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SYNOD SERMON

Preached by Rev. Alfred E. W. MacDonald, M.A., Gairloch, retiring Moderator, at Inverness, on 20th May, 1969.

Text: Matthew 23, verse 8. "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

There is little need to say anything with regard to the character of the scribes and of the Pharisees who are here denounced by the Lord. We may proceed to consider in the first instance, the necessity for such a warning as we have in the passage. Although the scribes and the Pharisees were those especially before the mind of the Lord Jesus when He gave this warning, the warning is given to the church of God for all times. The necessity for this warning arises first of all from the fact that man is proud; and, that the Lord is here directing His word against the sin of pride, is clearly brought out in verse 12: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased." Pride does not hide itself even when man comes near to the holy things of God, although one might think that it would. It is evil enough to find pride among the men of the world for pride is an evil thing wherever it is found; but nowhere can pride be so obnoxious to the eye of the Lord as when it is found in connection with the affairs of His cause and kingdom. Because man is what he is; because man is basically sinful; because you and I are by nature under the power of the great evil spirit Satan who is proud as Lucifer, who is himself the very essence of pride as it is evident from Scripture that it is the sin of pride that brought Satan to fall from that eminence in which he was created; then, we are always in danger from pride. Even in the case of those sinners who are brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and have implanted within them the grace of God, pride is not absent. And such as are called to work in the service of the Lord and to

the office of the ministry should remember that this evil is ready to manifest itself in the form of spiritual pride.

All forms of pride are vile but spiritual pride is most vile. "What hast thou," the Apostle asked the Corinthians, "that thou hast not received?" When a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, boast because they are in the kingdom of God it surely is a sad state of affairs. Yet how much of that kind of pride lurks in our hearts. The pride particularly brought before us here is that which evidences itself in the Church of God amongst its rulers. This is no new thing in the Church of God. You can go back to the Old Testament and there you will find examples of this spirit in those who were connected with the affairs of God's house. There is a warning given us in the example of Korah and Dathan and Abiram, which three rose up in the camp of Israel against Moses. These three thought themselves as near to God as Moses, and they were not afraid to speak against Moses the man of God; yet, you know how evident it was that nothing but the spirit of pride moved them in their rebellion.

When we come to the New Testament we do not need to pass by the twelve disciples of the Lord Jesus, in looking for a manifestation of this sin. Although they had with them the One who was meek and lowly, this did not hinder them revealing the contrary spirit. We read of two of them, on one occasion, James and John the sons of Zebedee, requesting that in the kingdom of the Lord they would sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left. They desired to be above their brethren. They craved a place of eminence. Later on in the history of the Lord Jesus and at a time when one would expect such thoughts to be far from their hearts, even at the time when their Lord and Master was about to be apprehended and tried and put to death, we find them thus, "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest." Thus we see pride coming forth from those who were undoubtedly the children of God (Judas Iscariot excepted) and who were blessed with much grace, much understanding, much holiness, and much wisdom; and the Lord had to rebuke them for this evil. "And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors, but ye shall not be so."

In the Acts of the Apostles we do not find such clear references to this evil showing itself and this may be accounted for by the exceeding great measure of the Holy Spirit given to the early church, but before the close of the Word of God we find this spirit in the Church being checked by the Spirit of God.

Were we to trace the history of the church of God from the close of the canon of Scripture down to the present day, the

same thing could be illustrated and, to some extent has been illustrated, by those well equipped to do so; so that the warning which the Saviour is giving us here belongs to ourselves and not to others — "Be not ye called Rabbi for one is your Master, even Christ."

In the second place we would note the sinfulness of this condition, when those who rule in the church of God affect and desire titles of honour and places of eminence, in order to be above their brethren. They manifest the spirit of pride in having themselves called Rabbi and, the sinfulness of this is, that while they are thus seeking to exalt themselves, they are doing great dishonour to Him who is their Master, even Christ, who is not only their Master but the Master of God's house. The things of the kingdom of God are not in the hands of any man, but in the hands of the Lord Himself and, inasmuch as any man seeks to be called Master he is taking away the eyes of his people from Christ. When the Lord was upon this earth, this is what took place. He was envied His rightful place in His own house. This is what we see taking place before our eyes today. Each one desires to be Master and to be reckoned as the authoritative voice in matters of religion. The position of the church today, to a very large extent, is as if Christ had never given His direction as to what He desires in His worship. This urge among men to have a place of eminence and to have that place that belongs to Christ, accounts for the fact that when problems arise concerning morality and concerning the worship of God, there is no answering by the church with an unequivocal voice, but men seek to set forth their individual opinions. In doing this they deny Christ His rightful place as Lord of His own house. One would think that the Church had been left without a Head, to find a way for herself. The people of the land are being left with this impression. One thing after another comes before the Government of the nation; one evil after another is demanding the sanction of law and, instead of the Church directing the Government to the rule of Christ in the Scriptures the Word of God is ignored in preference to man's opinions. People are allowed to think that there is great dubiety about the moral issues of the day; whereas the truth is that Christ has given His direction about all these matters; there is no dubiety in the Word of God about the evil and sin of Abortion, about the duty of morality, and about the rightness of capital punishment for the sin of murder. There is no difficulty in these matters at all. The Master has spoken and the duty of the servants of the Master within the Church of God is to tell the people what the Master has said, but this love of eminence and love of position and love of the praise of men, has made the rulers of the church appear as if they had to discover for them-

selves the principles of conduct and, answer these great problems. In doing this the honour of Christ is taken away and we should beware of robbing Christ of His glory and honour, which He will not give to another.

Not only, however, is it the case that those that rule are guilty in this matter but those that are ruled. Congregations and individual people are guilty of making men their masters. When issues arise about any matter there is too much readiness among people to look to this minister or that minister and to let some minister decide for them what is right and what is wrong. Persons in such circumstances think it sufficient for a rule of behaviour that some minister approves of their behaviour; and the fact that some other minister may not approve is just another opinion which can be discarded or attributed to his 'extremeness'. Thus the people act as if there was no Master, as if the Master of the house of God had not spoken in His Word as a criterion for them for all times. The people like this, although in doing so they are guilty of calling someone Rabbi. It is admitted that the people have a right to expect help from those that rule over them in the things of God. So here in this chapter the Saviour tells the people that they should have regard to the scribes and to the Pharisees in so far as they sat in Moses' seat — that is in so far as they told expressly the law of God as given by Moses and the servants of God. People are not bound to follow any man's opinion which cannot be proved from the Word of God. The rulers in the church are not seeking to be called 'Master' in such circumstances, when they try to lead and to guide their people according to the Word of God. What must be avoided is, that no private opinion of any man be followed as the rule of Christ.

The Word of God is a sufficient revelation for every age and for every condition, and, in particular, for 1969 with all its new problems and issues. In the realm of ethics, in the realm of morality and in the realm of day-to-day living, new problems come up, but we do not need to call men Rabbi. The Word of God has given the answer and that Word is to be listened to whether we like it or not, even when we would rather follow some man's opinion which suits our carnal tastes better. How ready we are to seek refuge under some minister and under some name in the Theological world! When people do this they manifest that they are not seeking the mind of the Master and they are not asking themselves, is this a man's private opinion or is it the mind of the Word of God? So it is when the church is divided on certain issues, the people are ever ready to join to one man or another. 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas', is the attitude all too often in the church.

The duty of the church of God is to declare the mind of God

to the people. This the true church is always seeking to do, basing their decisions on the Word. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has, for example, given a ruling to its people on the keeping of the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath. When you compare that view with the prevalent view among many who profess themselves to be evangelical and to be Christian you may be ready to question the matter. It may appear to you that the strict observance of that day as called for by the church, is only a matter of some men's opinions. In other words, you may be ready to say that in this matter there are some men who would be called Rabbi. This is not so. The view of the church on the Sabbath is the view of the Master.

Now we pass on from the sinfulness of the attitude of calling men master, as seen in the dishonour it does to Christ, to the sinfulness which manifests itself in the harm that it causes among the brethren. We need not go back to the cases already raised this evening of Moses in his being opposed by Dathan, Korah and Abiram, although that should suffice. Even in the case where the Lord had to rebuke his own twelve disciples on account of their disputing which among them should be the greatest, we see what division it caused among these disciples. It made way for division; it made way for jealousy; it made way for hatred; it made way for envy; and it will be the same still where this spirit of seeking to be called chief or master prevails.

So far we have spoken on the positive side of the matter, on what evil follows this spirit, and now let us turn to view the subject from the negative side. We lose what is to be gained by having the spirit that we ought to have, even the spirit of humility and of esteeming others better than ourselves. We lose what is to be gained by acknowledging that we do have Christ as our One Master:— by acknowledging Christ as our Master, and believing that Christ is the Master and that Christ as the Master of His Church has left His Church with an infallible record, with a clear indication of His will on all matters bearing upon the salvation of man. He has left it on record as to how a man is saved; how a sinner is to come out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. And it is not man's opinion that you are to listen to when it comes to that! Yet there is a great deal of calling men master in this serious matter of one's soul's salvation. How solemn it is that any sinner should go to eternity resting his soul's salvation upon the opinion of any minister. Therefore, rather search the Scriptures to be directed in this great matter. You are not to go to eternity thinking that although you might not satisfy some persons, or although you may not satisfy the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, with regard to your experience of salvation, yet in other circles you would soon be regarded as a person that is born again and

converted and saved. The young of our church should take great heed to this in a day when there is much mixing among varied Christian societies and among so-called 'evangelical circles', where the matter of conversion is made out to be something quite different than that which the Word of God makes it out to be. There is a danger that by mixing with persons of Arminian views on the matter of salvation that one will be ready to conclude himself or herself saved when it is not so. Christ has laid down for all time what it is that converts the soul of a dead sinner, even that it is the work of the Holy Spirit unaided by the sinner, and no minister nor group of persons calling themselves Christians shall ever change that. In a day when there is so much written in religious periodicals which makes for a superficial work in the minds and consciences of sinners, the danger is most real that sinners will go to eternity deceived. In following these vain opinions of men the sinner is losing the great blessing that belongs to the church of God, even that she has a Master who is ready to teach and Who is ready to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

On the consideration of how much is lost by this spirit of calling men master in as far as the brethren themselves are concerned, there is lost all that follows from 'loving as brethren'.

When the Lord Jesus ascended up on high 'He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers'; and the brethren are to recognise these differences, and it is only when the church accepts these differences that she reaps the benefits. We must realise that some have gifts for one thing and others have gifts in a different direction. The Lord gives the measure of gifts to each one as He sees shall be to the advantage of His Church upon earth. It must be acknowledged that certain persons have gifts above others. Therefore when it comes to setting persons over any business in connection with the Church our concern should be to see the person to whom Christ has given the required gifts and, not to seek places of eminence for ourselves or for others irrespective of their gifts.

The injunction of the Saviour states also that no man is to be called father for one is our Father which is in heaven — that is the Person of God the Father. This is most pertinent in connection with the salvation of a sinner. 'Of His own will begat He us by the Word of His truth'.

Those who are to be born again are born 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. Although there is a sense in which Paul refers to himself as a father in Christ, meaning that he was used by the Lord in the salvation of the person referred to; yet, if you are to be begotten into the family of God, you must call no man your father but look unto God the Father who alone can do this for you.

We come now in the third place to mention the warnings that the Lord gives against the sin we have been discussing. The warning is contained in the words, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased." If we perform the duties of religion to seek a place for self, we may for a little exalt ourselves, but the end will be that we shall be abased. This was most solemnly the portion of the scribes and Pharisees as we can see from the chapter where the Saviour warns them 'How can ye escape the damnation of hell?' Those who make a profession of religion and seek a place in the Church of God, out of love to self, shall have the same dreadful end, even the damnation of hell.

On the other side there is a promise of exaltation to those who will now abase themselves, 'and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted'. The promise is made to those who will take the place that belongs to them as ignorant, lost sinners on their way to eternity. With all our knowledge and all our learning, if we possess it, we must be brought to acknowledge that we know nothing spiritually apart from the divine illumination. We must come to the Word of God as a little child. It is he that takes a low place before God, that truly humbles himself in the sight of God, that shall be exalted.

The Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is before us as an example of this very thing. He sets before us Himself. When the disciples were disputing which of them should be the greatest, the Lord Jesus told them that such rule as was among the world in the political sphere was not to be in His church. According to Dr Owen the Roman Catholic Church misinterpret this statement of Christ by saying that what Christ is warning them against is the unjust rule of the heathen rulers. That this is not the case is very clear from the word that the Lord Jesus uses to describe these very rulers; so far from their being tyrants of any kind or despotic in their rule, He calls them 'benefactors'. There must be nothing of a 'lordly spirit' in those that rule in the Church of God. In another place, Christ said to His disciples 'Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well for so I am'. Look at Him who is the Master. He sought not to be ministered unto but to minister. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. 'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet'. In other words, He was saying to them, I have already done myself that which I call you to do. I have grace to give you to enable you to walk in this humble way. The delight of the Master was to serve and this should be the delight of all who hold place in the Church of God. With such an attitude we would please the Master.

Christ is the Master and, as the Master, He it is to whom we

shall all of us have to give our account. Each one of us, however gifted, however greatly used by the Lord, shall have to render our account to Him with respect to the manner of our ruling, as surely as those ruled by us must give their account, as to how they obeyed them that had the rule over them. We are not going to give our account to any man, for one is our Master, even Christ. To Him we must give answer for the views we held and followed in governing His Church. The people will not be able to lay the blame at their rulers. The Scribes and the Pharisees were leading the people of their day astray for eternity and, for this, as well as for all their other sins, they would perish for ever, but this would afford no cover or shelter for the people at the day of judgment who were willing to be led astray and refused to call Christ their Master. It will be no help to any sinner at the day of judgment to say that he followed the views of such and such a person or theologian of repute. At that day the great issue will be, was Christ our Master, or was it man? Christ as the Master has right to ask an account from those who serve in His Church. In view of that day let us pray to the Master to guide us in the affairs of His house that we be not found following man's opinions, and that particularly, in regard to the salvation of the soul. How blessed they are who will be able to say at that day to the Master that they did what they did, they spoke as they spoke, they decided as they decided, because they were seeking to call no man Master, but to acknowledge the Lord as the Master.

May the Lord bless His Word.

THE LATE REV. DONALD M. MACDONALD

In the early hours of Sabbath morning, 1st September 1968, this worthy servant of the Lord entered into that rest which remaineth to the people of God. He had lived to a good old age, being only a few days short of the 86th birthday when he was taken away. He had spent 34 years actively engaged in the ministry of the Gospel and 20 years in semi-retirement owing to the complete loss of his hearing.

Donald Malcolm Macdonald was born on 4th September 1882 in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis. His father, John Macdonald, whose obituary was reprinted not long ago in the pages of the Young People's Magazine, was an elder in the Free Presbyterian congregation there. His mother, although she never made a public profession, gave witness on her deathbed to her hope in the Saviour. It was in the atmosphere of a Christian home that Donald Macdonald was brought up and he gave evidence before many

years that the Gospel which he was taught from his early days had found a place in his heart through the Lord's blessing. On two occasions during his boyhood he had very narrow escapes from drowning, while at another time he was so extremely ill with pneumonia that his life was despaired of. However, the Lord had work for him to do, and in God's good providence he recovered.

He was educated at the Nicolson Institute in the town of Stornoway and afterwards entered the local office of the Collector of Rates. It was at this period that his conversion took place, of which we do not have any details but to the reality of which his after life bore eloquent testimony. In 1901 he was accepted as a member in full communion. Soon after this he was conscious of a call to the ministry of the Gospel and he was received as a student of the Church in August 1903. After preparatory studies, he entered Glasgow University in 1906 and completed the usual arts course then prescribed for students studying for the ministry. His divinity classes were taken later at Inverness and at Wick under Revs. J. R. Mackay and D. Beaton. He was ordained by the Northern Presbytery in April 1914 to go as Church Deputy to Canada and the U.S.A. where he laboured in different stations for two years. He was again to visit Canada as Deputy twenty years later.

Mr Macdonald was settled as minister of Bayhead, North Uist, in 1916. The same year he married Marion Grant of Evelix, Dornoch, a person likeminded with himself and one who proved a worthy helpmeet to him. She predeceased him by seven years. She passed away in February 1961 when they were resident in Edinburgh. This loss Mr Macdonald bore with wonderful submission to the Lord's will.

During the years of the Great War (1914-1918) Mr Macdonald gave several periods of service as Chaplain to the Highland sailors in the Portsmouth and Chatham Naval Depots and he often referred with pleasure to his experiences there. While in Portsmouth he met that worthy Christian lady, Miss Agnes Weston, who took such an interest in the spiritual and temporal welfare of the sailors. Mr Macdonald had a high regard for her Christian character, witness and work.

From North Uist he was translated to Portree in 1919, where he was to labour for twenty-nine years. One of the most highly esteemed and useful of the office-bearers of the Church, Neil Mackinnon, was one of his elders for a short time after he went to Portree. Mr Macdonald also had the pleasure of the assistance of one of his former elders in Bayhead, Alexander MacAskill (father of Rev. Alex. MacAskill, Lochinver), when Mr MacAskill came as missionary to Braes. During his long ministry in Portree

Mr Macdonald enjoyed remarkable health. Only on one occasion was he prevented by illness from taking the services on Sabbath. In 1949, owing to extreme deafness, he resigned his charge and retired to Edinburgh. During the following years he often assisted with the services in Edinburgh and during the summer seasons gave assistance in supplying vacant congregations in the Highlands and Islands. A year after his wife's death he came south to live with his son-in-law and daughter, Mr and Mrs John Campbell, at Worcester Park, Surrey. He was able for a time to return to Scotland each year and spend part of the year with Rev. and Mrs Donald Campbell at Edinburgh Manse. He was in this way lovingly and devotedly cared for by his own family during his remaining years. Their conduct towards their father was indeed exemplary and we are sure that they will not lose by it or have any regrets for it. Mr Macdonald attended the services in London during the last years of his life and his presence in the Church was a strength and encouragement to the minister and the congregation there. For a time he was able to assist with the services, especially during the vacancy after Rev. J. P. MacQueen's death, but after a very severe illness in 1963 he was rarely able to preach again. He did, however, regularly engage in prayer in the public means of grace almost to the last.

In February 1964 he was again taken to hospital. A text which supported him at that time was:

O happy is that man and blest,
whom Jacob's God doth aid;
Whose hope upon the Lord doth rest.
and on his God is stayed. (Ps. 146, 5. Met. Ver.)

He felt very much the loss of his brother-in-law, Mr John Grant, Inverness in August 1967. His own end came only a year later. In the good providence of the Lord his family were all with him the day before he passed away. That day he had been wonderfully bright in his mind, testifying to his hope in the Saviour and quoting the text: "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4, 12). A very short time afterwards, in the early hours of the following morning, he passed away to be forever with the Lord.

Mr Macdonald was of an outstandingly bright and patient disposition and this remained with him notwithstanding eventual total loss of his hearing. His constant cheerfulness made him a shining example to others. He was open and sincere and possessed the unspeakable blessing of an unclouded trust in the Saviour. He was a Nathaniel indeed in whom there was no guile. The esteem in which he was held by his brethren may be seen from the Presbytery tribute in 1948, which states: "The Court would take this opportunity of expressing their unfeigned appreciation

of his usefulness as a minister of the Gospel, and his efficiency and courtesy as a Clerk of Presbytery. His genial manner and his freedom from the spirit of strife helped considerably to guide the Presbytery out of many a difficult situation. Thus the loss of his services is all the more regrettable." Mr Macdonald also acted for many years as Convener of the Religion and Morals Committee of the Church. In this capacity he gave valuable service to which his excellent annual reports to the Synod, printed in the Free Presbyterian Magazines of that period, bear testimony. His interest in the affairs of our Church and of the Church universal never abated to the end. In his prayers he constantly pleaded for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in all parts of the world, for the furtherance of the work of the different societies in which he was specially interested, for the downfall of Popery, and for the promised outpouring of the Spirit upon the Jews.

Mr Macdonald's funeral was to Tomnahurich Cemetery, Inverness, where he was laid to rest beside his wife and an infant son who had died many years before. Several of the ministers of the Church took part in the worship held before the remains were carried to their last resting place. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15, 55).

What encouragement there is for those who in his passing have lost a loved one in the words of Scripture that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. 4, 14). May they have the consolations of the God of Israel, and may they be enabled to follow in the footsteps of those who are now inheriting the promises.

D.B.M.

Footnote: Mr MacDonald's articles which appeared in the Magazine from time to time, often dealt with the lives and history of eminent persons in the Church of Christ in past days. He had the gift of making his subject most interesting and spiritually edifying to readers.—Editor.

THE LATE ALEXANDER MACLEOD, ELDER, VANCOUVER

Alex. Macleod was born at Kyle-Rona, a remote district in the West Highlands of Scotland. One of a large family of boys and girls he was left fatherless when he was nine years old; a circumstance that for him as for his brothers and sisters meant considerable hardship in the Highlands of those days. But what ever he might lack by way of material advantages he was blessed in

having relatives who took pains to ensure that he had the inestimable privilege of a Christian upbringing. Thus from his early childhood he was familiar with the Scriptures and with the questions and answers of the Shorter Catechism, he had also the conversation and conduct of the godly to set his own course by, and he was to the end of his life grateful for his early training.

While still very young he was introduced to the profession which he followed all his active life, the sea, first on fishing boats on the waters of the stormy Minch, and latterly on the equally stormy waters off the West Coast of Vancouver Island, where he was in charge of the Life-Saving Station at Tofino.

In 1912 he emigrated to Canada, living for a time on Vancouver Island. When the first world war broke out he returned to the U.K. and served on ships of the Ministry of Munitions sailing to France. In 1922 he returned to Canada, this time accompanied by his wife and family and settled at Tofino, V.I., where the two youngest of the family were born. Here, in an isolated community, he faithfully taught his family of four boys and three girls as he himself had been taught in his youth, Mrs Macleod being a true helpmeet to him in this respect. Yet, notwithstanding his zeal in matters of a religious nature, he later confessed that at the time he did not know the Lord.

For Mr and Mrs Macleod, as for many other parents, the years of world war two were trying and anxious times, for four of their sons and a daughter were in the Services; one son was missing for a long time. After a thrilling escape from Singapore, when that fortress fell, he lived to be united with the family in Tofino. Though Alex. was not insensitive to the Lord's goodness in bringing his sons safely through many dangers, and despite his zeal in legal duties, he still had to learn that salvation is of Grace.

One of his sons went missing, feared drowned, near their home. This occasioned great grief to his father who in distress of mind prayed the Most High that he himself might die if the young man's life would be spared. There then came to him such a sense of his utter unreadiness to die that it would seem that he fainted. On recovering himself the words "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" came to his mind with great power and he was enabled to be resigned in humility to the Lord's will in taking away his son.

This was the beginning of a life of faith that had no trust in self. It was also the entering into many severe trials of that faith. The twin brother of the above-mentioned son was also lost at sea, and soon after another son died after a long and painful illness, but such trials were for him of the kind that "work for good".

Mr and Mrs Macleod became members in full Communion

with the F.P. Church in Winnipeg in 1954. In 1965 Alex. Macleod was ordained an elder in the Vancouver congregation, for by this time he was retired from the Life-Boat Service and was living in this city.

As a man, Alex. Macleod was of a bright and cheerful disposition, as a Christian he was faithful in witnessing to his Lord wherever he might be. This was very evident in the weeks he spent in hospital before he died. One orderly who was very interested in him offered the comment "he was a good man".

The Kirk Session of Vancouver and the congregation mourn his passing and extend their deep sympathy to the sorrowing widow, the surviving son and daughters.

"The memory of the just is blessed."

R.M.

SELECTIONS FROM C. H. SPURGEON

Solomon's Song, Chapter 1, verses 1-4

This is the one book in the Bible wholly given up to fellowship. It stands like the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and no man shall ever be able to pluck its fruit, and eat thereof, until first he has been brought by Christ past the sword of the Cherubim, and led to rejoice in the love which has delivered from death. The Song of Solomon is only to be comprehended by men whose standing is within the veil. The outer-court worshippers, and even those who only enter the courts of the priests, think the Book a very strange one; but they who come very near to Christ can often see in this Song of Solomon the only expression which their love to their Lord desires.

Verses 1-2. "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's, let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine."

The Person here alluded to is not named: this omission is very common, and usual to all-absorbing love. The spouse is thinking so much of Christ Jesus her Lord, that it is not necessary for her to name Him. The communion is so close between herself and her Lord that His name is left out. By the kiss is to be understood that strange and blessed communion, and manifestation of the love which Christ gives from Himself to His children, fresh and warm from His sacred Person.

"For Thy love is better than wine" It is better in itself, for it is costly. Did it not flow out in streams of blood from a better wine-press than earth's best wine hath ever known.

Verse 3. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

The spouse surveys all the attributes of Christ and she compares

them to separate and precious ointments. Christ is the anointed as Prophet, Priest and King, in each of these anointings He is a source of sweetness and fragrance to His people. But as if jealous of herself for having talked of His "ointments" when she should have spoken of Him, she seems to say, "Thy very name is as ointment poured forth," like an alabaster box when it is opened, and the odour of the precious spikenard fills the room. "Therefore do the virgins love Thee."

Verse 4. "Draw me, we will run after Thee."

She feels, perhaps, as you beloved brethren often do, heavy of heart. She cannot fly, nor go to reach her Lord; but her heart longs after Him, so she cries, draw me, we will run after Thee. While she prays the prayer, others feel it suitable to them also, so they join with her. When Christ draws us, we cannot walk, but "run" after Him, there is no heavy going then. When Christ draws us, how swiftly do we fly as the dove to the dove-cote, when His grace enticeth us.

Verse 4. "The King hath brought me into His chambers."

It is done. Come you to Him in prayer and it may be while you are yet speaking, He will hear, and you shall be able to say, "He has brought me near to Himself, to the chamber of riches and delights where I may feast with Him. "We will be glad, and rejoice in Thee." This is a sure result of getting into the inner chamber with Christ.

C. H. SPURGEON.

SPIRITUAL DOUBTS

by J. C. Philpot

But some will say, "Oh that I had a clear evidence I was walking in this path! What would I not give to have a divine testimony that the blessed Spirit was leading me in it!" It is through these very doubts that the evidence is obtained. Doubts lead to cries and groans after a divine testimony; and in answer to these cries the heavenly witness is given. A man without doubts is without testimonies. Doubts are to testimonies what the mortise is to the tenon, the lock to the key, the enigma to the solution. Testimonies on Ebenezers, "stones of help" (I Sam. vii 12, marg.); but the stone must have a hole dug for it to stand in, and that hole is **doubt**. Doubts of salvation are to manifestations of salvation what hunger is to food, nakedness to clothing and thunderstorm to a shelter, a gallows to reprieve, and death to a resurrection. The one of these things precedes, prepares and opens the way for the other. The first is nothing without the last, nor the last without the first. Thus, next to testimonies, the best thing is spiritual doubts. To know that we are right is the best

thing, to fear we are wrong is the second best. To enjoy the witness of the Spirit is the most blessed thing this side of the grave; to part after that enjoyment is the next greatest blessing. I am speaking, mind, only of spiritual doubts; that is doubts in a spiritual man, for natural doubts are as far from salvation as natural hopes. The path through the valley of Baca is "from strength to strength"; that is, according to the eastern mode of travelling, from one halting place to another, where wells are dug, and "the rain filleth the pools". We do not learn either God or ourselves, sin or salvation, in a day. The question is, Have we set one step in the way? "Watchman, what of the night?" Is it even, midnight, cock-growing or morning? Is it spring, summer, winter or harvest? The question is not so much whether you have **much** faith, but whether you have **any**. It is not quantity, but quality; not whether you have a very great religion, but whether you have any at all. A grain of true faith will save the soul; and I have known many many seasons when I should be glad to feel certain that I had a thousandth part of a grain.

MBUMA MISSIONARY SOCIETY MEETING, UTRECHT

Report by Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow

Although it was to rain heavily later in the day, the sun was shining when the Dutch friends of our Mission in Rhodesia gathered to the Missionary Meeting in Utrecht on 17th May 1969.

The meeting was opened with worship and the Convener of the Dutch Committee, Mr A. de Redelijkheid, made his introductory remarks to the audience of 3,500 people gathered in a very large hall.

The Convener then addressed the Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow, who had been invited by the Society to come to Holland from Scotland to address this meeting. In his remarks, the Convener spoke as follows:— "Dear Rev. Donald MacLean, As on our first Mission Day in 1964 you were our guest and more than a guest, a representative of your Church, we have again the privilege of meeting you today in 1969 as deputy from your Mission Committee.

You are very welcome here to the Society's Committee and this great gathering.

The Mission Day of 1968 was followed by a year full of events. During this period, the members of this Committee had a meeting with you and other members of your Committee in the Netherlands and in Britain. We discussed the difficulties and prayed under the Holy Spirit's guidance to try to keep and promote the threatened Mbuma Mission with the Lord's help.

When, on last year's Mission Day, it became obvious that missionary Jan Van Woerden had left our Mission staff and that

the Lisse office had withdrawn from the work, a Rhodesia Mission Society was called into existence to support the departing missionary. This was the cause of a split resulting in financial loss to the Mbumba Mission. It is well known to your Church Committee that our Committee here backed your missionary work and your Church firmly. It is also known that in this trouble our Committee promised to keep supporting the Scottish Church and that your Committee fully backs our Society, i.e. the Mbumba Missionary Society, for the following reasons:—

1. Because we stand on the same foundation. You mentioned this foundation at the Mission Day in 1964. The foundation is that the mission work must bear the authority of the Holy Ghost.

2. Because we hold the same principle. You said on that Mission Day that this was a principle of the Scottish Church that the Lord Jesus, Himself, calls His missionaries and that out of called and converted heathen, the Lord begets His preachers.

3. Because we pursue the same object which is to promote the spiritual interests of the heathen as guided by the Spirit and to use the medical mission as a means to this end.

Those who belong together and want to live according to this principle and to pursue this purpose have remained with us. This is what has kept us together. From this meeting, we convey to you and to your Church, the feeling of this meeting that, through God's grace, we hope to remain faithful to this determination to maintain this foundation and from this principle to continue the work of your Church's Mission and to have no other aim than to fight for this cause to the glory of God. May our help be in the name of the Lord."

Rev. Donald MacLean then addressed the meeting conveying the good wishes of the Free Presbyterian Church to the Society and expressing our sincere gratitude for the much valued and continued support to the Mission in Rhodesia. Mr MacLean's address is given elsewhere.

On the conclusion of Mr MacLean's address, the Convener asked the large company to stand and sing Psalm 134 as a benediction to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and its Mission in Rhodesia. A very solemn atmosphere prevailed while the large assembly sang:—

"Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye
that his attendants are.
Ev'n you that in Gods' temple be
and praise him nightly there.
Your hands within God's holy place
lift up and praise his name.
From Sion hill the Lord thee bless
that heaven and earth did frame."

Several ministers interested in and supporters of the Missionary Society spoke on themes relevant to the work. These addresses were, of course, all in Dutch.

Rev. C. Smits, the Secretary of the Society, who had intimated his retiral due to accepting a call to Clifton, New Jersey, U.S.A., was presented with a Bible Dictionary as a token of appreciation for his work. Rev. G.v.d. Breevaart made appropriate references to Rev. C. Smits usefulness to which Mr Smits suitably replied. Mr Smits was a most enthusiastic supporter of the Mission and a worthy successor to the late Mr Doctor, whose widow was present at this meeting. The new Secretary is Mr Van Waveren and he is already pursuing his duties with vigour.

The meeting was distinguished by its usual generous giving, the total collection amounting to over £3,000. £150 of this sum was presented by six boys of Rev. G.v.d. Breevaart's congregation representing the amount collected by the children of the congregation for the Mission. In July, the Society sent out £6,000 to the Mission in Rhodesia.

Despite the trials it has had to meet with, the Mbuma Missionary Society continues its warm interest in the Free Presbyterian Foreign Mission. The warmth felt at this meeting was especially gratifying to the members of the Society's Committee whose loyal support of the Church is worthy of all praise. All felt the meeting to be an encouragement to carry on the good work and to look for the blessing of God which alone can make His Word effectual unto salvation in Rhodesia, Holland and Scotland.

ADDRESS AT MBUMA MISSION MEETING, UTRECHT by Rev. D. MacLean

I must begin by expressing my great pleasure at the privilege of once more addressing the Mbuma Missionary Society in Utrecht. I wish to convey to you all the good wishes of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and express their sincere gratitude to you for your much valued and continued support to our Mission in Rhodesia.

To be a spiritual member of the family of God is the greatest honour which can be bestowed on any sinner in this world. Compared to this, the honours, riches and pleasures of the world are of no consequence. Well did Moses of old understand this when the Word of God tells us, "By faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of the reward." (Heb. II: 24-26).

Equally well did John realise his privilege when he said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not." (John 3; 1). Paul adds his testimony when he says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8, 16-18).

God loved His people with an everlasting love. They consist of a number that no man can number, and shall eventually shine as the stars in the kingdom of their Father singing the praises of His electing love. In the fulness of the times the Son of God appeared in the nature of man to redeem those who were loved from all eternity. The Son of God's love as the Lamb of the Father's providing fully paid the ransom price for His people by His atoning death on the Cross of Calvary, whereby He satisfied all the claims of God's holy Law and Justice, redeemed His people from all their iniquities, and purchased for them the life that shall never end. After His resurrection from the dead He ascended up into heaven where He now makes intercession for His people as the High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Through Him, the Holy Spirit is poured forth in every age and generation for the ingathering of the elect to Christ. It needs the divine power of the Holy Spirit to regenerate the soul. No other power can effect this great change, for the soul is dead in trespasses and sins. When the Holy Spirit comes He quickens the soul, convincing it of sin and misery, enlightening the mind in the knowledge of Christ, renewing the will and so working that faith which unites the soul to Christ for time and for eternity. This faith stands not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God, and as faith is the life of the soul, so Christ is the life of faith. To faith, Christ is very precious, and all that belongs to Him is very precious also. The Word of God, the Church of God, the Day of God and the worship of God are all highly esteemed by those in whom this precious faith dwells.

As they are united to Christ so all the Lord's people are spiritually united to one another. Thus the Scripture says, "And, whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or, one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12: 26-27). Because of their spiritual experience, the Lord's people fully realise the teaching of God's Word that the work of the Holy Spirit in calling sinners from darkness to His marvellous

light embraces the use of the Word of God. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things." "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom. 10: 14, 15, 17). There thus springs up in the gracious soul the desire that God's Word should be spread abroad in places where the Lord in His providence directs it to be sent, so that by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, Christ would see His seed and that the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in His hand. This is the work in which we are engaged in Rhodesia, and in which you are liberally helping with your prayers and contributions.

It has often been a wonder to me how Mission doors have been closing down all round the world. China, once a field of great missionary activity, is closed, and gross darkness has descended upon that nation. India, too, no longer welcomes the preacher of the everlasting gospel, while Israel firmly slams the door against even those of her own sons who would like to testify to their fellow-countrymen. "we have found the Messiah" When the unhappy quarrel arose between Britain and Rhodesia fears were expressed that this door might also be closed. The government of the United Kingdom first of all disallowed all finance being sent to Rhodesia, and even when some relaxation was made, the amount allowed to be sent was insufficient to carry on the Mission on the scale hoped for. It was here that the wonderful providence of the Mbumba Missionary Society in Holland gave a clear sign among many others that it was the mind of the Lord that this door should not be shut against the Word of God being spread abroad in Rhodesia. Let it be clearly understood that had it not been for the support of this Society, our work could not have been maintained to the extent we desired. When the Lord opens a door He can keep it open in ways altogether wonderful to His people, though they are often cast down with many fears. "I know thy works; behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." (Rev. 3: 8). As, undoubtedly, difficult days lie ahead for Rhodesia, may we not continue humbly to pray, "Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it." (Is. 65: 8).

In the light of what I have just said, I would like to make a passing reference to the activities of Mr Jan Van Woerden. As you know, Mr Van Woerden was a lay missionary and a member of our nursing staff at Mbumba Hospital where he was in charge.

He chose to leave our staff and begin a mission of his own which is called the Ebenezer Scripture Mission in Rhodesia and is supported by a Society called the Rhodesian Mission Society in Holland. Mr Van Woerden's Mission is run by himself. It has no minister, no Church Courts and no sacraments. But the point I particularly wish to make abundantly plain is that this Mission of his has no connection whatsoever with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Any impressions which may be given to the contrary are not true and I hope the position is now clearly understood by all concerned.

Rev. Petros Mzamo still carries on his labours at Mbumba Mission. At communion services held at the end of April, the attendances were greater than ever before. The number of young people there and the spirit of close attention to the preaching of the Word was refreshing to see. On the Monday of the Communion the Rhodesian Presbytery received a young man who is to commence studying with a view to the ministry. His name is Nathaniel Mpofu who has been teaching and holding services for years in a remote area on the other side of the Shangani River from Mbumba Mission. At this communion some came forward to sit at the Lord's Table for the first time. All such are under the observation of the minister and elders, and when they come forward they are examined by the minister and elders sitting as the Kirk Session on their experience of the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts and lives. These are tokens of encouragement for the missionaries to believe that their work is not in vain in the Lord.

Dr James Tallach has now arrived in Rhodesia and will be taking charge of the Hospital at Mbumba. An operating theatre is to be built and an X-ray unit bought. This will extend the work of the hospital and bring more patients to it. While at the hospital, every endeavour is made to bring the gospel to the patients. Those of them who are able to do so attend the services, and worship is conducted in the hospital itself every day. Even when the illness may not be very serious, opportunities do arise. On the Saturday of the communion mentioned above, a woman arrived suffering from toothache who had walked 17 miles. She comes from a remote part where the gospel is seldom, if ever, heard. After the tooth had been removed she set off home with Matthew's gospel in Sindebele among her belongings. Thus is the seed of the Word of God scattered abroad and the promise will ever stand, "For as the rain cometh down from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which

I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55: 10, 11).

Rev. D. Campbell, our minister in Zenka, is at present home on leave in Scotland with his wife and family. Zenka Mission is a large one and Mr Campbell had a recent ordination of office-bearers which brought their number to 11. As these men are all active in the Lord's vineyard, the Mission is in a promising condition. Like other Mission stations, Zenka has a Central school on the Mission site and a large number of Kraal schools in the outlying areas. At all these schools, the Scripture and the Shorter Catechism are taught according to a syllabus drawn up by our Church. In this way the good seed of the kingdom is sown not only in the hospital but in the schools. As the soul is more important than the body so the spreading abroad of the Word of God is more important even than the healing of the body or the informing of the mind in natural things.

Rev. A. Ndebele labours at Ingwenya Mission. He too is having encouraging signs of the Lord working to some extent among his hearers. He has recently commenced services in the City of Bulawayo. The tendency is for Africans to go to the City where they can get work, and this means meeting with all the temptations which exist in such a place. The holding of services here is therefore a real necessity as well as an opportunity. Negotiations are proceeding in the hope of getting a site for a church in Bulawayo. We hope the Lord will grant this in His own time. Holding services in Bulawayo means that Rev. A. Ndebele preaches four times each Sabbath Day. We have no doubt but that he will say with one of the former ministers in the Church in Scotland, "I am often tired in the work, but never tired of the work."

The Rhodesian Presbytery carries on its activities of supervising the Church work of the Mission. It will be of interest to you to know that this Presbytery consists almost entirely of Africans. Indeed, the only European who is a member of Presbytery is the Rev. D. Campbell. This means that should the political situation deteriorate in Rhodesia to such an extent that the Europeans would have to leave, the Free Presbyterian Church in Rhodesia could still continue on its own. We hope that such an eventuality will never arise but, if it does, the Lord has prepared the way for the Church to remain even although the Europeans should have to leave. As well as carrying on its ordinary labours, the Presbytery shows its interest in current events by raising the voice of witness against the errors that abound on every hand. For instance, we find them protesting to the Cabinet Ministers of Rhodesia against holding meetings on the Lord's Day and pointing out the nature and danger of such breaches of God's

Law. Again, we find the protesting against horse-racing and betting on the Lord's Day, polygamy, and the ancestor worship, which is such a sad feature of the life of the ordinary African. Thus, the Presbytery endeavours in the strength of divine grace to raise a witness on the side of God's Word not only within the circle within which it itself moves, but also in circles outside rising even to Government Departments and Cabinet Ministers. This spirit of witness is a very encouraging feature in a Presbytery so recently formed.

We are commanded by the Lord to acknowledge Him in all our ways and He promises to direct our paths. Truly we may say at this present time with respect to the Mission, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." For the future we must seek grace to say with the Psalmist,

"And I will constantly go on
in strength of God, the Lord
And thine own righteousness, ev'n thine,
alone I will record." (Ps. 71, 16)

We call upon you all to join with us in praying the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest in Rhodesia, and pleading that He would fulfil his own promise to His church, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." (Hosea 14: 5).

May the Lord grant to send a refreshing shower from His presence upon the Church in Scotland, Holland and Rhodesia that His people may be edified and built up in their most holy faith and that these great words of promise might be fulfilled;

"A seed shall service to do him
unto the Lord it shall
Be for a generation reckoned
in ages all.
They shall come, and they shall declare
his truth and righteousness
Unto a people yet unborn
and that he hath done this." (Ps. 22: 30, 31)

I once more most sincerely thank you on behalf of my Committee, my Church and the people of Scotland for your generous help and your fervent prayers.

THOUGHTS ON THE PSALMS

by Rev. Alex. McPherson

Psalm 3

Like many another of David's Psalms, this was written in a time of adversity. The title informs us that it was at the time of

Absalom's rebellion when the venerable king had to flee before his wicked son. You should read the fifteenth chapter of 2 Samuel where the incident is told in all its sad detail.

Verse 1. "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me."

The sudden increase of his enemies is what mainly vexes David. Like any king he would always have to be on his guard against potential mischief-makers, but now, to his great amazement, the greater part of the people had suddenly taken part in the rebellion organised by Absalom.

Verse 2. "Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah."

David here quotes what had practically become a watchword with the rebel throng. They took encouragement from the thought that David was no longer under the divine protection. Who started the rumour? Was it Absalom, himself? It matters not; there were plenty to take it up. Shimei gave it a turn that suited his own support of the cause of the dead Saul. "The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou has reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." (2 Sam. 16, v. 8). Do we wonder that the king was cut to the heart? He could clear himself easily of such charges as that of Shimei regarding his conduct in relation to Saul and Saul's family, but there was another matter which memory and conscience were raising up out of the past.

There was his great double sin of adultery and murder. That had been pardoned, but there had been a judgment pronounced in connection with it which David now realised to be more extensive than he had originally thought. Among the other things said by Nathan, there was this; "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." (2 Sam. 12, v. 11, 12). Could it be that these words meant that a time would come when God would really forsake him? "No help for him in God." Could it be true? But did not the Lord say at the time of his restoration; "The Lord also hath put away thy sin? Yes, He had, but how easy it is when a child of God is stricken by the memory of past sins, to be tempted to doubt such reassuring words.

The 'Selah' indicates a pause, so we can do that now and consider the resemblance between David's case and that of

Christ. If it was strange that Israel should revolt against the good king whom they had once acclaimed as the Lord's anointed ruler, surely it was much more strange that the multitudes who acclaimed Jesus as the Messiah with loud 'Hosannas', should in a few days shout "Away with him." And stranger still that a mere man like David who for his sins deserved to be forsaken of God, should be so wrong in giving any place to the idea that he was forsaken, while the Lord from heaven, holy and blameless, should actually be forsaken by Him whom He so truly served. He uttered truth when He cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The term 'God-forsaken' has been applied to persons and places which stood out as utterly wretched and ugly by their association with much that pained and gave displeasure. Yet, it has to be said that no mere man in this world, is totally forsaken by God. God-forsakenness means deprivation of all good, and is reserved for the state of lost sinners in hell.

But Christ was forsaken by God when there was laid upon Him the iniquities of us all. Justice then could not spare even God's Son, and the wrath due to his people for their sins fell upon Him. He was forsaken in that all sense of his Father's love ceased, and He was made to be and to feel a thing accursed. In his soul's experience there was only the darkness and pain of complete forsakenness.

No believer therefore, even when tempted as strongly as David, can truly say that God has forsaken him, but there may be occasions when he is bereft of all assurance regarding his saved state and feels that God has ceased to show him favour. The natural man who is a stranger to the sensation of being melted down before the God of love and mercy, and of bearing a measure of genuine love to Him as his Saviour, cannot understand what it is to feel thus deserted.

This sense of desertion may be due to sin unrepented of. Some known but unconfessed transgression, or some permitted and unexamined iniquity. These are barriers to communion with God. The withdrawal of God's Spirit is often the warning to begin intensive self-examination. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The fault may be hard to detect. It may be deep down, some form of sin showing itself only occasionally, but possessing a potential for destruction that we cannot imagine. Such sins as sensuality, pride, covetousness, envy, ambition, laziness are always menaces to the safety and comfort of Christians. Perhaps we have often noticed such sins but have slyly conferred other names on them so that they may not disturb us. Covetous Judas would describe himself as merely careful until the awful testing time came. Another will dignify

the pride which mars his character with the title 'self-respect'.

Yet, call it what name you will, there lies the evil like a hidden canker, and though the believer would feign let it lie, God who designs to save him from his sins will not leave him at ease in these sins. He does what He speaks about in Hosea; "I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face." Oh how we should be praying; "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. How jealous Christians ought to be over their souls! There is great need for holding fast their first love, and for strengthening the things which remain, which are ready to die. If not, a sense of desertion may shake them to their foundations.

Other possible reasons for believers feeling deserted in their souls will be mentioned next month, the Lord willing.

POSADH AN ANAMA RI CRIOSD

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

(Air a leantuinn bho t.d. 153)

II. Deanabh saoithir gu bhi gu domhain mothachail air bhur truaighe ro-mhòr do-bhrigh an dealachadh so. Mar a tha sinn uile gu nàdurra as eigmhais Chriosd mar sin tha ar truaighe ann an so ro-mhòr. An uibhir sin tha'n t-Abstol a cumail a mach anns an earrann a dh' ainmich sinn a cheana, Ephes. ii, 12, anns am bheil e labhairt air a bhi as eugmhais Chriosd mar ar truaighe, seadh, mar thobar agus bunait ar truaighe, agus uime sin tha e air ainmeachadh an toiseach. Bha 'n a h-Ephesianaich, agus tha sinne, mar a tha e ann sin ag innse dhuinn, as eugmhais a chumhnanta, as eugmhais dòchas, agus gun Dia anns an t-saoghal; nì a tha'n a thruaighe gu leoir do dh'anam air bith gu luidh fodha; agus 's e nì a tha leigeil a stigh na truaighe so uile agus a bhunait, iadsan agus sinne a bhi as eugmhais Chriosd. 'S e Chriosd a bhi againn, tha fear-mineachaidh ionnsaichte ag ràdh air a phuing so, bunait nan uile mhaith, mar sin 'e bhi as eugmhais Chriosd toiseach agus bunait na'n uile olc, agus leigeadh a stigh gach uile bhròn agus thruaighe, agus nì a dh'fhàgas sinn ann an staid bhrònach gu siorruidh. Gabhaibh blas, agus gun ach blas, dha bhur truaighe, agus an sin oibrichibh mothachadh dheth air bhur'n anamaibh.

I. A bhi as eugmhais Chriosd, tha sibh falamh dhe'n a h-uile mhaith, tha sibh gun bheatha, gun ghràs, gun sìth, gun mhaith-eanas, gu'n chomhfhurtachd, gun fhìreantachd, gun neamh, gun slàinte, gun dòchas, gun Dia, mar a th'agaibh anns an àite a dh'ainmicheadh, Ephes. ii, 12, gun deadh-ghean Dhé, gun

bheatha Dhé, tha sibh as eugmhais fìor mhaithreas, agus fìor shonas. A reir an t-sean fhocail fhìrinnich, As eugmhais a Mhaith is Airde cha'n eil nì air bith maith.

2. Air dhuibh a bhi as eugmhais Chrìosd, tha sibh ann an daorsa do'n a pheacadh, agus do Shàtan, nì is e'n daorsa is miosa anns an t-saoghal. Gu nàdurra tha'n a h-uile 'n an tràilean, agus 'n an seirbhisich do na tighearnan an-ìochdmhor so: bh'uaithes so tha e air a ràdh gu'm bheil sinn a coimhionadh ana-miannaibh an diabhoil. Eoin viii. 44, agus mar a tha ana-miannaibh an diabhoil, mar sin tha toil agus ana-miannaibh na feola, Ephes. ii. 2, a chùim a bhi 'n an seirbhisich do'n pheacadh, gu bh'i'n ar seirbhisich do ìomadh gné ana-miannaibh agus an-toil, agus an leithidean sin. Agus mar a tha gu nàdurra na h-uile anns an daorsa so do'n pheacadh agus do'n diobhol, mar sin cha'n eil saorsa bho'n a daorsa so ach tre Chrìosd, agus sin ann an rathad aonaidh Ris. "Uime sin ma nì a Mac saor sibh, bidh sibh saor da rìreadh." Eoin viii. 36, tha E Fein ag ràdh ris na h-Iudhaich. Bha iad a deanamh uaill 'n an sochair, gu'm b'iad sliochd Abrahaim, agus nach robh iad an daorsa do neach air bith. It fìor, tha Chrìosd ag ràdh, ach tha sibh ann an daorsa nì's miosa na daorsa do dhuine, ann an daorsa do'n pheacadh, ann an daorsa do'n 'n ana-miannaibh: oir esan a nì peacadh is seirbhiseach do'n pheacadh e. Agus an daorsa so cha'n eil aon ach a' Mac a nì saor sibh bh'uaithes: agus, uime sin, gus an cuir Esan saor sibh fanaidh sibh foidhpe. Oh cia cho searbh an daorsa so a bhi fodh riaghladh a pheacaidh, a bhi fodh òrdan gach ana-miann iosal agus neo-ghlan, agus a bhi air bhuir giulain ann am bhaighdeanas leis an diabol agus a thoil! 'S e so a leithid de bhraighdeanas agus a bha aig Israel fodh'n a maighsteirean-oibreach anns an Eiphit. Mar a tha ann a bhì deanamh seirbhis do Chrìosd an t-saorsa is motha, mar sin, ann a bhì deanamh seirbhis do'n pheacadh tha'n daorsa is ro-an-ìochdmhora.

3. Air dhuibh a bhi as eugmhais Chrìosd, agus as eugmhais aonaidh ri Crìosd, tha sibh air bhuir diùltadh le Dia. "Nach aithne dhuibh sibh fein, gu bheil Iosa Crìosd annaibh, mur daoine a chuireadh air cùl sibh?" II. Cor xiii. 5. "Nach aithne dhuibh sibh fein!" Mar gu'n abradh e, 'S e fìrinn ro-shoilleir, foillsichte, agus r'a tuigsinn a th'ann, mar eil aonadh agaibh ri Crìosd tha sibh 'n 'ur daoine a chuireadh air cùl, 's e sin, cha'n eil sibh air bhuir gabhail ribh le Dia, agus tha sibh a mach as a dheadh-ghean, tha araon 'ur pearsachan agus 'ur seirbhisean air an diùltadh leis. A dh'ionnsuidh an aon nì tha sin againn ann an Gal. iv. 22, far am bheil sinn a leughadh a thaobh dà mhàthair agus dà mhac. Tha'n dà mhàthair 'n a samhlanan air an dà cho-cheangal, cùmhnanta gnìomh agus cùmhnanta gràis, mar a tha e air a

nochdadh ann an rann 24. Tha'n dà mhac 'n an samhlaidhean air dà sheorsa sluaigh 'n an còmhnuidh anns an eaglais, an dara h-aon air a bhreith a reir na feola, agus an aon eile air a bhreith a reir a gheallaidh; buinidh an dara aon do'n cheud choimh-chengal, an aon eile do'n dara. Seadh, agus ciod e suidheachadh an dithis? C'ar son, tha aon ann an suidheachadh anns am bheil e air a dhiùltadh, an aon eile ann an suidheachadh anns am bheil e air gabhail ris. Ta iadsan a bhuinneas do'n dara coimh-cheangal air an aideachadh agus gabhail riutha ann an gairdeanan gràidh; tha'n fheadhan eile air an tilgeadh a mach, mar a chì sibh anns 'n a tha dol air adhart anns a chaibeideil; a thuilleadh air so tha sinn air gabhail ruinn le Dia ann an Criosd agus tre Chrìosd, Ephes. i. 6. A mach a Criosd, uime sin, tha sinn ann an staid diùltaidh. Oh cia cho duilich 's a tha so a nochadh ar suidheachadh a bhi! oir daoine, eadhon daoine math a bhi dha'r diùltadh agus gu'n gnothuch a bhi aca ruinn, 's e th'ann ach nì a ghabhas fhulang, gu h-àraidh 'n uair a dh'aideicheas Dia sinn agus a thogas E dealradh a ghnùis oirne: ach 'n uair a tha Dia dha'r diùltadh agus dha'r tilgeadh a mach, tha so uamhasach da-rìreadh, ged a dh'aidicheadh an saoghal uile sinn, agus a mholadh e sinn. Cia cho uamhasach 's a tha'm focal sin, "Airgiod nach fiù theirear riù, a chionn gu'n do chuir an Tighearna cùl riù." Ier. vi. 30. Ma dh'aidicheas Dia sinn agus a thogas E oirne dealradh a ghnùis, cha'n eil mòran ann cò a gheibh coire: ach ma dh'fholicheas Esan a ghnùis agus a dhiùltas Esan sinn, ro is urrain misneach na saorsa a thoirt do'n anam?

(R'a leantuinn.)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Ulster — the real issue

We in Britain and many throughout the English-speaking world have been appalled at the recent conflict between opposing parties in Northern Ireland. The loss of life and injury suffered in the street fighting, the great destruction of property by fire, and the fact that thousands have been rendered homeless, has given rise to serious anxiety on the part of all right-thinking people. It is of course accepted that the contending parties are the Protestants and the Roman Catholic minority in Ulster. It may well be that those who have been claiming certain civil rights have a case. Their claims are now being attended to by the Ulster Government. But in our view, although all the claims of the Civil Rights organisation shall be met, the real issue in Ulster from the Roman Catholic side will not thereby be settled. It has now been made abundantly clear to the world and to the British Government and the Government of Ulster, that an end to Partition is the only event that will satisfy the Roman

Catholics of a militant character and as such are supported by the Government of the Irish Republic in Dublin. The Government of Ulster can give as many concessions as they see fit to the R.C. minority, but the ceaseless activities of the Irish Republic to bring Ulster into one united Ireland under the Roman Catholic Government of Dublin, will continue unabated. The Irish Republican Army, an unlawful organisation, may be condemned by the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic in words. Where has there been any action to suppress their activities during the recent troubles in Ulster? The Protestants of Ulster, the vast majority of the people, elected to remain a part of Great Britain under the British Constitution and Protestant throne. This they obtained, although with difficulty, in face of political pressures, but under their great Protestant and political leader, Sir Edward Carson, they won the day. They won the day, to **remain as they were, a part of Britain.** While the Roman Catholics of the South cut adrift from Britain and from allegiance to the Protestant Throne of Britain, to become really enemies of Britain and enemies of Ulster. As yet, we think the political parties at Westminster perceive the legality, justness and constitutional standing of the Government of Ulster. To interfere with this fundamentally, would in the opinion of some give rise to a real war-like situation as the Protestant majority and their democratically elected members of Parliament are determined to retain the *status quo*. And this is what we uphold and support wholeheartedly from a Christian, Protestant, and constitutional point of view. May the King of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, defend Ulster, involving the Christian and Protestant religion. We could write much more on this vital matter, but the above will suffice for the present.

Keep Britain out of the Common Market

We were relieved to read (at the time of writing) that at the Trades Union Congress to be held in September, a campaign to keep Britain out of the European Common Market was to issue a motion to be debated before this Congress. We understand that the T.U.C. always insisted that the cost and possible hardship to the public should be most carefully examined beforehand. Safeguards regarding Britain's sovereignty are a vital consideration. It has been said by members of the T.U.C.: "We are absolutely satisfied that there is now a major body of public opinion opposed to Britain entering and this matter should be the subject of a public debate." These words express the truth as far as we know, and it is disappointing to learn that the leaders of the three political parties in the House of Commons are in favour of Britain entering Europe. We will be interested to learn what becomes of the debate on this matter before the Trades Union

Congress, although the debate will undoubtedly ignore the religious aspects behind and involved in becoming part of the Common Market.

Alcoholics in Scotland

Prior to an international Conference on alcohol and alcoholics, held in Glasgow on 17th September 1969, it was stated that there are half-a-million alcoholics in Britain and 80,000 of these are in Scotland. It was also stated that about 5% of people drinking today would become alcoholics. Speakers from several nations were to give papers on this problem. We wonder what American representatives at this Conference think of the boastful manner in which distillers in Scotland refer to the large quantities of whisky regularly exported to America and how they lament at times over the limited sales obtained in Britain. Annual Reports of Distiller Companies, setting forth the business state of this "industry" sometimes cover a whole page of a daily newspaper, as if this information was of the greatest public interest, when this business is responsible for providing a commodity capable of bringing intense misery to multitudes all over the world. Certainly, men and women who ruin themselves with drink, in becoming drunkards and alcoholics, bear their own responsibility for their excesses. In addition to established public houses, there has been a rapid growth in the number of clubs which are being opened under different names all over the country; and these are principally drinking clubs. It is well-known that many such premises are financed by 'big business' purely to push and increase the sales of intoxicating liquor. And the cash returns are the main concern of course and not the health and happiness of those who are encouraged to drink as a regular habit. Millions of money are spent on advertising. It seems that with all the taxation on drink, that large profits are being reaped. The people of this nation, as elsewhere, are spending stupendous sums on what they consume of strong drink. Fellowship at the drinking party is the fashion. Fellowship in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is becoming to an increasing number, something that does not belong in their world and which is quite unreal and completely foreign to them. In cases, those who attended the House of God on the Lord's Day when children, can now be seen entering the drinking club on that day. This is the practice of many women as well as men; and many of the young are following in this downward drift along the broadway that leads to everlasting destruction. It will be interesting to learn what the afore-said Conference suggests and recommends to prevent so much alcoholism. Hospitals are becoming more and more burdened with patients who are alcoholics. Some obtain a cure. The prevention and cure is to be found in the glorious gospel of the

blessed God entering the heart of the sinner by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Death on the Roads

Officials are concerned, and rightly so, with whether the numbers killed on the roads during any specific month are up or down. They have been doing all they can to lessen the terrible loss of life and injury suffered by road accidents. Nevertheless, whether the numbers killed and injured are down or up, the numbers are really staggering when one reads them calmly in the press. In June of this year, for instance, a total of 61 people, including 13 children, were killed on Scottish roads. The number of people seriously injured in road accidents during the same month was 809. When we think, even a little, of the implications of these figures, then the fact of many homes cast into grief and sorrow and persons incapacitated for life, comes to mind. All and sundry who drive cars have a moral obligation lying upon them to be careful, cautious and concerned habitually for their own safety and that of others. Professing Christians who drive must surely go out on the road everyday with a sense of responsibility to God and in relation to themselves and their neighbour. And although the car is a most efficient and comfortable blessing in divine providence and useful also in connection with the Church of Christ, yet there is an increasing number of people who are becoming apprehensive and nervous as to travelling on our roads by car. The duty of the Christian driver is clear.

Increase in Divorces in Scotland

It is now reported that the divorce rate in Scotland has more than doubled in nine years and runs at one divorce for every nine marriages. It is stated in an official report that fully three-quarters of the 17 Judges' work in the Court of Sessions is involved with divorce. The dissolving of so many marriages tells a lamentable tale of personal lack of forbearance, animosities, lack of natural affection and the widespread transgression of the law of God which declares: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." This, no doubt, is the state of affairs **anent** divorce throughout Britain. It appears that "liberal" men are getting their way in the Houses of Parliament when Bills for making divorce easier are being so strongly supported. Such laws are only fitted to undermine the institution of marriage and to render it, in the view of man, a very loose contract between husband and wife. This can have serious effects as to the national morals.

Crime and Affluence

Mr Cecil King, former Chairman of International Publishing Corporation, speaking in London recently, made some pertinent statements on the state of the nation. We do not know what

religious affiliation, if any, Mr King has, but his views were to the point. He said that we had no leaders at the moment, in Britain, commanding general confidence and respect. He also stated that perhaps the most alarming problem confronting us at the present time was the rising tide of crime, particularly violent crime. "There never has been so much affluence as there is in this country now, but the incidence of crime is far greater," he said. He observed that this can be attributed to what we call the permissive society. It is helpful to know that there are men in the midst of the business world who have sensible and clear views of the state of affairs morally and who are not afraid to make their views known.

EVENING READING

"She gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was the kindred of Elimelech." — Ruth ii, 3.

Her hap was. Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident, but how divinely was it overruled. Ruth had gone forth with her mother's blessing, under the care of her mother's God, to humble but honourable toil, and the providence of God was guiding her every step. Little did she know that amid the sheaves she would find a husband, that he should make her the joint owner of all those broad acres, and that she a poor foreigner should become one of the progenitors of the great Messiah. God is very good to those who trust in Him, and often surprises them with unlooked for blessings. Little do we know what may happen to us to-morrow, but this sweet fact may cheer us, that no good thing shall be with-held. Chance is banished from the faith of Christians, for they see the hand of God in everything. The trivial events of today or tomorrow may involve consequences of the highest importance. O Lord, deal as graciously with Thy servants as Thou didst with Ruth.

How blessed would it be, if, in wandering in the field of meditation tonight, our hap should be to light upon the place where our next Kinsman will reveal Himself to us. O Spirit of God, guide us to Him. We would sooner glean in His field than bear away the whole harvest from any other. O for the footsteps of His flock, which may conduct us to the green pastures where He dwells. This is a weary world when Jesus is away — we could better do without sun and moon than without Him — but how divinely fair all things become in the glory of His presence. Our souls know the virtue which dwells in Jesus, and can never be content without Him. We will wait in prayer this night until our hap shall be to light on a part of the field belonging to Jesus wherein He will manifest Himself to us. — C. H. Spurgeon.

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