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A Day in Thy Courts

The Psalmist had to say, "A day in Thy Courts is better than a thousand", and when he said it he meant it. He knew what it was to worship God in His sanctuary and to rejoice in that worship and service. He did not esteem the service of God a drudgery. To enter God's house with praise was his delight. It was not the outward worship of the formalist he gave but that inward heart worship and service which is pleasing in God's sight. He knew what it was to worship God in spirit and in truth. It was in His sanctuary particularly that God, the God of Israel, made Himself known, so to seek the Lord in His sanctuary was his delight. The Lord had made known that He delighted more in the gates of Sion than in all the dwellings of Jacob. There, then, would David be found, worshipping at His footstool.

How clear these things are from David's own expressions in the Psalms. It is to His own experience he gives utterance when he says, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." These were deep longings after the worship and service of the Living God. In another Psalm he says, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Jerusalem was the city to which the tribes went up, particularly at the three main feasts of Israel. It was the city that the Lord had chosen out of all the cities of Israel to put His Name there. There He set up His worship, first in the sanctuary and afterwards in the temple.

When David was far away from the sanctuary of God what longings and desires he had after it and what remembrances of former mercies and blessings received there. With longing he says, "My soul thirsteth

for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God." He remembers former occasions of blessing in saying, "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day." In the wilderness of Judah we find him saying again, "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary." When the house of God was out of sight it was not out of mind with the Psalmist. Neither will it be with the true Israel of God.

We may be ready to say that David was an exception. He was an outstanding man of God. Does he not speak of himself as "the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel"? Surely we cannot be expected to have the same spiritual experience as he had or the same longings or desires after God's sanctuary. It is true that David was one to whom the Lord gave gracious manifestations of Himself, but these were given, not only for the good of David's soul, but for the good of the Church in all ages. What is recorded of David's experience in the Scriptures of truth is not set down there as something unattainable by the children of God in every age and generation but as that which the people of God may experience in their own soul and so put their humble 'Amen' to what David was saying in his day. When grace is implanted in the soul in a day of the Lord's power, in that day the seed of every grace and every good desire is implanted in the soul. Longings after God's house, His worship and service are only the fruit of that grace that has been implanted. If these longings are wholly absent, we must question whether grace has been implanted. Where these longings are very weak, then what need there is that these longings would be stirred up and strengthened. If these longings are strong then what need there is to ask the Lord to preserve them and even extend them.

How may longings after God's house be strengthened where they are weak? Ultimately it is the Spirit of God who must increase the work of grace in the soul. He it is who implants longing desires in the soul as it is His also to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to our souls. For our part we are to guard against whatever would weaken our desires after God's house. Giving place to worldliness, carnality and sin will soon blunt the edge of longings and desires after God's house. If we are to have lively affections God-ward then we must crucify the flesh with its

affections and lusts. We must die unto sin and live unto righteousness more and more. Remembrance of former seasons of the Lord's power in His sanctuary should also stir up renewed desires after living communion and fellowship with God in the courts of His own house. Let us grieve over everything that has caused the Lord to go far from His sanctuary and hide His face from us, and let us plead with Him to make the place of His feet glorious.

Sermon

by Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale.

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Matth. 11:6.

II. I now come in the second place to notice a little concerning what is here said of those who are not offended in Christ. He Himself tells us that they are blessed.

(1) They are blessed in their state. They are now in a state of justification. They were by nature in a state of sin and misery, condemned already and waiting till the sentence of condemnation would be executed upon them. They were under condemnation, being under the guilt of Adam's first sin, and because of their own personal sins of omission and commission against the holy law of God, together with the great sin of despising God's great and glorious remedy to meet with their lost and ruined condition, for "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John III.18. But now, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. Their state of condemnation has given way to a state of justification, and this is declared in the court of Heaven by God Himself in the presence of the angels where there is joy over one sinner that repents. It is also declared in the court of their own conscience, so that they are now enabled to sing a new song, even a song of praise unto God. Their state now is a state in which there is no condemnation, and no possibility of laying anything to their charge of which God will take notice against them. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. VIII. I. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is

even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." verses 33, 34.

In this blessed state they are new creatures. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Cor. v.17. They have a new heart and a change of nature, for they are now make partakers of the nature of holiness. Their understanding, will, affections and conscience clearly prove that they are new creatures. All things visible and invisible have become new to them, and their attitude towards all God's creatures manifest this wonderful change, for they seek now grace to use, and not abuse, what God has provided, and in the use of His provision they seek His blessing, and seek to have thankful hearts to Him for His goodness in His providence and in His grace.

Again they are blessed in their state for they are brought nigh to God, and brought to taste of the blessings of the "man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." Psalm LXV. 4 They "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Eph. II.19. They have a right to all the privileges of God's dear children, and are given the spirit of adoption by which they are enabled to cry "Abba, Father." They have freedom of access to a Throne of Grace, and are enabled to pour out their souls before God, and even when oppressed by a sense of their own sinfulness, they are enabled to approach God with a sense of the fact that it was for sinners that a Throne of Grace was set up in the world. They are brought nigh in the sense that they are under His Fatherly protection, and that He will appear as their Deliverer from all their troubles and all their sins. He will fulfil to them what He has promised, "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." Job. v. 19.

(2) They are blessed in their disposition. Now they trust in Christ. Before, they looked to what they could do, or imagined they could do, themselves. They manifested this disposition at every step of the way, but in the day when they ceased to be offended in Christ, the language of their hearts was, "Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Hosea XIV.3. That was the beginning of better days for them, for, from then onwards, their disposition is to trust in the Lord for all that they stand in need of for time and eternity, and no matter how much they feel "tossed up and down as the locust," yet their whole life is a living commentary on the words of the Psalmist, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount

Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." Psalm CXXV. 1.

They are blessed in their disposition in that their hearts are inclined to keep God's ways. This manifests itself in their outward conduct, but that conduct is but a reflection of what they are at the heart. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them," (or "in whose heart are thy ways") Psalm LXXIV. 5. When God's ways are in the heart, the heart is in God's ways, although these ways may have many a "Hill Difficulty," yet, he only is the blessed man who will seek to face these steeps in the strength of God-given grace. The way may be hard, the trials many, within there will be fightings, and, without there will be fears, but He is a promise-keeping God with whom they have to do, and He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb. XIII.5.

Their tendency now is to wait for Him. This was the way with godly David when he found himself in the horrible pit. He tells us that he "waited patiently for the Lord," and though patience had her trials, yet he persevered in waiting and ultimately got deliverance. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Lam. III.26. Unbelief will look one in the face and say that it is vain to wait for the Lord, and it is a sad day for the child of God when he will go contrary to the inclinations of the new creation, and act on the suggestions of unbelief. In doing so he is sure to get broken bones; but oh! what blessings they receive who continually wait at posts of Wisdom's door. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah XL.31.

Those who have the blessed disposition of God's children are found mourning over sin. They are grieved because, in the highest sense, their sin is committed against God. It is often the case that they sin against others as David sinned against Uriah's wife, and against Uriah himself, and against his own soul, yet when he comes to confess his sin, though we may well believe that he was fully sensible of his sin against his fellow-creatures, he comes out with the heart-rending lament, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Psalm LI.4. It is not, merely, in connection with particular actions that they mourn. The one who walks nearest to God will get much in his own life to cause him to mourn, yea, we believe the closer the walk is to God, the more sensible one will be of his own sinfulness, and the oftener the prayer will ascend from his heart, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within one." Psalm LI.10.

They are disposed to hear God's Word. It was by His Word that God spoke first to their souls in awakening them, and also in revealing Himself to them in another way than He does unto the world. It may not be any particular passage, for sometimes the Holy Spirit uses the substance of God's Word to bring about God's purposes concerning the individual. This has made the Bible precious to the believer so that he can say, "The law of thy mouth is better unto one than thousands of gold and silver." Psalm CXIX.72. It is now a lamp to his feet and a light to his path. It is his daily guide, counsellor, and friend, and to it he inclines his ear to hear what God the Lord does speak.

(3) Those who are not offended in Christ are happy in their prospects. It has already been stated that they mourn over sin, and this shows their need of comfort. The Church of Christ and every believer in it are like a "lily among thorns." Their experience is that they are torn on every side. They have to carry on a continual warfare with the world, the Devil and the flesh in themselves. They can expect no lasting comfort in this world except as they find themselves entwined in the folds of God's promises, and as He condescends to lift upon them the light of His gracious countenance, but they are not to be always in this world. There is an end to their life here, and all troubles and trials will come to an end with it, then it shall be an eternity of comfort. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isaiah XL.1,2.

In their prospects there is an inheritance, and Oh! what a wonderful inheritance it is? It is not like the inheritances of this world. Every one who has an inheritance in this world must leave it sooner or later. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." Job. 1.21. Others may have the prospect of succeeding to an inheritance, and after a while be disinherited while some have the mortification of losing their inheritance through their own evil doings, or in some other way, but the inheritance of God's people is an inheritance that is "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for them. I Peter 1.4. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Psalm XVI.5. They shall go in to possess it as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Rom. VIII.17.

They shall be fully satisfied with their inheritance. There is no satisfaction in this world, for the more one gets the more one seeks, but

the soul that has Christ is fully satisfied with Christ. There is nothing in Him that he would wish out of Him, and nothing out of Him that he would wish in Him. He is a perfect Saviour to His own, but His own, as long as they are in this world, are not satisfied with the measure of knowledge they have of Him, or the measure which they get of communion with Him, or with the views they get of Him. They sometimes, by faith, get a ravishing view of "the King in his beauty," but after all it is but seeing Him through a glass, darkly." They have the prospect yet of seeing Him as He is. The Psalmist said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I wake, with thy likeness." Psalm XVII.15. At death their souls will be ushered into eternal glory, and neither the tongues of men nor angels will be able to tell the satisfaction that the soul will experience at that moment and throughout eternity. Then on the resurrection morning the glorified body, cleansed in the grave from its corruption, will be united to the soul and shall enter into the joy of the Lord.

(4) The privileges of those who are not offended in Christ reveal them to be a blessed people. They are the children of God, and as such, they alone can worship Him. The worship of the unregenerate is but hypocrisy in His sight. "But unto the wicked God saith, What has thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Psalm L.16,17. It is only His own who really approach God through Christ the Mediator, and though they have many reasons to mourn over the formality, worldliness and carnality which is to be found in their worship, yet it is accepted because it is offered through Christ, by whom it is cleansed from all its dross. It will be their privilege in heaven to be able to worship God without any trace of sin in their worship. It is their privilege to have a God, who "pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage," Micah VII.18, and of whom they can say, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Psalm CIII.10. He will not only listen to the faltering words of His child, but to their groanings when they are in bondage. "For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." Psalm CII.19,20.

(5) Finally, those who are not offended in Christ are a blessed people with respect to chastening. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastened, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." Psalm XCIV.12. The Holy

Ghost tells us that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Proverbs XXII.15. This is true of the spiritual child as well as the child literally. While God's children are in this world they are not perfect, and God gives them tokens of His Fatherly interest in them when He chastises them for their sins. This is not an easy thing to bear for it is not joyous but grievous, but the blessing is seen in that it brings forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Heb. XII.11.

Friend, are you offended in Christ? If so, you cannot lay claim to be accounted blessed, but on the other hand the Word of God clearly shows you to be under the curse. Consider what this means to you in time and eternity. Why should you be so easy about it? Is it a matter to dismiss lightly from your mind, and to think no more about it? You are in a sad position, speedily travelling to that place, where "snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest" is the portion of the sinner. The One whom you have trampled under foot so often, and so long, is still waiting to be gracious, and is saying, "Blessed is he, whosever shall not be offended in Me." It is true that you are not able to come, and it is the Holy Spirit alone who is able to make you willing. It is He alone who can exercise a drawing power over you, but your inability cannot do away with your responsibility, and if you continue to be ofended in Christ, He will hold you responsible for that when He will take His place as the Judge of the quick and the dead. Let your inability be brought before His ability and plead with Him that He would do all things that you stand in need of for you. May your experience be that of the Apostle when he was saying, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" Phil. IV.13. May He bless anything said consistent with His Word. Amen.

A Sinner's Marriage with Christ

by Rev. John Brown of Haddington

When I observe young persons, plainly destitute of piety, sobriety, and even common sense about the affairs of this life, entering into a married state with one another, I can scarcely forbear pronouncing them mad; when I see such as seem to have the knowledge and love of God, marrying with such as have not the smallest shadow of it, I cannot

forbear reckoning them worse; but the more I consider the marriage between Christ and my soul, the more it ravishes my heart.

When I view myself, I find everything humbling in my origin. I am but sprung of earth. I am but a worm, of few days, and full of trouble; an unclean thing brought out of an unclean; conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; a child of the devil, disobedience and wrath; cast out to the open field, to the loathing of my person. My guilt is unsearchable. Charged in my formation with Adam's first sin, that ruined the world, I have added to it the perpetual indulgence of my innumerable lusts, and the unceasing exertion of those sinful thoughts, words, and deeds, which are more than the hairs upon my head, or even the grains of sand upon the sea-shore. And how extensive and abominable my pollution! I am all as an unclean thing, and all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Oh! how altogether filthy! how much more abominable! drinking up iniquity as water! Lord, I am vile, what shall I answer Thee? Let me abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes! How universal, complicated, loathsome, and desperate my disease! From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is nothing in me but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. A loathsome disease fills my loins, and all the powers of my soul, with rottenness and pain. Out of my heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, false witness. Alas! how filled with all unrighteousness, debate, deceit, malignity; living in ignorance, unbelief, legality, malice and envy! How poor, infinitely indebted to both the kindness and justice of God; yet having nothing to pay the one or other, nothing properly my own, but my sins! How weak, able to do nothing good, not sufficient to think anything as of myself; filled with such carnality such enmity against God, that I am not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, and being in the flesh incapable to please God. How stupid, foolish, and ignorant, as a beast before God! more brutish than any man, not having learned wisdom, nor understanding; not having the knowledge of the holy; wise to do evil, but altogether without knowledge to do good; nay, mad and furious as the raging waves of the sea, like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, a raging bear, or roaring lion, inexpressibly forward and malicious against God and man! How infamous! My character in all the churches is a transgressor from the womb; an enemy, hater, blasphemer, robber of and rebeller against God; a self-destroyer; one who has a whorish heart, who is a plague and heavy burden to the earth.

How unworthy and unfit to be matched with any but the prince of

devils! And yet, astonishing! the Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for and to me! "He passed by me, and saw me polluted, and lying in my blood, and, behold, his time was a time of love. He swore unto me, and entered into covenant with me, and I became His. He betrothed me to Himself for ever; in loving-kindness, in judgment, and in faithfulness. My Maker is my husband, the Lord of hosts is His Name." O infinitely peerless Husband! Husband to such a monster! How amazing His Person! the only-begotten Son of God become the Son of man! God over all, made of the seed of David, according to the flesh; Immanuel, God with us; a child born, and yet the mighty God and the everlasting Father! How delightful His character! His names unnumbered, both plain and figurative, are like ointment poured forth; Shiloh, Anointed, Jesus, etc., all pregnant with life and salvation to my soul. How delightful, effacious, and suited to my case, are His offices of Mediator, Surety, Saviour, Redeemer, Prophet, Priest and King! And how fit is He for executing them all! By what amazing engagements, by what debased service, and tremendous sufferings; all for me! by what patient, condescending, and laborious dealings with me, hath he united me to Himself as one spirit!

And, O! what a wise, honourable, kind, condescending, and all-sufficient Husband I have found Him! What great things he hath done for my soul! He hath paid my infinite debt to His Father's law and justice. He instructs me with a strong hand, and makes me to understand the laws of my God! He forgiveth all my sins, however numerous and great; He supplies all my wants, gives me grace and glory, and every good thing; He healeth all my diseases, and tenderly binds up all my polluted and painful wounds. By His stripes I am healed. He restoreth my soul again. He bears all my burdens, cares for, supports, and delivers me. He sympathises with me in all my troubles, is my merciful and faithful High Priest, and hath a fellow-feeling of my infirmities, having been in all points tempted as I am, though without sin. In all my affliction He is afflicted, affords His Presence under it, makes me always to triumph in Him, and makes it all to work together for my good, yea, work for me an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He subdues all mine enemies, finishes transgression, makes an end of sin, destroys the works of the devil, crucifies the world, treads Satan under my feet, swallows up death in victory, is the plague of death, and the destruction of the grave. He manageth all my concerns, whether in heaven above me, by His continual intercession; or in the world around me, by His kind and powerful providence; or in my heart, by His Spirit and grace.

He hath irrevocably invested me with all His unsearchable riches, with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; with a kingdom prepared for me before the foundation of the world; with God Himself, and all His fulness! And O what great things He will do for me! He will guide me with His counsel while here, and bring me to glory, that I may be with Him where He is, that I may behold His glory. He will change my vile body, that I may be like unto His glorious body; solemnly acknowledge and acquit me at the day of judgment and render me perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of Him to all eternity.

What, then, shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits and kindness to me? Let me always remember Him; let my right-hand forget her cunning, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I forget Thee, O Jesus! who hath so remembered me in my low estate. Let me always esteem and honour Him, who hath raised me from the dung-hill, nay, from hell, to set me with Him on His throne. Let Him be superlatively precious and sweet to me; let me count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; and I *do* count them but dung, that I may win Him, and be found in Him. He is my Lord, let me worship Him. O! all ye creatures above, or around, magnify my Lord Christ with me; let us exalt His Name together. Let my heart be always chaste towards Him; let me be for Him, and for no other; let me, with purpose of heart, cleave unto the Lord. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and on earth there is none that I desire besides Thee. Let me constantly live on my Husband and His fulness, never eat my own bread, nor wear mine own apparel, but, clothed with His righteousness, eat His flesh, and drink His blood, that I may live for ever. Being crucified with Christ, let me live, yet not I, but Christ living in me; and the life I live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God. Let me heedfully listen to my Husband's words, let me search the Scriptures, as His testimony concerning Himself, and His testament ratified in His blood, in which, in the exceeding great and precious promises, all His unsearchable fulness is bequeathed to me. Let me find His words, and eat them, as the joy and rejoicing of my heart. Let me hide His word in my heart, that I may not sin against Him. Lord Jesus, how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day. It is sweeter to my taste than honey from the comb. It is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. Depart from me, all ye evil-doers; I will keep the commandments of my God. Let me carefully walk with my Husband, in holding fellowship with Him in every gospel ordinance, and even in every natural or secular employment. Let me go up through and from the

wilderness, leaning upon my Beloved, and, being strengthened in Him with all might in the inner man, let me walk up and down in His name.

If I hope to walk with Him in white, let me, like Enoch, walk with God on earth, and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, in ordinances or providences. Let a day in His courts be better to me than a thousand. In all my ways let me acknowledge Him, and He will direct my paths. Let me do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, that God may be glorified in Him. Let me always look to Him for strength and encouragement, always imitate Him, who left me an example, that I should follow His steps, and walk in love, in lowliness, meekness, patience, holiness, and zeal for the glory of God, and the welfare of souls, as He also walked. Let me walk worthy of Him unto all well-pleasing; always careful to please Him, and afraid of offending Him; let me be a good savour of Christ unto all around. Let me labour to recommend Him whom my soul loveth, as white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, and endeavour to have others come with me, and see that Christ is good, that they who revere and trust in Him are blessed. Let me look, long, and earnestly prepare for His comings, particularly for the glorious appearing of the great God, and my Saviour Jesus Christ, in which He will come again the second time without sin unto salvation, in which He will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on His enemies, but to be glorified in His saints, and admired in them that believe.

Rebuilding Jericho

by Rev. C.H. Spurgeon

"Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho." Joshua 6:26.

Since he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho, much more the man who labours to restore Popery among us. In our father's days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets; and now there are some who would rebuild that accursed system upon its old foundations. O Lord, be pleased to thwart their unrighteous endeavours, and pull down every stone which they build. It should be a serious business with us to be thoroughly purged of every error which may have a tendency to foster the spirit of Popery, and when we have made a clean sweep at

home we should seek in every way to oppose its all too rapid spread abroad in the church and in the world. This last can be done in secret by fervent prayer, and in public by decided testimony. We must warn with judicious boldness those who are inclined towards the errors of Rome; we must instruct the young in gospel truth, and tell them of the black doings of Popery in the olden times. We must aid in spreading the light more thoroughly through the land, for priests, like owls, hate daylight. Are we doing all we can for Jesus and the gospel? If not, our negligence plays into the hands of priestcraft. What are we doing to spread the Bible, which is the Pope's bane and poison? Are we casting abroad good, sound gospel writings? Luther once said, "The devil hates goose quills," and, doubtless, he has good reason, for ready writers, by the Holy Spirit's blessing, have done his kingdom much damage. If the thousands who will read this short word this night will do all they can to hinder the rebuilding of this accursed Jericho, the Lord's glory shall speed among the sons of men. Reader, what can you do? What will you do?

— *From Morning and Evening Readings for May 29th. (This date was the second day of the Pope's visit to this country.)*

Do you Confess?

by Bishop J.C. Ryle

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i.9).

Reader,

The question which forms the title of this paper is at all times deeply important. Among the foundation-stones of saving religion few deserve more serious attention than "confession of sins."

But there are occasions when circumstances give a particular importance to particular doctrines in religion. The assaults of enemies sometimes make it needful to exhibit some special truth with special distinctness. The plausible assertion of some error sometimes requires to be met by more than ordinary carefulness in showing "the thing as it is" in the Word. A doctrine may perhaps be in the rear-rank to-day, and to-morrow may be thrust forward by the force of events into the very front of the battle. This is the case at the present time with the subject of "confession." Many years have passed away since men thought and

talked so much as they do now about "the confession of sins."

Reader, I desire in this paper to lay down a few plain Scriptural principles about "confession of sin." I would fain guide you to some clear and decided conclusions on this important subject. Let us beware, in the din of controversy and discussion, that we do not lose sight of the mind of the Spirit, and injure our own souls. There is a confession which is needful to salvation, and there is a confession which is not needful at all. There is a confessional to which all men and women ought to go, and there is a confessional which ought to be denounced, avoided and abhorred. Let us endeavour to separate the wheat from the chaff, and the precious from the vile. We shall do well if we learn to hold decided and Scriptural opinions about the vexed question of confession.

There are two points to which I purpose to direct your attention, and two inquiries to which, by God's help, I will supply an answer.

I. In the first place, Who are they that ought to confess sin?

II. In the second place, To whom ought confession of sin to be made?

Once let a man have clear views on these two points, and he will never go far wrong on the subject of confession.

I. In the first place, Who are they that ought to confess sins?

I answer this question in one plain sentence. All men and women in the world. All are born in sin and children of wrath. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Before God all are guilty. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." There is not a child of Adam that ought not to confess sin. (Ephes. ii. 3; Rom. iii. 23; Eccles. vii. 20).

There is no exception to this rule. It does not apply only to murderers, and felons, and the inmates of prisons. It applies to all ranks, and classes, and orders of mankind. The highest are not too high to need confession. The lowest are not too low to be reached by God's requirement. Kings in their palaces, and poor men in their cottages, — preachers and hearers, — teachers and scholars — landlords and tenants, — masters and servants, — all, all are alike summoned in the Bible to confession. None are so moral and respectable that they need not confess that they have sinned. All are sinners in thought, word, and deed, and all are commanded to acknowledge their transgressions. Every knee ought to bow, and every tongue ought to confess to God. "Behold," saith the Lord, "I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned" (Jer. ii. 35). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8).

Without confession there is no salvation. The love of God towards

sinner's is infinite. The readiness of Christ to receive sinners is unbounded. The blood of Christ can cleanse away all sin. But we must "plead guilty" before God can declare us innocent. We must acknowledge that we surrender at discretion before we can be pardoned and let go free. Sins that are known and not confessed, are sins that are not forgiven. They are yet upon us, and daily sinking us nearer to hell. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13).

Without confession there is no inward peace. Conscience will never be at rest so long as it feels the burden of unacknowledged transgression. It is a load of which man must get rid if he means to be really happy. It is a worm at the root of all comfort. It is a blight on joy and mirth. The heart of the little child is not easy when he stands in his parent's presence and knows that he has done something wrong. He is never easy until he has confessed. The heart of the grown-up man is never really easy until he has unburdened himself before God, and obtained pardon and absolution. "When I kept silence," says David, "my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm xxxii. 3-5).

Reader, there is no gainsaying these things. They stand out plainly on the face of Scripture, as if they were written with a sunbeam. They are so clear that he who runs may read. Confession of sin is absolutely necessary to salvation. It is a habit which is an essential part of repentance unto life. Without it there is no going to heaven. Without it we have no part or lot in Christ. Without it we shall certainly go to hell. All this is undoubtedly true. And yet in the face of all this, it is a melancholy and appalling fact that few people confess their sins!

Some people have no thought or feeling about their sins. The subject is one which hardly crosses their minds. They rise in the morning and go to bed at night. They eat, and drink, and sleep, and work, and get money, and spend money, as if they had no souls at all. They live on as if this world was the only thing worth thinking of. They leave religion to parsons and old men and women. Their consciences seem asleep, if not dead. Of course they never confess.

Some people are too proud to acknowledge themselves sinners. Like the Pharisee of old, they flatter themselves they are "not as other men." They do not get drunk, like some; or swear, like others; or live

profligate lives like others. They are moral and respectable! They perform the duties of their station! They attend church regularly! They are kind to the poor! What more would you have? If they are not good people and going to heaven, who can be saved? But as to habitual confession of sin, they do not see that they need it. It is all very well for wicked people, but not for them. Of course when sin is not really felt, sin will never be confessed.

Some people are too indolent and slothful to take any step in religion so decided as confession. Their Christianity consists in meaning, and hoping, and intending, and resolving. They do not positively object to anything that they hear upon spiritual subjects. They can even approve of the Gospel. They hope one day to repent, and believe, and be converted, and become thorough Christians, and go to heaven after death. But they never get beyond "hoping." They never come to the point of making a business of religion. Of course they never confess sin.

In one or other of these ways thousands of persons on every side are ruining their souls. In one point they are all agreed. They may sometimes call themselves "sinners" in a vague, general way, but they have no real sense, or sight, or understanding of sin. Its guilt, and vileness, and wickedness, and consequences, are utterly hid from their eyes. And the result, in each case, is one and the same. They know nothing practically of confession of sins.

Reader, shall I tell you the clearest proof that man is a fallen and corrupt creature? It is not open vice or unblushing profligacy. It is not the crowded public house, or the murderer's cell in a jail. It is not avowed infidelity, or gross and foul idolatry. All these are proofs, and convincing proofs indeed, that man is fallen; — but there is to my mind a stronger proof still. That proof is the wide-spread spirit of slumber in which the most of men lie chained and bound about their souls. When I see that multitudes of sensible men, and intelligent men, and decent-living men, can travel quietly towards the grave, and feel no concern about their sins, I want no more convincing evidence that man is "born in sin," and that his heart is alienated from God. There is no avoiding the conclusion. Man is naturally asleep, and must be awakened. He is blind, and must be made to see. He is dead, and must be made alive. If this was not the case, there would be no need for our pressing the duty of confession. Scripture commands it. Reason assents to it. Conscience, in its best moments, approves of it. And yet, notwithstanding this, the vast majority of men have no practical acquaintance with confession of sin. No disease of body is so desperate as mortification. No heart is in so

bad a state as the heart that does not feel sin.

Reader, shall I tell you my first and foremost wish for your soul, if you are yet unconverted? I can wish you nothing better than thorough self-knowledge. I should like the veil to be taken from your heart. I should like you to see yourself as you really are in the sight of God. Ignorance of self and sin is the root of all mischief to the soul. There is hardly a religious error or a false doctrine that may not be traced up to it. For want of seeing sin, men do not value salvation. Once let a man get a sight of his own heart, and he will begin to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Reader, if you have learned to feel and acknowledge your sinfulness, you have great reason to thank God. It is a real symptom of health in the inward man. It is a mighty token for good. To know your spiritual disease is one step towards a cure. To feel bad and wicked and hell-deserving, is the first beginning of being really good. Once more I say, you have great reason to thank God.

What though you feel ashamed and confounded at the sight of your own transgressions! What though you are humbled to the dust, and cry, "Lord, I am vile! Lord, I am the very chief of sinners!" I tell you it is better a thousand times to have these feelings, and be miserable under them, than to have no feelings at all. I tell you that anything is better than a dead conscience, and a cold heart, and a prayerless tongue.

Reader, if you have learned to feel and confess sin, you may well thank God and take courage. Whence came those feelings that you find within? Who told you that you were a guilty sinner? What moved you to begin acknowledging your transgressions? How was it that you first found sin a burden, and longed to be set free from it? These feelings do not come from man's natural heart. The devil does not teach such lessons. The schools of this world have no power to impart them. Reader, these feelings come down from above. They are the precious gift of God the Holy Ghost. It is His special office to convince of sin. Rejoice, I say again, and be exceeding glad. The man who has really learned to feel and confess his sins, has learned that which millions never learn, and for want of which millions die in their sins, and are lost to all eternity.

Many blush to confess their faults, who never blush to commit them.
William Secker

Sin is the strength of death and the death of strength.
Thos. Adams

Why time is precious

by Jonathan Edwards

Time is precious for the following reasons: (1) Because a happy or miserable eternity depends on the good or ill improvement of it. Things are precious in proportion to their importance, or to the degree wherein they concern our welfare. Men are wont to set the highest value on those things upon which they are sensible their interest chiefly depends. And this renders time so exceedingly precious, because our eternal welfare depends on the improvement of it. Indeed our welfare in this world depends upon its improvement. If we improve it not, we shall be in danger of coming to poverty and disgrace; but by a good improvement of it, we may obtain those things which will be useful and comfortable. But it is above all things precious, as our state through eternity depends upon it. The importance of the improvement of time upon other accounts, is in subordination to this. Gold and silver are esteemed precious by men; but they are of no worth to any man, only as thereby he has an opportunity of avoiding or removing some evil, or of possessing himself of some good. And the greater the evil is which any man has advantage to escape, or the good which he has advantage to obtain, by anything that he possesses, by so much the greater is the value of that thing to him, whatever it be. Thus if a man, by any thing that he has, may save his life, which he must lose without it, he will look upon that by which he has the opportunity of escaping so great an evil as death, to be very precious. Hence it is that time is so exceedingly precious, because by it we have opportunity of escaping everlasting misery, and of obtaining everlasting blessedness and glory. On this depends our escape from an infinite evil, and our attainment of an infinite good.

(2) Time is very short, which is another thing which renders it very precious. The scarcity of any commodity occasions men to set a higher value upon it, especially if it be necessary and they cannot do without it. Thus when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, and provisions were exceedingly scarce, "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver." II Kings 6:25. So time is the more to be prized by men, because a whole eternity depends upon it; and yet we have but a little of time. "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." Job 16:22. "My days are swifter than a post. They are passed away as the

swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." Job 9:25,26. "Our life: what is it? it is but a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." James 4:14. It is but as a moment to eternity. Time is so short, and the work which we have to do in it is so great, that we have none of it to spare. The work which we have to do to prepare for eternity, must be done in time, or it never can be done; and it is found to be a work of great difficulty and labour, and therefore that for which time is the more requisite.

(3) Time ought to be esteemed by us very precious, because we are uncertain of its continuance. We know that it is very short, but we know not how short. We know not how little of it remains, whether a year, or several years, or only a month, a week, or a day. We are every day uncertain whether that day will not be the last, or whether we are to have the whole day. There is nothing that experience does more verify than this. If a man had but little provision laid up for a journey or a voyage, and at the same time knew that if his provision should fail, he must perish by the way, he would be the more choice of it. How much more would many men prize their time, if they knew that they had but a few months, or a few days, more to live! And certainly a wise man will prize his time the more, as he knows not but that it will be so as to himself. This is the case with multitudes now in the world, who at present enjoy health, and see no signs of approaching death: many such, no doubt, are to die the next month, many the next week, yea, many probably tomorrow, and some this night; yet these same persons know nothing of it, and perhaps think nothing of it, and neither they nor their neighbours can say that they are more likely soon to be taken out of the world than others. This teaches us how we ought to prize our time, and how careful we ought to be, that we lose none of it.

(4) Time is very precious, because when it is past, it cannot be recovered. There are many things which men possess, which if they part with, they can obtain them again. If a man has parted with something which he had, not knowing the worth of it, or the need he should have of it; he often can regain it, at least with pains and cost. If a man has been overseen in a bargain, and has bartered away or sold something, and afterwards repent of it, he may often obtain a release, and recover what he had parted with. But it is not so with respect to time; when once it is gone, it is gone for ever; no pains, no cost will recover it. Though we repent ever so much that we let it pass, and did not improve it while we had it, it will be to no purpose. Every part of it is successively offered to us, that we may choose whether we will make it our own, or not. But

there is no delay; it will not wait upon us to see whether or no we will comply with the offer. But if we refuse, it is immediately taken away, and never offered more. As to that part of time which is gone, however we have neglected to improve it, it is out of our possession, and out of our reach.

If we have lived fifty, or sixty, or seventy years, and have not improved our time, now it cannot be helped; it is eternally gone from us: all that we can do, is to improve the little that remains. Yea, if a man has spent all his life but a few moments unimproved, all that is gone is lost, and only those few remaining moments can possibly be made his own; and if the whole of a man's time be gone, and it be all lost, it is irrecoverable. Eternity depends on the improvement of time; but when once the time of life is gone, when once death is come, we have no more to do with time; there is no possibility of obtaining the restoration of it, or another space in which to prepare for eternity. If a man should lose the whole of his worldly substance, and become a bankrupt, it is possible that his loss may be made up. He may have another estate as good. But when the time of life is gone, it is impossible that we should ever obtain another such time. All opportunity of obtaining eternal welfare is utterly and everlastingly gone.

Prayers at the Grave

By Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale.

For many years now it has become an almost universal custom in Scotland to have a prayer at the grave at funerals, and too many accept the custom without question, as if it was the right and proper thing to do. In such an age of hurry as ours is, men seem to have lost the power of seriously reflecting on matters which pass before them and take no thought as to whether these matters are right or wrong. This is outstandingly true of the custom under review, and, therefore, the fact that it has not a shred of authority cannot be too often impressed upon the rising generation. The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has in 1909 passed a resolution condemning the practice and re-affirmed that resolution twenty years later. By this resolution the Synod clearly demonstrated that it was following the line of the Church of Scotland in its best days, for it re-affirmed its adherence to what the *Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God* says on this matter.

In that Directory, under the section headed, *Concerning Burial of the Dead*, we read, "When any person departeth this life, let the dead body, upon the day of burial, be decently attended from the house to the place appointed for public burial, and there immediately interred, without any ceremony. And because the custom of kneeling down, and praying by or towards the dead corpse, and other such usages, in the place where it lies before it be carried to burial, are superstitious; and for that praying, reading, and singing, both in going to and at the grave, have been grossly abused, are no way beneficial to the dead, and have proved many ways hurtful to the living; therefore let all such things be laid aside. Howbeit, we judge it very convenient, that the Christian friends, which accompany the dead body to the place appointed for public burial, do apply themselves to meditations and conferences suitable to the occasion; and that the minister, as upon other occasions, so at this time, if he be present, may put them in remembrance of their duty. That this shall not extend to deny any civil respects or deferences at the burial, suitable to the rank and condition of the party deceased, while he was living."

We see from the foregoing that the body is to be buried "without any ceremony", that is, as far as any ceremony of a religious nature is concerned, though it does not forbid any civil respects which were suitable to the rank of the party while he was living. In refusing to have a religious service at the grave our fore-fathers were acknowledging that the souls of the Lord's people were in no need of a religious service on earth and that the souls of the others could not derive any benefit from it, while the body which they were consigning to the earth was only the tabernacle where the soul once dwelt, though yet to be raised as a glorious body in the case of believers. They also had their eye on how such a service had in times past been grossly abused and made hurtful to the living, by fostering many superstitious practices contrary to the revealed will of God. All that they deemed necessary was that, if a minister happened to be present he might exhort the living as to their duty. This, of course, does not interfere with the conducting of worship at the house if the minister or some other professing man is present, for any minister, worthy of the name, will conduct worship in every household of his congregation, if at all possible, as often as he visits them, and if this is his duty on ordinary occasions, surely an exception cannot be made of a time when the family are bereaved. Even in this connection, a minister has to be on his guard against the latent superstition of the human heart for sometimes efforts are made by

ignorant persons to get the worship taken in the room where the dead body is lying, thus making it a service for the dead, as, in fact, prayers at the grave are.

That this Directory was an authoratative document of the Church of Scotland in days when men stood nobly by the Church's standards and practice, is clearly proved by the passing of an Act of the General Assembly on 3rd February 1645, "establishing and putting in execution of the Directory", and, again, by the Act of the Scottish Parliament on 6th February 1645, in which it unanimously ratified and approved the Directory, and added its authority to the said Act of the General Assembly. It is true that by the passing of the Act Recissory, and the leaving of that Act on the Statute Book at the time of the Revolution Settlement, the Directory lost its Parliamentary recognition, yet in 1705 the General Assembly recommended to all ministers and others within the pale of the Church of Scotland to observe the *Directory for Public Worship* as "approved by the General Assembly held in the year 1645, Session 10."

When the Church of Scotland in 1645 accepted the *Directory for Public Worship* nothing new was introduced as far as the burial of the dead was concerned. It conformed exactly, on this point, to the older Standards of that Church, and to what was her practice since the setting up of the Protestant Church. In the First Book of Discipline, approved by the General Assembly in 1560, we read concerning the burial of the dead, "For the avoiding of all inconveniences, we judge it best that neither singing nor reading be at the burial: For albeit things sung and read may admonish some of the living to prepare themselves for death, yet shall some superstitious think that singing and reading of the living may profit the dead. And therefore we think it most expedient, that the dead be conveyed to the place of burial with some honest company of the kirk, without either singing or reading; yea, without all kind of ceremony heretofore used, other than that the dead be committed to the grave, with such gravity and sobriety, as that those that be present may seem to fear the judgments of God, and to hate sin, which is the cause of death."

The Book of Common Order, being the rule of worship used by the English Congregation of Geneva, of which John Knox was at one time minister, and which has been "received and used by the Reformed Kirk of Scotland" previous to the First Book of Discipline, is equally explicit on this matter, for it says, "The corpse is reverently brought to the grave, accompanied with the congregation, without any further cere-

monies. Which being buried, the minister, if he be present, and required, goeth to the church, if it be not far off, and maketh some comfortable exhortation to the people touching death and the resurrection." This Book of Common Order was approved by John Calvin, which, incidentally, shows what the view of this great man was on this subject. That this was the practice in other Reformed Churches as well as in the Church of Scotland may be gathered from the fact that the French Reformed Church at a meeting of its Synod in 1562 decreed, "That all superstition may be avoided, ministers shall not use any prayers at the interment of the dead." That this practice was strictly adhered to in this country we have on the authority of Alexander Henderson, when he says, in his *Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, published in 1641, "Burials are conducted without singing or reading, which the superstitious do conceive to be profitable for the dead; without funeral sermons, which do beget superstition, and tend to flattery."

In the last quotation reference is made to funeral sermons, which are to be distinguished from prayers at the grave, but both are forbidden by the subordinate standards of the Church of Scotland, and by the Acts of her General Assemblies, showing that the uniform practice was to have no burial service. It is true that during the reign of Episcopacy funeral sermons were introduced, contrary to the First Book of Discipline and an enactment of the General Assembly in 1651, but when Episcopacy was thrown out at the Assembly of 1638 the old law with respect to funeral sermons was revived. (See Acts of Assembly, 1638, Session 23, 24.)

As, however, we are not bound to accept any standards for worship, drawn up by men, unless these standards conform to the Scriptures, we must go to the Word of God for these matters. We search in vain for precept or example in the Bible for prayer at the grave, but though, on the other hand, we lack a direct precept to abstain from prayers at the grave we do not lack examples which show that such exercises have not Scripture warrant. We have an account of the burial of many of the Lord's dear saints but nowhere do we read of a religious service on such an occasion. Of the funeral of Sarah, who was so precious in the sight of Abraham, we read the simple statement:— "And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre." An equally simple statement we have of the burial of Isaac; "And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried

him." Joseph loved and revered Jacob as much as any son ever loved and revered his father, but though we have a particular account of two periods of mourning which he caused to be made for him we have no record of a religious service at his burial. "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him," but there is not a word that they had a religious service. To crown all, the most solemn funeral which was ever witnessed in this world, and which preached so eloquently of the fulfillment of the purposes of Jehovah, had no religious ceremony in connection with it, for all we read is, "Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." Even in His burial He made common cause with His people for it was "as the manner of the Jews was to bury", and as they had no funeral services we may safely assume that there was none at His.

(to be continued)

Obituaries

John MacIver, North Tolsta

Periodically there are breaches made in the ranks of the precious sons of Sion by their passing from time to eternity and the church on earth is left much the poorer for their passing. John MacIver who has now removed from his witness on Christ's side in the world was, we believe, one of them and his passing has left another empty place among the officebearers in this congregation. Both in the service of the King of kings and in the service of his king and country in the world he proved himself a man of many parts.

He served his king and country during both world wars. In this service during the First World War he was among those who were interned in Holland where he studied navigation and as a result he obtained his Fishing Skipper's Certificate and at the end of hostilities he made use of that Certificate when following the fishing industry where stamina, health and strength were very much required. The commencement of the Second World War once again brought John to serve under his worldly sovereign's banner with many others and because of the fact that he held

a Skipper's Certificate he was soon a commissioned officer in the Royal Navy. The rigours of war did not leave him unscathed and the terrible conditions in which he and others served left a lasting impression on him.

His knowledge of his lost and ruined condition was brought home to him after his return from the First World War at the cessation of hostilities and his troubled soul finally received comfort while reading the word of God in private by means of the words of the apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 and from henceforth he got comfort and encouragement through the preaching of the Gospel and many of his doubts and fears were cleared. In March, 1972, he felt encouraged to come before the Kirk Session seeking admittance to the Lord's Table for the first time and after dutiful examination the Kirk Session readily gave him the privilege he sought. A little over a year later his name was brought before the members in full communion in the congregation when an election of Deacons was required and consequently he was elected and fulfilled his duties with diligence and faithfulness and in July 1974, he was ordained an elder in the congregation by the same process. He was constantly being called upon to lead the praise during public worship being possessed of a strong, rich and melodious voice and one felt that here was a man who considered it a privilege to have this honour conferred upon him.

John, by the time of his death, had known many of the tribulations which beset some of the Lord's people. His first wife died leaving him with a young family to attend to but he bore with these trials with fortitude and submission to the will of Him Who doeth according to His will among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. His second wife, who was like-minded with himself, attended to his needs with great tenderness and affection especially as the "last enemy" drew near. His sufferings were then very intense but these were borne without complaint and it was evident in him that not only does the Lord give His people grace to live but He also gives them grace to die. His sufferings are now past for he is, we believe, with his Lord and Saviour where his sun shall no more go down nor his moon be darkened. It is our prayerful desire that his widow would receive much of the consolation of Christ and that the family would come to know the Lord God of their parents and that this solemn voice would be blessed to them.

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Psalm 107:29,30. J.McD.

Alexander Graham, North Tolsta

Alexander Graham, the subject of this obituary, professed publicly his faith in Christ in 1937 and from that time until his lamented death on 26th December, 1979, he adorned the doctrine of his Lord and Saviour not only in the house of God but also in his walk and conversation in his conduct in the world.

The Lord, as He so often does, dealt with this trophy of grace even from his early years. The Godly example of his parents made a passing impression but when he left this environment in which he had been nurtured Alexander soon forgot the remonstrances of his God-fearing parents. The Lord, however, was to remind this young man that he could not cast off the reality of life and death for a year after he had been married for the first time he lost both his wife and child on the same day. Another incident, among many, left a lasting impression on him when, following his occupation as a fisher man and while transferring from one boat to another, he fell overboard and he was only saved with considerable difficulty and this incident left an indelible impression on his memory causing him to lay to heart that he was quite unprepared for the solemn realities which confronted him. This incident caused him great searching of heart. The advice of the God-fearing was sought and was greatly appreciated for it was as balm to his troubled soul. His sins and particularly that of having cast aside parental teaching and their tender remonstrances in connection with his waywardness, long since forgotten were as "a burning fire shut up within his bones" and gave him no rest. He resorted to secret prayer in which he sought for light and guidance from the Lord for in his flesh he had no rest for sin that he had done.

He was, however, rewarded on one such an occasion by the entrance of the word of God with light, guidance and comfort to his weary soul by the word of truth, "This is the way walk ye in it". His understanding laid hold of the mercy of God in Christ even for a poor seeking wretch as he was and the light of the Gospel entered into his sin darkened soul. In consequence of having been deeply taught of something of the depravity of his nature and the blessing of having a good hope through grace he was able with great clarity, while tears streamed down from his eyes, to speak to others of what the Lord had done for his soul. The Saviour's finished work was the chief topic of his conversation. The steadfastness of his profession endeared him not only to the North Tolsta congregation but to all with whom he came into contact. He was indeed a man greatly beloved. His unswerving loyalty to the testimony for the truth

and purity of worship which was raised in 1893 by the fathers of the Free Presbyterian Church was evident to all. He was ordained to the Deaconship in 1948 and seven years later he became an Elder by the same process and his humble consistent exercise revealed to all that this was a man deeply taught of God. His removal from the church militant to the church triumphant is keenly felt by the North Tolsta congregation.

To his family by his second wife, at home and abroad, we extend our deep sympathy. They saw and heard much within their family circle. May their father's God be their God and may they, in their sorrow, come to know the value of His sustaining grace.

"But thanks be to God, which hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Cor. 15:57

J.McD.

Book Reviews

"Amazing Love", the Prodigal Son by J.R. de Witt, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh; paperback, pp. 160, price £1.60.

The subject of this book, the best known and the best loved of our Lord's parables, the very human and life-like story of the Prodigal Son, is as full of meaning and replete with fresh instruction for today as when first listened to by enthralled crowds on the hillsides of Palestine. Prof. John R. de Witt has written a very pleasant and readable book in which of the ten chapters, one is devoted to each stage of the spiritual pilgrimage of the younger son from the time when he forsook his father's house for the far country to the final chapter on the churlish and angry refusal of the elder brother to join in the rejoicing of the household over the prodigal's return. The parable has not escaped hostile criticism but this is disposed of in the course of the narrative. That Christ is not in it nor his sufferings and death and that the younger son spontaneously arose and repented and returned to his father's house are among such criticisms. The parable, however, is one of a group of three, the lost sheep and the lost coin as well as that of the lost son. In these the work of the shepherd in seeking out the lost sheep and the discovery of the lost coin lying in the dust till recovered set forth different aspects of the gospel. In the third parable the love of the father and the repentance of the younger son are prominent. As the author remarks, we cannot expect to find the whole Gospel within the compass

of a single parable. There are some severe words for modern preaching and religious practices; the aversion of the pulpit from any mention of 'hell'; 'careless ministers and lax congregations' who read into this parable a lower standard of faith and repentance than is demanded in the Word of God; modern teaching that Christ died for all; the superior order of Christians who go in for celibacy and asceticism. These vagaries of modern unbelief are vigorously exposed. Throughout the book appear names that are prominent in the reformed world, Bunyan, Luther, Alexander Henderson, Robert Bruce and in more modern times, Dr A. Kuiper and Prof. H.N. Ridderbos. If any criticism may be made it is of the excessive and not altogether discriminating use of hymns, some of quite recent times, which were no doubt chosen for aptness and beauty of expression but short in evangelical doctrine. We have in mind the hymn which begins with the words: "There are ninety and nine", made so popular by the American evangelists, Moody and Sankey, in their campaigns in this country. It may not be too much to apply to this book the words which appear on the back cover "an easily read and moving introduction to the meaning of real Christianity".

A.F.M.

1st and 2nd Thessalonians by Geoffrey B. Wilson. Banner of Truth £1.75

This slight paperback, on 1st and 2nd Thessalonians by G.B. Wilson, begins with a brief, yet sufficient Introduction to these two Epistles of Paul. Gleanings from the choice of the choicest, from a variety of authors are, in the main, not only carefully selected but skilfully welded together with simplicity and clarity. This book is suggestive, useful and interesting. Its chief excellence lies in the fact that so much from a wide range of authors, scholars, commentators and theologians, is compressed into so small a space. For those who do not have access to the sources of the material summarised here, it should prove to be especially useful. Others who feel that they have neither the time or ability to wade through volumes in search of pearls, will find them here within easy reach. We appreciate the author's attempt to blend together the old and the new, the past and the present in Christian thought and literature on those important, relevant and practical Epistles. We do not agree however with all that is written, but more especially with chapter 2 of the 2nd Epistle. The increasing arrogance of Rome confirms us in our view that the Antichrist is to be identified with the Papacy which has already invaded

the high prerogatives of God and will yet be seen to be the head and centre of the great final apostacy. We therefore recommend that this book be read with a good degree of caution.

F.M.

Notes and Comments

Evolution

Unbelieving scientists for a hundred years or more have been trying to establish some link between man and the apes. From time to time fossils of one kind or another appear and seem to fit the bill. The latest of these discoveries has appeared in Kenya where a team of Japanese and Kenyan researchers have discovered a jaw-bone of a "human-like" creature which they claim is between seven and nine million years old and may help to unravel the origin of man. The suggestion is that if this estimate is correct the fossil would fill an eight million year gap between the 12 million year old Ramapithecus who walked on all four and the four million year old Australopithecus who walked upright, according to a report in the Press and Journal.

Vain man would be wise but, leaving aside the teaching of God's Word, is destined to wander in a wilderness in which there is no way. Evolution has had a long run and all the while has only hindered instead of advanced the progress of man. Let men only seek first the knowledge of the living God and then they will devote their gifts and energies to more fruitful studies.

Industrial Tribunal Case

An Inverness social worker, Mr Stephen Little, third officer in charge at Rosedene Children's Home, won his case against Highland Regional Council for unfair dismissal. He was dismissed because his religious beliefs prevented him from working on Saturdays. He is a member of the Worldwide Church of God. The Regional Director of Social Work said that Mr Little had proved a hard working employee but it seemed unfair that one member of staff should be given special treatment.

Though this is a case with which we would have little sympathy as it stems from an unscriptural view of the Sabbath day, yet it makes clear that the Industrial Tribunal would support any individual who was dismissed for refusing to do unnecessary work on the Lord's Day. It is an encouragement to know this.

Video Tapes

At Willesden Magistrates Court in London two violent video films were ordered to be forfeited under the Obscene Publications Act. Mrs Mary Whitehouse had reported the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The films were described in court as portraying violence of the most sickening kind. Mrs Whitehouse stated afterwards that the distributors of the films should have been prosecuted under Section 2 of the Act which would allow the magistrates to commit the distributors for trial instead of under Section 3 which only provided for forfeiture of the goods. It was stated in court that future prosecutions would be under Section 2.

It is to be hoped that a firm line will be taken in dealing with this evil trade and that ultimately it will be stamped out altogether. We would warn parents of this new danger to which their children are exposed and which, if they are not protected from it, will pollute the minds of the young from their earliest years.

Church Notes

Theological Classes

The classes in Syntematic Theology and Apologetics were commenced in Glasgow in September under Rev. Donald MacLean. These classes are being taken by Messrs. Donald and George MacAskill, P. Lloyd Roberts, Archibald MacPhail, M.A., and Dr Donald Boyd. The prayers of the Lord's people are requested that both Tutor and Students may receive the necessary physical, mental and spiritual strength for these studies.

(Rev) Donald MacLean.

Ministers' Illness

We are glad to report that the ministers who underwent operations in August, Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow and Rev. E.A. Rayner, Grafton have made good progress, also Rev. Angus MacKay, Tarbert who was laid aside about the same time. We pray that the Lord may be pleased to restore them fully to health and strength and to usefulness in His vineyard.

Church Deputy's Visit to Australia

During September Rev. A.F. MacKay has been visiting the congregations in Australia. After the Communion in Grafton on the first Sabbath of October he expects to go on to New Zealand to supply Auckland and

visit the different places where services are held. We trust that he may be upheld in his duties in these countries and in due time be brought back in safety to this country.

Zimbabwe Mission

The situation has not been easy for our missioneries in Zimbabwe, especially at Mbumba which is situated in the bush. Recent events have made it necessary for the Staff to withdraw from the hospital. It is with regret that this action has been taken but terrorist activity has made it necessary. We trust that the Lord will graciously continue to protect our missionaries from harm and that the work of the Mission may continue.

Acknowledgement of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: Mr & Mrs D. Morrison, Tarbert, £60; Anon., St. Jude's plate, £30.

Home Mission Fund: Mr & Mrs D. Morrison, Tarbert, £40. ~~£40~~

Foreign Mission Fund: Kyle Friend, per Rev. H.I.M., £5 for Mbumba Hospital.

Home of Rest Fund: Dr W.J. MacKenzie, Idaho, U.S.A., £10; Visitor, £1; Anonymous Donation, £45, £60, £40, £60, £50, £40, £40, £60, £40, £50, £60. ~~£556~~

Trinitarian Bible Society: Anon., St. Jude's plate, £20.

Underground Evangelism: Anon., St. Jude's plate, £20.

Ingwenya: The Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:— \$200, Psalm 115 v 12; £50, Miss P. Nicolson, Inverness, per Rev. Mazwabo; \$7, from S.M.; all three for New Canaan Church, Shabani; \$100 for New Canaan Sabbath School from Psalm 115 v 12; \$175 from Mr & Mrs MacDonald for Mission Funds; £20 for Mbumba Mission Hospital from Miss C. Leitch, Wick, per Rev R.R.S.

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

Free Distribution Fund: Gairloch Friend £2; J.F., Larne £9; Psalm 74:22 £2.

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

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£1, both per Rev. J.A. MacDonald; Envelope in plate £1.

Gairloch: A. MacPh. £500; J. MacPh. £500, both for Congr. Purposes; Anon £30; Mrs J.R. £10 per Rev. A.E.W. MacDonald for Congr. purposes (Correction — In last acknowledgement read Mrs Irvine not Mr Irvine).

Greenock: Anon £100 in memory of parents and three sisters, for Congr. purposes; Anon £10 for Sust. Fund (Envelope in plate)

Inverness: Friend in Larne £15 Malachi 3:16 for Home of Rest per Rev. A.F.M.

Lochinver: Anon, in church plate at North Uist Communion £5 for Sust. Fund per Rev. A. MacAskill.

North Harris: A Friend Harris House £2 for door coll; Envelope in plate £5 for Congr. Fds; Friend, Meavag South £8 (£5 for Home Miss. & £3 for Car Fd); Friend, Harris House £2 for door Coll. per R. MacCuish; A Friend, Meavag South £2 was added to door coll; A Friend, Tarbert D/C. £14.13 for Congr. Fds; Same Friend, Tarbert D/C cheque £21.44 for Congr. Fds; A Friend, Leacklec D/C £17.14 (£10.71 for Sust. Fund and £6.43 for Home Mission Fund), last three per Wm. D. Fraser; A Friend, Harris House £2 for door Coll.

South Harris: M. Mack., Northton £20 for Congr. Fd per A. MacCuish.

Stornoway: Friends, North Tolsta £20 for Sust. Fd and £5 for Comm. Expenses per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Strath: Kyle Friends £5 for Mbuma Hospital; Mrs C.M. £10; Mr D. MacC, Inverness £15; Messrs C. & L. MacPh. Braes/Glasgow £5; OMF Friends Md Baltimore, USA £20, all for Church Fund & all donations per Rev. H.I. MacKinnon.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOKROOM

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARTIN LUTHER

by J.H. Merle D'Aubigne. Large print (p) £6.50

THE GOLDEN ALPHABET

by C.H. Spurgeon. A devotional commentary on Psalm 119 (p) £2.70

PEDEN THE PROPHET (PUIR AULD SANDY)

by Thomas Cameron M.A. A booklet £0.60

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by the Rev. J.A. Wylie LL.D. A booklet £0.75

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