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Numbering Our Days

The opening of another year reminds us once more that our life is passing. Time does not stand still. The Psalmist was saying:

Threescore and ten years do sum up
our days and years, we see;
Or if, by reason of more strength,
in some fourscore they be.

Yet how many will never see that length of time in the world. Death will come much earlier than that age and carry them away into the eternal world. How very short at the longest is our time in this world and how necessary it is in the short span of time we have in this world to be making our calling and election sure. Have we not need to cry with the Psalmist:

Mine end, and measure of my days,
O Lord, unto me show
What is the same; that I thereby
my frailty well may know?

We are ready to let time pass without truly considering our latter end. Death seems far away when in reality it may be near at hand.

Another year has opened and we have been spared in the providence of God to see the opening of it but who can say that they will see its close. We do not know what a day or an hour will bring to pass. We are to lay to heart that we are journeying to the eternal world, to the world of spirits. But is it to the world of the spirits of just men made perfect that we are journeying or is it to the world of the spirits of the lost in the prison house of a lost eternity? What a momentous matter this is. We are to consider it seriously in the light of God's Word. We have no need to be deceived in this matter. The Word of God will show us where we stand in the light of eternity.

The matter of chief importance for us is whether we are in Christ or whether we are not. This is what will determine our latter end. If we are found in Christ, united to Him by a living faith, then death will not find us unprepared. If, on the other hand, we are still in our sins, still enemies to God by wicked works, then we are in imminent danger of perishing in our sins and going down to an undone eternity. If this is our case, is it not time to be up and doing, to be seeking the Lord while He may be found and to be calling on Him while He is near? There is every encouragement given to us in God's Word to seek the Saviour, and to come as poor needy sinners to the footstool of mercy and grace. Seek, we are told, and ye shall find. Let the wicked forsake his way, we are urged, and the unrighteous man His thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

May we not plead with the Psalmist:

— Lord, teach thou us
our end in mind to bear;
And so to count our days, that we
our hearts may still apply
To learn Thy wisdom and Thy truth,
that we may live thereby?

Saved by Hope

by Rev. James S. Sinclair

At the beginning of a new year, we take the liberty of expressing our hearty good wishes for the future well-being and happiness of our readers. May this year upon which we are entering prove a year of the Lord's right hand to many souls! The signs of the times are dark and foreboding. But we would do well to be encouraged by the promise that the Lord will not cast off His own inheritance; He will continue to fulfil in their experience the words, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." There is also Scripture warrant to pray for and expect the conversion of the sheep who are still outside the fold. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear, and while our iniquities testify against us, it has been His gracious way to remember His covenant, and save poor sinners from going down into the pit.

The subject of our remarks on this occasion, we think, is highly suitable to the present time. If we judge of things by the sight of our eyes, and the

hearing of our ears, we shall, without fail, become discouraged, and allow our hands to hang down in despair. But such ought not to be the frame of mind of the people of God in the darkest days. They must seek, by divine grace, to look above the floods and behold the King eternal sitting there, one who is mightier than the noise of many waters and great sea billows.

"Saved by hope." This seemed the motto of the Apostle Paul amid the sufferings of the time in which he lived. Hope was to him "the anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast" throughout all the storms and tempests of his earthly course. It has been the same to the people of God in every age.

First, let us look at hope in a natural sense. What is it that enables many to struggle on in spite of all the disappointments of life? It is hope: the expectation based upon natural grounds of better things to come. Hope saves the young man from folding his arms in heartless inactivity. Hope stimulates him to put forth all his energies in the business in which he is engaged. Hope leads him on through mighty obstacles to eventual victory. If it were not that there was something of this spirit of hope in the heart of mankind, the world would be a morass of stagnation and a hell of despair and misery. Hope then, in the natural sense, performs a useful function in society.

This, however, is at best but a temporal hope; it has no spiritual value, it does not stretch into eternity. Men do often mistake it for a spiritual thing, and imagine it will carry them safely through the swellings of Jordan to the better land. But this is a sad delusion that will cost many poor souls an eternity of woe. Natural hope flows merely from a natural faith common to unregenerate men, a faith that is concerned solely with the things of sense and sight, a faith, which, if it happens to touch the things of eternity, only drags them down to the low level of carnal objects. The hope, therefore, that has this parent never rises for satisfaction and blessedness into the sublime and spiritual heights of eternity.

What, then, is the real character of the hope of which the Apostle speaks? It is a spiritual hope. It is born not of the flesh, but of the Spirit of God. The Spirit teaches the sinner that he lost all hope of life in the first Adam by sin, and that he is "without hope and without God in the world." The sinner is led to see that he is utterly hopeless as far as the help of man is concerned, and that he must perish in this hopeless condition unless some way of salvation is opened up by his offended God. It is then the Spirit reveals to him Jesus Christ as the Hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof, and leads the poor hopeless soul to cast anchor upon Christ for time and eternity. He now begins to "fight the good fight of faith" and

"lay hold of eternal life." Hope — the hope of eternal life — sustains him in this conflict, and enables him to come off more than conqueror. The Scriptures compare the Christian course to a wilderness journey, a passage across the ocean, the running of a race, and the fighting of a battle. In all these views of the life of faith, hope is necessary to the soul's final success. Let us further observe that this is no vain hope based upon groundless imaginations and visionary fancies; it rests by faith upon God in Christ Jesus. It draws its life and sustenance from the character, the word, and the promises of God. It is therefore able to triumph over all obstacles whatsoever. The powers of darkness may marshal their hosts against it, the world and the flesh may unite to crush and destroy it, but all that these combined enemies can do is to make hope's victory all the more glorious. Hope looks not to itself or any created object, but leans upon the arm of a faithful omnipotent God, and fixes its eye with triumphant expectation on the Forerunner within the veil, even Jesus, who ascended up on high, having overcome principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly in His cross. Thus the people of God may expect that one day through the grace that is in Christ Jesus they shall, poor and destitute though they be, share in the rest and glory of their exalted Redeemer. This, also, they may say even now, "We are saved by hope"

Lastly, we notice the function of hope in one's survey of the times in which we live. These times are dark and perilous indeed, more so, we believe, than any since the beginning of the Christian era, and according to the testimony of prophecy they will, for years to come, as far as the world at large is concerned, get worse and worse. But are the people of God on this account to hang down their hands in despair? Are they to speak and act as if the cause of God were a failure in the earth, and as if His purposes were being frustrated by the designs of men? Verily, not. The Lord Jesus said on one occasion to the Jews, "Ye have seen Me, and believe not;" but did He leave them to think that on that account His work was a failure? No; far from it. He said, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will in nowise cast out." Every soul that God has chosen from eternity shall be saved, and not one of them shall be lost. Christ shall lose nothing of all that the Father gave Him. Here we must rest with acquiescence and satisfaction. Not but we weep over a world perishing in their sins, and stretch out our hands in warning and entreaty towards them beseeching them to turn and live. At the same time, let not the widespread rejection of the Gospel, by any subtle device of the devil, prove a snare to the believer in the pew or the true preacher in the pulpit; let it not weaken their hands in active efforts

for the advance of Christ's kingdom, or lessen their rejoicing in God their Saviour. There are two extremes into which erring creatures are ready to fall. On the one hand, we are liable to contemplate the low state of the times in a frame of mind that would seem to convey the impression that the Lord had wholly forsaken the earth. On the other, we are apt to misunderstand the depth and malignity of prevailing declensions, and to take a superficial and confident view of their speedy rectification. Both extremes are dangerous. The latter is the more common, and the more dangerous. We would do well also to beware of the former. The only way we can be delivered from it is by getting through the teaching of the Holy Ghost a spiritual grasp of the words, "We are saved by hope" (Romans viii.24). — F.P. Mag., Jan 1899.

Saul would not let the people taste food until after they had avenged themselves on their enemies, so if it were not for this cursed "Saul" that is in even believers, that will not let them taste the refreshing honey of the promise, they would make greater slaughter of their spiritual foes than they often do — *Alex. Gair, "Ministers and Men in the Far North."*

"Thou Crownest the Year with Thy Goodness."

Beloved, through this coming year,
May the Lord Jehovah bless thee;
Keep His gracious presence near
Whatsoever trials press thee.

May the Father show His love,
As the Fountain of salvation,
And bestow thee from above
Everlasting consolation.

May the Son reveal His grace
In His interceding merit,
And uplift His lovely face,
Full of beauty, on thy spirit.

May the Holy Ghost impart,
In His rich and sweet communion,
Joy unfading to thy heart,
Flowing from eternal union.

May thy covenant-keeping God,
All in heaven and earth possessing,
Freely shed His love abroad,
Sealing thee an heir of blessing.

When the day is fair and bright,
May His goodness be thy treasure,
Walking on in Jesu's might,
Pleased with all thy Father's pleasure.

Should a cloud of anxious care
Cast its shade across the morrow,
He will give thee strength to bear,
Or will shine away the sorrow.

He who loves thy soul ensures
After dark a gracious dawning;
Sorrow for a night endures;
Joy returneth in the morning.

When thy path is hid from sight,
And the tempest rages o'er thee,
Christ can make the darkness light,
For He trod the way before thee.

Leaning on Him day by day,
May He yield thee safe protection;
And, throughout thy pilgrim way,
Grant thee His all-wise direction.

Then, though all around thee shake,
Thou art safe, abiding near Him;
He will never them forsake
Who are taught to love and fear Him.

In the pathway mark'd with blood,
Through life's ever-changing story,
All shall work thy lasting good,
And secure Him all the glory.

W. Wileman

Sermon

by The Rev. Wm MacLean M.A.

(Preached in St Jude's Glasgow at the Harvest Thanksgiving service on Wednesday evening 21 November 1962. The sermon, which was taken down by a hearer, was revised by Mr MacLean).

*"Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us".
1 Samuel 7:13*

The people of Israel at this time had to an alarming extent forsaken the Lord. Their priests Hophni and Phinehas were ungodly and immoral. The Word of God declares that they were the sons of Belial, and that they knew not the Lord. When the Philistines made war on Israel, it was Hophni and Phinehas who brought the ark of the Lord to the battlefield, expecting thereby to get the victory over the Philistines. In doing so they were but provoking the Lord. Instead of victory the children of Israel were smitten before the Philistines with a very great slaughter, both Hophni and Phinehas were killed and the ark of God was taken. When Phinehas' wife heard that the ark of God was taken she travailed and gave birth to a son whom she called Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel; because the ark of God is taken". Then we have an account of the hand of the Lord being heavy upon the Philistines. They came to realise that the hand of the Lord was upon them because of the ark. They therefore, took two milch kine, tied them to a cart, shut up their calves at home, and laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart. The milch kine wended their way to Bethshemesh. We are told how irreverently the men of Bethshemesh dealt with the ark of the Lord. They looked into the ark, and because of this the Lord smote them with a great slaughter. Before they could look into the ark they had to remove the lid of the ark — the mercy seat, upon which the blood of the sacrifices offered as an atonement to the Lord for the sins of the people was sprinkled. The ark of the covenant was a type of Christ in His two natures, and the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, the atonement which he was to make. In removing the mercy seat they were setting aside the atonement and exposing themselves to the curse of the law. And in how awful a manner the wrath of God came upon them. From Bethshemesh the ark of the covenant was brought to Kirjath-jearim. "And it came to pass while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim that the time was long; for it was twenty years; and the house of Israel lamented after the Lord". We find Samuel

saying to the house of Israel "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroath from among you and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines". They assembled and fasted before the Lord and confessed that they had sinned against Him. While they were thus engaged the Philistines came up against them to Mizpeh. When the children of Israel heard it they were afraid and said to Samuel "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it for a burnt offering, wholly into the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him". As proof that his sacrifice and intercession for Israel was acceptable to the Lord, "The Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines and discomfited them and they were smitten before Israel". Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen. and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us". Samuel's burnt sacrifice and his intercession on behalf of Israel typified and pointed to Christ's sacrifice as the Lamb of God and his all prevailing intercession.

We have reason this evening to set up our Ebenezer anew to the goodness of the Lord to us in His providence and to confess, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us".

In seeking to make a spiritual use of these words, we may notice in the *first* place that there is help in the Lord, salvation in the Lord for helpless sinners as He Himself declares: "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help". In the *second* place we will make a few remarks about those who have this confession "Hitherto, etc." The people of Israel had experience of the deliverance of the Lord from the hands of their foes on the ground of the sacrifice and intercession, and the Israel of God in every age and generation entertain the hope that in their own souls' experience they know something about this deliverance. In the *third* place there is encouragement for the future implied in the words "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us". "The Lord of us hath mindful been and He will bless us still".

Under the *first* head we may notice, as it is written, "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help". We destroyed ourselves in Adam our first covenant head and we have been destroying ourselves by sinning against God. This is the indictment the Lord brings against every individual of our fallen race. The blame and the guilt of our destruction, ruin and hell-deservedness lies at our own door. We are not only self-destroyed, but helpless to deliver ourselves from the ruin and

misery of the Fall. Our case is hopeless as far as the help of man is concerned. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him". The glory of saving sinners from their lost and ruined condition belongs to the Lord alone. "Salvation is of the Lord". "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of god". We may notice Ebenezers in the truth which opens up to us what the Lord declares. "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help,,.

The memorial which Christ set up in the night in which he was betrayed, when He instituted the sacrament of the supper is an Ebenezer. It is a memorial of His atoning death apart from which there would be no hope for any sinner, for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin". The Lord's people in publicly giving obedience to the Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of me, for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come", are also setting up their Ebenezer to the goodness of the Lord that He has hitherto helped them. There is in this solemn ordinance a voice to Christless sinners, "O Israel thou has destroyed thyself but in me is thine help".

The divine memorial of Christ's resurrection from the dead is an Ebenezer. His resurrection is proof that he finished the work given Him to do, that He paid to the uttermost farthing the debts of His people. He rose triumphantly over death and the grave and the Sabbath is now an Ebenezer, a memorial stone of Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is a type and an assurance to the Lord's people of the eternal rest which awaits them in heaven. As a memorial it has a voice, every Sabbath day proclaiming to sinners out of hell, "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help".

The sacrament of Baptism is an Ebenezer. We are baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This holy ordinance brings before us on the one hand that we have a nature which is depraved, deceitful and desperately wicked out of which nothing clean in God's sight can come, and on the other hand that, however vile and unclean we may be there is infinite merit and efficacy in Christ's precious blood to wash the foulest sinner clean.

The long suffering of God in that He has spared us in the room of mercy is an Ebenezer. We are by nature and practice barren fig trees in the vineyard of the visible church. He has not cut us down as our sins deserved and cast us into a lost eternity. He is digging and dunging around us in diverse ways that we might bring forth the fruit of repentance. How we

should give an ear to the gracious question He is putting to us: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

The free offer of Christ to sinners in the everlasting gospel is an Ebenezer. Christ is offered freely to sinners. The offer is based not on any merit or qualification in them, for they have none and cannot attain to any. The offer is based on what the Lord says, "Look unto me and be ye save all ye ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." "Unto you O men I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." How awful shall the eternity be of those who neglect the great salvation which is in their offer! And how solemn the words, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"! Thomas Brooks the Puritan divine says, "It is the duty of all the sons of Adam who hear the gospel preached and Christ offered to them to believe or receive Christ whether they be prepared or not prepared".

In the *second* place we may notice a few things about those, the spiritual Israel of God, who have this confession from personal experience. They are sinners saved by grace. It was the Lord who gave them deliverance. In setting up their Ebenezer to the Lord's goodness to them, their confession is: "Our sure and all sufficient help is in Jehovah's name". Their hope and confidence is placed in Him alone. They were brought, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to believe what the Lord declares in his word, that they had destroyed themselves, that they were in a helpless and hopeless condition. They were brought in their own souls' experience to the end of their own resources, to acquiesce that God in His justice could cut them off, and in His sovereignty pass them by. It is when they died they lived, and lived through Christ being revealed in them, and their souls finding rest and peace and communion in Him. The glory of His person as the Father's eternally begotten Son, the One who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person is precious to them. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed". All who have died to the law as a ground of hope — for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified in God's sight — are married, as the Truth declares, to Christ in a covenant that shall never be broken. They are justified in Christ and shall be glorified in Christ. In the covenant Christ is made unto them of God, their wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification and their redemption. Their own confession is, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". But although dead to the law as a ground of hope they live to the law as a rule of life. Their having a love after the inner man to the law and to the whole of His revealed will, as set

forth in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is proof that the Lord is in covenant with them, and that therefore the forgiveness of sins is theirs. Hebrews 10:16-17, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after these days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more', confirms this.

It is because they have a love to the law after the inner man that they have a consciousness of the awful sinfulness of their nature which causes them to mourn and to cry "O cleanse thou me within from secret faults, thy servant keep from all presumptuous sin". Christ their covenant head is precious to them in His offices as their prophet, priest and king and so these profound and precious blessings are theirs by covenant right — "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom he called, them He also justified and whom He justified, them He also glorified". They are a people who seek to make their calling and election sure. "It is one thing", as Dr Owen says, "to be in a state of grace, it is another to know that this is the case." All believers are in a state of grace. They have peace with God, being reconciled to Him by the blood of His cross, but as to what shall be the measure of their understanding of their interest in it, this is left to the sovereign grace and good pleasure of God. There are many believers who all their days never come to an abiding sense of peace with God, but are filled with troubles and exercised with fears and perplexities, so that they go sorrowing and heavy all their days. But however tried they may be by doubts and fears and unbelief, they cannot but be looking to the Lord and waiting upon Him in their poverty and need, and in doing so they have from Christ Himself, the One who has the tongue of the learned, and who is able to speak a word in season to him that is weary, that they are in His intercession. "Let not them," He says, "that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake; O God of Israel." (Ps. 69:6) They are at times tempted that they shall be put to shame and confusion of face, but His promise stands sure, "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end". (Isa. 45:7)

"Poor creature" said the late Dr Kennedy of Dingwall in the course of a sermon, "if you are believing yourself to be so utterly worthless that you think your prayer is not worth hearing, your reading, your singing, your meditation worthless, your attendance at the means of grace worthless, my dear friend let me assure you that the day will never dawn when Christ will despise you".

The cause of Christ in this world which is the cause of His glory is precious to them. It is therefore a cause of sorrow and mourning to them how the glory has departed to an alarming extent from our once highly favoured land, and they would desire to have in truth the prayer of the Church of old:

“To these long desolations
Thy feet lift do not tarry:
For all the ills thy foes have done
Within thy sanctuary”.

Their prayer and desire too is for the ingathering of God's ancient people the Jews, through the promised outpouring of the Spirit of grace and of supplications. What a day of blessing unparalleled that shall be to the whole Gentile world! “The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising”. (Isa 60:3) To the prayer of the sweet psalmist of Israel inspired by the Holy Spirit, “The whole earth let His glory fill”, the whole-hearted response of their hearts is, “Amen so let it be.”

In the *third* place there is encouragement for the future in the words, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us”. “The Lord of us hath mindful been and He will bless us still”. Whatever troubles and trials His own have to pass through in their wilderness journey, they are assured that “all things shall work together for good, to them who love God, who are the called according to His purpose”. “The Lord is good a stronghold in the day of trouble and He knoweth them who put their trust in Him”. His own promise confirms this, “Fear not thou; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness”. They are warranted therefore to say “For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death”.

The one thing needful for us in view of death and of eternity is to be found of this people, for “they are a blessed people whose God is the Lord”.

Letter

by Rev. Hugh Martin, D.D.

Lasswade, 6th June, 1875.

My Dear Friend, — I was putting on my coat to take some letters to the post when yours came in, so I sit down again, and will take this with me when I go. I regret to learn that you have not been quite well, “down” in body and mind as you say, and that as I am “Hopeful,” you need a word of

comfort from me. As to my being "Hopeful," let me first clear off that misunderstanding. On our first acquaintance you represented yourself at your worst, and what could I do but try to fulfil the command, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," which is not difficult to do when Jerusalem is made willing to accept no comfort but such as comes, not only in loving kindness and mercy, but also in righteousness and judgment. Hence, perhaps, "Hopeful" did make an impression on the line of buoyancy, but he is for all that a very sorrowful fellow, and often after making such impressions, he has to go away by himself and groan, and sob, and sigh, and suffer deserved chastisement. As to needing a word of comfort from me, if your need touches my sinful heart how must it tell on His heart who is the gracious and sympathizing High Priest, and who is infinitely more tender and more ready to help than any fellow-sinner? I think, however, that this depression of spirit of which you speak is one of the "manifold dispensations" through which the Lord sometimes takes His children — one of the "ways of the wilderness" through which He sometimes leads them round about, so that they may learn the rich variety of covenant provision made for all their need. You know the science of the rainbow. We cannot have the rainbow, unless there be the cloud for it to rest upon. The beautiful rays are there, streaming away into invisible space, but in order to the revelation of the beauty, the interception of the cloud is essential. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall come to pass, saith the Lord, that when I do bring a cloud over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of the covenant between me and the earth." May we not say that when the Lord brings a cloud, not over the earth, but over the heart, then He "sets a bow in the cloud," such a "bow" as this — "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me, hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God," Do you not see "the bow?" "Hope thou in God who is the health of my countenance and my God." "My God" — is not that "the token of the covenant, the echo of the covenant promise, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people?" And a people that shall "yet praise Him." So you see the "praise" is in the covenant with all else, but you and I would stint the praise until we are relieved from our cast down state. "Gratitude," says a sardonic writer, "is thankfulness for favours received that have satiated the greed of human nature." But in the kingdom of grace gratitude is thankfulness for favours to come, favours that will come, because they are in the covenant, and faith is already the substance of them, and the evidence of them, while yet they are unseen and unenjoyed; therefore

"why are thou cast down, O my soul?" Really, though I am not "Hopeful" you make me write as though I were, and why should I not be, and you too? Answer that if you can, at least if you can consistently with your duty to glorify Him who is the Hope of Israel.

I was meditating this morning on the words, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion," and I thought, "The Lord is gracious," that is true, because He says Himself He is so. It is also inexhaustible, because it reveals the character of Him who is infinite, therefore, being true and inexhaustible it should be enough for me — enough to live upon, and enough to die upon. But is it apprehended and appropriated by me? there's the weak point of the argument. Well, is He not gracious enough to enable me to apprehend and appropriate it? Is He not gracious enough to be willing that I should apprehend and appropriate it? He is; therefore it just comes round again to the simple but blessed statement, "The Lord is gracious," and more or better cannot be.

You would observe from the newspapers that I took no part in the Church and State debate, didn't even vote. I could have voted with Sir Henry Moncrieff, for his motion was harmless, but I knew it was framed not so much with the view of emphasising our Free Church position as of keeping in check our more advanced men, and I was glad on that account it got such a large following. But I am happy to tell you that I expect soon to be out of earshot, for a season, of the alarm of war, as I am looking forward to a six weeks' sojourn in the Highlands. I go to Dornoch (D.V.) on the third week of this month to the Communion there, afterwards to Rogart, and there will remain on until after the Dingwall Communion, first week of August. Indeed, my heart's in the Highlands already, so add no more at present, but that I hope soon to have good accounts of your improved health, and remain, yours, &c.,

Hugh Martin

Let zeal be accompanied with meekness, that you may be free from passion and prejudice; and let meekness be backed with zeal, that you may be free of lukewarmness and indifference.

James Renwick

Obituary

Rev. John Nicolson, Tain

John or Ian Nicolson was born in Glasgow in July 1919, the only boy in a family of three. His parents, who belonged to Skye, lived on the south side of Glasgow but later removed to the north side of the river to be near

the Church. His father was seafaring but when John was still young he was able to get work ashore. These were difficult times and John's mother, a praying woman, often had to resort to a Throne of grace and was not without answers to her petitions.

As a boy, John was very lively and often got into trouble. He delighted in playing tricks on people which was a concern to his mother. At school he did not apply himself, not being interested in school work, a matter which he later regretted very much. When he was about 9 years of age he fell off a dyke and broke his arm. While his mother was at the hospital waiting for him she was pleading with the Lord for him and received a promise that he would yet be a preacher of the Gospel which was later to be fulfilled. At 14 years of age he left school and at 16 he began his apprenticeship with an engineering firm, on completion of which he went to sea. At this time the Second World War was on. He and a friend although standing next to one another were assigned to different ships. During a battle his friend's ship was sunk with all hands while John was to be preserved to the end of the war without receiving a scratch.

John continued at sea as a marine engineer after the war. His manner of life during this period was far removed from the upbringing he had received. The practice in those days of taking young apprentices out to celebrate after they had completed their apprenticeship had borne sad fruit in John's case. It was to be many a day before he would be delivered from the evil in which he was ensnared and it was to cause his parents many a tear and sigh. His course of life during this period was very much that of the prodigal in the far country, yet in the midst of all his ungodliness and running after worldly pleasure some remnants of his strict upbringing remained with him. He was not given to swearing and would rebuke others for taking the Lord's Name in vain. He would also debate with his workmates about the doctrines of the Bible. He also kept up the form of Bible reading morning and evening quite regularly. On occasions his mother's face would come before him and he would see her shaking a warning finger at him. This would make him turn away from temptation and return to the ship. The Lord's providential care also was exercised over him. Once on a dark, foggy night returning to his ship alone he was about to step on what he thought was the gangway of his ship when a glimmer of the moon appeared and he saw that he had almost stepped into a dry dock where he would have fallen to almost certain death. Another time when swimming he got into difficulty. His friends thinking it was all play-acting just laughed and did nothing. However, a new man who was there took him seriously and jumped in and saved him

from drowning. On one occasion, after he had made a vow not to go swimming on a Sabbath again, he was persuaded to go. When he dived into the water he was taken with severe cramp and thought he would never get out of the water. At once he remembered his vow and prayed for forgiveness and help. The Lord heard him and he was able to get out safely and never again forgot his promise to the Lord.

The Lord's time to deliver him out of Satan's kingdom was at hand. Though still pursuing his godless ways he went one evening to the house of God. That evening the Lord arrested him in his godless course. Though his mind was on other things during the sermon, the minister in closing the Bible said, "Too long have you been the workers of iniquity", and repeated it the second time. These words went as an arrow of conviction to John's heart. Now he knew what it was to be in anguish and distress of soul. He knew not which way to turn for deliverance. He began, however, to read his Bible and seek deliverance for his soul from the hell which he now saw his sins deserved. Almost in despair one night he said to his sister that he couldn't even pray. Though unconverted herself she directed him to the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner". That night he threw himself on his knees and uttering this prayer wrestled with the Lord well into the night. At length opening his Bible his eyes fell on these words, "Now are ye clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you". His bands were now loosed and he was filled with joy and praise towards his Lord and Saviour and spent much of the night singing psalms. How overjoyed his mother was when she heard that this son of many prayers had been turned to the Lord!

Not long after he had professed publicly the saving change that had been wrought in him by the Spirit of God, it was impressed on him that he was to preach the Gospel. The words were, "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me." At once he put the words away feeling his unfitness for such a high calling. This continued a considerable time but after much striving and distress to be rid of the impression he was ultimately convinced that it was of the Lord. His minister, whom he consulted, encouraged him to go forward. The task was no light one for him to proceed to the studies necessary for the ministry, especially as he had left school so young. However, he was enabled to go on and complete the course laid out for him and was eventually licensed to preach the Gospel. At that time he was encouraged by the words, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

He was called first of all to the Congregation of Ness after its former

minister, Rev. Wm. MacLean, had been translated to Gisborne in New Zealand. Here he laboured for a period of seven years setting before sinners life and death, warning the wicked that it would be ill with them and comforting the Lord's people with the assurance that it would be well with them. In this congregation he had the added disadvantage that it was Gaelic speaking and that at least one of the services on the Lord's day had to be in that language. He, however, persisted in his task.

Besides his labours in his own congregation he was frequently away at communion seasons in different parts of the Church. In 1970 he was asked to visit Canada and the U.S.A as Church deputy and during that time met a good number of our people out there, including Mrs MacLennen, Hillsdale, one who was like-minded with himself and who was to become his wife. From this time he ever retained a warm interest in the people of our Church in those countries. (He also visited Canada in 1974.)

After returning from Canada he received a call to the joint congregation of Tain and Fearn where the late Mr Archibald Robertson had laboured as a missionary for many years. Here again he continued to set life and death before the people. It was not the Lord's will however that he should remain for long in this charge. For some time before his trouble was diagnosed it was evident that he was not in good health. The last year of his life was spent in much pain and declining strength. To those who were tempted and cast down he would say: "Go on your knees. Confess your sins to the Lord and say, The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin, and Satan will flee from you."

In May 1977 he was admitted into hospital for X-rays. To the porter who accompanied him he spoke of the way of salvation by grace alone and prayed that it would be blessed to him. He spoke in the same way to a doctor who attended him in his home when he was given the opportunity. The X-rays taken at the hospital confirmed that his trouble was cancer and that the days remaining to him were few. He was reconciled to the Lord's will in this. On his deathbed he received a letter from Rhodesia telling of an African who was greatly helped by hearing one of his sermons on a tape. He saw this as a fulfilling of the promise given that he was to preach to the nations. While rejoicing over this, he exclaimed, "Pride, cursed pride." Satan did not often buffet him on his death bed but on this occasion tried him.

He told that when he knew the nature of his trouble the peace of God came flooding into his soul such as he had never experienced before. This continued with him until the end. He remained in a spiritual frame of mind though suffering much bodily pain. He mentioned a burning in his

bones, but said, "What is this in comparison to what Christ suffered." He was heard saying at different times, "Why me, Lord? Why me?" Then he would say, "The sovereignty of God." On his last day on earth many of his own congregation called to see him to whom he proclaimed the Gospel. He was conscious to the last. In the end someone suggested that they sing the 23rd Psalm. His lips were seen forming each of the words until his last words on earth were uttered:

"And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling place shall be."

So he passed from time to eternity one who endeavoured to declare the whole counsel of God to his fellow-sinners and who laboured for their ingathering to the kingdom of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His remains were laid to rest in the Tain cemetery, near those of Mr Archibald Robertson, to await the call of the morning of the resurrection.

"Then are they glad because at rest
and quiet now they be
So to the haven He them brings
which they desired to see."

May his widow and sisters experience the fulfilment of the promise: "For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

D. B. M.

Extracts of Diary

by Rev. Donald MacFarlane

The Enemy comes in like a Flood

Isaiah 59.19. The enemy spoken of is Satan. He is the great enemy of God, of His people and cause, and the great enemy of men in general. The manner of his coming in — like a flood. Indicative of power. He comes in powerfully — a flood is very powerful. There is suddenness — a flood comes suddenly. So does Satan. It is widespread — the nature of a flood is to spread to advance in its course till met by something to make it stop. Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further. All this is true regarding the manner in which Satan comes in. He comes in like a flood. A flood is destructive, as history proves, so are the floods of Satan. The promise is that the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. In his own strength man is impotent before the power of the enemy. It requires

divine power to overcome and put him to flight. "It is not by power nor by might, but by my Spirit saith the Lord." So it is said here. "The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." This implies victory from Satan and his servants. Devils and men are on the one hand; Christ and His people on the other. The standard is the banner of the Cross, the standard of the Gospel, by which the enemy is overcome. Having made these preliminary remarks by way of exhortation, let us proceed to consider some of the times when the enemy comes in like a flood, and when and how the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him.

Man was in a state of holiness and happiness as he came forth from the creative hand of God; in every way capable of answering the end of his being — the glorifying and enjoying of His God. But the enemy Satan came in like a flood, attacking our first parents by his temptations and they sinned and fell. How sudden; how powerful and destructive was his coming in, as seen from the fact that ere they were aware they were overcome and destroyed themselves. Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. The fact that we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God shows how extensive the flood was. Thy enemy comes in like a flood at the time of the captivity. What I mean is that it was the enemy coming in that led to the captivity. He turned the people of Israel from following the Lord to idols and the Lord, who is a jealous God, gave them into the hands of their enemies, who carried them away into captivity.

The enemy came in like a flood, before the reformation from popery and from prelacy when doctrinal errors flooded the church. Many of the Lord's people were persecuted unto death by the two evil systems of Popery and Prelacy. These were indeed the floods of the enemy. In times of persecution, the wolf and the lamb can easily be distinguished. The enemy comes in like a flood now, in our own day. In general, it may be said that Satan comes in like a flood in our day, inasmuch as wickedness abounds generally throughout the land, such as the running of trains and steamboats on Sabbath not to speak at present of the various floods which invade this generation. I shall confine myself to some that are very prominent — that which threatens to deprive us of the use of the Bible, the inspired word of God — Rationalism, or the Rationalistic view of Criticism which Professors use to deprive us of the Scriptures of the Old Testament as the Word of God.

Whatever may be the motives of the Professors in their treatment of the Bible, it is pretty clear to those who are possessed of spiritual penetration, and that know the devices of Satan, that the rationalistic views which the Professors thrust upon the church are floods of the enemy to deprive us of

the Word of God. What awful responsibilities rest upon men engaged in such a work. This is the work in which they so defiantly persist, for they must know that they are only reviving a heresy that has been condemned and repudiated by the church centuries ago, and it is a sign of sad backslidings, that there should be so many in the church doing all in their power to support men who try to deprive us of this treasure, the Bible.

That which seeks to deprive us of the Sabbath, avowed enemies and professed friends, are made use of by the great enemy to rob us of the blessed Sabbath. There are those that occupy the responsible office of the holy ministry, that would turn the Sabbath, or at least part of it, into a day of amusement and pleasure. It is deplorable that ministers should be found amongst those that advocate this evil. It has been reported that one of these Dr Fraser, London, when brought to task by his Presbytery, said that he did not advocate the opening of picture galleries on the Lord's Day but he would not condemn or oppose it. Is this consistent with his ordination vows? As a minister he is under solemn vows to condemn and oppose any kind of Sabbath desecration. This is one of the ways in which the enemy is coming in like a flood. It may be remarked that in every age, in which the Church was backsliding from the Lord, that the enemy was coming in with such floods as I have described. They are a sure type of the backsliding state of the church in our day.

"The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." He did this when the enemy came in to cause the fall of man. He revealed that a Saviour was to be raised up of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the enemy. This Gospel was preached to our first parents, and it is very probable that it was blessed to the saving of their souls. Thus by the standard lifted up the enemy was overcome and put to flight. The Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard at the deliverance from bondage, proclaimed liberty to the captives, actually delivered them. He raised up Cyrus — His anointed — whom He employed to bring them out of their captivity. The Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard at the time of the Reformation. The Spirit made use of men, whom he raised up, qualified for the work — Luther and others in Germany, Knox and others in Scotland. There the Spirit used men in lifting up a standard against the enemy, and what was the standard lifted up. The standard of the Cross of Christ. The standard of the Gospel of free grace of salvation.

There is another standard that is sufficient to overcome the enemy, to put to flight the armies of the aliens — the standard they lifted up in the sound and faithful preaching of the Gospel — salvation through the finished work of Christ — justification by faith. In the lifting up of the

standard they had been engaged in a warfare. A spiritual warfare. They fought as good soldiers of Jesus Christ under the banner of His Cross; through Christ strengthening them. He sends none alone a warfare at their own charges. They overcame and lifted up the standard of Victory. The reformation was effected, reformation in doctrine etc. This took the place of the floods of error which so long pervaded the church under the iron thralldom of Popery and Prelacy. To come to our own time. This is a time of need when the floods of errors and corruption are evident abroad throughout the Church. May we not, even in the midst of merited wrath, expect that the Spirit should lift up a standard against the enemy, who comes in like a flood in order to deprive us of the Word of God, of the Sabbath, and to carry the rising generation away by the floods of infidelity, innovations and other forms of ungodliness. We need this; we pray for it; we labour for it; we expect it, for He hath said, when the enemy shall come in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. The Lord will fulfil this promise. He will lift up a standard. He has done this in some measure already. In the midst of the general defection that has befallen the church. The Lord has a few faithful servants and people in her yet. These he uses to lift up a standard against the enemy. They meet with opposition in their work, but all whom the Lord employed to bear a faithful testimony on his side in the past encountered opposition. The cause is a worthy cause. The Lord's faithful witnesses should not be daunted or made to shrink from the plain path of duty, by any such opposition. They lifted up a standard in giving a faithful testimony against errors. They do this in the church courts, in the pulpit and in the closet. Among the various divinely appointed means instituted for lifting up the standard, prayer is a very powerful one, and the Lord's people observing that the enemy is coming in with floods of errors have been stirred up to the exercise of prayer on behalf of the Lord's cause in the Free Church, in the Kingdoms throughout the world, and if those floods have been in any measure arrested as they have, it is, we believe, in answer to prayer.

Preached 1879 at Moy

The Feast. John 11.56. The Feast, the passover, which was instituted in Egypt in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage in that place, continued to be observed till the death of Christ. Christ is now, in the New Testament dispensation, our pass-over 1 Cor:5.7. The passover was only a type of Christ's death, as set forth in the sacrament of the supper. The sacrament of the Lord's supper

is a commemorative ordinance. It is in commemoration of the great deliverance he accomplished for His people by His death. This ordinance is to be observed by His children till He comes again. 1. Cor:11.26. This is the feast we should keep in view this day in view of our approaching communion Sabbath. Why is the sacrament of the supper called a feast: Just because it is really a feast. Christ is our life. Cor:3.4. His flesh is meat indeed; His blood is drink indeed. John:6.55. The occasion of the dispensation thereof is a feast-time because Christ offers Himself then not only to those who are His children but also to those who are not His children, but the children of Satan. In the sacrament He offers Himself to His own beloved, needy, but undeserving children to feed upon that they might be nourished, strengthened, encouraged, and edified. And in the preaching of the Gospel (for the Gospel is preached on such an occasion) He offers Himself to sinners, even the chief. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Prov:8.4. "Whosoever will, let Him take the water of life freely." Rev:22.17.

Christ is set forth in both the sacrament and in the preaching of the Gospel, and both classes of men to whom He thus presents Himself need Him. Sinners however, insensible of their need, stand in need of Him, and His people feel that they need Him, yea, that without Him they can do nothing, that they cannot do without Him.

The person enquired about. "What think ye that He will not come to the feast?" Christ is the person enquired about and often this is the person we should enquire about too, and be anxious and desirous that he would come to the feast. Some may be solicitous as to who are the ministers coming to the feast, but not so much as to whether Christ will come to it. Why are His people so anxious that He Himself should come to the feast? Because He is the all in all in that ordinance. He is the feast. Then if He does not come there will be no feast. There may be dishes, but no food.

Christ is also the Host. It is He that serves the feast to His guests. If He does not come they shall not get anything. "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" Song of Sol:3.3. Christ is the Beloved of their soul, their Friend, Brother, etc. They saw His glory, beauty and excellency. "We would see Jesus" John:12.21. They desire to see Him, to meet with Him in His own ordinance, to enjoy and glorify Him. They have doubts as to whether He will come. Those who sincerely desire Christ's coming to the feast are often troubled with doubts. They are exposed to the assaults of unbelief and of Satan, and are in consequence dejected in their souls fearing that Christ will

not come to them. Psalm:43.5. They consult one another "What think ye? Have ye heard any word about His coming at the throne of grace? Enquire ye of the Lord." There are indeed many things that seem to keep Him away, carelessness, want of prayer, anxiousness, repentance, etc., not to speak of open ungodliness. There are encouraging considerations to expect His coming. It is His own feast. His ministering servants will be there. (Lo I am with you always.) His people will be there. His own promise. There are preparations necessary for His coming. Repenting in sackclothes and ashes. The grace of humility in exercise, prayer. Christ likes that His people should petition Him to come. He will be enquired of by the house of Israel. Others constrained Him and He went with them. There is communion between God's people and Himself by prayer. They correspond with Him by prayer, and He answers their prayer so far as it is for His own glory and their good. Then if you would have Christ come to the feast be much as the throne of grace. Oh! that He would come for His own name's sake, to glorify His great name and bless us according to need. Amen.

Letter to Editor of Inverness Courier.

Sir, — From repeated reports of newspapers, it appears that the decision of last Commission of Assembly in the case of Professor Smith, has caused a great deal of excitement in many quarters especially in Elgin, Aberdeen, Greenock, Glasgow, and other places. This in my opinion shows that Satan is angry because the progress of his wicked attacks on the blessed Word of God has been so far arrested: and is very sad to think that he should get so many sympathisers among professing Christians. Let those who so boldly take the side of a man that has done so much to shake the faith of precious immortal souls in the Bible take heed lest their present audacity be turned into trembling, and confusion, when they shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ to be judged by the inspired word of God. It is no new thing in the history of the Church to see Members of Parliament, Bailies, Lawyers, and others holding responsible offices in the church, taking offence at the teaching of Holy Scripture, and standing up against the Lord and against His Anointed. But, "He that sits in the Heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision".

*I am &c,
D. McF.*

Strathearn, 26th Nov. 1880.

Fornaci Di Barga

Visiting that Tuscan village again in June of this year, I found Emelia and her mother to be just the same.

The mother spoke about tensions between her and others in her wider family circle, because of her religion. She said that, when she read the Bible, she often had little sense of benefitting from it. However, she sometimes felt spontaneously inclined to pray; and when this happened she felt greatly refreshed. I asked what it was she prayed for at such times. She said that she prayed for the pardon of her sins, she prayed to be helped to understand the Scriptures, she prayed for people in trouble, and on Saturdays she prayed for ministers who were preparing to preach on the Lord's Day.

Emelia has a tendency to depression. However one cannot fail to be impressed by her transparent honesty, and the sincerity of her zeal for the gospel. She regards herself as ignorant, and she feels deeply that she comes short in regard to her example and the witness she gives in her family and among her neighbours. But despite all her sense of insufficiency, I feel that the words will have fulfilment in regard to her, 'and the last shall be first'.

Emelia's husband and children were again at most of the meetings. It is difficult to tell how much the word of God has come to mean to them; though Simonetta, who is now 13 years old, shows more interest than the others.

The friends of the family, the Mazzei's, were at fewer of the services than before. I understand that they still sometimes attend Mass. The husband argues volubly that it is enough to believe in God, and to do no harm to one's neighbour. 'What more than that can anyone do?' he asks. Emelia told him that he should pray as the minister taught the highland kitchen maid: *Shew me myself*, and *Shew me Thyself*. Mazzei said that, if there were no R.C. Church in Italy, the young people would grow up altogether ignorant of how they ought to live. He asked why it was that the religion which we were discussing had not taken hold in Italy; and why it was that the R.C. Church attracted greater numbers. It was pointed out that the R.C. Church counts among its numbers thousands of pagan people who are regarded as converts just because they submit to being baptised; even when they continue to follow their heathen practices. I also referred to how the R.C. Church had opposed the gospel whenever it had had a prospect of gaining ground in Italy; burning those who criticised the Pope (as Savonarolla) and destroying

books which contained the doctrines of the gospel (as Parleario's *Justification by Faith*).

Two sisters, who used to attend the meetings when Mr MacInnes went to Fornaci at first, and whose interest for a time fell off, were with us again several times during this visit, as work permitted.

The greatest encouragement that I felt on this occasion was from the presence of a friend of Emelia's. Miriana is a young mother, with a daughter called Tania. Miriana attended every meeting during this visit, until she went on holiday two days before I left. By the end of the first evening she was sufficiently relaxed to ask some questions, and she continued to ask questions every time she came.

She asked about praying to saints; she asked if it was necessary for a change to come when one believed in Jesus; she asked if, to be a true Christian, one had to be full of love towards everybody one met. She said that, when she was a girl, the priest had asked her why she was not coming to Mass. She had replied that sometimes she read the Bible, but the priest had said that it was more important to attend Mass.

Miriana said that she had practically no one with whom she could talk about religion, except Emelia; that if she began to talk seriously about it people would probably think her out of her mind. The hold which the R.C. Church has on those born and brought up within it was clearly seen in Miriana's case. Even though she is critical of the local priest, understands something of the teaching of the Bible, and sees many things wrong with the R.C. Church, she twice spoke feelingly of how great a faith one would need before one could leave the R.C. Church.

It would be such an encouragement if Miriana were to come to saving faith in Christ; and may there be much prayer that this will in fact take place.

The Rev. Angus Morrison visited Fornaci in November, and may his visit prove a source of much blessing.

Both on my way to Fornaci, and on my way back, I saw Franco Maggiotto again.

Franco has more than one difficulty, but it seemed to me that his work was going ahead. He spoke of visits he had had recently from different groups of priests. He also spoke of encouragement he had had recently from different groups of priests. He also spoke of encouragement he had received from new contacts being made locally. I talked several times with a shopkeeper nearby who, along with his wife, has begun to attend the meetings Franco holds at Finale.

Franco has also become involved with work at Milan, where he has responsibility for another small congregation which called him to be their pastor after their previous pastor went to America. In fact I met one of the young people attached to that group in Milan, as he was down seeing Franco when I was there.

This seventeen year old boy, called Walter, had been president of Catholic Action in his school. He was learning to play classical guitar music, and that was how he made contact with the church in Milan. His teacher was in charge of the Christian bookshop associated with the church, and spoke to Walter about the bookshop and about the church. As a result of this Walter began to attend the services in February of this year, and has continued to attend ever since. I asked him what it was that had attracted him to the church. He said that certainly salvation was the most important thing, but that he was also impressed because he saw that, in the church services, the Bible was being applied in a practical way.

Walter was to have got a lift to England a week after my return, and we were looking forward to a visit from him in Aberdeen. However Franco phoned just after I got back to Scotland to say that Walter's family had become apprehensive about his going to stay with a Protestant family in another country, and that it had been made impossible for him to visit us. We pray that Walter will be able to withstand pressures which will be put on him; that this and other aspects of Franco's work will be seen to prosper under the blessing of the Lord.

J. T.

Book Reviews

Parting Counsels: An Exposition of Second Peter, Chapter 1 by John Brown; pages 329, price £4. Banner of Truth Trust

The present volume is among the very last of the great expository works on the New Testament which Dr Brown was able personally to see through the press. As the title "Parting Counsels" indicates, the exposition of the First chapter of Second Peter is in the nature of a valedictory address — "better", says the author, now at the end of long years in the Church's ministry, "to offer it as a gift than leave it as a legacy". Dr Brown had often been urged to bring out a volume on Second Peter as a companion volume to his expository work on First Peter, but on the ground of increasing age and the difficulties of undertaking fresh work of such an exacting nature, he declined. He felt, however, that the first

chapter of Second Peter was complete in itself, that he had given a good deal of careful study to the chapter and had satisfied himself that he had arrived at a true understanding of its meaning. He therefore published the work in November 1856. We have here then the mature fruits of his ripe scholarship.

The chapter falls into two natural parts of almost equal length. The first covers the practical counsel prescribed to those to whom the Epistle is addressed, "who have obtained like precious faith with us", to lead a sound moral life by cultivating all the virtues and graces of the Christian faith, so "making their calling and election sure", and reaping the reward which awaits the saints, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". In the second part, the apostle writes under the impression of an early death, "Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me", no doubt in reference to the words of warning in John xxi v.18 which gives urgency to his words. Peter recalls the scene he had witnessed on the Holy Mount, but nevertheless enforces his advice on the ground of holy scripture alone, "the more sure word of prophecy". Included with this study are four sermons preached at various times by Brown. The first two sermons are upon closely related subjects, "How Christians may know that they are of the Truth and may assure their hearts before God"; "Assurance of Salvation and how to Obtain it". The other two sermons inserted at the request of friends are on the subjects: "The Object of the Christian Economy, and the Means of its Accomplishment" and "The Christian Minister's Request to his People at the Commencement and towards the Close of His Ministry". This last sermon was preached by John Brown to the congregation at Biggar as a young minister entering upon his first charge in February 1806, and again delivered some 50 years later in February 1856 to his congregation at Broughton Place. The preacher takes the opportunity to offer young aspirants to the Christian Ministry timely advice, rich with the experience of a long ministry in the Lord's service.

This volume shows the author's well known powers of exact exegesis. The sole aim which John Brown set himself, to elicit the true meaning from the text of scripture, is seen in his treatment of the difficult words: "No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation". Dr Brown never allowed the scientific side of his work to supersede or diminish the reverend spirit which he always brought to the study of God's holy word, and the present volume is no exception. In a day when superficial

religious literature abounds, these devout evangelical studies should prove refreshing and edifying, with solid doctrinal instruction mingled with the practical duties of the Christian life and should be of great help to ministers and students in their personal lives and work. There is a mistake in the year of Brown's birth given on the dust cover as 1807 — it should be 1784, a slight misprint appears on page 315, easy instead of "eask"; and on page 316 overleaf, Paul's advice to Timothy omits the words which should be supplied in order to complete the sense, "continue in them", 1 Timothy iv, verse 16. This volume is another of the fine reprints of John Brown's great expository works, produced by the Banner of Truth Trust which deserves, and we hope will enjoy, a wide circulation.

A.F.M.

Notes and Comments

The Prime Minister Visits the Pope

The Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, recently visited the Pope. The deference paid by the Queen and now the Prime Minister of a Protestant country must be exceedingly gratifying to the Pontiff and confirmatory of his claim to be ruler over kings and princes. What were the Queen and Prime Minister doing conferring with the Pope? One thing is certain — whatever they were doing it was not for the good of the Protestant Cause in Britain. Poor Britain has fallen on sad days when her leaders in Church and State are consorting with her avowed enemy, the Pope of Rome. We have not the least doubt what the Pope sees in these visits, that is, the submission of Protestant Britain to the papal yoke. May the Lord in His mercy arise and deliver our nation from the machinations of the Antichrist.

The Pope and Unity

The Pope is reported to have made a dramatic gesture to promote Christian unity on his recent visit to West Germany when he acknowledged that the Roman Catholic Church was not without guilt in the division of Christianity 450 years ago. He made this admission at a meeting with leaders of Martin Luther's Evangelical Church. At the same time he affirmed that Christians of both faiths could assemble round one altar only after their Churches were fully united. It was agreed to form a Commission to study ways of reconciling differences between their Churches.

This admission by the Pope that the Roman Catholic Church was not without guilt over the Reformation is of little worth until he will acknowledge that the doctrines of evangelical Protestantism are the doctrines of the Bible. To the Pope the Reformation was a tragedy; to the Protestant Church it was a glorious event which liberated the minds of the people from the idolatry and superstition of the Roman Church. Hence there is no way of reconciling differences between the Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths but by the Roman Catholic Church abandoning its apostacy from the true faith of the Gospel.

Mixed Marriages

The Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Church joint Commission on Mixed Marriages has just issued a pamphlet on this subject. Although talks have gone on for nine years yet on several issues no agreement was reached and the joint Commission has now been discontinued. The insistence of the Roman Catholic Church that the Roman Catholic partner must promise to do all in his or her power to raise the children of the marriage within the Roman Catholic Church has proved a fertile source of trouble in such marriages. The Church of Scotland failed in its attempt to get the Roman Catholic Church to change its attitude.

Children and Drink

An Alcohol and Young People seminar at Strathclyde University was told that youngsters have to be educated in safe drinking. It was suggested that teenagers should be introduced to drink at home with parental supervision. These radical proposals are perfectly in line with the idea now current that drinking is an accepted fact of life with young people and therefore we must live with it. Would it not be a much more responsible attitude to adopt that children should be warned of the dangers of drink and every effort made to discourage them from engaging in social drinking which in many cases leads on to drunkenness and alcoholism?

Corporal Punishment in Schools

A Commission of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg accuse Britain of failing to respect the right of parents to ensure that their children's education and teaching is in conformity with their own philosophical convictions. The Government are to contest the Commission's findings. The case was brought before the Commission by two mothers from Scotland who object to the use of corporal punishment in schools. It is

regrettable that parents who ought to be upholding the authority of teachers and head-masters in schools would be actively engaged in seeking to subvert that authority by endeavouring to prevent them from using condign punishment when the situation requires it.

Church Notes

Appeal for Chesley Manse

The Deacons' Court of the Ebenezer Free Presbyterian Church, Chesley, Ontario, Canada, wishes to draw to the attention of people throughout the Church that an opportunity to purchase a manse has arisen which the Deacons' Court feels is very providential. The house in question is next door to the church building and is the original manse for this church. The house has been modernized and is in exceptionally good condition. The price is Sixty Thousand dollars (\$60000) £21,500 which is fair. The income of the congregation is such that it could either support a minister or buy the manse but not both at the same time. Since the congregation is small and its people are giving very willingly now, any additional help from anyone outside the congregation who is able to help build up the Cause in Canada would be very much appreciated. Donations, designated for this purpose, should be sent to Mr Wm. Fraser, General Treasurer, 20 Daleview Avenue, Kelvindale, Glasgow G12 0HE, or to Mr Gerrit Schuit, RR#2, Chesley, Ontario, Canada N0G 1L0, and these will be gratefully acknowledged.

*Rev. Malcolm MacInnes Chairman, Deacons' Court
J.G. Fraser, Clerk, Deacons' Court*

This appeal was endorsed by the Southern Presbytery

D.J. MacDonald, Clerk.

Perth Communion

The Kirk Session of Dundee, Perth and Stirling Congregation have decided to hold a Communion in Perth on the second Sabbath of March, D.V. The usual services will be held from Thursday 5th March to Monday 9th March. A fuller notice will appear later.

(Rev) D.J. MacDonald, Moderator

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on Friday 23rd January 1981 at 2.30 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on Tuesday, 13th January 1981 at 11 a.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on Tuesday 27th January 1981 at 2.30 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on Tuesday 17th February 1981 at 6 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 10th March 1981 at 11 a.m.

Scottish Reformation Society Tours

The Scottish Reformation Society has over the past few years been organising various tours which have taken in places of historical interest in Scotland. These have now developed into extended tours and have become Touring holidays.

In 1981 (d.v.) we plan two such tours on the following lines.

1. A FIVE DAY Covenanting Tour Holiday covering the main areas of Scottish Reformation and Covenanting interests. This tour will commence on MONDAY 4th May and finish on FRIDAY 8th May. Prices have still to be finalised but the 1980 tour cost £43 for travel, bed and breakfast, morning coffee and evening supper. Only 14 places are available on this tour with the mini bus.

2. An ELEVEN DAY Continental Reformation Tour taking in places such as Noyon; Paris; Geneva; Basel; Heidelberg; Worms and various places in Holland. This tour commences on MONDAY 27th July and concludes on FRIDAY 7th August. Though 1981 tariffs are not to hand the 1980 tour cost £205 for a shared room and £221 for a single room (there are limited numbers of single rooms available). This included all travel, ferries, bed/breakfast and dinner. We hope there will only be small increases in costs this year.

Booking forms and full particulars of the tours are available from Rev A. Sinclair Horne (who will lead both tours), Scottish Reformation Society, 17 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EE, Scotland.

Early booking for both tours is advisable as already bookings have been made by friends on the 1980 tours for relatives and friends. COME AND JOIN US IN THESE TIMES OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr W.D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Glasgow, G12 0HE, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:—

Sustentation Fund: M.M., South Harris, £30; Anon., Ontario, \$20.00.

Home Mission: Anon., £10.

Aged & Infirm Ministers' etc. Fund: "Friend", Kames, £50.

Dominions & Overseas Fund: M.M., South Harris, £10; Fowler Gibson family, Alberta, in memory of our mother, Christina F. Gibson, \$100.00.

Home of Rest Fund: Anon., Psalm 92v14, £20; Miss C. MacLeod, North Tolsta, £10.

The Publications Treasurer, Mr. R.W.M. MacKenzie C.A., Hilton of Cadboll, Fearn, Ross-shire, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Publications Fund: C.A. McL., Dunvegan £5; A Friend of the Cause, £200, both for Westminster Confession of Faith Fund; E. McL., Dumbarton, £5.

Welfare of Youth Fund: Mrs MacK., Ullapool, £5, per W.D. Fraser; St. Jude's Congregation, £4.

Free Distribution Magazine Fund: St. Jude's Congregation, £3.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Aberdeen: Friend, £10; Friend, Harris, £10; M.M., Stornoway, £10; W.T., £10; C.C. McD., Inverness, £10; Anon., Stornoway, in memory of late Rev. James Tallach, £60; A Friend, Skye, £20; Psalm 147:2, £50; A Friend, Harris, £5; Anon, North Tolsta, £20; A Skye Friend, £10; An Oban Friend, £5; An Oban Friend, £10, both per Rev. J.T.; Friends, Harris, £20; A Glasgow Friend, £10.

Barnoldswick: MacLean, £5 per Dr. R.K. Macuish; Mrs MacK., Ullapool, £20 per W.D.F.; Friend, £100; In loving memory of loved ones, per T. De Lacey, £5; Anon, £10 for Congr. Purposes.

Flashadder: Envelope in plate, £10 for For. Mission; Envelope in Plate, £20 for Home Mission.

Fort William: Skye Friend, £10; Dingwall Friend, £2, both per Rev. J.A. MacDonald; In memory of a dearly beloved son and brother, £10 for Sust. Fund, per F. Ferguson.

Greenock: R.A.C., Bangor, N.I. £15; Mr MacI., Greenock, £10; D.R. MacS., Glasgow, £15, all for Congr. Purposes, last two per Rev. L. MacLeod; Anon, envelope in Church plate, £10 for Underground Evangelism.

Portree: Tolsta Friend, £20 per F.M.; Anon, £15 (in church plate), both for Sust. Fund; Anon, £4 for Congr. Purposes; Friend, £5 for Manse Expenses.

Shieldaig: Anon, £10 for Property Fund.

South Harris: Lochcarron Friend, £10 for Car Fund; Widow's Mite, £12 for Congr. Fund, both per Rev. D. MacLean.

Staffin: Mr. H., Falkirk, £5 (envelope in plate); £100 for Congr. Purposes (envelope in plate); D.C., Raasay, £5 for Tel. Account, per Rev. J. McD.

Stornoway: Miss C.M., Dun Eisdan, £10 for Car Fund, per N. Murray; Friend, £10 for Stornoway Congr.; M. and R., £20 for Sust. Fund; Friends, £10; Two Friends, Inverness, £10, both for Congr. Purposes; Friends, £10 for Car Fund, last five per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Strath: Anon, Envelope in plate, £2 for Home Mission; Mr. M. MacD., Tarskavaig, Sleat, £45 for Church Funds per J. McK.

Tomatin: In Church plate, £30 for Congr. Expenses.

Ulg: Tolsta Friend, £5 for Comm. Expenses; Stornoway Friend, £15; Stornoway Friend, £20, both per Rev. D.A. MacL. and both for Car Fund.

Watnish: Friend, £6 for Church Funds.