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The Reward of Obedience

"... that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever." (Deut. 5:29).

Men promise themselves much success in the ways of sin. Satan, too, holds out the prospect of happiness and satisfaction as an enticement to men to transgress God's commandments. All these hopes, however, are false. There cannot be any real happiness or prosperity in the way of disobedience. We must learn, either by precept or experience, that the way of transgressors is hard. If we refuse to heed the warnings of God's Word concerning the evil nature and fruits of sin, then we will go on to discover by sore experience that it is an evil thing and a bitter sin against God.

The children of Israel had to learn this lesson in the wilderness. How often they brought the judgments of the God of Israel upon themselves because of their disobedience! Surely if anything was impressed upon their minds it was this — that God, who is a holy God, will not suffer sin to go unpunished. Moses left Israel in no doubt of the fact that disobedience and backsliding would mean God's displeasure. (Lev. 26:14-43; Deut. 28:15-68).

How different their experience might have been had they acted differently! This is clear from the words: "O that there were such an heart in them . . . that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever." (Deut. 5:29). God is a promising God to those who obey Him. The obedience of faith shall be rewarded. God, as Israel's Covenant God, was a promising God. It is as a God revealing Himself in Christ Jesus that He holds out the promise of good and blessing to all who trust in Him. It would be well with the children of Israel so long as they acknowledged, honoured, feared and served the Lord. It was not mere outward service which the Lord looked for but heart obedience — "The Lord looketh upon the heart." If they were obedient to His revealed will then the blessings which the Lord had promised

would be granted to them. "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kind, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." (See Deut. 28:3-13; also Lev. 26:3:12).

It would truly be well with Israel if they obeyed the voice of the Lord, for the Lord was to bless them — and if the Lord blessed them then they would be blessed indeed. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." (Prov. 10:22). The Lord, the covenant-keeping God of Israel, who possesses all blessings and bestows them when and where He will, promises the righteous that it shall not only be well with them but also that it shall be well with their children. What an encouragement this was to serve Him. The promise implied that generations yet unborn would call Him blessed and would be blessed by Him and in Him. How little do men running in the way of disobedience reflect on the misery they are in process of bringing, not only upon themselves, but also upon their children. How encouraging it is, on the other hand, for the godly to consider that there is a promise of good not only to themselves but also to their children after them. It is encouraging for them also to remember that the work of grace can often be traced in families even for many generations. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39).

Finally, we see that the blessings promised to this people and to their children are not merely the transitory ones of this life but the enduring ones of God's grace, which are for eternity. It was to be well with them and with their children for ever. They were to be blessed for time and for eternity. Gospel blessings are worth possessing. They will never become common-place or cease to yield the satisfaction which they at first afforded to the believing soul. Rather will they become increasingly precious. The blessings of the Covenant will never fade. Eternal blessedness for the redeemed soul will mean the eternal enjoyment of the blessings of the everlasting covenant which are laid up in Jesus Christ.

Do we desire to possess the good which the Lord is holding out to us in His Word? Do we desire that it would be well with us and with our children for ever? Then let us yield gospel obedience to the commands and invitations of the Word of God. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55:7). If we are put in possession of the blessings of the everlasting

covenant it will never give us ground for vain-glorious boasting, but we will be brought to say with David : " Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (1 Chrom. 17:16).

Sermon

by the Rev. William MacLean, M.A., Gisborne

" Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Psalm 73 verse 24.

We have in these words the confession of Asaph who wrote this Psalm, after the Lord had delivered him from the trial through which he passed, a trial which brought him so low that he concluded his hope and his profession were all in vain. When he got deliverance this was the new song that was in his mouth — " Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

As the Lord may enable us we shall consider; (1) Those who have this confession and who have a right to such a confession; (2) A few things implied in their confession.

I. It is clear from the Psalm that it is the Israel of God, His own ransomed people, who are led and guided by the Lord. As the Lord delivered His people out of the land of Egypt and guided them through the wilderness, and into possession of Canaan the promised land, so the Lord is guiding all whom He delivers out of the Egypt of a state of nature to the heavenly Canaan of eternal glory. And what is true of them? The Psalmist here through the Holy Spirit tells what is true of them. They are a people to whom the Lord is good, good and gracious to them in all His dealings with them. It is the fruit of His goodness, of His everlasting love to them that they are of a clean heart, that a principle of life and purity was implanted in their souls in the day of their regeneration and thereby blessed in their union to Christ. " Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." They shall at last be with Him where He is, beholding His glory, as that is brought before us in Christ's intercessory prayer on their behalf: " Father I will that they also, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

There is nothing clean in the heart of man as he is by nature. It is in connection with the heart of man that the question is put: "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The Word of God

declares that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" The Lord alone knows the depths of depravity of our nature, what a cesspool of filth and sin the heart of man is. "Out of the heart," says the Saviour, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." We were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. We have a nature that drinks in iniquity like water. Sin is sweet to our fallen and depraved nature. We are guilty before God the Judge of all, of choosing and seeking after the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Such is the power and love of sin in the heart of a sinner that he will set at nought the counsel of God, the warnings of God in His Word, no matter how solemn, and the invitation of God, no matter how gracious, in order to go on in his own way. He walks, as the Word of God says, in the ways of his own heart and not in Wisdom's ways, although Wisdom's ways are pleasantness and all her paths are peace. He walks in the light of his own eyes and not in the light of God's Word, vainly and foolishly imagining that all shall be well. But what the Lord says shall stand — "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

We live in a day when the counsel of God is cast aside by leaders in the professing Church. Like the false prophets of old they stand not in the counsel of the Lord, and the woe of the Lord is upon them. The pronouncements they make on doctrinal and moral issues are diametrically opposed to God's counsel. "They have rejected the Word of the Lord and what wisdom is in them." They are blind leaders. The light which they profess to have is darkness, and those who follow them are blind also. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them." All who sponsor and support the Ecumenical movement are blinded by Satan as an angel of light and are heading towards the midnight darkness of the Church of Rome in time, and towards the blackness of darkness in eternity. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

The leaders in the State are equally guilty of rejecting the counsel of the Lord. The civil magistrate or the civic authorities are duty bound according to the Word of God, to uphold the law of God, not only the second table of the law, in seeing to it that thieves, murderers and all evil doers are judged and punished

for their crimes, but also the first table of the law, the first four commandments setting forth our duty to God. In holding the view that this is outside their province they prove their rejection of the counsel of God, and that is clearly revealed in the recent decision of the Wellington City Council to permit organised sport on the Lord's Day. The god of this generation is but an idol of their own imagination, not the one living and true God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, and in all His glorious perfections, unchangeable too in His hatred of sin. The God of truth cannot be mocked, as desecrators of His day shall discover, either in mercy or in judgment. "Cursed is that health," said the great Dr Love, one of the most renowned ministers of Scotland in the 18th century, "and cursed is that wealth and cursed is that recreation which is obtained by criminal encroachments on God's holy day." And the saintly Rev. Murray McCheyne said that the polished Sabbath breaker and the murderer are one in God's sight. They are both guilty of contempt and defiance of God's law. The polished Sabbath breaker is guilty of trampling under foot the memorial of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and therefore guilty of trampling under foot the blood of Christ and of rejecting the great salvation which Christ by His precious blood obtained. Sabbath breakers are pure in their own eyes. They do not look upon their Sabbath breaking as a sin. God in His Word declares that "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." Sabbath breakers are in that class. They are not of the Israel of God who are clean in heart because washed with the washing of regeneration. If you have no love for God's day and seek your own pleasure on it, you are not of the Israel of God who are journeying toward eternal glory. You are being led captive by the devil at his will on the way that will end, if you repent not, in eternal perdition.

We shall now notice the counsel by which the Lord is leading His people, and according to which He will bring them at last to glory. That counsel is the covenant of grace. Were it not for the covenant of grace no sinner of the lost race to which we belong would ever get grace in time or glory in eternity. By breaking the covenant of works, Adam the covenant head and representative of the human race, forfeited the promise of eternal life and procured for himself and for his posterity the sentence of eternal death. But the Lord in His grace, love and mercy, made the covenant of grace with His beloved Son on behalf of all whom He purposed to save, a number which no man can number, as the dust of the earth, and the stars of the heaven, innumerable. It is in terms of this everlasting covenant that Christ assumed in the womb of the Virgin the nature of those whom He came to

save. In terms, too, of the covenant of grace, He satisfied all the claims of God's law and justice, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in an everlasting righteousness, purchased eternal life for sinners deserving eternal death, pardon and peace for the guilty and the lost. Christ is the Head and Mediator of the covenant of grace. All the blessings of the covenant and the blessings of salvation are at His disposal, and conveyed and revealed by the Holy Spirit to all who are savingly taught by Him. The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one, one in their witness that God hath given to us eternal life and that this life is in His Son. However guilty, ruined, lost and hell deserving you may be, there is eternal life in Christ for you. "Incline your ear," he says, "and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." The blessings to be found in Christ, bound up in the eternal life that is in Him, are sure mercies. He Himself says, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." The witness and testimony of His Israel is, "Thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel; Yea, ev'n for them, that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell." "Hear and your soul shall live." Hear what He says concerning you that you have destroyed yourself, that you are undone in your state and nature. You say, I believe that I am a graceless and Christless sinner. On what authority do you believe that? I believe it on the authority of God's Word, for if I would say otherwise I know I would be but deceiving myself. And if you believe that on the authority of God's Word, you have the authority and the warrant of God's Word for believing that there is in Christ, and in Christ alone, what will meet all your needs as a sinner. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help." "Hear and your soul shall live and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." What a blessing it would be if you would hear in your soul the voice of Christ speaking to you as a sinner and calling upon you to return to Him and to receive that eternal life which is to be found in Him alone. And at this very moment that gracious invitation is coming to us from the Saviour, for He is nigh to us in His Word. How we should be crying to Him — O Lord turn me from every evil way. Enlighten me lest the sleep of death me overtake. Remember me with that love which thou bearest to thine own. Visit my soul with that salvation wherein thy glory is made great. Leave me not to be deceiving myself for eternity. Wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow. You will find Christ to be according to His Word, for He never said to the seed of Jacob to seek His face in vain.

Now, those who are of the Israel of God are fully satisfied with God's counsel, with God's way of salvation. It is salvation from

sin and salvation that ensures conformity to the image of Christ. They know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, but there is in this salvation what will sanctify them and make them perfect in holiness at death. We find David confessing on his death-bed, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." If the question were put to David, "How do you know David, that the Lord has made an everlasting covenant with you and that the blessings of the covenant are yours, grace in time and glory in eternity?" We have his own answer — "It is all my salvation and all my desire." I desire no other salvations but this salvation, the salvation planned and presented in the covenant that is ordered in all things and sure.

If you are satisfied with God's way of salvation, that there is no hope for you apart from Christ and His precious blood, with God's way of salvation, with the glorious scheme of redemption, things which the angels desire to look into, you cannot but be dissatisfied with yourself. The house of your soul is far from what you would have it to be. But with all your backwardness, backsliding and wretchedness is this not your cry — "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation?" It is because you are a partaker of that salvation that you are satisfied with Christ and dissatisfied with yourself. You are embraced in the promise of the covenant. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

The Word of God which is His counsel, is precious to His Israel. They do not sit in judgment on the Word of God, for they have been, and are being judged by it. All who sit in judgment on God's Word, impugn its inspiration and infallibility and are not of the Israel of God. They are of their father the devil and his lusts they will do. They are in this dark day of apostacy like a plague in the schools, colleges and pulpits of our land. All who have an ear and a heart for their teaching are not of Christ's sheep. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, says concerning His sheep "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

The doctrines of Christ are to His Israel the words of eternal life. What His counsel reveals they accept. Saving faith receives and embraces the doctrines of the faith — the fall of man, his total depravity and inability, the doctrine of election, redemption by the blood, regeneration by the Spirit, the perseverance of the saints and the offer of Christ, free, full and unfettered to all to whom the gospel comes.

II. It is clear from the history of the Israel of God that, through

the power of indwelling sin, unbelief and the wiles of Satan, at times they have been taken aside to follow counsels of their own. It was his own counsel that Jonah the prophet of the Lord followed when he fled to Tarshish. It was not the counsel of the Lord that Joshua and the elders of Israel followed when they gave the right hand of fellowship to the Gibeonites, for the account they gave of themselves was so plausible and the evidences, that they had come a long journey, so convincing. But Joshua and the elders of Israel soon discovered that they had been taken in. And the reason? — "they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." And how often history repeats itself. Philip the evangelist, a man full of the Holy Ghost, received and baptised Simon the sorcerer, and the apostle Paul speaks of Demas who afterwards fell away, having loved this present world, as a fellow-labourer.

It was following his own counsel, his own reasoning on the dispensations of God in His providence that led Asaph, as he confesses in this Psalm, into the trial which brought him so low. He saw and even envied the prosperity of the wicked. They rejected the counsel of the Lord, blasphemed His name, lived as if God did not exist, and yet they prospered. On the other hand Asaph was given the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. "All the day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning." During this period all that he was conscious of was the plague of his own heart, plagued by its carnality and corruption and the rod of the Lord upon him. "Verily," he concludes, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." "With the heart," it is written "man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." My faith cannot be saving and the public profession I have made cannot but be false. It cannot be that I am of the Israel of God to whom the Lord is good and who are of a clean heart.

But although Asaph was writing bitter things against himself, he was by his speech betraying that he was an Israelite indeed. "If I say I will speak thus; behold I should offend against the generation of thy children." There is a tenderness in grace toward the Lord's people. Although I cannot see myself to be of them, I know the Lord is good to His Israel and I would not desire to hurt them. One of Jonathan Edwards' seventy resolutions was, "Let there be something of benevolence in all that I speak." Asaph also desired to be in the sanctuary of God. "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Grace in the heart loves what the Lord loves, where the Lord is publicly honoured and publicly praised. The godly in the past, although none more diligent in the private means than they, would walk long distances to be present in the public means. In the days of the persecution in Scotland a young woman set off to attend

a communion service far among the hills and the glens which afforded seclusion and protection. The journey was long, and she was in danger, if caught, of being either tortured or shot. The Red Dragoons who were out for the life of the Lord's witnesses spied her and rode up to her. On enquiring where she was going, she said, "The Elder Brother has died. His last will and testament is being read today and I am going to see if there is anything in the will for me." Not understanding the language of Canaan, they expressed their sympathy in her loss and allowed her to continue her journey.

It was in God's sanctuary that Asaph got deliverance. The Lord in leaving Asaph's deliverance in the sanctuary on record, did so for our learning, that with David who also honoured the private means, we might say — "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." I knew a godly woman in Scotland whose prayer and desire was that when she would not be able to attend the public means of grace that the Lord would remove her out of this world. Her desire was granted to her. In her younger days she used to walk the distance of about 30 miles to a neighbouring parish to hear the Word of life, denied her at that time in the parish in which she lived.

Asaph was given to see in the sanctuary the end of the wicked. He may have heard in the reading of the law the solemn words "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." He sees them hastening unconcernedly down on the slippery slope of worldly prosperity to be received at death not into glory, but to be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death. And he exclaims, "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors."

"How foolish and ignorant I was and in thy sight a beast! Nevertheless I am continually with thee." I am not with the wicked, their way is not my way, their prosperity is not my portion. I am not with them. I am with thee. I am continually with thee even when in deep and darksome caves. Thou art ever watching over me for thou art the Keeper of Israel who slumbers not nor sleeps, and who art making continual intercession on behalf on thine own. Asaph's deliverance was the fruit of Christ's intercession as surely as Peter's was. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." Save me from walking in counsels of mine own. It is thy counsel that shall stand. Thy

counsel is good, for good is the will of the Lord. What thou hast ordained for me shall come to pass, for the covenant is ordered in all things and sure. Whatsoever comes to pass is for thy glory, and what is for thy glory must be for my good. Thou art guiding thine Israel by a right way however dark and difficult and mysterious the way at times may appear.

"And afterward receive me to glory." Thou art my shepherd. Thou hast restored my soul from wandering in forbidden paths which led me into darkness and bondage. Reviving and restoration are in the covenant for His Israel. "Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry, and he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies." "My soul He doth restore again," is the testimony of His Israel. The Psalmist therefore in the light of the Lord's manifold restorations and deliverances to his soul from darkness, desertion and bondage, could say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." My foes shall be found liars unto me. I shall feast eternally in Immanuel's land. I shall be anointed with the oil of gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. My cup shall be overflowing and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory."

Are they not a blessed people whose God is the Lord! They only are a happy people. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." You shall never know what true peace and true happiness is until you find the peace and the happiness that is in the One who redeemed His people and who says "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And the message also of His Word is to you, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." "The Master is come and calleth for thee."

Follow Those Who Follow Christ

by The Rev. R. M. Cheyne

"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

(Ruth 1 v. 16).

I. Their God is a precious God

1. A sin-pardoning God: "Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity?" Unconverted souls have no God: "Without

God, and without hope in the world;" or, like Orpah, they have false gods. Whatever they like best is their god. Their belly is their god — money is their god — or the god of this world is their god. But, ah! he is not sin-pardoning. Your converted friends have found a sin-pardoning God — one that washes out their sins in blood, though red as scarlet — the God and Father of Jesus — one that forgets sins: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" — "Thou hast put all my sins behind thy back;" one that is the prodigal's Father: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." Should you not cleave to them? They had the same sins as you — perhaps they have sinned along with you. Why should you despair, if they have found mercy? Cleave to the skirt of their garment; for God is with them.

2. Their God is a faithful God — faithful to them in enabling them to persevere: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" — "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" — "Even to old age I am he." (Isa. 46:4). When once he takes a brand out of the fire, he never lets it fall in again. He will let heaven and earth fall sooner than one of his own. He keeps them night and day. The souls whom God chose four years ago in this place, he has kept to this day. Often they have been ready to die: "Then the Lord sent from above; he took me, he drew me out of many waters" — "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them: I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

Faithful in temptations: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Look back, believers, on your temptations. They have been very dreadful. You have been on the brink of ruin. The Lord has delivered you.

Faithful in afflictions: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Do you not see they have a refuge in the storm? Believers in this place have passed through many sore trials within these four years; yet God has been their refuge. He is a strength to the needy in his distress. Do you not see in the hour of trial what a rest they found in God — in the Saviour? — how they poured out their sorrows into the ear of their High Priest? Cleave you to them.

II. Their people are a happy people.

Naomi was one of the peculiar people of Israel. It was this people that Ruth was going to join. But converted persons amongst us

have joined the true Israel — a still more peculiar people. They have been added to the Church — such as have been saved.

1. They are a pardoned people: "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven." They all have this blessedness. Sin is the greatest curse and burden in this world. Sin makes the world groan, makes damned souls shriek, and makes hell blaze. But this people have no unpardoned sin lying on them. They are washed whiter than snow. They are all fair — without so much as a spot on them. They are as clean in God's pure eye as Christ is. Christ carried all their sins — they carry all his righteousness. Christ has suffered all their hell. They are in the love of God. God delights in them. Are they not a happy people? Are they not happier than you, who have so much sin as would sink a world?

2. A holy people — all born again — all have received the Holy Spirit. He dwells in them, and will never leave them. They have an old heart; still the Spirit reigns in them. They walk after the Spirit — they love in the Spirit — they pray in the Holy Ghost. Of themselves they cannot pray; but the Spirit teaches them. Heaven is begun in their hearts. They have a little heaven now. Do you not see that they have left off your carnal pleasures? "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." Do you see no difference in their tempers — habits — lives? Are they not calmer, happier, heavenlier, than they were before? Seek what they have found.

3. All things work together for their good. Perhaps you will say they are an afflicted people. Some in poverty — some bereaved — some groaning on sick beds. True, God dealeth with them as with sons. Often they cry, These things are against me. But really all is **for** them. If we could see the end as God does, we would see that every event is **for** the believer. When we get to heaven, we will see that every wind was wafting us to glory.

4. In death. Even wicked Balaam said: "Let me die the death of the righteous." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." God calls upon you to mark the death-bed of his children. Sometimes it is triumphant, like Stephen: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Lord Jesus receive my spirit" — almost always peaceful — or, if it be that the sun goes down in a cloud, O how sweet the surprise, when the believer finds himself on the other side of Jordan! — at the pearly gate of the New Jerusalem! — in the arms of the angels! — in the smile of Jesus! "There is a rest remaining for the people of God." Will you not cleave to your godly child — parent — sister — friend? You have sported together, you have sinned together — will you not be blessed together? "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

(Extracted from **Additional Remains**).

Doctrines of the Christian Faith

III. The Attributes of God

by Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow

When we speak of the attributes of God we speak of the several things which are revealed to be true of the Divine nature.

The attributes themselves should never be considered apart from the Divine nature. The nature and essence of God cannot be thought of apart from consideration of the attributes.

For instance when we say "God is a Spirit," we mean that the nature and essence of God is Spiritual. In further explanation of this we mean that the nature of God does not possess bodily parts or passions. It is not composed of material parts and not subject to material limitations and consequently cannot be discerned by us through our bodily senses. On the other hand, we affirm that he is a rational and moral Being whose actions are determined by his own will. He is one who is self-existent and not dependent upon anything outside of himself, and distinct from this created universe.

In discussing the perfections of God a distinction is sometimes made between 'incommunicable' and 'communicable' attributes. By incommunicable attributes we mean those perfections of the Divine nature which he does not communicate to any creature. Communicable attributes, on the other hand are such as are found in the human spirit created or re-created in the image of God.

The Shorter Catechism divides this subject for us very nicely in answer to the Question "What is God?": "God is a Spirit, Infinite, Eternal and Unchangeable in his Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth." The perfections of Infinity, Eternity and Unchangeability are incommunicable. These mark God out as the self-existent Being who alone is infinite from everlasting to everlasting, and without change. The other attributes, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth, God did communicate in finite measure to man in his original creation and when he restores sinful man by the new creation in Christ Jesus he communicates these lost attributes to him once more.

We shall proceed, therefore, to make a few remarks on these various perfections which are true of the nature of God and can be seen by the eye of the Soul anointed with the Divine eye-salve in the works of creation and providence, always remembering that the latter sphere includes redemption.

A. The Incommunicable Attributes — (i) Infinity. — By

saying that God is Infinite, we mean that he has no limitation which would involve any imperfection on his part. He is above and beyond space and time. "Great is the Lord: His understanding is infinite." He is infinite in all his perfections. The immensity of God refers to his infinitude with respect to space. Omnipresence is another word used for this aspect of God's infinitude. (ii) **Eternity** — This is the aspect of God's infinitude relative to Time, and can be thought of as duration through endless ages. This is a great mystery which the finite mind of man cannot grasp and yet it is clearly revealed in the Word of God. "Before the mountains were brought forth or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." (Psalm 90-v.2). (iii) **Immutability** — That God is unchangeable not only in his being, but in his knowledge, will, purposes and attributes, is absolutely essential to the perfection of God. The perfect being is one who can neither improve nor become less than perfect. This glorious truth is a wonderful strength and stay to the people of God. Speaking of the earth and the heavens the Psalmist says, "They shall perish but thou shalt endure: yea, all of these shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them and they shall be changed: but thou art the same and thy years shall have no end" (Psalm 102 vv. 26 and 27). In the midst of the defections of Israel, the Lord, by the mouth of Malachi says "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Ch. 3-v. 6).

Sometimes phrases in the Bible such as God being said to "repent" raise difficulties when viewed in the light of his unchangeability. If God is said to "repent" does this not mean some change in his mind? Shedd writes as follows on this particular point "God is said to repent. (Gen. 6:6). It repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth' (Jonah 3:10): 'God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them.' This means no change in his attributes and character, but only in his manner of treating men. 'Repentance in God is not a change of will, but a will to change.' If God had treated the Ninevites after their repentance as he had threatened to treat them before their repentance, this would have proved him to be mutable. It would have showed him to be one time displeased with impenitence, and at another with penitence. Charnock (**Immutability of God**) remarks that 'the unchangeableness of God, when considered in relation to the exercise of his attributes in the government of the world, consists not in always acting in the same manner however circumstances and causes may alter, but in always doing what is right, and in adapting his treatment of his intelligent creatures to the variation of their actions and characters. When the Devils, now fallen, stood as glorious angels, they were the objects of God's

love, necessarily: when they fell, they were the objects of God's hatred, because impure. The same reason which made him love them while they were pure, made him hate them when they were criminal.' It is one thing for God to will a change in created things external to himself, and another thing for him to change in his own nature and character. God can will a change in the affairs of men, such as the abrogation of the Levitical priesthood and ceremonial, and yet his own will remain immutable, because he had from eternity willed and decreed the change. In like manner, promises and threatenings that are made conditionally, and suppose a change in man, imply no change in the essence or attributes of God. 'If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.' (Jer. 18:7-10) No change is made in God, as there is in the creature, by his knowledge. A creature increases his knowledge, and experiences a change intellectually. But God's knowledge is a fixed quantity, because it is infinite. He knows everything from everlasting to everlasting, and at each instant, and there is no more than everything. He knew before it came to pass that Christ would be crucified upon Calvary. When that event occurred, it made no change in his knowledge. He was no better informed than he was before. He was no more certain of the crucifixion after the event than he was before it, because he had decreed that it should take place. He could not have foreknown that it would take place, unless he had predetermined that it should. If God does not first decide that an event shall happen, he must wait and see whether it happens in order to any certain knowledge; and this would make a change in his knowledge."

We shall deal (D.V.) with the communicable attributes in our next article.

Thoughts on Prayer

by Bishop J. C. Ryle

"Men ought always to pray." — Luke 18:1.

"I will that men pray everywhere." — 1 Tim 2:8.

Prayer is the most important subject in practical religion. All other subjects are second to it. Reading the Bible, keeping the Sabbath, hearing sermons, attending public worship, going to the Lord's Table — all these are very weighty matters. But none of them are so important as private prayer.

I propose in this paper to offer seven plain reasons why I use

such strong language about prayer. I invite to these reasons the attention of every thinking man into whose hands this paper may fall. I venture to assert with confidence that they deserve serious consideration.

1. In the first place, Prayer is absolutely needful to a man's salvation.

I say absolutely needful, and I say so advisedly. I am not speaking now of infants and idiots. I am not settling the state of the heathen. I remember that where little is given, there little will be required. I speak especially of those who call themselves Christian in a land like our own. And of such I say no man or woman can expect to be saved who does not pray.

I hold salvation by grace as strongly as any one. I would gladly offer a free and full pardon to the greatest sinner that ever lived. I would not hesitate to stand by his dying bed, and say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ even now, and you shall be saved." But that a man can have salvation without asking for it, I cannot see in the Bible. That a man will receive pardon of his sins, who will not so much as lift up his heart inwardly, and say, "Lord Jesus, give it to me," this I cannot find. I can find that nobody will be saved by his prayers, but I cannot find that without prayer anybody will be saved.

It is not absolutely needful to salvation that a man should read the Bible. A man may have no learning, or be blind, and yet have Christ in his heart. It is not absolutely needful that a man should hear the public preaching of the Gospel. He may live where the Gospel is not preached, or he may be bedridden, or deaf. But the same thing cannot be said about prayer. It is absolutely needful to salvation that a man should pray.

There is no royal road either to health or learning. Princes and kings, poor men and peasants, all alike must attend to the wants of their own bodies and their own minds. No man can eat, drink, or sleep by proxy. No man can get the alphabet learned for him by another. All these are things which everybody must do for himself, or they will not be done at all.

Just as it is with the mind and body, so it is with the soul. There are certain things absolutely needful to the soul's health and well-being. Each one must attend to these things for himself. Each must repent for himself. Each must apply to Christ for himself. And for himself each one must speak to God and pray. You must do it for yourself, for by nobody else can it be done.

How can we expect to be saved by an "unknown" God? And how can we know God without prayer? We know nothing of men and women in this world, unless we speak with them. We cannot know God in Christ, unless we speak to Him in prayer. If we wish to be with Him in heaven, we must be His friends on earth.

If we wish to be His friends on earth, we must pray.

There will be many at Christ's right hand in the last day. The saints gathered from North and South, and East and West, will be "a multitude that no man can number." (Rev. 7:9). The song of victory that will burst from their mouths, when their redemption is at length complete, will be a glorious song indeed. It will be far above the noise of many waters, and of mighty thunders. But there will be no discord in that song. They that sing will sing with one heart as well as one voice. Their experience will be one and the same. All will have believed. All will have been washed in the blood of Christ. All will have been born again. All will have prayed. Yes, we must pray on earth, or we shall never praise in heaven. We must go through the school of prayer, or we shall never be fit for the holiday of praise. In short, to be prayerless is to be without God — without Christ — without grace — without hope — and without heaven. It is to be in the road to hell.

II. In the second place, a habit of prayer is one of the surest marks of a true Christian.

All the children of God on earth are alike in this respect. From the moment there is any life and reality about their religion, they pray. Just as the first sign of life in an infant when born into the world, is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women when they are born again, is praying.

This is one of the common marks of all the elect of God. "They cry unto Him day and night." (Luke 18:1). The Holy Spirit, who makes them new creatures, works in them the feeling of adoption, and makes them cry, "Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15). The Lord Jesus, when He quickens them, gives them a voice and a tongue, and says to them, "Be dumb no more." God has no dumb children. It is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to cry. They see their need of mercy and grace. They feel their emptiness and weakness. They cannot do otherwise than they do. They must pray.

I have looked carefully over the lives of God's saints in the Bible. I cannot find one of whose history much is told us, from Genesis to Revelation, who was not a man of prayer. I find it mentioned as a characteristic of the godly, that "they call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." I find it recorded as a characteristic of the wicked, that "they call not upon the Lord." (1 Peter 1:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; Psalm 14:4).

I have read the lives of many eminent Christians who have been on earth since the Bible days. Some of them, I see, were rich, and some poor. Some were learned, and some unlearned. Some of them were Episcopalians, some Presbyterians, some Baptists, some Independents. Some were Calvinists, and some Arminians. Some have loved to use a liturgy, and some to use none. But one thing,

I see, they all had in common. They have all been men of prayer.

I study the reports of Missionary Societies in our own times. I see with joy that heathen men and women are receiving the Gospel in various parts of the globe. There are conversions in Africa, in New Zealand, in Hindostan, in America. The people converted are naturally unlike one another in every respect. But one striking thing I observe at all the Missionary stations. The converted people always pray.

I do not deny that a man may pray without heart, and without sincerity. I do not for a moment pretend to say that the mere fact of a person praying proves everything about his soul. As in every other part of religion, so also in this, there is plenty of deception and hypocrisy.

But this I do say — that not praying is a clear proof that a man is not yet a true Christian. He cannot really feel his sins. He cannot love God. He cannot feel himself a debtor to Christ. He cannot long after holiness. He cannot desire heaven. He has yet to be born again. He has yet to be made a new creature. He may boast confidently of election, grace, faith, hope, and knowledge, and deceive ignorant people. But you may rest assured it is all vain talk if he does not pray.

And I say furthermore, that of all the evidences of the real work of the Spirit, a habit of hearty private prayer is one of the most satisfactory that can be named. A man may preach from false motives. A man may write books, and make fine speeches, and seem diligent in good works, and yet be a Judas Iscariot. But a man seldom goes into his closet, and pours out his soul before God in secret, unless he is in earnest. The Lord Himself has set His stamp on prayer as the best proof of a true conversion. When He sent Ananias to Saul in Damascus, He gave him no other evidence of his change of heart than this — “Behold, he prayeth.” (Acts 9:11).

I know that much may go on in a man's mind before he is brought to pray. He may have many convictions, desires, wishes, feelings, intentions, resolutions, hopes, and fears. But all these things are very uncertain evidences. They are to be found in ungodly people, and often come to nothing. In many a case they are not more lasting than “the morning cloud, and the dew that goeth away.” (Hos. 6:4). A real hearty prayer, flowing from a broken and contrite spirit, is worth all these things put together.

I know that the elect of God are chosen to salvation from all eternity. I do not forget that the Holy Spirit, who calls them in due time, in many instances leads them by very slow degrees to acquaintance with Christ. But the eye of man can only judge by what it sees. I cannot call anyone justified until he believes. I dare not say that anyone believes until he prays. I cannot under-

stand a dumb faith. The first act of faith will be to speak to God. Faith is to the soul what life is to the body. Prayer is to faith what breath is to life. How can a man live and not breathe is past my comprehension, and how a man can believe and not pray is past my comprehension too.

Let no one be surprised if he hears ministers of the Gospel dwelling much on the importance of prayer. This is the point we want to bring you to — we want to know that you pray. Your view of doctrine may be correct. Your love of Protestantism may be warm and unmistakable. But still this may be nothing more than head knowledge and party spirit. The great point is this—whether you can speak to God as well as speak about God.

III. In the third place, there is no duty in religion so neglected as private prayer.

We live in days of abounding religious profession. There are more places of public worship now than there ever were before. There are more persons attending them than there ever have been since England was a nation. And yet in spite of all this public religion, I believe there is a vast neglect of private prayer.

I should not have said so a few years ago. I once thought, in my ignorance, that most people said their prayers, and many people prayed. I have lived to think differently. I have come to the conclusion that the great majority of professing Christians do not pray at all.

I know this sounds very shocking, and will startle many. But I am satisfied that prayer is just one of those things which is thought “a matter of course,” and, like many matters of course, is shamefully neglected. It is “everybody’s business;” and, as it often happens in such cases, it is a business carried on by very few. It is one of those private transactions between God and our souls which no eye sees, and therefore one which there is every temptation to pass over and leave alone.

I believe that thousands never say a word of prayer at all. They eat; they drink; they sleep; they rise; they go forth to their labour; they return to their homes; they breathe God’s air; they see God’s sun; they walk on God’s earth; they enjoy God’s mercies; they have dying bodies; they have judgment and eternity before them. But they never speak to God! They live like the beasts that perish; they behave like creatures without souls; they have not a word to say to Him in whose hand are their life, and breath, and all things, and from whose mouth they must one day receive their everlasting sentence. How dreadful this seems! But if the secrets of men were known, how common!

I believe there are tens of thousands whose prayers are nothing but a mere form — a set of words repeated by rote, without a thought about their meaning. Some say over a few hasty sentences

picked up in the nursery when they were children. Some content themselves with repeating the Belief, forgetting that there is not a request in it. Some add the Lord's Prayer, but without the slightest desire that its solemn petitions may be granted. Many, even of those who use good forms, mutter their prayers over after they have gone into bed, or scramble over them while they wash or dress in the morning. Men may think what they please, but they may depend that in the sight of God this is not praying. Words said without heart are as utterly useless to our souls as the drum-beating of the poor heathen before their idols. Where there is no heart, there may be lip-work and tongue-work, but there is nothing that God listens to — there is no prayer. Saul, I have no doubt, said many a long prayer before the Lord met him on the way to Damascus. But it was not till his heart was broken that the Lord said, "He prayeth."

Does this surprise any reader? Listen to me and I will show you that I am not speaking as I do without reason. Do you think that my assertions are extravagant and unwarrantable? Give me your attention, and I will show you that I am only telling you the truth.

Have you forgotten that it is not natural to any one to pray? The carnal mind is enmity against God. The desire of man's heart is to get far away from God, and to have nothing to do with Him. His feeling toward Him is not love but fear. Why then should a man pray when he has no real sense of sin, no real feeling of spiritual wants — no thorough belief in unseen things — no desire after holiness and heaven? Of all these things the vast majority of men know and feel nothing. The multitude walk in the broad way. I cannot forget this. Therefore I say boldly, I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten that it is not fashionable to pray? It is just one of the things that many would be rather ashamed to own. There are hundreds who would sooner storm a breach, or lead a forlorn hope, than confess publicly that they make a habit of prayer. There are thousands who, if obliged by chance to sleep in the same room with a stranger, would lie down in bed without a prayer. To ride well, to shoot well, to dress well, to go to balls and concerts, and theatres, to be thought clever and agreeable — and all this is fashionable, but not to pray. I cannot forget this. I cannot think a habit is common which so many seem ashamed to own. I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten the lives that many live? Can we really suppose that people are praying against sin night and day, when we see them plunging right into it? Can we suppose they pray against the world, when they are entirely absorbed and taken up with its pursuits? Can we think they really ask God for grace to

serve Him, when they do not show the slightest desire to serve Him at all? Oh, no! It is plain as daylight that the great majority of men either ask nothing of God, or do not mean what they say when they do ask — which is just the same thing. Praying and sinning will never live together in the same heart. Prayer will consume sin, or sin will choke prayer. I cannot forget this. I look at men's lives. I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten the deaths that many die? How many, when they draw near death, seem entirely strangers to God. Not only are they sadly ignorant of His Gospel, but sadly wanting in the power to speak to Him. There is a terrible awkwardness, and shyness, and newness, and rawness, in their endeavours to approach Him. They seem to be taking up a fresh thing. They appear as if they wanted an introduction to God, and as if they had never talked with Him before. I remember having heard of a lady who was anxious to have a minister to visit her in her last illness. She desired that he would pray with her. He asked her what he should pray for. She did not know and could not tell. She was utterly unable to name any one thing which she wished him to ask God for her soul. All she seemed to want was the form of a minister's prayers. I can quite understand this. Deathbeds are great revealers of secrets. I cannot forget what I have seen of sick and dying people. This also leads me to believe that few pray.

The Diary of Dugald Buchanan

Period II — From twelve years of age to twenty-four
(Continued from page 91)

I was now twenty years of age when I came to Dumbarton, where I wanted the benefit of the good society I enjoyed at Kippon, and because I had not the root of the matter in me, was soon seduced by my new associates to get occasionally intoxicated, and when I would become deprived of reason would now and then utter an oath, for which, after I had become sober, I would heartily repent, and have recourse to my old habit of making vows, which were often no sooner made than broken. At last my building, which was made up of untempered mortar, fell to the ground, not all at once, but by degrees, from one step to another, till at last I found myself wholly sunk in the mire of sin, and joined with the rest of my companions in all their hellish courses.

As I was one day walking abroad in the fields, that Scripture sounded a dreadful alarm in my conscience, "when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places seeking

rest, but findeth none; then he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matthew 12 43, 45). O, how this went like a dagger to my heart! It put me in an agony to think of being forsaken by God, and to become a habitation of devils. "Cursed," said I, "be the day in which I was born; nay, rather cursed be the day in which I first departed from God! O cursed be the day in which I met with these cursed companions! O sad condition! to be given over to a reprobate mind. O miserable change!" I was in that state that I could pluck my hair, and tear my flesh. It is, indeed, impossible for me adequately to describe the unutterable horror with which my soul was filled. I looked upon myself as being altogether forsaken by God, and as having no more hope, but a looking for a fearful indignation that devoureth all God's enemies.

After this, I for some time became so melancholy that nothing could give me any comfort. But afterwards I began to consider what I had better do. I saw that heaven was lost; and that I had no other heaven to get if I did not take a heaven on earth. Therefore I began to cheer up my spirits, and began to take my fill of sinful enjoyment while I might have it. Then all the bonds of restraining grace were broken, and I ran on in all manner of sin with greediness. I became like a wild ass in the wilderness, and used every means to lull my conscience asleep, which, however, I could not do. Company was the only remedy I found for easing my trouble, which made me flee to it on every opportunity; and because I could not be always in company, in order to divert my mind when in private, I learned all the ballads and songs I could get; which was but a bad cure for a wounded and festered conscience. Yet, notwithstanding all these means to which I had recourse, I could find no rest.

Then I thought if I could persuade myself there was no God, that I could get some ease in my mind. But all my efforts could not free my mind of the impressions of the existence of God. It was my earnest wish that there was no God; but I could not shake off the dread of His vengeance, and in the midst of all my jollity, whilst endeavouring to shake off all thoughts of God and eternity, an irresistible impression would come across my mind, that there was a God, and an everlasting state of being, prepared for all impenitent sinners. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalms 14:1). I found the thought regarding the existence of God continually assaulting me, and my doubts grew ultimately so strong that I concluded there was no God; nor could all my power and strength resist the violence of this temptation.

I found now the sad effects of my former exercises, when I employed all my ingenuity and powers in persuading myself that there was no God, that I might sleep securely in my sins, although, as I have already stated, I could not, by all the means in my power, succeed in convincing myself of the reality of the object of this awful and blasphemous wish. All that I could do was merely to wish in my heart, that there was no God who might take vengeance upon me; and that temptation which I had before sought after with so much earnestness, came now of itself without any solicitation; and I was now as unable to impress the belief of the being of God upon my mind, as I was before to shake it off.

Being one day in an adjoining wood, and my thoughts deeply exercised about the being of God, I began to look upon the plants which were growing around me, and observed a most beautiful order in their form and structure. Having plucked some of them, and examined them minutely, I saw so many branches growing from the trunk of each, and every one at a regular distance from the other; I saw also so many twigs spreading from those on either side, in so admirable and exact an order, that I could perceive no difference between one side and another. Again, I considered the various kinds of birds and beasts, and how every creature was provided with food and directed to its proper ends. Then I enquired of myself, How came these to be so? But I could not tell, unless by the power and wisdom of the Creator. And thus, when I considered the works of nature and providence, my mind was in some degree settled as to the being of God, and His providence towards His creatures.

Another day, while walking through the fields, I found the skull of a horse lying on the ground, bleached by the weather, so that all the seams and joinings in it were distinctly seen. Taking it up in my hands, I very minutely examined the curious seams by which one piece was joined to another, and the admirable windings and turnings that were about the ears and nostrils; I looked upon both sides of it, to see, if among so many intricacies and so many pieces joined to one another, I could perceive any difference or defect; and after I had spent a considerable time in comparing one part with another, I could not perceive the very least difference, but a wonderful order and adaptation in every part of it. I saw that nothing less than infinite wisdom could contrive such a piece of mechanism as this; and that all the men on earth could not frame such another, although they had it as a pattern; and if they could not frame the skull how much less could they join bone to bone, and cover them with sinews, flesh and skin; and least of all put breath into it and cause it to walk and move as it once did? Then, I concluded, surely there is a God

who is infinite in wisdom and power, who is the great Creator of all things, and who ruleth every thing as He pleaseth.

After that, I considered man, and how he excels all other creatures, especially in his being endowed with a rational soul by which he is capable of knowing God and His works. From these and from many other considerations of a similar kind, I became convinced of the existence of God; yet my mind remained unsatisfied as to how I ought to worship Him. For it was about the time I had met with the temptation, concerning the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the authority of the Scriptures, in which I was assaulted with this temptation of Atheism, so that all directions afforded me from Revelation were rendered void; and this temptation, I mean that concerning the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, like the rest, followed me till I got the discovery of God in Christ, which overcame this and the other temptations.

At this time, however, I had arrived at such a height in wickedness, as to sin openly and avowedly. I gloried in my wickedness, and was not content with making a boast of my own sins, but ascribed to myself the sins of others also. I never looked into my Bible, for it was a terror to me. The only books I studied, were Gordon's Geographical Grammar, and the History of the Kings of Scotland; and for whatever I did I could not bear reproof, for the least reproof would arm my conscience with new accusations which would put my soul in an agony. I was one day reproved for my swearing, by a very ignorant, and I believe graceless person, when I thought the terror of my conscience made me so weak as scarcely to be able to stand.

I even went so far as to attempt to wrest the Scriptures, to justify my wicked actions. O! the height of all the impiety to which I had now come! "As also in all his Epistles, speaking of them in these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope;" "whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (2 Peter 3:16; Isaiah 5:18, 20; Philip. 3:19).

Much about this time, I met with one who was reputed a learned man, and enquired of him what he thought of a future state, and also of the punishment of the damned in hell. He said there was no such thing as everlasting punishment, and this he attempted to prove by several arguments, especially from a consideration of the goodness of God. For how could it consist with the good-

ness of God, he observed, to torment poor creatures through eternity; especially the heathen, who had never heard of Him, with many other such arguments. Hearing this new doctrine urged with so many arguments, I was very glad, and thought with myself that there was yet hope of coming out of hell, since it was not eternal, but only to last for a time. O sweet doctrine to such as I was, who looked for nothing but everlasting punishment, that I might now, although never so short, indulge some hope !

When I parted with this man, I began to persuade others to be of my monstrous opinion, by arguing with them as he did with me. But none would believe it, and indeed no wonder, for I did not fully believe it myself. I could not get a full persuasion of it fixed on my mind, only I wished it was true, but all my wishes were crushed by this consideration, viz., that there was a God, and that this God was a God of truth; that He said in His word, the punishment of the wicked in another world will be eternal, and that it was only a mere man like myself, who said it would be only for a time. Then I thought on these words, "Let God be true and every man a liar," and said if God be true, I must be in hell through all eternity. Having no comfort from this doctrine, I began to think how I could dwell with devouring fire; and how could I abide with everlasting burnings, and how could this feeble back bear the heavy and unsupportable wrath of God, which burns to the lowest hell? Sometimes I thought that God would strengthen me to bear what He would inflict; and again, that I would do as well as others, and harden myself in sorrows. These were but melancholy meditations, and therefore I endeavoured to banish them from my mind.

There was another thing I found in myself, although it may appear very strange how it could possibly be, and that was, that I could never have full freedom in the company of wicked men, for although I was singular for wickedness myself, I could not love it in others, and frequently reprov'd them for their cursing, drinking, and other sins. And when anything would cross me, I would think of enlisting in the army; but upon considering the way of living these men had, and how they indulged in every kind of wickedness, especially in swearing and other sinful practices, my heart could not endure to think of being all my days in such company, and thought that, if I kept myself from such, I might sometime or other return. This was a secret thought which was suggested to my mind, but was crushed by my unbelief, so that it had no influence upon my conversation, for it did not come the length of saying, "There is hope in Israel concerning this thing." However, I thought if I did enlist that every opportunity of repentance would be for ever lost, and by this faint consideration of mercy, I was kept from going into the army.

There was another thing that was very stumbling to me, and that was the loose conduct of many of the professors of religion, whom I knew; and also the unsuitable walk of some ministers. For I had a habit whenever I happened to be in company, either with ministers or professors, of diligently observing their behaviour, and discovering whether they conducted themselves agreeably to their profession; and when I found their conversation vain and about worldly concerns, which did not beseem them, then I concluded that they were either mere hypocrites, or that there was no such thing as that reality in religion which they affirmed; since I was satisfied that if these men believed the reality of those things which they pressed upon others, it would make themselves walk differently from what I observed them to do. I thought also, if I were within reach of mercy, how I would walk in all holiness. Hence, the conclusion I drew from my observations was, that these people were, in all respects, in as bad a condition as myself. I served the devil publicly, and crowned him as my lord, and I appeared outwardly to be what I was inwardly; but they professed to serve God, and at the same time served the devil. These things were very stumbling to me.

I observe these two or three things from this passage. In the first place, I observe the great need the people of God have to study the Psalmist's resolution, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me" (Psalm 39). It is much to have the wisdom of the serpent, and the harmlessness of the dove; to walk so as that our good may not be evil spoken of, for many are waiting for our halting, that they may have somewhat to say to the reproach of religion.

Again, I see that there is great need to observe that precept, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:5,6). And seeing that, ministers and other persons, whose example is most likely to be imitated, ought to make it their study to walk as it becometh the people of God. For if those who are the salt of the earth lose their savour, wherewith shall they be salted? And if the light that is in them be darkness, how great must that darkness be? And as Solomon says, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour" (Eccles. 10:1). I further observe, that by this the weak believer is stumbled, and the heart of the wicked hardened in the ways of sin; and the good way of our God evil spoken of on that account. "Thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Sam. 12:14). Which I have found to my sad experience.

I was one day hearing a sermon in our parish Church, where

I now very seldom went, unless it was for some by-end or other, when the minister observed that wearied backsliders were like iron once heated. This was so applicable to my case, that I concluded since I had been so often heated and cooled again, that I was turned like steel that could never be softened. For I found the truth of the observation by experience, having made several essays to serve the Lord, and drawn back as often. I remark this one thing in regard to my own backsliding; namely, that after the first time I drew back I was a degree worse than before I returned; and that, the second time I drew back, I was twofold the child of hell more than ever; and that the last time the unclean spirit returned, he brought seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And then my last fall was, without doubt, seven times deeper in the gulf of sin than my first.

This observation did me no other service than merely to let me see that to all appearance I would never be softened. And so to get some ease, I betook myself to my old trade of singing ballads and going into company. But in the midst of my mirth my conscience would stop my mouth by the consideration: there is an everlasting burning abiding you, and how can you be merry? I never, however, intended to let the trouble of my mind be known to any, for no man could help me, and God would not help me. I saw that in a short time I would go to my place, and soon be deprived of those common mercies which I enjoyed from that God who makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good. I had continually a vehement thirst, and drank a great quantity of water, and when I got a drink, would say: "O! poor wretch, you will be, ere long, with Dives in the flames of hell, where you will not get so much as a single drop to cool your scorching tongue." I was greatly afraid of death, and like Cain, said, "Every one who finds me will slay me." If it was but a little pain in the head. I would look upon it as the messenger that was to end my heaven. Something of that curse which Moses pronounced against the children of Israel followed me, "The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them. The wicked flee when no men pursueth" (Lev. 26:36; Prov. 28:1). But it pleased the Lord that during these four melancholy years I never had one day's sickness, and I believe if I had, the terror of my mind would have distracted me. Yet, I believe it was easy for the Lord to have prevented my fears by allaying my trouble.

Obituary

ALEXANDER NICOLSON, Elder, Glasgow

This worthy man was born in the Island of Fladda, at the north end of the Island of Raasay, a small island between Skye and the

mainland opposite Applecross. His date of birth was June, 1883; so that when he passed away on the 28th day of June, 1969, he had attained the age of 86 years.

He left his native isle and came to Glasgow in May, 1901, where he was employed by The Clyde Navigation Trust to whom he gave faithful service for 36 years until his retiral due to ill health. During the period of his retirement, he enjoyed a good measure of health and loved to travel to various parts of the Church attending Communion seasons, at which he became a well known figure.

In 1909 he married Miss Catherine Clark, a native of Lochinver, to whom he was joined in happy union until her death forty seven years later. Mrs Nicolson was a true helpmeet to her husband and, especially in her latter years, gave clear evidences that the grace of God had taken possession of her heart. She was most kind and hospitable as many still alive can testify. On one occasion, when she was seriously ill in hospital, and not expected to recover, a friend who had been a frequent recipient of her kindness was pleading her case at a Throne of Grace when that portion of Truth came powerfully to his mind concerning her: "for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shown toward his name in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister" (Heb. 6 v. 10). From this he concluded that Mrs Nicolson was to be raised up, which indeed took place; and she was spared for many years after the incident. It was evident also that her hospitality arose not only from natural kindness, which she possessed in abundance, but that it was one of the "things which accompany salvation."

Of the family of eight granted to Mr and Mrs Nicolson, six are spared. The first born died at the age of two, and another daughter suddenly at the age of 6. Both of these were sad blows to our friend, but were as nothing compared to the death of his wife. Although given a wonderful measure of grace to be reconciled to the Lord's will about the loss of his life's partner, he confided on one occasion to the writer: "I never thought I would feel it so deeply."

Up to the death of his second child, Alexander Nicolson had no true realisation of the solemnity of a soul journeying to an endless Eternity. For twenty years he had been under the ministry of the Rev. Neil Cameron, attending church regularly, holding family worship, observing the Sabbath, and bringing his family to the means of grace as they grew up. On occasions, he had severe twinges of conscience while in church but when he came out all this passed away as the morning cloud and the early dew. In November 1922, however, Rev. D. N. MacLeod, when minister in Tarbert, Harris, and later in Ullapool, was assisting at the Communion in Glasgow and preached in the Hall there from the words:

“And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. Ch. 6 v. 11).

It was a powerful sermon and Alick was greatly impressed under it and wept most of the time that Rev. D. N. MacLeod was preaching. The following year at the November Communion, Mr MacLeod, who was again assisting, preached on Sabbath morning. He enjoyed a large measure of liberty, but it was when he was fencing the Table that the arrow of conviction so powerfully entered the heart of Alick Nicolson that he could not move but had to be carried from the church. He often mentioned, when speaking to the Question, and in conversation with intimate friends that, although the arrow of conviction went so deep convincing him of his sin and misery, yet he was also supremely conscious of such a holy desire entering his soul after the God against whom he had sinned that he thought he would go through fire and water to have this desire satisfied. His sins he felt to be so great that he could not believe from any human being that the Lord would have mercy on such a great sinner as he felt himself to be.

The following Summer he went to the Communion in Raasay. He felt very cast down, empty and sad, and yet kept crying to the Lord for mercy. On Monday the Rev. Neil Cameron preached from Psalm 78, v. 5: “For he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children.” The time of Alick’s spiritual deliverance had come. Speaking of his experience under this sermon he said, “Mr Cameron was not long preaching when I felt the sweetness of the power of the Word going through me, and realising the love of Christ filling my soul, I could truly say that the desire and thirst in my soul was fully satisfied. I could not restrain myself; I had to cry out with such joy in my soul. I could say at that time ‘It is enough, I cannot stand any more.’ It did not last very long and there is none to blame but myself — my folly made it so.” On other occasions he was granted a similar nearness to the Lord, and these occasions lay behind the petition so often in his public prayers: “That I Thy power may behold and brightness of thy face, as I have seen Thee heretofore within thy Holy Place.” (Ps. 62 v.2).

He became a communicant in November, 1925, and was elected, ordained, and inducted to the Deaconship in April, 1931. He was thus among the last of the office-bearers in the days of Mr Cameron and, while there are one or two others in other parts of the church, he was the last one resident in St. Jude’s. He dearly loved the congregation and was greatly interested in all its activities and, even as he entered the valley of the shadow of death, spoke to those around him of the congregation and of those in

it whom he had known for such a long time.

He was deeply grieved by the trouble through which a section of the congregation left and went elsewhere, but he felt the hand of the Lord could be clearly seen in supporting the faithful section of the congregation and enabling them to continue the testimony for truth in the City of Glasgow.

He was elected an elder in March, 1946, and took a great interest in the Courts and Committees of the Church upon which he served. He possessed a goodly measure of common sense, and once he saw a point to be correct would hold on to it tenaciously. He earnestly sought the good of Zion among us and many were his cries to Heaven that the Lord would pour forth His Spirit.

He was very evidently a man of prayer. His public exercises were characterised by freshness, directness of petition and unction which gave the Lord's people to feel that their needs were indeed being made known to the Hearer of prayer. The reality of Eternity, the value of the soul, the preciousness of the blood of the Lamb to cleanse from all sin, and the interests of Christ's Cause were all gathered together in his earnest prayers for mercy and grace to help in time of need. He was one of the best of the Men in speaking to the Question — an exercise which he greatly appreciated both as speaker and hearer. Having a clear experience of effectual calling and favoured with many other experiences he was well equipped to give marks of grace. Although of an intelligent turn of mind, he was not widely read, so he spoke from what he had directly passed through in his own soul, and this proved very helpful in this type of meeting. Our friend was not without his faults. On occasions, he would take too long on the Question or be guilty of some hasty statement which tended to mar the value of what he had to say. These and other faults, however, serve to remind us that there is no perfection here, and did not detract from the all-round impression that he was a true man of God.

He mellowed considerably in his latter years. In no case was this seen so clearly as in his attitude to the young. In his death they lost a real friend who prayed for them and sought their good. He rejoiced in the increased interest evidenced by young people in the Gospel of Christ and hoped and prayed that they would be kept faithful to the end.

The year before he died he mentioned to the writer that he did not expect to be long in the world. He had just been to a Communion and, when he came back he said, "I got what I have been looking for for some time at the Communion, and I do not expect to be here much longer." In June of last year he was at the Glendale Communion where he enjoyed his usual health. The following Sabbath he attended the services at Vatten and remarked

to his daughter with whom he was staying, how much he enjoyed the liberty with which the Rev. John Colquhoun had been favoured on that day. Later in the week he took a bad turn which gave every indication that his end had come. He enjoyed great peace of mind, spoke of his congregation, the old and the young among them, and passed away to be, we believe, forever with the Lord, on 28th June, 1969. His regular petition during this time was — “Deonuich do m'anam bochd bhi beo, is dhuitse bheir e gloir.” (“O let my soul live, and it shall give praises unto thee”).

Ps. 119 v. 175.

There can be no doubt but that this last prayer was answered and that his redeemed soul is now singing the praises of the Lamb who, having loved his own, loved them to the end.

To his family we extend our sincere sympathy. His empty place is felt in the congregation and in the Courts of the Church and will also be felt in the home. May their father's God be their portion for time and for eternity.

D.M.

Jerusalem, My Happy Home*

“He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” Hebrews xi:10.

Hierusalem, my happy home !
When shall I come to thee ?
When shall my sorrows have an end ?
Thy joys when shall I see ?

O happie harbor of the saints !
O sweete and pleasant soyle !
In thee noe sorrow may be found,
Noe grieve, noe care, no toyle.

In thee noe sicknesse may be seene,
Noe hurt, noe ache, noe sore;
There is noe death, nor ugly dole,
But life for evermore.

*This poem was composed by a prisoner in the Tower of London, during a time of religious persecution.

Noe dampish mist is seene in thee,
Noe colde nor darksome night :
There every soule shines as the sun,
There God Himself gives light.

There lust and lucre cannot dwell :
There envy bears no sway;
There is noe hunger, heate nor colde,
But pleasure everie way.

Hierusalem ! Hierusalem !
God grant I once may see
Thy endless joyes, and of the same
Partaker aye may be !

Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarkes diamondes square;
Thy gates are of bright orient pearle,
Exceedinge rich and rare.

Thy turrets and thy pinnacles
With carbuncles doth shine;
Thy verrie streets are paved with gould,
Surpassing cleare and fine.

Thy houses are of yvorie,
Thy windows crystal cleare;
Thy tyles are made of beated gould—
Oh, God that I were there !

Within thy gates doth nothing come
That is not passing cleane;
Noe spider's web, noe dirt, noe dust
Noe filthe may there be seene.

Ah, my sweete home, Hierusalem,
Would God I were in thee !
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joyes that I might see !

Thy saints are crowned with glorie great:
They see God face to face :
They triumph still, they still rejoice;
Most happie is their case.

We that are heere in banishment;
Continuallie doe moane :
We sigh and sobbe, we weepe and waile,
Perpetuellie we groane.

Our sweete is mixed with bitter gaule,
 Our pleasure is but paine,
 Our joyes scarce last the looking on,
 Our sorrows still remaine.

But there they live in such delight,
 Such pleasure and such play,
 As that to them a thousand yeares
 Doth seeme as yesterday.

Thy vineyards and thy orchardes are
 Most beautiful and faire :
 Full furnished with trees and fruits,
 Exceeding riche and rare.

There cinnamon, there sugar growe,
 There narde and balme abound :
 What tongue can telle, or heart containe,
 The joyes that there are found.

Quyt through the streets, with silver sound,
 The flood of life doth flowe !
 Upon whose bankes, on everie syde
 The wood of life doth growe.

There trees for evermore bear fruite,
 And evermore doe springe;
 There evermore the angels sit,
 And evermore doe singe.

Hierusalem, my happy home !
 Would God I were in thee !
 Would God my woes were at an end,
 Thy joyes that I might see !

Posadh an Anama ri Criosd

Leis an Urr. Eideard Pearce (A.D. 1672)
(Air a leantuinn bho t.d.)

4. 'S e'n ceathramh prionnsabal soisgeulach, na misneachd do chreideamh, a bu chòr dhuit t-anam a shocrachadh air, agus a bhi gabhail còmhnuidh gu mòr ann a bhi beachd-smuaineachadh air, so — gu'r e 'n aon bhonn agus prionnsabal na h-uile nì a rinn Criosd air son pheacach bhoichd, bho thoiseach gu deireadh,

a ghràs agus a ghràdh àrd-uachdaranail Fein. Is e a ghràdh a thug a nuas E bho neamh agus a threoirich a mach E gu bhi dòrtadh fhala agus a bàsachadh air an son. Uime sin, ann an Ephes. v. 25, thà e air a ràdh gu'm bheil E gràdhachadh eaglais, agus gu'n d'thug Se E Fein air a son, Is e a ghràdh, a ghràdh saor, a tha'n gu'n d'thug Se E Fein air a son. Is e a ghràdh, a ghràdh saor, a tha'n toiseach ga'n tarruing ga ionnsuidh Fein, agus ga'n tàladh a stigh ann an cùmhnanta Ris: "O chein dh'fhoillsicheadh Iehobhah dhòmh-sa, ag ràdh, Seadh, le gràdh siorruidh ghràdhach mì thù; uime sin tharruing mì thù le caoimhneas gràdhach." (Ier. xxxi:3). Is e a ghràdh a thà ga'n gabhail ga ionnsuidh, a toirt maitheanas dhoibh, agus a buileachadh beatha agus slàinte orra. Uime sin tha e air a ràdh gu'm bheil na h-uile bho ghràs, eadhon ar slàinte uile. (Ephes. ii:8). Uime sin tha E air a chur fa'r comhair mar a suidh air cathair gràis, agus 's ann an sin a tha E ga'r cuireadh ga ionnsuidh Fein, agus bho sin tha E toirt na h-uile dhùinn. (Eabh. iv:16); agus, uime sin, faodaidh sinn, ged is peacaich sinn, tighinn le dànachd a dh'ionnsuidh na rìgh-chathair sin. Tha E air rìgh-chathair! agus uime sin, faodaidh sinn dearbhadh dhuinn fein gu'n dean E nithean mòr air peacaich a thig ga ionnsuidh. Nochdaidh Se E Fein mar Rìgh, bheir E maitheanas mar Rìgh, tearnaidh E mar Rìgh; ni E na h-uile ni le mòralachd agus fialaidheachd rìgh. Agus 's e cathair gràis a th'innte, cathair air am bheil gràs a rìgheachadh; cathair air am bheil gràs a suidhe ann a' morachd ìmpeireil, agus sin a nì na h-uile ni gu saor, ann an dòigh àrd-uachdaranail gràis agus gràidh. Uime sin tha a chainte sin, Nì mì tròcair, do bhrìgh gu'n dean mì tròcair; bheir mì maitheanas, do-brìgh gu'n toir mì maitheanas; tearnaidh mì do-bhrìgh gu'n tearn mì. Nis, ciod e mhisneachd a tha'n so do chreidimh! agus cia mar, ma tha e gu ceart air a chothromachadh agus air a thoirt fa'n ear, a bhriseadh e'n a bhloighdibh gach tagradh a th'aig an eas-creidimh, agus a thàirneadh e gu milis an t-anam a dh'ionnsuidh dlùthachadh ri Crìosd ann an cùmhnanta pòsaidh! oir guidheam oirbh, thugaibh fa'n ear, Ciod e nàdur gràis agus gràidh àrd-uachdaranail? 's e 'n nàdur a bhì toirt cleachdadh bh'uaihte Fein gà ionnsuidh Fein, gu'n a bhì toirt cleachdadh bh'uaihte Fein gà ionnsuidh Fein, gu'n a bhì toirt fa'n ear nì air bith annainne, gu'n a bhi toirt fa'n ear aon chuid airidheachd na neo-airidheachd anns a chreutair idir. Tha a nàdur dhe leithid de ghné agus nach eil e aon chuid air a cho-èigheachadh, na air a bhacadh bho bhi deanamh maith do dh'anamaibh, le nì air bith aon chuid maith na olc annta; ach tha e ruith gu saor. Agus, uime sin cha'n eil e gu mutha ciod a tha mise, ged a tha mì cho salach agus cho truagh annam fein, am feadh a tha mo ghnothuch ri leithid de ghràdh; agus 's e leithid sin de ghràdh tobar deiligidhean Chrìosd rium, agus a ghiùllain ga mo thaobh.

5. 'S e'n coigeanh proinnsabal soisgeulach na misneachd do chreidimh, air am bu chòr dhuit thù fein a ghiùlain suas, agus còmhnuidh a ghabhail gu minic ann a bhì beachd-smuaineachadh air, so — gur e 'n rùn is motha a th'aig Criosd anns na h-uile nì a tha E gabhail os laimh, agus a fhrithealaidhean do pheacaich, a bhì foillseachadh a mach agus a cur air an rìgh-chathair a ghràs Fein; agus mar is motha a thà thù a' d' thruaghan salach, peacach, agus gràineil, 's ann is motha tha a ghràs air a chur air an rìgh-chathair agus air fhoillseachadh a mach ann a d'ghabhail Ris. Cha'n eil Criosd ann na dheiligidhean ri, agus air son, pheacach, cha'n e mhàin a toirt cleachdadh Dhà Fein bho phrionnsabal àrd-uachdaranail gràis, ach anns na h-uile thà E giùlain rùn a bhì cur air an Rìgh-chathair a ghràs, agus ga dheanamh glòrmhor gu bràth; seadh, agus tha E cleachdadh, agus nì E cleachdadh a thaobh a leithid sin de rùn gu freagarach. Cha'n e ciod a tha leithid sin de pheacaich a toilltinn, na nach eil iad a toilltinn, a deir Criosd, a thà agam ri chumail air chuimhne, ach ciod a nì mo ghràs air an son, ach ciod a dh'oibricheas nì's motha a chum glòir a ghràis sin, ciod a chuireas an crùn is dealraich air a cheann: tha so foilleasach ann an Ephes.i.6, 12, 14, a bha air fhosgladh roimhe air aobhar eile.

(R'a leantuinn).

No Affliction Like Mine

"There never was such affliction as mine," said a poor sufferer, restlessly tossing in her bed in one of the wards of a city hospital. "I don't think there ever was such a racking pain."

"Once," was faintly uttered from the next bed.

The first speaker paused for a moment; and then in a still more impatient tone, resumed her complaint.

"Nobody knows what I pass through. Nobody ever suffered more pain."

"One," was again whispered from the same direction.

"I take it you mean yourself, poor soul, but" —

"Oh, not myself; not me," exclaimed the other; and her pale face flushed up to the very temples, as if some wrong had been offered, not to herself, but to another.

She spoke with such earnestness that her restless companion lay still for several seconds and gazed intently on her face. The cheeks were now wan and sunken, and the parched lips were drawn back from the mouth as if by pain. Yet there dwelt an extraordinary sweetness in the clear gray eyes, and a refinement on the placid brow, such as can only be imparted by a heart-acquaintance with Him, who is "full of grace and truth."

" Oh, not myself ! Not me ! " she repeated.

There was a short pause; and then the following words, uttered in the same low tone, slowly and solemnly broke the midnight silence of the place.

" And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. . . . And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. And they crucified him And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, my God, my God, why has Thou forsaken Me ? "

The voice ceased, and for several minutes not a syllable was spoken. The night nurse rose from her chair by the fire and mechanically handed a cup of barley-water, flavoured with lemon-juice and sugar, to the lips of both sufferers.

" Thank you nurse," said the last speaker. " They gave him gall for his meat; and in his thirst they gave him vinegar to drink."

" She is talking about Jesus Christ," said the other woman, already beginning to toss restlessly from side to side. " But," added she, " talking about His sufferings can't mend ours — at least, not mine."

" But it lightens hers," said the nurse.

" I wonder how."

" Hush."

And the gentle voice again took up the strain :

" Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

The following day, as some ladies visiting the hospital passed by the cots, they handed to each a few fragrant flowers.

The gentle voice was again heard : " If God so clothe the grass of the field which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith.

A few days passed slowly away, when, on a bright Sabbath morning, as the sun was rising, the nurse noticed the lips of the sufferer moving, and, leaning over her, she heard these words : " Going home, ' I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' "

Her eyes closed, and the nurse knew that the hand of death was grasping the cords of life. A moment more and all was over; the

soul had gone to dwell in that city where "there is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain."
— Sword and Trowel, 1872.

Book Review

Amos by Ray Beeley. Banner of Truth Trust paperback: 5/-.

This nicely produced paperback of 117 pages is the latest of the commentaries put out by the Banner of Truth Trust. Mr Beeley is a teacher, Head of Religious Education in a Yorkshire school, and is described as a 'lay pastor', the minister of Richmond Wesleyan Reform Church, Sheffield. 'Lay pastor' would appear to be the equivalent of a lay missionary among ourselves. Mr Beeley's commentary originated as notes made during personal Bible study. The Commentary retains its devotional quality throughout and is suitable for the general reader as well as for the preacher.

First he gives the background to the prophecy, and then analyses it and shows the resemblance between the situation in Israel then and that in Britain today. There follows ten chapters dealing with the book section by section. Each sub-section within the chapters is headed by the verses as in the Authorised Version. These are then explained plainly and helpfully, and in many instances the portion is completed by a series of thoughts for meditation. Here and there Mr Beeley has drawn upon 'Living Prophecies' and the 'Amplified Old Testament' as well as the 'Berkeley Version' to obtain light on different passages. The first two of these versions are paraphrases of Scripture, and the reviewer is not at present in a position to give any opinion as to their value for this purpose. Apart from an unguarded statement on p. 64 which could be taken to mean that every reader is a child of God who needs chastening, the treatment of the prophecy is sound, interesting and wholesome.

A. MacP.

Notes and Comments

A New Government

In the providence of the Lord a new Government has taken office in Britain. This event ought to remind us that God is ruling, not only amongst the armies of heaven, but also in the affairs of men. He is the final Disposer of all things. He puts down one, and sets up another.

It becomes those who assume the responsibilities of government to remember that they hold their office from the Lord — "By me kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth," Prov. 8:15, 16. It is to Him they are to give account in the day of judgment how they have exercised that government, whether in righteousness or in defiance of the law and will of God.

On our part, we should not forget our obligation to pray for those whom God has set over us in civil affairs. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," 1 Tim. 2:1, 2.

May the Lord graciously grant the new Prime Minister and his Government wisdom from on High that they may govern our land in the fear of the Lord.

Mass at Canterbury Cathedral

As expected, the popish mass to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas à Becket took place at Canterbury Cathedral on 7th July with all the pomp and ritual associated with such Romanist celebrations. The volume of protests from evangelical Christians both within and outside of the Church of England were unavailing to deter the responsible Church of England authorities from granting this unwarranted privilege to the enemies of Protestantism. Once again the hierarchy of the Church of England have shown where their sympathies really lie. It is very clear that they take their stand, not with evangelical Protestantism, but with the avowed enemies of Protestant Christianity.

Church Notes

Theological Conference, 1970

The Theological Conference will be held in the Dingwall Free Presbyterian Church on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 8th and 9th of September, 1970. As on former occasions, the Conference is for ministers, office-bearers, students, congregational treasurers and male communicants.

The Papers to be read at the Conference are as follows —

Tuesday, 8th September

2.30 p.m. "Prayer"—Rev. A. E. W. MacDonald, M.A.
Gairloch.

7.00 p.m. "The Christian and Providence" — Rev.
Robert R. Sinclair, Wick.

Wednesday, 9th September

10.15 a.m. "The Sabbath" — Mr William Fraser, Glasgow.

2.30 p.m. "Book Review(s)" — Rev. A. F. MacKay, M.A., Inverness.

7.00 p.m. "Pentecostalism" — Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow.

On both days, the evening sessions, beginning at 7 p.m. will be held in public.

The Conference Chairman will be Rev. A. MacPherson, Stratherrick.

Jewish and Foreign Missions Fund

This Collection is to be taken by book in August, and we again approach our loyal people for their contributions. In the past they have done remarkably well, and we have every confidence in them that they will not be behind on this occasion. For a small denomination such as ours is, it is not an easy matter to keep a Mission of such an extent going, but "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." It is an honour to help to bring a full-orbed Gospel to a people who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and the Lord has put that honour upon us as a Church. We, therefore, expect that our people will contribute as liberally as the Lord will lay to their hands.

John Colquhoun, Convener.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Kelvin-dale, Glasgow, W.2, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:

Sustentation Fund — A. MacKay, Quidinish, £1.

Foreign Mission Fund — Anon., Inverness, £20; Victoria Park Presbyterian Reformed Church, Ontario, \$338.75, sent direct to Ingwenya Mission.

Dominions & Overseas Fund — Mrs MacL., Leckmelm, £2 for Italian Bibles, per Rev. M. MacL.; Anon., £5 for Italian Mission; Miss MacL., Leckmelm, £2 for Italy, per Rev. M. MacL.

Legacy — From the estate of the late Norman Macaskill, Breakish, Skye, £100. This legacy was received in 1969 and apologies are tendered for omitting it from list of legacies in Finance Committee's Report for 1969 (Synod Proceeding 1970).

The Publications Treasurer, Mr R. W. M. MacKenzie, C.A., 10 Beaufort Road, Inverness, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

Free Distribution Magazine Fund — Mr N. Montgomery, Dunvegan, 8/-; A Friend in north coast of Applecross, £2, per Rev. A. McA.; Edinburgh Friends, £1.10/-, per Mr H.S.; G. McD., Kirkhill, 8/-; Mr C. MacF., Edinbane, 8/-; Mr L. Gillanders, Stratford, N.Z., 8/-; "In Memory of the late Miss Margaret MacLeod, 251 Achnahaird, Achiltibuie, Ross-shire" from her sister, £10; Mr MacDonald, Culag, £1, per Rev. A. MacA.

Welfare of Youth Fund — Wellwisher, Breasclete, £1.14/-.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks:

Scourie — Wellwisher, £4, per R. Ross; "Two Friends", £10; Friend, Strathy, £2 per R. Ross; Anon., £5 per R.W.M.M., all for Church Renovation Fund.

Shieldaig — Sustentation Fund — Wellwisher, Home of Rest, £4, per Rev. A. F. MacKay, M.A.; Gairloch Friend, £5. Congregational purposes — In loving memory of Sgt. Finlay MacDonald, A.E.F., and his parents Alexina and Donald MacDonald, \$50. Manse repairs — Mr and Mrs MacBeath, Raasay, £10.

Gairloch — Repair of Opinan Mission House — Mrs Macleod, California, U.S.A., \$10; Mrs MacRae, Blair Cottage, Melvaig, £2, per K. Maclean. Congregational purposes — Mrs MacAskill, Garden Road, Stornoway, £5; the Estate of the late Roderick Morrison, Bir Sand, Gairloch, £339.1.5.

Portree — In memory of the late Mrs MacLeod, Martin Crescent, £5 for Sustentation Fund, per Rev. F. MacD.

Glendale — A Friend, £5 for Car Park; A Friend, £5 for Church Repairs; A Friend, £1 for Church Repairs; A Friend, £5 for Organisation Fund (last three per Rev. J.C.); Mrs J. Hall, U.S.A., £2.0.3; Anon., £2; A Friend, £5; A Canadian Friend, £1, all for Church Repairs (last two per Rev. J.C.).

Beauly Church Building Fund — Mrs Fraser, Leanach, £5; Mr Macleod, Kessock, £2, per Rev. D. A. MacFarlane; London Friend, £15; Mrs MacLauchlan, Inverness, £5; Miss MacAulay, Inverness, £5 (last three per Mr A. MacLennan); Envelope in Plate, £6; Friend, £1; Mrs MacKellar, £5; Anon., per Mr D. MacKenzie, £10; Envelope in Plate, £10; A. R. MacDonald, Kiltarlity, £50.

Aberdeen Church Fund — Mr W. MacKenzie, 7 Crown Drive, Inverness. Treasurer, acknowledges with thanks — An Aberdonian living in Maidstone, £5.

London — Congregational Fund — Friends, Northolt, per Rev. D. B. Macleod, £1. Church and Manse Building Fund — Miss MacDonald, Knebworth, in memory Rev. J. P. MacQueen, £5; Miss Smith, London, £2.

Applecross — A Friend, North Coast, £1 for Motor Cycle Fund, per Rev. A. Murray.

Home of Rest Fund — R.M., for hospitality to visitor, £5; Visitor, 10/-; Anon., Greenock, £7; "From Friends", £10, per Mrs McA., Inverness; Mr A. Walker, Glasgow, £2; J. MacKenzie, Islay, 21/4 (last three per R.W.M.M.).

Mbumba Mission — Dr James Tallach acknowledges with sincere thanks, Timothy Fund, Canada, \$300; Anon., Vancouver, \$1,000 (American).

Raasay — Friend Raasay, £2; Friend, Portree, £5; Friend, Raasay, £2, all for Carpet Fund, per J. M. MacLeod; Passer-by, £2; A.M., £1, per R. MacLeod; Mrs C. MacRae, Osaig, £10, per J. M. MacLeod, all for Manse extension.