

THE
Free Presbyterian Magazine
and Monthly Record

Vol. 88

JUNE 1982

No.6

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people

Part of Isaiah's task as the prophet of the Lord to Judah and Jerusalem was to proclaim to them as a backsliding people many unpalatable truths. It is true that Isaiah had also to pronounce many a judgment on the heathen nations round about, yet the sin of Judah and Jerusalem was more reprehensible on account of her great privileges. To whom much is given of the same shall much be required.

Yet Isaiah's task was not to be one merely of warning and denunciation. He was entrusted also with a message of comfort and hope. It is a solemn matter for a people to come under the divine displeasure — and especially for those who enjoyed much of the divine favour in the past. Lest such be altogether discouraged and become despondent the Lord mingles with the threats words of comfort and peace. So in the case of Judah and Jerusalem, the Lord graciously gave Isaiah a message of encouragement and of comfort. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

The words which Isaiah was commanded to utter were promises of future prosperity and blessedness. The day was indeed dark, the dark clouds of divine judgments were overhanging the nation, yet a bright future was in store. Though the nation to whom Isaiah delivered his message in the Word of the Lord was to go into captivity — and that was a bleak prospect — yet that captivity was ultimately to end and they were to be like men that dreamed.

When Zion's bondage God turned back
like men that dreamed were we
Then filled with laughter was our mouth
our tongue with melody.

However fair was the prospect of a return from the captivity of Babylon, Isaiah had much fairer prospects to set before the people — even the coming of the Messiah of Israel who was to redeem Israel from all her iniquity. The prospect of the coming of Zion's King, who at the

same time was to be Jehovah's suffering Servant, was a most glorious one. He was to come as the Healer of the Nations. He was to be a Light to lighten the Gentile as well as the glory of His people Israel. Surely such a prospect was a most comforting one and fitted to fill the hearts of all who received the message with unspeakable joy. How many precious promises did Isaiah give utterance to as the prophet of the Lord. He was commanded to speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare was accomplished, that her iniquity was pardoned: for she had received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. This surely foretold of a season of reconciliation and peace which she was to enjoy. The fact that it was spoken by the Lord made it sure. He is the One that cannot lie. Hath He spoken and shall He not do it? Let Judah and Jerusalem drink in the consolation that it is intended to afford. The dark and cloudy day is to pass away and give place to a day without clouds when the Sun of righteousness was to arise with healing in His wings.

In our day it may well be asked what comfort the Church of God can receive. The day is undoubtedly dark, the dark clouds of divine judgments hang low over nations such as our own, once highly favoured of God, but now in a state of active rebellion against Him. It seems to be a time when it is only a message of woe which can be proclaimed. Yet even in such a time the message of Isaiah remains true — "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Even in a situation where there seems to be no prospect of immediate deliverance, it is possible to look beyond the immediate present to the perhaps not too distant future and view the more prosperous state of Zion then and take delight and rejoice in it now. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down."

"Glorious things are spoken of Zion." Days of millennial glory are foretold when Christ shall be exalted in the earth. "Unto Shiloh shall the gathering of the people be." Unbelief would question the reality of the promises, faith embraces them. That faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. What a glorious day in the history of the world will be Israel's return to the house she left! With what joy will the Gentiles receive her. They themselves, once prodigals until they returned to the Father's house, and once aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of promise, cannot but welcome repentant Israel. Israel shall come weeping, for they shall look upon the One whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him. They shall be smitten for their sins, especially for their rejection of their Messiah and shall be smitten because He was smitten for them.

In such a day as ours, when the power of anti-Christ appears to be extending in our own land is it not a comforting prospect to look forward to that day when Christ shall destroy that evil system with the brightness of His coming, and the millions enslaved by it shall have their eyes opened to see its true character? What a comforting prospect for the Church of God is that day when the news of her downfall sounds through the earth — “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.” Until that time comes let the people of God in this dark night of the Church’s history stay themselves upon their God and encourage themselves in the prospect of the fulfilment of the promises concerning Christ’s ultimate triumphal reign in the earth when He will come in the power of His Spirit with Pentecostal showers of blessing.

Sermon

By the Rev. Andrew Gray, Glasgow.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand — Isaiah 53:10.

It is, without all debate and controversy, the great and cardinal mystery of godliness, that God was manifest in the flesh; that He who was the eternal Son of God did become the Son of Man, that we might become the sons of God; He did contract affinity with this lower house, by taking on Him our nature; that so we might contract affinity with that higher house, by taking on His Divine nature. And that which renders this mystery more wonderful is, the unspeakable highness and excellency of that person who did condescend, and the unspeakable lowness and wretchedness of those for whom He did condescend. If we were posed how much we owe to Christ for this, we could not answer; but, upon serious consideration and search, we should say, the more we search, the more we see our obligation to Him.

We may here see, or behold, that infinite wisdom of God, who contrived so noble and precious a way for making up such a distance and breach betwixt Him and us, by bruising such a person, even the Son of God. If God had summoned angels and men to get down and do counsel about this way of our salvation, in what a confusion and silence would they all have been! Surely this should have the general vote of that meeting and assembly, *non liquet*, or they could not tell. But, when

human wisdom did fail, then His Divine wisdom did begin and answer.

We may likewise see here that love that He has manifested towards wretched sinners, and that perfect justice that He has manifested towards His Son. O did even angels as men see such a spectacle, that a most loving Father should command that sword of justice to awake and smite an obedient Son! and, when that knife was coming down on that blessed sacrifice of His soul, there was more in heaven or in earth crying, Hold thy hand! O stand astonished, and wonder at that blessed condescension in Jesus Christ, that He who was God equal to the Father, should have made Himself of no reputation, and taken upon Him the form of a servant! O to see how rigorously spotless justice dealt with spotless innocence! I suppose, if all the redeemed had seen Him hanging upon a tree, and these beautiful lips growing pale, and had seen how He was bruised betwixt these two millstones of God's wrath and indignation, the justice and the omnipotency of God, we might have said, "Surely we have sinned, but what has this spotless Lamb done?" That saying cannot be enough wondered at, in John 18:8 when they were seeking to take Christ; "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

We may likewise here behold the spotless justice of God, that though He was a person in whose lips were no guile, yet, by the imputation of our sin upon Him, we conceive justice did punish Him, as if He had been the greatest reprobate in the world; justice delivered Him up till He had paid the utmost farthing of our debt; and we doubt not but there are some here today for whom He satisfied the Father's wrath: woe is to them eternally that were not among these for whom He satisfied! O but they shall be an excellent and glorious company when they shall be all together! when all these children shall be as olive plants planted about His table! Shall not that be an excellent day, when we shall eat and drink, and shall remember our poverty no more? O Christians, comfort yourselves in the hope and expectation of the approaching of this day, when ye shall rejoice for evermore, and all sorrow and sighing shall flee away. O shall not we rejoice, when all the redeemed of the Lord shall be brought together to that place, and be brought to the King in garments brodered with needle-work? Shall it not be a pleasant day, when they shall come from every corner of the earth, and shall sit down in heaven together with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; when all these your enemies shall be cast into that lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, whose worm never dieth, but their smoke ascendeth for ever and ever? O remember on that day, when ye shall behold Him face to face, and all your shadows shall flee away, and ye shall have the immediate and naked sight of God, and shall

rejoice and delight yourselves in Him through all the ages of eternity, and God shall delight Himself in you for evermore; and shall not that be an excellent day, when such things shall be? But we shall speak to these things in the words read. And,

I. We have in them that fountain from whence the redemption of man doth flow: certainly there was nothing in us the cause of our redemption, but only infinite love in Him. Grace, no doubt, was the ruling power of that council when such an excellent purpose and decree was brought forth; O He is an excellent rule to Himself! Our redemption should have been laid by, if Christ had staid in heaven till He had found something in us to be a cause in our redemption. We have,

II. In the words, the greatness of Christ's sufferings held forth under these two words; *He was bruised, and put to grief*. The first word holds forth the pain of His body, *He was bruised*: and O what a sight it was to see these blessed hands, which never wrought iniquity, to be pierced through; and His precious feet, the sound whereof was never heard in the paths of unrighteousness, to be thrust through; and that blessed side of His pierced with a lance! O what a sight it was, to see the infinite and eternal Son of God so handled for our cause. O Christians, stand astonished at this! And the second word is this, *He put Him to grief*; which comprehends all the sufferings of the soul of Christ. Was it not this insupportable burden of our iniquity which was laid on His blessed back? and when He was drinking the cup, infinite grace subjoined, *I delight to do thy will, O Lord!* But that which makes it mysterious is that which is in the beginning of our Text, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." O! might not the law of nature and of love have entered a protest however? "yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." It was so that He was bruised; it behoved Him so to be.

And the last thing is, the most precious and excellent promises that the Father gives to the Son; which is, the execution of that ancient covenant of redemption. And there are these three promises expressly set down in the words: (1) That He should see His seed, that He should behold His offspring and generation. (2) That He should prolong His days; He should once more have that triumphant song put in His mouth, "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory?" Thus He is now prolonging His days. And (3) that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in His hands. We think there has been a blessed concurrence and holy harmony amongst all the Persons of the blessed Trinity, in accomplishing this blessed and never enough admired work of man's redemption and eternal salvation. Is it not glad tidings from a far country, that there is a

redemption purchased for lost mankind? and ought it not to be as cold water to a thirsty soul? So is it not a great wonder to see sinners sleeping at this news, for whom this redemption is purchased and bought with such a price, even with the blood of Jesus Christ, who is the eternal Son of God, incarnate and made manifest in the flesh? O what a love was this that He had to use, that He should have condescended so far as to come down from heaven to earth; that He could not be alone happy in heaven, but He would come down and be miserable on earth that we might be happy in heaven! Paul found out a fourfold dimension of this love of God to sinners. There are three of them ordinary; the length, and the breadth, and the depth: but there is also the height of that love; and O what a love must that be! Now we shall point at some few considerations that may commend this blessed and precious love of our Lord Jesus Christ in undertaking this design of our redemption and eternal salvation. And,

First, Consider the unspeakable highness of that Person who suffered such things: was it not the Son of God, who was equal with the Father? If it had been an angel who suffered those things, it had not been so admirable and wonderful: but that He was an all-sufficient and self-sufficient Being, who stood not in any need of us, that He should have been bruised for us! O what an admiration may this be to men and angels! that He who is the eternal God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, should have ever conceived such a thing, as to take upon Him our nature, and pay our debt; and that He should have laid down His life for us; and that He should have done this, when we were cast out to the loathing of our persons; O stand astonished, marvel and wonder at this, that even such a thing should have been! O did you ever see two such unequal persons joined together in so near a bond, that we should be married to Him; and that wretched should be advanced to such a high dignity and privilege that we should be espoused to that excellent One, even our Creator? Certainly we may say with Abigail — We are going to be married to the King. O less dignity would have satisfied one; yet, seeing it is the kings' will, I will condescend to it. He has taken us off the dunghill, and clothed us, and will yet clothe us, with the garments of His righteousness; and O is not this a divine and matchless mystery; O Christians, what think ye of this? Has not Christ been very considerate, that even He should have taken such wretches as we are to be His companions and bride? I confess, I wonder that men and women are not swallowed up in a sea of wonder at this matchless consideration, viz. The highness and transcendent excellency of the Person who suffered such things for them.

The *second* consideration is this, the greatness of these pains that He underwent for us: He was *bruised* for us; or, as the word may be rendered, He was *brayed in a mortar*; and O what pain think ye that would be? O what horrible pain was that, when He did sweat great drops of blood, and when He was forced to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and O what a thing was that, that made Him so cry out? O that Jesus Christ, who is the eternal begotten of the Father, wonderful that He should have been forsaken for us! He was forsaken for a moment, that we might not be forsaken eternally. O what would have become of us, if Christ had not condescended so far, as to take upon Him our nature, to satisfy the divine justice of God, and come under the Father's wrath? Certainly we should never have been able, through all the ages of eternity, to have satisfied the least point of the justice of God: we should have lain eternally under the stroke of the naked sword of the justice of God, without any hope of redemption; but blessed be He eternally, that ever such a gracious purpose and design should have dwelt in His blessed breast, as to redeem mankind, who were utterly lost; and to redeem them by His own precious and worthy blood. O our redemption was bought to us at a dear rate! not with gold or silver, or with any corruptible thing, but with the incorruptible blood of Jesus Christ. It behoved Him to be *bruised* and *pierced*, before our redemption could be purchased unto us; and His shame was the greatest pain He had, so that even the sun, against the course of nature, did cast a veil over its face, and, as it were, through shame to see its Creator put to such an open shame, hanging between heaven and earth upon a tree. I confess this can never be enough wondered at, that He who was infinite and of Himself all sufficient, should have stooped so low a step, from heaven to earth, and have suffered the shameful death of the cross! This was so wonderful a spectacle and sight, that the very souls who were departed rose and saw it, and the rocks and mountains did lament, yea, they brake and burst asunder at such a sight, and then the sun did not shine, nor the moon gave her light. Then seeing all this was done to purchase redemption and salvation to sinners, O what shall become of those who neglect this great salvation? Seeing justice dealt so with Jesus Christ, who was but the surety of the debt; what shall it extort from you, when ye shall be gnashing your teeth, and wailing in the bitterness of your souls? O what shall it exact from you, who are the full and principal debtors, when ye shall be lying tormented for ever in that lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, that shall never be quenched? What shall become of you, for whom this satisfaction was not made, and for whom this redemption and everlasting salvation was

not purchased? What shall it make you do, when it caused Jesus Christ to cry out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

The *third* consideration that may commend this blessed and precious love of our Lord Jesus Christ, in undertaking this most noble and excellent design of our redemption and eternal salvation, is this: Consider the lowness and infinite wretchedness of those persons for whom He underwent these sore and unspeakable pains. Was it for an excellent creature He was pleaded to undertake these pains? No, it was for the lost and miserable seed of poor mankind. There are these two things in the consideration that makes it most mysterious: (i) that He should undergo these pains and torments for the dust of His feet. Might not Christ have created other creatures more excellent, and more spiritual in their walk and conversation, letting us go on the way where we were going, for we were running the highway to destruction? O blessed of the Lord, think ye not that a Christian is much indebted to Christ for this? I confess it is a great mystery that Christ did not create, or thought it good to create, other creatures better than we were. (2) The second thing in the consideration of the lowness of the persons that makes this a mystery and wonder is, that He condescended to undergo these unspeakable pains for men and not for angels. If He had done it for angels, and not for us, we might have sunk through the earth for heaviness, when we thought upon these days of eternal torment that were approaching to us: but O blessed be He for ever, that He has purchased a redemption for us rather than for fallen angels, Heb. 2:16, "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham". And when angels were falling, He let them go; but when we were falling, He went in betwixt us and the depth.

The *fourth* consideration that may commend the precious love of Christ to us, for undertaking the great design of our redemption, is this, that woeful impossibility for us to have obtained everlasting life, without His suffering for us, and His coming down from heaven to earth. But there was a threefold impossibility wherewith we were clothed, if He had not graciously undertaken for us: (1) There was an impossibility of the weakness of the law. (2) There was an impossibility of the weakness of nature. (3) The sinfulness of our nature, Rom. 5:6. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." These blessed and precious arms did sweetly dissolve these impossibilities; He rent asunder, and made a new and living way to enter into the holiest of all.

There is this *fifth* consideration, which may commend the precious love

of Christ to us, by undertaking this blessed design of our redemption; and it is this, that there was but one in heaven or in earth that could undertake this business: and this makes it most mysterious. If there had been multitudes of persons to have done it, His love would not have been so singular; but there was but one, the second Person of the blessed Trinity; He only was able and willing. O what a wonder is it, that even there should have been a consultation among the Persons of the blessed Trinity about this work of our eternal redemption! It is more easy to take up all the mysteries of nature than this mystery, how our redemption was brought about; it is more easy to take up the sixty-four languages than this.

The *sixth* consideration to commend the precious love of Christ, in undertaking this blessed design of our redemption is this, that notwithstanding of the many affronts that were put on Him, yet He condescended to satisfy justice for us. O what blessed news was this to our forefather Adam, who had this promise held out to him, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent!" When he was expecting that God would arm all the beasts of the field against him, yet he met with a blessed disappointment of his expectation.

In further prosecuting of this, we shall speak of some advantages from the consideration of Christ's sufferings and lowness. (1) It provokes Christians to the grace of love, I John 4:10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Love takes fire and kindles best at love: and when the love of God and of the creature shall be brought to one, we shall be taken up to the third heavens. (2) The second advantage is, it keeps the grace of God eminently in exercise, II Cor. 5:16. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more." O may we not blush, that we should solace ourselves in the paths of iniquity, and He to have done this for us! (3) The third advantage is this, it keeps the grace of humility eminently in exercise, Luke 23:31. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?" (4) There is a fourth advantage; Hereby ye may be distinct in the knowledge of sin. O what a cruel and monstrous thing must sin be! and yet to know it, is a most excellent thing. And the last advantage is; We may behold much of God in this mystery of our redemption. O Christians, we desire you to be much in the consideration of this glorious mystery, which is so astonishing, that we are told the angels themselves desire to look into it, I Peter 1:12. However at present we must cease from speaking any more of this; but, I am persuaded, it is

the exercise of those that are now above, not to search, but to admire at the boundless mystery of our redemption. Then would ye know the tenor of their praise? It is this; "Blessed be the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world, that He should have taken the crown of thorns and put it on his head, to cause us to have a crown of immortal glory." O Christians, we surely shall not know ourselves that day, when we shall put on that threefold crown upon us, the crown of joy, the crown of righteousness, and the crown of immortal glory; and when we have that triple crown upon our heads, then we shall fall down at His feet and cry out in admiration, "Thou alone, O Lord, art worthy of honour and glory!" Amen.

The Three Offices of Christ

By John Calvin

It is a just observation of Augustine, that although hereticks profess the name of Christ, yet He is not a foundation to them in common with the pious, but remains exclusively the foundation of the Church: because, on a diligent consideration of what belongs Christ, Christ will be found among them only in name, not in reality. Thus the Papists in the present age, although the name of the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, be frequently in their mouths, yet since they are contented with the mere name, and despoil Him of His power and dignity, these words of Paul, "not holding the Head", are truly applicable to them. Therefore, that faith may find in Christ a solid ground of salvation, and so may rely on Him, it is proper for us to establish this principle, that the office which was assigned to Him by the Father consists of three parts. For He was given as a Prophet, a King, and a Priest; though we should derive but little benefit from an acquaintance with these names, unaccompanied with a knowledge of their end and use. For they are likewise pronounced among the Papists, but in a frigid and unprofitable manner, while they are ignorant of what is included in each of these titles. We have before observed, that although God sent prophets, one after another in a continual succession, and never left His people destitute of useful instruction, such as was sufficient for salvation; yet the minds of the pious were always persuaded, that the full light of understanding was not to be expected till the advent of the Messiah. And that this opinion had even reached the Samaritans, notwithstanding they had never been acquainted

with the true religion, appears from the speech of the woman, "When Messiah is come, He will tell us all things." John IV. 25. Nor had the Jews entertained this sentiment without sufficient ground, but believed as they had been taught by infallible oracles. One of the most remarkable is this passage of Isaiah: "Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people:" just as he had before styled Him "the Wonderful Counsellor". In the same manner the Apostle, with a view to display the perfection of the evangelical doctrine, after having said, that "God at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets," adds, that He "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." But because it was the office of all the prophets to keep the Church in a state of suspense and expectation, and also to support it till the advent of the Mediator, we therefore find the faithful complaining, in their dispersion, that they were deprived of this ordinary blessing: "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long." At length when Christ was at no great distance, a time was prefixed for Daniel to seal up the vision and prophecy, not only to authenticate the prediction it contained, but in order that the faithful might patiently bear for a time the want of prophets, because the plenitude and conclusion of all revelations was near at hand.

Now it is to be observed, that the appellation of "Christ" belongs to these three offices. For we know that under the law not only priests and kings, but prophets also, were annointed with holy oil. Hence the celebrated title of "Messiah" was given to the promised Mediator. But though I confess that He was called the Messiah with particular reference to His Kingdom, as I have already shown, yet the prophetic and sacerdotal unctions have their respective places, and must not be neglected by us. The former is expressly mentioned by Isaiah in these words; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon one; because the Lord hath annointed one to preach good tidings unto the meek: He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." We see that He was annointed by the Spirit, to be a preacher and witness of the grace of the Father; and that not in a common manner; for He is distinguished from other teachers, who held a similar office. And here again it must be remarked, that He received this unction, not only for Himself that He might perform the office of a teacher, but for His whole body, that the preaching of the gospel might continually be attended with the power of the Spirit. But it remains beyond all doubt, that by this perfection of doctrine which He has

introduced, He has put an end to all prophecies; so that they who, not contented with the gospel, make any extraneous addition to it, are guilty of derogating from His authority. For that voice, which thundered from heaven, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him," has exalted Him by a peculiar privilege above all others. From the Head this unction is afterwards diffused over the members, according to the prediction of Joel: "Your sons and your daughters, shall prophesy and see visions." But the declarations of Paul, that "He is made unto us wisdom," and that "in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," have rather a different meaning: namely, that beside Him there is nothing useful to be known, and that they who by faith apprehend Him as He is, have embraced the whole infinitude of celestial blessings. For which reason he writes in another place; "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," which is perfectly just, because it is unlawful to go beyond the simplicity of the gospel. And the tendency of the prophetic dignity in Christ is, to assure us that all the branches of perfect wisdom are included in the system of doctrine which He has given us.

Remember Lot!

By Bishop J.C. Ryle

(continued from page 138)

"He lingered." Gen. 19:16.

IV. Let us enquire now what kind of fruit Lot's lingering spirit bore at last.

I would not pass over this point for many reasons, and especially in the present day.

There are not a few who will feel disposed to say, "After all Lot was saved — he was justified — he got to heaven. I want no more. If I do but get to heaven, I shall be content."

Reader, if this be the thought of your heart, just stay a moment, and listen to me a little longer. I will show you one or two things in Lot's history which deserve attention, and may perhaps induce you to alter your mind.

I think it of first importance to dwell upon this subject. I always will contend that eminent holiness, and eminent usefulness, are most closely

connected — that happiness and following the Lord fully go side by side — and that if believers will linger, they must not expect to be useful in their day and generation, or to enjoy great comfort and peace in believing.

Mark then, for one thing, Lot did no good among the inhabitants of Sodom.

Lot lived in Sodom many years. No doubt he had many precious opportunities for speaking of the things of God, and trying to turn away souls from sin. But Lot seems to have effected just nothing at all. He appears to have had no weight or influence with the people who lived around him. He possessed none of that respect and reverence which even the men of the world will frequently concede to a bright servant of God.

Not one righteous person could be found in all Sodom, outside the walls of Lot's home. Not one of his neighbours believed his testimony. Not one of his acquaintances honoured the Lord when he worshipped. Not one of his servants served his master's God. Not one of "all the people from every quarter" cared a jot for his opinion when he tried to restrain their wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn," said they, "and he will needs be a judge." (Gen. 19:9). His life carried no weight. His words were not listened to. His religion drew none.

And truly I do not wonder. As a general rule, lingering souls do no good to the world, and bring no credit to God's cause. Their salt has too little savour to season the corruption around them. They are not epistles of Christ who can be known and read of all. (2 Cor. 3:2). There is nothing magnetic, and attractive, and Christ-reflecting about their ways. Remember this.

Mark another thing. Lot helped no relation towards heaven.

We are not told how large his family was. But this we know — he had a wife and two daughters at least, in the day he was called out of Sodom. If he had not more children besides.

But whether Lot's family was large or small, one thing, I think, is perfectly clear — there was not one among them all that feared God.

When he "went out and spake to his sons-in-law, which married his daughters," and warned them to flee from the coming judgments, we are told, "he seemed to them as one that mocked." (Gen. 19:14). What fearful words those are! It was as good as saying, "Who cares for anything you say?" So long as the world stands, those words will be a painful proof of the contempt with which a lingerer in religion is regarded.

And what was Lot's wife? She left the city in his company, but she did not go far. She had not faith to see the need of such a speedy flight. She

left her heart in Sodom when she began to flee. She looked back from behind her husband, in spite of the plainest command not to do so (Gen. 19:17), and was at once turned into a pillar of salt.

And what were Lot's two daughters? They escaped indeed — but only to do the devil's work. They became their father's tempters to wickedness, and led him to commit the foulest of sins.

In short, Lot stood alone in his family. He was not made the means of keeping one soul back from the gates of hell.

And I do not wonder. Lingered souls are seen through by their own families and, when seen through, despised. Their nearest relations understand inconsistency, if they understand nothing else in religion. They draw the sad, but not unnatural conclusion, "Surely if he believed all he professes to believe, he would not go on as he does." Lingered parents seldom have godly children. The eye of the child drinks in far more than the ear. A child will always observe what you do much more than what you say. Remember this.

Mark a third thing. Lot left no evidence behind him when he died.

We know but little about Lot after his flight from Sodom, and all that we do know is unsatisfactory. His pleading for Zoar, because it was "a little one" — his departure from Zoar afterwards — and his conduct in the cave — all, all tell the same story. All show the weakness of the grace that was in him, and the low state of soul into which he had fallen.

We know not how long he lived after his escape. We know not where he died, or when he died — whether he saw Abraham again — what was the manner of his death — what he said, or what he thought. All these are hidden things. We are told of the last days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David — but not one word about Lot. Oh, what a gloomy death-bed the death-bed of Lot must have been!

The Scripture appears to draw a veil around him on purpose. There is a painful silence about his latter end. He seems to go out like an expiring lamp, and leave an ill savour behind him. And had we not been specially told in the New Testament that Lot was "just" and "righteous", I verily believe we should have doubted whether Lot was a saved soul at all.

But I do not wonder at his sad end. Lingered believers will generally reap according as they have sown. Their lingering often meets them when their spirit is in departing. They have little peace at the last. They reach heaven, to be sure, but they reach it in darkness and storm. They are saved, but "saved so as by fire." (1 Cor. 3:15).

Reader, consider these three things I have just mentioned. Do not misunderstand my meaning. It is amazing to observe how readily people

catch at the least excuse for misunderstanding the things that concern their souls!

I do not tell you that believers who do not "linger" will, as a matter of course, be great instruments of usefulness to the world. Noah preached one hundred and twenty years, and none believed him. The Lord Jesus was not esteemed by His own people, the Jews.

Nor yet do I tell you that believers who do not linger will, as a matter of course, be the means of converting their families and relations. David's children were, many of them, ungodly. The Lord Jesus was not believed on even by his own brethren.

But I do say it is almost impossible not to see a connection between Lot's evil choice and Lot's lingering; — and between Lot's lingering and his unprofitableness to his family and the world. I believe the Spirit meant us to see it. I believe the Spirit meant to make it a beacon to all professing Christians. And I am sure the lessons I have tried to draw from the whole history, deserve serious reflection.

Let me speak a few parting words to all who read this paper, and especially to all who call themselves believers in Christ.

I have no wish to make your hearts sad. I do not want to give you a gloomy view of the Christian course. My only object to give you friendly warnings. I desire your peace and comfort. I would fain see you happy, as well as safe — and joyful, as well as justified. I speak as I have done for your good.

You live in days when a lingering, Lot-like religion abounds. The stream of profession is far broader than it once was, but far less deep in many places. A certain kind of Christianity is almost fashionable now. To belong to some party in the Church of England, and show a zeal for its interests — to talk about the leading controversies of the day — to buy popular religious books as fast as they come out, and lay them on your table — to attend meetings — subscribe to societies — and discuss the merits of preachers — all these are now comparatively easy and common attainments. They no longer make a person singular. They require little or no sacrifice. They entail no cross.

But to walk closely with God, to be really spiritually minded — to behave like strangers and pilgrims — to be distinct from the world in employment of time, in conversation, in amusements, in dress — to bear a faithful witness for Christ in all places — to leave a savour of our Master in every society, to be prayerful, humble, unselfish, meek — to be jealously afraid of sin, and tremblingly alive to our danger from the world — these, these are still rare things. They are not common among those

who are called true Christians, and, worst of all, the absence of them is not felt and bewailed as it should be.

Reader, I give you good counsel this day. Do not turn from it. Do not be angry with me for plain speaking. I bid you give diligence to make your calling and election sure. I bid you not to be slothful — not to be careless, not to be content with a small measure of grace — not to be satisfied with being a little better than the world. I solemnly warn you not to attempt doing what never can be done — I mean, to serve Christ, and yet keep in with the world. I call upon you, and beseech you, I charge you, and exhort you — by all your hopes of heaven, and desires of glory — do not be a lingering soul.

Would you know what the times demand? — the shaking of nations — the uprooting of ancient things — the overturning of kingdoms — the stir and restlessness of men's minds? — They all say — Christian! do not linger!

Would you be found ready for Christ at His second appearing — your loins girded — your lamp burning, yourself bold, and prepared to meet Him? Then do not linger!

Would you enjoy much sensible comfort in your religion — feel the witness of the Spirit within you — know whom you have believed — and not be a gloomy and melancholy Christian? Then do not linger!

Would you enjoy strong assurance of your own salvation, in the day of sickness, and on the bed of death? — Would you see with the eye of faith heaven opening, and Jesus rising to receive you? Then do not linger!

Would you leave great broad evidences behind you when you are gone? — Would you like us to lay you in the grave with comfortable hope, and talk of your state after death without a doubt? Then do not linger.

Would you be useful to the world in your day and generation? — Would you draw men from sin to Christ, and make your Master's cause beautiful in their eyes? Then do not linger!

Would you help your children and relatives towards heaven, and make them say, "We will go with you?" — and not make them infidels and despisers of all religion? Then do not linger!

Would you have a great crown in the day of Christ's appearing, and not be the least and smallest star in glory, and not find yourself the last and lowest in the kingdom of God? Then do not linger!

Oh, let not one of us linger! Time does not — death does not — judgment does not — the devil does not — the world does not. Neither let the children of God linger.

Reader, are you a lingerer? Has your heart felt heavy, and your

conscience sore, while you have been reading these pages? Does something within you whisper, "I am the man"? Reader, listen to what I am saying — How is it with your soul?

If you are a lingerer, you must just go to Christ at once and be cured — you must use the old remedy. You must bathe in the old fountain. You must turn again to Christ and be healed. The way to do a thing is to do it. Do this at once.

Think not for a moment your case is past recovery. Think not because you have been long living in a dry and heavy state of soul, that there is no hope of revival. Is not the Lord Jesus Christ an appointed Physician for the soul? Did He not cure every form of disease? Did not He cast out every kind of devil? Did He not raise poor backsliding Peter, and put a new song in his mouth? Oh, doubt not, but earnestly believe that He will yet revive His work within you! Only turn from lingering, and confess your folly, and come — come at once to Christ. Blessed are the words of the prophet: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" — "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding." (Jerem. 3:13, 22).

Reader, remember the souls of others, as well as your own. If at any time you see any brother or sister lingering, try to awaken them — try to arouse them — try to stir them up. Let us all exhort one another as we have opportunity. Let us provoke unto love and good works. Let us not be afraid to say to each other, "Brother, or sister, have you forgotten Lot? Awake! and remember Lot — Awake, and linger no more."

Church Life Examined

By Rev. Malcolm MacInnes, Toronto.

There is considerable confusion as to what is the nature and function of the Christian Church. Some look on it as a social agency for the performance of certain 'religious duties' such as baptism, marriage, or funeral services. Some view it as the place for formal worship confined to set-hours on the Lord's Day or even mid-week. There are others, who are born-again Christians, but who look on the church merely as a place of worship where their own spiritual temperature will be adjusted for a short period. Are all, or any, of these right? I do not think so! There is a sense in which aspects of the church's work touches on all of these, but not one of them defines adequately the Biblical truths regarding the church. Even evangelicals of this decade have suffered from a shift in emphasis from

propositional religion to an experience-oriented one. It is true that saving religion is to be experienced, but it must be experience related to and governed by Scripture revelation. Religion can be plentiful but not powerful. That is the situation prevailing in Canada and the United States. Present-day evangelicals have been likened to 'a lion on the loose, but no one fears the lion'! Surely the situation is very different from that which existed with the early Christian church. Then both civil and ecclesiastical authorities felt that they had a power to reckon with.

If the Christian church is to follow the teaching and example of Christ, it must understand the spiritual, the moral, and the social condition of the times. Jesus charged the religious and secular world with their imperfections. His approach covered the wide spectrum of human and divine relationships. His answers demonstrate principles of truth which are adequate for the present crisis in both church and civil life. Jesus corrected the distortions and perversions of the religious world by applying these principles. The same task confronts the church today. The principles are revealed in Scripture, or 'by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture', and it is the duty of the church to discover and apply them.

'The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him'. (Shorter Catechism 2).

There is danger of limiting evangelicalism to adherence to an orthodox creed, without regard for the practical outworking of the Gospel message. This is to deny the relevance of Scripture to the present situation. It fails to demonstrate 'Scripture-truth-in-action'. On the other hand, the Epistle of James challenges the Christian to demonstrate faith by a life of 'works'. The primary duty of the church, and of those who are part of it, is to discover afresh the Biblical basis of faith, and to apply its principles to the situations in life. The spotlight of the Word of God must be turned on the hearts and lives of men and women, and they must be called to repentance. The life must show that the soul is alive to God. The spiritual mind cannot be hid. It ought not to be considered an optional-extra for Christians, or something of less importance than adherence to a creed or a profession of faith. The works will show that the faith is real. Justification and sanctification may be distinguished, but they ought not to be divorced. Justification is an act; sanctification is an on-going work based on that act. Christian living must not only be based upon union to Christ, it must constantly follow the union. The experiential dimensions of the Christian life must parallel the norms of Scripture.

For example, love to the Lord Jesus and trust in Him for salvation must characterise every true Christian. Persistence in a course of conduct which is clearly condemned in Scripture is a blatant contradiction of any claim to Christian discipleship. The large influx of sinners to the kingdom of Christ through the 'decisions' and 'conversion experiences' of mass evangelism has produced a superficial Christianity. Walter Chantry has discerningly observed that 'the products of modern evangelism are often sad examples of Christianity. They make a profession of faith, and then continue to live as the world. Decisions for Christ mean very little'. The 'Invitation System', characteristic of many evangelistic campaigns, has contributed largely to the present defective life and witness of the church. The practice of inviting people who wish to receive Christ to come forward to the front cannot be shown to have warrant from Scripture. Too often the impression is given that 'coming forward' is tantamount to receiving Christ. Leighton Ford, one of the exponents of the Invitation System, advocates such appeals as 'God is willing, Come now; Come here'. The most popular description of 'the Invitation' is an 'act of commitment to Christ'. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Campaign practices this method, and although it is asserted that little knowledge and no emotion is needed to respond, packed appeals are repeated, equating the distance to the front as the distance the sinner is from Christ. Iain Murray has asserted that 'In all this there is no pressure beyond the solemn insistence on the one fact that those who want to receive Christ must come to the front'. Most often, if not always, those who come forward are spoken to as those who have committed their lives to God. The emotional impact on the observer is compounded as he sees others proceed to the front. Psychologists rightly contend that such a response can be obtained on issues which are not related to Christianity. The outcome is that when the various elements which have contributed to the emotional impact are removed, the person is back where he was initially. This explains the 'falling away' of so many who 'decided for Christ'. Charles Finney was the first to adopt this method in evangelism, and with him there was the loss of some of the theological depth which had been characteristic of earlier periods. Finney narrowed down his message to one point, the point of accepting Christ. Asahel Nettleton, whose ministry was greatly blessed in revivals, was critical of Finney's message and methods, and of the adverse effects these had on the churches in the area. Nettleton hoped that the writings of Jonathan Edwards would 'supply the deficiency in Finney's sermons'. Too often the concern seems to have been 'strength in names and numbers'. Heads are counted, and the statistics become the great

encouragement and challenge for the next crusade. What is needed rather is conviction based on the Truth of God. Only then will a strong theology emerge. The observation has been made that much of the church's literature is experience-oriented. Christians must become more objective in their thinking, having God and revealed truth in heart and mind. Only in this way will the literature become theological. The present subjectivism resembles too strongly the self-centredness of those who are not the disciples of Christ. Too often the church's message has failed to communicate a 'sense of the sacred'. There is a spiritual vacuum in society and often also in the preached message. In its worship the church needs to become concerned for the presence of God. Then will those who worship begin to truly experience that 'This is the house of God, and the gate of heaven'. People need to have restored a sense of that sacred order by which they ought to live. Expository preaching through the Bible will ensure that a variety of subjects are raised which might not otherwise be explicitly dealt with. The Christian and the Christian Church are intended, for the present, to be in the world. This is where Christ walked and talked, and this is where the individual Christian, and the Church collectively, is to live out the truths and principles of the Scripture. Jesus did not isolate Himself from the immediate interests and concerns of people. He knew that there was evil in the world, but He did also use the earth's legitimate resources to advance the interests of His kingdom. It is not possible, nor is it Biblical to totally divorce the Christian life from society. The Saviour's example and teaching require that the Christian be in the world as salt and as light (Matthew 5 v 13-16). Salt is to preserve and to prevent deterioration; light is to disseminate knowledge. Society is not the source of sin — it only reflects the sin from the human heart. A blanket rejection of all society will not ensure a holy life; nor will an undiscerning conformity to society automatically win souls to Christ. Our concern must reach out to others. There is the second great commandment which requires that we love our neighbour. The Lord Jesus made the point very clear when He told about the Good Samaritan. A priest and a Levite passed by the man whose need was obvious. The following quotation makes practical application of the principles in the commandment and in the story — 'love demands that I use what is mine . . . my neighbour cannot demand it by civil right, but by divine command I cannot withhold it if my neighbour's need cannot be met with otherwise'. The concern for others must be more than for their physical needs. According to the Epistle of James, we must attempt to meet these physical needs. If we do not even try, we sin; but if we do only that which

is addressed to the body we have a social Gospel, and souls are left to perish. The Christian needs to be 'missionary-minded'. Churches can have missions in foreign lands and be indifferent to the 'Christless community' in which their own people live. The interest in 'missions' is then limited to 'prayers and offerings'. Both of these are important, but more is involved in the 'mission' of the church in the world. We may find it easier to give money than to say 'Here am I, send me'. If the Christian finds it easier to give his money than to give himself, his time, and his talents, he has not yet resembled his Master, Who gave Himself.

There is no area of human experience here on earth to which the principles of Scripture do not apply, and therefore the Christian church and its individual members should seek to understand the basic principles involved. In family life the need for Biblical instruction is staggering. Broken homes, 'single parents', and common-law relationships have become the norm. God is dishonoured, individuals are hurt, the church suffers, and society is fragmented. The only remedy is the application of the teaching of Scripture. The morals and standards of the Bible must once more be implanted so that the family members will conform to what is right. The Christian influence in education is being eroded, not because Christianity has nothing to offer, but because the Christian community has lost hold of its former place. Christianity and true knowledge are mutually supportive. There is no conflict between the Bible and science properly defined. It becomes part of the Christian obligation to seek that, by God's grace, society will discover that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Christian teachers may be expected to represent the Church's objectives in that area, and, at the same time, keep the Church informed of significant changes which may occur there.

The Christian is a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and his whole life-style is to be according to the teaching and example of the Master. 'Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline; cheap grace is grace without discipleship'. Christ's demands for discipleship are high, with the end in view that God will be glorified (John 15 v 8). The Christian life is a life of freedom, but it is defined freedom. It is the freedom of being in the yoke with Christ; the freedom of self-denial. For the restoration of the former glory of the Church the work of the Holy Spirit is needed in rich measure. Those who occupy the pulpits must discover in the Gospel the power of God unto salvation, and proclaim its whole message. The people who hear the word preached, must discover what it is to walk in close fellowship with God, what it is to 'put off the old man, with his deeds, and to put on the new

man'. The teaching of Jesus, and the proven experience of God's saints in all ages, indicates that this can be achieved only by the constant and humble use of the 'secret place' for prayer and fellowship with God.

'But though, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly'. (Matthew 6 v 6).

The Conversion of the Jews

By Ergatees

"With the destiny of Israel has always been linked that of the universal race of man. The casting away of them hath been the reconciling of the world, and the receiving of them will be life from the dead." So said the saintly Rev. John Duncan, LL.D., in one of his addresses on the subject of the evangelisation of the Jews at the Free Church General Assembly in Edinburgh in May 1860. His profound knowledge of Hebrew and of oriental languages of which he was professor, and his love for the Jews, earned him the title of "Rabbi" Duncan.

The conversion of the Jews to Christ their Messiah is recorded and set forth in both the Old and New Testaments. "For I would not, brethren," writes the Apostle Paul in Romans 11, "that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved" etc (v. 25, 26).

"By all Israel here we are not to understand the whole Church of God, all the elect consisting of Jews and Gentiles. It is true that in Gal. 6:16 and elsewhere, the word Israel is applied in that general sense to the Church of God. But in this chapter Israel means the nation and people of the Jews. "All" is used as in many other instances in a general way and here indicates a very great number, and in a manner the whole Jewish nation in a full body." So writes the eminent Netherlands divine, Hermann Witsius D.D. (1636-1708), Professor of Divinity in the Universities of Utrecht and Leyden.

"They depart from the apostles' meaning" he continues, "who by 'all Israel' understand the mystical Israel, or the people of God, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, without admitting the conversion of the whole Jewish nation to Christ, in the sense we here mentioned. Notwithstanding, this may be confirmed by the following arguments. First, the apostle

speaks of the Israel, to whom he ascribes his own pedigree v. 1. whom he calls his flesh, that is, his kindred, v. 14, and the natural branches v. 21, whom he constantly distinguishes from the Gentiles; to whom he testifies, blindness has happened. All this is applicable to Israel properly so called. Secondly, he lays before us a mystery, but it was no mystery, that a very few Jews were converted to Christ together with the Gentiles; for we have daily instances of that. Thirdly, he reminds the Gentiles not to exalt over, or despise the Jews, from this argument, that, as they themselves were now taken in among the people of God, so, in like manner, the Jews were in due time to be taken in again. But if the apostle meant that the body of the Jewish nation was to continue in their hardness; and but a few of them to be saved, who, joined to the Gentiles would form a mystical Israel, the whole of the discourse would be more adapted to the commendation of the Gentiles, than of the Israelites; and encourage rather than depress the pride of the Gentiles. Fourthly, as the fall and diminishing of Israel, v. 12, and their casting away, v. 15, are to be understood, so likewise the receiving and saving them, for here the rules of a just opposition must be observed. But the fall, diminishing and casting away of Israel are to be understood of the generality of the Jewish nation; therefore the receiving and saving of Israel in like manner.

“To this restoration of Israel shall be joined the riches of the whole church, and as it were, life from the dead (Rom. 11:12). “Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more the fulness?” and v. 15 “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”. The apostle intimates that much greater and more extensive benefits shall redound to the Christian Church from the fulness and restoration of the Jews, than did to the Gentiles from their fall and diminution; greater, I say intensely, or with respect to degrees, and larger with respect to extent.

As to intenseness or degrees, it is supposed that about the time of the conversion of the Jews, the Gentile world will be like a dead person, in a manner almost as Christ describes the church of Sardis, Rev. 3:1, 2 namely, both that light of saving knowledge, and that fervent piety, and that lively and vigorous simplicity of ancient Christianity, will in a course of years be very much impaired. Many nations, which had formerly embraced the gospel with much zeal afterwards almost to be extinguished by the venom of Mahomedanism, Popery, Libertinism and Atheism would verify this prophecy; but upon the restoration of the Jews these will suddenly arise, as out of the grave; a new light will shine upon them, a new

zeal be kindled up; the life of Christ be again manifested in His mystical body, more lively, perhaps, and vigorous than ever.

Agreeably to which James has said, Act 15: 15-17 "And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." The reparation of the fallen tabernacle of David signifies the restoration of true and spiritual worship among the Israelites. And when that shall come to pass, the rest of mankind, who never gave up their names to Christ, and the nations, upon which His name was formerly called, but which by their falling away lost the benefit of the Gospel will then with emulation seek the Lord.

"And what is more evident than that prophecy in Isaiah? The prophet in Ch. 59:20, 21, having foretold the restoration of Israel, according to the apostle's commentary, immediately, in Ch. 60:1 exclaims, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," and in v. 3 "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" etc (The Economy of the Covenants Book 4, ch. 15).

Rich Gleanings from "Rabbi Duncan"

At several General Assemblies Dr Duncan delivered highly animated and elevated addresses, marked by genius and spiritual power, on the subject of the evangelisation of the Jews. Six of these addresses from 1857-1867 are given in "Rich Gleanings After the Vintage from Rabbi Duncan" edited by the late Rev. James S. Sinclair, Glasgow. The following are extracts linked together.

"How miserable, yet how deeply interesting the situation of Israel after the flesh! And how deeply mysterious the procedure of God's adorable providence towards them! The spirit of the Lord preserveth among them the holy books of the law and the prophets, and thus maintaineth even in the synagogue a constant, though ever resisted testimony for Christ! They are perpetually conversant with what is spiritual (for the law is spiritual) though only after a carnal manner, they themselves being carnal. Wonders (glorious things) are still before their eyes, but their eyes are not opened to behold them. The Spirit is present by the Word, a loud reprover, but unheard for His saving influences are for a period judicially removed. Christ is present by the Word, for the whole of the Old Testament is full of Him — all day long stretching forth His hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people. (Rom. 10:23). For behold God hath

laid in Zion a stumbling-block and a rock of offence; and whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed." (Rom. 9:33). What a lesson does this afford to us, how insufficient the best means and noblest privileges are to benefit a people, unless the gracious presence and inward operation of the Holy Spirit accompany them! What a warning that we do nothing to grieve and provoke that good Spirit, especially by refusing to behold the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ! And as regards the Jews themselves, how astonishingly has a system of means, fitted and destined to prepare them for the ultimate reception of the kingdom of God, been, during all the fierce anger of the Lord, kept up among them! How wide in one respect and yet in another, how small is the separation between the church and the synagogue! Let but the veil which is between the face of Moses, and the heart of Israel, and which has been removed from Moses' face in Christ, be removed also from their heart, and the synagogue immediately becomes the church; for if they believe Moses, they will believe Christ. But remove this veil no creature can; it is the work of God's Spirit solely and entirely. God will not give His glory to another. The residue of the Spirit is with Him and it will be bestowed in answer to believing, earnest, importunate, persevering prayer. Oh then pray — pray without ceasing, that the salvation of Israel may come out of Zion.

"I would call on you to remember the days of old, when Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of His increase, at the time when God left all nations, our own fathers among them, to walk in the way of their own hearts. How bright was then the beauty over whose departure for a time, we mourn! He showed not such favour to any nation, for they had not known His judgments. Think on all the exalted privileges conferred on them by Him who had mercy on them — the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God. Think that theirs are the fathers; and greatest of all, that of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all blessed for ever. Think of our obligations to them. When we were poor aliens they thought on us, they prayed for us: "We have a little sister and she hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for?" (Songs 8:8). "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all (heathen) nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah." (Ps. 67:1-5). Into their olive tree we have been ingrafted and partake of the root and fatness; on the skirts of a Jew we hang for life

everlasting. "Salvation is of the Jews." Think of the benefit still in prospect for ourselves, to whom the receiving of them shall be as life from the dead.

Meanwhile, let us pray, hope, work and wait. Israel waited long for us; longer for us than we have yet had to wait for him. He waited, for he had a promise that we should be brought; and so we have been. We also have a promise concerning him. It cannot fail; and we shall yet receive him. How glorious shall the consumation be when it comes! The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, as the light of seven days, when the Lord shall bind up the breach of His people, and heal "the stroke of their wound."

O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall sing. Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people, for,

He mindful of his grace and truth

To Israel's house hath been;

And the salvation of our God

All ends of the earth have seen.

(Ps. 98:3)

Notes and Comments

Falkland Islands Conflict

Owing to the seizure of the Falkland Islands by Argentina, and owing to the failure of diplomatic means to resolve the crisis Britain was forced into armed conflict with Argentina. The Prime Minister has made quite clear to the Argentine Government that Argentine forces must be removed from these islands before any discussion on their future can be entered into.

The outbreak of hostilities in any part of the world is a serious matter in view of the divided state of the nations of the world. It is to be hoped that the present conflict can be speedily resolved and the Falkland Islanders left free to pursue their way of life unmolested by outside forces. At the same time it is proper for us as a nation to ask the question why this trouble has broken out and what purpose the Lord has in it for us as a nation. The answer may not be far to seek.

Anti-Sabbath Legislation

The Lord's Day Observance Society is organising a nationwide petition against a Bill due to come before the House of Commons. The Bill would

make it legal for any shop to trade on the Lord's Day. Much legislation of this nature has been before Parliament already and some of it has failed to obtain endorsement by the Lords and Commons. We trust that this Bill will meet the same fate. The increasing secularisation of the Sabbath is one of the sad features of our day and anything that can be done to hinder it is to be welcomed.

Illegitimate Births

Dundee obtained the dishonour this year of having the highest illegitimate birth rate in Scotland at 20 per cent, just slightly ahead of Glasgow's 19.5 per cent. These figures are indicative of the low standard of moral conduct prevalent today and are indeed alarming. Yet the cause is not far to seek when we consider how moral standards have been under attack for over two decades. This has encouraged promiscuous behaviour and men and women have lost sight of their accountability to God. Only a revival of genuine religion can bring the people of the nation back to Christian standards of decency and godliness.

Fornaci di Barga

In the late summer of last year I spent some four weeks visiting the little group in this Tuscan village with whom we, as a Church, maintain contact. It was a pleasant experience to renew acquaintance with them and especially to enjoy again Gospel fellowship with Emelia Campani and her mother Irene. Readers of this magazine will know these two women as the back-bone of the Lord's cause in Fornaci. The situation there I found, in general, much as before. There are some grounds for encouragement in the work, and much reason for thankfulness to the Lord for maintaining the witness of his people in a very dark place.

As Rev John Tallach has indicated in previous articles Emilia is a meek, humbleminded and deeply-exercised Christian. Suffering from a chronic nervous condition she is particularly liable to some of Satan's most cruel assaults. She gets easily downcast and often doubts the reality of her own experience. Speaking of this one evening she said, "One thing I am sure of is that there is no merit in me. I do not think there is any merit in my doubts either. They are sin. But salvation is of the Lord." While her standing in grace is seldom clear to herself, Emelia's evident love to the Saviour and his cause and her longing for the conversion of the Christless about her, make plain to others the reality of grace in her heart. The following passage (translated) from one of her letters is typical of her exercises:

"I hope and pray to the Lord that He will bless His work in the Gospel, and all those who seek its advancement. I myself am passing through a distressing period in which I do not have the same fervency that I have felt at other times — perhaps this will be because I do not read the Scriptures enough? I do pray that the Lord would cause his face to shine on me and bless me because of the merits of Jesus . . .

"It is one of those nights when I cannot sleep. I am always terribly tired, especially now that mother cannot do so much to help me . . . Just before returning upstairs I wanted to read *Daily Light* for the 9th of April and I read "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee." The whole page is appropriate to my state of mind and the words bring me comfort. I do not have assurance, but I hope that the most precious blood of Jesus has redeemed even me and brought me near to the Father. May it be so also for my family, and oh that it were so even for the whole world . . ."

Irene, Emelia's elderly mother, has a bright, cheerful personality. Her strength is a considerable support to Emelia. Unable now to do the work she used to do she spends a good deal of time reading the Bible for which she has a very evident love. It will be understood that in the Roman Catholic environment in which they live, these women encounter many difficulties. They are no strangers to the persecution which is the lot of "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus." One day when her daughter was out Irene spoke to me of how the world no longer held anything for her. She would be glad at any time to go to be with Christ. "My only concern," she said with tears, "is the thought of leaving Emelia alone in this terrible situation. But I know that the Lord would take care of her." Pray for these women that the Lord would strengthen and preserve them and bless their witness to many around.

As yet, Emelia's husband Claudio gives no evidence of a saving change. He does show real kindness in his home and was present quite regularly at the services. There are, however, many obstacles in his way. Some time ago his aged mother threatened him that if he should "change his religion" as his wife and mother-in-law had done, she would completely disown him as her son. How essential is the power of grace to deal with pressures like these! The three children in the family, Renzo, Dario and Simonetta are growing up fast. While I was there Renzo was waiting to receive his call-up for a period of military service, Dario was hoping to get a job in the same local factory in which his father works, while Simonetta, the youngest in the family, is still at school. She, in particular, showed real attentiveness at the services and does seem to have a sincere interest in

the Word. Claudio and the children, too, need much prayer that they may be made willing to take up the cross and follow Christ.

From time to time, as their work permitted, Grazia and Laura Marchi, whom many readers will remember, were present at the meetings. It was encouraging to see indications of renewed interest on their part.

Also encouraging was the regular attendance of Giorgina and Arturo Mazzei. This was a marked change from previous visits. Arturo, who has always been a very staunch R.C., was less argumentative than I had found him previously and more than once he seemed quite affected. I could not but feel that the Spirit was striving with him. May he be graciously convinced of the truth, so unpalatable to the natural man, that "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:8, 9.

Miriana, the friend of Emelia of whom Mr Tallach has written before, was at a few of the meetings. She and her husband and little daughter Tania were on holiday during part of my stay so I did not see as much of her as I would otherwise have done. Miriana is a very interesting person. Over the years she has been growing increasingly disillusioned with what she sees as the hypocrisy and formalism of Roman Catholicism. She feels that "true religion simply cannot be like that." This has led her to look at various alternatives. She had recently visited a commune in which a group of young Catholics, similarly disillusioned, had come together to seek to live in the simple, communal life-style of the early disciples. It soon became clear, however, that Mariolatry (an evil much encouraged by the present Pope) was an essential part of the set-up. Miriana understood the wrongness of such a practice, and could not associate with them. While Miriana has considerable interest in the Word of God and acknowledges as true the Gospel she has heard preached in the Campani home, it is evident that the world still reigns in her heart. Emelia's concern for her friend can be seen in the following extract from a letter. Mr Tallach had written asking her to find out if Miriana would be willing to maintain contact with us in Scotland by correspondence. Emelia replied:

"Dearest friends, I hope you are all well . . . We are fairly well, thanks to God, except that mother is slowly recovering from bronchitis and still has a cough; but I am glad that she is better than she was.

My delay in writing was because I did not have an opportunity to speak to Miriana; but one day I saw her from the window and asked her. She said Yes: but as we talked I realised that she was not really

happy about it, because she said that one doesn't want to get involved, that she would have to tell her husband about it; and then she said that, with the shop, it is important not to offend the customers. I was very upset about this, but I knew that I should not insist. In any case nothing is changed among us . . ."

It is our hope that what Emelia has written will encourage readers to remember Miriana in prayer. The Lord is able to "break in pieces the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder."

One of the Sabbaths during my visit we were glad to have with us at the services Mr Kenneth MacKenzie and Mr John Lewis from Fearn. With a friend they were on business in the north of Italy and motored to Fornaci for the weekend. Their presence and fellowship was a real source of encouragement to us all and especially to Emelia and her mother.

The Church in Fornaci is still very small in numbers. In many ways it is a wonder that the Lord has a church there at all. Let us seek to be diligent on their behalf at a Throne of Grace, pleading the Lord's own promise, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time." Is. 60:22.

During my short stay I was able to pay a brief visit to Finale where I met Franco Maggiotto and other members of the Fede Viva committee. Despite various difficulties the work there continues to make progress. It was especially encouraging to see a completed translation into Italian of the Canons of the Synod of Dort and a new issue of the Fede Viva magazine which, for a number of reasons, had not appeared for some time. The standard of material in this magazine is very high and it is calculated to do much good. May the Lord prosper this and other aspects of Franco's work.

Mr Tallach has visited Italy since I was last there and may his many labours in connection with the cause of the Gospel in Italy be richly owned of God.

Postscript News has just arrived that Emelia has given birth to a baby daughter. In the Lord's good providence, both mother and child are well.

A.M.

Church Notes

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 4th June at 2.40 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 8th June at 11 a.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 15th June at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 15th June at 6 p.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 22nd June at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 29th June at 12 noon.

Stirling Communion

A Communion will be held at Stirling on the second Sabbath of June (D.V.). The services will be held in the Tolbooth, Broad Street, Stirling and will be as follows:—

Thursday and Friday 7.30 p.m., Saturday 3 p.m., Sabbath 11.15 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday 7.30 p.m.

Rev. D.B. MacLeod, Dingwall is expected to assist (D.V.).

Reply from Foreign Office

Dear Mr MacLeod

I have been asked to reply to your further letter of 8 March to Lord Carrington about the Pope's visit to Britain and about the upgrading of diplomatic relations with the Holy See.

There is in our view an important distinction to be drawn between the Pope as Head of the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope in his temporal capacity as Head of the Vatican State. As I have stated before, we are satisfied that the Bill of Rights did not preclude the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Holy See as a secular state, and it is in his capacity as the Head of that State that the Pope will be received by The Queen, just as she was herself received by him during Her visit to Rome in October 1980.

You asked for clarification of the circumstances under which the Pope is coming to Britain. The Pope was invited by the Roman Catholic hierarchies in England and Wales, and in Scotland, to pay a pastoral visit to the Roman Catholic Community in Briatin. Her Majesty's Government have welcomed the visit, but have not been involved in the arrangements for it. Nor as far as I know have the Jesuits. Nevertheless, the Pope will be afforded the courtesy and protection due to any visiting Head of State.

You mention in your letter that the majority of EEC countries are predominantly Roman Catholic but you both fail to mention those, like the Netherlands, that are not, and leave out of account the more than 100 other countries which already hold full diplomatic relations with the Holy See at Ambassadorial level. Of those that can be described as Christian countries, many are not predominantly Roman Catholic. But I am not

aware that any of them have found that maintenance of full diplomatic relations with the Holy See has been harmful to their national Churches.

Yours sincerely,

D A S Gladstone, Western European Department

Correction: In the May issue please delete the first six lines on page 156 which were inserted in error. We apologise for this printer's error.

Acknowledgement of Donations

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

Dominions & Overseas Fund: Friend, N.W.S., £116.74 towards spreading the Gospel in Italy.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Auckland Congregation, £381.77

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

Achmore: Tolsta Friend, £5 towards Communion expenses.

Bracadale: In Church plate £100; In Church plate £100, both for Manse and Church repairs; Anon £80; Anon £100, both for Fabric Fund.

Dingwall: S.C., Invergordon £10 for Sust. Fund.

Dundee: R.M.K., Blackpool £10; J.M.K., London £10, both for Dundee Congr. Funds per Rev. D.J. MacDonald.

Fort William: Friend, Fort William (Envelope in plate, Psalm 60:4) £10 for Minibus Fund; Skye Friend £20; Two Communion Friends £20; D. MacD., Claggan £5, both for Sust. Fund, last three per Rev. J.A. MacDonald.

Glasgow: M.G. £10; D.McL. £10; Anon £10; Anon £10; In every loving memory of Hamish B. Grant — Mother £100 per Rev. D. MacL., all for Bus Fund; Anon £5; Anon £10, both for Sust. Fund; Anon £5; Mr Fraser £10, both for Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund; Mrs S. Mack £7; A.M. £10, both for Congr. Fund, both per Rev. D. MacL.; Anon £100; Anon £5, both for Spastic Coll; Anon £5 for Barnoldswick.

Inverness: Collection at T.B.S. Meeting £388.72 for Trinitarian Bible Society.

Lochcarron: For September, October and November 1981 (envelopes in plate) for Sust. Fund £9; for Minister's Car Fund £9; In memory of a loved one per Rev. J.W.R.; In coll. plate 21:3:82 £10 for Aged and Inform minister's fund.

North Tolsta: In memory of a dear Mother £5 (Church Plate); Canadian Friend £30 per M. MacIver, both for Congr. Purposes; Mrs MacL., School Rd, in memory of my beloved husband £20; Friend of the Cause £5; In memory of a beloved husband £20 (last three in Church plate); In loving memory of my beloved husband and dear father £20 per J. Murray, last four for Comm. Expenses; In memory of our beloved parents £15 for Church Heating; Friend £10 for Manse Heating (In Church plate).

Raasay: M. MacL., Inverness £5; MacL., Suishnish £10; Friend, late of Raasay £5 all for Sust. Fd and all per J.M. MacLeod; Friend, Raasay £1 for Property Fund.

South Harris: Miss R. Morrison, Northton £30 for Sustentation Fund; J.M.J. Inverness £20 for Northton Mission House, per A. MacCuish.

Stornoway: J. MacD., Dun Eisdan £10 for Bibles per Rev. J. MacLeod.