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A Name to Live

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write : . . . I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Rev. 3:1.

What a blessing life is, but in particular spiritual and eternal life ! How wonderful it is for a sinner, through Divine grace, to be made alive in Christ Jesus, to be delivered from eternal death, and to be made an heir of eternal life through Christ Jesus. To live, and to live for ever — who would not desire it? To be dead unto sin and alive unto God, hating iniquity and loving righteousness. This is true of all whom the Lord has delivered from death and redeemed from the power of the grave. Are we among such? Or are we still without God and without hope in the world ?

But it is not of those who are alive spiritually that the Apostle John speaks but of those who had only a name to live. And it is not merely John's judgment but the judgment of Him who knows all things — "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This was the awful condition of the church in Sardis. It is still the condition of many churches and individuals. They are not alive but are thought to be alive by others. Perhaps they think themselves to be alive but they are alive in name only. In reality they are spiritually dead.

How dreadful is the condition of those who have only a name to live! They have never truly come to know themselves as sinners, never truly fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel, were never subjects in their souls of the Holy Spirit's regenerating work. They are still in their sins. But they have the name of pardoned sinners, though never pardoned. They have the name of Christ's children, though He does not know them. They have the name of believers, though they have never truly exercised faith in the Son of God. They have the name of persons on the way to heaven while in reality they are on the way to hell. It is such who will say to Christ at the end of the day: "Lord, Lord have we

not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" And Christ shall say to them: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

How searching this is for every one of us! Have I only a name to live? Or am I truly Christ's? How then may I know that I am His? There are many marks given in the Word of God, and we must examine ourselves by them. For example, Christ says, "If my words abide in you, then are ye my disciples indeed." Again, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Again, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." There are many more marks of a similar kind in the Scriptures of truth. Let us prayerfully seek to know whether we are followers of the Saviour in name only or in reality and truth. Our hearts are deceitful, therefore we must say with the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." It is the Word of God in the hand of the Holy Spirit which can alone finally determine where we stand and how we stand.

Sermon

by **Rev. S. Fraser Tallach, M.A.**

(Taken down by a hearer)

"For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people. He will beautify the meek with salvation." Psalm 149:4.

When we consider the plan of salvation we see how God from the beginning is the One who has brought salvation even while we were yet dead in sins. His people, therefore, are totally dependent as the Word of God reminds us upon Him for life and grace; it is only because Christ says "Because I live," that they can be sure that they too will live. We are inclined to emphasise, and rightly, that as far as salvation is concerned, and the work of redemption, God is reaching down to us and causing us, in the darkness and in the shadow of death, to have light brought to us. "God is the Lord who has caused light to arise" — as we have it in Psalm 118. Bless the Lord, praise His name and rejoice in him. We are thus brought to have pleasure in God. At one time, one was forced to say, "I thought upon God and I was troubled." Surely this must be the result upon us as sinners when we think of a holy God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Our hearts are troubled, and the whole history of salvation is of

how God has reached down to us and caused us, when we think upon God, to think of Him not as one in whose presence we are troubled and uncertain, but One in whose presence as the Psalmist could say, "there is fullness of joy." In other words it is the history of how God has caused pleasure and rejoicing to be brought to those who are sinful and unworthy in spite of their undoneness in themselves.

In the text brought before us here, light is shed on this aspect of salvation from God's side. The Lord himself has pleasure in his own people. Yet, let us not think it a matter of constraint that God has opened of His bounty to those who are in their hopeless, undone estate. He has a positive pleasure in those who are His own people. He has pleasure in granting to them of His bounty and favour and love. This has very wide repercussions, and if you are one who can claim that you are included in this covenant of grace, as you think of God, you no longer view Him as one whom you fear. "God hath not given to us the spirit of fear but of power, love and of a sound mind." You may come with boldness knowing that He is willing to answer your requests and needs and the essence of that boldness comes from this fact that the Lord has pleasure in you as one of His people. Esther's fear in going in before Ahasuerus would have been totally resolved if she could have been sure he would have had pleasure in her. She would then have known certainly that the sceptre signifying his favour would have been extended to her.

So, if it is true that the Psalmist can say, "The Lord takes pleasure in His people," they may come with confidence and trust, not in the spirit of bondage and fear, but in a spirit of power. They are able with confidence and peace to draw on the resources of this God who has committed Himself to them in His loving kindness.

First we may consider the varied relationships that are brought before us in the Word, in which God expresses His pleasure in supplying the needs of His people and also His pleasure in their own person.

(a) A king to his subjects.

This is brought before us time and again in connection with God himself. His kingdom is that one of which we read in Psalm 145. He rules over all things but is especially mindful of the needs of his own people. Though it is concerned with all mankind — "The eyes of all wait upon thee," it is a kingdom that is especially concerned with the supply of the needs of his own people. "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him. The Lord preserveth all that love Him, but all the wicked will He destroy." We may sum up the needs of the kingdom in the words of the

Psalmist in Psalm 122. "Pray that Jerusalem may have peace and prosperity." Pray to this one who is the king of Jerusalem. What more could a king wish for as he surveys all underneath himself of which he desires the good than peace, on the one hand i.e. that all other warring kingdoms might be kept out, and that internally, on the other hand prosperity would spring forth; thus his laws will be so ordered that the peace and prosperity of his own people will be ensured. This is one relationship to his own people that of a king to a kingdom, which is under his constant care and control. Yet, this is a rather distant relationship; the king is so far above his subjects. There is no intimate contact between them. He rules them without the need for seeing everyone personally and individually.

There is a closer relationship brought before us:

(b) A Father to his children. We read of God looking over His kingdom at His own people and He does this not only as a king.

"Such pity as a father hath
unto his children dear;
Like pity shows the Lord to such
as worship Him in fear."

Here is a personal relationship. The desire of a father for his child is not merely that he would, in general, be in health, but it is that the child would have the very best that he could supply for him. And if in any way the child shows that he is wanting in anything, in health or in happiness, this immediately affects the father's heart. Whereas in connection with the king so long as all is going well in his kingdom as a whole, the individual concerns of his people do not affect him personally, in the case of the father there is this intimate personal concern for the good of the children; he personally supplies all they have need of. This is true of God as a father himself, and it is true of Christ especially in relation to his Church. He is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father of his own people.

(c) Then again there is the most intimate relationship of husband and wife. The king gives laws to his kingdom which will maintain the prosperity of his kingdom, and it is true that the father gives of the sweat of his brow to supply the needs of his children. In the case of the husband, he gives not merely anything external; he gives himself to his wife. This is true of God — as we find it in Isaiah — "Thy Maker is thy husband." Israel of old was married to God. Hence when they forsook God, they were guilty, not merely as subjects are guilty who break faith with their sovereign, or children who turn against the hand that fed them. They

were guilty of spiritual adultery since God had not merely given of his benefits to his people but of himself. So Christ has given himself to his own church, as the epistle to the Ephesians points out. He is the one who loved the church and gave not merely benefits of one kind or another, but gave himself for it. This is the essence of this relationship. The king has pleasure in giving peace and prosperity; so it is as the Lord views the prosperity of His people. In his relationship as Father, He is the one from whom descends every good and perfect gift; He is the father who giveth liberally and who upbraideth not. Further, God has pleasure in giving himself to his people. In His uniting himself in the work of redemption through Christ this is fulfilled, "Thy Maker is thy husband." We read, "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride so will thy God rejoice over thee." It is nothing in us that constrains God to do it. It is of his own free pleasure, his own good will that he has given us Himself in all these relationships.

Let us consider the essence of these relationships. They concern each individual believer in the church — as subject to king, as child to father, as wife to husband. These are all true of each individual believer at any particular time. He enters into these perhaps more clearly one step after another. We may consider the case of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was first of all the one who owned the parcel of ground where Ruth gleaned. Ruth did not see him; she did not know him personally; she came to know him only through his servants. This mirrors forth the relationship of a subject to her king, who enjoys the good of a particular kingdom without knowing the king personally, and she gains the benefits of the laws which rule this particular parcel of ground. Then she went forward from that into a relationship as child to father. Boaz came to speak to her. He told his servants to drop for her handfuls on purpose. He was thinking personally of her as the father thinks of the child — as working to gain food for the child. Lastly she entered into a relationship with Boaz as one who not only promised to supply all that she required, but gave himself to her in the bond of marriage. So we may say it is with the believer and God, that at the beginning he is like Rabbie Duncan when he came to believe there was a Divine ruler. This caused him rejoicing in his heart. He had never spoken to Him, but he had come to this belief that there was one who was king over all the world. The world was not left to chance. There was one whose laws bound the whole universe. Eventually he went on till he could say, his maker was his husband, his Redeemer was the Holy One of Israel. He came to know him personally.

All these relationships are true of the believer at the same

time. In the case of Ruth each succeeding relationship swallowed up the relationship that preceded it. In the case of the believer it is still true of him that he is subject to God as his king. In the 45th Psalm we have that beautiful scene depicting Christ come to claim his people as his own. There is a sense of spontaneous joy and freedom — “They shall be brought with gladness great and mirth on every side.”

Yet in the midst of this there is the solemn reminder —

“Because he is thy Lord do thou him worship rev'rently.”

The intimacy of the relationship did not absolve her from doing homage to him as her lord and remembering to serve him “reverently and with godly fear.”

We have these relationships brought before us and in each one of them the Lord rejoices in supplying the needs of his own people. What is it that gives this pleasure to God in thus supplying the needs of his own people? We know that it is true that any position of power gives pleasure. Nebuchadnezzar looked upon Babylon and rejoiced in supplying all the needs of Babylon. He rejoiced in the power it gave him and in the reflected glory it gave to him to be able to do this. This is the same in the relationship of father to son. It can be a fact that the son in growing up shows certain qualities that cause pride to rise in the heart of the father. As long as this feeling of pride in the son continues, the father continues to have pleasure in supplying the needs of the son. This can be true in the closest relationship. We have it in the case of Ahasuerus and Vashti, how he had a pride in Vashti — in her beauty. He called for her to come and display her beauty before his princes. Her beauty caused a kind of reflected glory to be cast upon himself and hence gave him pleasure. Yet, when it is just selfishness which causes a person to rejoice in this relationship how quickly can this relationship change. We see this in the case of Ahasuerus and Vashti, how quickly was she removed from her position as queen — Why? Because the pleasure in her was not a pleasure in the person of the queen for her own sake. So it can be with father and son. When the son ceases to reflect glory then so quickly will that pleasure that the father had in the son disappear. Care for the son will turn to disowning him. How wonderful it is that the care God shows towards His own people is not of such a nature — that it is a love toward their persons themselves. It is based upon a love to them individually.

We may take an example of exalted human love as an illustration of the love of God to his own people. If we compare the love of Ahasuerus to Vashti with the relationship between Joseph and his brethren we see the difference between what is true love and what is a seeking of a reflected glory.

Remember how Joseph supplied his brethren with the abundance of Egypt — plenty food upon the table. How they wondered at all this great supply given to them! We may say concerning his brethren he was well rid of them. When he gained this high position he did not need them to come in order to gain any reflected glory from them. They would only have been a liability to him; he had already attained the highest pinnacle; he had become established. Here now were his brethren who had sold him to Egypt. Their presence, one would think would open old wounds and constitute an acute embarrassment in his relations with his adopted country. If he had responded in the way the natural heart responds in such situations, he would have felt only the deepest hatred towards them. Yet we find Joseph at the head of the table looking down upon them partaking of his bounty, and seeing this with rejoicing and with joy. He sees Judah, Reuben, etc., all of them partaking of the food he places before them and he himself having pleasure in this. Where does the pleasure come from? Does it come from the fact that he is rewarding kindness they have shown him in the past. Not at all; rather they have shown cruelty. Yet all the cruelty has not soured his spirit. He rejoices in seeing them; he yearns for the time when he can open to them his heart and say, "I am Joseph thy brother." This is so in connection with the Lord. His pleasure in all these relationships arises not from the reflected glory that they give to Him. He has pleasure in giving of Himself to them — how often does that phrase occur — "For His own name's sake." He gives to them of His goodness even when they cease to reflect glory upon Him. Does He turn his back upon them as we see Ahasuerus turning his back against Vashti? Does the Lord do this? Does he not say even as they are wandering away from Him, "How can I give thee up." He "earnestly remembers them still," and when they turn back towards Him once again with faltering steps, His bowels yearn for His own people — "I will heal their backsliding." He is willing to receive them again. What security this gives to the relationship between the Lord and His people. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance — without calling back. Hence the Lord loves his own people even to the uttermost.

We may consider more particularly ways in which the Lord takes pleasure in his people. Let us return to the illustration of Boaz. Boaz in the providence of God was one who appeared on the behalf of God to Ruth. He thus came from outside her experience altogether to be related to her, first as benefactor, then as husband. Yet in that same providence of God, Boaz was already her near kinsman, and it was for this reason that Ruth asked Boaz to cast his garment over her. Boaz in this sense appeared on behalf of Ruth before the assembly of elders, indeed, before

God himself as the one who under the Levirate law claimed Ruth as his own. In the first sense it was of Boaz "mere good pleasure" that he allowed Ruth, an alien Moabitess, to glean in his lands. In the second, Ruth had power to constrain Boaz to receive her and with reverence we may say that because of the laws he had already made, God himself was constrained to look on her with favour. Like Boaz, Christ appears in the first place on behalf of God to man. Thus, though God considered absolutely is king over his kingdom, Christ particularly is king over his own people. "Verily," he said to Pilate, "I am a king," and in his own person the kingdom of heaven comes into this world. God is their Father, but of Christ especially it is true that he is their "everlasting Father." God is the husband of his people; yet Christ especially is spoken of in this relationship. Yet there is another side to this matter. Christ is their "goel," their kinsman-redeemer. He is related to them as the One who on their behalf became flesh. Indeed we may say he has completely identified himself with them in their lost, undone condition. He loved the Church and gave himself for it, not merely by a token promise to be a faithful and loving husband to her, but in a very real pouring out his soul unto death on her behalf so that his Father would be her Father and his God her God. Now, because of this new relationship which the death of Christ has forged between himself and his people, God is not ashamed to be called their God. Indeed, he takes a positive delight in this relationship. He rejoices over them with joy and rests in his love. Thus, the Lord's pleasure in his people does not depend in the first place on anything in themselves but in their relationship to Christ.

You remember when David became king how he could not divorce himself from his past. He searched and said, "Is there yet any of the house of Saul that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake." He found one physically poor specimen of the house of Saul — very unlike Saul himself and very unlike Jonathan. This was Mephibosheth who was lame in both feet, one who could not even begin to accomplish the feats of Saul or Jonathan. David shows him kindness because of the memories he has of Jonathan. Hence he rejoices to give him a portion from the king's table because he reminded him of Jonathan of whom he could say, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

So we may say of the Lord in his having pleasure in His people and in His giving gifts to his people. This pleasure comes in the first place because of their relationship to Christ. It may be that externally there is very little that would link them with Christ. They are sinners just like any others. They have the marks of sin in their own hearts. Just as Mephibosheth was so different from Jonathan so the believer is very different from Christ. Yet

because of their relationship to Christ — that He has been pleased to have this relationship to be made between Himself and His people — the Lord is well pleased to show His good pleasure towards them for His sake. The Father said of Christ, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In His bringing in everlasting righteousness His steps were followed by His Father with infinite delight. It is true of everyone on whom Christ has looked, they are accepted in the Beloved because he is pleased to sprinkle His blood upon their souls. He is pleased to cast the mantle of His love over them when they cannot save themselves and for His sake they are accepted. Yet there is more to it than this.

Would it not seem strange if when Mephibosheth was elevated he did not show thanks, if he did not express gratitude. He had been brought from the dunghill to sit among princes. Would it not be equally strange if when he showed this response it would not cause David to have increased pleasure in showing his goodwill towards him, in giving him all the good gifts he enjoyed. It is true that basically the Lord has pleasure in His people not for anything in themselves but because of their relationship to Christ. They are chosen not for themselves but chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. It is not on the basis of their goodness that they are chosen in Christ. But is it not true that the Lord seeks for a response from his own people? "O my dove that art in the clefts of the rock in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." Song of Solomon 2:14. The Lord seeks this response from his people. It causes pleasure in His heart. "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out." Note that there may be a response also on the side of God. "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Song of Solomon 4:16. We may speak of that response in terms of these graces:—

Repentance, Faith and New Obedience. They are shown in the life of the believer. The Lord offers to us eternal life through Christ. He says — "Whoso hath the Son and believeth in Him hath everlasting life." Should this not cause a response in the heart of one who hears it effectively, of sorrow for sin in the light of the grace of God manifested in Christ. As David said, this broken spirit, which is a mark of sorrow for sin, is to God a pleasing sacrifice. It is that which causes to spring forth His good pleasure towards the one in whom it is found. Even though the believer is not chosen for anything in himself, the Lord seeks that response, in sorrow for sin even though it may seem a very little response. God's goodness in Christ should lead us to repentance. Let us not feel that our short comings in this means that we cannot be pleasing in God's sight. Rabbi Duncan tells

of his own experience how the Lord brought him to see his sin not merely through his own eyes but through the eye of God; not merely to measure himself among his fellows but according to the measure of the sanctuary. There was given to this one a new song which was sung, says Dr Duncan with "a joyous grief and a grievous joy . . . it faltered, and made wrong music; it jarred, and there was discord; and it grated on its own ear; and pained it . . . But the song was presented through and by the Mediator of the New Covenant and it came up as music in Jehovah's ear; melody to the Lord." Was it not this harmony that Paul was seeking after. The Apostle says in the epistle to the Romans that he had a desire after that which was good but all the time he was finding a law which kept him from that. "Who shall deliver me from this law of sin and death." The apostle had to strive again and again; he had to sorrow and grieve because he failed time and again. Let us not consider that because we cannot make that harmony in our hearts — we make notes that jar on our ears — that it does not ascend as music to the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. In the prayer of the Pharisee there was external harmony between the confident stance, the pious expression and the pious form of words, but it was a harmony that was disharmony in the sight of God. He saw what was there, that the pharisee was but a whited sepulchre and within were dead men's bones. There was disharmony in the heart of the publican when he said God be merciful to me who, in thy sight, see myself as a sinner. Yet there was harmony in his saying, I agree with the law of God. It is holy, just and good. I agree Thou art just when Thou markest iniquity. Thou art holy even though my goodness does not reach to thee, I repent in dust and ashes before Thee. That harmony between the spirit of the publican in condemning himself and the law of God was a harmony that was sweet and precious in the ears of God. The Lord has pleasure in His people — in their repentance. "All these things have my hands made, but to this man will I look to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." How men might pass over the publican and think him of no account. Yet however little he may be thought of on earth, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

As well as repentance there is faith also. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. In a sense faith comes before repentance. It is in the light of the favour of God revealed in the heart that we truly repent and recognise our own sinfulness. Faith is not merely at the beginning of the Christian life, it is called forth throughout the Christian life. Faith must seek to reach out from our low condition to the favour and power of God. We see this in the case of Jonah. "I was cast out from thy sight. Yet will I look again

to thy holy temple." There is a seeking to reach out to God and His power, beyond our present feeling of weakness and inability. It is true that the Lord tests his own people in order to see if this is really there, as he tested Abraham to see if his faith was genuine. It is in connection with this that the Lord says, "Come thou north wind," in order to draw forth this response of faith. It was a cold north wind that blew upon the Syro-Phoenecian woman who came to Christ and said, "My daughter is sick nigh to death." How the Lord turned, it seemed, His back on her saying, "It is not meet to take the children's food and give it to dogs." Why did he do it? In order that this response would come forth of faith and trust, "Truth Lord yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table." Did not that cause pleasure in the heart of Christ when He said, "O woman, great is thy faith." Does it not cause pleasure in the heart of God when his people show that faith and trust in Him in such adverse circumstances, praise, also, as an extension of faith causes pleasure to God. "Who offereth praise glorifies me." At times the believer may have faith without being able to rise to praise. Such was the experience of the Psalmist when he said, "For yet I know I shall him praise." His faith was unchanged, yet he could not at that moment surmount his feelings of dejection. Where, however, one shows the ability even in the face of adverse circumstances to rise to praise, what pleasure this causes in the heart of God! This was true in the case of Job. Here is a just man who hates evil; God has pleasure in him. Satan being what he is could not discern the love that bound Job with God. He saw it in mercenary terms. Job offered sacrifices to God and in return he got all his prosperity and good things from God. He did this purely in order that he might get gifts from God. Being of a cold spirit he, as Simon the Pharisee, could not enter into the spirit of love that bound the woman that poured the ointment on the head of Christ, so it was impossible for Satan to enter into the love that bound God to Job. Hence when Satan did all that he could, when the Lord caused the mount standing strong by His love to crumble, what a wonder it must have been to Satan to see Job rising again, in the midst of his ruin saying, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." How would he glorify God in these circumstances.

We have spoken of repentance, faith and the extension of faith in praise to God. There is also new obedience to the Lord in seeking to follow in the way of His footsteps. This is something we should surely seek to do. It is true we can do nothing; our sufficiency is of God. Does that mean we are not to seek the way of new obedience; that we are not to seek to follow Christ Himself and set our feet in the way of His steps. "Exercise thyself unto godliness." Do not sit waiting for some wonderful things to

happen, as the lepers waited at the gate of Samaria. We are called to stir up the grace of God that is in us. Seek to follow in the way even though you may feel that your greatest efforts may be poor. Let us consider the command given to the believer to turn his back upon the one he followed before. He was then carried captive by Satan at his will. Instead of being obedient to the cause of Satan now he is obedient to Christ. It is summed up in that command, "Resist the devil." What a command to give to one who is but a babe beginning the life of grace. Is it not true that even Michael the Archangel durst not bring an accusation against Satan. Here is this one who is but a child in grace being told to resist the devil; to walk in this way of new obedience: It is said of leviathan that "he laugheth at the shaking of a spear." Will not Satan likewise merely laugh at the posture of defiance that the believer might offer to him as Goliath laughed at David as he came against him. Yet the command still stands, "Resist the devil." We may take this as an illustration of how the Lord takes pleasure in His people. (a) As the Lord said it was good that it was in the heart of David to build him an house, even though he never laid one stone upon another, so the Lord says it is good that it would be in the heart of the believer to resist this 'Goliath' ready to entrap and ensnare him. "If I were to leave you in his hands," the Lord might well say, "he would sift you as wheat. Yet it rejoices me to see your willingness to oppose him."

(b) The Lord takes pleasure in fighting with those who fight — not leaving the believer to stand alone. Though David held his shield and buckler it was not in his own strength he trusted. He pleaded that the Lord would take hold of his shield and buckler and stand up to be his strength. Thus it is the case of the believer; if one does seek to resist the power of Satan, then the Lord will fight with such a one. He will give him the victory as surely as David got the victory. The gates of hell will not prevail against Him.

Now, in conclusion, what is our position in God's sight? We are told that he views the earth in all its various activities. What is He searching for? "Is there any that seeks God and is wise?" Before the Flood, the Lord saw much activity which might have impressed the natural eye, but the Lord failed to detect what he desired above all, and far from having pleasure it grieved him at his heart. On the other hand, in connection with those who do seek the Lord, even though their efforts may be weak, the Lord responds in love and favour. While he will cause mighty kingdoms to descend in ruins and grovel in the dust, "the bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench." The smoking flax seems to represent the suspicion of life rather than life itself. Yet, the Lord deals tenderly with such. He has pleasure in them.

Let us seek that new relationship with God through the sprinkling of the blood of His Son. Let us seek repentance, faith and new obedience, marks that would show us clearly to be the Lord's own people. Then he will say to us, while others are passed by, "These are the ones I delight to honour;" and of that coming time when the wicked shall be as chaff, ready to be burnt up, the Lord says of us, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels."

Forgiveness of Sins

The Experience of Saints

Let us go to some poor soul, that now walks comfortably under the light of God's countenance, and say unto him, Did we not know you, some time since, to be full of sadness and great anxiety of spirit; yea, sorrowful almost to death, and bitter in soul?

Answer. Yes, saith he, so it was indeed; my days were consumed with mourning, and my life with sorrow; and I walked in fear and bitterness of spirit all the day long.

Question. Why, what ailed you? what was the matter with you, seeing, as to outward things, you were in peace?

Answer. The law of God had laid hold of me, and slain me; I found myself thereby a woeful sinner, yea overwhelmed with the guilt of sin. Every moment I expected tribulation and wrath from the hand of God: "My sore ran in the night, and ceased not, and my soul refused comfort."

How is it, then, that you are thus delivered, that you are no more sad? Where have you found ease and peace? Have you been by any means delivered, or did your trouble wear off, and depart of its own accord?

Answer. Alas! no; had I not met with an effectual remedy, I had sunk and everlastingly perished.

What course did you take?

Answer. I went to Him, by Jesus Christ, against whom I had sinned, and have found Him better to me than I could expect, or ever should have believed, had not He overpowered my heart by His Spirit. Instead of wrath, which I feared, and that justly, because I had deserved it, He said to me in Christ, "Fury is not in me." For a long time I could not believe it; I thought it impossible that there should be mercy and pardon for me, for such a one as I. But He still supported me, sometimes by one means, sometimes by another; until taking my soul near to Himself, He caused me to see the folly of my unbelieving heart, and the villainess of the hard thoughts I had of Him, and that indeed there is

forgiveness with Him and plenteous redemption. This has taken away all my sorrows, and given me quietness, with rest and assurance.

But are you sure now that this is so? May you not possibly be deceived?

Answer. I have not the least suspicion of any such matter; and if at any time, aught doth arise to that purpose, it is quickly overcome.

But how are you confirmed in this persuasion?

Answer. That sense of it that I have in my heart, that sweetness and rest which I have experience of, that influence it hath upon my soul, that obligation I find laid upon me by it to all thankful obedience, that relief, support, and consolation, which it hath afforded me in trials and afflictions, in the mouth of the grave, and entrance of eternity, all answering what is declared concerning these things in the word, will not suffer me to be deceived. I could not indeed receive it, until God was pleased to speak it to me. But now, let Satan do his utmost, I shall never cease to bear this testimony, that there is mercy and forgiveness with Him. — from Dr Owen on Psalm 130.

Thoughts on Prayer

by Bishop J. C. Ryle

(Continued from page 125)

IV. In the fourth place, **prayer is that act in religion to which there is the greatest encouragement.**

There is everything on God's part to make prayer easy, if men will only attempt it. "All things are ready" on His side. (Luke 14:17). Every objection is anticipated. Every difficulty is provided for. The crooked places are made straight, and the rough places are made smooth. There is no excuse left for the prayerless man.

There is a way by which any man, however sinful and unworthy, may draw near to God the Father. Jesus Christ has opened that way by the sacrifice He made for us upon the cross. The holiness and justice of God need not frighten sinners and keep them back. Only let them cry to God in the name of Jesus — only let them plead the atoning blood of Jesus — and they shall find God upon a throne of grace, willing and ready to hear. The name of Jesus is a never-failing passport to our prayers. In that name a man may draw near to God with boldness, and ask with confidence. God has engaged to hear him. Think of this. Is not this encouragement?

There is an advocate and intercessor always waiting to present the prayers of those who will employ Him. That advocate is Jesus Christ. He mingles our prayers with the incense of His own almighty intercession. So mingled they go up as a sweet savour before the throne of God. Poor as they are in themselves, they are mighty and powerful in the hand of our High Priest and elder brother. The bank-note without a signature at the bottom is nothing but a worthless bit of paper. A few strokes of a pen confer on it all its value. The prayer of a poor child of Adam is a feeble thing in itself, but once endorsed by the hand of the Lord Jesus it availeth much. There was an officer in the city of Rome who was appointed to have his doors always open, in order to receive any Roman citizen who applied to him for help. Just so the ear of the Lord Jesus is ever open to the cry of all who want mercy and grace. It is His office to help them. Their prayer is His delight. Think of this. Is this not encouragement?

There is the Holy Spirit ever ready to help our infirmities in prayer. It is one part of His special office to assist us in our endeavours to speak to God. We need not be cast down and distressed by the fear of not knowing what to say. The Spirit will give us words if we will only seek His aid. He will supply us with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." The prayers of the Lord's people are the inspiration of the Lord's Spirit — the work of the Holy Ghost who dwells within them as the Spirit of grace and supplications. Surely the Lord's people may well hope to be heard. It is not they merely that pray, but the Holy Ghost pleading in them (Rom. 8:26). Think of this. Is not this encouragement?

There are exceeding great and precious promises to those who pray. What did the Lord Jesus mean when He spoke such words as these, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matt. 7:7, 8). "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." (Matt. 21:22). "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." (John 14:13, 14). What did the Lord mean when He spoke the parables of the friend at midnight and the importunate widow? (Luke 11:5; and 18:1). Think over these passages. If this is not an encouragement to pray, words have no meaning at all.

There are wonderful examples in Scripture of the power of prayer. Nothing seems to be too great, too hard, or too difficult for prayer to do. It has obtained things that seemed impossible and out of reach. It has won victories over fire, air, earth, and water. Prayer opened the Red Sea. Prayer brought water from the rock and bread from heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still.

Prayer brought fire from the sky on Elijah's sacrifice. Prayer turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. Prayer overthrew the army of Sennacherib. Well might Mary, Queen of Scots, say, "I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men." Prayer has healed the sick. Prayer has raised the dead. Prayer has procured the conversion of souls. "The child of many prayers," said an old Christian to Augustine's mother, "shall never perish." Prayer, pains, and faith can do anything. Nothing seems impossible when a man has the Spirit of adoption. "Let me alone," is the remarkable saying of God to Moses, when Moses was about to intercede for the children of Israel. (Exod. 32:10). The Chaldee version has it "Leave off praying." So long as Abraham asked mercy for Sodom, the Lord went on giving. He never ceased to give till Abraham ceased to pray. Think of this. Is not this encouragement?

What more can a man want to lead him to take any step in religion than the things I have just told him about prayer? What more could be done to make the path to the mercy-seat easy, and to remove all occasions of stumbling from the sinner's way? Surely if the devils in hell had such a door set open before them they would leap for gladness, and make the very pit ring with joy.

But where will the man hide his head at last who neglects such glorious encouragements? What can be possibly said for the man who after all dies without prayer? God forbid that any reader of this paper should be that man.

V. In the fifth place, **diligence in prayer is the secret of eminent holiness.**

Without controversy there is a vast difference among true Christians. There is an immense interval between the foremost and the hindermost in the army of God.

They are all fighting the same good fight; — but how much more valiantly some fight than others! They are all doing the Lord's work; — but how much more some do than others! They are all light in the Lord; — but how much more brightly some shine than others! They are all running the same race; — but how much faster some get on than others! They all love the same Lord and Saviour; — but how much more some love Him than others! I ask any true Christian whether this is not the case. Are not these things so?

There are some of the Lord's people who seem never able to get on from the time of their conversion. They are born again, but they remain babies all their lives. They are learners in Christ's school, but they never seem to get beyond A B C, and the lowest form. They have got inside the fold, but there they lie down and get no further. Year after year you see in them the same old

besetting sins. You hear from them the same old experience. You remark in them the same want of spiritual appetite — the same squeamishness about anything but the milk of the Word, and the same dislike to strong meat — the same childishness, the same feebleness — the same littleness of mind — the same narrowness of heart — the same want of interest in anything beyond their own little circle, which you remarked ten years ago. They are pilgrims indeed, but pilgrims like the Gibeonites of old; — there bread is always dry and mouldy — their shoes always old and clouted, and their garments always rent and torn. (Josh. 9:4, 5). I say this with sorrow and grief. But I ask any real Christian, Is it not true?

There are others of the Lord's people who seem to be always getting on. They grow like the grass after rain. They increase like Israel in Egypt. They press on like Gideon — though sometimes "faint, yet always pursuing." (Judges 8:4). They are ever adding grace to grace, and faith to faith, and strength to strength. Every time you meet them their hearts seem larger, and their spiritual stature bigger, taller, and stronger. Every year they appear to see more, and know more, and believe more, and feel more in their religion. They not only have good works to prove the reality of their faith, but they are zealous of them. They not only do well, but they are unwearied in well-doing. (Titus 2:14; Gal. 6:9). They attempt great things, and they do great things. When they fail they try again, and when they fall they are soon up again. And all this time they think themselves poor unprofitable servants, and fancy they do nothing at all! — These are those who make religion lovely and beautiful in the eyes of all. They wrest praise even from the unconverted, and win golden opinions even from the selfish men of the world. These are those whom it does one good to see, to be with, and to hear. When you meet them, you could believe that, like Moses, they had just come out from the presence of God. When you part with them you feel warmed by their company, as if your soul had been near a fire. I know such people are rare. I only ask, Is it not so?

Now, how can we account for the difference which I have just described? What is the reason that some believers are so much brighter and holier than others? I believe the difference, in nineteen case out of twenty, arises from different habits about private prayer. I believe that those who are not eminently holy pray little, and those who are eminently holy pray much.

I daresay this opinion will startle some readers. I have little doubt that many look on eminent holiness as a kind of special gift, which none but a few must pretend to aim at. They admire it at a distance, in books; they think it beautiful when they see an example near themselves. But as to its being a thing within

the reach of any but a very few, such a notion never seems to enter their minds. In short, they consider it a kind of monopoly granted to a few favoured believers, but certainly not to all.

Now I believe that this is a most dangerous mistake. I believe that spiritual, as well as natural, greatness, depends far more on the use of means within everybody's reach, than on anything else. Of course I do not say we have a right to expect a miraculous grant of intellectual gifts. But this I do say, that when a man is once converted to God, whether he shall be eminently holy or not depends chiefly on his own diligence in the use of God's appointed means. And I assert confidently, that the principal means by which most believers have become great in the Church of Christ is the habit of diligent private prayer.

Look through the lives of the brightest and best of God's servants, whether in the Bible or not. See what is written of Moses, and David, and Daniel, and Paul. Mark what is recorded of Luther and Bradford, the Reformers. Observe what is related of the private devotions of Whitfield, and Cecil, and Venn, and Bickersteth, and M'Cheyne. Tell me one of all the goodly fellowship of saints and martyrs, who has not had this mark most prominently, — he was a man of prayer. Oh, depend upon it, prayer is power!

Prayer obtains fresh and continued outpourings of the Spirit. He alone begins the work of grace in a man's heart: He alone can carry it forward and make it prosper. But the good Spirit loves to be entreated. And those who ask most, will always have most of His influence.

Prayer is the surest remedy against the devil and besetting sins. That sin will never stand firm which is heartily prayed against: that devil will never long keep dominion over us which we beseech the Lord to cast forth. But, then, we must spread out all our case before our Heavenly Physician, if He is to give us daily relief: we must drag our indwelling devils to the feet of Christ, and cry to Him to send them back to the pit.

Do we wish to grow in grace and be very holy Christians? Then let us never forget the value of prayer.

VI. In the sixth place, **neglect of prayer is one great cause of backsliding.**

There is such a thing as going back in religion, after making a good profession. Many run well for a season, like the Galatians, and then turn aside after false teachers. Men may profess loudly, while their feelings are warm, as Peter did; and then, in the hour of trial, deny their Lord. Men may lose their first love, as the Ephesians did. Men may cool down in their zeal to do good, like Mark, the companion of Paul. Men may follow an apostle for a season, and then, like Demas, go back to the world. — All these things men may do.

It is a miserable thing to be a backslider. Of all unhappy things that can befall a man, I suppose it is the worst. A stranded ship, a broken-winged eagle, a garden overrun with weeds, a harp without strings, a church in ruins, — all these are sad sights; but a backslider is a sadder sight still. That true grace shall never be extinguished, and true union with Christ never be broken off, I feel no doubt. But I do believe that a man may fall away so far that he shall lose sight of his own grace, and despair of his own salvation. And if this is not hell, it is certainly the next thing to it! A wounded conscience, a mind sick of itself, a memory full of self-reproach, a heart pierced through with the Lord's arrows, a spirit broken with a load of inward accusation, — all this is a taste of hell. It is a hell on earth. Truly that saying of the wise man is solemn and weighty, — "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." (Prov. 14:14).

Now, what is the cause of most backsliding? I believe, as a general rule, one of the chief causes is neglect of private prayer. Of course the secret history of falls will not be known till the last day. I can only give my opinion as a minister of Christ and a student of the heart. That opinion is, I repeat distinctly, that backsliding generally first begins with neglect of private prayer.

Bibles read without prayer, sermons heard without prayer, marriages contracted without prayer, journeys undertaken without prayer, residences chosen without prayer, friendships formed without prayer, the daily act of prayer itself hurried over or gone through without heart, — these are the kind of downward steps by which many a Christian descends to a condition of spiritual palsy, or reaches the point where God allows him to have a tremendous fall.

This is the process which forms the lingering Lots, the unstable Samsons, the wife-idolizing Solomons, the inconsistent Asas, the pliable Jehoshaphats, the over-careful Marthas, of whom so many are to be found in the Church of Christ. Often the simple history of such cases is this, — they became careless about private prayer.

We may be very sure that men fall in private long before they fall in public. They are backsliders on their knees long before they backslide openly in the eyes of the world. Like Peter, they first disregard the Lord's warning to watch and pray; and then, like Peter, their strength is gone, and in the hour of temptation they deny their Lord.

The world takes notice of their fall, and scoffs loudly. But the world knows nothing of the real reason. The heathen succeeded in making Origen, the old Christian Father, offer incense to an idol, by threatening him with a punishment worse than death. Then they triumphed greatly at the sight of his cowardice and apostacy. But the heathen did not know the fact, which Origen

himself tells us, that on that very morning he had left his bed-chamber hastily, and without finishing his usual prayers.

If any reader of this paper is a Christian indeed I trust he will never be a backslider. But if you do not wish to be a backsliding Christian, remember the hint I give you, — Mind your prayers.

The Diary of Dugald Buchanan

Period III — From 24 years of age to twenty six

To divert myself I went out one day to shoot, and as I was watching some game, was surprised with strong impressions that my death was not far distant. And, although I was then in perfect health, I stood still as one astonished; yea, confounded to think of eternity. Then I bewailed my sad condition, and said, How soon has my heaven fled! O how gladly would I be a dog or any other animal but a man! For in that case death would at once put an end to all my miseries. But now all my sorrows, which would know no end, were but beginning. I began then to consider in what way I might probably die; I thought I might die like Francis Spira, for although I succeeded hitherto in concealing all my troubles, yet that my trouble might increase my agony to that height that it would be utterly impossible for me to conceal it. Still I thought if my judgment remained, come what might, that I would conceal it. This thought was however superceded by another — What if Providence, as in justice He might, would take away my judgment, as I saw in the case of others who died stupid and senseless? In which condition I saw that I would die roaring and blaspheming.

My reason for being so desirous to conceal my trouble was, first, that if I could succeed in doing so till the day of judgment, I would have a numerous company of damned reprobates to stand beside me, so that I would not be singular. Another reason was, the loss of my good name, for although I had no good name to lose in reference to religion, yet I had in the estimation of the world a good name to lose, and if I died in raving despair, I was afraid that my name would become a byword and a proverb among all who should hear of it; but if I could succeed in getting matters concealed, there would no more be said of me than of any of the rest of the so-called honest men of the country who died like lambs, and yet in my opinion, went to hell as certainly as those who died in roaring despair.

Not long after this I went to a neighbouring congregation, where the Lord's Supper was being dispensed, and where I heard the action sermon with great attention, and was melted into tears for my sins. And when the table was fenced, I was ready to cry out for the anguish of my heart, when hearing myself, as it were by name and surname, upon my peril, debarred as a dog from touching the children's bread. I was observed by others to be in great concern; yet, when I came out of the church and met my old companions, this sudden land-flood dried up and I was the same as before.

About this time the Lord threatened to visit me with a remarkable stroke of His displeasure for my horrid iniquity, even to write my folly in legible characters on my forehead, that he who ran might read it. I saw this stroke to be threatening me for some time before, and also the justice of God in allowing it to fall upon me; for I knew that, how heavy and grievous soever it might be, I deserved it. A sense of guilt, and despairing to be heard, so closed my mouth that I could not plead with the Lord to avert it. Yet I thought that if the Lord would deliver me from my feared reproach, I never would do as I had done before. And it pleased the Lord to deliver me from this dreaded calamity, which I no sooner observed, than I turned to my old ways. O the long-suffering of God towards me, the chief of sinners !

Some time after this I had business to transact in Edinburgh, where I happened to be in a company where the conversation turned upon religion, when a certain individual seeing me in a Highland dress enquired "what were my principles;" to which I replied, "that as yet I was like a sheet of clean paper, and that he might write any thing he pleased upon me." "Are you indeed?" says he, "if so, I will give you an advice — take good care that the devil does not scrawl something upon you, and then you will no more be clean." I was so confounded by this answer that I did not know which way to look; for it pierced me to the heart to think of the truth of what he had said, and which indeed the devil had already done. I was also ashamed that I had spoken so irreverently of religion, and firmly resolved never to speak to such a manner again. When I came away, this man's answer cleaved very close to me, nor could I by any means get it out of my mind. It also continually brought my former despairing thoughts fresh upon me, and how the devil had written his own law on my heart and placed his image on all my actions.

10th June 1741. — "But the month in which the wild ass was to be found was now approaching" (Jer. 2:24). "Hitherto shalt thou come but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. The decreed place was broken up, and bars and doors set that I could not pass" (Job 38:10, 11).

I was one Sabbath evening walking through the fields, which was my usual habit, when my sister met me and began to reprove me for profaning the Sabbath-day, saying, "What do you think will become of you, if you will die in your present condition? You will certainly perish." At first I began to mock her for her exhortations. But she still insisted, and told me again "that without repentance I would inevitably perish." I answered that "she need not tell me that, for that I was fully aware of it myself." "O! strange," remarked she, "do you know that you will perish? Are you in despair, or what is the matter with you?" She intreated me to apply to the blood of Christ which cleanseth from sins of a crimson dye. I told her that "I had counted His blood an unholy thing and done despite to the Spirit of grace." She then inquired "if I prayed at all, and when I prayed last." I replied that "I did not bow my knee for the last four years." She then asked "if I would pray that night;" to which I answered, "No! I will never pray." Which indeed I had fully resolved. For at the period alluded to, I could not as much as ask a blessing on my common mercies, nor presume to mention the glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God, in my mouth. She, however, continued intreating me to go and pray and humble myself before God, who would at last lift me up as a person condemned but rescued. O what heart condemnings! What terrible thoughts of God I had! I stood like the publican afar off, and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" not out of mere compliment, as I said before, but out of a real sense of my guilt and misery.

I had but few words in this prayer, for although I prayed, I did not expect to be heard, Satan and my unbelieving heart saying that I was the greatest fool in the world to think that ever the Lord would show mercy to the like of me. However, I thought that I could not be worse than I was, for I saw that it was death if I sat there, and that it would be but death should I have recourse to duty: and I further thought that if I gave over prayer again, my torments would be seven times more increased than ever, therefore I intreated the Lord to keep me from backsliding any more. The Lord at the same time instructed me with a secret and powerful conviction that my sins were pardonable, notwithstanding their heinous aggravations, and that His name would be more glorified in pardoning the like of me than a less sinner.

A book called "The Practice of Piety" fell into my hands at this time which I liked exceedingly well, and I endeavoured to practice such directions as were prescribed in it for the discharging of my duty towards God and my neighbour. In short, I now attained to a pretty good order in the discharge of my duty, for I was busy enough making a garment to cover my nakedness.

This sudden change that was come upon me made a great noise

in the country, because I was before so remarkable for my wickedness. Everyone talked of it as their fancies led them. Some said, "Is Saul also among the prophets? — we have heard by many concerning this man" (1 Sam. 1:11; Acts 9:13). And in short every one wondered at the change. But when my former companions perceived that I avoided their company, they began to expose me to the greatest contempt when they met me. Others began to slander me by taking away my good name; and my name being the only jewel that remained to me, I could not think of parting with it. I thought, however, that if religion would not suffer on account of my being evil spoken of, I would have the less care as to what they might say about me, but I could not see how my good name could be taken away without reproaching religion. I then began to consider how the saints in all ages had their names cast out for the name of Christ; and also what slanders and reproaches the holy Jesus Himself had suffered, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. I also thought that if those who were now slandering my name, did know what my past manner of life had been, they, by telling only the truth, would cause my name to be much more spoken of than it was.

So far, however, at last did the mocking and scorn of wicked men prevail with me, that if the forsaking of the form of religion which I had assumed would cause them to be at peace with me, I believe that I would have done it. But I saw that, although I would forsake all my professions, I would never regain my name, but rather increase my infamy. "Blessed is he who is not offended in me," saith the Lord Jesus.

Then I perceived that I had begun to build my house without first sitting down to count the cost, and thought that I had better do it now. Therefore I began to lay my account with slanders, reproaches, crosses, losses, persecution, and distress, with a determination whatever else might come, never to forsake Christ whom I had begun to follow. My acquaintances continued as formerly to expose me whenever they met me, saying, "Behold the Whig." Others, out of a better design as they thought, advised me to forsake the reading of books, otherwise that I would lose my judgment, and thus become useless to myself and to my friends; while others of my near relations, who were of a more heroic spirit, said, "Alas! we have lost him since he has turned after this way." Others again said that I was really mad, and what not. However, I avoided their company as much as possible, for I loved to be alone, and endured all those things as well as I could, although not so well as I should have done. By these things I saw that the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is very great, when even the very show of religion, for at this time I had nothing more, is persecuted with slanders and reproaches.

Believers' Baptism

by Rev. Wm. MacLean, M.A., Gisborne

The term believers' baptism is generally taken to imply that only persons in possession of saving faith have a right to the sacrament of baptism, and that only infants of such parents (either one or both) have a right to receive the privilege of baptism for their children. Parents, according to this view, who do not profess the hope of having saving faith, are to be denied baptism for their children. In this case, therefore, it is members of the invisible Church, upon their own profession, and not members of the visible Church, who are to be baptised. "The visible Church" as the Westminster Confession of Faith states, "consists of all throughout the world that profess the true religion and their children." "The invisible Church" on the other hand, "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be, gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Ch. 25).

The early Church and all the Reformers without exception, held that the visible Church under both the Old and the New Testament dispensations were one and the same. In the light of that continuity they believed in infant baptism, that as infants were formerly admitted by the sacrament of circumcision into the Old Testament Church, and as no warrant whatsoever could be adduced from the Scriptures to debar them from a privilege they enjoyed for twenty centuries, they admitted them by the sacrament of baptism into the New Testament Church.

"It will not be denied" wrote the late Rev. William MacIntyre of St. George's, Sydney, "that God had a Church on earth in the time of Abraham, and His visible Church in all ages is composed of those with whom He has **outwardly** entered into covenant, and whom He has thus brought outwardly into such a relation to Himself that He "is a God unto them." Now circumcision was the "token" by the application of which Abraham and his seed were outwardly received within the bonds of the covenant which God made with them, that is of the covenant of grace, and thus constituted members of the visible Church as then organised." (The Token of the Covenant — p. 6).

That it was on the basis of a profession of the true religion Gentiles were admitted through the ordinance of circumcision into the Old Testament Church, is clear from the command given to Abraham in the day in which the Lord gave him circumcision as the seal of the covenant — that all born in his house and all bought with his money **which were not of his seed** had to be cir-

cumcised. In obedience to this command we read, "Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and **all that were bought with his money**, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the self-same day as God had said unto him. (Gen. 17.23). Earlier in the Book of Genesis, in chapter 14, we are told that when Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he armed 318 of his trained servants born in his own house, and set out for the rescue of Lot. If Abram could take 318 of his trained servants, and leave a sufficient number to take care of his flocks, what a large household he must have had! Abram's 318 trained servants, as Matthew Henry points out, were not only trained to fight, but instructed and catechised in the principles of the true religion. In the Hebrew the word for "trained" means instructed or catechised. It is the same word that is used in the exhortation "train up a child in the way he should go" etc. (Prov. 22.6). It was his servants, therefore, instructed in the principles of the true religion, that Abraham circumcised, and thereby openly admitted them in the visible Church at that time confined to his household. Dr. Gill in his commentary quotes from Maimonides that "if an Israelite receives a grown servant of the heathens, and the servant is not willing to be circumcised, at the end of a whole year seeing he is uncircumcised he is to be sent again to the heathens." "No man," comments Dr. Gill "was to be forced to embrace the true religion, or obliged against his will to submit to its ordinances."

"Baptism is now the solemn admission into the visible Church of Christ. As an ordinance of the visible Church it is also a sign and a seal of the **external** administration of the covenant of grace. There is the **internal** administration of the covenant. The internal administration has respect to believers, who join themselves to the Lord by a free and hearty consent which entitles them to the saving benefits of the covenant. In this internal administration **the Holy Spirit is the seal.**" (Treatise on Baptism by Matthew Henry).

Baptism as a sign and seal of the **external** administration of the covenant of grace belongs to all members of the visible church — "all who profess the true religion with their children." They receive the privilege of baptism on the ground of their professing the true religion, and not on the ground of their professing a hope of regeneration and saving faith which belongs to the **internal** administration of the covenant.

"Baptism is an ordinance of Christ's mediatorial kingdom; therefore all who pertain to the kingdom (the visible Church in the world) are to be baptised. It is the Magna Carta, which every subject may claim the benefit of, unless by any forfeiture, he de-

prived himself of the privilege of it. It belongs not to the internal but external administration of the kingdom; it is an ordinance of the visible Church, and pertains therefore to those who are visible members of the Church." (Matthew Henry).

Dr. Charles Hodge states that the Churches of the Reformation, the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Churches on the Continent of Europe and also most Protestant Churches, as the Church of England and the Congregational Churches, acted on the principle that every baptised person not excommunicated being a member of the visible church has a right to have his child baptised. "Infants of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptised." (Shorter Cat. Q.95). **"Such was the general practice of the Presbyterian Church of America"** writes Dr. Charles Hodge **"until within a comparative recent period of its history."** (Systematic Theology Vol.3, p. 569).

Before making this admission Dr. Hodge sets forth the commonly accepted practice of the above mentioned Churches in Britain, on the Continent and in America, which was founded on the following principle:— (1) That as under the old economy the Temple was one, it had its outer and inner courts, and those who had access to the former were not thereby entitled to the latter; so under the New Testament dispensation the visible Church is one, but it includes two classes of members; baptised professors of the true religion, and those who, giving evidence of regeneration, are admitted to the Lord's Supper. (2) That the qualifications for baptism and for full communion are not identical. Many may properly be admitted to the former, who are not prepared for the latter.

Both Dr. C. Hodge and Dr. A. A. Hodge accepted the new view which their Church, the Presbyterian Church of America, had "within a recent period of its history" adopted, that baptism should only be given to the children of parents professing to have saving faith, and therefore entitled to admission to the Lord's Table. [Sad to say they also held to the changes made by the Presbyterian Church of America in 1788 in the chapters and sections of the Confession of Faith dealing with the Civil Magistrate, or in other words, the Establishment Principle which maintains the Scriptural view of the universal supremacy of Christ as King of Nations, with the consequent duty of nations as such to honour and serve Him by recognising His Truth and promoting His Cause. Dr Thomas McCrie in his classic "Statement" on the Establishment Principle first published in April 1807, shows that all the Confessions of all Protestant Churches of the Reformation in Britain and on the Continent, held and maintained the Establishment Principle. "The Establishment Principle" said the

eminent Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall, is "not only worth living for, but a principle worth dying for."]

In the last century the idea of "believers' baptism" made inroads mainly in the South of Scotland where latitudinarianism in doctrine and practice had thrown open the Table of the Lord to almost all and sundry and denied baptism to parents unless they became communicants. Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall ably opposed and exposed the "believers' baptism" idea and defended in his book "The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire" the view held not only by the fathers in Ross-shire, but by the worthy fathers in the Church since Reformation times not only in Scotland but also on the Continent. "The Ross-shire fathers held," wrote Dr. Kennedy, "that the two sacraments were in general, seals of the covenant of grace and that as such they were equally valid. But they also held with Mastricht that they did not specially seal the same measure of privilege. They held that the qualifications for baptism and full communion are not identical, that many may be admitted to the former who are not prepared for the latter." The arguments advanced by Dr. Kennedy and Mastricht are convincing, that it is a great evil to make the Church consist only of communicants and to cast out into the world without any of that watch and care which God intended for them, all those together with their children who do not see their way clear to come to the Lord's Table.

Dr. Kennedy states that four most desirable results were secured by the mode of dispensing sealing ordinances, practiced by the fathers in the North, — the mode, too, which at one time was almost universal as already noted. These four results go far, Dr. Kennedy says "to prove that this mode was according to the mind of and was crowned with the blessing of the Lord. — It marked and preserved a distinction, so far as this can be legitimately done, between the approved followers of Christ and all others. This distinction as an ecclesiastical one, is quite blotted out, when both sacraments are administered on the same footing. — It always reminded the ministers of the danger of indiscriminate preaching. — When a minister has always a congregation of communicants before him, he is easily led to address from the pulpit, as it ought to be fitting he should, when standing at the head of the Table of the Lord."

"The Ross-shire fathers had no difficulty in regarding the sacrament of the Supper, as intended by the Lord, specially to seal something other and higher than that which is specially sealed by baptism. They called it with Mastricht '**sacramentum nutritionis**' as being intended to be an occasional feast to believers during all their wilderness journey. They beheld in the symbols of Christ's body and blood the clearest and closest manifestation

of the glory of the Lord, and in the exercise of those who partake of them the nearest approach to the Lord that can be on the earth. They regarded the guests at the table as having the most conspicuous connection with the cause and glory of Christ. They saw the Church pointing the eye of the world to a communion table, to inform them whom she accredited as the true people of God. On all these accounts they felt that they were specially called to guard the passage to the Table of the Lord, and to subject to the closest scrutiny all who would approach it. And surely they were right . . .”

Mastricht from whose writings Dr. Kennedy approvingly quotes, was a Dutch theologian of the 17th century. Mosheim in his “Ecclesiastical History” speaks of Mastricht as being held in the highest reputation for erudition and soundness in the faith, while Principal Cunningham describes his system of theology as eminently distinguished for ability, clearness and accuracy.

A worthy father of the Church, the Rev. Roderick MacLeod of Snizort in the Island of Skye who died in the year 1868, and whose labours were greatly blessed in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of the Lord’s people, embraced for a time the idea of “believers’ baptism.” “During the first three years of my ministry,” he says, “I was a stranger to the Gospel scheme of salvation”. It was after his conversion that he adopted the idea of “believers’ baptism”, but he eventually withdrew from the position he had taken up and agreed that the Church’s views were Scriptural.

Principal Cunningham a contemporary of the Hodges also favoured “believers’ baptism”. Against this view as has already been noted, Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall raised his voice. Dr. Kennedy was one of the most powerful preachers of the gospel in his generation, held by the godly in the highest esteem, and from whose lips they were fed with the finest of the wheat. He was also a faithful and uncompromising witness against the innovations in worship and doctrine — the lamentable vogue of his day, which, he said, would result, as it has done, in the spiritual desolation of Scotland. Dr. Kennedy’s death in 1884 was described by C. H. Spurgeon as “a loss to the Highlands greater than could have befallen by the death of any other hundred men”.

With all due respect to the unquestioned reputation of both Dr. Charles Hodge and Dr A. A. Hodge and Principal Cunningham as renowned theologians, to their piety and scholarship and their invaluable contributions to theology, we, nevertheless, on this point of granting baptism to parents who, if they receive the privilege of baptism for their children must also go forward to the Lord’s Table, prefer to agree with the older divines, believing “the old wine to be better,” that their mode of dispensing sealing or-

dinances has proved as Dr. Kennedy said, to be the mode that was according to the mind of the Lord and crowned with His blessing.

In this connection we submit the following extracts. The first is from "The Shorter Catechism Explained" by the Rev. James Fisher, assisted by the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine and the Rev. Ralph Erskine, all able and outstanding ministers of the New Testament. This book which runs into 466 pages is a standard work on the Shorter Catechism, and was first published in February, 1753. In their explanation of Question 95 — "To whom is baptism to be administered?" the following is the explanation given by these godly divines as setting forth the common Church view on the subject.

Question — To whom is baptism **not** to be administered?

Answer — Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church.

Q.—Whom do you understand by those that are out of the visible church?

A.—All infidels, or such as are Jews or Heathens, and their children.

Q.—May infidels in no event be baptised?

A.—Yes. They may, so soon as they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to Him.

Q.—What is it to profess faith in Christ?

A.—It is to profess a belief of the whole doctrines of the Christian religion. Acts 8.37.

Q.—What is it to profess obedience to Him?

A.—It is to yield an external subjection to all the ordinances and institutions of Christ. Acts.2.46.

Q.—Whom doth such a profession respect?

A.—It respects only the adult, or such as are grown up to ripeness of age.

Q.—Have not infants (who can make no such profession) a right to baptism?

A.—Yes: the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptised.

Q.—Who are the members of the visible church?

A.—They are "all such as profess the true religion and their children". (Larger Catechism Q.62. Confession of Faith Ch. 25.2).

Q.—What are we to understand by the true religion?

A.—We are to understand by it the whole of those doctrines deduced from the Holy Scriptures, which are contained in our

Confession of Faith, and Catechisms as agreeable in the main with the confessions of other reformed churches. "Hold fast the form of sound words". (2 Tim. 1.13).

The second is from the writings of the late Rev. Joseph Irons of Grove Chapel, London, an able minister of the New Testament, and a defender of the scripturalness of infant baptism. "We have been told" wrote Joseph Irons, "that saving faith must precede water baptism; but on what authority such an assertion rests I know not, as I cannot find it in Scripture, for the utmost requisition made by the apostles was an acknowledgement that Jesus was the Messiah, and that related only to adult persons who as Jews or Heathen had denied Him." (Jazer. p.74).

Footnote. It will be clearly understood, of course, that members of the visible church seeking baptism for their children must satisfy the Kirk Session with respect to their knowledge and practice of the Christian faith.

Posadh an Anama ri Criosd

Leis an Urr. Eideard Pearce (A.D. 1672)

(Air a leantuinn bho t.d. 139)

Uime sin, a mhuinntir a tha E saoradh, tha E dha'n saoradh air a leithid de dhòigh agus is motha a thogas suas a ghràs Fein, air bhi rùn ann an sin, gu'n rìghicheadh gràs, mar a tha agaibh ann an Ròm.v.21. Uime sin tha sibh a leughadh mu E bhi fireanachadh an duine mì-dhiadhaidh, Ròm. iv.5. Bheir E air a ghràs buadhachadh thairis air a h-uile anam a shaoras E. Nis ciod a mhisneach a tha'n sodo chreidimh. Cha'n e mhàin gu'm bheil Criosd a suidhe air cathair a ghràis, ach 's e mar an ceudna a rùn ann a bhi deiligidh ri peacaich, a bhi cur a ghràis air an rìgh-chathair. A pheacaich, mar is salaiche agus is peacaiche a thà thù, 's ann is freagaraiche a tha e do rùn Chriosd do thearnadh: oir mar is salaiche agus is peacaiche a thà thù, 's ann is motha a thà cur an ceill gràis air taobh Chriosd ann a do ghabhail agus ann a d' shlàinte. Oh! 'n uair a bheir Criosd maitheanas do anam cho ciontach, a ghabhas E ri anam cho peacach, a nì E rèite ri anam a tha'n a leithid de nàmhaid 's a thà thusa; cia mar a dh' fhoillsicheas sin saoibhreas ghlòrmhor a ghràis ann an sealladh araon dhaoine agus aingeal! foillsichidh so a mach saoibhreas do-rannsaichte a ghràis, mar a tha e air a ràdh ann an Ephes. ii.7. Agus mar is salaiche agus is peacaiche a thà thù, 's ann is motha bhitheas tù air do thogail le gràs gu bràth air do thaobh-sa: far am bheil mòran air a mhaitheadh is ann is motha

a bhitheas an gràdh agus a' moladh, Lucas vii.47. O, co mise, (deir a t-anam, 'n uair a tha e aon uair air aghabhaila stigh do thrò-cair, ged a thà e thar tomhas neo-chumanta salach agus peacadh) co mise, gu'm faighinn gràs ann an sealladh Chrìosd? Ciod e! a leithid de cheannaireach, agus gidheadh air a mhaitheadh! a leithid de nàmhaid, agus gidheadh air a dheanamh réidh! a leithid de pheacach salach, agus gidheadh air a ghlanadh agus air a dheanamh geal ann am fuil an Uain! a leithid a tha toillteanach air ifrinn agus gidheadh air a dheanamh freagarach gu faotainn deadh-ghean neamh! a leithid de thruaghan dite salach, agus gidheadh air a thoirt a dh'ionnsuidh broilleach fìorghlan agus gràdhach Iosa! Oh gràs, gràs! cia cho saoibhir agus cho saor 's a tha gràs! agus oh! ciod e' moladh agus na **halleluias** a bhios air an tionndadh air teanganaibh agus air spioradan do Dhia agus do'n Uan gu bràth! 'N uair, uime sin, a rachadh tù dh'ionnsuidh Chrìosd, agus a dh' eireas mì-mhisneachaidhean a chùm do chumail air ais bh' uaithe bu chòr còmhnuidh a ghabhail, agus t-anam a chumail suas air a so, a reusanachadh air a so riut fein—Is fìor e, is truaghan salach mì, ceann-feadhna pheacach mì, aon anns gach uile seadh a tha toillteanach air gràin a ghabhail dheth, agus a bhi air a thilgeadh air falbh le Crìosd: ach ciod e an sin? thà Crìosd ag oibreachadh a thaobh pheacach a mhàinn bho phrionnsabal gràis; cha'n eil suim Aige a thaobh airidheachd na neo-airidheachd; co-dhiubh is e peacach beag, 's e'n aon nì ann Leis-san, a thaobh gabhail rium. A thuilleadh air so, is e bhi crùnadh a ghrais a run, agus a bhi tabhairt na glòir sin; agus mar is salaich mì, is ann is motha a dh' athartaicheas sin a rùn-san 'n am ghabhail Ris agus r'a shlàinte. Cia air bith cho salach, uime sin, 's a thà mì, tilgidh mì mì-fein Air-san, agus cuiridh mì stigh air son pòsadh Ris.

6. 'S e'n seathamh prionnsabal soisgeulach na misneachd do chreidimh, a bu chòr dhuit thù fèin a ghiulain suas air, agus còmhnuidh a ghabhail gu mòr ann a bhi beachd-smuainteachadh air, so — Gur e glòir agus iomlanachd Chrìosd, mar Eadar-mheadhon-air, a bhi gabhail ri peacaich agus a bhi dha thoirt Fein agus iomlanachd a mach dhoibh, 'n uair a thig iad dha ionnsuidh. Nì so, ma tha e air a thomhas gu ceart, creidimh a chuideachadh gu cumhachdach, agus anam bochd a thogail thairis air a mhì-mhisneachaidhean, a dh' ionnsuidh broilleach agus glacaibh Iosa Crìosd. Gu bhi dha thuigsinn gu ceart, feumaidh fios a bhi agad gu ceart gu'm bheil glòir agus iomlanachd dhùbailt aig Crìosd: ghòir agus iomlanachd a Phearsa, mar is e Mac Dhé; agus glòir agus iomlanachd a dhreuchd, mar is E Eadar-mheadhonair agus Ceann an dara cùmhnannt. Glòir agus iomlanachd a Phearsa, mar Mhac Dhé, tha sin gu neo-chrìochnach iomlan agus làn, agus cha ghabh e stigh ann aon chuid toirt bh' uaithe na cur ris, air

bhi dhà gu neo-chriochnach a' nì ceudna gu bràth. Ach glòir agus iomlanachd a dhreuchd, mar Eadar-mheadhonair, tha sin ann an tomhas mòr ag eiridh bho bhi gabhail pheacach, agus dha bhuileachadh Fein agus a ghràs orra 'n uair a thig iad dha ionnsuidh; agus mar is motha de pheachaich a ghabhas E dha ionnsuidh, agus mar is motha de ghràs a fhrithéal E mach dhoibh, is ann is motha a ghlòir agus iomlanachd anns a chùis so. Agus faodaidh e gu cinnteach a bhi air a ràdh, gu'm bheil Crìosd, ann a bhi gabhail ri peacaich agus a bhi tabhairt dhoibh gràs, a meudachadh ionmhas a ghlòir Fein, agus nì's motha agus nì's motha a lionadh suas na tha dha dheanamh Fein iomlan, mar cheann agus Eadar-mheadhonair. Bh' uaithe so thà e air a ràdh mu'n eaglais gu'r i a lànachd-san, "Agus chuir e na h-uile nithean fodh a chasan, agus thug se e gu bhi 'n a cheann os ceann nan uile nithean do'n eaglais, a tha 'n a corp aige, lànachd an tì a tha lionadh nan uile nithean anns na h-uile." Ephes. i. 22, 23. Nis, ma's e'n eaglais lànachd Chrìosd, an sin mar is motha thà sin air a lionadh agus air a dheanamh iomlan le E bhi gabhail pheacach dha ionnsuidh Fein, agus a bhi tabhairt a mach gràs dhoibh; is ann is motha tha lànachd agus iomlanachd Fein, a thaobh urram agus iomlanachd eadar-mheadhonaireachd a fàs. Bh' uaithe sin tha e air a ràdh thaobh nan uaomh gu'r iad glòir Chrìosd. II. Cor. viii. 23. Mar is e Crìosd a mhàinn an glòir-san, mar sin is iadsan mar an ceudna a ghlòir-san. Agus cia mar is iad a ghlòir-san? Cha'n e mhàinn gu'm bheil iad, na gu'm o chòr dhoibh gu gnìomhach Esan a ghlòrachadh, ach mar an ceudna gu'n do gabh E riutha, agus gu'n do sgaoil E mach a ghràs dhoibh, agus is e a ghràs a mhàinn a thà dealrachadh a mach annta. Bh' uaithe so tha'n ràdh ud aig **Calvin** air an àite so, "Iadsan," tha e'g ràdh, "a tha toirt barrachd ann an gràs agus ann an naomhachd, is iad air mhodh sònraichte glòir Chrìosd; do bhrìgh nach eil aca nì air bith ach le saor-thiodhlac bho Chrìosd." Bh' uaithe so mar an ceudna, thà Crìosd ag innse dhuinn, gu'm bheil E air a ghlòrachadh annta, Eoin xvii. 10. Agus tha E gu soilleir ag innse dhuinn, gu'n glòirich an Spiorad E do-bhrìgh gu'n gabh E dheth chuid-san agus gu'n nochd E dhuinne e, Eoin xvi. 14.

(R'a leantuinn).

Poaching—Right or Wrong?

by Rev. Malcolm MacInnes, Ullapool

It is characteristic of human nature in every age to rebel against authority which is felt to infringe upon the liberty sought after by the generation. Too often today students at universities and

colleges are prepared to join forces with people who voice their grievances by "strikes," "marches" or by a "sit-in." It may well be that superiors are not providing for their inferiors "all things necessary," but even unfair treatment by those in authority does not give license to take matters into our own hands. Similarly, legislation which to some people may appear to be unjust, but the observance of which does not infringe upon one's liberty of conscience, is to be observed. Should such legislation infringe upon one's liberty to worship God or seek to impose practices which are immoral upon the individual, then obviously the law of God is of greater authority than any "man-made" law which contradicts it. The title of this article poses a question which, surprisingly enough, might prove controversial, and yet, if the principles of law and order, which are contended for in other spheres of society, are applied to this subject, the line of conduct should be clear to all.

"Poaching" is defined as "trespassing on land belonging to another in search of game or fish" or "searching for game or fish illegally" — Universal English Dictionary (Wyld). Two arguments seem to cloud the issue, and behind these arguments those in favour of poaching take their stand. The first of these arguments is that the fish in the sea or rivers and the 'game' on the hills was put there by God for the good of man; the second argument advanced is that some Christians have not regarded poaching as wrong. An examination of both these arguments should show that neither gives a tenable position to those who condone poaching.

It is universally agreed that God placed the fish in the water and the game on the hill for the good of man, but the point to be debated is whether every man has a right to go into what is acknowledged as the property of another and take what is there. When men buy land to which there are attached 'fishing rights' or 'shooting rights' the laws governing the structure of society are such that the catching of fish or game there belongs to them — it is their property. For any to use the first argument that such a law is bad seems to be beside the point in trying to decide whether we obey it or not. If any regard a law as bad the proper way to deal with it is to seek to have it repealed, but to give obedience to it while it is in force. If everyone is to flout what they consider a "bad" law in society, then a state of anarchy will prevail. If one law be flouted, who is to say which laws are to be obeyed and which not? It is recognised by all classes of society that the law decides 'what is whose property.' Stealing is stealing, whether it be a person's good name, character or possessions, or whether it be the envying and grudging at the good of others. We read in Leviticus chapter six some of the laws of community relations, and in verse four the Lord says "then it shall be, because he has

sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten." No person with a sense of equity can say that it is honest for a man to take deceitfully what belongs to someone else. The verse quoted implies that there is sin and guilt in taking deceitfully what belongs to another person. There may be some public sympathy with the "poacher," but public sympathy does not remove guilt. The public conscience may not always condemn an evil action. Only when the conscience is instructed by divine truth can it be a sure monitor. If the teaching of Scripture condemns an action then this must be the standard. Before becoming hardened, the conscience recognises that there is an association of "wrong-doing" attached to the transgression of laws, even the laws of society. If "poaching" cannot be done before the eyes of men, it shows that the "poacher" has forgotten the eye of God. The loneliness of the hillside or of the river does not hide from God, nor does the darkness of the night.

The argument that some Christians do not regard it as wrong does not give a licence either; it is rather a sad reflection on these Christians. Such Christians may be regarded as outstanding for the exercise of grace or of zeal for the cause of Christ, and yet they are not to be regarded as infallible. Paul exhorted the Corinthians "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." We would do well to follow Christians who follow Christ, but the moment they begin to condone what is questionable, if not clearly wrong in the estimation of some, it is time for us to say "not a step further." Let a Christian be seen doing what is wrong, let him be seen poaching, and a finger is immediately pointed at this "spot" in his profession even although he may win the praise and friendship of the "lawbreakers." Christians who regard "poaching" as "permissible" are not only endangering the effectiveness of their own witness, but are in danger of encouraging others in what can only be regarded as wrong. The principle we see at work in Zaccheus was a seeking to undo the evil he had done. He restored his ill-gotten gain, which implies that had he acted properly from the outset he would not have indulged in false dealing. Love to our neighbour implies that we wish him prosperity in all that he has. We cannot say that we are prospering our neighbour's outward estate when we take what, by law, is his property. A Christian life should commend obedience to the laws of "the powers that are ordained of God." The more that laws are observed as rules of life the more tender the conscience will be against doing what is forbidden, whether by God's moral law or the laws of society. The more that the believer, not only voices his conviction on moral issues which are becoming increasingly blurred, but also by divine grace lives accordingly, the

clearer and more effective will his witness for Christ be in the world. Christians should live so as to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." and thus have "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Taking unlawfully what does not belong to him should not be a characteristic of a person converted to Christ. What is wrong for a Christian is also wrong for an unconverted person, and the conclusion to which we must come is that "poaching" is wrong not only for the converted, but for the unconverted also. "... giving no offence in any thing..." 2 Corinthians 6:3.

The Wrong Priest

The incident recorded here occurred in a City restaurant, and on the occasion referred to, the men at one of the tables were conversing upon the subject of religion and the argument grew so lively that it became impossible for those at the nearest tables not to hear it. As it proceeded the interest of the listeners became intense. The argument was chiefly as to whether salvation was by works or of grace, and whether a person could be assured of his salvation in this life. One of the disputants firmly insisted that salvation is by grace, through faith; not of ourselves, but the gift of God.

Another, a Roman Catholic, contended that no man can know he is saved until he dies, and, as a final argument, he exclaimed, "Well, all I can say is this: I have placed myself in the hands of my priest and he is responsible for my salvation."

At this point a gentleman rose from his table, and lifting his hat, said: "Gentlemen, I believe I am well known in the Law Courts and in this room. I could not help hearing the argument at your table, and I feel bound to say that our Roman Catholic friend is perfectly logical in what he has said. I have also placed myself in the hands of my Priest, and He is responsible for my salvation. The mistake our friend has made is that he has chosen the wrong priest. My Priest is the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith I have committed myself into His hands, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." This settled the dispute. The effect of this, from a well known King's Counsel, was marvellous. Perfect silence reigned as he spoke, and I believe that some men there heard the Gospel for the first time, thus preached in a restaurant, by an exponent of the law.

William Wileman.

Notes and Comments

The Pope and the Common Market

The Daily Telegraph reported that when Mr Desmond Crawley, Britain's new Minister to the Vatican, presented his Letters of Credence to the Pope at the Papal summer palace in Castigandolfo, the Pope praised Britain's efforts to try to enter the Common Market. It has been evident for a number of years that the alignment of the nations of Europe in one grand economic, and eventual political union, has had the warm approval and blessing of the Vatican. From this we can judge that the Common Market, whether in its present form or in its proposed enlargement is in no way prejudicial to the Vatican's future political and religious aims but rather the reverse. Let us beware what the Pope blesses !

Britain's Minister at the Vatican

The appointment of a new Minister to the Vatican cannot but make us ask anew, Why should Britain have any representation at the pocket-sized State of the Vatican ? It is quite clear that the Vatican's political power would be non-existent if it rested merely on the Pope's temporal sovereignty over the Vatican territory. It rests rather on the Pope's headship over the Roman Catholic Church and his blasphemous claim to be the Vicar of Christ. The less Britain has to do with "the Man of sin and the Son of perdition" the better for herself.

No Prosecution !

The Attorney General, after consultation with the Director of Public Prosecution, has indicated that he cannot authorise criminal proceedings over Kenneth Tynan's controversial revue "Oh ! Calcutta !" on the grounds that there was no reasonable likelihood that a prosecution would be successful.

In view of the increasingly debased plays and films which are now being shown in Britain, it is alarming that the safeguards which the law once provided to prevent such shows from taking place, have been largely removed or so weakened that a successful prosecution is difficult to obtain. It is surely time that the Govern-

ment restored legislation which would have the effect of curbing, for the benefit of society, productions of the type of "Oh! Calcutta!"

Church Notes

Church Deputy

Rev. John Nicolson, Ness, is at present visiting the U.S.A. and Canada. The prayers of the people of the Church are requested for the Deputy in his journeyings abroad and that his labours in the Gospel on the other side of the Atlantic may be blessed by the Lord to the awakening of sinners and to the reviving of His people.

Induction of Missionary to the Jews

The Southern Presbytery is to meet on Wednesday, 23rd September (D.V.) in St Jude's Church, Glasgow, at 7 p.m., to induct Rev. H. R. Moshe Radcliff, Th.L., to his work as a missionary to the Jews.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern Presbytery : At Dingwall on Tuesday, 6th October, at 3 p.m.

Southern Presbytery : At Glasgow, on Wednesday, 23rd September, at 3 p.m. and afterwards at 7 p.m. for the Induction of Rev. H. R. M. Radcliff.

Students Licensed

At a meeting of the Northern Presbytery at Dingwall on Tuesday, 28th July, 1970, Messrs John Tallach, M.A., and John Walter Ross were taken on trials, which being sustained, the Presbytery licensed them as preachers of the Gospel.

Staff required in Rhodesia

Miss Margaret Mackenzie who teaches at Ingwanya Secondary School is due Home at the end of the year. (DV). The Committee are anxious to obtain teachers for the Mission work at this important station and will be pleased to hear from young communicants of the Church who are interested in taking up teaching in this interesting sphere.

Both Sisters M. Tallach and M. Carmichael are due for leave

and will be coming home soon. Two sisters leaving at the same time makes the work heavy for others and, with the expanding nature of the medical work, there is a real necessity for two with nursing experience to go out to Mbumba. The Committee will be glad to hear from any who have a desire to help in attending to the bodily needs of the Africans.

In both the school and hospital there is ample opportunity to spread the Word of God and to witness on the side of the One Who, having loved His own, loved them unto the end. May the love of Christ constrain some of the young among us to labour in Rhodesia. "Loose him and let him go; for the Lord hath need of him."

(Rev.) Donald MacLean, Clerk to the Committee,
13 Kingsborough Gardens, Glasgow, W.2.

Claims on General Building Fund

Congregations should please note that all claims on the General Building Fund for consideration by the Financial Committee at its next meeting (D.V.), should be in the hands of the General Treasurer, by 30th September next, at the latest.

Fort William Minister resumes preaching

Readers of the magazine will be glad to know that Rev. J. A. MacDonald, Fort William, and his elder Mr Ian Matheson, who were both injured in a car accident early in the year have made a good recovery. Mr Macdonald has lately resumed preaching duties in his congregation. We acknowledge the Lord's goodness in sparing their lives and restoring them to usefulness in His Cause.

We would express our sympathy with other ministers of the Church who have been on the sick list in recent months and would ask the people of the Church to continue to remember them at a Throne of Grace.

Book Review

From Grace to Glory by Rev. Murdoch Campbell. Banner of Truth Trust. Paperback. Price 6/-.

This attractively produced paperback consists of a series of brief meditations on the Book of Psalms. The meditations are richly Biblical in content and warmly evangelical in tone and indicate the ripeness of the Author's spiritual thought and ex-

perience. Interspersed throughout the book are many "Notes" of the godly of the past and also many incidents from the Author's own experience. While not intended to be a commentary, but merely the expansion of one of the principal thoughts in each Psalm, yet where the interpretation of a passage is touched upon the treatment is sober. The brief comments made on the Psalms are suggestive and helpful. The book would be very suitable, as the Publishers suggest, for daily reading.

In the reviewer's opinion it is the best of the devotional books which Mr Campbell has written. We are glad to recommend it to the readers of the Magazine.

D.B.M.

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 :

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Portree — £5 in envelope in Church Plate for the Communion Expenses, A. M. N.

Mr W. MacKenzie, 7 Crown Drive, Inverness, Treasurer, Aberdeen Church Fund, acknowledges with thanks, Friend, £5.

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