

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. R. MacLeod

THE CONNECTION between departure from true religion and from true morality is clearly established in Scripture. Romans 1 develops this connection clearly, for example in verse 28: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”. The connection is illustrated in the ongoing departure from biblical morality in our society. It is also evidenced in the legislative priorities of our elected representatives. The first significant act of the Scottish Parliament was to deny the unique claims of the God of the Bible to the worship of His creatures and to commit the body officially representing this professedly Christian nation to the practice of “multi-faith prayer”. It is scarcely to be wondered at that this body should then engage in a crusade to remove the safeguards on the Protestant Succession to the Throne and should contemplate legislation to remove the restraints upon local authorities and schools promoting homosexuality or its acceptability.

Representing as we do the Church of the Reformation, of the Disruption and of 1893, we hold to the Establishment Principle. Although state and society are increasingly unsympathetic to the concept of the national recognition and support of true religion, the Church must endeavour, to the best of the ability God grants, to bring the teaching of God’s Word to bear upon state and society. This we must do primarily by the preaching of the Gospel and by our lives in the world. But we must also make use of our democratic right and seek to fulfil our biblical duty to confront the authorities and people of our land with the biblical position on matters of current concern. This has been part of the rationale for the Religion and Morals Report from the beginning.

As far as specifically religious matters are concerned the Committee endeavoured throughout the past year to represent to the relevant authorities the Church’s convictions regarding prayer in the Scottish Parliament, the honouring of the late Cardinal Hume by Her Majesty the Queen, and the attempts to promote the repeal of legislation safeguarding the Protestant nature of the Throne. These endeavours are reported on in this section of the Report and attention is drawn to some other matters of significance for the cause of Christ in our land.

The Scottish Parliament and Prayer

When the Religion and Morals Committee became aware of the Scottish Parliament’s acceptance in principle that there should be multi-faith prayers in Parliament (although the motion carried in Parliament on 18th May 1999 referred to “prayers to be held on a non-denominational basis”) the Convener wrote to the First Minister expressing the Committee’s conviction that this proposal was contrary to the unique claims of God and of the one Mediator

between God and men, contrary to the Protestant Constitution of the United Kingdom and to the terms of the 1707 Union between Scotland and England, and grieving to many loyal Scottish people (see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, July 1999, pages 218-219).

Following this communication the Committee were invited to be represented at a meeting on 6th July 1999 between representatives of various religious bodies in Scotland and the Parliamentary Bureau, which Parliament had charged with bringing forward proposals regarding prayer in Parliament. The Parliamentary Bureau was represented by several MSPs (the business leaders of each party) accompanied by civil servants. Sir David Steel chaired the meeting. Each of the 22 representatives of religious bodies was invited to address the meeting for a few minutes and to respond to the questions: should there be prayer, should it be in the Chamber, should it be daily and what form should it take? A brief report of the meeting and the letter subsequently sent to the Parliamentary Bureau appeared in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, September 1999, pages 286-287. It was advocated on behalf of the Committee that there should be prayer, that it should be held in the chamber, that it should be held daily and that the Scottish Parliament should take account of the constitutional position and determine that prayer in the Parliament be in accordance with the Reformed Faith.

On 9th September 1999 the Parliament returned to this subject. In opening the debate Mr. T. McCabe stated that “in essence, what is recommended is that time for reflection should comprise mainly Christian prayers, but the critical underlying principle is that it will allocate time to all the main beliefs held in Scotland. The aim is simply to reflect the diversity of our country as it is today. . . . We have a duty to show by example that we are a tolerant and open legislature that is content with the pursuit of social inclusion.” Mr. Phil Gallie proposed an amendment calling on Parliament to commence the week’s meetings “with a Christian thought and prayer”. He presented various arguments in support of his amendment, concluding with the statement: “Surely it must be wrong for any Christian to do other than promote his or her beliefs and to cut across the very foundation of Christian belief by transgressing the first commandment: ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me’.” One MSP from the South of Scotland admitted that the desire for only Christian prayers had dominated his mailbag by a ratio of some 70:1, though he went on to support the multi-faith approach as “a new, open and welcoming procedure as we enter both a new phase of Scottish democracy and the new millennium”. Mr. Donald Gorrie illustrated the general abandonment of the concept of the absolutely unique claims of Christianity, and the nation’s constitutional commitment to them, when he said: “Members and others who are Christians strongly believe that their views are correct: that theirs is the true God, that Christ is their Redeemer, and so on. They must accept that other people believe equally strongly in their various faiths.” The prevailing argument seemed to be that Parliament had a duty to represent those of all faiths and of none and little attention was paid to the point that prayer in and

on behalf of the Scottish Parliament should be viewed not as a question of the democratic representation of various groups in society but as the Parliament of a Christian nation, committed historically and constitutionally to the Protestant and Reformed Faith, addressing God and seeking His blessing. There were nine votes for Mr. Gallie's amendment and one hundred against.

The Queen, Cardinal Hume and the political progress of Romanism

Cardinal Basil Hume, who died in June 1999, whatever may have been his personal loyalty to the Queen, was the most visible and highly profiled representative in the United Kingdom of the errors of Romanism as a religion and the claims of the Papacy as an ecclesiastical and temporal power. He was reputedly known in Italy as "the saviour of the English Catholic Church". As long ago as 1982, in his Foreword to Lord Longford's *Pope John Paul II: An Authorized Biography*, Cardinal Hume hopefully contemplated the forthcoming visit of the Pope: ". . . the first successor of St. Peter to set foot on these shores. . . . Given the turbulent religious history of this country, given the longstanding bitterness which separated these islands from the visible unity of the Roman Catholic Church, it is hardly surprising that many see the coming of the Pope as an event of major historical, religious and ecumenical significance. Certainly there are many people in all the Christian Churches here who pray that it may further the cause of Christian unity." Lord Longford drew "great encouragement from the immense success of the Queen's visit to John Paul II in autumn 1980, followed by one from the Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher". He commented on the "*unmistakeable rapport*" which there seemed to be between the Pope and the Queen and expressed the hope "that after the forthcoming visit of the Pope, the mutual understanding established between the Queen and himself will extend to all her subjects". Lord Longford quoted the Duke of Norfolk: "Many of my friends sensibly see the papal visit as one of the concluding chapters of the healing of the cleavage of Christendom which sadly occurred in the sixteenth century." The Duke of Norfolk in turn quoted Pope Paul VI's welcome to Archbishop Ramsay in 1966: "By your coming you rebuild a bridge which for centuries has lain fallen between the Churches of Rome and Canterbury. Your steps bring you to a home you can call your own." The Duke also quoted Paul VI's assurance: "There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church is able to embrace firmly her ever-beloved sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ: a communion of origin, faith, priesthood and rule." Attention is drawn to these voices from the past to illustrate the context in which we must view an honour conferred by the Queen, shortly before his death, upon the man whom she is said to have described as "my Cardinal".

The Committee took account of the honour bestowed upon Cardinal Hume personally by the Queen when she conferred upon him the Order of Merit and the Clerk wrote a letter to Her Majesty, a copy of which appeared in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, September 1999. The Queen has been frequently

assured of this Church's loyalty to her personally and in her capacity as the Protestant Monarch of a Protestant Nation. Although the honour was one personally given by the Queen it was given by her in virtue of the fact that she is Queen and could not be regarded as something personal to herself as if she were a private individual. It was thus inconsistent with her coronation commitments which had their origin in the deliverance of this nation from the dangers of Romanism and foreign dominion in the Glorious Revolution. Since the Revolution Romanism has developed in an even more unbiblical direction with such dogmas as that of papal infallibility.

It is a matter of deep regret that the Queen countenances the system from which our nation was delivered by God and which is working towards recovering the nation for Rome. Writing the day after Hume's death, Victoria Combe, Religion Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, commented that "one of the Cardinal's great achievements was to draw the Church from the margins of British society to a position where he, as its leader, became a familiar and respected figure to all. He was a frequent guest of the Royal Family and a close friend of the Duchess of Kent and the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk. The Duke said the Cardinal achieved a 'milestone' for the Catholic Church when the Queen accepted his invitation to attend Vespers in Westminster Cathedral in 1995." The road on which this was a milestone is indicated by such utterances as those already quoted and by that of the Scottish Cardinal Winning when he expressed the hope that we would "make that journey together, hand in hand" which would lead to "the final reunification of the whole of Christ's Church into a church that is truly Catholic – that is universal" – meaning that Roman Catholicism would be the only faith in Scotland in 50 years time (see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, February 1999). Cardinal Winning was reported to have achieved another "first" for the foremost Roman Catholic in Scotland when the Scottish Secretary arranged an official reception for him at Westminster. He spoke at a lunch at Dover House, the Scotland Office's London Headquarters, and conducted a mass in the crypt of the House of Commons (*The Scotsman*, 19th January 2000).

The Protestant Succession to the Throne

In a letter of 3rd November 1999 to the Clerk of Synod, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MSP, requested information by the end of the year as to whether or not the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland would support an amendment to the Act of Settlement removing the article which provides "that all and every person and persons, who shall or may take or inherit the said Crown, by virtue of the limitation of this present Act, and is, are, or shall be reconciled to, or shall hold communion with, the See or Church of Rome, or shall profess the popish religion, or shall marry a papist, shall be subject to such incapacities as in such case or cases are by the said recited Act provided, enacted and established", thus debarring persons who are Roman Catholics or who marry Roman Catholics from continuing in the line of succession to the Throne. At the request of the Clerk of Synod the Religion and Morals Committee replied

to this letter. Having been asked for information by the end of the year the Committee were surprised that a debate on the subject was held in the Scottish Parliament before the end of the year. In addition to the fact that the Scottish Parliament has no jurisdiction with regard to this matter the Committee were not aware that the members or parties represented in the Parliament were elected on the basis of a commitment to seek amendment of the Act of Settlement and so could not understand how Parliament could justify its haste in this matter and claim to speak for the vast majority of the Scottish people.

The Committee informed Lord James Douglas-Hamilton that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland strongly supports the present constitutional arrangement for securing the Protestant Succession to the Throne and deeply regrets the prominent place taken by Conservative Peers and by members of the Scottish Parliament in pressing for change. They expressed regret that Lord James personally was reported to have said that “it was appalling that such an outdated piece of legislation could continue in a country which claimed to have an inclusive, multi-faith society” and to have referred to this legislation as “this unfair and unjust anomaly” (*The Scotsman*, 30th October 1999). The Committee took the opportunity to briefly indicate why they opposed any alteration to the present legislation securing the Protestant character of the Throne and claimed that there are solid historical, constitutional and religious reasons for maintaining the *status quo*. The substance of the Committee’s representation is as follows:

“Claims that the present legislation would allow the monarch to marry a person of any religion other than Roman Catholicism ignore the fact that the primary aim of the legislation is to secure the Protestant succession to the Throne and that no marriage inconsistent with this fundamental aim of the legislation should be permitted. Surely clauses within the legislation must be read in the light of the whole.

“Securing the Protestant succession to the Throne was seen as an essential element in the commitment of this nation to the Reformed Faith as set forth in the *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* of the Church of Scotland. The removal of the monarch’s personal and official commitment to the maintenance of the Protestant Religion would be a most significant indication of the nation’s resiling from the concept of an Established Protestant Religion and would almost inevitably strengthen the case of those urging disestablishment of the Churches of England and Scotland. It would also further diminish the status of the monarchy as the embodiment of the authority of the State.

“Suggestions that this legislation was foisted on Scotland ignore the fact that the Estates of the Kingdom of Scotland prior to the Union regarded the laws which secure the Protestant succession to the Throne as essential for the preservation of the established religion in both

Scotland and England and for the preservation of the Protestant character of these nations, and made this a condition of proceeding with the Treaty of Union. *The Declaration of the Estates of the Kingdom of Scotland, containing the CLAIM OF RIGHT, and the offer of the Crown to their Majesties King William and Queen Mary, April 11, 1689*, gave as a reason for the assertion that King James the Seventh had ‘forefaulted the right to the Crown, and the Throne is become vacant’ the fact that he did ‘invade the fundamental constitution of this Kingdom and altered it from a legal limited monarchy to an arbitrary despotic power . . . particularly arraigning the laws establishing the Protestant Religion, and did exercise that power to the subversion of the Protestant Religion, and to the violation of the laws and liberties of the Kingdom’. It went on to declare ‘that by the law of this Kingdom no Papist can be King or Queen of this realm, nor bear any office whatsoever therein; nor can any Protestant successor exercise the regal power, until he or she swear the Coronation Oath’. Their pre-Union *Act for securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government* proceeded on the basis that it was ‘reasonable and necessary, that the true Protestant religion, as presently professed within this kingdom, with the worship, discipline and government of this Church, should be effectually and unalterably secured’. The Act provided that ‘after the decease of her present Majesty (whom God long preserve), the Sovereign succeeding to her in the royal government of the kingdom of Great Britain, shall in all time coming, at his or her accession to the Crown, swear and subscribe, that they shall inviolably maintain and preserve the foresaid settlement of the true Protestant religion, with the government, worship, discipline, rights and privileges of this Church, as above established by the laws of this kingdom, in prosecution of the Claim of Right; and it is hereby statute and ordained, that this Act of Parliament, with the establishment therein contained, shall be held and observed in all time coming, as a fundamental and essential condition of any treaty or union to be concluded betwixt the two kingdoms, without any alteration thereof, or derogation thereto, in any sort for ever: as also, that this Act of Parliament, and settlement therein contained, shall be inserted and repeated in any Act of Parliament that shall pass for agreeing and concluding the foresaid treaty or union betwixt the two kingdoms; and that the same shall be therein expressly declared to be a fundamental and essential condition of the said treaty or union in all time coming’.

“It cannot be doubted that the Protestant Throne and the establishment of the Protestant Religion bound up with it are so fundamental to the constitution of Scotland and of the United Kingdom that whatever may emerge if the proposed changes take place will have lost its original identity and will be a new entity. The nation will have broken faith with

those who established the nation in its present form and will have broken faith with God who has preserved and blessed it throughout these centuries. It is disappointing that leading figures in the country are of the view that this can be done by 'the stroke of a pen'. What guarantee is there for the continued liberty of subjects under the law if solemn constitutional undertakings and commitments can be treated in this way by the legislators of the nation?

“It is generally recognised that there were good contemporary reasons for excluding a Romanist from the Throne. An advocate of change, David Hamilton, wrote in *The Scotsman*, 19th November, 1999: ‘At the time of the revolutions of 1688-9, the parliaments of Scotland and England had good reason to prohibit the monarch from being a Catholic. Louis XIV, the arch-persecutor of Protestants, had been poised to annihilate Protestant constitutionalism by conquest of the Netherlands. The British parliaments had just overthrown the last Catholic King, James VII & II, who had tried to declare his own powers absolute in order to be Louis’s lapdog. Protestantism and the seeds of democracy might have disappeared together’.

“It is argued, however, by advocates of change that these reasons no longer exist. We recognise that this view may be accounted for by the indifference to religion of those who desire an officially secular state, by the compromising of Protestant distinctives by those committed to the ecumenical movement and by the propaganda of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. We maintain that in addition to the constitutional reasons for preserving the provisions of the Act of Settlement there are good reasons in the nature and history of Romanism for doing so. The present constitutional arrangements give full scope for loyal Roman Catholic subjects to avail themselves of all the civil and religious rights enjoyed by any other subject of Her Majesty the Queen within this nation. In addition to the fact that the Protestantism of the Throne is a major element in and safeguard of the establishment of Protestantism as the faith of the Nation the exclusion of a Roman Catholic is a recognition not only of the fact that Romanism is incompatible with Protestantism but also of the fact that Romanism is a religion which claims precedence and authority not only over all Christian Churches and religious faiths but over all civil governments. The Pope is not only head of the system throughout the world known as the Roman Catholic Church, which as a religious organisation is totalitarian and autocratic, but is also head of an independent State. And he claims to have priority over all the monarchs and governments of the world. Has the Pope abandoned the claim asserted in his crowning with the triple tiara, when the officiating cleric says: ‘Receive this tiara, adorned with three crowns, that thou mayest know thou art the father of princes and kings, the ruler of the world, the Vicar on earth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to

Whom is honour and glory for ever and ever'? Such claims are blasphemous according to the Creeds which embody the Protestant Faith of this nation. And such claims are dangerous to the liberties of nations. One does not require to go to ancient history or to distant lands to find evidence that the Vatican has never hesitated to take all possible measures to control the destiny of nations in a way that fits in with its ambition for its own advancement. No person who belongs to a religion which acknowledges a supreme human authority over the nation beyond the authority of the monarch in Parliament can claim the allegiance of loyal citizens of the United Kingdom. Does not the Roman hierarchy, even in its position as a dissenting or nonconformist body under the present administration of affairs assume to itself all the airs and, as far as possible privileges, of an established institution? What has been the effect of the Papacy on the nations and societies where there has been an approximation to its demand for civil as well as ecclesiastical power? What has been the record of the Papal attitude to this nation and her enemies even throughout this century? It ill becomes the 'princes of the Church' of Rome to lecture the British public or parliaments on the subject of natural and civil rights.

“We are aware of the influence of powerful minority groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church, upon our elected representatives, but we trust that our legislators will have regard to the representations of those who may or may not be a minority with regard to this matter but who urge upon them the maintenance of those constitutional arrangements which have been fundamental to the spiritual and temporal wellbeing of Scotland and the United Kingdom over the past three centuries.”

The Scottish Parliament debated this issue on 16th December 1999. The only real differences surfacing in the debate were party political – over whether or not the matter should have been debated in the Scottish Parliament and over the relative urgency of legislation of this kind and legislation affecting ordinary people more directly. The authority quoted most frequently in the debate was Cardinal Winning. No understanding was shown or account taken of the reasoned arguments of those who oppose repeal of the legislation preserving the Protestant nature of the monarchy, and no one spoke in support of preserving the current legislation. The little regard shown for history, for treaties, for constitutional arrangements and for rational argument gives cause for concern for the future. The cry now expected to silence all opposition to change in any sphere of life is that of “no discrimination”. With about seventy of the one hundred and twenty-nine MSPs present the following motion was unanimously adopted: “That the Parliament believes that the discrimination contained in the Act of Settlement has no place in our modern society, expresses its wish that those discriminatory aspects of the Act be repealed, and affirms its view that Scottish society must not disbar participation in any

aspect of our national life on the grounds of religion, recognises that amendment or repeal raises complex constitutional issues, and that this is a matter reserved to UK Parliament”.

For reasons known best to themselves, the Government, and even leading Roman Catholic figures like Lord St. John of Fawsley, are unwilling at present to embark on a process of legislative change. But the Government have no objection in principle to change. The relevant minister at the Home Office wrote in response to a communication from a Scottish MP, at the end of December 1999: “The Government has always stood firmly against discrimination in all its forms, including discrimination against Roman Catholics, and it will continue to do so. However, the Government has a heavy legislative programme aimed at delivering key manifesto commitments in areas such as health, education, crime and reform of the welfare system. Furthermore, changes to the law on succession would be a complex undertaking, raising major constitutional issues which would involve the amendment or repeal of a number of pieces of related legislation, as well as requiring the assent of the legislatures of all the countries of which Her Majesty is Queen. The Government therefore has no plans to legislate in this area.” In his speech opposing Lord Forsyth’s attempt to introduce the subject in the House of Lords in December 1999, Lord St. John said: “Such a major matter is best set in train – and should be set in train – by the Government and Opposition parties officially acting together.”

The Queen’s most loyal subjects are disturbed yet again by the announcement that she and the Duke of Edinburgh intend to meet the Pope at the Vatican during a state visit to Italy planned for October 2000. One report described this as “the third visit by the Supreme Governor of the Church of England to the Holy See” (*The Times*, 8th December 1999). Her Majesty is ill advised to give such recognition to a man who heads a religion which is subversive of the Reformed Faith which she is sworn to uphold and who claims, as noted previously, to be “the father of princes and kings, the ruler of the world”.

Romanism and the current Counter Reformation Movement

One way or another *Romanism* has been involved in each of the items reported on. Given the current tendency in professedly Protestant circles to view Romanism with apathy or a measure of sympathy, and given our ongoing opposition to Romanism, it may be necessary to remind ourselves of the basis and necessity of that opposition. We who are within an unashamedly Protestant Church require to be alert to the evils and dangers of Romanism. An important service is rendered in this respect by the “Protestant View” and other articles in our Church Magazines. For those deluded by Romanism we have no personal antipathy but a prayerful desire for their deliverance and their conversion to Christ. For their sakes we look forward with earnest desire to the exposure and overthrow of the antichristian system by which they are bound. In a Foreword to his *Papal Portrait* (Edinburgh 1962) the late Rev. Donald MacKay of Watten Free Church wrote: “It is my earnest prayer for the Free

Church that we will not alter or lower our testimony regarding the Papacy and Church of Rome as anti-Christ – the testimony of the Reformers – no more than we will against the false gospel of Modernism in the Protestant Church. I am fully persuaded that if we fail in either respect we might as well cease to exist as a separate denomination, for we will have missed the mark of our calling.” Mr. MacKay obviously did not mean that the reason for the existence of his denomination could be interpreted primarily in terms of protest against Romanism and Protestant liberalism but he recognised that faithfulness to the Church’s commission and testimony would necessarily involve such protest and that failure in that respect would go hand in hand with departure from the Church’s testimony generally. It is significant that one of the current, presumably self-appointed, ministerial spokesmen of the Free Church reportedly estimates that about 75% of Free Church ministers do not accept that the Pope is the Anti-Christ (*Free Presbyterian Magazine*, August 1999).

Among explanations for “Protestant” readiness to look more favourably on Romanism, one finds the arguments that Romanists are more true to cardinal doctrines of Christianity than liberal Protestants and that the spokesmen of Romanism often appear to take a stand on moral issues which corresponds with that of conservative Protestants and which secures media coverage rarely given to conservative Protestants. Also the Charismatic movement, with its concentration upon allegedly spiritual experience, however induced, rather than sound doctrine and its fruits, has contributed to the idea that persons can be regarded as Christians and indwelt by the Spirit irrespective of their doctrinal views and religious practices. It is a fact that within Romanism even the orthodox doctrines professed are vitiated by the errors combined with them. The tendencies of Romanism with regard to morality must be judged by the societies in which they have been able to work themselves out fully. While Cardinal Winning prominently (and rightly) opposes change to Section 28 and its prohibition of the promotion of homosexuality and of its acceptability it is reported that some of his celibate priests unite to defend “gay” priests and others have been involved in affairs with women and in the abuse of children. The biblical connection between truth, experience and practice immediately renders suspect claims to similar “spiritual” experience made by adherents of such essentially contradictory systems as Romanism and Protestantism. Instead of seeking here to demonstrate the fallacy of reasons given for viewing Romanism with respect we may put the axe to the root of the tree as William Cunningham did when he claimed that Popery “in its complex character and as a system is Satan’s great scheme for frustrating the leading objects of the Christian revelation” (“The Errors of Romanism” in *Discussions on Church Principles*, page 34). In his Preface to Bishop Stillingfleet’s *The Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome truly represented* Cunningham writes: “The system of Popery occupies a prominent place in the New Testament. Not only are there abundant materials in the Word of God for establishing the erroneous and dangerous character of its tenets individually, but the system, as a whole, is there delineated so fully and plainly, that it seems to be scarcely possible to

mistake it. It is predicted as a great apostasy from the true faith, which was to prevail extensively in the professing Church, and to be attended with the most injurious consequences. It is expressly ascribed to the peculiar agency of Satan; and, indeed, the very reason why it forms the subject of the predictions of the New Testament is because it was Satan's great scheme for frustrating the leading objects of Christianity – for depriving men of the important advantages, connected both with this world and the next, which the preaching of the Gospel was intended to convey; and was to be very successful in effecting these ends.”

When the *Counter Reformation* is mentioned thoughts go to the sixteenth century and efforts then made by Rome to halt the progress of the Reformation and recover lost territory. Religious orders were either reformed or introduced, the Jesuits being the most significant and influential of those created specifically for the work of Counter Reformation. The Council of Trent (met for twenty-five sessions over three periods between 1551 and 1563) took steps to make the administration of the Roman Church more effective and set forth the accumulated errors of Romanism in a dogmatic and perpetually binding form over against the Biblical doctrines of the Reformers. The Inquisition was harnessed to the work of controlling people's thinking and suppressing dissent. Political and military (notably Spanish) means were used in the attempt to revive the fortunes of Romanism in Europe. The failure of these attempts in Great Britain halted the progress, though not the work, of Counter Reformation for many years.

It would be a great mistake to think that the Counter Reformation belongs only to the history of Reformation times. The Council of Trent drew up the line of battle between Romanism and Protestantism. By their *Profession of the Tridentine Faith* the Roman hierarchy and priests still bind themselves, after asserting their adherence to certain specific articles of Roman belief and practice, to “undoubtedly receive and profess all other things delivered, defined and declared by the Sacred Canons and General Councils, and particularly by the holy Council of Trent” and to “condemn, reject and anathematize all things contrary thereto, and all heresies which the Church has condemned, rejected and anathematized”. The First Vatican Council (1869-70) is noted primarily for its dogmatic assertion of the primacy and infallibility of the Pope. The Second Vatican Council, which sat at various times between October 1962 and December 1965, was an attempt to conserve traditional dogmas and give the Church a media-friendly face appropriate to the twentieth century. Trent and Vatican I were endorsed by Vatican II but impetus was given to a tendency to present unchanging dogma in a way which would appeal to non-Roman churchmen who had virtually abandoned the Bible as their point of reference and the unequivocal statements of the Reformation Creeds as their testimony to Biblical truth. This process has continued in less formal ways by means of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commissions (ARCIC), in whose reports in the 1980s common statements were agreed on “Eucharist, Ministry and Authority” and on questions relating to salvation and to the

Church which give the impression that the doctrinal differences of the Reformation were really due to misunderstanding and that on all the “core” doctrines of the faith there is no essential disagreement. In the 1990s the same process came to expression in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: the Christian Mission and the Third Millennium* (ECT), which maintained that by concentrating on certain core doctrines of the faith, such as those of the *Apostles’ Creed*, persons belonging to each of these bodies could recognise each other as Christians engaged in the same mission of “communicating Christ to unbelievers and upholding Christian order in a post-Christian world” (Dr. J. I. Packer). After all, wrote Dr. Packer, one of the signatories to the ECT statement, what brings salvation “is not any theory about faith in Christ, justification, and the church, but faith itself in Christ himself”. According to a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by Lutherans and Romanists on 31st October 1999, in Augsburg, Germany, “The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnation of the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration.” The Counter Reformation movement in its use of dialogue continues to try to win the old arguments by confusion of terminology and succeeds to a large extent because of the lack of awareness and commitment to biblical truth on the part of those participating on the professedly Protestant side.

Counter Reformation in the Theological realm

The main objection to Romanism continues to be that as a system it subverts the essential foundations of biblical Christianity. The biblical doctrine of justification reasserted at the Reformation cannot be accepted without the overthrow of Roman doctrine, practice and ecclesiology. The fact that many churchmen consider that there is no fundamental difference between them and Rome on this subject does not indicate a change on the part of Rome but their ignorance of the truth and Rome’s success in deluding them. William Cunningham in his *Historical Theology*, Vol. 2, page 120, showed his alertness to the true situation when he wrote that “the tendency of the whole Popish system, when fully imbibed and applied, is to lead men to build upon a different, a false foundation; while the very profession they are permitted to make of relying upon God’s mercy and Christ’s work may just conceal from them the truth that they are practically relying upon themselves, and thus only increase the danger to which all their strongest natural tendencies expose them, of disregarding and rejecting the only provision whereby guilty and fallen men can be saved”.

Counter Reformation in the Ecclesiastical realm

The aim of Rome is still to bring at least the whole of “Christendom” into full fellowship with Rome and under the supreme authority of the Pope. The most recent ARCIC statement, published in May 1999, *The Gift of Authority*,

accepted that in a united church the Pope would be the universal primate, even though he might have to exercise his primacy “in the context of synodality”. The report “seeks to make clear how in certain circumstances the Bishop of Rome has a duty to discern and make explicit, in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition, the authentic faith of the whole Church. . . . The commission believes that this is a gift to be received by all the churches and is entailed in the recognition of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome” (Statement issued by joint-chairmen of ARCIC). It is understood that as long ago as 1996 the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury agreed to a meeting in Montreal in May 2000 between primates of the Anglican Provinces and presidents of the Roman Catholic Bishops Conferences to consider how to give more practical effect to the ARCIC findings in the way of local and international co-operation.

Counter Reformation in the Political realm

Romanism has always been prepared, openly or secretly, to advance her own ends by political means. This has been illustrated recently in a book denounced by Vatican critics as “trash not worth the paper it is written on”, *Hitler's Pope* by John Cornwell (Viking 1999). The book is aptly sub-titled *The Secret History of Pius XII*. Rome often speaks with a variety of voices so that when one statement arouses indignation another can be quoted which makes the critic feel he must have misinterpreted the first. An example of this is the recent revelation that in spite of initial denials by the Vatican, the Vatican, having been lobbied by the Chilean government, made representations privately to the Foreign Office to the effect that the extradition of General Pinochet should be blocked and that he should be immune from prosecution for alleged involvement in atrocities as a former head of state. At the same time it was reported that Cardinal Hume had been of the view that no one responsible for the crimes of which Pinochet was accused should have total immunity. The Church whose head can exhort Latin American Romanists to aggressively combat Protestants can walk together with them in the British Isles. A Vatican accord with the Palestinian leader can describe Israeli rule over Jerusalem as “morally and legally unacceptable” but a papal nuncio can explain that “there is no reference to the political situation of Jerusalem in the document”.

Roman Catholic bishops were keen to have a role in a reformed House of Lords. Such aspirations were encouraged by the view of the Archbishop of Canterbury that “in a multi-faith society the Church of England should not be the only religious body to be formally given space on the red benches in the Lords”. Even *The Scotsman* speaks of “the increasing politicisation of Cardinal Winning”.

Romanism is subversive of the true interests of our nation and of the Reformed Religion of our nation. The threatened breaking up of the United Kingdom, the unifying of Ireland and further incorporation in a European super-state, with subjection to its laws, all contribute to the aim of Rome to further weaken the influence of Protestantism in a nation which has, in the past, been one of the main obstacles in the way of her ambitions.

Without questioning that there are Roman Catholics in Ulster who are content to continue as British subjects and are opposed to terrorist atrocities, and that much terrorism is connected with a wide range of criminal activity not directly related to religion, there can be no doubt that the removal of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom and its incorporation in a united Ireland would satisfy the aspirations of the Vatican.

An interesting article on "Ulster's ethnic cleansing" was published in the "Protestant View" of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* in May 1999. Under political pressure, ostensibly to make the Royal Ulster Constabulary more attractive to Roman Catholics, Northern Ireland's Police Force is to be subjected to extensive change, going beyond a change of name and badge and oath, and resulting in what has been described as "virtually a new police force", and a police force drastically reduced in size in spite of the refusal of the terrorist organisations to decommission arms and in spite of the release of hordes of convicted terrorists from the prisons. Moves to allow Sinn Fein MPs Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness to use the facilities of the House of Commons, although they refuse to swear the Oath of Allegiance to the Queen, and to allow Irish MPs to take seats at Westminster and in the Northern Ireland Assembly are further evidence of the totally irrational and unprincipled attitude of those in Government to the situation in Northern Ireland. The British Government has been riding roughshod over those most loyal subjects of the British monarchy, the Protestants of Northern Ireland. Men were admitted to government in Northern Ireland whose sworn aim is to destroy that government. Gerry Adams and his associates have insisted that his party should be accepted as truly democratic without any preconditions. As one concession after another has been made in the interests of the desired peace the threat of renewed violence has been kept in reserve as a lever to force further movement in the direction sought by the IRA and their democratic front. Political manoeuvres by Republicans have repeatedly led to Unionists being denounced as responsible for endangering peace. Morally indignant over "terrorism" in distant lands, the Government has treated the terrorists of Northern Ireland with kid gloves. Situations are engineered in which the democratic process is made to appear impossible and then the breakdown of the democratic process is used to justify the resort to threat in order to further promote their own aims. For example: "Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Fein, said that decommissioning was not in his gift and warned that it would never happen if the power-sharing executive collapsed" (*The Scotsman*, 1st February 2000). Martin McGuinness had already described decommissioning as a voluntary and not an obligatory act (*The Scotsman*, 22nd January 2000). *The Herald* (20th January 2000) described Sinn Fein as "quietly happy with the confusion which is sown".

It is important that the Church should continue to bring before those in authority the Antichristian nature of Romanism and the betrayal of the Protestant Constitution of this nation involved in all governmental and royal recognition of the claims of Romanism. Throughout the ages Rome has shown

ability to adapt to local circumstances where necessary while retaining her basic position. On 8th March 2000, Romanists observed a “Request for Forgiveness” day. The methods may change but none of Rome’s claims has been withdrawn. The Inquisition may have been replaced with “the Holy Office”. *Opus Dei* may have overtaken the Jesuits as the religious order spearheading the promotion of the Romanist Faith. Involvement in political and military situations throughout the world may or may not have become more subtle. But the same work of Counter Reformation proceeds aided by the apostasy of Protestant Churches, the apathy of many still adhering to Reformation truth and the secularisation of society and of political institutions.

The Free Church of Scotland

All within our bounds concerned for the effect upon the Cause of Christ in Scotland have followed developments within the Free Church of Scotland during recent years with real interest. It has been difficult for outsiders, and perhaps even for Free Church people, to fully appreciate what has been taking place in the Free Church, largely because of the selective and biased nature of much reporting and comment. This is not the place to try to go into details of the inner workings of the Free Church. Examination of the main public aspects of recent developments shows that basic to the difficulties which culminated in the summoning of a relatively large number of Free Church ministers to the bar of the Commission of Assembly in January 2000 to answer charges of contumacy was a finding of General Assembly in 1995 which endorsed the verdict of a majority of the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee (without Assembly Commissioners seeing any of the evidence submitted or being formally acquainted with what the allegations were), that “on completion of a long and intensive enquiry into allegations made against Rev. Professor Donald Macleod, the Committee found no evidence capable of proving in the Courts of the Church censurable conduct on the part of Rev. Professor Donald Macleod” (Acts of the 1995 General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland). The minority complained that not only was this finding reached in a way inconsistent with proper disciplinary procedure but it was used to prevent disciplinary processes against Professor Macleod on allegations relating to matters arising subsequent to the date of that finding, and was used to force men into positions where they were seen to be defying the authority of Church Courts and were themselves exposed to discipline though they considered themselves to be contending for constitutional principles and practices against an arbitrarily assumed power.

On 20th January 2000 the minority withdrew from the place in which the Commission of General Assembly was taking place and met elsewhere, claiming to continue the meeting of Commission. In their *Declaration of Reconstitution of the Historic Free Church of Scotland* those declining the authority of “all church courts seeking to impose acts and findings contrary to the constitution of the historic Free Church of Scotland” claimed over against the majority “still to be the true *bona fide* representatives of the original

protesters of 1843 and to be carrying out the objects of the Protest more faithfully than the majority". They resolved to be known "solely for purposes of administration" as the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). Had not the majority been intent on pursuing those who refused to submit to the interpretation being put upon and use made of the finding of 1995 and who identified themselves with the Free Church Defence Association, would this separation have taken place? The future attitude of the Free Church (Continuing) to the increasing number of matters regarded as "open questions" in the Free Church of Scotland remains to be seen.

It also remains to be seen if the majority Free Church of Scotland, without those who have identified themselves as the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), may be even more ready to implement the programme of the modernisers. Professor D. Macleod uses various media to voice his view that in being committed to exclusive psalmody the smaller Presbyterian Churches are out of step with the Bible, with their past and with the rest of Christendom, and that the failure to address these issues as he desires them to be addressed "carries with it resignation to the view that the smaller Presbyterian Churches are doomed to extinction" ("The Highland Churches today", in *The Church in the Highlands*, ed. James Kirk, Edinburgh, 1998). Rev. David Robertson unabashedly proclaims his readiness to receive "Roman Catholic believers" to the Lord's Table, gives his church on a weekday to a woman preacher from an Arminian and Ecumenical organisation, is glad that Dundee has become "a city of dance" and considers that "it would be hard to find a case against what might be termed spontaneous congregational dance as an expression of praise". When he sees "the pleasure that so many of our young (and not so young) people get from dancing" he wants "to guide our people into a biblical theology of dance" (see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, June 1999: "The Free Church and the World").

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

There has been little readiness on the part of either body currently claiming to be the Free Church of Scotland to recognise the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland as an already existing body which, in practice as well as profession, endeavours to adhere to that full commitment to the standards of the Free Church of Scotland which accounted for the separation of 1893 from the body then claiming that name. The historical continuity of a Church is not determined by identity of name, nor by retention of property, nor even by continuous genealogical descent, but by hearty and unreserved commitment to original principles and practices. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has adhered, though with conscious inadequacy and at times against internal and external pressures to compromise, to the standards of the Reformed Church of Scotland as represented in the constitutional documents of the Free Church of Scotland of 1843. We may be small and despised, and we are conscious of our defects and weakness and our need of a gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but we do claim to be the only Church in Scotland which

has hitherto given unreserved commitment to these standards. We ought to highly value and seek to preserve the unity currently enjoyed among us in wholehearted commitment to the whole truth in principle and practice, and beware of any temptation from any source to dilute that commitment. A larger body kept together by a readiness to make open questions of matters which the Church long ago recognised as settled by Scripture will be much less effective in testifying to the truth than a smaller body united by unreserved commitment to an agreed standard.

May we be enabled to adhere to the distinctive position set forth in our supreme and subordinate standards, “in humble dependence on the grace of God, the help of our Lord and Saviour, and the presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit”, as our *Deed of Separation* of 1893 puts it.

Other Scottish Churches

The *Church of Scotland* continues to speak with contrary voices, not only on providing alternatives for baptism and the further modernising of methods of worship, but also on fundamental doctrine, issues of morality and ecumenical relations.

Bishop Richard Holloway of the *Scottish Episcopal Church*, in spite of some protest from Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics within his own communion, becomes ever more outrageous in his denial of fundamental truths of biblical theism not to speak of his contradiction of the Christian Faith and even of civilised morality and his resorting to the use of profane language.

Developments within the *Associated Presbyterian Churches* may be gathered from an advertisement appearing in the *Aberdeen Evening Express* in December 1999: “Alford Place Church. Christmas Services: Sunday 26th December: 11am, Joint Service at Union Grove Baptist Church. No Evening Service at Alford Place. Sunday 2nd January: We have been invited to attend the services at Bon Accord Free Church at 11am & 6.30pm. We wish all our Congregation & Visitors A Very Merry Christmas”.

The *Alpha Course* not only finds support across denominational boundaries from those professing to be Evangelicals but is regarded as a useful tool by many who make no such profession (see “The Alpha Course Examined”, *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, March 1999). One city evangelistic campaign, “Make the Connection”, built around the Alpha Course, while seeking to promote Bible reading and consideration of the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God, promised such events in 2000 as a Ceilidh, “The Singing Dancing Carpenter” Musical, and “Scot’s Passion” by Cutting Edge Theatre.

Modern Ecumenism

Ecumenical bodies continue to aim at unity of churches though they tend to find that the “bureaucratic and legalised structures of Scottish churches are getting in the way” (Rev. Ross Maclaren of Action of Churches Together in Scotland – ACTS). A press release informs us that ACTS was formed in 1990 along with similar ecumenical bodies in the rest of Britain and Ireland. Its

members are the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, the Scottish Congregational Church, the United Free Church, the United Reformed Church, the Congregational Federation, the Salvation Army and the Religious Society of Friends. ACTS is taking a lead in organising a festival in St. Andrews which pilgrims from all over the world are expected to attend on Friday 8th September 2000 to celebrate both the alleged bringing of the relics of "Scotland's patron saint" from Greece in the 4th century and current ecumenical involvement in the community. From St. Andrews the pilgrims will journey by a variety of routes and means to Edinburgh via Dunfermline and on "Holy Cross (Rood) Day", Thursday 14th September, the festival will come to a climax with a procession down the Royal Mile from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood Park. We are told that the theme throughout will be one of reconciliation and hope focusing on the Millennium Resolution offered by the Churches as a message of hope: "Let there be respect for the Earth, peace for its people, love in our lives, delight in the good, forgiveness for past wrongs and from now on a new start". The project was launched at an ecumenical gathering in St. Andrews University by Roman Catholic Archbishop Keith Patrick O'Brien on 24th September 1999.

What the World Council of Churches in its fifty years existence has failed to do in attempting to promote Church Union from the top, even between the bodies who have participated in it, is proceeding apace in much more subtle ways.

In London the beginning of the new century and millennium was marked by a multi-faith gathering – described as a Service of Shared Faith – at the Royal Gallery in the Houses of Parliament. The 400 participants were led in an Act of Commitment by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Prime Minister spoke of the values shared by the different faiths – justice, mutual respect, compassion, community.

When Scotland's First Minister arrived for the Millennium service at St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh he was welcomed by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland General Assembly and the Roman Catholic Cardinal Winning. Dr. Cairns and Cardinal Winning have appeared on different sides in some public debates but the moderator seems to have no difficulty embracing the cardinal as his Christian brother.

Among local Church leaders reported to have joined in worship at a special millennium service held in the Old High Church, Inverness, conducted by the minister of that Church and addressed by Lord MacKay of Clashfern, were a Roman Catholic priest, the Episcopalian Cathedral Provost, the minister of the Free North Church and representatives of the Methodist and Pentecostal churches. Inverness Salvation Army Band, Inverness Gospel Male Voice Choir, St. Andrew's Cathedral Boys' Choir, and the Gaelic Children's Choir all took part and a Free North precentor led the unaccompanied singing of Psalm 121. While the address given in Inverness would be different from those in London and Edinburgh the message going out from each of those gatherings is that more unites than divides the bodies represented in them.

The Pope was joined at the opening of a “holy door” in Rome to mark the beginning of this special “holy year” by the Archbishop of Canterbury, a leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the representatives of many other churches. Apart from the childishness and idolatry of the whole affair the Archbishop was thereby countenancing the idea that persons passing through this and certain other “holy doors” during this “holy year” will receive “indulgence”. What can be expected from an Archbishop who can proclaim to an American Conference entitled “Scholarly Engagement with Anglican Doctrine”: “Sola Scriptura has been consistently rejected by our Communion as our theological method but we have never rejected Scripture as the pivot and mainstay of theological truth. . . . We have consistently rejected a narrow biblicism”?

Those who question the possibility of any coming together of the major non-biblical religions under the presidency of the Pope should read the review in the April 1999 *Free Presbyterian Magazine* of a book by Herbert J. Pollitt, *The Inter-Faith Movement: The New Age enters the Church* (Banner of Truth Trust). Muslims and Jews among others are being wooed by the Pope.

Incipient intolerance

The Scotsman's editorial of 16th December 1999 on the Act of Settlement was entitled: “Obnoxious piece of antique law” and describes the Act as, amongst other things, “an intolerable relic”, “this dry, poisonous, old nettle”, “at once divisive, insulting, and redolent of the least of England, the worst of Britain”. The *Edinburgh Evening News* headlined its Comment of 8th November 1999 “Outdated Act of folly” and went on to claim that “even the most ardent Royalists – with the exception of religious bigots who use alleged Royal support as justification for their hatred – would agree that this part of the Act of Settlement is a ridiculous piece of nonsense. It is a matter of common sense rather than party politics.” As if no one of any worth could think otherwise, Cardinal Winning, who describes the Act of Settlement as “a continuing insult to the Roman Catholic community . . . a blot on our justice and integrity”, suggests that “it is an anachronism and everyone acknowledges that and what we have to do is get rid of it”. Similarly when John Reid, the first Roman Catholic Secretary of State for Scotland, spoke strongly in favour of repealing the Act of Settlement, the Cardinal proclaimed that “Dr. Reid’s words will be welcomed by Scots of all faiths and none” (*The Scotsman*, 10th November 1999). An MSP during the debate in the Scottish Parliament on the Act of Settlement expressed a typical view when she said that “the number of members, with differing religious beliefs, from all parties, who signed the motion showed that any fair-minded person would like this anomaly to be removed from our law . . . the Act of Settlement is discriminatory to Catholics . . . and is offensive to any reasonable person”.

It has become common for those who put forward a reasoned argument for the biblical position on any subject to be labelled and dismissed as hardliners or bigots. There may well be reason to fear that in the current climate of

“tolerance” it may become an offence to proclaim what we believe to be the truth concerning religions and practices which deviate from or contradict the Word of God. None can be more fiercely intolerant than the humanistically or morally or religiously liberal when confronted by absolute truth.

Our brief survey of the public religion of our day in Scotland leads us to say with the psalmist: “O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?” (Psalm 80:4).

Homosexuality (Sodomy)

Section 28. As our readers are doubtless aware, the purpose of the Local Government Act 1986, Section 2a (better known as Section 28) is to ensure that local authorities would not “promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality or promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”. In Scotland, Wendy Alexander, the Scottish Communities Minister, was reported in the *Times* newspaper of 30th October 1999 as saying that Section 28 was flawed and driven by discrimination and that regulations banning councils from promoting homosexuality would be repealed in Scotland. Subsequent discussion of this issue showed that repeal of Section 28 enjoyed overwhelming support in the Scottish Parliament. The voting for repeal was 88 against 18 with three abstentions. One of the MSPs who opposed the move to repeal the Section was the Conservative Spokesman for Home Affairs, Mr. Phil Gallie, who wisely said: “We do not believe that there is any place for the promotion of sex education in schools, never mind homosexuality.” With these sentiments we heartily concur.

It is apparent that homosexual activist groups have influence and power out of all proportion to their numerical strength. Stonewall UK, the leading activist homosexual rights group in Britain, published its manifesto before the last general election. Among the stated aims of the group are the following:

- (1) The repeal of Section 28, equal recognition for young gays and lesbians and an end to homophobic bullying.
- (2) Equal treatment, under the criminal law, for homosexuals and the repeal of the law against “gross indecency”.
- (3) Equal recognition and respect for same-sex partners and for lesbian and gay parents and their children.

It is abundantly plain that the above aims – quite unjustifiably – imply equality between homosexual relationships and faithful scriptural marriage relationships and sadly the majority of members of the Scottish Parliament would appear to endorse this view.

In the house of Lords, Baroness Young, supported by Lady Saltoun of Abernethy, have been active in leading the effort of the House of Lords to retain Section 28 and are to be applauded for their unambiguous stand on the issue. Other members of the Upper House, including Lord Brightman, Lord

Quick, Lord Moran and Lord Northbourne, have tabled a separate amendment asking for a ban on the promotion of homosexuality in schools.

In an attempt to justify the campaign for the repeal of Section 28, Angela Mason, who is Executive Director of Stonewall UK (and who was awarded the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for her services to homosexual rights!), has castigated Section 28 as "a damaging piece of legislation" and calls on all supporters of the aims of the organisation to "end the years of bigotry and prejudice that Section 28 has helped to sustain".

The year that has passed has shown that homosexual groups in this country constitute a force to be reckoned with. Free Presbyterians and all Christians dare not ignore their influence and power but should prayerfully seek that God in His mercy would turn the tide of immorality and godlessness which seems to prevail.

"But yet the Lord, that is on high,
Is more of might by far
Than noise of many waters is,
Or great sea-billows are."

Psalm 93:4

Although the Scottish Parliament by a significant majority favours repeal of Section 28 there appears to be an encouraging and growing degree of opposition to repeal among parents and probably teachers. The "Keep the Clause" campaign, which has been offered considerable financial backing by businessman Brian Souter, seems to be gathering a significant level of support. Among the religious periodicals opposing the proposals on biblical grounds are *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, *The English Churchman*, *Christian Voice*, *The Reformer*, *The Christian Digest* and *The Advocate*, to name but a few.

It is difficult to obtain reliable information of the attitude of the National Church to this question but a statement from the Press Office of the Church of Scotland on 19th January 2000, says: "The Church of Scotland's Education Committee . . . supports repeal of Section 2a of The Local Government Act 1986 ("Clause 28") and would endorse the arguments for repeal set out in the Scottish Executive's Standards of Public Life consultation document".

On the same date a Press Release issued through the Church of Scotland Media Relations Office states: "The Scottish Order of Christian Unity welcomes the growing call from Christian leaders in Scotland to the Scottish Parliament to retain Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1986. The Scottish Order . . . has as one of its stated objects the upholding of Christian values, especially in the fields of family life, education and health services. In consequence it feels that any move that would encourage the promotion of homosexuality in Scotland's schools would threaten the institution of marriage and damage the stability and structure of family life."

As far as is known it appears to be the intention of the Scottish Parliament to introduce a Bill which will contain a section on repeal in the very near future.

The Committee has written to the Scottish Executive, the First Minister, Mr. Donald Dewar, Sir David Steel, and others, protesting most strongly against the proposal to repeal Section 28 stating that our protest was based primarily on our unqualified commitment to the teaching of Holy Scripture, the final court of appeal in all matters of faith and conduct, which categorises homosexuality (sodomy) as sinful in the sight of God.

The Committee hopes that parents and others have responded positively to the notice in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* urging them to make their opposition known to their MSPs.

It is clear that the majority of members of the House of Commons favour repeal of the Clause although the proposal has met with strong opposition in the House of Lords. Baroness Young has ably contended for retention of Section 28 and has been, we believe, the leader in the House of Lords case for retention. A detailed account of the deliberations in the Westminster Parliament is not possible in a report of this nature because of constraints of space.

Lowering the Age of Consent

At present the Age of Consent for homosexual relations between consenting adults is 18, but recently an amendment to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to reduce the age of consent to 16 was passed by the House of Commons but opposed by a significant majority in the House of Lords. Another attempt to lower the age of consent made under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill (SO[A]B) was rejected by the Upper House but, as was feared by many, the House of Commons, on 10th February 2000, invoked the Parliament Act which, in the event of disagreement between the two Houses, provides that the will of the elected body, viz. the House of Commons shall prevail. Thus legislation to lower the age of consent for male sexual homosexuality from 18 to 16 has been approved.

In Scotland the Scottish Parliament is likely to attempt to pass a Bill to lower the age of consent to 16 probably this year according to predictions.

The anxiety shown by the UK government to yield to the demands of sodomists reflects the modern tendency to advocate a lifestyle utterly divorced from that enjoined in the Word of God. In spite of the exposure of the horrendous extent of Child Abuse in recent times the so-called gay rights groups and other organisations such as Amnesty International are exerting pressure, apparently successfully, to bring in legislation for lowering the age of consent to 16. If the government is successful in bringing in such legislation it is almost certain that attempts will be made by the homosexual rights movement to lower the age of consent still further.

Thankfully a few voices are heard advocating the way of life taught in the Word of God. One writer to the *English Churchman* says: "The Holy Scriptures not only condemn homosexual conduct but also all uncleanness. The Apostle states: 'No whoremonger, nor unclean person, . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God . . . for because of these things

the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience' (Ephesians 5:3-6). These words of Paul are reinforced by Peter (2 Peter 2:10), by James (1:21) and by Jude (7, 8). There is surely an urgent need for our young people to be warned to heed the exhortation of Peter, "... abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11) and that of Paul, "... flee youthful lusts . . ." (2 Timothy 2:22), not forgetting our children who, in modern so-called sex education, are all too often taught to regard unclean habits as 'normal'."

Marriage and Divorce

The modern tendency to undermine the divine institution of marriage shows no signs of abating and, according to official statistics, marriage breakdown is approaching the 50% level and the number of couples co-habiting is rapidly increasing indicating a growing disrespect for the sanctity of the marriage relationship.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, stated in a consultation document entitled *Supporting Families*, "marriage is still the surest foundation for raising children . . . we want to strengthen the institution of marriage to help more marriages succeed", but one writer in a Christian publication observes that "Straw is so ideologically permissive that he cannot see that sexual restraint among the young . . . is impossible without strong government support for the institution of marriage". While we are not in a position to confirm or deny the allegation of ideological permissiveness, yet there is no evidence that Straw bases his support for the ordinance of marriage on the Christian view of the sanctity of the divine ordinance.

The United Kingdom has the highest divorce rate in Europe and it is almost certain that, if provision is made in the law for No-Fault Divorce, the divorce rate will increase rapidly. In the providence of God, Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor has had to announce that the government will not bring in No-Fault Divorce in the year 2000. Christian people ought to pray earnestly that this proposed further erosion of the principle of the sanctity of the marriage ordinance will never become law.

The Scottish Parliament has put forward several proposals for the reform of the divorce laws. These are:

- (1) To leave the law as it is. The present grounds for divorce in Scotland are adultery, unacceptable behaviour, desertion and non-cohabitation.
- (2) To adopt the proposals of the Scottish Law Commission.
- (3) To adopt No-Fault Divorce.

Among the proposals of the Scottish Law Commissions are some which, if adopted, would be welcomed by homosexual activist groups who are pressing for legalisation of same sex marriages. Those who are in touch with Scottish Executive thinking on the divorce question are of the opinion that the Scottish Law Commission proposals are the most likely to be adopted.

Again we would urge all the people of our Church and all who hold dear the Biblical view of marriage to write to their MSPs to appraise them of their abhorrence of the trends in our national life with regard to the divine ordinance of marriage.

Abortion

It is not too much to say that the nefarious Abortion Act of 1967 has led, as many feared it would, to what is tantamount to abortion on demand. The amendment to the 1990 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act not only allowed abortions up to 24 weeks but also allowed “certain exceptions with no upper time limit” – in effect making abortions legal up to the time of birth.

The abortion statistics available from the Office for National Statistics, 1999, and the Abortion Statistics Scotland, January 2000, are heart-rending and indicative of the alarming moral landslide taking place in the United Kingdom. The abortion rate in England and Wales increased from 13.2 per 1,000 women between the ages of 14 and 49 in 1997 to 13.7 per 1,000 in 1998. Figures for Scotland show a similar trend – 11.1 per 1000 women in 1997 and 11.4 in 1998. The total number of abortions in England and Wales for 1998 reached the staggering total of 187,402. Up to 1997 from 1968 the total number of abortions carried out in England and Wales was well in excess of 4 million. In Scotland the total for 1998 was 12,424. A very small percentage of abortions between 1968 and 1995 – 0.003% in England and Wales and 0.007% in Scotland – were carried out to save the life of the pregnant women. In the face of these statistics can it be denied that, in the majority of cases, abortion constitutes a breach of the sixth commandment? Apparently the commonest reason given (91%) to justify having an abortion is “risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the woman”. It has been observed this can cover any psychological pressure which the woman may claim to be suffering from.

The slaughter of four million unborn children provides eloquent witness to the moral decadence which prevails in our time.

Child Abuse

All rightminded people have doubtless been shocked by the recent revelations in the national media of the extent and nature of child abuse in the United Kingdom. The exposure of widespread abuse of children in residential homes following the investigations of the Waterhouse tribunal, although confined to North Wales, is indicative of what is taking place in other parts of the United Kingdom. The tribunal, headed by Sir Ronald Waterhouse, Q.C., a former High Court Judge, heard evidence from 264 witnesses and studied 12,000 documents, according to a report in the *Times* of February, 2000. Although earlier investigations had indicated widespread abuse of children in care, Clwyd Council had refused to publish its report because it feared litigation. The Waterhouse Tribunal was appointed in 1996 by Mr. William Hague, the then Secretary of State for Wales. Although Sir Ronald Waterhouse had

finished his inquiry in 1998 he was unable to publish his report, *Lost in Care*, until 1999 because of the volume of evidence which had to be sifted through.

The investigations discovered that a “paedophile ring” existed which subjected teenage boys in care to sexual abuse. Some of the victims of sexual abuse brutality died after testifying to police in the early nineties.

The situation is serious indeed and, just as many primary schools in the London area have reportedly received a booklet informing teachers how best to persuade children to accept that homosexuality is an acceptable life style, so paedophilic literature attempting to make a case for the legalisation of paedophilic behaviour is being published and one recently published book, *Paedophilia – The Radical Case*, is available in at least one library in a major British city.

One fears that, to some extent at least, society is becoming more and more tolerant of departures from what were, until recently, accepted moral standards. Morality is regarded as merely socially conditioned. The absolute standards of morality laid down at Sinai and encapsulated in the decalogue are seldom, if ever, appealed to by those who govern us. The prevailing principle seems to be if a certain course of action makes one feel good then it is right. With the spread of AIDS and HIV we have convincing evidence of the truth of God’s Word: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians, 6:7,8).

Euthanasia

The Private Members’ Bill, entitled Medical Treatment (Prevention of Euthanasia) Bill, has brought the burning question of euthanasia into the forum of public Debate. The Bill has been presented to the House of Commons by Ann Winterton, MP, and had its second reading in January of this year. One essential feature of the Bill is to urge the government to make the deliberate termination of a patient’s life illegal. It also asks the government to legislate to prevent doctors from ending a patient’s life by withholding treatment of food and drink. So far the attitude of the government is that it cannot support the Bill because, in its view, its requirements would be difficult to put into practice. However, after debating the issues involved, the House of Commons agreed by 113 votes to 2 that the Bill should have a second reading. The British Medical Association (BMA) expressed strong opposition to the Bill. In a letter to all Members of Parliament urging them to vote against the Bill, the Chairman of the BMA, Dr. I. G. Bogle, said: “If treatment can no longer benefit the patient, then ethically, the doctor must start to discuss with the patient (where possible) whether it should be withdrawn”. One would think that the primary ethical (moral) question for the doctor and the patient is whether it is ever right for a doctor to decide to end life either by withholding treatment or administering drugs which he knows may hasten death. The Christian view derives from the biblical teaching which is directly opposed to

the humanist concept of a person having what is called “the right to die”. (Genesis 1:26,27; Exodus 20:13; 23:7).

In Holland, Euthanasia has been legally sanctioned since 1990. A government Committee appointed to research the position in the Netherlands in regard to the practice of euthanasia found that, in 1990, euthanasia was carried out in approximately 3,000 cases and that in over 1,000 cases the euthanasia was not voluntary. As far as can be ascertained the outcome of these findings was that the Dutch government made available funds to establish a hospice movement to make palliative care more available. But as has been pointed out, it is almost impossible to imagine the hospice movement, where the emphasis should be on palliative care, being successful when euthanasia is also legal.

The fact that a second reading for Ann Winterton’s Bill was so strongly supported encourages us to hope that her Bill will be successful and that euthanasia will not be legalised in the UK.

Genetic Engineering

In a previous report of the Religion and Morals Committee, in which the above topic was briefly referred to, it was commented that moral relativism seemed to dominate the thinking of the scientific community and that, therefore, there was reason to be apprehensive that the new technology would be misapplied. In the five years since that report was written nothing has happened to diminish our apprehension.

At a seminar on Genetic Engineering held in an Oxford College towards the end of 1998, Dr. Brian Johnson, a well known scientist in the field, said: “Most of us will . . . admit to a deep-seated unease about genetic engineering, probably based on an intrinsic fear of the unknown, and, to some extent the unknowable. The choices regulators and producers make should be those which give real benefit to society, but the history of scientific and technological discovery is peppered with examples of the opposite. . . . Often, after a number of years, many problems arise. These can be moral or practical, environmental or medical. Slowly and painfully, after decades of campaigning . . . an ethical code governing the use of the discovery may emerge.” Dr. Johnson also pointed out the dangers of an “anything goes” approach. He said that not only the lack of proper regulation caused the economic social and personal devastation of the BSE and salmonella crises but also the lack of ethical considerations about the wisdom of herbivores being fed their own proteins and giving chickens food known to be contaminated.

Genetic engineering and gene therapy research are complex and inherently difficult to control. While, theoretically, the latter may yield great therapeutic benefits to mankind, responsible scientists do not expect that gene therapy will work for some decades to come.

The cloning of sheep has been given great media coverage and it is speculated but not confirmed that cloning of a human has succeeded. Apart from the moral questions which cloning raises the other dangers of human

cloning are legion. It would be possible for unscrupulous governments to “create” individuals with characteristics which would suit their political ends.

It is cause for thankfulness that there is a growing opposition to, for example, human cloning among the public and also an increasing tendency among scientists to favour rigorous monitoring of the direction of genetic research.

An opinion poll carried out in the United States of America found that 74% believed that human cloning was contrary to the will of God and a total of almost 90% believed that it was morally unacceptable. A writer in the *British Bulletin of Medical Ethics* expressed the view that cloning research may be “sowing the seeds of our destruction”.

There are many other areas of concern in our national life which have not been referred to in this report because of space. Among these are the alarming increase in Substance Abuse deaths, the vast majority of which are males under 45 years of age. A large percentage of crimes committed in the UK are drugs related. Violence in the home is an area of deep concern.

In the body of the report mention was made of the difficulty of obtaining a clear indication of the attitude of the National Church as a whole to the clamour for repeal of Section 28(2a) of the Local Government Act 1986. Be that as it may, the Glasgow Presbytery, the largest Presbytery of the Church of Scotland, has declared its strong support for retaining Section 28.

It was reported in the press that of 320 members who attended a meeting of the Presbytery only 22 favoured repeal of the Section. This is certainly heartening information and is, as the Clerk of Presbytery, Rev. Alex Cunningham, said, a very substantial vote in favour of retaining Section 28.

The moral decadence which is a conspicuous feature of our national life is hardly surprising when there is such clear evidence that the authority and teaching of the Word of God and the sanctions of the divine law have, to a large extent, been abandoned. A report in the 27th of December 1999 edition of the *Daily Telegraph* which was based on the response to a questionnaire, sent to over 1,000 people, and to which only 426 replied, provides some evidence of the extent of unbelief. For example, 22% did not believe that the decalogue is applicable today and only approximately 17% believed that Adam and Eve ever existed. Responses to other questions provide clear evidence of unbelief even among clerics. Of the 402 who did not believe that God created the world in six days were a large number of bishops and ministers (the questionnaire was confined to England).

What need there is for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a return to the preaching of the glorious Gospel of Christ. God in His Word encourages His believing people to pray for a time when He “shall declare the name of the Lord in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord” (Psalm 102:21-22).

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

AT LAST YEAR'S MEETING of the Synod some members expressed a wish for the Committee to give a more detailed account of protests made. While we are happy to comply with the suggestion, members of Synod will know that the account will necessarily be brief and selective.

1. While the Synod was actually sitting, members of the Committee were considering a protest against the decision to count votes cast in the election of MEPs throughout Scotland on Sabbath, with the exception of the Western Isles and Highland Region. Copies of this letter, dated 26th May 1999, were sent to Dr. John Reid, Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. Donald Dewar, First Minister, and Mr. T. A. Aitchison as Regional Returning Officer for Scotland.

The replies from the Scottish Office and the Regional Returning Officer were unsatisfactory. Basically the Scottish Office said it was the responsibility of the Returning Officer and he for his part maintained: "I have no power to direct local returning officers when they commence their count. I have formally advised the Secretary of State on this matter and he has accepted that I have no alternative but to accept the decision made by the local Returning Officers."

The Scottish Office did say: "I should however state that no individual is forced to work at an election. Voting at the European elections did not therefore result in anyone being forced to work on Sunday. This allows people who wish to retain the day as a day of rest to do so."

2. The most common cause of letter writing was perhaps the playing of football on the Sabbath. This breaking of the Sabbath has been institutionalised by the demands of television companies who pay large sums of money for the exclusive rights to broadcast football matches on the Sabbath day, during the football season. Our understanding is that one game in Scotland is broadcast on the Lord's Day weekly. This is followed by a game played in England and then one played on the Continent, so that one TV channel boasts, "Wall to wall football every Sunday". We understand that it is now possible to see football matches on the Internet also. The high level of concern at this further intrusion on the Lord's Day is borne out by a statement by Chief Superintendent Stewart Davidson, President of the Association of the Scottish Police Superintendents, who said that the "games were turning cities into battlegrounds" and that public safety "is being sacrificed on the altar of television revenue". The Clerk wrote a letter to the Chief Executive of the Scottish Premier League protesting about Sabbath football in general. His reply states, *inter alia*: "The S.P.L. tries to take all views into consideration in what is a major part in the social life of the UK and, indeed, in other Christian countries."

Though we are not able to protest to every football club which takes part in this Sabbath breaking we do write when a forthcoming game is brought to our attention. The most recent of those was in Inverness in February when

Inverness Caledonian Thistle played a Scottish Cup tie. This event caused no small stir in the Highland capital so that newspapers from the local ones to the *Times* gave much coverage to the event. It seems that over 6,000 people crowded into the Longman Stadium and, according to newspaper reports, one minister in Inverness switched his evening service to 4 p.m. to allow his congregation to be present at the game or watch it on their TVs. A strong protest was written to the Inverness club's management but up to the present time no acknowledgement has been received.

3. 7th September 1999. A protest was sent to Waverley Excursions Ltd., Glasgow, for running pleasure cruises to and from a variety of venues along the Clyde coast. We understand that entertainments and refreshments were available to passengers and that the services were well patronised. An acknowledgement was received.

4. 7th September 1999. A protest was sent to Morrison Construction, Inverness, against Sabbath working on the new Safeway store at Inverness. This was not acknowledged.

5. A protest to the Manager of the Eastgate Centre against the Sabbath opening of the Centre was not acknowledged either.

6. On 14th September 1999 a protest was sent to the charity *Children First* for organising a Raft Race on the River Ness on the Sabbath in support of the charity. Though this race has been held since 1984, this was the first time it was held on the Lord's Day. There was no reply from the charity themselves. At the same time a letter was written to Provost Smith of Inverness who was reported in the newspapers as scheduled to present the prizes in the Raft Race. The Committee was grateful to receive a letter from Provost Smith stating that he would not be taking part in the prize-giving. Provost Smith wrote: "I have declined the invitation to attend the Raft Race and advised the organisers last week that I considered the timing of the event to be inappropriate."

7. 20th January 2000. A protest was sent to the Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon. Jack Straw, MP, regarding the changes to the 1780 Sunday Observance Act which forbade dancing on the Lord's Day on a commercial basis. This law has stood for 200 years but the present Government seems set to remove every last law that might be seen as a restriction on sinners from "enjoying" themselves. As an example of the letters the Committee sends, an extract from the above mentioned letter is given:

"The detriment to our nation from the increased opening of places of such entertainment will not be small. Is it conceivable that the problems already caused by discos and nightclubs will not be increased, that the alcohol and drugs problem will not be exacerbated, that family life will not be under further strain, that violence will not become more frequent in the home and on the street, that the stress upon the police and the system of criminal justice will not be compounded, that the rights of many people to enjoy quiet in the privacy of their own homes on the

Lord's Day will not be in hazard or that people will not be forced to work on the Lord's Day?

"Not only is it self-evident that a due proportion of time should be set apart for the worship of God, but He in His Word, by a positive, moral and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, has particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week, and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath.

"Is it not a serious mockery of the one true and living God, the Legislator and moral Governor of men, to insist on the part of His Law which legislates for the protection of our persons and possessions, while we judge the part of His Law which respects His day and worship unbearable? We refer to the Fourth Commandment: 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' This, we protest, is what this proposed legislation involves."

8. The Clerk wrote a letter to the Editor of the *Stornoway Gazette*, setting out the Church's position on public transport on the Lord's Day, as some councillors, and others in public office, were again making known their desire to have sea and air travel to the Western Isles on Sabbath. This letter was published.

9. A letter was written to Sir David Steel, the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, commending him on setting the date of the Ayr by-election on Thursday 16th March 2000. There had been a suggestion to have it on Saturday 18th March 2000, which would have meant counting the votes on Sabbath. Sir David did not approve of this, as according to a daily newspaper, "He did not wish to upset the Sabbatarian lobby".

In all some forty letters were written and their scope ranged from a letter to a Cabinet Minister and the First Minister of the Scottish Executive, to a letter to a social club in Dingwall and a *Wedding Fayre* in Tain, sponsored by a local newspaper.

As in much of the work of bearing witness to the Truth, it is not possible to think of the Committee's work in terms of success. All we can claim to have done is to seek to uphold the testimony of our Church in a small way for another year, endeavouring to do so in a God glorifying way. For this end, the Committee unanimously agreed that the Sabbath Observance and the Religion and Morals Committees keep their separate identity. Once again we

commend our work to the prayers of Synod members and all the Lord's people in our midst.

As we witness a continual departure from the Sabbath in our nation and see the moral, social and spiritual consequences in every strata of society, we cannot but feel that Sabbath keeping does not have the priority it once had in our own midst. The trifling spirit towards the things of God which is so much a sign of this degenerate age is a spirit we should seek grace to be kept from. Let us again remind ourselves of the words of the Fourth Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son nor thy daughter, thy man-servant nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. . . ." This is the standard which the God of heaven requires still and it becomes us, each one, to keep it before our minds continually in face of all opposition and in defiance of all who follow the multitude to do evil. Only the grace of God will enable us to be faithful in God's commandments and Word as individuals and as a Church. Let us resolve to seek this grace daily.

JEWISH AND FOREIGN MISSIONS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. John MacLeod

General

The Committee has, over yet another year, endeavoured to fulfil its function in dealing with matters related to our African mission work. For the most part, these matters are of a routine nature but from time to time difficulties arise and it is not always easy to determine how to meet them. In every situation we have tried to do what we believed was in accordance with the mind of the Head of the Church and most consonant to a prudent, proper use of the resources placed at our disposal. What is not at our disposal, and that which we feel the lack of most of all, is ordained missionaries. The only one able to supply that need is the Lord of the harvest and it is to Him that we endeavour to look – for the harvest truly is plenteous. The Rev. A. B. Ndebele's health gives cause for concern but we are glad to report that he is at present able to attend to his ministerial duties. The Rev. P. Mzamo continues to attend to his many and multifarious duties at Mbuma and the Rev. Z. Mazvabo, notwithstanding the handicap of failing eyesight, is similarly engaged at New Canaan in Mashonaland. The Committee would take this opportunity of placing on record its sincere sense of sorrow over the death of Mrs. Margaret MacLeod, Leverburgh, who, for many years, faithfully and self-denyingly served as a teacher at Ingwenya.

Zimbabwe

The political situation in Zimbabwe is at present somewhat unstable and the pace of inflation has caused difficulties as far as mission administration is concerned. Representatives of Oikonomos Foundation (a Dutch-based “Christian institution for the public good”, and which “finances a variety of social projects”) having attended a communion season at Mbumba expressed themselves as keen to support the secular side of mission work in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, this Committee met with them in July at a meeting held in Inverness and it was agreed, after much discussion, to accept their offer to fund projects at each of our mission stations. This, however, was done on the clear understanding that the Committee was not, at this stage, entering into any long-term relationship with Oikonomos Foundation.

The devotion to duty of our staff at Ingwenya, Mbumba, Zenka, Zvishavane and Bulawayo is exemplary and this is much appreciated by the Committee. Mr. Jake van Praag’s permit arrived at last and he arrived in Zimbabwe in October to take up his duties as assistant to Mr. J. B. Mpofu, the Transport Manager. He and his wife live at Ingwenya. Miss K. M. MacAulay retired from her teaching post after many years of service but returned to Ingwenya to act as librarian and also assist the Zimbabwean Presbyterian Committee responsible for the revision of the Ndebele and Shona Bibles. Miss MacAulay will in turn be assisted by Mr. Teus Benschop when his term as a teacher comes to an end. In December 1999 Mr. Benschop and Dr. Hak were joined in marriage and when Mr. Benschop’s employment as a teacher comes to an end, their home will be at Mbumba. Miss Marion Graham has indicated that she will be retiring this year and that she will be leaving Ingwenya in June although her official retiral date will be 30th November. From the time of her arrival in Zimbabwe in 1961, she has, over the years, served the mission well and the Committee take this opportunity of expressing its appreciation of all the work that she did and the devotion to duty which she showed. Zimbabwean Government regulations will not permit the appointment of a European. We hope and pray that the matter will be satisfactorily resolved.

At Mbumba, Dr. Hak and her staff continue to minister to the sick and at the same time, when the opportunity presents itself, to bring the minds of patients to bear on eternal realities. Miss Jessie Coote, who retired after many years of service at Mbumba Hospital first, and then at Sengera, is at the time of writing helping out at Mbumba for a six-month period.

Kenya

Following on the Synod decision to reopen Sengera, Mr. Ian MacLean, who had acted as caretaker was re-instated as Administrator, and it was decided by the Committee to re-open the Out-patient Clinic. Three of the nurses previously employed – Miss Peta van de Ridder, Miss Truus Ringelberg and Miss Celia Renes – were re-engaged with Miss van de Ridder as Sister-in-Charge. This was made possible as a result of the generosity of the Mbumba Zending who paid for all the expenses involved in the re-opening. It was necessary for

Miss Ringelberg to undergo emergency surgery in Nairobi but we are thankful to report that she has fully recovered. Mrs. Myra MacLean and the two youngest sons returned to this country in the Summer and she was safely delivered of a child in January. Throughout the year, three deputies visited Sengera for extended periods. The situation in Kenya, however, remains uncertain on account of the lack of a permanently-settled ordained missionary.

Conclusion

In a day when iniquity is abounding, with many subtle attacks being mounted by the powers of darkness, it is of paramount importance that we should, as a Church, and in the face of all difficulties, seek to maintain our witness in Zimbabwe and Kenya where doors have been opened to us. In our weakness, we are to endeavour to look to the One who commissioned His heralds to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. It is to Him that all power in heaven and in earth is given and we are very conscious of the fact that without His presence and help our labours shall be in vain. We solicit the prayers of the Lord's people among us, for the effectual prayer of the righteous, we are told, "availeth much".

"Arise O God, plead thine own cause."

REPORT FROM ZVISHAVANE

Rev. Z. V. Mazvabo

AT LAST the Year 2000 caught up with us. Many and fearful were the predictions that were made by religious and worldly people about the arrival of this millennium. Some said this would mark the end of the world and the coming of Christ, others said a darkness thicker than the darkness of Egypt would cover the whole earth. Many, therefore, approached the New Year with fear and anxiety because of what they had been told. But none of these things came to pass – instead the New Year slipped in without event. We must never forget what the Holy Spirit teaches us about the times that the Lord has set. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

However, as if to give support to the prophets of doom, and provide them with an opportunity to save their faces, things began to happen. First, there was rain – torrential rain, continual rain – such as none of us remember witnessing. All streams and rivers were flooded and they continued to swell till they overflowed their banks. The ground was saturated with water, the fields were water-logged and the clay floors of huts were so damp (and many are still so now), which made it difficult to make a fire to cook or lie down in the evening to sleep. Children were kept from going to school and herdsmen kept their

herds around the kraals because it was too dangerous to venture away from home lest one be swept away by the swift flowing streams.

Then, as if all this was not enough, came cyclone Eline, which devastated Mozambique and other parts of this country such as Manicaland, Masvingo and Beitbridge, when thousands were left homeless, without food and without clothing. The clay bricks with which our people use to build houses were wet through and through and the huts were blown down by the winds. It is a sad sight as one travels along the road to see the huts lying on the ground. It is sadder still to learn that in some cases the walls fell over the occupants of the huts, bringing them to their end, in their sleep – many of them unprepared. It is sad indeed for any person to depart this life without Christ.

Near Chiwara, a grandmother was taken away with her grandchild, while the mother of the child was allowed to escape with minor injuries. “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23).

It will be a long time before our people will be able to find money and opportunity to rebuild their homes. For just now, they will have to be content to shelter with relatives and friends and to look to charity for food and clothing. The experts in agriculture were advising that it was too late for those who have lost their crops to replant.

During this period of continual rain and winds, trees fell, sometimes over telephone or electrical wires, thus depriving the destitute of the much needed power and communication. Many accidents occurred when cars or buses were swept away and fishermen or gold-panners suddenly found themselves surrounded by water. In fact, one of the causes of the excessive floods in Mozambique are the floods in Zimbabwe.

One event which deserves a special mention is that of the shrine at the Matopos. About the end of last year, the so-called supreme rain-making shrine of the country, Njelele, was struck by lightning. The extent of the damage was not established, as the area is closed off to the public. But it is ascertained that on the 24th December at 2 p.m. that Tuesday afternoon, those who live near the shrine observed that the shrine which is situated on a mountain was gutted by a fire caused by lightning. It is said that the shrine was saved from total destruction by a big downpour which fell immediately. It is most remarkable that this shrine, which is looked upon as a god and to whom many look for protection from all danger, is not able to protect itself.

In the past, we have only had a few psalms put into metre in Shona for the praising of the Lord in public worship. We are very pleased that in that respect a good stride has been made. From about forty psalms, the psalms put into metre in Shona have now been increased to 120. We hope that with God’s help, we should be able to finish the psalms if the Lord be pleased to help us. It is not pleasing to notice that our people are ignorant, but we feel that the only way to help them is to provide them with good reading material. For now we only have the *Mother’s Catechism*, *Shorter Catechism*, some tracts and the Holy Bible. I am aware this part of the work is only new and not at all established. Many of the young people and mothers who come to church with

us do not come from Christian homes. Many are the problems that they meet as they endeavour to worship the Lord in accordance with the Word of God, especially as it differs from the other denominations around them.

The problem of AIDS is still with us and, if anything, it is escalating. Young men and women die, leaving their families. The young men or women left behind move away to new places to remarry, infecting the other partner. But the biggest problem the nation is facing now is that of AIDS orphans. There are children without parents in schools, hospitals and churches and their need of assistance is written with bold letters on their faces. This is a problem confronted everywhere. May the Lord have mercy on us.

Mr. Josiah Mashavakure, of whom mention was made before, of the congregation of Chiedza, has been having problems among his own people. It has to do with customs which Josiah thought it was not needful for him to observe, being a Christian, but which people of his tribe thought he must observe – if necessary, by force.

Last year the whole issue came to a climax when, during his absence, they beat his wife. When the Dutch deputies were here, we went to see her together, to comfort and encourage her and to have worship with her. But, to cut a long story short, Josiah decided to move away from his own people to a new place where he could be free to worship his Lord without disturbances. Miss C. MacAulay was a great assistance to this family. May the Lord, who sees in secret, bless her.

Mr. Siziba, my fellow labourer, lost his first-born son last year. It was very sad indeed, but the Lord gave them grace to receive it calmly, as coming from His hand.

We know that many prayers are offered for the work of the Gospel here. We wish to thank you all and tell you that we need your support and prayers. Our people are well, including myself. If the Lord gave us wisdom we would say with Mephibosheth: "For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?"

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT

Marion Graham, Headmistress

THE LAST YEAR of the millennium and yet how quietly for us the year seemed to slip by.

Staff

There were few changes among the school staff, though we were delighted to welcome Miss Sheena Ross at the beginning of the year and Miss Norma Maclean back in second term.

Miss C. M. MacAulay went on leave in April and returned in October in time to help organise the end of year activities of the Prize Day and the preparation and printing of the School Magazine.

Since then she has been facilitating the work of the elders in revising the Ndebele New Testament while she does the hard back-up job of putting their revisions onto computer disk.

Once Teus Benschop, and then myself, leave the school she will have to assist with the Bible Knowledge classes again. Teus changes over to Mbuma at the end of this term (April) and I hope to return to Scotland by the end of June.

We therefore really need help from overseas teachers, for Science particularly (and Bible Knowledge) as this is an area where the Government will still consider applications from outside the country.

There has also been a recent change in policy and Responsible Authorities like Missions are expected to source their own teachers. Consequently we have received a number of applications from our own former pupils and we now employ ten of these in the Secondary School. With promoted posts, however, the Ministry of Education demand major input and this causes a lot of troubles for Churches who wish their own candidate.

Finance

The cost of living continues to create a tremendous challenge as we struggle to keep fees to a level that less well off parents can afford. We also still try to subsidise the local pupils who get their meals during the day. Whenever there is the slightest excuse the Government has not been paying the grants for the Missionary teachers so that in 1998 Mr. Benschop's was not paid and in 1999 Miss Maclean's. As we use this money to subsidise fees we cannot easily do without it.

Fuel costs increased by 40% three times in 1999 and then everything else increased too! Meat, milk and bread increased by at least 100% over the year. We have tried to offset this a little by buying maize locally as there had been a good harvest, and arranging to buy cows which the boarding master, Mr. Sibando, slaughters himself.

This, however, adds considerably to the office work and is very time consuming, but it does save money.

Buildings

With such high costs we have done little in the way of maintenance, though many of the school buildings are needing this and some teachers' cottages are badly needing renovation. We did manage to complete the teachers' house from the 1998 budget. It has been made in two units and now houses four ladies very comfortably.

Because of a specific donation from Holland we went ahead and have now completed a much needed new classroom. We still have enough to pay for the walls of a second one and a local building firm has promised to give us the roof – the most costly part of the project.

The extra buildings are not for expansion but needed, firstly, because there are very few local teachers and all the younger ones wish to stay on the campus during the week. This is now a common practice, even with day schools in rural areas. Secondly, classes are at maximum numbers with forty or more in each of the four Form 1s and four Form 2s. In the older classes, to offset this, we have five Form 3s and five Form 4s, though there are no extra pupils (we could do with six) but it means we need more space.

We are still hoping to source financial assistance to replace the oldest of the girls' dorms which are very crowded and were built about fifty years ago!

Transport

Our Toyota Venture continues to be most useful as it is so economical in fuel as well as being spacious and comfortable.

The "school bus", however, which is eight years old and has given us really good service, is now costing so much to keep on the road that it is imperative to consider a replacement. Its programme for a week is really too heavy: Sabbaths – Bulawayo taking people to church; Mondays and Fridays – teachers to school and to town as we insist on no Sabbath travel (there is no good local transport system); Tuesdays and Thursdays – complete days in town doing orders, returning late loaded to the top with items for the school. Even on Wednesdays it is often in use and sometimes does an extra trip on Monday or Friday. With over 600 pupils and 500 of these borders there are lots of things needed weekly.

The teachers contribute in a small way to the fuel they use and at our next meeting of FIM (Friends of Ingwenya Mission – an organisation which has developed out of the support given by former pupils and now also involves parents) we hope to discuss ways to contribute to the cost of a new vehicle. The most recent quotation is \$1,500,000 (£25,000) – and this is not for a luxury vehicle.

Parents

During 1999 we also invited parents to come to Ingwenya for a special day of meeting teachers and discussing their children's progress. This proved so popular that in 2000 we hope to have a day for each Form rather than combining them together. In the past parents were called or requested interviews individually at school or in town and we have a committee of senior staff who deal with this. Of course, like most schools everywhere, the parents one most wants to see are the most reluctant to come!

School activities

Generally we take part in few off the campus activities, but in 1999 we were invited to send two competitors to a Speechmaking Contest in Bulawayo. Both came first in their sections and went to Harare to represent our province. There, despite being the youngest in their groups, Takura was third out of 9 and Kiitumetsi was fifth out of nine.

The 1998 O Level results again put us in the top four schools in the area, with the largest number of candidates and the highest passes, though we have a larger range of ability in pupils than the other top schools.

Visitors

With Miss C. M. MacAulay's house being demolished (now being replaced by two very attractive single units), my house was the only one available for visitors, as both what we call the Guest Houses were being used by permanent staff – one by Teus Benschop and the other by Jake and Nella van Praag who joined us during the year. Using some personal gifts we added an extra room onto their little dwelling and by keeping the thatched roof we have turned it into a charming though small traditional cottage.

The van Praags very quickly became involved in the work here. Mr. van Praag saves us a lot of money by keeping our electrical systems in repair and doing any new work and he also takes a close interest in the pupils' activities. He often helps with the preaching and we enjoy getting more English sermons, though we are thankful that Mr. Ndebele has been able to take services fairly regularly of late.

Mrs. van Praag is helping too with fund raising by baking for the pupils and also, much to the surprise of the workmen, doing painting in some of the houses!

I have been very thankful for my comfortable modern house which Miss MacAulay has been sharing and which has been enjoyed by a number of visitors during the year.

At the time of Teus Benschop and Jannette Hak's wedding, when their visitors arrived, we were very thankful that the school was closing and we were able to use the new teachers' house as well. We were also thankful for the large dining room and assembly hall, as the day of the Ingwenya feast (African custom demands a celebration at both homes) was one of fierce rain. However, both occasions were voted to be very successful!

After almost forty years this is likely to be my last report and though it seems strange and sad to retire from this place where most of my life has been spent and to leave my many African friends behind, I do feel it is right for younger folk to take over the burden of running the school. I hope those who do will continue to get the support I have been given and be able to maintain the standards and witness which was built up over the years, despite the opposition which seems to increase to the Bible and its truth.

O Level Passes 1999

122 out of 136 = 90% pass.

51 (i.e., 5 As or better).

No. of pupils with maximum result = 9 pupils got 9 As.

MBUMA MISSION REPORT

Rev. P. Mzamo

IN THE KINDNESS of the Lord, we saw another year come to an end peacefully. The work in general was not disturbed by illness or injuries among the Church office bearers and myself. The Church elders devoted themselves to the doing of their duties in Church courts and the taking of Church services in various congregations every Lord's Day, using their own transport.

I am thankful to the Giver of health and strength that I was able to be out every Lord's Day and able to conduct weekday prayer meetings, sometimes three prayer meeting a week. I was alone at Somakantana, Donsa and Nkayi communions, taking all the services from Thursday to Monday. I administered the sacrament of Baptism in several congregations. I had one minister assisting at Mbuma and Zenka communions. I also assisted at several communions in other congregations.

I attended funerals where I spoke a word on the solemnity of a soul departing from this world without the blood of Christ, a soul appearing before God without the righteousness of Christ. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

I married a number of couples. I wished them a happy and long married life. I travelled between Mbuma and Bulawayo to attend Presbytery and Field Committee meetings and communions. The cost of fuel is becoming a major problem.

Churches are now given the task of employing their own teachers, following a government guideline. In this exercise we have formed a committee composed of the three heads of our three primary schools, one elder of the Church, one parent, our mission building manager, and the writer as the representative of the responsible authority.

The enrolment of pupils in our schools is as follows:

Zenka.....	Pupils 898	Teachers 23
Mbuma	656	16
Lutsha.....	570	13
	2124	52

I take this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks to all who, once again, have by their labours, substance and prayers, shown great interest in the work in the Mission Field. "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

Zenka

The church services continued to the end of the year undisturbed, as well as weekday prayer meetings. The church building on a Thursday prayer meeting

is filled to overflowing. With the congregation enhanced by the presence of pupils and teachers there is a great opportunity to diffuse the Word of life. This year I did not often visit these congregations, except at communions.

Nkayi

The congregation continues to grow in numbers. There is a good number of young people who come to hear the Word. I hope they will continue to attend the means of grace and that the Word would be blessed to the saving of their souls. Both sacraments were administered – twice at Nkayi and once at Donsa.

Binga

We supplied the two places – Samende and Senga – once a month. Nkayi elders helped us most willingly. Here, when it is my turn to supply, I take a driver with me because the distance is long. One trip to Binga now costs \$2,500. The Binga fund is now low and if the price of fuel continues to go up and Binga funds continue to go down, it may result in a reduction of the number of our trips, which will be regrettable.

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”

MBUMA MISSION HOSPITAL REPORT

Dr. J. Benschop

THE SITUATION here at Mbuma remains basically the same as previous years. We will start with the medical report, followed by a few comments about the hospital. The statistics appear below. For a comparison see the previous report.

Medical Report

It is very difficult to interpret the figures, which show unexplainable fluctuations over the years. They do not reflect any basic changes in the quality of patient care. We are by all means trying to reduce the number of inpatients, because with our present staff and facilities we cannot cope with increased numbers. This means that many seriously ill patients with HIV for example, have been sent home for “home based care”. There is just no alternative. Before discharge the relatives are shown how to deal with them at home. It requires a lot of extra time counselling patients and their relatives. It would be nice if there was a possibility of giving them nursing care in a special centre, where there would also be an opportunity to confront them with the Gospel, and to teach them, but that is simply not feasible. At present Mr. M. Mloyi has an excellent opportunity to teach them for the time they are in the hospital. This applies also to the TB patients, who are in for about two months, and for the patients in the waiting mothers’ dormitory. All hospitals have the same

problem coping with the increasing number of patients, so as many as possible are sent home. Another problem the hospital faces, is that patients are now required in most hospitals to pay for consultation, and for each procedure, which they cannot afford. Practically this makes it difficult for us to refer patients, because they will not get the necessary attention.

The bed occupancy of 196% in 1998, which meant two patients per bed, was reduced to 147%. This was because of the above policy of sending patients home as soon as possible. The total number of admissions is low compared with the average number of inpatients every day. This is because patients are on average admitted for longer periods, because of the nature of their illness, frequently due to HIV infection.

The number of deliveries has remained high since 1997.

The still birth rate (the number of still births per 1000 total births) came down from 14.29 to 10.5 per 1,000 births.

The perinatal mortality rate (the number of still births and early neonatal deaths in the first week, per 1,000 total births) was reduced from 41.43 to 25.49 per 1,000 total births. The high figure of 1998, although much in line with the other hospitals, is difficult to explain.

The neonatal mortality rate (early plus late neonatal deaths within the first month of life) came down from 30.43 to 16.67 which was even better than 1997 when it was 19.89.

The infant mortality rate went down from 49.28 to 36.36.

The maternal mortality rate of 1.50 meant 1 maternal death in 1999.

The malnutrition rate of 14% remained more or less the same as before.

Staff

There has been no change in the staff situation. Some qualified nurses from overseas showed interest, but eventually withdrew themselves, to our great disappointment. Louise Leiper came back from leave in March, after which Margaret Macaskill went on leave in May for four months. Sinanzeni Tshalibe, one of our nurse aids, who had been a clerk with us for many years, died at the end of the year. In December the Doctor got married to Teus Benschop, (a school teacher on the mission) who hopes to come to Mbumba after finishing the first term at Ingwenya Secondary School, to help with the revision of the Ndebele and Shona Bible translations.

Communication

Communication was greatly improved with the introduction of e-mail at the beginning of the year.

Transport

A new ambulance was bought in Bulawayo, a Mazda pickup, with a four wheel drive, converted here to an ambulance. Purchasing locally saved a lot of money! No more repairs on the old ambulance are allowed, but it is still very useful for local calls.

Accommodation

Staff accommodation still needs upgrading. One staff house has been built with donor funds from the Netherlands.

Budget

Expenses are increasing. One reason is that most drugs now have to be bought privately, as the Government Medical Stores are no longer able to supply our needs.

Solar Cookers

With financial assistance from Solidamentum, a Dutch student organisation, we have started to introduce solar cookers at the hospital (for those interested). Because of the rainy season we had to stop the project temporarily, but it will be continued after the rainy season is over. This will save a lot of firewood, if the project will be successful.

Conclusion

We wish to thank all our friends for their support to the Mission, in whatever way given. Although it is difficult to cope with the ever increasing expenses, we have still been enabled to continue. Despite the difficulties we hope the work will be blessed and the Kingdom of God will be advanced in this part of the vineyard.

STATISTICS

Admissions

General	1,710
Maternity	741
T.B.	58

Discharges

General	1,576
Maternity	741
T.B.	65

Bed Occupancy

General	24,645
Maternity	3,185
T.B.	3,809

Deaths

General, including neonatal deaths	117
Maternity	1
T.B.	16

Outpatient Attendances	
New cases	17,923
Total cases	21,876
Confinements	
Live Births	660
Still Births.....	7
Neonatal Deaths (first month).....	11
Antenatal Clinic Attendances	3,946
Child Welfare Clinic Attendances	5,035
Major Operations	
General	0
Maternity, including Caesarian Sections.....	5
Minor Operations	
General	174
Maternity	172
X-Ray	
Number of patients	534
Number of films taken.....	791
Ambulance	
Number of trips (referrals only).....	133
Distance covered in kilometres	29,498
Five Major Health Problems	
<i>In the age group below 5 years:</i>	
1. Acute respiratory infection	
2. Skin disease	
3. Diarrhoea	
4. Malaria	
5. Eye disease	
<i>In the age group of 5 to 14 years:</i>	
1. Acute respiratory infection	
2. Skin disease	
3. Malaria	
4. Injuries	
5. Eye disease	

In the group of 15 years and over:

1. Acute respiratory infection
2. Sexually transmitted disease
3. Malaria
4. Injuries
5. Dental conditions

INGWENYA MISSION REPORT

Rev. A. B. Ndebele

DURING THE FIRST HALF of 1999 I had some spells of very poor health which meant I was unable to perform all my duties. However, since September or so I have been able to take services most Sabbaths and the school service and prayer meeting most weeks.

I still try to go to the smaller preaching stations around the Mission and to Bulawayo on occasions. However, I am very thankful for the faithful help of the elders, especially Mr. Nxusani at Cameron and Mr. Zikhali in Bulawayo, who preach every week.

Here at Ingwenya, Mr. van Praag, who joined us during the year, helps Mr. Manzini and Mr. Moyo when I am away or unable to be out.

Death is taking its toll among young and old and we are very often attending the funeral, or hearing of the death, of some young person connected with us.

Recently we took the funeral of an old lady, Ma Donsa, a grand-daughter of Ma Mlotshwa, who was married to King Lobengula and after his death was a member in the Ingwenya congregation. In fact, she was one of the few people buried on the Mission and Ma Donsa would have liked to be buried beside her. The school is now so big, however, that it was not possible to add to the graveyard. She was staying with her daughter in town so it was decided she would be buried there.

Until quite recently she would walk to church or if her legs were troubling her she would send a message for someone to come for her. We will miss her prayers and her faithful interest in the Gospel and the Church. Many people attended the funeral to pay their last respects to her.

Another old woman, Ma Moyo, who had attended the church here since she was young, passed away recently at her home nearby. Bit by bit those who knew the original elders and ministers here are passing away and there are very few left.

Now that our three local elders are retired from teaching they are spending quite a lot of time on the revision of the New Testament, which we hope will be of great help in the future. I am very thankful that they are able to do this.

This past year's good harvest in this area meant that quite a number from the congregations were able to contribute to the Church funds by selling some maize to the school. We hope they will be able to do the same this year.

I am thankful to the Lord that I am able to carry on up until now.

BUILDING AND TRANSPORT REPORT

Mr. J. B. Mpofu

IN OPENING I would quote from Hosea 6:1: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."

Building

We were very sorry to lose one of our young builders at Mbuma, Mandlenkosi Gagisa, after a short illness. Our School bus driver also lost two of his sons in a car accident – one passed away on the sport's field and the other later in hospital.

Miss MacAulay's house is nearly finished. We got a very good builder for the house, who is always at his work and his people are working hard and doing good work.

The only problem in our country is that there might be a long wait for material even though you have the money.

The classroom at John Tallach Secondary School is now finished and the children using it for their lessons. Mr. Benschop, a teacher at the school, got some money from his former employer in Holland and this was used to build the classroom.

We extended a small house used by Mr. van Praag and included a store room for keeping material in connection with his work.

The Ingwenya teachers' cottage is nearly complete and is being already used by the teachers.

At Zenka we have done maintenance work on water pipes, taps and toilets for a few weeks.

At Mbuma Mission we are presently doing maintenance in the hospital because of cracks and have put ring forces in to keep the walls from further cracking. The soil at Mbuma is very bad for cracks and there is a need for painting after mending.

The new Mbuma staff house is nearly finished. We got a contractor who started the work and promised to finish the house within a month, but after a few weeks the man left the work with his workforce and has never returned to finish. I have put a builder in to finish the house and hope that it will be ready soon.

In my last report for Binga church I referred to new benches and these are now in use.

The office in Bulawayo Robertson has to be extended and the verandah made as part of the office. This will be done by our builder from Ingwenya Mission.

Transport

We have latterly introduced a way of controlling our transport by giving each driver a car to use rather than him taking any car and this has proved successful. Our cars are in much better condition now.

Rev. P. Mzamo's Ford Courier was repaired and is doing well.

The Doctor's Mazda developed gear problems and has been repaired.

We were very thankful to be able to buy two new cars – both Mazdas – a new Ambulance and one for Rev. Mazvabo.

The old Landrover Ambulance is still very useful for local calls and has many other uses on the Mission. It is a very good vehicle for the bad roads at Mbuma.

The Ford Triton lorry is now old and has seen years of use. We still have it on the road and is useful for bigger orders for the hospital. They use it for the transport of hospital goods and to collect firewood for all living on the Mission to do their cooking.

Rev. A. B. Ndebele's Mazda is still running very well, as is the brown Nissan used by the manager.

The John Tallach School bus needs replacement as it is often in and out of the garage – one of the problems is that there are no spare parts in the country for repairs.

The Leyland is still doing very well and this car is used by a careful driver, a young man with good knowledge of car repairs who services the Mission cars when he is not driving.

The Toyota used by the John Tallach Secondary School staff is still in good condition. It is sometimes used by our visitors when they come to the Mission for a visit.

The car which was used by Rev. Mazvabo, the Ford Correa, is now in town and used by the office for their own needs. The green Nissan is still used for short journeys, but has a very good engine.

Rev. Mazvabo has a new car which has no problems. The Thembiso Mazda is still doing very well, but the old Combie used at Thembiso is now very old and needs replacement.

I end my report with the words we find in the First Epistle of Paul to Timothy, chapter 1, verse 15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

KENYA MISSION ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. I MacLean

“AS COLD WATERS to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” So the news from Scotland that the Synod had decided to rescind the decision of the previous year and revive the work of spreading the Gospel in Kenya was received by the people of Sengera.

At the time of writing, Revs. Neil Ross and Donald Ross have both been here as deputies for two months each and Dr. James Tallach is presently with us for six weeks. Their visits were very much appreciated and their help in re-establishing the work invaluable.

As an handmaid to the work of the Gospel the Clinic was re-opened on the 17th January 2000 but on this occasion only as an Out Patient Department. Three nurses who had been with us previously, returned: Miss Celia Renes and Miss Truus Ringelberg in October and Miss Peta van de Ridder to take up her new appointment as Matron, in December. It is hoped that the OPD, in due course, will be self-supporting.

We are indebted to our friends from Holland for meeting the setting-up costs and the day-to-day running costs of the Mission and we trust that the Great Day will reveal that their money was well invested. Bodies are being healed, of that there is no doubt, but how we long to say the same with regard to precious never-dying souls.

The desire of our people here is that a suitable Gospel minister would be raised up to oversee the work and carry on the pre-eminent work of preaching Christ crucified.

OMOREMBE HEALTH CENTRE REPORT

Sister P. van de Ridder

AFTER SOME MONTHS of busy preparation, in the kind providence of the Lord, we were enabled to re-open the Clinic at Sengera, on Monday, 17th January 2000.

Staff

European: Sisters T. Ringelberg and C. Renes returned to Sengera in October 1999, and I returned two months later in December 1999.

Kenyan: Employed are –

1. A Clerk – for registration attendances.
2. Two laboratory workers – one of whom is a laboratory technician, and the other is a trained lab assistant. Both of these work part-time with one day overlap.

3. Three untrained nurse aids with experience in dressings, injections and performing uncomplicated deliveries. They are able to work quite independently.

4. Two untrained nurse aids with less experience in nursing. They carry out their duties under supervision. (Each of these five nurse aids had been employed by the Mission before the Hospital closed.)

5. Two cleaners – both working part-time.

STATISTICS

Number of attendances and referrals over the past five weeks after re-opening:

Week No.	New Cases	Re-visits	Referrals
1	25	9	0
2	36	6	1
3	40	16	4
4	26	16	4
5	34	12	6

As we know from past experience, the medical activities fluctuated significantly by very busy and quiet spells. The busy time being the malaria seasons, usually occurring round about February-March and June-July, each lasting a few months. It does appear that we commenced our work in a quiet spell of time. However, we are aware of the fact that it is too early to predict the future progress of the work at the Clinic.

DOMINIONS AND OVERSEAS COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. Donald A. Ross

IN THE PROVIDENCE of the Most High, the past year has not been without some encouragement for the Church. That congregations of many years standing continue to worship according to the mind of Christ is cause for encouragement. Not only that, there are new gatherings of people who desire to abide by Reformation principles adhered to by our Church. The Texan group continues to express a sincere interest in these principles and desires the time when they will be fully established within the Free Presbyterian Church. The Revs. John McLeod and Roderick MacLeod have visited this group within the past year.

A small gathering of people in Singapore last year expressed a wish to be fully integrated into our Church, believing that the Free Presbyterian Church's

constitution is in line with true reformation principles. The Rev. John MacLeod visited this group in September of last year. Mr. MacLeod's favourable report about his visit appeared in the October Magazine. Rev. Edward Rayner from Grafton also visited Singapore in January of this year. He too was very impressed with the small group of believers there. The wish of the Singapore people is that they will yet become part of the Free Presbyterian Church, as it is the hope of this Committee.

The Committee is grateful to those ministers who gave up their time to visit overseas congregations. We are disappointed that no minister was able to supply New Zealand and Australia. A considerable number were approached, but were unable to supply. It is hoped that there will be a visit by one of our ministers in July of this year. With only two ministers permanently in New Zealand and Australia, it is not possible to fulfill all ministerial duties for the scattered congregations there. A great burden falls on the shoulders of Revs. Edward Rayner and Johannes van Dorp. We feel for them, and sincerely wish we could do more for the congregations there.

We understand the congregations are in good heart. However, those without pastors long for the day when they will be blessed with teachers after God's own will. May the Lord in His goodness hasten that day.

Tauranga, a new addition to the congregations of New Zealand, continues to have public worship each Sabbath. The services are truly appreciated by the few who gather. Our hope and prayer is that the congregation will go from strength to strength.

Moving to Canada there are yet a few of our Church people in Vancouver. Regular services are no longer conducted there and it is inexpressibly sad when the Gospel ceases to be preached in an area where it once was. Our Church people in Vancouver view the situation with as much grief as do the Committee. Our hope is that before long the Lord will revive this group. The Lord is able in His providence to bring prosperity from what appears to be a hopeless situation.

We are indebted to these ministers who visited the Chesley congregation, namely Revs. Keith Watkins, Roderick MacLeod and Allan MacDonald, Probationer. Good reports have been received of the continuance of the work of the Gospel in Chesley. Like our other vacant congregations the Chesley one is seeking and praying that they would have a Pastor over them. We hope the Lord in His mercy will hear our prayers and provide a suitable person.

The small group of people in Fornaci di Barga continues to meet each Sabbath and contribute to Church Funds. The Committee is indebted to Mr. Lucio Strata, London, who while on holiday in Italy conducted public worship for one Sabbath as well as a prayer meeting. He reports that the services were much appreciated by the people and of the Lord's mercy in giving a measure of liberty to speaker and hearers.

The work in Eastern Europe continues. The Ukrainians of Odessa wish to be part and parcel of the Free Presbyterian Church as much as the Texan and Singapore people. Doubtless the language barrier is a disadvantage to

communications with the Church in Scotland. However, the spirit of the Gospel, which knows no language barrier, is the same in the hearts of the people in Odessa as in the hearts of our people in Scotland. The hope is that the Free Presbyterian Church will yet flourish there and that the Lord will raise up a Pastor among them who would care for them.

Of much literature sent throughout the Ukraine there appears to be evidence that this has borne some fruit. For example, a deacon of a Baptist Congregation along with a group of people use the *Westminster Confession* for studying the Word of God. For this he is threatened with excommunication, nevertheless intends to go on studying the doctrines of the Word of God with the help of the *Confession of Faith*.

In conclusion, it is our privilege in God's providence to be a branch of the visible Church worldwide, which professes true religion. It is, however, no small matter that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has by the grace of God been kept in the way of the Word of God in doctrine, worship and practice. Since its inception our Church has expanded far beyond the borders of Scotland. That honour God has bestowed on us. Since He has honoured us to be used in this expansion it behoves us in the home Church and in all places of worship established in other lands, to abide by that pure doctrine, worship and practice handed down by the fathers of the Church. It is in so doing that we are to expect the favour of God among us. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then . . . I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Leviticus 26:3-12).

AUSTRALIAN REPORT

Rev. E. A. Rayner

AS WE CONCLUDE this century I have been now with the Grafton congregation for nearly a quarter of it. It seems only such a short time ago that I took over from the Rev. Wm. MacLean. A great difference is now seen in the congregation since those that were unmarried young men and women and children are now grown up with their own families of the same age as they were when I arrived in 1976. We pray that the rising generation will continue as the parents have. Over the years we have lost some of our choice original stalwarts. Mr. R. Kidd is yet spared as one of my two original elders. I have received much help and support from himself and Mr. Donald Shaw, the other elder who passed away some years ago. Thankfully there are other younger men who have also been raised up, as well as Ritchie Kidd's brother Ron, who are able men on the Session.

Over the years there have been new faces from outside the congregation. This year we had the addition of Mr. Matthew Winzer and his large family from Sydney. The result is that with families growing up, more room is

required in the church building at communion seasons and other special occasions. Plans are at present in council for the extension of the church to provide a larger Session Room, a new room for mothers with young children and new toilet facilities. We are hopeful that when quotes are submitted our funds will be adequate for the expenses involved.

I recently travelled the 1,100km to Rockhampton with my wife by car to take services on the Sabbath and to baptise Kate Dimity, the latest addition to the Barton family. At the evening service there were 23 in attendance, including children.

As a result of my attendance at last Synod, our Presbytery was delayed until the Wellington communion in August. This also meant the rescheduling of the Sydney communion. It was thought appropriate to hold this in September since two of the Sydney elders were to move abroad. Mr. J. van Praag and his wife left shortly afterwards for the Mission and Mr. H. Optland and family emigrated to New Zealand. Mr. Optland has taken up a teaching position in a Christian school run by the Netherlands Reformed Congregation. The congregation at Riverstone has keenly felt the removal of two elders at the same time. There remain now just two elders as the only office bearers, Mr. C. MacKenzie and Mr. J. Marshall. This emphasises the great need for a minister to labour amongst them on a permanent basis. Sydney has great potential with numbers of contacts being made from time to time and with the Lord's blessing we could expect the increase.

Mr. Tuck, our student, is still with us after circumstances prevented his removal to Scotland. His entry to theological classes has thus been delayed. This has been a great trial to him but his strong desire is to pursue studies in preparation for theological classes.

There is a great need for the continued faithful witness of our Church into the next century, especially in Australia, as some Reformed Churches are yielding to pressures which compromise the truth. This is especially seen in the area of Bible versions. There are those who question such a direction and make enquiries to us. What a need there is to hold fast the form of sound words in a day of declension. Yet the Lord is constantly raising up a continued witness in the worst times according to the promise that when iniquity comes in like a flood He will raise up a witness against it. The purpose of God will be accomplished and the time will arrive when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.

NEW ZEALAND REPORT

Rev. J. A. T. van Dorp

BOTH THE GISBORNE and the Auckland congregations had the usual communion seasons during 1999, two communions in each congregation. Wellington had one communion season, on this occasion with the assistance of

Rev. E. A. Rayner. This developed through an adjustment of the Presbytery venue for our second Presbytery meeting, which had to be held in Wellington as Mr. Rayner was overseas for a number of weeks.

There were four baptisms during the year, two in Gisborne, one in Auckland and one in Wellington.

The ecumenical scene continues its Romeward trend as in other parts of the world. The events around Reformation Day seemed to be particularly well orchestrated to give the Roman Church maximum publicity. I understand that Reformation Day is observed on the 31st October when Churches in continental Europe often conduct services to remember the occasion. This year that event occurred on a Sabbath. Here in Gisborne on Sabbath evening, 31st October 1999, there was an ecumenical service in St. Mary's Roman Catholic church which was attended by ministers and members from various Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic congregation under the chairmanship of the Roman priest, while the Methodist minister led the service. The following day a radio news item announced the signing of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic agreement on the doctrine of justification which agreement was reached after 32 years of deliberation between theologians from both Churches.

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, besides having an ecumenical direction, also has a very liberal dimension. This is evident in the continued homosexual debate that continues to foment strife in their General Assemblies without any conclusive decision emerging. In the absence of any clear condemnation of homosexual and lesbian conduct, the Manurewa St. Andrew's congregation has distanced itself from the General Assembly decision not to condemn homosexuality without, however, clearly separating from the Presbyterian Church.

The writings and lecturing of Professor Lloyd Geering, one-time Principal of Knox College of the Presbyterian Church, continue to confuse and mislead our society with unscriptural views. Now officially retired, he remains a member in good standing of the Presbyterian Church. He visited Gisborne to hold a seminar and to launch his new book, *The World to Come: From Christian Past to Global Future*. In his lecture he expressed the fear of something very serious happening, namely according to his unbelieving philosophy, "not the end of the millennium but the end of the Christian era".

There were no deputies during the past year but it is hoped that in the year 2000 one of the brethren from Scotland may be able to visit these parts again.

EASTERN EUROPE MISSION REPORT

Rev. Donald A. Ross

THE WORK connected with Eastern Europe continues as in previous years. It is cause for thankfulness that the Most High sees fit that the work should continue, especially when there are doors closing in some parts of Eastern

Europe. In Belorussia it is well nigh impossible to do any kind of mission work. There are rumblings from other parts, which suggest strong disapproval of the setting up of Churches other than those already established. We have already reported similar difficulties in connection with our mission work in the Ukraine. Thankfully we are still permitted in a measure to carry on the work of the Gospel in various parts of Eastern Europe.

We encountered a problem in connection with the delivery of 12,000 Ukrainian Bibles. These Bibles are the Kulish Version, based on the Received Text. The Bibles came to Odessa on the 2nd December 1998. They were, however, denied entry by the Customs from the Ukraine, at considerable cost to the Trinitarian Bible Society. Thereafter they were stored for a short time in Holland and it was only after extensive work by the Trinitarian Bible Society, and with the assistance of the Hungarian Reformed Church, that the Bibles eventually reached Odessa. From April 1999 to January 2000, Mr. Igor Zadoroshney has posted 2,289 of these throughout the Ukraine.

There are districts in the Ukraine which use the Kulish version while other districts use a modern version of the Ukrainian Bible. The response to the Kulish version is one of satisfaction, many people requesting that this Kulish version be sent. One recipient from Chernovtsy in West Ukraine, writes: "By chance I came to know that you post-free the Bible Kulish version. This is my dream during many years, in our area it is impossible to buy it. If you have this possibility to post me this Bible, do not delay, because I am old and my time is short. Thank you." Another woman was delighted to obtain this version since it is in her mother tongue. A headmaster of a school asks for a quantity of the Kulish Bibles so as to allow the students to study the Word of God in their free time.

The total amount of Ukrainian and Russian Bibles posted by Igor Zadoroshney in 1999 amounted to 2,391, as well as 2,154 New Testaments. A total of 2,154 copies of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Shorter Catechism* were also posted, along with 10,000 copies of the *Mother's Catechism*, which is in great demand. Three hundred copies of the combined *Westminster Confession of Faith*, *Larger Catechism* and the *Shorter Catechism* were also posted. Bibles and literature are sent to all that request the same.

Some letters of appreciation are received but such is the poverty and the high cost of postage that few can afford to reply. Those who continue to make contact and express an interest in studying the Word of God are sent the combined volume of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger Catechism* and the *Shorter Catechism*.

On a smaller scale there is postal distribution from the Free Presbyterian Church Office in Glasgow, some of which are: 367 Russian Bibles, 160 Russian New Testaments, 904 Russian Gospels of John, 180 Hungarian Bibles, 538 *Westminster Confessions of Faith* in Russian, 223 *Shorter Catechisms* in Russian and a large quantity of religious literature. Miss Norma Morrison does this work very efficiently. Much of this distribution is not only to the Ukraine, but Russia, Hungary and Romania, and includes a quantity of religious literature in English.

There is also some distribution of Bibles and literature when we visit Eastern Europe with humanitarian aid. There were two visits last year, one to the Children's Hospital in Odessa and the other to an orphanage in Nagydobrony. We are particularly indebted to Mr. Alastair MacRae and Mrs. Helen Fraser for help in preparing these visits, and Lochcarron Garage for servicing the truck at greatly reduced cost to the Church. We are also grateful to the various drivers who gave of their time to travel to and from Eastern Europe and many other people who helped in different ways.

Since our last report a further 5,000 copies of the *Shorter Catechism* and 5,000 of the *Mother's Catechism* have been printed in the Russian language. Ten thousand copies of the *Confession of Faith* in Hungarian, including the full scripture proofs and translated by Mr. Gyula Bagoly, are in the process of being printed. These will be distributed in Hungary, and the Hungarian speaking part of Ukraine and Romania to persons who express an interest in the Word of God. Also in the process of printing in Russian is the combined volume of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, the *Directory for the Public Worship of God*, the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government*, and the *Directory for Family Worship*.

The translation of the *Confession of Faith* in Russian was done by Mr. Vladimir Lotsmanov. We are indebted to the Reformed Christian Ministries, USA, for permission to use their translation. Mrs. Natasha Hopkins added the scripture proofs and translated all the other sections in the volume. We are deeply appreciative of all the work she has done over many months. The total cost of printing the *Confession of Faith*, etc., in Russian and Hungarian will be in the region of £12,000. The next book to be translated by Mrs. Hopkins will be *The Apostolic Church*, by Dr. Witherow.

Evidently this amount of work could not be undertaken unless money is made available. In the goodness of the Most High the hearts of some have been opened to support liberally this work. As with all work in connection with the Cause of Christ, there is only one Person able to bring about spiritual prosperity and that is the Holy Spirit. What need to be at Throne of Grace for this prosperity which He alone is able to bring about. It is encouraging when prayers are heard in public for the advancement of this work. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE

Rev. John MacLeod

General

In February 1999, the Moderator of Synod received a letter from Mr. Bernard Yong, an elder of the Covenant Grace Church, Singapore, in which he set out his Church's position with regard to doctrine and practice. This position

seemed to be much in harmony with that of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and since the letter expressed a desire “to be accepted as a part of a greater assembly in the Church of Christ”, it was brought to the attention of the Dominions and Overseas Committee. The Committee decided to draw the Synod’s attention to the letter and it was agreed that it be suggested to that Court that Church deputies be sent to Singapore to meet this group. The Synod decided to leave the matter in the hands of the Dominions and Overseas Committee. Accordingly, on 9th June, the Committee agreed that I should visit Singapore in August.

Establishing contact

On 28th July I departed from Glasgow Airport for Amsterdam where I boarded the KLM flight for Singapore. The following day, on arrival at the airport I was met by Bernard Yong and his wife Lai Yee. They had arranged accommodation for me at a hotel located near the buildings within which the Covenant Grace Church meets for Sabbath worship services and I was taken there from the airport. We were meeting for the first time but from the outset I felt very much at ease in their company. They were to show me much kindness in the days ahead.

It is the practice of this congregation to meet for mid-week prayer meetings in the homes of members in turn and on the evening following my arrival I conducted the prayer meeting in the home of a lady called Kim Eng. Including children, there were around twenty souls gathered in that apartment. Among them were a number who had visited Scotland and even Lewis and Harris. One couple – Sim Thiam Chye and his wife Gek Eng – told me that they had experienced much kindness from a couple in South Harris who turned out to be Mr. Donald MacDonald, our missionary there, and his wife. They were on holiday and were spending the night in a caravan at Finsbay! Another couple – Victor Lee and his wife Jean – had toured the north of Scotland spending a night at Ullapool. Also present was Dr. David Chin, a communicant member in the Free Church. He and his like-minded wife – Ming Shu – had practised medicine in Edinburgh for over two years and are well known to the Rev. Hugh and Mrs. Cartwright. Here also I met for the first time Tham Wing Keong and his wife Foo Kim Leng, both of whom are leading members in the group, and a number of very pleasant young men among whom were Bernard Han, Kheng Huat and Peter Heng. Later, among the regular worshippers I was to meet a young couple, Ivan Ho and his wife Wen Yee, Dominic Ho, Paul Teo and also a number of women whose names were Sim Poh Khem, Chee Foong Yee and Nancie Koo. Others, I am sorry to say, I was not able to retain in my memory. From that first evening I felt entirely at home among them. They invited me to their homes but my visit being of short duration I was only able to visit a few of them. I was entertained in a most hospitable manner and all of them appeared keen to make my stay among them enjoyable. For this I would desire to express my gratitude to them. As the days passed by I was more and more impressed by what I saw and heard. It is plain that seekers after the truth

seek not in vain wherever under heaven their portion is allotted them. Here were men and women not only well-versed in the Scriptures but well-versed in the writings of the Puritans and Scottish divines. Boston was frequently quoted and I noted that one young man had armed himself with a copy of *Fisher's Catechism!* I soon discovered that I had not come to preach to a company who were in need of being taught the first rudiments of the faith. This is all very remarkable in an environment which is to a large extent heathen, with temples dedicated to various false deities numerous on every hand. The Singaporean authorities even facilitate heathen practices such as the burning of paper money and incense to appease spirits by providing the receptacles necessary for these purposes beside apartment blocks. These practices were a common sight.

Conducting services

On Sabbath, 1st August, I preached morning and evening to the assembled company. Since they have no building of their own, the members of Covenant Grace Church meet in the morning in a room provided by a hotel and in the evening in a college classroom. These venues are not ideal but they are meantime adequate for the purpose of worshipping God in public. About forty souls were present on the Sabbath morning, somewhat fewer at night. The average attendance would appear to be about thirty including children. The services were conducted strictly in accordance with our Church's practice and as it was already customary for them to stand when praying and to sit when singing there was no difficulty whatever. Only the Authorised Version is used and the Metrical Psalms are sung in the same manner as is done throughout our Church. The second mid-week prayer meeting was held in the home of Victor Lee and the following Sabbath the services followed the same pattern. On the following Monday (9th August 1999) there was a congregational "conference" held in the home of Wing Keong where I tried to answer certain questions which were submitted to me in writing beforehand. These included the following:

Whether it is possible to have a Church affiliation in which some differences in understanding and application of confessional standards are respected?

Whether all members of a confessional Church are required to be perfectly in accord with the received interpretation of confessional standards, or is this necessary only for office holders?

Whether there is any clear scriptural support for an ecclesiastical requirement for celebrating the Lord's Supper over 4 days, and once or twice in a year?

In providing answers I have to acknowledge the help given by the Rev. K. M. Watkins with whom I was in contact by e-mail.

Agreement/Disagreement re doctrine and practice

The congregation is largely composed of young families brought together as a result of being of one mind in regard to the foundation doctrines of the Christian Faith as defined in the Westminster Standards. They all profess to believe the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God and the supreme and only rule to direct us in regard to doctrine and practice. The elder, Mr. Bernard Yong, and, I would think, the majority in Covenant Grace Church would appear to be very much of one mind with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland as far as doctrine and practice is concerned. They are anxious to learn and in my informal meetings with them I spent a considerable portion of the time answering questions and clarifying the Church's position on a variety of matters. It is in matters related to practice that most differences came to the surface. Some found it hard to accept that the taking of public transport on Sabbath to attend the public worship of God was forbidden by the Fourth Commandment and one or two appealed to the views of John Bunyan who, sadly, seems to have been of the view that the Sabbath was not a creation ordinance. Even obtaining Government permission to purchase a car is very expensive in Singapore and few are able to afford one. The answer to the problem may be the purchase of a mini-bus. Booklets obtainable at our Glasgow bookshop were very helpful when discussion centred on the propriety of women having their heads covered when present in the public worship of God and the impropriety of women wearing men's garments. There was also some difference of views on the Establishment Principle and in this context American influence seemed to be detectable. When it came to discussing eschatology, the post millennial view did not seem to be well known among them, but I presented it to the best of my ability and on arrival home I sent out to them several copies of the Westminster Standard booklet on the millennium, which not only sets forth the views of Jonathan Edwards, but also in succinct form the views of other divines as well.

The future?

It would be most regrettable if we as a Church did not give all possible encouragement to this group in Singapore when, in the Lord's wonderful providence, they have been led to seek affiliation with us. It is my firm belief that a door is opening for the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Singapore and we should make every endeavour to establish a congregation there.

Conclusion

On 12th August I arrived home safely. I have reason to be thankful to the Most High for His care and keeping of me. The writer is grateful to the Committee for giving him the opportunity of visiting Singapore. It was good for me, I felt, to be there. It is always encouraging to meet young people who appear to have a genuine interest in the things pertaining to "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" and in Singapore I believe that I met a choice number of them.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO SINGAPORE

Rev. E. A. Rayner

MY DEPARTURE on Thursday, 30th December, from Sydney, was a journey that took about eight hours to Singapore. Our flight was diverted for half an hour owing to severe turbulence over the tropics in Northern Australia and Indonesia. Thankfully I arrived safely and I was met by the elder of the Covenant Grace Church, Bernard Yong, and his like minded friend Tham Wing Keong. They took me to the hotel that had been arranged for my accommodation located near the places used for public worship. As we sat around a cup of coffee on that Thursday evening it was very clear that these two men were of one mind in their whole-hearted desire to have closer connections with the Free Presbyterian Church. Mr. Yong had recently visited Scotland when he was able to attend the Glasgow communion and to gain a first-hand experience of the way our communions are held and the benefits of such gatherings. Throughout my stay I was most hospitably entertained by these two men and their families which made my stay very pleasant and, I trust, profitable as we discussed various issues and the needs of the congregation for its future direction.

Since Mr. MacLeod's report, (November 1999 magazine) the Friday night prayer meeting is no longer held in various homes of the congregation but has been relocated to the Bible House where a lecture room is booked. This is the same building where the Sabbath evening services are located. The Sabbath services were attended by 20 or so people. One couple was married while I was there, Mr. Dominic Ho and his wife Emily. They were away for the second Sabbath for their honeymoon in Tasmania. There are a number of keen young men who seem spiritually exercised, knowledgeable of the Reformed Faith and appear to wholeheartedly support the direction their elder is recommending. There are others who are perhaps not openly committing themselves at this stage. I remember that when I was first in contact with our Church and was persuaded of the Reformed position there were many issues which engaged my research and it took time and teaching to appreciate the scriptural position of the Church in areas such as Church Government, Baptism and Eschatology. This is no doubt the case with others as well.

Some of the congregation have already decided to take another direction and before I arrived they had ceased to attend and have resigned as members of the congregation. Dr. David Chin, mentioned in the previous report, could not see that forbidding public transport on the Sabbath Day was necessary. It should be pointed out that the congregation has now purchased a mini-bus to bring those who do not have vehicles and wish to attend public worship on the Lord's Day. Another family seems to have had a problem with the Establishment Principle and has also ceased membership. I took material regarding various issues including an excellent treatise by Mr. Matthew Winzer, one of the Grafton congregation, on the subject just mentioned. I also included several references to practical issues including a portion from the

writings of Rev. W. MacIntyre, mid 19th century Presbyterian minister of N.S.W., who wrote against some ministers who had taken public transport on the Lord's Day to attend public worship because of unforeseen circumstances. Such articles on this and other subjects were deliberately chosen to show that these things are not matters that are specifically Free Presbyterian but were held in better days by the Church at large no matter what cultural background. Some are inclined to identify various scriptural practices as part of a Free Presbyterian or Scottish culture rather than something the Bible teaches and therefore belongs to a Christian culture that identifies the Lord's professing people as citizens of Christ's kingdom.

Since there remains a core of the congregation who are ready to learn and are of one mind with the Free Presbyterian Church's position it seems to me that it is essential for their encouragement that deputies be sent as often as possible over what appears to be a transitional period so that the remaining members of the congregation are grounded, settled and strengthened.

I was also kindly entertained by Pastor Chacko who had attended with some of his congregation a communion season in Grafton about two years ago. Since then he suffered a stroke but is now able to continue his busy schedule.

The congregation needs our prayers and practical support during this critical time as they make an approach to have closer links with our denomination. My visit soon passed and I was entertained at the airport before my departure by my now two friends, Mr. Bernard Yong and Mr. Tham Wing Keong. Two other younger men also kindly joined with us, Paul Teo and Peter Heng, who enquired about the times of our communions expressing a desire to visit us. I trust we will have the pleasure of their company in the future as well as some others.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO KENYA

Rev. Neil M. Ross

THE TASK allotted me, in being sent to Kenya last August for two and a half months, was to take steps to have our mission work at Sengera resumed. This was the result of the Synod deciding to rescind the decision of the previous Synod to close the mission. The way is now reopened for us to spread the Gospel in that spiritually needy part of the highlands of south-west Kenya. The Church is greatly indebted to the Dutch society, Mbuma-Zending, and to our friends in Holland who so generously support it, for giving the considerable financial aid required for the resumption and continuation of the work.

On arriving at Nairobi I was pleased to be cordially welcomed by Mr. Ian MacLean, who had been acting as caretaker of the mission during its closure, and to whom we are indebted for his remaining there. Another warm greeting awaited me at Sengera where I was met by some Kisii old friends with whom I

became acquainted during my visit in 1995-96. Mr. MacLean then got me very comfortably and conveniently settled down in the little house next to his own.

It was a privilege and a pleasure to preach again to our Sengera congregation. Our people kept together during the closure, and continued to meet each Sabbath, the services being conducted by Mr. MacLean, who is, of course, the elder of the congregation. Each morning at 8 o'clock we had worship with the staff (those who remained to assist Mr. MacLean in caring for the compound). Every Sabbath the congregation of about 180 met in the church, some distance down the hill from the compound, for the service at 10.30 a.m. The afternoon service in the rondavel in the compound was usually attended by about 100 people. The morning service was preceded by the adult catechism class conducted by myself, and the afternoon service was followed by the Sabbath school conducted by Mr. MacLean with the help of others. I noted a significant increase in the religious knowledge of the people since my last visit, and a marked improvement in the singing of the Psalms. In the midst of all the spiritual darkness in the area, compounded by the prevalence of the errors of Roman Catholicism and Seventh Day Adventism, it is encouraging to see the candlestick of the Gospel shining there. May the Lord gather many of the people to be among those of whom Scripture says, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord".

Mr. MacLean, as the re-appointed Mission Administrator, and myself as Mission Superintendent *pro-tem*, worked together for the reopening of the mission. Having revived the Kenyan Field Committee, we proceeded with the main task: that of completing the Out Patients' Clinic (OPC), and its surroundings. Because our Church has decided to resume the work to a lesser extent than formerly, and has closed down the hospital, the OPC is formed from part of the disused hospital plus the hospital basement water tank. The OPC consists of examination rooms, treatment rooms, waiting room, reception area, office for sister-in-charge, clerk's office, laboratory, dispensary, and certain other rooms. It will provide a most valuable service for the people, who are very appreciative of our efforts to help them. I drew a plan for the new layout for the public part of the compound, and wrote a schedule of the work to be done to the clinic. Mr. MacLean co-ordinated and implemented the work with the help of the mission workmen and others. It was most gratifying to see how well the work went on under his supervision and that it was approaching completion by the time I left.

Mr. MacLean also had to visit the immigration and other authorities in Nairobi to finalise the arrangements for the entry of nursing sisters, Peta van de Ridder, Truus Ringelberg and Celia Renes into the country. I regretted not being able to wait until they arrived. As well as attending to administration matters when Mr. MacLean was away on business, I took the opportunity to review and re-organise the whole office filing system. We also took measures to improve the security of the compound.

Because the existing church below the compound, which is used by the primary school during the week, is inconveniently located and requires much

work to be done to complete it, the decision was taken to convert another part of the disused hospital into a church. The result will be a building that will be less expensive, as well as bright and clean, with better acoustics, and more conveniently located, being in the heart of the compound and close beside Sengera village. The old church will continue to be used by the school.

I acknowledge the Lord's great kindness in preserving me in all my travels, and undertaking for me in my various duties at Sengera, especially in my endeavours to set the truth before the people. I thank the Church for giving me the opportunity to assist the mission, Mr. MacLean for his valuable help and kindness, my presbytery for releasing me, and the elders of my congregation and others for conducting the services in my congregation during my absence. It was with great sorrow that I learned, halfway through my stay there, that our dear friend and faithful elder, Mr. Alasdair Gillies, passed away.

In conclusion, I emphasise the great need of our Mission in Kenya – that the Lord of the harvest would be pleased to send a minister of the Gospel to live and work among the people and preach and teach “the word of the truth of the gospel”. We pray that He will direct one of our ministers to Sengera. More needful still is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the gospel to be “the power of God unto salvation” to the people.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO KENYA

Rev. Donald A. Ross

HAVING ARRIVED SAFELY at Nairobi Airport on Friday, 29th October 1999, I was met by the Administrator of the Mission, Mr. Ian Maclean, and the two nurses who had arrived a few days before me, Misses Truus Ringelberg and Celia Renes. We stayed that night in Nairobi with the intention of leaving for Sengera next day. On that day our vehicle broke down, and while Mr. Ian MacLean stayed in Nairobi to see to the repair of the vehicle the nurses and myself hired a car to return to Sengera before the Sabbath. We arrived late on the Saturday night.

On the Sabbath I preached to a congregation of over 200 in the morning and around 100 at the afternoon service. The morning service was held in the church building situated outside the mission compound. In the evening the service was held within the mission compound, in the rondavel which was packed tight with about 100 people.

Each Sabbath service was well attended, but the attendance at the morning service, after a few weeks, fell away to about 150 on average. The services in the rondavel continued to be attended with the same number of people, many of whom were children.

As well as the two Sabbath services, the Catechism class for adults meets regularly each Sabbath and takes place before the morning service. There is

also a Sabbath school for the children which is divided into four classes and takes place after the afternoon service. Mr. MacLean has been responsible for conducting the services and Sabbath school each Sabbath since the closure of the mission eighteen months ago. He was greatly relieved to have a break from this work when Rev. Neil Ross was sent out by the Foreign Mission Committee for ten weeks, followed by myself.

On five days of the week, morning worship is held and a short address is given from a portion of Scripture. All the mission personnel attend the morning worship which lasts for at least 30 minutes. After worship an opportunity is given to ask questions about the address or any other matter related to the Word of God. This is often a very lively exercise. At the Catechism class also there is time given for asking questions. It is evident from some of the questions asked that a number of the people have thoughts which would suggest more than an ordinary interest.

The translated Psalms which are sung at all times of worship are limited to eighteen. Translation work, under the direction of the Rev. John Goldby, was brought to a sudden halt, like the rest of the mission work, at the time of closure. At that time there were other Psalms translated but not in use and these are waiting for inclusion with the Psalms already in use.

On 15th December, the day of Humiliation and Prayer was kept on the mission. I endeavoured to bring before the people the fact of the spiritual darkness of the day we live in and the need for humiliation and prayer. I spoke from the words, "Behold your King" (John 19:14). The time of the meeting was intimated at very short notice, yet the meeting was well attended, and the people seemed to listen very attentively.

On 20th December there was a Congregational Meeting for the annual election of the Congregational Committee as required by the Kenya Government Regulations for the continued Registration of the Church. Also the financial statement was read. The money collections are very small and are down considerably from previous years. This money is entered into the Congregational Poor Fund which, along with donations from Scotland, is of considerable help to poor people.

Shortly after my arrival at Sengera, work began on the old hospital to turn part of it into a church building using approximately half of the building. This includes one small room for a vestry. The old church will continue to be used for the benefit of the local Primary School where a number of classes have met over the years for lessons. One great advantage about having the old hospital building as a new church building is that it is within the mission compound. As well as being a fully constructed building the acoustics are excellent. The old church building, which is only partially built, has many disadvantages, not least the difficulty of speaking loudly so as to be heard.

Towards the end of my stay at Sengera the new church was complete, apart from one or two small items which had to be attended to. The services were held there on my last Sabbath at Sengera. The congregation had increased considerably with about 300 present at both services and the church was nearly

filled to capacity. Seats were borrowed from the school and other places and it is hoped that new seats, which will be made by the mission carpenters, will be ready in a few months.

On my first arrival at Sengera it was readily seen that considerable work had already been done within the mission compound, to bring the clinic and its surroundings up to the necessary standard prior to opening. It was evident also that a good deal of planning by the previous deputy, Rev. N. M. Ross, and the Administrator, Mr. Ian MacLean, has resulted in an attractive entrance and landscape.

Much of the work from the time of my arrival was taken up with assisting in the completion of different projects, such as the clinic, which consists of eight rooms situated in the previous Out Patients Department. These are the reception, waiting room, two examination rooms, injection room, dressing room, a laboratory and dispensary. In addition there are a further seven rooms belonging to the former hospital. These will be used as the matron's office, sterilization room, council room, transference room, staff room, dehydration room and a storage room.

The carport is also completed and holds two cars comfortably and will be a great asset towards the maintenance of mission vehicles. There is also a small side room, off the carport, in which the mechanic locks away his tools. There have been also various improvements done to stores and other buildings.

One of the main concerns is for the safety of mission personnel and property. As well as a team of night guards there is a reliable security alarm. Security lights are installed and work in conjunction with the alarm which has been resituated and tested to ensure it is easily heard at the Police Depot and District Commissioners Camp in the village. The PABX phone system has yet to be repaired. It includes a phone in each home as a further security measure. Mission Staff are aware of the need of higher hands than human security devices to keep them; nevertheless God requires us to use all lawful means to preserve our own lives and those of others.

Both the congregation and the community have been informed about our plan for medical work in Sengera. There will be no longer a hospital, and the Free Presbyterian Church intends to concentrate on clinic work, with an ambulance to serve those who need hospitalization. They were also informed that the old hospital is now to be used as a church and that the old church will remain in use for the school children. Our plan appears to be generally acceptable, although there will always be those who can never be pleased no matter what benefits they are given. While the people are pleased to have the clinic I have no doubt that a number were especially pleased that the Word of God is to remain with them. They speak far more readily and highly of this than of the medical care which they hope to receive.

Cooper and Lybrand, Accountants, who have done the Sengera Mission accounts in the past, have said that they could not continue doing this work. An accountant, John Cumming in Kisumu, was approached and has promised to have the mission accounts ready by March, in time to present to the Foreign

Missions Committee, as well as the 1998 accounts. We hope now that the Sengera Mission accounts each year will be prepared in time for presentation to the Synod.

Misses Truus Ringelberg and Celia Renes, the two nurses who arrived on 30th October, spent their first six weeks on the Mission sorting furniture and doing a host of duties in connection with preparation for opening the clinic. To close down the hospital took some weeks but it is taking more than a few months to open the clinic. Miss Peta van de Ridder, the Matron, arrived on 15th December. She is busy, with the other nurses, preparing for opening.

The Administrator, Mr. Ian Maclean, is very busy. When there is no Mission Superintendent present, the burden of all the church services fall to him. While the mission was closed the congregation wished to continue meeting each Sabbath and to meet for the Catechism classes. Mr. MacLean felt he could not stand by, and he did what he could to keep the Sabbath services going. Were it not for this, the congregation would have eventually dispersed. We are indebted to Mr. MacLean acting as caretaker during the closure of the mission, without which the property would have been in poor shape.

It is cause for thankfulness to the Most High that the Free Presbyterian Church will hopefully be fully functioning in Sengera yet again. Since the door is opened once more, we trust that it is the Lord's gracious purpose to supply an ordained missionary for the work. The first missionaries to work among the Kisii people were from the Seventh Day Adventists and the Roman Catholic Church. The people under these false religions obviously have a very distorted view of the Christian religion. There is great need therefore that we would seek to continue preaching the Word of God among the Sengera people. Many of our present churchgoers are from SDA and RC background, and it is a pleasure to meet with some of them who seem to have come to a firm understanding of the errors of these cults and seek now to follow the teaching of the Word of God. Our hope and prayer is that they will yet be bright stars among the people of God.

“The Lord of us hath mindful been,
And He will bless us still.”

Psalm 115:12

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CANADA

Rev. J. L. Goldby

THIS VISIT took place between 15th April and 17th June 1999. We arrived in Chesley on 15th April 1999.

The communion season, which began on 22nd April, was well attended with a large number of visitors from Texas and a few from other places. The visitors were kindly entertained in the Chesley homes and by all accounts the

fellowship was mutually beneficial. I also kept the senior Sabbath School class and attended useful meetings of the Lord's Day Observance Society (Canada Committee) and the Ontario auxiliary of the Trinitarian Bible Society, Canada, where it was good to observe able men contending for the faith.

We were very warmly received, as formerly, in the homes of the Chesley people. Before our departure, it was encouraging to see some of the Texans visit for a second time in order to attend the Chesley services. During this deputation, a lively interest in the Gospel was evident among the friends in Chesley. The Lord carried us safely through our duties and journeys and it was refreshing to see the Lord's hand in this growing interest in our witness in North America. We are most grateful to the Chesley people for their hearty reception and hospitality. We wish them well in every way, but especially that they may be provided for in spiritual things. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

There is a great need of a resident Free Presbyterian minister for North America. May the Lord provide a labourer.

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO CANADA

Rev. K. M. Watkins

AT THE END OF OCTOBER 1999 I was privileged once again to travel as a Deputy of the Dominions and Overseas Committee to Canada, to supply the Chesley congregation for two Sabbaths. Rev. Allan MacDonald, Probationer on trial with the Church, had gone out the week before and had taken the services on the preceding Sabbath. As ever, my wife and I enjoyed the usual warm welcome from the Chesley friends.

On the first Sabbath after my arrival I preached in the morning and Mr. MacDonald in the evening. Early the next day, Mr. MacDonald, my wife and I, set out for Indiana in the United States, to visit the family of Albert Hembd, who has been a communicant member of the Chesley congregation for several years. After a drive of 11 hours or so, we held a service in his home that evening, and a second service on the following evening. We enjoyed our time with the Hembd family. They are in such an isolated position, but the Lord is able to keep His own and give them bread in the wilderness. On the Wednesday another early start saw us driving back to Chesley, accompanied by Mr. Hembd's eldest son, Jeshurun. After crossing the border into Canada, we encountered snow and saw a number of vehicles stranded in the deep ditches at the roadside, so we were very thankful to arrive in Chesley safely and in time to take the prayer meeting.

The following day, Thursday, was the beginning of the communion season. The usual services were shared between Mr. MacDonald and myself. The congregation was increased by the presence of almost all the people from the

Texas group, which was a great encouragement to everyone. With Miss Martina van Praag from Sydney also able to be present, the numbers at the communion services were between 60 and 70. On the Friday, the sacrament of baptism was dispensed to the youngest daughter of Carolyn Richards, a Chesley communicant member living in Texas. On the Sabbath the Lord's death was remembered in His own appointed way.

Before returning to London, I was pleased to have the opportunity once again to preach at Mount Elgin, where it was good to be among old friends. With Chesley and Texas people, some 80 souls were in attendance.

On 10th November a congregational meeting was held, in which the congregation expressed its desire that Rev. Roderick MacLeod should be approached to see if he would encourage them in proceeding with a call to become their pastor. Certainly our prayer is that the Lord would give Chesley a pastor to feed them with knowledge and understanding. Considering North America as a whole reminds us pressingly of the Saviour's words: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

REPORT OF DEPUTY TO USA

Rev. John MacLeod

THE DOMINIONS and Overseas Committee, having asked me to visit Texas as a deputy, I arrived at Houston International Airport on Thursday 24th February. There, Messrs. Ernie and Lyle Smith and some members of Ernie's family were waiting to meet me. We immediately proceeded to Santa Fe where I was to stay with the Smith families in turn. On Sabbath I took both the services at Richmond, an hour's drive from Santa Fe, where the congregation regularly meet. Those living to the north have to travel for approximately the same period of time in order to attend the services so that, in the circumstances, the location appears to be a suitable one. There were approximately thirty souls present at all the services held at Richmond. On Monday evening I held a service at Santa Fe in the Citizen's State Bank building with around twenty souls present. The following Wednesday I conducted the prayer meeting and after it I took up my residence in the home of Mr. Steven Ervin, whose wife, Jennifer, is a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Moline. The following Sabbath I again conducted the services at Richmond and then the prayer meeting on Monday evening prior to my departure the following day.

As the congregation had, for some time, cherished the hope of being received into the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and desired to take whatever steps were necessary to that end, a Petition addressed to the Synod

was drawn up. It was signed by seventeen persons aged fourteen years and upwards. The writer believes that all the signatories were of one heart and mind in regard to this matter.

In the kind providence of the Most High I arrived home safely on 10th March. In concluding this report I would express my gratitude to all those in Texas who entertained me in their homes and showed me much kindness throughout my stay among them.

TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. J. MacDonald

THE COMMITTEE is pleased to report that, at its meeting on 7th March 2000, the Zimbabwe Presbytery received Mr. Siphon Khumalo as a student studying for the ministry of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Committee decided that Mr. Khumalo requires one more "A" level pass in an academic subject before entering his Divinity Course. The Committee noted that Mr. Manford Mloyi also requires one "A" level pass before entering Divinity.

Since the last meeting of Synod, Dr. Douglas Somerset, Aberdeen, passed his Entrance to Divinity Examinations and joined the Divinity Classes. Both Dr. Somerset and Mr. David Campbell have been studying under the tutorship of Rev. Kenneth D. MacLeod, South Harris, and have done the classes in Old Testament Hebrew and Criticism, Church History and Pastoral Theology. On successful completion of these studies both students will study next year in Inverness, God willing; Dr. Somerset in his second year and Mr. Campbell in his third and final year. The Committee understands that the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery will be presenting a new recommendation to the Synod regarding Mr. Christopher Tuck, Student, Australia.

We would ask the praying people in our Church to remember these young men at a throne of Grace that they would be kept in an evil and adulterous generation, and that they would be faithful ambassadors of Christ in years to come.

The Theological Conference

The Theological Conference was held in Inverness in December and the following papers were read:

1. *Henry Cook – "Defender of the Faith"* Rev. G. G. Hutton
2. *Halyburton's "Knowing God"* Rev. H. M. Cartwright
3. *The Puritans on the Ministry*..... Rev. D. J. MacDonald
4. *The Grace of Adoption* Rev. D. MacLean
5. *John Knox – "Scotland's man of the Millennium"* Rev. D. M. Boyd

Rev. John MacLeod, Stornoway, was the Chairman.

The Committee were heartened by the continuing good attendance at the Conference and would like to thank those who prepared papers.

THEOLOGICAL TUTOR'S REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod

MR. DAVID CAMPBELL and Dr. Douglas Somerset joined the class in September 1999, to begin the first of three terms of ten weeks each. Each day has begun with translation from Hebrew; over the session we have taken passages from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, 1 Kings, Psalms and Isaiah, and the whole of the short prophecies of Haggai and Malachi. The following commentaries were consulted: Andrew Bonar on Leviticus, J. A. Alexander on Psalms and on Isaiah, and T. V. Moore on Haggai and Malachi. The students also submitted an exegesis of part of Isaiah 42. In addition, they did some revision of Hebrew grammar and studied some sections of R. B. Girdlestone's *Synonyms of the Old Testament*.

The part of Scripture studied was Genesis to Esther.

Under the general heading of Old Testament Introduction and Homiletics, we first considered the Old Testament Canon and the Apocrypha in chapters by, respectively, E. J. Young and G. D. Young in the book *Revelation and the Bible*, edited by C. F. H. Henry. Also studied were: *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* by Louis Berkhof, the Old Testament section of *Biblical Theology* by Geerhardus Vos, parts of R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament* and of Patrick Fairbairn's two volumes, *The Typology of Scripture* and *The Interpretation of Prophecy*.

In Church History we began with the Reformation in Europe, using the larger part of the book on that period by Owen Chadwick. We then studied the period from the Reformation to the Disruption in Scotland, using *The Story of the Scottish Church* by Thomas M'Crie. The final term was occupied in studying *The History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*. In addition the students were required to submit an essay on a subject related to the work of each term.

The main books used in the Pastoral Theology course were: the volume of that name by Patrick Fairbairn and *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* by W. G. T. Shedd. We then turned to the Westminster Assembly's *The Directory of Public Worship*. In particular we gave consideration to the administration of the sacraments and the form of a marriage service before going on to look at the other subjects usually covered in this part of the course, such as the inadmissibility of organs and uninspired hymns in public worship. Throughout the year, students were required each week to bring an outline of a sermon based on a prescribed text. These outlines were discussed in the class, and

I sought to give them appropriate advice. I also took the opportunity of listening to the students conducting public worship, both on the Sabbath and on weekday.

The students worked diligently and performed well in both sets of class exams. (As always, such a report has to be written before the time of the final exams.) I am grateful to them for the help they have given in taking services in the South Harris congregation and further afield. We pray that the Lord may be pleased to use them greatly in the future as faithful and able ministers of the New Testament.

WELFARE OF YOUTH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. D. A. Ross

THE WELFARE OF YOUTH Committee have again in the goodness of the Most High accomplished some work in connection with the welfare of our young people. The Conference last year was well attended and the young people took a lively part during discussion. It seemed to us that there was a seriousness among some of the young people in connection with eternal matters.

The Conference centre on that occasion was at Bonskied House, Pitlochry. As it was the first Conference at Bonskeid, we went there with a degree of concern as to the suitability of the venue, but it turned out to be a most practical and pleasant place for the conference.

It is cause for thankfulness that the young people at the conferences are well behaved. This is remarked on time and time again by the staff in the different centres which we use. We often receive expressions of gratitude from parents that the Church is able to provide an annual conference for our young people.

The Conference for this year was held in Glasgow at the Dalrymple Student Halls of Residence, from Tuesday, 11th April, at 2 p.m., to Thursday, 13th April, at 1 p.m. The Chairman was the Rev. D. A. Ross and the following papers were presented:

1. *"The Lord was with Joseph" – Some Lessons for Today* Rev. N. M. Ross
2. *The Sabbath – Whose Day is It?* Rev. K. M. Watkins
3. *The Morning Star of the Reformation – The Story of John Wycliffe* Rev. J. R. Tallach
4. *Places of Religious Interest Around Glasgow – A Historical Tour* Mr B. Jardine
5. *The Angel of the Lord – Christ's Appearances in the Old Testament* Rev. A. Smith

The young people also attended the prayer meeting in St. Jude's Church on the Wednesday evening.

The Scripture and Catechism Exercises continue and the number of children and young people taking part are much the same as in previous years. In the spiritually dark period in which we live, when the vast majority of children and young people in this and other lands know nothing of the Word of God, we are thankful that our young people are under an additional means of grace. In better days such exercises were common in our schools, but we are appalled at the attempt to banish from our schools safeguards against the evil influence of homosexuality. We should encourage our children all the more to study the Bible and the Catechism. With the blessing of God this will prove to be a powerful barrier against the evils of the age.

The Committee is most thankful to all who take part in its work in any way, whether in giving papers at the Conference, in setting and marking the Scripture and Catechism Exercises, or preparing suitable literature for the young.

The work in connection with *Line Upon Line* is now complete. The book is for sale in our Bookroom and other bookshops at a cost of £5.95. We are indebted to the Rev. Kenneth Macleod for editing this instructive book for young children.

The Church is bound, according to the Word of God, to instruct the young. We are constantly directed to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord. The work of the Welfare of Youth Committee makes a small contribution in that direction. We know that all our efforts will fall on deaf ears unless the Lord will apply His Word to their souls by His Holy Spirit. We look to the Lord to continue doing this as we labour to instruct our young people in His Word. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

BALLIFEARY RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Alistair N. Macrae

AT THE END of another year we acknowledge our indebtedness to the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect gift" for His continuing provision for all the needs of Ballifeary Residential Care Home, and wish to record our thankfulness to the Most High for His care over us – committee, staff and residents – in the past twelve months. The Matron, Miss C. Tallach, and her staff, have often gone beyond the call of duty in sometimes very difficult and trying circumstances.

We record with sorrow that during the year nine residents passed away. Mrs. J. Colquhoun on 1st February (at the age of 103 years), Mrs. S. Ross on 7th February, Mr. M. Fraser on 15th June, Miss M. MacRae on 21st June, Mrs.

M. Morrison on 3rd July, Mrs. E. MacKenzie on 7th August, Mrs. I. Balfour on 14th August, Mrs. C. A. Kinnaird on 24th August and Mr. M. R. Fraser on 15th September. We extend our sincere sympathy to all their relatives.

During the year two residents were transferred to a nursing home which was considered more suited to their needs. We have had eleven admissions, which means that the home is operating at maximum capacity. There are also four persons on the waiting list who are in urgent need of care.

This was a very busy year with alterations and improvements. Part of the basement was upgraded, the garden room was replaced, an administration block was added and a boundary wall, adjacent to the main road, had to be replaced due to damage caused by trees in the grounds. Two trees had to be removed and surgery was required on another. We are indebted to Mr. Iain MacRae for his supervision of these projects. Various pieces of equipment were purchased and the car was replaced.

The expenditure for all the above projects and purchases amounted to £109,885. The amount of £62,934, which was the outstanding loan to the Home from the Forsyth Legacy, was repaid in full. Despite the high expenditure we are pleased to report that the Home's finances remain healthy.

At its meeting in November and December, the Committee considered applications for the post of Matron, which is to become vacant. After careful consideration a suitable applicant has been chosen. However, the appointment is subject to the approval of the registration section of the Social Work Department. We expect, D.V., to be in a position to make an announcement early in the New Year.

All the inspections, announced and unannounced, carried out by the various regulatory bodies have been satisfactory.

We wish to express our thanks to Mr. John Fraser and Mr. John G. MacLeod for auditing the financial accounts. We also wish to thank the ministers and elders who come to take worship during the year and the ladies who very kindly give of their time to visit the residents.

Finally, we express our gratitude to the Matron and her staff for the diligence and compassion with which they carry out their duties and commend them, and all those in their care, to the prayers of the Lord's people.

LEVERBURGH RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

THE WORK of the Home has continued for another year, providing care for up to 14 older people who no longer feel altogether able to care for themselves. We are glad to be able to offer them this support in comfortable surroundings, where they have daily family worship and can hear the services from the

adjoining church. In the past year, however, three residents have passed away: Mr. Donald Fenton, Mr. John Paterson and Mrs. Annie MacVicar – the last after only a very few days in the Home. We extend our sympathy to their relatives. At the time of writing, we are in the unusual position of having a waiting list of five.

The increased fee income mostly reflects the fact that the Home was full for a greater proportion of time in 1999 than in 1998. In the year from April 1999 no increase in fee levels was made by the local authority. In these circumstances, we were thankful that the operating surplus for the year amounted to over £23,000. This year we are expecting a fee increase which, while it is in excess of inflation for the past year, does not cover inflation over two years. We are also conscious that general wage inflation exceeds price inflation and so increases in fee income, which broadly match general price inflation, are not sufficient in the longer term to keep the level of staff wages in line with those in other occupations.

The Committee would again express its sincere thanks to the Officer in Charge and her staff for the consistent care they are giving to the residents in the Home. The unstinted service given by the staff to the residents is indeed worthy of our sincere gratitude, and we wish them all the Lord's blessing. We again commend the work of the Home to the prayers of the Lord's people.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. G. G. Hutton

THE COMMITTEE is pleased to report a continuing interest in the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Requests for the Gospel tracts produced by our Committee remain constant, the two most popular being *The Unknown God* and *Repent and Believe*. Last year more than 7,000 left the Bookroom and this year in the first three months around 2,000 were posted overseas upon request. The latest addition to our list of tracts is entitled *The Regulative Principle: What Saith the Scripture?* It is the earnest desire of the Committee that this little pamphlet will be instrumental in drawing the attention of "Christians" to the scriptural principles governing the worship of God, which are sadly ignored by the huge majority of church attenders today.

According to the feedback on the Church's website, the Committee has reason to believe that it is serving a very useful purpose in publicising the principles of the Church to a worldwide audience. At the time of writing, more than 11,500 people have visited our website. A minister from another country writes: "Congratulations on a very user friendly site. Actually one of the best sites of this type that I have visited!" Another writes: "Just a quick note to say how impressive the FP site is. I found it excellent and full of sound content. I hope many Internet users find it to their spiritual benefit." Other messages are in the same vein.

The Committee is aware that regular users of the Internet may feel that the developments of the Church's site has been slow. Rather, the Committee has proceeded cautiously in accordance with the wishes of Synod members. Further, the development of the site has been accomplished on a shoestring budget using a few voluntary workers. Mr. Kenneth Campbell, the webmaster, uploads *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* each month to the site. More volunteers are being enlisted to produce the extra material to develop the website further. Dr. John Mitchell, Inverness, continuously scans sound books which are useful for *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and for the website. Mr. Matthew Winzer, Grafton, has scanned a few of the first volumes of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, and the definitive version of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* should soon be available on our website, D.V. The Committee will be pleased to hear from anyone who is able and willing to help; they should contact the Rev. D. M. Boyd at DrBoyd@fpchurch.org.uk.

Having established ourselves on the Internet, the Committee sees the potential for e-commerce, that is, the ability for the Church's Bookroom and Publications Committee to sell its products via the website. This will involve professional help which will utilise the funds available in the Outreach Fund. These funds were built up by the Outreach Fund Collection and the Committee considers that this Standing Collection will need to be restored at some stage. The Committee commends this aspect of the Church's ministry as our best resource for advertising and for outreach.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE REPORT

Rev. Neil M. Ross, Editor

NOT ONLY has the circulation of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* increased during the past year, but also the readership has grown in another way. The Magazine is now read by the many people, worldwide, who visit the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland website on the Internet – more than 11,000 visitors have accessed it since it was set up. The feedback we have received indicates genuine appreciation of the Church's work in giving sound material to our readers. A certain European minister who works in Africa sent this message: "Congratulations on a very user friendly site! Actually one of the best sites of this type that I have visited! I appreciate the quick downloading of articles from your magazine. . . Congratulations on your excellent biblical content!"

The article which generated most response was the editorial, "The Advance of Rome under Hume", in the August 1999 issue. The editor received many

letters and several phone calls thanking him for the article, and these outnumbered the letters and phone calls – some of them abusive – of condemnation. As a result of the wide coverage which the article received in the national press, the editor participated in two radio programmes and one television programme. He acknowledges the Lord's help in dealing with all those responses to the article, all of them, except three, from people outside our Church. The article was also republished in another Christian magazine.

Our endeavour in publishing the Magazine month by month is to maintain a thoroughly scriptural standard in this important part of the witness of our denomination. As we set before our readership our Church's views on various doctrines, spiritual experience, Christian conduct, events in church history, current affairs, and Roman Catholicism, we are conscious of our constant need of following the principle enshrined in the words of the prophet, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). We also remember the high standard achieved by previous editors, not least the founding editor, the Rev. James Sinclair. His faithful and courteous defence of the faith was exemplary.

"Our Magazine, as its name indicates, is published specially in the interests of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland," said Mr. Sinclair in the first issue. But we hope also that the many readers outside our Church are deriving benefit from it. Our Gaelic readers continue to appreciate the quarterly *Gaelic Supplement*, issued under the able editorship of the Rev. John MacLeod, to whom the Church is much indebted.

The present editor of the Magazine, having now reached the end of his five years' appointment, wishes to record the goodness of God in undertaking for him through these few onerous years of editing. He also wishes to give his heartfelt thanks to all those who assisted him, year by year, especially the Rev. K. D. Macleod for his frequent contributions to the content of the Magazine.

The task of the next editor will continue to be that of the first: to promote and defend the principles of our precious Christian heritage. Therefore we draw attention to the first editorial, in 1896, in which the editor summarised the principles which he felt called upon to emphasise then: that is, the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith as it relates to the infallibility, inspiration, and authority of the Holy Scriptures, the decrees of God, the atonement, man's total depravity, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the Gospel; the perpetual obligation upon nations, and our nation in particular, to recognise, support, and defend the Church of Christ, Presbyterian in doctrine, worship, and discipline; and the use of the Book of Psalms only as to the matter of praise in the worship of God, and singing with the human voice to the exclusion of instrumental music, as to the manner thereof.

These are principles to which we must continue to bear witness, and therefore we echo the words of the first editor: "This magazine will exist for the maintenance of these doctrines, and for bearing testimony against the erroneous tendencies of the times in which we live. . . . Above all other

things, we would ask for the prayers and sympathy of all who fear the name of the Lord, that the Magazine may, by His blessing, be an agent for spiritual good, and may prove helpful in advancing the cause of the Lord in our land and generation.”

THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S MAGAZINE REPORT

Rev. K. D. Macleod, Editor

ANOTHER YEAR has passed and twelve more issues of the magazine have passed through the hands of Synod members. These issues have followed more or less the same pattern as in previous years. They have included comment on current issues, especially as they affect today’s young people. All issues have contained accounts of conversion or other narratives which contain some degree of teaching. Other articles have given direction on practical issues; in particular, Rev. Keith Watkins’ series on the Book of Ruth. The needs of younger children are not forgotten, with material being published every month under the headings “For Junior Readers” and “For Younger Readers”. Space also continues to be made available for the Scripture and Catechism Exercises.

Once again, I would like to thank contributors to the magazine over the past year, including some new ones. It is also appreciated when people point out material from other sources which may be useful in the pages of the magazine. My thanks again to Dr. J. Mitchell for his continued willing help in checking the magazine at the final stages of editing.

The circulation of the Magazine has shown a slight increase recently. But again, the Magazines Committee found it necessary to increase the price of *The Young People’s Magazine* by 10p per issue from the beginning of 2000.

There is much need for prayer that, as the Magazines go out to various parts of the world, the material presented in them would be applied by the Most High to the readers. Only His blessing will make the work truly worthwhile.

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOKROOM COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev. K. D. Macleod

Publications

Perhaps the most significant development in the past year was the decision to reprint Volume 2 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, edited by Rev. J. S. Sinclair. Members of Synod may remember that, a number of years ago, an attempt was made to obtain sufficient subscribers to justify reprinting the

earlier volumes of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* – apart from volume 1, which was brought into print by the Church. What was not feasible then is possible now because of changes in technology which have made it possible to produce as few as 100 copies of a title at a reasonable price. It is hoped that, over a period of time, it will be possible to follow volume 2, which became available at the beginning of this year, with some of the other early volumes.

Also published during the past year were: *Memoirs and Remains* of Rev. Donald Macfarlane, *The Tree of Promise* by Alexander Stewart, and *Ministers and Men in the Far North* by Alexander Auld. We are grateful to Dr. J. Mitchell for preparing the text of these volumes for printing, and to those who have undertaken the work of proof-reading. Other volumes at various stages of preparation include *Sermons* of John Love, *Memoir and Remains* of Rev. D. Macdonald and *Sermons* of James Durham. It is also hoped that a selection of the editorials of Rev. J. S. Sinclair in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* may be published in due course. It is likely that a further reprint of the hardback edition of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* will again be necessary this year.

The Committee were grateful to Mr. Alasdair Gillies for his work in editing the English translation of Cook's Gaelic sermons. We would like to take this opportunity to express our sorrow at the passing of this former member of both constituent parts of the Committee, yet we are conscious that our loss is his gain. We hope that we will soon see progress in bringing these sermons into print.

The Committee decided that, in view of the healthy state of the Publications Fund, it would be appropriate, on an individual basis, to bear the cost of printing books being produced by the Welfare of Youth Committee. The first of these is the book for young children, *Line Upon Line* by Mrs. F. L. Mortimer, which became available at the beginning of March.

Total sales of books were somewhat less last year, at around £16,400. This was due to the absence of the large orders, mentioned in last year's report, for both *The Westminster Confession of Faith* and *The Larger Catechism*. This was compensated to some extent by sales through Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing in the USA. In only about nine months of the year their sales of Free Presbyterian Publications came to around £5,800. This is a very useful beginning and we hope that it will lead to many more of our books being sold in what is an enormous market for Christian literature.

Bookroom

It is disappointing to have to report that total sales for 1999 were down by about £6,500 on the previous year's total. One factor was the lower sales of books from Free Presbyterian Publications as indicated above, but there were probably fewer customers coming into the shop last year although there was a number of new customers. One possible avenue for an increase in sales is the new Bookroom website, which allows potential customers who have had no

previous knowledge of the Church or the Bookroom to become aware of what is on offer, and to place their order electronically.

Recently no lists of second-hand books have been issued as it has become more difficult to obtain a sufficient quantity of books for this purpose. However, one of our valued customers, Mr. J. W. S. Dearness of Orkney, passed away towards the end of last year, and a considerable number of books (200 boxes) from his extensive collection came to the Bookroom. It is hoped that booklist will be issued to customers before the Synod. The Committee would like to thank Mr. Alasdair MacLean who has kindly offered to go through the books and price them.

Once again the Committee would express their grateful thanks to the manager, Miss Marion Morrison, for her diligent and efficient work in running the Bookroom over the past year. We are also grateful to the men who keep the Bookroom open on a Saturday morning, or stand in to cover the manager's holidays, etc.

In conclusion we would request the prayers of the Lord's people for His rich blessing on the work of the Church in trying to put good literature into the hands of readers throughout many parts of the world.

**SEMINAR ON THE INCORPORATION
OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN
RIGHTS INTO SCOTTISH LAW**

**European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg,
Thursday 17th February 2000**

Report by the Rev. D. M. Boyd

The European Union – 15 Member States

The Council of Europe, Strasbourg (1949): recent enlargement
from 28 to 41 Member States

The European Commission of Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights

The European Convention on Human Rights, 1950 (ECHR)

Scotland Act 1998

Implication for Presbyterian Churches in Scotland

Recommended Motion to Synod:

“The Synod instructs the Church Interests Committee to consider the possible implications upon the judicial procedures of the Church as a result of the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into Scottish Law by the Scotland Act 1998; to prepare a Report for Synod on this and any other relevant matters; and to make recommendations, in consultation with the Legal Adviser.”

Introduction

In accordance with the instructions of the Church Interests Committee, I attended a Seminar in the European Palace of Human Rights, Strasbourg, on Thursday, 17th February 2000, about the possible implications upon the judicial procedures of Churches of the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into Scottish Law.

The Strasbourg Seminar took the form of a series of short presentations from a variety of speakers, punctuated with question sessions. One of the most useful aspects was the intervals for coffee and meals, during which I was able to get fuller answers to more detailed questions. After a general introduction to the work of the Council of Europe in the field of Human Rights by Mrs. Jane Dinsdale, Deputy Head of the Directorate of Human Rights, Dr. Stanley

Naismith, Senior Lawyer, Registry of the European Court of Human Rights, gave a useful presentation of examples of case law with a religious bearing. Other speakers included Sir Nicholas Bratza, the British Judge on the European Court of Human Rights; Professor Neil MacCormick, QC, MEP, the Regius Professor of Public Law, University of Edinburgh; Patrick Layden, the Lord Advocate's representative; and Professor David McClean, Professor of Law at the University of Sheffield, a long-standing member of the General Synod of the Church of England and convener of one of its judicial committees.

History

The United Kingdom was one of the founder Members of the Council of Europe on 5th May 1949, and the UK ratified the European Convention on Human Rights on 8th March 1951.

The European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into Scottish Law in the Devolution process by the Scotland Act 1998. It will be incorporated into the law of England and Wales on 2nd October 2000.

The UK Government has incorporated the ECHR into its law to prevent the necessity of individuals having to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg. The ECHR includes the right of easy access to the justice system, and as it is more expensive and difficult to go to Strasbourg than to one's local court, the ECHR has been incorporated into the local legislation of the UK.

The ECHR includes the basic right to a fair trial. This means that all public authorities, including our national courts, will have to review their disciplinary and judicial procedures in the light of the ECHR. In Scotland, it has led to a huge increase in cases alleging breaches of the ECHR as Scots Law needs to be completely reinterpreted in accordance with the ECHR.

Implications

The first matter of importance to us is the question whether or not Churches are public authorities. When this was discussed in the House of Lords, an amendment was introduced to exclude Churches from the definition of public authorities lest the ECHR would interfere with their spiritual jurisdiction. This was resisted and overturned by the House of Commons, (with a concession to the wishes of the Churches, which was described by Sir Nicholas Bratza, the British judge at the European Court of Human Rights, as a sop which is next to useless). Churches will not be immune from what are seen to be basic human rights.

The second matter is about the fairness of judicial procedures. The implications for Presbyterian Churches are clearly in the area of discipline. It is evident that all Churches need to act within the laws of natural justice and within their own constitution. However, the ECHR will carry this principle further, simply because natural justice requires that people be given a fair trial.

It is highly likely that the ECHR would look unfavourably upon Presbyterian Churches having a Kirk Session or Presbytery as prosecutor, judge and jury in disciplinary procedures. There has been comment in the public press in recent years about this, and now the avenue is open for even the Church of Scotland to be challenged in civil courts. The Church of Scotland is concerned about its position *vis-à-vis* courts of law. Its first line of defence will be its constitutional position as the national Church, but it is questionable if this will hold up in court. The Church of Scotland has a special relationship in UK law, but since Britain is a member of the European Union and the Council of Europe, the Church of Scotland is now a small fish in a very large pond of 800 million people in 41 countries. The Church of Scotland has had a growing number of serious cases of discipline in recent years and a case against its discipline will shortly come before civil tribunals.

The Church of England has the same difficulty, so Professor David McClean, Professor of Law at the University of Sheffield, was also present at the seminar; he is a long-standing member of the General Synod of the Church of England and convener of one of its judicial committees.

The two national churches are feeling the pressure from civil courts which smaller Presbyterian Churches have had to feel since the middle of the 19th century.

Church of Scotland

In the light of these matters, the Church of Scotland has already begun reviewing its procedures in an attempt to pre-empt the success of any appeals to the civil courts, and it is well down the pathway of reviewing its judicial procedures. The Strasbourg seminar was made to coincide with the visit of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to the European Court of Human Rights. The Rev. Finlay A. J. Macdonald, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, was present, with the Deputy Clerk, and other Church of Scotland personnel. Some others present included Alastair Dunlop, the Procurator to the Church of Scotland, Janette Wilson, Solicitor to the Church of Scotland, Patrick Layden represented Lord Hardie, the Lord Advocate, who was due to be present but was prevented as it was the day in which he was elevated to the Scottish Bench, and the Advocate General who stated that there had been 360 cases on Human Rights issues as a result of Devolution, which were swamping Scottish Courts.

The main area of trouble in Presbyterian courts is that the Presbytery can be prosecutor, judge and jury. Although our present procedures require the Presbytery to carefully separate these functions, in practice this can be overlooked.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

1. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland needs to continue to monitor the changing legislative scene.

2. The basic idea is to ensure that fair trials are conducted in our Church courts, that justice is done and is seen to be done. We can look upon this exercise as the promotion and implementation of “best practice”.

3. We should continue to interact in a pro-active manner. The Scottish Presbyterian Churches are seen at present to be at a negotiating and an implementation stage rather than on a collision course with civil courts.

4. Further questions remain which need discussion and resolution: about the limits of the jurisdiction of the European Courts; what changes are required in our judicial procedures to keep us within the framework of what are considered to be basic human rights; what subjects are likely to be included in Convention rights; the extent to which Churches may be penalised for a breach of Convention rights.

Motion recommended to the Synod meeting in May 2000:

“The Synod instructs the Church Interests Committee to consider the possible implications upon the judicial procedures of the Church as a result of the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into Scottish Law by the Scotland Act 1998; to prepare a Report for Synod on this and any other relevant matters; and to make recommendations, in consultation with the Legal Adviser.”