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Barrenness and Unfruitfulness

The Saviour said to His disciples: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Yet it is the lot of many of the Lord's people in this world that they have to lament over their barrenness and unfruitfulness. As branches in the true Vine, they ought to be bringing forth fruit to God's glory. Yet this seems to be far from them. The Apostle had to say in writing to the believers at Rome: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." This, then, is what is to be expected of them. How, then, do they so often have this complaint: "My leanness, my leanness".

One cause of barrenness and unfruitfulness in the life of grace is unbelief. Unbelief is a robber. It robs the soul of the comforts which it ought to be enjoying and leaves the soul in a very stagnant state. The life of grace is a life of faith — "the just shall live by faith" — so that where unbelief gets the upper hand growth and progress in the life of grace is stunted and retarded. Unbelief comes between the soul and the enjoyment of spiritual blessings. The realities of the eternal world become overclouded and the soul loses its lively sense of them.

Another cause of barrenness and unfruitfulness is worldlimindedness. When the soul is drawn away from the unseen realities of the eternal world and is more taken up with the realities of this world worldlimindedness sets in. Things which we can touch and taste and see are of more consequence in our estimation than the things which are unseen and eternal. These last can only be perceived by the eye of faith. The world can captivate the minds, not only of worldly men and women (for them it is the whole of their world) but also the minds of the people of God. It has such an alluring effect that they may be drawn aside by it. The things of

the world, the ways of the world then loom large in their eyes. They may be led even into adopting the fashions of the world and the ways of the world for a season. In such a case is it any wonder that barrenness and unfruitfulness should follow?

Another cause of barrenness and unfruitfulness is backsliding. Giving place to sin in heart or life cannot but leave the soul in a withered state. The liveliness that was once there — where is it now? The warmth of affections that was once there — where is it now? The zeal for God's glory and kingdom which was once there — where is it now? These are gone and the soul wallows in a slough of despond. What can such a soul know of fruitfulness in the life of grace? In what state are the graces of the Spirit in the soul at such a time? Certainly not in lively exercise. Are these not searching matters for the people of God, particularly in a dark day? What need there is for vigilance in such a day when we remember the warning of Scripture concerning our adversary the devil who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

But there may be an altogether different answer to this question of barrenness and unfruitfulness. It may be a case of seeming barrenness and unfruitfulness that makes the soul mourn and lament. So long as we compare ourselves with others about us we may have little sense of our leanness but when we go to the Word of God and see what fruit some of the saints of old brought forth then we may have reason indeed to complain of our backwardness and shortcomings. Or if we measure ourselves by the high standard set forth in the Word of God — as for instance the exhortation, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," then we may have warrant indeed to conclude what little attainments we have made in the life of grace. Still, when we think of what the Saviour said concerning faith — "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be then planted in the sea and it should obey you" — then we may not be as totally barren and unfruitful as we feared. If a grain of faith can accomplish so much now valuable it must be in God's sight. It is the Lord alone who can truly weigh what is true and what is spurious in the life of grace.

For our encouragement we are to look to the One in whom our hope lies. Poor and empty though we are in ourselves, and barren and unfruitful though we find ourselves to be yet it is in Christ we have our standing before God. And "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." In the Song He has said, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee", and He goes on to call her His undefiled. These are not extravagant expressions but

faithful representations of what Christ thinks of His people. They have their standing in Him and on this basis are accepted of God. Though they have so often cause to mourn and grieve over their sins and backslidings and shortcomings in the life of faith yet the Lord is so perfect that which concerns them. Like Mephibosheth they have reason to complain of their lameness and unfitness to sit at the King's table, but the day is coming when the Lord shall remove all their disabilities and all that hinders them in serving the Lord as they would desire to serve Him and they will go into the banqueting house where they will serve Him uninterruptedly and unhaltingly for ever and where His banner over them will be love.

Sermon

By Rev. Charles Calder MacKintosh DD.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." — Luke XIX, 41, 42.

It will be felt that this is sacred ground. Nothing more impressively and solemnly interesting is recorded of our Lord during His sojourn on earth, than His weeping over Jerusalem, except the account of His agony in Gethsemane, and His death on the tree. We never read of our Saviour smiling, but we read of His weeping. He wept over the grave of Lazarus, and over Jerusalem. Our Lord was now entering Jerusalem, as He had never entered it before, in triumph. It was a triumph, indeed, which in its aspect befitted His character as the meek and lowly Jesus; not the triumph of an earthly conqueror, but of a spiritual deliverer, for whose condescension there was no service or condition too low to secure the salvation of sinners, and for whose power there was nothing too hard. Just as He tamed the ass's colt and made it submissive to His will, so does He change, by His grace, the spirits of sinful men.

Yet He permitted His disciples to express their joy freely. Nay, He said, in answer to the Pharisees, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out".¹ He comes in sight of Jerusalem, and all at once, in the midst of this joy, He stops and weeps. What awakened this deep emotion, and in such measure that it overflowed in weeping? He was now entering the city in triumph; within

¹ Luke XIX. 40.

five short days He was to be led forth from it bearing His cross. One of His own disciples was to betray Him. Wicked hands were to seize Him. And after undergoing every species of insult and reproach, He was to be put to a cruel and shameful death. This He knew. He knew all that awaited Him. Was it then the thought that in so short a time all this suffering should come upon Him? For a mere man it might be natural that such a thought, suggested at such a time, should unman him, and constrain him to weep. But this was not the cause of Jesus' weeping. He thought not of Himself, but of Jerusalem.

"If thou hadst known", or "O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes," i.e. you do not and will not know them, and therefore, in a little time, the Lord will give you over altogether to your own hearts' lusts.

The Jewish nation and Jerusalem had enjoyed a long and precious day of visitation. It stretched from the time when God visited them in Egypt till the appearance of Christ himself. During this time God had kept among them, as a peculiar people, His visible church, blessing them with His word, ordinances, and ambassadors. But though He had at all times a people among them, yet as a body, being true representatives of fallen man, they resisted and vexed His good Spirit. Instead of bearing the fruits of righteousness, they bore the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah. Some of His prophets they beat and sent empty away, and some they killed. At length the Lord sent His Son to receive the fruits of the vineyard. With His coming the measure of their privileges was filled up to the uttermost, and it was therefore fitting and right that it should be determined whether they should continue still exalted to heaven through bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, or whether, filling up the measure of their iniquity, they should be cast down to hell. They had done much already to solve this question. They had rejected their Messiah. Some of them had said of His miracles, "He hath Beelzebub, he casteth out devils through the prince of the devils;" and some of His personal character, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" "His own" had not received Him.¹ In a few days the cry of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" was to be changed into the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" They were to kill the Prince of Life. Another gracious message should be sent from His throne on high, "beginning at Jerusalem." But this too should be

¹ John i. 11.

rejected; and then, as the limit would be reached which the Divine forbearance could not cross, wrath would come forth against them to the uttermost, and all the threatenings recorded in the Word would be executed against them. Beholding then the city, and thinking of its coming destruction, He wept over it.

He saw clearly the guilt of Jerusalem — that all the judgments to come upon it would be a glorious demonstration of the justice and truth of God. Doubtless He saw its especial guilt in rejecting Himself, in hating both Him and His Father. All this He saw in its real character of desperate wickedness; yet, seeing it all, He wept over the city. He saw the certainty of its doom. No visible cloud of judgment was suspended over it, no fears were entertained by its inhabitants of approaching danger; but He knew that its sentence had gone forth. He saw the flaming sword stretched out over it. He saw the fearfulness of this doom: — the holy, city, where Old Testament saints had worshipped, and, beholding His day afar off, been glad, razed to the ground; its inhabitants visited with a complication of natural miseries such as had never, in equal measure, met before in the case of any people — wasted and destroyed by famine, the sword, and pestilence; and the remnant of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh made a by-word among all nations and driven to the four winds of heaven — not to be restored, as formerly, after a banishment of seventy years, but to wander for centuries among the nations, the monuments of Jehovah's wrath.

But, more than all this, He saw multitudes of immortal souls passing into eternity, with the guilt of His blood upon them, dying in darkness, and cast into outer darkness.

And He "would have gathered them."¹ His infinitely compassionate heart told Him how He had sought their salvation. He knew that He had come to them with glad tidings, that He had sincerely and earnestly invited them to the enjoyment of rest, that His mercy had gone out importunately after them beseeching them not to die, that He had spent His strength in labouring among them; and now finding, as it were, this mercy thrown back upon Him, returning to His breast all but empty, because while He would have gathered them they "would not", He wept over their coming ruin.

We must remember that this is very holy and tender ground. It is evident that our Lord's lamentations did not arise from any want of complacency in His Father's will regarding the salvation of some and not

¹ Luke xiii. 34.

of all: "At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes;'"¹ or from the want of entire complacency in the threatenings of that law which attaches eternal death to sin; or from any feeling that His own work would be in vain, and that He should not "see the travail of his soul and be satisfied."² None of these things are to be understood. But we trace it to the pity and mercy of His heart, overflowing in sorrow in contemplating the misery produced by sin. Unless He had been "the Lamb of God", He could not have been thus affected. It was part of His humiliation to be "despised and rejected of men." It was a necessary consequence of His purity and love, that this rejection should make Him "a man of sorrows." And it was perfectly consistent with His perfection as God-man that He should weep over the destruction of sinners, while He saw clearly that they merited their doom, and while the foundations of His own happiness should be altogether untouched by the sight of their misery. We see His holy jealousy in the denunciations against the Scribes and Pharisees: "Ye hypocrites, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" We see His complacency in the punishment of the lost, in the words which He tells us He will address to the wicked on that day: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." We see here the gushing forth of His mercy, the mercy which has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," the grace and tenderness and love (unselfish, self-sacrificing love) manifested in the whole of His work of humiliation and suffering, and by which He revealed the Father as "love;" mercy and love not the less real but the more wondrous, because in alliance with the purity which hates sin, and the righteousness which cannot spare sin. We have the heart of Christ opened up to us, a heart filled with good-will to sinners, with tenderness and compassion; yes, as having as its deepest affection in connection with the glory of His Father, thirst for their salvation; full of grace, pure grace, yet holy grace which cannot desire to be exercised at the expense of righteousness or to screen the guilty. And though every tear has been wiped from His eyes, though His sorrows were over when He said, "It is finished," and He is now infinitely exalted above all sorrow, yet His heart is the same — as gracious, and as full of compassion as in the days of His flesh.

¹ Matt. xi. 25.

² Isa. xlix. 5, 6; John vi. 37; x. 27, 28.

Now then, let us notice a few of the truths taught us by Christ's weeping and Christ's words. There are "things which belong to our peace" in this life and in the ages of eternity, which it supremely concerns us to know. Our true peace and happiness depend on our enjoying the favour and friendship of God. If the great "God be for us, who can be against us?" But if He be against us there is not peace to us; and our case is the more affecting and dangerous if we say "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." God alone can make us happy. He only can fill our hearts. By nature God and we are estranged, and His wrath abides on us. But He has devised and revealed a way of reconciliation and return through Jesus Christ, the Son of His love. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "These things which belong to our peace" may be said to be saving knowledge of Christ in its excellency and preciousness, or "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" so to know and feel ourselves as lost, so to know Jesus as the way to the Father, as to trust in Him alone for salvation, and to come to God through Him for mercy, acceptance and rest, and for grace to live to His glory; so to know Jesus as that He shall be precious to us, and that to us to live shall be Christ — is to "know the things which belong to our peace." And "blessed is the people that know" them. They have peace with God; they have rest to their souls; they may lie down in peace and take quiet sleep, for the Lord maketh them dwell in safety.

There is a "day" in which they may be known, in which pardon and salvation are to be obtained; and during this day the Redeemer uses many means to awaken the sinner, and to lead him to saving acquaintance with the "things which belong to his peace;" seconding the calls of His word with His providence, standing at his door, digging about the barren tree and dunging it. It is the day of *gospel privileges*, when the Sun of Righteousness shines forth in the firmament of the truth, when the Lord sets life and death before us. His terrors and His mercies, and invites us to Himself as the God of peace. Oh, to know the value of the Gospel! It is the day of *life*. It is this which gives life its preciousness; that these things may be known, even at the eleventh hour. "All day long" He has "stretched out his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people," and yet He says, "To-day if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts." But especially it is the day of *youth*.

Most of those who now know the Lord savingly were converted in youth. It is the day *when the Spirit of God strives* with the soul. Generally speaking, this is the gospel day; but there are some special times above others when He strives with men. Let all beware of resisting Him now, lest, as has happened to others, He cease to strive with them, and they be left "like heath in the desert, and see not when good cometh."

This day is short and will soon come to a close. At the longest, it is a short day. But its continuation is also uncertain. At any moment it may come to an end. The brittle thread of life may be snapped. "What is our life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The long-suffering of God may come to an end, or He may "swear in his wrath" that we "shall not enter into his rest." Yet many refuse to know the things that belong to their peace. As it was in Christ's day it is so still. They continue as careless about the soul as though it were in no danger. They refuse to believe God's testimony concerning its lost state, and the way of salvation. They give their hearts and thoughts and energies to this world, as though there were no hereafter. They sleep on in sin, and neglect the great salvation, persuading themselves that they shall "die the death of the righteous," and that their last end shall be like his. "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

If these things are not known in this world, they will never be known. It is only in this world that the Lord exercises pardoning mercy. "There is no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." As the tree falleth, so shall it lie. And if they be not known, what remains but the "judgment" and the "fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." The mercy which now says, "Why will ye die?" will not interfere to shield or rescue the sinner from avenging justice. Christ's tears over Jerusalem now assure the most guilt-laden sinner of His readiness to receive him, and that he cannot perish because of want of willingness in Christ to save him. "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life."¹ But out of the lips of mercy from which the affecting words flowed, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace," will then come forth, the awful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

¹ John v. 40.

To apply these remarks.

How unspeakable the obligations of those who are brought so to "know the things that belong to their peace" that it were misery to them not to feel the power of a world to come! It is the sufferings and the grace of Christ that have procured for you any hope in looking forward to eternity. Let that thought be precious to you. And oh! by these solemn realities, by the darkness of hell and the glories of heaven and the dying love of Christ, be exhorted to plead and wrestle for the salvation of souls. Bring your hearts to this sight, to a weeping Saviour, till they are fired into a flame of compassion for the souls of perishing fellow-sinners, and you seek to "pluck them as brands from the burning."

How humbling the contemplation of a weeping Jesus to us ministers — even although through grace it be our desire and aim to be faithful and to win precious souls — that, believing in the amazing mysteries of redemption, in the soul's value and the soul's immortality, we are not more solemnly in earnest in speaking the word of life; that we are not now as Jeremiah was, when he said, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" or as Paul was when he said, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." How humbling is the contemplation to the Christian, in his most advanced state in this world! And yet, if he is seeking after conformity to the Lamb of God, he will one day be like Him in holy love.

What a rebuke, also to unconcern for the soul's salvation, what an awakening call, is here! Was it without a reason, or without a sufficient reason, that the Son of God came to our world, and was a man of sorrows, and died on the tree? Or was it to save the soul He came, and was it over the loss of the soul He wept? Then have you no concern for the salvation of your own soul? will you take no thought about it? Did Christ sweat great drops of blood when He was struggling for its redemption, and are you unacquainted with a single soul-pang or intense striving in reference to it? Did Christ weep such tears as were never shed before, and is it a *fiction* that there is a hell? Fellow-sinner, awaken! The tears of Christ tell you that you have infinite reason to be concerned and to weep for yourself this day. Remember that while the whole of Christ's work casts light on the value of the soul and the greatness of its loss, it has not changed your condition by nature. It has made possible for you and for me to be saved; but it has not made a natural state less dreadful or dangerous than it was; nay, if you continue

Christless and die, Christless, it will fare worse with you in eternity than if you had never heard the gospel.

"What meanest thou," then, "O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon" thee, that thou "perish not." I might beseech you, and I do beseech you, to consider that if you are unaffected by the state of your own soul, it is because sin stupefies and Satan blinds you. It is not the less certain that it is a fearful thing to be going on in this state, till the foot slide, and till distress and anguish come upon you; nor is it the less certain that if your eyes were opened, if you believed God, you would realize it, and be exercised as the Psalmist was exercised:— "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul."¹ I might beseech you, and I do beseech you, to consider what it will be to have these things "hid from your eyes" for ever, to have the reflection following you to eternity that you perished because you *would not come to Christ*.

But I would rather make use of the *love of Jesus*, as exhibited here, to move, awaken, to melt, and to draw you. This is the loving Saviour who now invites you — He who wept over His enemies and His murderers. Think what a heaven it must be to be with Him! Think what a hell, were there nothing else in hell, to be separated from Him for ever!

¹ Ps. cxvi. 3, 4.

Do you Confess?

by Bishop JC. Ryle

(Continued from page 321)

II. I now turn to the second branch of my subject. *To whom ought confession of sin to be made?*

»I enter on this branch of the subject with sorrowful feelings. I approach it as a sailor would approach some rock on which many gallant ships have made shipwreck. I cannot forget that I have arrived at a point on which millions of so-called Christians have erred greatly, and millions are erring at the present day. But I dare not keep back anything that is Scriptural, for fear of giving offence. The errors of millions must not prevent a minister of the Gospel speaking the truth. If multitudes are hewing out broken cisterns that can hold no water, it becomes the more needful to point out the true fountain. If countless souls are turning

aside from the right way, it becomes the more important to show clearly to whom confession ought to be made.

Sin, to speak generally, ought to be confessed to God. He it is whom we have chiefly offended. His are the laws which we have broken. To him all men and women will one day give account. His displeasure is that which sinners have principally to fear. This is what David felt: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm li. 4). This is what David practised: "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord" (Psalm xxxii, 5). This is what Joshua advised Achan to do: "My son, give glory to God, and make confession to Him" (Joshua vi. 19). The Jews were right when they said, "Who can forgive sins but God only? (Mark ii, 7).

But must we leave the matter here? Can vile sinners like us ever dare to confess our sins to a holy God? Will not the thought of his infinite purity shut our mouths and make us afraid? Must not the remembrance of His holiness make us afraid? Is it not written of God, that He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity?" (Hab. i. 13). Is it not said, that He "hates all workers of iniquity?" (Psalm v. 5). Did He not say to Moses, "There shall no man see My face and live?" (Exodus xxxiii. 20). Did not Israel say of old, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die?" (Exodus xx. 19). Did not Daniel say, "How can the servant of this my Lord talk with this my Lord?" (Dan. x. 17). Did not Job say, "When I consider I am afraid of Him?" (Job xxiii. 15). Did not Isaiah say, "Woe is me, for I am undone; . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts? (Isaiah vi. 5). Does not Elihu say, "Shall it be told Him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up" (Job xxxvii. 20).

Reader, these are serious questions. They are questions which must and will occur to thoughtful minds. There are many who know what Luther meant when he said, "I dare not have anything to do with an absolute God." But I thank God, they are questions to which the Gospel supplies a full and satisfactory answer. The Gospel reveals One who is exactly suited to the wants of souls which desire to confess sin.

I say then that sin ought to be confessed to God in Christ. I say that sin ought especially to be confessed to God manifest in the flesh — to Christ Jesus the Lord — to that Jesus who came into the world to save sinners — to that Jesus who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and now lives at the right hand of God to intercede for all who come to God by Him. He that desires to confess sin, should apply direct to Christ.

Christ is a great High Priest. Let that truth sink down into our hearts, and never be forgotten. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father for that very purpose. It is His peculiar office to receive and hear, and pardon and absolve sinners. It is His place to receive confessions and to grant plenary absolutions. It is written in Scripture, "Thou art a priest for ever." "We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens." "Having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith" (Heb. iv. 14; vi. 20; x. 21, 22).

Christ is a High Priest of Almighty *power*. There is no sin that He cannot pardon, and no sinner that He cannot absolve. He is very God of very God. He is "over all, God blessed for ever." He says Himself, "I and My Father are one." He has "all power in heaven and in earth." He has "power on earth to forgive sins." He has complete authority to say to the chief of sinners, "Thy sins are forgiven. Go in peace." He has "the keys of death and hell." When He opens, no man can shut. (Rom. ix. 5; John x. 30; Matt. xxviii. 18; Matt. ix. 6; Luke vii. 48-50; Rev. i. 18; iii. 7).

Christ is a High Priest of infinite *willingness* to receive confession of sin. He invites all who feel their guilt to come to Him for relief. "Come unto Me," He says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." When the penitent thief cried to Him on the cross, He at once absolved him fully, and gave him an answer of peace (Matt. xi. 28; John vii. 37).

Christ is a High Priest of perfect *knowledge*. He knows exactly the whole history of all who confess to Him. From Him no secrets are hid. He never errs in judgments. He makes no mistakes. It is written that "He is of quick understanding. He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears" (Isaiah xi. 3). He can discern the difference between the hypocritical professor who is full of words, and the broken-hearted sinner who can scarce stammer out his confession. People may deceive ministers by "good words and fair speeches," but they will never deceive Christ.

Christ is a High Priest of matchless *tenderness*. He will not afflict willingly, or grieve any soul that comes to Him. He will handle delicately every wound that is exposed to Him. He will deal tenderly even with the vilest sinners, as He did with the Samaritan woman. Confidence reposed in Him is never abused. Secrets confided to Him are completely safe. Of Him it is written, that "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." He is one that "despiseth

not any" (Isaiah xlii. 3; Job xxxvi. 5).

Christ is a High Priest who *can sympathize* with all that confess to Him. He knows the heart of a man by experience, for He had a body like our own, and was made in the likeness of man. "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). To Him the words can most truly be applied, which Elihu applied to himself, "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee" (Job xxxiii. 6, 7).

Reader, this great High Priest is the person whom you and I ought especially to employ in our confession of sin. It is only through Him and by Him that we should make all our approaches to God. In Him we may draw near to God with boldness, and have access with confidence (Ephes. iii, 12). Laying our hand on Him and His atonement, we may "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. iv. 16). We need no other mediator or priest. We can find no better High Priest. To whom should the sick man disclose his ailment, but the physician? To whom should the prisoner tell his story, but to his legal advocate? To whom should the sinner open his heart and confess his sins, but to Christ?

Why should we confess our sins to angels and dead saints, while we have Christ for a High Priest? Why should we confess to the Virgin Mary, Michael the archangel, John the Baptist, St. Paul, or any other creature in the unseen world? The Church of Rome enjoins such confession as this on her millions of members, and many members of the Church of England seem half disposed to think the Church of Rome is right. But when we ask a reason for the practice, we may ask long without getting an answer.

There is *no need* for such a confession. Christ has not given up His office, and ceased to be a Priest. The saints and angels cannot possibly do more for us than Christ can. They certainly have not more pity or compassion, or goodwill towards our souls.

There is *no warrant of Scripture* for such a confession. There is not a text in the Bible that bids us confess to dead saints and angels. There is not an instance in Scripture of any living believer taking his sins to them.

There is not the slightest proof that there is *any use* in such a confession. We do not even know that the saints in glory can hear what we say. Much less do we know that they could help us if they heard. They were all sinners, saved by grace themselves. Where is the

likelihood that they could do anything to aid our souls?

Reader, the man who turns away from Christ to confess to saints and angels is a deluded robber of his own soul. He is following a shadow, and forsaking the substance. He is rejecting the bread of life, and trying to satisfy his spiritual hunger with sand.

But why, again, should we confess our sins to living priests and ministers, while we have Christ for a High Priest? The Church of Rome commands her members to do so. A party within the Church of England approves the practice as useful, helpful, and almost needful to the soul. But, again, when we ask for Scripture and reason in support of the practice, we receive no satisfactory answer.

Is there *any need* for confessing to priests or ministers? There is none. There is nothing they can do for a sinner that Christ cannot do a thousand times better. When Christ has failed the soul that cries to Him it may be time to turn to ministers. But that time will never come.

Is there *any Scriptural warrant* for confessing to priests or ministers? There is none. There is not a passage in the New Testament which commands it. St. Paul writes three epistles to Timothy and Titus about ministerial duty. But he says nothing about receiving confessions. St. James bids us "confess our faults to one another," but he says nothing about confessing to ministers. Above all, there is not a single example in the Bible of any one confessing to a minister and receiving absolution. We see the Apostles often declaring plainly the way of forgiveness, and pointing men to Christ. But we nowhere find them telling men to confess to them, and offering to absolve them after confession.

Finally, is *any good likely to result* from confessing to priests or ministers? I answer boldly, there is none. Ministers can never know that those who confess to them are telling the truth. Those who confess to them will never feel their consciences really satisfied, and will never feel certain that what they confess will not be improperly used. Above all, facts, stubborn facts abound, to show that the practice of confessing to ministers has often led to the grossest and most disgusting immorality. A living writer has truly said, "There is not better school of wickedness on earth than the confessional. History testifies that for every offender whom the confessional has reclaimed, it has hardened thousands:— for one it may have saved it has destroyed millions." (*Wylie on Popery*, p 329).

Reader, the man who turns away from Christ to confess his sins to ministers, is like a man who chooses to live in prison when he may walk at liberty; or to starve and go in rags in the midst of riches and plenty; or

to cringe for favours at the feet of a servant, when he may go boldly to the Master and ask what he will. A mighty and sinless High Priest is provided for him, and yet he prefers to employ the aid of mere fellow sinners like himself! He is trying to fill his purse with rubbish when he may have fine gold for the asking. He is insisting on lighting a rushlight, when he may enjoy the noon-day light of God's sun!

(To be continued)

Death of John Janeway

by Rev. J. Venn

And now the time drew nigh, wherein his longings would be satisfied; he is called to his last work; and truly his deportment in it was honourable; his carriage so eminently gracious, so meek, patient, fruitful, joyful and thankful, that it made all his friends stand and wonder as being abundantly above their experience and reading; and those Christians that saw him could not but admire God in him, and look upon him as one of the most singular instances of rich grace, and even bless God that their eyes ever saw, or their ears ever heard, such things; and had such a sensible demonstration of the reality of invisibles.

He falls into a deep consumption

His body was now shaken again, and he fell into a deep consumption; but this messenger of God did not in the least damp him. Spitting of blood was no ghastly thing to one who had his eye upon the blood of Jesus; faint sweats did not daunt him who had always such reviving cordials at hand. It was matter of joy to him, that he was now in some hopes of having his earnest desires satisfied.

After he had been a while sick, a sudden dimness seized upon his eyes; by-and-by his sight quite failed; and there was such a visible alteration in him that he and others judged these things to be the symptoms of approaching death. But when he was thus taken, he was not in the least suprised; but was lifted up with joy to think what a life he was going to; looking upon death itself as one of his Father's servants, and his friend who was sent as a messenger to conduct him safely to his glorious palace.

When he felt his body ready to faint, he called to his mother and said, 'Dear mother, I am dying, but I beseech you be not troubled: for I am, through mercy, quite above the fears of death; I have nothing troubles me but the apprehension of your grief. I am going to Him Whom I love above life.'

But it pleased the Lord to raise him again a little out of this fainting-fit, for his Master had yet more work for him to do before he must receive his wages. Although his outward man decayed apace, yet he was renewed in the inward man day by day; his graces were never more active and his experiences were never greater. When one would have thought he should have been taken up with his distemper, and that it had been enough for him to grapple with his pains, then he quite forgot his weakness, and was so swallowed up of the life to come, that he had scarcely leisure to think of his sickness.

For several weeks together I never heard the least word that savoured of any complaint or weariness under the hand of God, except his eager desire to be with Christ be counted complaining, and his haste to be in heaven be called impatience. Now was the time when one might have seen heaven and the glory of another world realized to sense. His faith grew exceedingly, his love was proportionable, and his joys were equal to both.

O the rare attainments! The high and divine expressions that dropped from his mouth! I have not words to express what a strange, triumphant, angelical frame he was in, for some considerable time together. It was a very heaven upon earth, to see and hear a man admiring God at such a rate, as I never heard any, nor ever expect to hear or see more till I come to heaven. Those that did not see cannot well conceive what a sweet frame he was in, for at least six weeks before he died. His soul was almost always filled with those joys unspeakable and full of glory. How oft would he cry out, 'O that I could but let you know what I now feel! O that I could show you what I see! O that I could express the thousandth part of that sweetness that I now find in Christ! You would all then think it well worth the while to make it your business to be religious. O my dear friends, we little think what Christ is worth upon a death bed. I would not for a world, nay for millions of worlds, be now without Christ and a pardon. I would not for a world have to live any longer: the very thought of a possibility of recovery makes me even tremble.'

When one came to visit him and told him that he hoped it might please God to raise him again, and that he had seen many a weaker man restored to health, and that lived many a good year after: 'And do you think to please me,' said he, 'by such discourse as this? No, friend, you are much mistaken in me, if you think that the thoughts of life, and health, and the world, are pleasing to me. The world hath quite lost its excellency in my judgment. O how poor and contemptible a thing is it in all its glory, compared with the glory of that invisible world which I now

live in the sight of! And as for life, Christ is my life, health and strength; and I know I shall have another kind of life when I leave this. I tell you it would incomparably more please me, if you should say to me, "You are no more of this world; you cannot possibly hold out long; before to-morrow you will be in eternity." I tell you I do so long to be with Christ that I could be contented to be cut in pieces, and to be put to the most exquisite torments, so I might but die and be with Christ. O, how sweet is Jesus! Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly! Death, do thy worst! Death hath lost its terribleness. Death! It is nothing. I say death is nothing, through grace, to me. I can as easily die as shut my eyes, or turn my head and sleep. I long to be with Christ: I long to die!' that was still his note.

His mother and brethren standing by him, he said: 'Dear mother, I beseech you, as earnestly as ever I desired anything of you in my life, that you would cheerfully give me up to Christ; I beseech you do not hinder me, now I am going to rest and glory. I am afraid of your prayers, lest they pull one way and mine another.'

And then turning to his brethren, he spake thus to them: 'I charge you all, do not pray for my life any more; you do me wrong if you do! O that glory! — the unspeakable glory that I behold! My heart is full, my heart is full. Christ smiles, and I cannot choose but smile; can you find in your heart to stop me, who am now going to the complete and eternal enjoyment of Christ? Would you keep me from my crown? The arms of my blessed Saviour are open to embrace me; the angels stand ready to carry my soul into His bosom. O, did you but see what I see, you would all cry out with me, "How long, dear Lord! come, Lord Jesus; come quickly. O, why are His chariot-wheels so long a-coming?"'

And all this while he lay like a triumphing conqueror, smiling and rejoicing in spirit.

There was not a day towards his end, but, weak as he was, he did some special service for his great Master.

A reverend, judicious, and holy minister came often to visit him, and discoursed with him of the excellency of Christ, and the glory of the invisible world. 'Sir,' said he, 'I feel something of it; my heart is as full as it can hold in this lower state; I can hold no more here. O that I could but let you know what I feel!'

This holy minister praying with him, his soul was ravished with the abundant incomes of light, life and love, so that he could scarcely bear it, or the thought of staying any longer in the world, but longed to be in such a condition wherein he should have yet more grace and more

comfort, and be better able to bear that weight of glory, some manifestations whereof did even almost sink his weak body, and had he not been sustained by a great power, his very joys would have overwhelmed him; and whilst he was in these ecstasies of joy and love, he was wont to cry out?—

‘Who am I, Lord, who am I, that Thou shouldst be mindful of me! Why me, Lord, why me? and pass by thousands and look upon such a wretch as me! O, what shall I say unto Thee, O Thou preserver of men? O, why me, Lord, why me? O blessed, and for ever blessed, be free grace! How is it, Lord, that Thou shouldst manifest Thyself unto me, and not unto others? even so, Father, because it seemeth good in Thy sight. Thou wilt have mercy, because Thou wilt have mercy. And if Thou wilt look upon such a poor worm, who can hinder? Who would not love Thee, O blessed Father! O how sweet and gracious hast Thou been unto me! O, that He should have had me in His thoughts of love, before the foundations of the world!’

And thus he went on, admiring and adoring God, in a more high and heavenly manner that I can clothe with words. Suppose what you can on this side heaven, and I am persuaded you might have seen it in him. He was wonderfully sensible of the goodness of God to him in sending that aged experienced minister to help him in his last great work upon earth. ‘Who am I,’ said he, ‘that God should send to me a messenger one among a thousand!’ meaning that minister who had been praying with him with tears of joy.

Though he was, towards his end, most commonly in a triumphant joyful frame, yet, sometimes, even then he had some small intermissions, in which he would cry out, ‘Hold out, faith and patience; yet a little while, and your work is done.’ And when he found not his heart wound up to the highest pitch of thankfulness, admiration, and love, he would with great sorrow bemoan himself, and cry out in this language:

‘And what is the matter now, O my soul? what wilt thou? canst thou thus unworthily slight this admirable and astonishing condescension of God to thee? Seems it a small matter, that the great Jehovah should deal thus familiarly with His worm; and wilt thou pass this over as a common mercy? What meanest thou, O my soul, that thou dost not constantly adore, and praise this rare, strong, and unspeakable love? Is it true, O my soul? doth God deal familiarly with man, and are his humble, zealous, and constant love, praise, and service, too good for God? Why art not thou, O my soul, swallowed up every moment with this free unparalleled everlasting love?’

And then he breaks out again into another triumphant ecstasy of praise and joy, in such words as these:

'Stand astonished, ye heavens, and wonder, O ye angels, at this infinite grace! Was ever any under heaven more beholden to free grace than I? Doth God use to do thus with His creatures? Admire Him for ever and ever, O ye redeemed ones! O those joys, the taste of which I have! Those everlasting joys, which are at His right hand for evermore! Eternity, eternity itself, is too short to praise God in. O bless the Lord with me! come, let us shout for joy and boast in the God of our salvation! O help me to praise the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever!'

One of his brethren who had formerly been wrought upon by his holy exhortations and example, praying with him, and seeing him, as he apprehended, near his dissolution, desired that the Lord would be pleased to continue those astonishing and soul-supporting comforts to the last moment of his breath, and that he might go from one heaven to another, from grace and joy imperfect, to perfect grace and glory; and when his work was done here, give him, if it were His will, the most easy and triumphant passage to rest; and that he might have an abundant entrance administered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

At the end of the duty he burst out into a wonderful expression of joy. Sure, that was joy unspeakable and full of glory! O what an Amen did he speak? 'Amen, Amen, Amen, Hallelujah!'

It would have made any Christian's heart leap, to have seen and heard what some saw and heard at that time; and I question not but that it will somewhat affect them to hear and read it; though it be scarce possible to speak the half of what was admirable in him; for being so much beyond precedent, it astonished and amazed those of us who were about him, and the relation must fall greatly short of what was real.

I verily believe that it exceeds the highest rhetoric fully to set forth what this heavenly creature did then deliver. I say again, I want words to speak; and so did he, for he saw things unutterable. But yet, so much he spake as justly drew the admiration of all who saw him; and I heard an old experienced Christian and minister say again and again, that he never saw, nor read, nor heard the like; neither could we ever expect to see the glories of heaven more demonstrated to sense, in this world. He talked as if he had been in the third heaven, and broke out into such words as these:

'O He is come! He is come! O how sweet! How glorious is the blessed

Jesus! How shall I speak the thousandth part of His praises! O for words, to set out a little of that excellency! But it is inexpressible! O how excellent, glorious, and lovely is the precious Jesus! He is sweet, He is altogether lovely!

'O my friends, stand by and wonder; come, look upon a dying man and wonder; I cannot myself but wonder! Was there ever a greater kindness, was there ever more sensible manifestations of rich grace! O, why me, Lord, why me? Sure this is akin to heaven, and if I were never to enjoy any more than this, it were well worth all the torments that men and devils could invent, to come through even a hell to such transcendent joys as these. If this be dying, dying is sweet: let no true Christian ever be afraid of dying. O, death is sweet to me! This bed is soft. Christ's arms, His smiles and visits, sure they would turn hell into heaven. O that you did but see and feel what I do! Come and behold a dying man more cheerful than you ever saw any healthy man in the midst of his sweetest enjoyments! O sirs, worldly pleasures are pitiful poor sorry things, compared with one glimpse of this glory, which shines so brightly into my soul! O, why should any of you be sorrowful, when I am so glad? This, this is the hour that I have waited for!'

Two days before his death, his eyes were dim, and his sight much failed; his jaws shook and trembled, and his feet were cold, and all the symptoms of death were upon him, and his extreme parts were already almost dead and senseless; and yet, even then, his joys were, if possible, greater still. He had so many fits of joy unspeakable, that he seemed to be in one continued act of seraphic love and praise. He spake like one that was just entering into the gates of the new Jerusalem: the greatest part of him was now in heaven; not a word dropped from his mouth but it breathed Christ and heaven. O what encouragements did he give to them which stood by, to follow hard after God, and to follow Christ in a humble, believing, zealous course of life, and adding one degree of grace to another, and using all diligence to make their calling and election sure; and that then, they also should find that they should have a glorious passage into a blessed eternity.

But most of his work was praise; a hundred times admiring the bottomless love of God to him. 'O, why me, Lord, why me?' And then he would give instructions to them that came to see him. He was scarce ever silent, because the love of Christ and souls did constrain him. I am ready to think that towards the close of his life, grace enabled him to do more for the cause of Christ in one hour, than is ordinarily wrought in a year. Every particular person had a faithful affectionate warning. And

that good minister, who was so much with him, used this as an argument to persuade him to be willing to live a little longer, and to be patient to tarry God's leisure: 'Sure God hath something for thee to do that is yet undone; some word of exhortation to some poor soul, that you have forgotten.'

The truth of it is, he was so filled with the love of Christ, that he could scarce bear absence from Him a moment. He knew that he should be capable of bearing greater glory above than he could here. It was the judgment of some that were with him, that his heart was not only habitually, but actually set on God all the day long; and nothing of human frailty, that could be thought a sin, appeared for some time; except it were his passionate desire to die, and difficulty to bring himself to be willing to stay below heaven.

He used every evening to take leave of his friends, hoping not to see them till the morning of the Resurrection; and he desired that they would strive to make sure of a comfortable meeting at our Father's house in that other world.

I cannot relate the twentieth part of that which deserved to be written in letters of gold. One remarkable passage I cannot omit, which was this, that when ministers or Christians came to him, he would beg of them to spend all the time that they had with him in praise. O help me to praise God; I have now nothing else to do from this time to eternity but to praise and love God. I have what my soul desires upon earth. I cannot tell what to pray for but what is already bestowed. The wants that are capable of supply in this world are supplied. I want but one thing, and that is, a speedy lift to heaven. I expect no more here, I cannot desire more, I cannot bear more. O praise, praise, praise that infinite boundless love, that hath to a wonder looked upon my soul, and done more for me than thousands of His dear children. Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me bless His holy Name. O help me, help me, O my friends, to praise and admire Him that hath done such astonishing wonders for my soul; He hath pardoned all my sins. He hath filled me with His goodness; He hath given me grace and glory, and no good thing hath He withheld from me.

'Come, help me with praises — all is too little: come, help me, O ye glorious and mighty angels, who are so well skilled in this heavenly work of praise! Praise Him, all ye creatures upon the earth; let everything that hath being help me to praise Him. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah! praise is now my work, and I shall be engaged in this sweet employment for ever. Bring the Bible; turn to David's Psalms, and let us sing a psalm

of praise; come, let us lift up our voice in the praise of the Most High. I will sing with you as long as my breath doth last; and when I have none, I shall do it better.'

And then turning to some of his friends that were weeping, he desired them rather to rejoice than weep upon his account. It may justly seem a wonder how he could speak so much as he did, when he was so weak; but the joy of the Lord did strengthen him.

In his sickness the Scriptures that he took much delight in were the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth of John. The fifty-fourth of Isaiah was very refreshing also to him; he would repeat that word, "with everlasting mercies will I gather," with abundance of joy.

He commended the study of the promises to believers, and desired that they would be sure to make good their claim to them, and then they might come to the wells of consolation, and drink their fill thereof.

According to his desire, most of the time that was spent with him was spent in praise; and he would still be calling out, 'More praise still! O, help me to praise Him; I have now nothing else to do; I have done with prayer, and all other ordinances; I have almost done conversing with mortals. I shall presently be beholding Christ Himself, that died for me, and loved me, and washed me in His blood.'

(To be continued)

Grafting

by Rev. John Flavel

When the husbandman has prepared his grafts in the season of the year, he carries them, with the tools necessary for that work to the tree he intends to ingraft, and having cut off the top of the branch in some smooth part, he cleaves it with his knife or chisel, a little beside the pith, knocks in his wedge to keep it open, then having prepared the graft he carefully sets it into the cleft, joining the inner side of the barks of graft and stock together (there being the main current of the sap). Then he pulls out the wedge, binds both together and clays it up, to defend the tender graft, and wounded stock, from the injuries of the sun and rain.

The tender scions quickly take hold of the stock, and having immediate coalition with it, drink in its sap, concoct it into their own

nourishment, thrive better, and bear more and better fruits than ever they would have done upon this natural root, and will in a short time become flourishing and fruitful.

Application

This carries a most sweet and lively resemblance to the soul's union with Christ by faith, and indeed there is nothing in nature that shadows forth this great gospel mystery like it.

1. When a twig is to be ingrafted it is cut off from the tree on which it naturally grows. And when the Lord is to graft a soul into Christ, the first work about it is a cutting work Acts 2, 37. Their hearts were cut by conviction; no scion is ingrafted without cutting, no soul united with Christ without a cutting sense of sin and misery — John 16, 8 & 9.

2. When the tender shoot is cut off from the tree, there are many more left behind upon the same tree, so promising and vigorous, as that which is taken, but it pleases the husbandman to take the one he chooses. Even so it is in the removing or transplanting of a soul by conversion; it leaves many behind in the state of nature, as likely and promising as itself. It pleaseth God to take this soul and leave many others; yet often such as grew upon the same root. Malachi 1, v. 2. Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."

3. When the grafts are cut off it is a critical season with them if they lie too long before they are ingrafted, or if they take not with the stock they die. They may stand in the stock a while but are no part of the tree. When souls are under conviction it is a critical time with them; many a one I have known then to miscarry — they have indeed for a time stood like dead grafts in the stock, by an external dead hearted profession, but never came to any thing.

4. The husbandman when he cuts off grafts makes all convenient speed to close them with the stock: And truly it concerns the servants of the Lord who are employed in this work to make haste to bring the convinced sinner to a closure with Christ. As soon as the trembling jailor cried, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas immediately directed him to Christ — Acts 16, 30 & 31. They did not say it is too soon to act faith on Christ, but "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

5. There must be an incision made in the stock, or the stock must be cut and cleaved, before the scion can be ingrafted. Such an incision or wound was made upon Christ, in order to our being ingrafted into Him. John 19, 34. The opening of that deadly wound gives life to the souls of believers.

6. The graft is intimately united and closely conjoined with the stock — the conjunction is so close that they become one tree. There is also a most close and intimate union between Christ and the soul that believeth in Him. It is emphatically expressed by the apostle 1 Cor. 6, 17. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The word imports the nearest, closest and strictest union. Christ and the soul cleave together in a blessed oneness, as those things do which are glued one to another. As the graft is really in the stock, and the spirit or sap of the stock is really in the graft, so a believer is really (though mystically) in Christ, and the spirit of Christ is really communicated to a believer. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" says Paul.

7. Grafts are bound to the stock by bands to keep them steady, else the wind would loose them out of the stock. The believing soul is also fastened to Christ by bands, which will secure it from all danger of being loosed from Him any more. There are two bonds of this union; the Spirit on God's part — this is the firm bond of union without which we could never be made one with Christ — Rom. 8, 9. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," and faith on our own part Eph. 3, 17. "That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." These hold strongly.

8. Though the stock be one and the same, yet all grafts do not thrive and flourish alike in it; some outgrow the rest, and those that grow not so well, the fault is in them not in the stock, so it is with souls really united to Christ; all do not flourish alike, the faith of some grows exceedingly, 2 Thess. 1, 3. "The things that be in others are ready to die." Rev. 3, 2, and such must charge the fault upon themselves.

Be thou tenderly affected with all the reproaches that fall upon Christ from abroad, but especially with those that redound to Him from thine own unfruitfulness.

Prayers at the Grave

by Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale.

(continued from page 328)

In view of what has been shown already, as to the practice of the Church of Scotland in its best days, one has a right to ask what is the authority for the universal custom of ministers of the Church of Scotland in our day, and most of those of other churches, except our own, for praying at the grave at funerals. The Bible, being an unchangeable Book, cannot furnish that authority any more than it did to our forefathers, and if their practice was based on the Bible the practice of the present age must be a departure from it. That they have departed from it and from the *Directory for Public Worship* is not only evident, but proved by the following statement from one of their own authorities on church law and procedure: "With regard to worship the standard of the Church is nominally the Directory of Public Worship, produced at the Westminster Assembly of Divines and approved by the General Assembly of 1645. This is included among the leading documents mentioned in the Basis of Union, but, as no such Directory can be expected to retain exclusive obligation on the Church after the age for which it was composed has passed, a note is added that it is to be 'regarded as generally regulative and of validity as . . . interpreted or modified by Acts of the General Assembly or by consuetude.'" *Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland*, 3rd ed. p. 11 by Rev. J.T. Cox, DD. It is evident from this that, though the Directory is in the Basis of Union, members and office-bearers are to understand it in whatever manner it suits themselves. This is to be expected of men who have swallowed the Declaratory Act of 1892, a document which for its vagueness and ambiguity is notorious among Church documents. In other words the Church of Scotland has modified its relationship to the Directory so far that, at least in the case of the burial of the dead, it has opened the door wide enough for the superstitions which our forefathers, with might and main, sought to expel. Alas! that some who profess greater orthodoxy than many Church of Scotland ministers should be equally guilty.

This practice of praying at the grave has become so important in the estimation of some that they do their utmost to impose it on others who give it no countenance. They represent a funeral without a prayer at the

grave as heathenish though they themselves can get neither precept nor example in Scripture for their own practice. The excuse is often made that, when people are standing round an open grave, after lowering the body of a fellow-mortal into it, they are more susceptible to serious impressions and, under such circumstances a prayer might be beneficial. Such as hold this view ought to study the Lord's mind in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and especially that part of it where the rich man expresses the view that if one went from the dead to his father's house to warn them that they would repent. The reply he got was, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." When at a funeral, we do not now wait to hear a prayer at the grave, but such of them as we have heard, we found nothing in them calculated to awaken serious impressions, but much to harden the heart and confirm sinners in their impenitency. In such services one may hear confirmed drunkards, liars, thieves and immoral persons, who gave every evidence that they had died as they had lived, referred to as being in Heaven with Christ. This betrays not only a lack of faithfulness to the living, but a hardened unconcern about uttering falsehood before the Lord.

It is almost unbelievable the extent to which some go in order to impose this practice on others, so that even the feelings of the bereaved are not spared. We remember, over twenty years ago, being at the funeral of a very dear friend, a member of our Church, and one who adhered wholeheartedly to its position. After we lowered the body into the grave one of these modern apostles of Christian burials, whom I candidly acknowledge was not of any branch of the Presbyterian Church, intruded himself into the company and asked the bereaved father if he wanted a prayer at the grave. Through anguish of heart no reply was given, and fearing that silence would be taken for consent, we answered on behalf of the father that, as a Church, we were not countenancing such a practice. Unsolicited, he began to defend his position by saying that Christ prayed at the grave of Lazarus, and that ought to be enough of an example for us. The fact that the Saviour was not at the funeral of Lazarus and that any prayer which may be referred to in connection with the raising of Lazarus out of the grave cannot be put in the same category as a burial service, manifests the ignorance behind this defence as will be apparent to any one who will read the inspired narrative on this point.

Sometimes we find men and women who all their days, by their profession, testified against this practice, and on the day of their

funeral, relatives, who in no way sympathized with their views, insisting on getting a minister to pray at their grave. Such a prayer will, in no way, harm the deceased, but it is not much comfort to those who are responsible for such conduct to know that in the last act of kindness they performed to the departed they vitiated it by insulting their memory. It were better, under such circumstances, to set aside one's own views, especially when these views could not be supported by the Word of God, than to do anything so heartless.

Where there is a true regard to the Word of God and to the practice of the Church in its best days together with an intimate knowledge of the contendings of its confessors and martyrs no place will be given to the heathenish innovations of men, which they bring in under the name of religion. This was the case in modern times with such a noted man as Dr. David Hay Fleming of St. Andrews, who left strict instructions that there were to be no prayers at his grave. He was one who had an accurate, profound, and sympathetic knowledge of the contendings of the Church of Scotland, and his conduct, in this instance, speaks to his country-men as a clear commentary on the language of Scripture, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

In closing this article we cannot do better than quote a statement of the celebrated Thomas McCrie, D.D., the historian of John Knox, on the introduction of religious services at funerals and the privilege conferred upon us by our forefathers in forbidding them in the Church of Scotland:— "One superstitious rite paves the way for another, and one superstitious opinion generates seven worse and more monstrous than itself. The primitive Christians, from regard for those who suffered death for the Gospel, began to perform their funeral obsequies with great solemnity. They visited their tombs — they held their assemblies for worship at them — they celebrated the anniversary of their martyrdom. The prayers and commemorations at the funeral of martyrs (which came to be extended to all who died in the faith) were at first confined to thanksgivings for their deliverance and glorification, with supplications that those who survived might be enabled to follow their example. But prayers *over* the dead were soon succeeded by prayers *for* them; and produced in due time the doctrines of purgatory, penances, pardons, the merit of masses, obites and dirges, canonization, saints' days, prayers to the dead, the collecting and worshipping of relics, pretended miracles, and a thousand absurdities of the same pernicious description.

“Our ancestors, at the Reformation, wisely resolved to strike at the root of this system of corruption and imposture, as the only effectual way of getting rid of the evils which it had entailed on them, and of guarding against their return. Upon this principle they completely abolished, not only the funeral service, which they justly regarded as having been a powerful instrument in the hands of superstition and priestcraft, but also holidays, the hierarchy, the use as well as the names of the five popish sacraments, with a multitude of other ceremonies, which, though introduced with the view, or under the pretext of decorating and recommending divine worship, tend, in fact, to tarnish its beauty, and to reduce and exhaust its spirit. This thorough reform constitutes the high distinction of Scotland among the Protestant churches. Its beneficial influence has extended to all departments of society — it has improved our temporal as well as our spiritual welfare — it has freed us from many galling impositions, which diminish the comforts, and fret the spirits of other nations. It may be seen in the superior information of our people, in their freedom from childish fears and vulgar prejudices, in the purity of their morals, and in that practical regard, which, unconstrained by forms, and unattracted by show, they voluntarily pay to the ordinances of religion. One of the worst symptoms of our state, and which may justly occasion foreboding apprehensions, is, that we are not duly sensible of our privileges, nor aware of the cause to which, under Providence, we are principally to ascribe them; and that there are many among us, whose conduct gives too much ground to suspect, that they would be ready to part, at a very cheap rate, with those privileges which their fathers so dearly won.” *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 573, 574.

Book Reviews

Grace & The Gentiles, Expository studies in six Pauline Letters, by Marcus L. Loane, xxiv, pp. 149. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, price £2.50, paperback.

These expository studies by Bp. Marcus Loane are not intended to represent generally the Apostle's doctrine of free grace but are restricted to the Apostle's ministry to the Gentile world. The other apostles, no doubt, took a deep interest in the peoples who live outwith the land of Palestine but their contacts were either occasional or with Gentile groups whom they came across in the course of their work in the

gospel. The apostle, however, was called to labour in the untouched fields of the civilised world to which the Saviour referred when he said: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring" — John 10: 16. When the time was ripe for evangelising the Gentiles, Paul was at hand to undertake the work. "The Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to me", he said to the Galatians, "as the Gospel of the circumcision was to Peter" — Gal. 2:7, and in the fulfilment of this mission, as he stood on the steps of the temple in Jerusalem in an attempt to quieten the rioters, he explained in the words of the Lord: "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" — Acts 23:21. In his three great missionary journeys, the apostle opened up new ground for the gospel and followed this up by sending his epistles to the main centres where he had planted Churches. From these 13 epistles, Dr. Loane has selected 6 epistles for the purpose of these studies: I & II Thessalonians which are now regarded as the earliest of Paul's letters; Philippians, perhaps near the end of his life, with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, written from his prison in Rome and known as the prison epistles. These epistles, therefore, generally cover the whole of the apostle's life of varied and arduous service in his ministry to the Gentile nations and may be regarded as representing the apostle's doctrine on the great theme of free and sovereign grace which lay so close to his heart. In the 24 short chapters of this volume, a key verse is selected to stand at the head of each chapter as the subject of study. Dr. Loane's well known powers of lucid and full exposition are evident in these chapters which are fresh and stimulating and warmly evangelical. The words on the back cover gives Dr. Loane a place in the tradition of Dr. J.C. Ryle, the great Bishop of Liverpool which is sufficient recommendation. This is another of the Banner of Truth publications which is worth securing and placing on the book shelves in our homes and manses.

Notes and Comments

Marxists in the Schools

A new book, called "The Right to Learn" which has been produced by the Conservatives claims that 25,000 extremist Marxists are teaching in our schools. That Marxists have been infiltrating the schools has been well known for a long time but it is alarming to think that this infiltration may have reached such proportions. There is little doubt that this band

of revolutionaries, of whatever size it may be, is devoted to the spread of an atheistic philosophy which seeks the overthrow of everything we hold dear. The children which these Communistic infiltrators would produce by their type of education would be mere slaves of their Communist masters and of the State. If we desire to prevent such a calamity overtaking the nation let us seek an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our land. Nothing would be more certain to defeat all the subtle schemes and intrigue of the Communists than such an outpouring of God's Spirit.

Education Today

Many aspects of present-day education cause serious concern to parents. One incident affecting education was reported recently in the press. A mother complained to the school authorities because her 15 year old son was asked to write an essay on how he would plan his own death. The headmaster maintained that the class had been asked to comment on a story about a boy who saw a suicide bid and to analyse the story and see what might have been achieved by that suicide. He also stated: "We cannot prepare a lad for the outside world not knowing that things like suicide exist."

It is true that children have to be prepared for the outside world but we hardly think that projects of this kind are helpful to the impressionable minds of the young. If it was a case of emphasising the sanctity of life and warning against the evil of suicide it would be another matter altogether and to this none would object. However it does not appear to have been so and consequently is to be deplored.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Southern: At Glasgow on 23rd November at 6 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 7th December at 2 p.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 25th January 1983 at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: at Auckland on 28th January 1983 at 2.30 p.m.

Induction at Chesley

On Friday September 3rd, 1982, a good congregation gathered in Ebenezer Free Presbyterian Church, Chesley, Ontario, Canada to

witness the induction of Rev. Donald M. Campbell.

The Presbytery opened in private in the usual manner and after the appointment of a Clerk pro tem. the relevant part of the Minute authorizing this meeting was read by the Clerk. The Edict was returned duly served and the officer of court made the proclamation at the door of the church after which the Moderator, Rev. Alex MacPherson, went to the pulpit and the congregation were treated to a clear expository sermon based upon II Corinthians 5:20-21. From this text, the Moderator showed first of all that Paul presented himself as an ambassador for Christ, secondly Paul's embassy or mission and thirdly, the terms of his embassy.

After an excellent address, the Moderator proceeded to address the required questions to Rev. D. Campbell who returned satisfactory answers, after which the formula was signed in the presence of the congregation. Mr MacPherson, in the name of the Presbytery and with solemn prayer inducted Rev. D.M. Campbell into the pastoral charge of Chesley, and the brethren gave the right hand of fellowship.

Mr Campbell was then addressed by the Clerk pro. tem. and the congregation suitably exhorted by Rev. M. MacInnes, Toronto. The Moderator made some closing remarks and the service was concluded with prayer and praise. Mr Campbell then received the congregation at the church door. After the service, the congregation were invited to the home of Mr G. Schuit where they were lavishly entertained and refreshed.

It is a mark of great encouragement for the church in Canada to have a third minister settled in this vast country. It is especially heartening for the Chesley congregation to have a settled pastor after patiently waiting for so many years. It is our earnest prayer that Mr Campbell's ministry would be abundantly blessed. *(Rev) D. Beattie, Clerk pro. tem.*

Acknowledgement of Donations

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

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon, Glasgow postmark £19; Anon, Glasgow postmark, £10; S.S., £10 for Shabani (New Canaan).

China Mission Fund: S.S., £5.

The Treasurers of the following congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Beaulieu: Legacy of £1000 for Congregational Purposes from the executry of the late Mrs K.

Mackenzie (Chapelton) per Munro & Noble, Solicitors, Inverness.

Daviot: Anon £20 for Sust. Fund.

Dingwall: Anon £3 for Communion Expenses.

Dumbarton: Anon £5 (in plate); N McP. £10, both for Congr. Funds.

Fort William: Envelope in plate £1 for Sust. Fund; Mrs M.M.N. £20; Mrs R. McD. £5, both per Rev. J.A. MacDonald.

Gairloch: Lady Buchanan £100 for Inverasdale Mtg House; Two Inverness Friends £20 for Strath Mtg. House.

Glasgow: Anon £3; £5; £5; £5; Passenger £10; Mrs Jones £10; Miss J. McD £10; all for Bus Expenses; Anon £20 for Church Cleaning Expenses; M. McK. \$25 (in church plate); Anon £60.64p for Manse Gas Heating Installation.

Greenock: Robt H.C., Bangor, N.I. £15; Mr & Mrs A.M., Fort William £10 per Rev. L. MacLeod, both for Congr. Purposes.

Laide: In Coll. Plate £5; Fort William Friend £20; Paul & Jane Holland £10; Friend at Communion £20; Anon £10; Friend at Communion £10; Dingwall Friends £5 per K. McK. In memory of loved ones £8; Friend, Strathburn £2 for Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund per C. Ross; In Coll. Plate, Bayhead £5 for Laide Sust. Fund per Rev. D.A. Ross.

Lochcarron: Anon £5 for Blythwood Tract Society; Anon £2 for Inverness Home of Rest, both in Ardineaskin Plate.

South Harris: Miss J.M., Tarbert £100; Mr R. MacL., Middlesbrough £50, both for Sust. Fund; Mrs M. MacL., Lochcarron £20; Friend of the Cause, per N. MacKay £100; Friends, Leverburgh per Rev. D. MacLean £20, all for Congr. Fund; Friend, North Harris £10; Friends, Skye £30, both for Manse Renovation; Mrs T., Glenisla £15; Friend, North Harris £10 for Car Fund.

Stirling: R.T. £10 for Congr. Funds per Rev. D.J. MacDonald.

Stornoway: Tolsta Friend £5; Anon £10; Anon £5, all for Communion Expenses.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOKROOM

THE CHRISTIAN, HIS CONFLICTS AND HIS ARMOUR

by the Rev. C. Simeon M.A. (An exposition of Ephesians 6: 10-18)

(p) £1.10

1 & 2 PETER

by Alexander Nisbet (c) £5.95

CALVIN & THE CALVINISTS.

A Reply to R.T. Kendall's Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 by

Paul Helm (p) £2.25

POOR DOUBTING CHRISTIAN DRAWN TO CHRIST

by Thomas Hooker 1586-1647 (p) £1.80

Anyone wishing to dispose of second-hand books, please contact the bookroom at 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE. Tel. 041 332 1760.