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THE AIMS OF THE CHURCH'S BUSINESS

In contemplating our Church's Annual Synod the business before members is ordinarily diverse entailing beforehand a great deal of devoted and responsible work by ministers and laymen, in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church.

As is known, this work and business includes among other matters, the training of young men for the ministry, the supervision of the Foreign Mission Field, the Church's interest in Overseas Congregations, a concern with Religion and Morals as affecting the nation, the publication of edifying and excellent books, the guiding of the young into an interest in the Bible, and also the matter of finance for the support of vital Church needs.

These and other channels of Church business are absolute essentials to be undertaken and carried on in the spirit of the Gospel, faithfully and patiently by those upon whom the work devolves. The Lord says: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light"; albeit anxieties and difficulties are certainly not unknown in carrying on the business related to Christ's Cause in the world. Yet His divine wisdom and grace, as available to His people, are sufficient for them at all times.

Now the aims of the Church's activities, obviously to us, do not include a compromising with the world as such nor a seeking to please carnal men, nor an endeavour at any point to avoid the animus of those who are opposed to the truth of God. Christ warns His people, "Marvel not if the world hate you: for ye know that it hated me, before it hated you."

The aims which the Church is to have in view are such as are clearly indicated in the Holy Scriptures; and these include, The honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone Head of the Church. The Church is to be subject to Christ as to complying with His revealed will enunciated in His Word and by a firm belief in and an unswerving devotion to all His holy doctrines and teaching. Christ claims the pre-eminence in all things and this the Church must seek to render. The views and claims of men, which conflict with Christ's mind and claims must be discounted and resisted.

He is worthy of all honour and praise and glory as the Redeemer of His people and as their exalted Head in heaven.

Again, the outstanding matter of the conversion and salvation of the precious souls of sinners must ever be before the mind of the Church. The Redeemer's mission into the world pre-eminently included His coming to seek and to save that which was lost. The Church is to be at all times influenced by the mind of the Master and graciously and **instrumentally** to apply herself to the blessed task of bringing sinners to Him as the mighty Saviour. Samuel Rutherford thought much of the expectation of meeting even one soul from Anwoth at God's right hand. Every avenue of the Church's activities must be stamped with this outlook, the deliverance of lost sinners from the broad way and everlasting destruction.

And thirdly, the Church's Scriptural business must also be directed to the spiritual good and edification of all those who believe in and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity within the realm of the Church. For example, the Church must always endeavour to provide for God's people, the ordinances of the Gospel, that they may be spiritually fed with food convenient for them and instructed in the doctrines of grace and also corrected and comforted by these same doctrines. There can be no spiritual experience or growth in the knowledge of Christ Jesus without the application of the doctrine of Christ to the souls of His people by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. Paul instructed Timothy to "preach the Word". The Church then is to concern itself with the acceptance of godfearing men, who have a clear and divine call to preach the Word and engage in the work of the ministry of the Gospel. Such men should be expected to possess necessary gifts from the divine Head of the Church, that they may contribute, as used by the Lord, to the building up of believers on their most holy faith.

Then again the Church having regard to the honour of Christ and to His commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature is concerned for the furtherance of the Gospel in "regions beyond", if and when additional regions are opened up in the divine purpose and providence. Our Foreign Mission Committee and Dominions and Overseas Committee, for instance, have this responsibility as authorised by the Church.

It also devolves upon the Church to expose the sins rampant in a backsliding day and to point to declensions which characterise the professing Christian Church where such declensions obtain. The Lord Jesus exposed the errors of men, telling them, "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

All those who have a heart and genuine interest in the varied activities of the Church have obligations lying upon them. The

spirit and exercise of believing and earnest prayer are called for. If we look for the Most High to work among us and to use us as a Church, then He reminds us, "I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." And all who profess the name of the Lord Jesus must continually watch and pray that they shall be kept in their personal lives and characters from unchristian conduct and be preserved in faithful adherence to the faith once delivered to the saints in all aspects of that faith. Defects in 'character' and 'adherence' inevitably hinder the Church's work and witness in the world. And finally, it is expected of all connected with the Church that they support the Cause of Christ with finance as the Lord prospers them in providence. And, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver".

May Zion be built up by the mighty God, and Zion's children be made joyful in their King.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

by Rev. A. M. Cattanach, M.A.

II — The Road to Damascus

The young man called Saul did not waste any time in his efforts to stamp out the faith for which Stephen had laid down his life. Such was his hatred of the disciples of the Lord Jesus that he determined to follow them, even as far as Damascus, and seek to "bring them bound to Jerusalem". The opening verses of the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles presents us with a view of SAUL as a PERSECUTOR, to quote his own word in later life, when writing to young Timothy. Let us remember that it was Saul himself that went first to the high priest, to ask for those infamous letters to the synagogues — in other words, the initiative lay with Saul, not with the high priest. The request was readily granted, and soon Saul was on his way: how long the journey took, we are not told, but we may be sure that Saul would waste no time. The miles between Jerusalem and Damascus were almost covered, when the "time for favour" came, and the Lord drew near — "and as he journeyed, he came near Damascus". (Acts ix, 3). The time and place, ordained in the purpose of Jehovah, had met together, in which the right hand of the Lord would do valiantly. The day of days for the great Apostle had dawned; the arrows of the King were to pierce the heart of one of the fiercest enemies of His cause, and bring him down in subjection to His rule. This was the moment when, for Saul, the truth was fulfilled — "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". (2 Cor. v. 17).

There are some events in a man's life which stand out more

than others, but none which can compare with the wonderful experience of the new birth — this is an event which has no equal. It can only happen once. What a wonderful day for Saul — this day on the road to Damascus, when Jesus, whom he was so intent on persecuting, appeared unto him, calling unto him from the excellent glory, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" We need not enter into the details of the transaction that day; rather let us gather together a few thoughts, which seem to sum up the reality of the work, and bear to us across the centuries, the lessons which we all need so much to learn.

One sign of the reality of the work is to be found in the complete change of purpose which Saul manifested, when he reached his destination that day. Instead of going to the rulers of the synagogues, as he had intended, to present to them his letters of introduction for his evil work, he is led by the hand to the house of Judas, there to pour out his soul in prayer to Him who is the Hearer and Answerer of the same. Saul was in no mood for searching out the disciples of the despised Nazarene now; oh, no, rather was he concerned with the perennial question, "How can a man be just with God?"

After much agony of soul, Saul found, by Divine instruction, the only answer to such a question — Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe. He found an answer to his prayer; he had not called on God in vain; the Divine mark, by which he was to be recognised by Ananias, was indeed fulfilled — "Behold, he prayeth". Is it not true still? A truly converted man is still the praying man; prayer, in the true sense of the word, is still the life of the soul. Oh, may we have this precious mark of the Divine Spirit's teaching in our hearts today. To live without prayer is to live without Christ. We have only to think of the precious examples of a living prayer, as these are unfolded to us in Paul's Epistles, to see how truly changed this one-time Pharisee of many 'prayers' was. The very atmosphere of heaven seems to pervade them, as he pours out his soul for the saints, in this church, and that, scattered up and down the Roman Empire — take, for example, that wonderful prayer for 'the saints which are at Ephesus', recorded for us in the third chapter of that precious epistle (verse 14 to the end). The burden of it is that they may be filled with the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. May we ourselves be blessed with such heavenly blessings as those, which Paul desired for his friends at Ephesus.

Another sign that the change was real is to be found in the words of the nineteenth verse, "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus". The young man, who had but lately left Jerusalem, to seek out these very people, and carry them back to stand before the Sanhedrin for their faith, is now

among them, as a brother. Oh the wonder of it; the Apostle himself never ceased to wonder at it, to the end of his days on earth, for he was wont to see in it the super-abounding grace of God. Instead of hastening to his fellow-Pharisees with his wicked letters, he is happy to join the company of the despised followers of Jesus of Nazareth, and abide with them for a few days. Have you ever wondered what happened to his letters? How good it was for the church of God that the bearer of them had no further use for them, from that day forward. It was said of his namesake, King of Israel, once, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Samuel, 10, v. 11). The outcome, there, was not according to the early promise, but we can truly praise the Lord that Saul of Tarsus was indeed 'among the disciples' at Damascus, and never left their company any more. The student of Gamaliel and the disciples of Damascus sat together at the feet of Jesus, and enjoyed sweet fellowship in a common Lord. From that day forth, Saul of Tarsus could truly say with the Psalmist,

"I am companion to all those
who fear, and thee obey." (Psalm 119, v. 63).

May we, too, be of that same company.

It has been rightly said that a man is known by the company which he keeps. If we would seek a sign for good within ourselves, let us ask ourselves this question. Which company do we keep? If our heart is set upon the company of the world, we may be sure that we have never tasted of the pleasures that are at God's right hand, whereas, if our delight is to be found with those, who love the Lord, and fear His name, we may be encouraged to believe that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, that, for us, too, "old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new".

The third, and last sign, which we would give, that the work was real, is to be found in the twentieth verse, where we read, "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Again, we can only marvel at the grace of God, which wrought such a change in Saul of Tarsus, that, instead of going about his preconceived business in the synagogues of Damascus, here he is, "holding forth the word of life" in them, proving from the Scriptures, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. All the knowledge, which he had absorbed at the feet of Gamaliel; all the wonderful gifts, which had been bestowed upon him naturally; all the qualities, with which he had been endowed; all these talents, he now, by the constraining love of Christ, lays on the altar of service for Jesus. Saul is, indeed, a 'man of Christ', a new creature, a new creation. It is typical of the man, as we know him, from this book, and from his precious epistles, that he should plunge into the deep things of God,

'straightway', striking at the very core of the opposition of his fellow-countryman to Jesus of Nazareth, declaring to all and sundry, that this man is Christ indeed, the Son of God. THIS, above all else, is to be his watchword ever after; this task, above all else, is to be his life-work ever after.

The change was apparent to all, who cared to observe. Yet, not unnaturally we might say, some doubted; some had their queries. Is it genuine?; can it really have taken place?; is he really sincere?; will it really last?; may it not just be a passing phase?; 'a morning cloud'?; the early dew? Some such thoughts may have lurked in the minds of those who heard him that day in Damascus — they were 'amazed'. The word in the original is a strong one, meaning literally, to 'put out of its place', and frequently used in the New Testament to mean, to be beside oneself; perhaps it is not out of place, with all reverence, to see, in its use here, a suggestion that all who saw and heard the wonderful things which had transpired that day in the synagogues of Damascus, were so beside themselves, that they could hardly grasp the true significance of it all — it was almost incredible. It is in this sense that Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, uses the same word, 'whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God'. (2 Cor. 5. v. 13). Amazed they truly were, with holy amazement, saying, Is this not he that destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? (v. 21). If they had their doubts, the way towards the clearing of them was quickly opened up for them, as the Lord Himself caused Saul 'to increase the more in strength', to wax bolder as he lifted high the banner of the Cross, so that, by Divine grace, he "confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ" (v. 22). Again, the word is a strong one — he threw them all into confusion; their well-laid arguments were all thrown upside down; the ground was taken from their feet — in other words, they had no answer to this apologetic. From the Scriptures, he 'proved' that Jesus was the promised Messiah; he demonstrated, by "joining together, and thus uniting into one", the words in 'Moses, and the Psalms, and the Prophets, concerning Him', that in the Crucified and Risen One, in whom the disciples believed, these very Scriptures had found their final and fullest fulfilment. O how these poor, despised disciples at Damascus must have rejoiced, to hear such wonderful words, from one of whom they had, but yesterday, been so much afraid! And so we leave the Apostle, for the moment, at the beginning of his career, 'preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ' to his fellow-sinners at Damascus.

Would we seek another sign of good within ourselves? Let us find it, then, in this, that Christ is All to us. The outstanding

lesson, which comes to us across the years, from the theme of our present meditation, is, that for Saul, from that day forward, 'to live is Christ'. These are the very words which he uses, when writing to the church at Philippi, from his prison-house at Rome. Have WE been taught, as HE was, on the Damascus road, by the same Spirit of promise, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing this, been enabled to embrace Him, freely offered to us in the Gospel? God grant it may be so! Let us be measured, then, by this same rule. Are we a praying people? Are God's people, our people? Is Christ, and Him crucified, our only hope? These are questions which we need to ask ourselves, and honestly answer, before the Lord. May the Holy Spirit teach us so to search ourselves, in the light of His own Word, that we shall come to know, if we do not already know, that 'He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ'. (Phil. 1, v. 6).

A SERMON

by Rev. Ebenezer Erskine (June 4th, 1721)

"In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89 : 16).

The Psalmist, in the beginning of this Psalm, having run out at a great length in the praise and commendation of the God of Israel, he comes, from the 15th verse of the Psalm, to declare the happiness of His Israel, or of true believers, of whom Israel according to the flesh were a type. Now, God's Israel are a happy people upon several accounts. 1. Because they are privileged to **know the joyful sound**, in the beginning of the 15th verse. The Gospel has a joyful sound; a sound of peace, a sound of life, a sound of liberty and salvation. You are all privileged to hear this sound with your bodily ears; but the great question is, If you do know it, understand it, and give faith's entertainment to it? Alas, Isaiah's lamentation may but too justly be continued, with respect to the greatest part of the hearers of the Gospel. Who hath believed our report? 2. God's Israel are a happy people, **because they walk in the light of His countenance**, in the close of the 15th verse. They are privileged with the special intimations of His love, which puts more gladness in their hearts, than when corn, wine, and oil doth abound. 3. Whatever discouragement they may meet with from the world yet still they have ground of rejoicing in their God: **In Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day**; and, **Thanks be unto God**, says the Apostle, **Who always causeth us to triumph in Christ**. 4. Their happiness is evident from this, that they are dignified and exalted above others, by the

immaculate robe of Surety's righteousness; as you see in the words of my text, **In Thy righteousness shall they be exalted.**

In which words briefly we may notice, 1. The believer's promotion; he is **exalted**. In the first Adam we were debased unto the lowest Hell, the crown having fallen from our heads: but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as Heaven, for we **sit together with Him in heavenly places**, says the Apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer, who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in Heaven in Christ his glorious Head and Representative; and yet it is indisputably true, that we **sit together with Him in heavenly places** (Eph. 2 : 6). Yea, in Him he **rules the nations with a rod of iron**, and triumphs over, and treadeth upon all the powers of Hell. 2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation; it is **in Thy righteousness**; it is not in any righteousness of his own: no; this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but **dung and loss, filthy rags, dogs meat**: but it is in **Thy righteousness**; that is, the **righteousness of God**, as the Apostle calls it (Rom. 1 : 17). The righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. iii. 9). The righteousness of God is variously taken in Scripture. Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of His nature (Psalm xi : 7). **The righteous Lord loveth righteousness**. Sometimes for His rectoral equity, or distributive justice, which He exerciseth in the government of the world, rewarding the good, and punishing evil-doers (Psalm xcvi. 2). **Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne**. Sometimes it is put for His veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing His Word of promise, or in executing His Word of threatening (Psalm 36 : 5, 6). **Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: Thy righteousness is like the great mountains**. Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ the Son of God as our Surety and Mediator brought in by His obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners: and this, as I said, is frequently called the righteousness of God, and in this sense I understand it here in the text, **In Thy righteousness shall they be exalted**. The observation is much the same with the words themselves, namely, That in, or by the righteousness of Christ, believers are exalted. Or thus, Whatever honour or happiness believers are exalted to, the righteousness of Christ is the ground and foundation of it. It is all owing to the complete obedience, and meritorious death of the ever-blessed Surety. This is the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, upon which all our happiness in time and through eternity is built. I have not time now to adduce parallel texts of Scripture for the confirmation of this doctrine, neither can I stand upon a long prosecution of it, considering what great work you have before you through the day.

All I shall do, shall be only,

I. To offer a few propositions anent this righteousness, that you may understand both the nature and necessity of it.

II. Give you a few of its properties, to clear its excellency.

III. Speak a little of the believers' exaltation by virtue of this righteousness.

IV. Apply.

I. For the first thing, to offer a few propositions anent this righteousness for clearing its nature and necessity.

1. Then, You would know, that God having made man a rational creature, capable of moral government, He gave him a law suited to his nature, by which he was to govern himself in the duties he owed to God his great Creator. This law was delivered to man in the form of a covenant, with a promise of life upon the condition of perfect obedience, and a threatening of death in case of disobedience (Gen. ii. 7). Thus stood matters between God and man in a state of innocence.

2. Adam, and all his posterity in him, and with him, having broken the covenant, are become liable to the curse and penalty of it; so that our salvation is become absolutely impossible, until justice be satisfied, and the honour of the broken law be repaired. The law and justice of God are very peremptory, and stand upon a full satisfaction and reparation, otherwise Heaven's gates shall be shut, and eternally barred against man and all his posterity. The flaming sword of justice turns every way, to keep us from access unto the Paradise that is above.

3. While man in these circumstances was expecting nothing but to fall an eternal sacrifice unto Divine justice, the eternal Son of God, in His infinite love and pity to perishing sinners steps in as a Mediator and Surety; offering not only to take our nature but to take our law-place, to stand in our room and stead whereby the whole obligation of the law, both penal and preceptive, did fall upon Him; that is, He becomes liable and obliged both to fulfil the command, and to endure the curse of the covenant of works, which we had violate. And here, by the way, it is fit to advertise you, that it was an act of amazing grace in the Lord Jehovah, to admit a surety in our room; for, had He stood to the rigour and severity of the law, He would have demanded a personal satisfaction, without admitting of the satisfaction of a surety; in which case Adam, and all his posterity, had fallen under the stroke of avenging justice through eternity. But glory to God in the highest, who not only admitted of a Surety, but provided One, and laid help upon One that is mighty.

4. Christ, the eternal Son of God, being, in the fulness of time, made of a woman, and made under the law, as our Surety, He actually, in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole terms of the

covenant of works; that is, in a word, He obeyed all the commands of the law, and endured the curse of it, and thereby brings in a complete law-righteousness, whereby guilty sinners are justified before God. And this is the righteousness by which we are exalted. By His active and passive obedience, He magnifies the law, and makes it honourable, and the Lord declares Himself to be well pleased for His righteousness sake.

5. Although Christ obeyed the law, and satisfies justice, and thereby brought in an everlasting law-righteousness, for a whole elect world; yet the elect of God are never exalted by virtue of this righteousness, till, in a day of power, they be brought to receive it by faith, and submit to it for justification before God. We disclaim that Antinonian error of an actual justification from eternity, or yet of a formal justification, bearing date from the death of Christ. We own indeed, with all Protestant sound divines, that it was the purpose of God to justify His elect from eternity, and that all the elect were represented by Christ in His obedience unto the death: but that they are actually justified before conversion, or before their application by faith unto the blood of Jesus, is impossible; because the sentence of the broken law stands always in force against them till they actually believe in the Son of God; for he that believeth not, is condemned already. And how can they be both justified and condemned at the same time? Till then, they are children of wrath, even as others.*

6. This righteousness of the Surety is conveyed unto us by imputation; as is abundantly plain from many places of Scripture, particularly Rom. 4, 6, 11, 12, 23, 24. God reckons what the Surety did in our room unto us: so that His righteousness becomes as much ours for justification before God, as though we had obeyed the law, and satisfied justice in God, as though we had obeyed the law, and satisfied justice in our own person. Now, this imputation of the Surety's righteousness runs principally upon these two or three things. (1) Upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the Surety of an elect world. Then it was that He gave bond to the Father, to pay their debt in the red gold of His blood, saying, Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire:— Lo, I come:— I delight to do Thy Will. (2) It is grounded upon the actual imputation of our sins unto Him: The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. There is a blessed exchange of places between Christ and His people: He takes on our sin and unrighteousness, that we may be clothed with the white robe of His righteousness (2 Cor, v. 21). He was made sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteous-

* Readers should note that this is an instructive paragraph regarding pre-conversion state of the elect. — Editor.

ness of God in Him. (3) This imputation goes upon the ground of the mystical union between Christ and the believer. When the poor soul is determined in a day of power to embrace the Lord Jesus in the arms of faith, Christ and he do that very moment coalesce into one body. He becomes a branch of the noble vine: a member of that body whereof Christ is the glorious Head of eminence, influence, and government. And being thus united to Christ, the long and white robe of the Mediator's righteousness is spread over him, whereby he is not only freed from condemnation, but for ever sustained as righteous in the sight of God (1 Cor. i. 30). But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

II. The second general head was, to offer a few properties of this righteousness in which believers are exalted, from whence its excellency will appear.

1. Then, it is an every way perfect and spotless righteousness: and how can it be otherwise, seeing it is the righteousness of God? So perfect is it, that the holy law is not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable thereby (Isa. 42:21). So perfect is this righteousness, that the piercing eye of infinite justice cannot find the least flaw in it: yea, justice is so fully satisfied therewith, that God speaks of the soul who is clothed therewith, as though it were in a state of innocency, and perfectly freed from sin. Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel. Indeed He beholds many spots on the believers considered in himself, but not a spot is in him, considered as under the covert of this spotless righteousness.

2. It is a meritorious righteousness. The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it would have ceased for ever, unless it had been redeemed by this righteousness; for silver and gold, and such corruptible things, could never do it. Lay Heaven and all the glories thereof, in the balance with this righteousness they would be all light as a feather, compared with it. Heaven is called a purchased inheritance, and this righteousness is the price that bought it. There is such merit in it, that it expiates sins of the blackest hue, and redeems a whole elect world from wrath and ruin. Yea, such is the intrinsic value of it, that, had it been so designed, it was sufficient to have redeemed the whole posterity of Adam, yea, ten thousand worlds of angels and men, upon a supposition of their existence and fall. O with what confidence then may a poor soul venture its eternal salvation upon this bottom.

3. It is an incomparable righteousness. There is no righteousness among the creatures that can be compared with it. Compare it

with our own righteousness by the law, and the Apostle Paul will tell us, that he reckoned his Pharisaical righteousness before conversion, yea, his own obedience after conversion but as dung when laid in the balance with it (Phil.3). Compare it with Adam's righteousness in a state of innocence, or yet with the righteousness of the spotless angels, they are but like glow-worms when compared with this sun: the one is but the righteousness of a creature but here is the righteousness of God.

4. It is a soul-beautifying and adorning righteousness (Isa. 61 : 10). I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. The poor soul, that was black by lying among the pots, when clothed with this robe, shines as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

5. It is an everlasting righteousness, as the prophet Daniel calls it (chap. 9 : 24). Indeed this righteousness had no being, save in the purpose and promise of God, till Christ actually appeared in our nature, and satisfied the commands of the law, and demands of justice: however, upon that very being that it had in the purpose and promise of God, it became effectual for the justification of all the Old Testament saints. This righteousness then, I say, is an everlasting righteousness, both as to the contrivance and duration of it. The contrivance of it bears date from the council of peace in the ancient years of eternity; for the Surety was set up from everlasting. And as it is everlasting in its root, so also in its fruit; for upon this righteousness the saints will stand and be acquitted at the day of Judgment; and upon this bottom they will have their standing in Heaven through eternity. The song of the redeemed for ever will be, He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

6. It is a soul dignifying and exalting righteousness. Solomon (Prov. xiv. 34) speaking of equity in the administration of justice, says that even that kind of righteousness exalteth a nation. I am sure this holds true of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as you see in my text, In Thy righteousness shall they be exalted. But this leads to

III. The third thing in the method, which was, to speak of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness. And here I will very briefly shew, 1. What evils it exalts him above. 2. What happiness and dignity it exalts him to.

First, What evils it exalts him above.

1. It exalts him above the law as a covenant of works; yea, above both the commanding and condemning power of that covenant. Ye are not under the law, says the Apostle, but under

grace (Rom. vi. 14). And if they be not under it, it follows that they are exalted above it. Indeed they are not, and cannot be above it as a rule of duty: no creature can be dispensed from the obligation of yielding obedience to the laws of the great Creator; and the believer, in a peculiar manner, is bound to obey the law of a Creator in the hand of a Mediator. But considering the law as a covenant of works, demanding the debt of obedience as a condition of life, or threatening eternal wrath in case of disobedience, the believer is indeed exalted above it by the righteousness of Christ. And if the law at any time attempt to bring the believer in bondage to it, he is to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free. The bond woman Hagar, with her offspring of legal fears and terrors, are cast out by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 4 : 30). If a believer in Christ shall hear the thunderings and curses of Mount Ebal, or Sinai, he has no reason to be affrighted; for Christ by His righteousness hath redeemed from the curse of the law. Thou art not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest:— but thou are come unto Mount Sion — and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. The believer is dead to the law by the body of Christ, being married unto a better husband, even Him that is raised from the dead.

2. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above the world (Rev. 12 : 1). The woman clothed with the sun, has the moon under her feet; which may not only point at the believer's duty to soar heavenward in his affections, but also his privilege in Christ, to trample both upon the frowns and flatteries of this lower world; according to that of the Apostle, This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

3. By this righteousness he is exalted above the power and malice of Satan. Indeed as long as the believer is on this side Jordan, the devil will be harassing him with his fiery darts, and do his utmost to make him go halting to Heaven; but by virtue of this righteousness, namely, the doing and dying of our ever-blessed Surety, the devil is both disarmed and destroyed. The head of the old serpent is bruised; for, through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And by faith in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, the believer treads Satan under his feet; they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.

4. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above death. Perhaps thou art in bondage through fear of death; thy heart is like to faint and fail thee, when thou lookest to the swellings of this Jordan. But take a view of this righteousness and thou shalt

be exalted above the fears of it; for although thou be liable to the stroke of death, yet by this righteousness thou art freed from the sting of it. What is the sting of death? It is sin. Now, Christ has finished transgression, and made an end of sin by bringing in everlasting righteousness. And therefore thou mayst roll that word like a sweet morsel under thy tongue (Hos. 13, 14). I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction.

5. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above all accusations, from whatever quarter they may come (Rom. 8 : 33). There the Apostle gives a bold challenge, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? The challenge is universal in respect of all accusers: as if he had said, Is there any in Heaven, earth, or hell, that can accuse them? It is universal in respect of all the accused; for the whole elect of God are comprehended, among whom there have been as great sinners as ever breathed on God's earth. And it is universal in respect of all crimes: it is not said, Who shall lay this, or that, or the other crime to their charge? but, **any thing?** and what can be more comprehensive? Now, what is the ground of this bold challenge? It is grounded on the righteousness of Christ: for, says the Apostle, It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, etc.

(to be continued)

A SOLDIER'S CONVERSION

(from the Christian Treasury — 1868. The story appears to be translated from the German language)

A soldier, who greatly loved the Lord Jesus, related to me somewhat of his former life, which had been an eventful one. Much did he tell me of hairbreadth escapes, of adventures both by sea and land; but of these I will not speak now, but will tell you how he came to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus; and I pray Him that the story of his conversion may be blessed to some soul here.

He was above thirty years of age at the time of my acquaintance with him. "I have," said he, "been ten years a soldier, and have marched with my regiment through the whole of Hanover, have crossed the border, and have fought in Schleswig-Holstein. I have lived in cities, in towns, and in villages, and am well acquainted with both land and people. I have marched on foot, and have travelled by rail; I have lived in plenty, and suffered want; I have danced in ballrooms, and sighed in hospitals. Owing to a naturally amiable disposition, I was a favourite with both officers and men; and wherever our regiment was

quartered, I made myself friendly with the people. If I had been asked what religion I professed, I should have called myself a Christian; but alas! of Christianity I knew nothing. I went, indeed, to church on certain occasions; but whether it was that our officers always remained standing outside while we attended divine service, or whether it was the preacher's fault, I know not; but of Christianity and of Christ I learned nothing. My religion consisted in this — that it was a disgrace to steal and a duty to be obedient to one's superiors. I did not know that it was the greatest sin of all for a man to live without God, for a Christian to live without Christ. I had no Bible, I could not pray; and never, in the whole course of my experience, had I heard the sound of prayer or the singing of psalms, but in the church, where I joined in neither. It seems strange to me now that, in this godless state, I committed no gross sins or crimes. The reason may be, that I prided myself on being an orderly and well-living man. Yet I felt a want, an unsatisfied longing — for what I knew not.

"Once when, on the King's birthday, our regimental band played the Chorale, 'Now all thank God,' tears filled my eyes — I knew not for what. How dreadful," said he, "to think of living for thirty years in Protestant Germany, to serve in a Christian army, to live in Christian towns and villages and yet never, during all that time, to hear anything of God or of Christ!

"One day I came to a village, where we were to rest eight days, and it fell to my lot to be quartered with a farmer. He received me very kindly; and, after showing me the room he had assigned to me, asked whether I would dine alone, or with his family. I replied, that I preferred doing the latter; and he led me into a room, where the family and a number of farm servants were sitting at table. But how astonished was I when after dinner was served all rose and stood, with the greatest reverence, while the father, with devout voice, began: 'All eyes writ upon Thee, Lord, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing!'" Then followed the Lord's Prayer, and the conclusion of Luther's blessing before food, and the words, 'may God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, bless this food to us. Amen!' All, even the youngest children, stood reverently with folded hands; and one could see that they prayed inwardly. I had stood also, out of courtesy, but I trembled from inward emotion. I ate but little, and the farmer thinking that my want of appetite was from bashfulness, pressed me kindly to take more food. When all were finished — and a right joyful meal had it been — all stood as at the first; and the father said: 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good for his mercy endureth for ever,' and so on to the end of the Psalm. Then all shook hands kindly and heartily, and gave

one another the usual salutation 'Gesegnete Mahlzeit,' and all went away, the children to school, the servants to their work.

"Quiet and thoughtful, I had seated myself in a corner of the room, when the youngest child, a boy of three years, came and climbing up to my knee, looked up in my face, and with winning frankness, said, 'Tell me about the dear Saviour?' I began, in my confusion, to tell him of sheep and of goats, of dogs and of horses; for of the dear Saviour I knew nothing. This amused him for a while, but he soon renewed his petition that I should tell him about the Saviour, and I was obliged to confess that I knew nothing of Him. 'And you so big,' said the child, 'and know nothing about the Saviour! Then you cannot go to heaven.' It was true indeed that I had never thought of heaven, but to hear my condemnation from the lips of a child, the thought was too dreadful! I went out and visited my comrades in the village, still I could not shake off my uneasiness, and I determined to let supper-time pass before going home.

"At nine o'clock I returned. Supper was over, but a portion was kept for me. I began to eat, when the youngest child who was just going to bed, ran up to me, and said, 'First pray, then eat!' This was a new and sorer thrust. I could not pray, but the child clasped his hands, and prayed for me: 'Come Lord Jesus, be our Guest, and bless what thou hast prepared. Amen.' 'So pray,' said the child, and ran off to bed. I sat overpowered with emotion. The servants entered, and family worship was made. First singing—such singing as thrilled my heart, then a chapter of the Bible was read, and a difficult passage here and there was explained. Prayer followed, in which forgiveness of sins, the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and the protection of God's holy angel against the wiles of Satan were sought. All seemed like a dream to me. I dared not open my eyes, and yet I felt glad at heart. There followed kind good-nights, and each left the room with his Bible. The farmer and his wife remained to read a chapter for themselves, and he seeing me, reached me a Bible — 'If perhaps, I would like to read a few more of God's blessed words.' I thanked him, read a few words, of which I understood nothing and retired; but before going to bed, I knelt down and prayed: God, Thou God of this house be my God also.

"The next day was a decisive one for me. All went to church except one, who remained, as they expressed it, to keep watch at home; and that day I heard a God's service which I shall never forget. Since then I have lived a new life, and I now love the Lord Jesus with my whole heart, and know and rejoice that I shall go to heaven."

Is it not strange that this soldier should have lived so long in a Christian land, should have dwelt in Christian houses, and have

seen no indication of the Saviour's presence till he came to this farmer's house, and found Him there? Had he come into your house, would he have found the Saviour with you? Does the light stand with you on the candlestick, or under a bushel? From henceforth make this covenant with you and your family: "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

EFFECTIVE PRAYER

by C. H. Spurgeon

(This is last part of former articles)

The Sorrows of God's People: This is frequently pleaded in the Bible. Jeremiah is the great master of this art. He says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than a coal." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" He talks of all their griefs and straitnesses in the siege. He calls upon the Lord to look upon his suffering Zion; and before long his plaintive cries are heard. Nothing so eloquent with the father as his child's cry; yes, there is one thing more mighty still, and that is a moan — when the child is so sick that it is past crying, and lies moaning with that kind of moan which indicates extreme suffering and intense weakness. Who can resist that moan? And when God's Israel shall be brought very low so that they can scarcely cry but only their moans are heard, then comes the Lord's time of deliverance; and He is sure to show that He loves His people. Whenever you also are brought into the same condition you may plead your moanings, and when you see a church brought very low you may use her griefs as an argument why God should return and save the remnant of His people.

(5) **The Past:** Experienced people of God, you know how to plead this. Here is David's specimen of it:— "Thou hast been my help, leave me not neither forsake me." He pleads God's mercy to him from his youth up. He speaks of being cast upon his God from his very birth, and then he pleads, "Now also, when I am old and grey headed, O, God forsake me not." Moses also, speaking with God says, "Thou didst bring this people up out of Egypt." As if he would say, "Do not leave thy work unfinished. Thou hast begun to build, complete it. Thou hast fought the first battle; Lord, end the campaign! Go on till thou gettest a complete victory." How often have we cried in our trouble, "Lord, thou didst deliver me in such and such a sharp trial, when it seemed as if no help were near; Thou hast never forsaken me yet, I have set

up my Ebenezer in thy name. If thou hadst intended to leave me why hast thou showed me such things? Hast thou brought thy servant to this place to put him to shame?" We have to deal with an unchanging God, who will do in the future what he has done in the past. Because he never turns from his purpose; and cannot be thwarted in his design; The past thus becomes a very mighty means of winning blessings from him. We may even use our own unworthiness as an argument with God, "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." David in one place pleads thus, "Lord, have mercy upon my iniquity, for it is great." That is a very singular mode of reasoning; but being interpreted it means, "Lord, why shouldest thou go about doing little things? Thou art a great God and here is a great sinner. Here is a fitness in me for the display of thy grace. The greatness of my sin makes me a platform for the greatness of thy mercy. Let the greatness of thy love be seen in me." Moses seems to have the same on his mind when he asks God to show his great power in sparing his sinful people. The power with which God restrains himself is great indeed. There is such a thing as creeping down at the foot of the throne, crouching low and crying, "O God, break me not — I am a bruised reed. Tread not on my little life, it is now but as the smoking flax. Wilt thou hunt me? Wilt thou come out as David said, after a dead dog, after a flea? Wilt thou pursue me as a leaf that is blown in the tempest? Wilt thou watch me, as Job said, as though I were a vast sea, or a great whale? I am so little, and because the greatness of thy mercy can be shown in one so insignificant and, yet so vile, therefore, O God, have mercy upon me." There was once an occasion when the very Godhead of Jehovah made a triumphant plea for the prophet Elijah. On that august occasion, when he had bidden his adversaries see whether their God could answer them by fire, you can little guess the excitement there must have been in the prophet's mind. With what stern sarcasm did he say, "Cry aloud: for he is a God: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." And as they cut themselves with knives, and leaped upon the altar, oh the scorn with which that man of God must have looked down upon their impotent exertions, and their earnest but useless cry! But think of how his heart must have palpitated, if it had not been for the strength of his faith, when he repaired the altar of God that was broken down, and laid the wood in order, and killed the bullock. Hear him cry, "Pour water on it. You shall not suspect me of concealing fire; pour water on the victim." When they had done so, he bids them, "Do it a second time;" and they did it a second time; and then he says, "Do it a third time," and when it was all covered with water, soaked and saturated through, then he stands

up and cries to God, "O God, let it be known that thou only art God." Here everything was put to the test, Jehovah's own existence was now put, as it were, at stake, before the eyes of men by this bold prophet. But how well the prophet was heard! Down came the fire and devoured not only the sacrifice, but even the wood, and the stones, and even the very water that was in the trenches; for Jehovah God had answered his servant's prayer. We sometimes may do the same, and say unto him, "Oh, by thy deity, by thine existence, if indeed thou be God, now show thyself for the help of thy people!"

(6) The sufferings, death, merit, and intercession of Christ Jesus. I am afraid we do not understand what it is that we have at our command when we are allowed to plead to God for Christ's sake. I met with this thought the other day: It was something new to me, but I believe it ought not to have been. When we ask God to hear us, pleading Christ's name, we usually mean, "O Lord, thy dear son deserves this of thee; do this unto me because of what he merits." But if we knew it we might go farther, supposing you should say to me, you who keep a warehouse in the city, "Sir, call at my office, and use my name, and say that they are to give you such a thing." I should go in and use your name, and I should obtain my request as a matter of right and a matter of necessity. This is virtually what Jesus Christ says to us, "If you need anything of God, all that the Father has belongs to me; go and use my name." Suppose you should give a man your cheque-book signed with your own name and left blank, to be filled up as he chose; that would be very nearly what Jesus has done in these words, "If ye ask anything in my name I will give it you." If I had a good name at the bottom of the cheque I should be sure that I should get it cashed when I went to the banker with it; so when you have got Christ's name, to whom the very justice of God has become a debtor, and whose merits have claims with the most high, when you have Christ's name there is no need to speak with fear and trembling and bated breath. Waver not and let not faith stagger! When you plead the name of Christ you plead that which shakes the gates of hell, and which the hosts of heaven obey, and God himself feels the sacred power of that divine plea.

You would do better if you sometimes thought more in your prayers of Christ's griefs and groans. Bring before the Lord his wounds, tell the Lord of his cries, make the groans of Jesus cry again from Gethsemane, and his blood speak again from that frozen Calvary. Speak out and tell the Lord that with such griefs, and cries, and groans to plead, you cannot take a denial.

III — Praise and Thanksgiving

If the Holy Ghost shall teach us how to order our cause, and

how to fill our mouth with arguments, the result shall be that we shall have our mouth filled with praise. The man who has his mouth full of arguments in prayer shall soon have his mouth full of benedictions in answer to prayer. You have your mouth full this morning, have you? What of? Full of complaining? Pray the Lord to rinse your mouth out of that black stuff for it will little avail you, and it will turn bitter within you one of these days. Oh have your mouth full of prayer, full of it, full of arguments so that there is room for nothing else. Then you shall soon go away with whatsoever you have asked of God. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He will give thee the desires of thine heart." It is said — I know not how truly — that the explanation of the text, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," may be found in a very singular oriental custom. It is said that not many years ago — I remember the circumstances being reported — the King of Persia ordered the chief of his nobility, who had done something or other which greatly gratified him, to open his mouth, and when he had done so he began to put into his mouth pearls, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, till he had filled it as full as it could hold, and then he bade him go his way. This is said to have been occasionally done in Oriental courts towards great favourites. Now certainly whether that be an explanation of the text or not, it is an illustration of it. God says, "Open thy mouth with arguments," and then he will fill it with mercies priceless, gems unspeakably valuable. Would not a man open his mouth wide when he had to have it filled in such a manner? Surely the most simple-minded among you would be wise enough for that. Let us then open wide our mouth when we have to plead with God. Our needs are great, let our asking be great, and the supply shall be great too. You are not straitened in Him; you are straitened in yourselves. The Lord give you large-mouthedness in prayer, great potency, not in the use of language, but in employing arguments. What I have been speaking to the Christian is applicable in great measure to the unconverted man. God give you to see the force of it, and to fly in humble prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find eternal life in Him.

MY PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU

Peace is promised to those whose hearts are stayed on God — "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isaiah 26, 3). What then is the nature of this possession so wonderfully bestowed and preserved to us by God Himself? Peace is that settled, calm happiness which is more quiet and lasting than joy — more noble and worthy than pleasure. Pleasure may make us for a time forget pain, and a passing joy may take for a moment the place of a passing sorrow, but peace is deeper

than these. Search the heart in which true peace dwells, and you will find it reaching down to the centre of life itself; pleasure, pain, joy, sorrow, may come and go, but peace abides through all.

It is remarkable, that in the books and in the talk of the men of this world you rarely find the word peace. They seem to have found the thing itself beyond their reach; the life of peace appears to them an impossible condition here. You sometimes hear them speak of a tranquil life, but that only means a freedom from external disturbances. Now, the peaceful life of a faithful Christian is not one always of outward quietness. It may be one of constant, busy employment; we have each of us our work to do, and much of this work may be fatiguing, troublesome, full of interruptions, distasteful in itself; and so we may lead anything but what the world means by a tranquil life, and yet it may be full of peace. When our Lord said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," He added, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you." And indeed, the peace of His bestowing is as mysterious as the Giver. He who might have exempted the lot of the righteous from all suffering and sorrow has not done so; "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Take such trouble as sore sickness, or the death of those we love. The Christian soldier is no stoic — his heart is full of deepest grief by the grave of the lost; but grief and peace may dwell together; he sees the earthly hope blighted, but he has a hope full of immortality; he is not forbidden to grieve, but he cannot sorrow as others who have no hope. The hand of God is plain to him, directing this as all other things; and if he has been enabled, as a sinner reconciled through Christ Jesus, to place himself in His care and keeping, as unto a faithful Creator, he knows it shall be well with him; his heaviness may endure for a night, yea, it may not be wholly removed through all the night of his life; but the dawning of a better day is at hand, and joy cometh in that morning.

Peace, then, such as God gives, is not destroyed even amidst the heaviest storms; and see how it avails under the **common** circumstances of life! What is it that gives real abiding cheerfulness to the day? What is it that makes the task so easy, the labour so light? What is it that spreads itself all round as a tranquil atmosphere, but the influence of peace? And it has a blessed effect upon others; there is nothing that wins men, nothing that sooner leads them to inquire into the nature and power of the gospel of peace, than seeing peace manifested in the life, peace written on the very countenance of the righteous. What good it does, too, to beginners, to those just setting out on their Christian course, when they thus learn how great a present blessing is within their own reach? And yet, as none can quite penetrate those depths of the heart where peace dwells, none can see in others a thousandth part of the

blessing as it lies there; or perceive, if they have not themselves experienced it, how truly it is called "the peace that passeth all understanding." Indeed, how can it be understood? Is it not a mystery to a man's own self? In the midst of the many hopes and fears, doubts and distresses, that are often in the heart, how wonderful it is, that, on the whole there is peace there, peace, like some rock that the heaving and surging waves hide, for a moment from the eye, but which yet abides, fixed and unshaken for ever.

"They in the Lord that firmly trust,
Shall be like Zion hill,
Which at no time can be removed,
But standeth ever still."

(From "Voices of Comfort," T. V. Fosbery, 1875)

HINDRANCES TO GROWTH IN GRACE

by Rev. Dr Archibald Alexander

It seems desirable to ascertain, as precisely as we can, the reasons why Christians commonly are of so diminutive a stature and of such feeble strength in their religion. When persons are truly converted they always are sincerely desirous to make rapid progress in piety; and there are not wanting exceeding great and gracious promises of aid to encourage them to go forward with alacrity. Why then is so little advancement made? Are there not some practical mistakes very commonly entertained, which are the cause of this slowness of growth? I think there are, and will endeavour to specify some of them.

First, there is a defect in our belief in the freeness of divine grace. To exercise unshaken confidence in the doctrine of gratuitous pardon is one of the most difficult things in the world; and to preach this doctrine fully without verging towards anti-nomianism is no easy task, and is therefore seldom done. But Christians cannot but be lean and feeble when deprived of their proper nutriment. It is by faith that the spiritual life is made to grow; and the doctrine of free grace, without any mixture of human merit, is the only true object of faith. Christians are too much inclined to depend on themselves, and not to derive their life entirely from Christ. There is a spurious legal religion, which may flourish without the practical belief in the absolute freeness of divine grace, but it possesses none of the characteristics of the Christian's life. It is found to exist in the rankest growth, in systems of religion which are utterly false. But even when the true doctrine is acknowledged in theory, often it is not practically felt and acted on. The new convert lives upon his frames rather than on Christ, while the older Christian is still found struggling

in his own strength and, failing in his expectations of success, he becomes discouraged first, and then he sinks into a gloomy despondency, or becomes in a measure careless. At that point the spirit of the world comes in with resistless force. Here, I am persuaded, is the root of the evil; and until religious teachers inculcate clearly, fully, and practically, the grace of God as manifested in the Gospel, we shall have no vigorous growth of piety among professing Christians. We must be, as it were, identified with Christ — crucified with Him, and living by Him, and in Him by faith, or rather, have Christ living in us. The covenant of grace must be more clearly and repeatedly expounded in all its rich plenitude of mercy, and in all its absolute freeness.

Another thing which prevents growth in grace is that Christians do not make their obedience to Christ comprehend every other object of pursuit. Their religion is too much a separate thing, and they pursue their worldly business in another spirit. They try to unite the service of God and Mammon. Their minds are divided, and often distracted with earthly cares and desires which interfere with the service of God; whereas they should have but one object of pursuit, and all that they do and seek should be in subordination to this. Everything should be done for God and to God. Whether they eat or drink they should do all to His glory. As the ploughing and sowing of the wicked is sin, because done without regard to God and His glory, so the secular employments and pursuits of the pious should all be consecrated, and become a part of their religion. Thus they would serve God in the field and in the shop, in buying and selling and getting gain — all would be for God. Thus their earthly labours would prove no hindrance to their progress in piety; and possessing an undivided mind, having a single object of pursuit, they could not but grow in grace daily. He whose eye is single shall have his whole body full of light.

Another powerful cause of hindrance in the growth of the life of God in the soul is that we make general resolutions of improvement, but neglect to extend our efforts to particulars. We promise ourselves that in the indefinite future we will do much in the way of reformation, but are found doing nothing each day in cultivating piety. We begin and end a day without aiming or expecting to make any particular advance on that day. Thus our best resolutions evaporate without effect. We merely run the round of prescribed duty, satisfied if we do nothing amiss and neglect no external service which we feel to be obligatory. We resemble the man who purposes to go to a certain place, and often resolves with earnestness that he will some day perform the journey, but never takes a step towards the place. Is it at all strange that that person who on no day makes it his distinct object to advance in

the divine life, at the end of months and years is found stationary? The natural body will grow without our thinking about it, even when we are asleep, but not the life of piety, which only increases by and through the exercises of the mind, aiming at higher measures of grace. And as every day we should do something in this good work, so we should direct our attention to the growth of particular graces, especially of those in which we know ourselves to be defective. Are we weak in faith? let us give attention to the proper means of strengthening our faith and, above all, apply to the Lord to increase our faith. Is our love to God cold and hardly perceptible, and greatly interrupted by long intervals in which God and Christ are not in all our thoughts? let us have this for a daily lamentation at the throne of grace — let us resolve to meditate more on the excellency of the divine attributes, and especially on the love of God to us — let us be much in reading the account of Christ's sufferings and death, and be importunate in prayer, until we receive more copious effusions of the Holy Spirit; for the fruit of the Spirit is love, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. And so we should directly aim at cultivating and increasing every grace; for the divine life, or 'new man', consists of these graces, and the whole cannot be in health and vigour while the constituent parts are feeble and in a state of decay.

The same remarks are applicable to the mortification of sin. We are prone to view our depravity too much in the general, and under this view to repent of it, and humble ourselves on account of it; whereas, in order to make any considerable progress in this part of sanctification, we must deal with our sins in detail. We must have it as a special object to eradicate pride and vain glory, covetousness, indolence, envy, discontent, anger, etc. There should be appropriate means used, suited to the extirpation of each particular vice of the mind. It is true, indeed, that if we water the root we may expect the branches to flourish; if we invigorate the principle of piety, the several Christian virtues will flourish. But a skilful gardener will pay due attention both to the root and the branches; and, in fact, these graces of the heart are parts of the root, and it is by strengthening these that we invigorate the root. The same is true as it relates to the remaining principle of sin. We must strike our blows chiefly at the root of the evil tree; but those inherent vices which were mentioned, and others, should be considered as belonging to the root, and when we aim at their destruction particularly and in detail, our strokes will be most effectual.

I shall mention at present but one other cause of the slow growth of believers in piety, and that is the neglect of improving in the knowledge of divine things. As spiritual knowledge is the

foundation of all genuine exercises of religion, so growth in religion is intimately connected with divine knowledge. Men may possess unsanctified knowledge and be nothing the better for it; but they cannot grow in grace without increasing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Being," says Paul, "fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." "Grow in grace," says Peter, "and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jonathan Edwards remarks that the more faithful he was in studying the Bible, the more he prospered in spiritual things. The reason is plain, and other Christians will find the same to be true.

POSADH AN ANAMA RI CRIOSD

Leiss an Urr. Eidard Pearce (A.D. 1672)

(Air a leantuinn bhi t.d. 373)

IV. Mar so tha cridhe Chriosd, agus e air a shuidheacadh air a leithid de dhòigh gu bhi air a phòsadh ri peacaich; agus gu'n do chuir Se E Féin fodh cheanglaichean gu bhi gabhail riutha, agus gu bhi dha'n gabhail na'm b'e agus gu'm biodh iad toileach a bhi air am pòsadh Ris: agus ciod e'm faillseachadh is motha air a chridhe na so? Na'n cuireadh duine òg e féin fodh cheanglaichean a bhi pòsadh a leithid so de bhoireannach, ged a bha fathasd fuath aice dha, agus gu'n robh i gu tur 'n a aghaidh; thigeadh tu gu cìnnteach a dh'ionnsuidh a cho-dhùnaidh gu'n robh a chridhe gu mòr air a shuidheachadh air pòsadh rithe: agus gu cìnnteach cha'n e nì eile ach so a tha Criosd, Tighearna na glòire, a deanamh. Tha E air tighinn gu bhi ceangailte a bhi pòsadh peacaich bhoichd ris Féin, seadh, ged a tha iad aig an am so dha fhuathachadh, agus uile gu leir 'n a aghaidh; gidheadh ma's e gu'n tig iad mu dheireadh gu bhi toileach a ghi dùnadh a stigh Ris, thàinig E gu bhi ceangailte a bhi gabhail riutha. Thainig E gu bhi ceangailte an dà chuid wha'n Athair agus dhoibhsan.

1. Tha E ceangailte do'n Athair a bhi gabhail pheacadh, agus dha'm pòsadh Ris Féin, na's e agus gu'n tig iad dha ionnsuidh. Tha'n uibhir sin air a chur fodh'r comhair ann an Eoin vi. 27. "Deanabh saothair cha'n ann air son a bhidh a theirgeas, ach air son a' bhidh a mhaireas chùim na beatha siorruidh, a bhair Mac an duine dhuibh: oir esan sheulaich Dia an t-Athair"; 's e sin dh'òrduich agus shuidhich Dia an t-Athair Criosd; leag E lagh Air gu beatha mhaireannach a thoir, agus uime sin E Féin do pheacaich a tha tighinn dha ionnsuidh; agus faodaidh sinn uime sin a bhi cìnnteach gu'n dean Se E; seadh tha Criosd ag amharc mar fodh lagh dha'n Athair so a dheanamh, agus, uime sin, tha E 'g ràdh, "Is e mo thlachd do thoil a dheanamh, a Dhé;

seadh, tha do lagh an taobh a stigh de m' chridhe," Salm xl. 8. Ciod e'n lagh? Tha lagh eadar-mheadhonaireachd, a tha'g àithne Dhà, mar a bhàsaich E air son pheacach, mar sin a bhi gabhail ri peacaich 'n uair a thig iad dha ionnsuidh. Agus 's cìnnteach Esan a choimhlion cho saor e anns an aon, nach bi E easumhail dha anns an aon eile. Ann am focal, anns a chùmhanta sin (ris an abair diadhairean cùmhanta saorsa) a chaidh a dheanamh eadar an t-Athair gus Iosa Criosd bho shiorruidheachd, thaobh slàinte pheacach, thàinig Criosd gu bhi ceangailte do'n Athair a bhi gabhail gach neach a thigeadh dha ionnsuidh, agus bithidh E dileas.

2. Tha E ceangailte do pheacaich iad fein anns a chùis so. Thug E da-rìreadh dhoibh a cheangal. Thug E dhoibh a ghealladh, nì is e a cheangal, agus ceangal làidir mar an ceudna, gealladh nach urrain cumhachd air bith busidh a thoirt air, agus faodaidh an t-anam amharc air mar sin. Ach c'ait am bheil an gealladh? Gu cìnnteach tha'n soisgeul uile mar gu'm biodh aon ghealladh coitchionn air a dheanamh Leis a chùim na chiche so. Ach gabh aon air son chàiche uile; "Gach nì a bheir an t-Athair dhomhsa, thig e a m'ionnsuidh; agus an tì a thig a m'ionnsuidh, cha tilg mi air chor sam bith a mach." Eoin vi. 37; 's e sin, Gabhaidh mi gu ro-chìnnteach a m'ionnsuidh e, agus bheir mi dha Mi Féin agus beatha mhaireannach. Agus cia cho minic agus a dh'ath-nuadhaich E a cheangal so! Seadh, agus a chùim gu'm biodh e daingean agus fìor do ar creidimh, mar a tha e ann féin, chuir E ris a sheula, agus a leithid de sheula agus a tha dha dheanamh uile gu leir taobh thall do theagabh; oir is e th'ann seula fhala Féin. Uime sin tha e air a ràdh ris an t-soisgeul an tiomnadh nuadh ann na fhuil, 's e sin air a sheulachadh agus air a dhaingeachadh 'n a fhuil. Lùcas xx. 20. Agus tha fuil a chùmhanta air a ràdh ri fhuil; do bhrìgh gu'm bheil an cùmhanta agus a gheallaidhean air an seulachadh leis an fhuil sin. Eabh. ix. 24-28. Seadh, tha tuilleadh fathasd ann; Mar eil gu leoir 'n a ghealladh agus 'n a sheula, gheibh iad tuilleadh, oir ris na dhà so tha E cur a mhionnan air son an tearuinteachd anns a chùis; "Gu deimhin, deimhin tha mi ag ràdh ruibh, An tì a dh'eisdeas ri m'fhocal-sa, agus a tha creidsinn anns an tì a chuir uaith mi, tha a bheatha mhaireannach aige, agus cha tig e chùim dìthidh, ach chaidh e thairis o bhàs gu beatha; agus a ris, "Gu deimhin, deimhin tha mi ag ràdh ruibh, Gu bheil an uair a teachd, agus gu bheil i nis ann, anns an cluinn na mairbh guth Mhic Dhé, agus an dream a chluinneas, bidh iad beo." Eoin vi. 24, 25. B'e "Mar is beo mise" dòigh mionnan Dhé anns an t-Seann Tiomnadh, agus ann an sin tha E toirt a mhionnan nach eil tlachd Aige ann an bàs pheacach, ach gu'm pilleadh iad agus gu'm biodh iad beo, Esec. xxxiii. 11, agus 's e Gu deimhin, deimhin, "doigh mionnan Chriosd

anns an Tionnadh Nuadh, agus tha E an sin, tha sibh a faicinn, gu'm bì anamaibh a thig dha ionnsuidh beo." O is sona sin, "tha fear dhe'n a h-aithrichean a glaodhaich," air sgàth am bheil Dia a toirt a mhionnan, ach Oh! sinne tha eas-creidmheach, mar a creid sinn E a tha toirt a mhionnan." Mar sin thug Criosd dhuinn a cho-cheangal, a bhealladh, agus sin air a sheulachadh le fhuil, agus ri so uile chuir E a mhionnan a chùm a bhi nì bu mhotha a misneachadh ar creidimh; agus ciod tuilleadh a mhiannaicheas sinn? Ma tha gealladh duine agaibh a bhi deanabh siud na so, tha sibh a smuainteachadh gu'm bheil sibh ceart, air dhuibh a bhi dha mheas an dà chuid comasach agus dìleas; ach ma tha a sheula agaibh air a chur ris a ghealladh, an sin amhaircidh sibh oirbh fein mar tearuinte da-rìreadh anns a' ghnothuch; ach mar a tha ris na dha so a mhionnan air a chur, an sin amhaircidh sibh air a ghnothuch mar nì a tha thairis air gadh teagamh, agus cha dìn leibh amhrus a chur ann. Feuchaibh! thug Criosd do pheacaich bhochd so uile chùm a dheanamh cìnnteach dhoibh a chùm an dlùth-ghlacadh agus gabhail riutha ann a bhi tighinn dha ionnsuidh; agus oh! cia cho daingeann agus a dh'fhaodas an creidimh seasamh air a so uile! agus ciod e'n aingidheachd ghràineil a dh'fheumas a bhi ann teagamh a chur ann air son aon mhòmaint! Is fìor, cha'n eil a sheula na a mhionnan a cur nì air bith ri fìrinn agus cìnnteachd a gheallaidh annta féin; ach do ar mothachadh agus ar tuigse thà; ach a mhàin ann a bhi coinneachadh ri ar 'n anmhuinneachdan tha'n aon ud agus an aon ud eile air an cur; Mar so tha'n t-Abstol ag innse dhuinn; "Uime sin air bhi do Dhia toileach air neo-chaochluidheachd a chomhairle nochdadh na bu phailte do oighreachan a' gheallaidh, dhaingnich e le mionnan e: chùm tre dha nì neo-chaochluidheach, anns an robh e eu-comasach gu'n deanadh Dia breug, gu'm biodh againne comhfhurtachd làidir, a theich a chùm dèidin gu greim a dheanamh air an dòchas a chuireadh romhainn," Eabh. vi. 17, 18. Gabh beachd, cha'n ann gu bhi daingneachadh, na bhi cur nì air bith ri fìrinn agus cìnnteachd comhairle Dhé na air a chur gu bhi daingneachadh agus a misneachadh ar creidimh. Mar sin chì sibh gu'm bheil Criosd vfodh cheangal gu bhi gabhail preacach dha ionnsuidh, ma thig iad dha ionnsuidh, agus a tha iad toileach a' bhi air am pòsadh Ris. Agus cia mar a tha so a dearbhadh gu'm bheil a chridhe anns a ghnothuch. O na abradh neach gu bràth, An gazh Criosd riumso ann a bhi tighinn dha ionnsuidh? Oir gu cìnnteach tha cùmhnanta dha cheangal gu so a dheanamh. Is fìrinn e, ged nach robh E fodh cho-cheangal air bith, cha leig sinn a leas a chur ann an amhrus; oir cho-eignicheadh a thruas E; agus ged nach biodh truss Aige, cha leig sinn a leas teagamh a chur 's a chùis oir cheangladh a cho-cheangal E. Dh'fheumadh Criosd fhocal àicheadh, a ghealladh, a sheula, a

mhionnan agus na h-uile, na'n diultadh E aon anam a tha gu firinneach a tighinn dha ionnsuidh agus a miannachadh a bhi dùnadh a stigh Ris ann an cùmhnanta pòsaidh. Oh, ciod e mhisneachd a tha'n so!

(R'a leantuinn)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

On Censorship — Argentinian Example to Britain

The following news item from Reuter is illuminating:— "All films, television and theatre shows will be subject to strict censorship by an Argentine Government agency under a decree published in Buenos Aires. It empowers the censor to ban films or cut scenes affecting public morals and behaviour or endangering national security, scenes justifying adultery or damaging marriage and family life, justifying abortion, prostitution and sexual perversion and justifying crime. Lewd scenes at variance with morals and good behaviour would also be cut out." Whatever the actual source of this decree, it is a reproof and an example to Britain, where we have a continual campaign against censorship of any kind. The terms and application of the Argentine decree are sorely needed in Britain to bring the activities of a "permissive society" under control.

Plea by Humanists Rejected

It may not be generally known that there is a Humanist Parliamentary Group who are very active as Members of Parliament and as Humanists outside and inside the House. There are thirty-six M.P.s in the group, and they all belong to the Labour Party, and six peers. It may well be that there are Humanists in other parties in the House of Commons, but apparently they do not belong to this active group. In this group are Mr Michael Foot, Mr Emrys Hughes, Mrs Bessie Braddock and Mr Douglas Houghton and others. The Humanists are enemies of the Christian faith. They may for argument's sake deny this. Yet they are working hard to eliminate the teaching of the knowledge of the Christian religion in our schools. This group complained to the BBC Chairman, Lord Hill, that they think Humanists are not getting a fair deal on Radio and TV. Lord Hill rejected their arguments and told them that many correspondents complained to him that Humanist opinion is over represented and that the non-Christian point of view tends to be taken for granted. It is thought by some, that Lord Hill, as the new Chairman of the BBC, will exercise a beneficial influence against what is morally evil and harmful. In conversing recently with men of liberal views,

we heard them denounce some BBC Television programmes in no uncertain terms, because they were disgusting in their opinion. It would be helpful if such persons would direct their protests, loud and clear, to the proper quarter.

Another Cardinal for Scotland

Rev. Dr Gordon J. Gray, Roman Catholic Archbishop over Roman Catholics in the St. Andrews - Edinburgh area of Scotland, has been appointed a cardinal. The last cardinal appointed in Scotland, over 400 years ago, was David Beaton, an active persecutor of the Reformers. We do not read in the New Testament history of the Apostolic Church of the office of pope or cardinal. They are the inventions of men. A former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland welcomed the announcement and commended Rev. Dr Gray as a man who fostered good relations between the Churches in Scotland. We ask — good relations to what extent? As to Church government, doctrine, form of worship, sacraments and so on? Although some leaders in the Church of Scotland endeavour to have fellowship with the Roman Church, that fellowship can never go beyond talking, unless there is a departure from professed principles by the non-Roman Catholic participants. The appointment of a Cardinal to Scotland is of no significance whatsoever relative to Scotland's need of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostolic delegate in Britain had the ignorance and arrogance to congratulate not only R.C.s but all the people of Scotland on this Romish appointment.

A New Phase of Ecumenical Activity

Ecumenism has taken to the stage and drama. Recently members of Rosyth Council of Churches presented a play which dealt with a member of a Jewish family becoming a Christian. The local Roman Catholic priest produced the play and also took a part. The Episcopal rector, the Rev. C. Preston-Thomas, was stage manager, and in the cast and behind the scenes were members of the Church of Scotland and other denominations. This is the fourth year such an enterprise has been carried through. In Aberfoyle also, members of the Parish Church, the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church co-operated in staging a play illustrating the early years of the Christian Church. How far removed all these vain, worldly exertions and fellowships are from the spiritual unity of those who have been born of the Spirit and united by faith to Christ and thus united to one another. The living unity of all true believers in the Lord Jesus and in the truth of God, needeth not the performance of stage plays to further it. Fellowship on the stage will not eliminate the fable of the Mass; and is not intended to do so.

CHURCH NOTES

Deputy to North America

The Rev. Alexander Murray, M.A., Applecross, has agreed to be this year's Church Deputy to Canada and the U.S.A. Mr Murray expects to leave Scotland for Canada at the beginning of June (D.V.). He hopes to visit all the congregations in the Dominion and is willing to visit other Church friends, who may desire his services. As there are many in Canada and the U.S.A. who have a genuine interest in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, we feel contact with the Deputy would prove a stimulating help.

Mr Murray will be most of his time in Winnipeg, and to facilitate possible arrangements for his services elsewhere, his Winnipeg address will in due course appear in the Free Presbyterian Magazine. The Lord's people are asked to remember the Deputy at the throne of grace. His safety and the success of his mission are matters which should have a place in our prayers, and we wish him the Lord's rich blessing during his journeys. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Psalm 32, v. 8). — D. Campbell, Convener, Dominions and Overseas Committee.

The Annual Synod Meeting

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will meet, the Lord willing, within the Free Presbyterian Church, Inverness, on Tuesday, 20th May 1969, at 6.30 p.m. Rev. Alfred E. W. MacDonald, M.A., Gairloch, the retiring Moderator, will conduct public worship. — Robert R. Sinclair, Clerk of Synod.

LITERARY NOTICES

Alexander MacAskill: by Rev Kenneth J. Macleay, 32 pages and price 3/-. To be had from Mr Macleay, Free Church Manse, Beauly, Inverness-shire. The subject of this booklet was born at Glen Brittle in the Island of Skye, in the year 1873. He was one of a family of ten. He was a gamekeeper for a good part of his days, and a man possessed of no ordinary gifts. He was first of all brought to a deep and prolonged exercise of heart regarding his salvation by a letter written to him by his younger brother, John, who told Alexander: "I have a Saviour for my soul . . . and I who was an heir of hell, am now an heir of heaven." Later on, he received the light of the gospel returning home in the

darkness on the public highway. We understand that many friends in the Free Presbyterian Church deeply respected Alex. MacAskill, as a man of God and an able witness for Christ in Skye. There is quite a lot recorded in this booklet of what was said at Question Meetings and there are Gaelic quotations interspersed with English. There is a letter also included from the late Rev. Dr Donald Munro to Alex. MacAskill on the origin of Fellowship Meetings. This worthy man died at the age of 92 years about one hour after praying at family worship. The booklet is very well printed, with thick glossy paper covers. To the reader it gives an edifying view and spiritual impression of a Christian man of a past generation. We recommend its purchase.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF DONATIONS

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On behalf of the Trinitarian Bible Society — Strathy Congregation, £21; A Friend, £1.

Mr W. MacKenzie, 7 Crown Drive, Inverness, Treasurer, **Aberdeen Building Fund**, acknowledges with thanks:— A Friend, per Rev. A. F. Mackay, £2; Friend, Geocrab, £3; Mr and Mrs Geo. Gillies, Raasay, £2; Alex. Bethune, Bucksburn, £1 (last two per Dr C. Tallach); Friend, Inverness, per Rev. J. A. Macdonald, £5; Mrs N. Macleod, Inverness, £1; J.M. and A.M., Inverness, £2; Miss Katie M. McKay, Strathy, £2; Armadale F.P.s, £2 (last two per Rev. D. A. Maclean); D. A. McPhee, Glendale, per R.W.M.M., £2; Alex. Ross, Scourie, £1; Anon., Inverness postmark, £5; Friend, Inverness, £1; Stratherrick Friend, £4; Mrs D. J. Matheson, Inverness, £1; Alex. Forgie, Redding, Falkirk, £50; "M.M.G.", £10; Zech. 4, v. 10, £5; Ullapool postmark, £2.15/-; Passer-by, £2; Mrs M. MacKenzie, Ontario, \$25; Anon., \$100.

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Broadford — Manse Building Fund — Bequeathed by the late Mr Lachlan Robertson, Luib, £31; Mr R. MacLeod, Broadford, £25.

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Inverness Ladies' Rhodesian Mission Fund — Collection at Meeting plus additional donations, £103.4/-.