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Thou shalt Arise

The low state of the Cause of Christ is often a burden to the true children of God. While, on the one hand, they are not to despise the day of small things, neither are they to cease to look for, and pray for, the prosperity of Zion. The Psalmist was saying: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." In Haggai's time there were those who were saying: "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." But the Lord had a different message for them: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" By Haggai, the prophet the Lord reproved them: "Consider your ways." And through the same prophet He directed them: "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." Haggai and Zechariah were instrumental in the Lord's hands, in making the people go up to rebuild the temple, the rebuilding of which had been halted for a time through the enemies of the Church of God.

In Psalm 102 we find the Psalmist, after mournfully expressing himself because of affliction and trouble, turning from these sorrows and trials to encourage himself in the contemplation of the future prosperity of Zion. He had to say: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come." It is an encouragement to the soul in its distress that things are not always to be so. The Lord has His seasons, His set times for reviving His Church in the world. For this His people are to look and wait. The faithfulness of the Lord to His promises ensures that the promises will be fulfilled in the Lord's good time. As our times are wholly in His hands, so are the set times for the reviving of His Church in His hands. He alone can build up Zion and gather the dispersed of Israel into one. And when He does this, men will know that it is the work of the Lord and not of man.

It may seem at the present time that the Lord is taking no notice what-

soever of the desolate state of His Church. It is as though He is altogether deaf to the entreaties of His folk. But is it indeed so? Verily, No. While it is true that the Lord sometimes says to His unbelieving people: "Your time is always ready but my time is not yet come," yet He does not discourage His people from making their requests known unto Him, nor is His ear closed to their entreating voice. They may be assured of this for He has said: "I will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." They are to learn as Habakkuk instructed those to whom he prophesied: "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." So was the Psalmist assured when he said: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion." The present desolate state of Zion was not to continue without any change. The Lord could say through His servant Jeremiah: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Balaam, the false prophet, with all the enmity that was in his heart against Israel was forced to speak the truth. When invited to curse Israel, God would not allow him to do so and a word was put in his mouth. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold I have received commandment to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." Balaam discovered as he said: "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." So what the Psalmist declared must come to pass: The Lord shall arise and have mercy upon Zion.

But the Psalmist went on to declare: "for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come." The Lord has His set times. His purposes are from eternity. Yet He has not only wisdom to devise all His purposes but also has power to fulfil them in their due season. Nothing can be without His permission. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it." If this be so, then how much more with regard to events affecting the interests of His Church in the world. They shall surely come to pass in their set time. Men will have to say: "The time to favour her, yea, the set time is come." The dawn of a brighter day for the Church of God will break. It will be a morning without clouds. The Church so long oppressed, so long under the hiding of the Lord's Countenance will find in that day the Sun of righteousness arising with healing in His wings. Blessed day! when Zion by the mighty Lord shall be built up again. Blessed day! when she shall come forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." For that day the Church waits. For that day the

Church prays. Her confidence that her expectation will not be disappointed is not in the strength of her faith but in the faithfulness of her glorified Head to His promises.

The Real Presence — What is it?

by Rev. J. C. Ryle

(Continued from page 17)

"If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Exod. 33: 15.

II. The second thing which I propose to consider is *the real spiritual presence of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

In considering this branch of our subject we must carefully remember that we are speaking of One who is God and man in one Person. We are speaking of One who in infinite love to our souls, took man's nature, and was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead, and buried, to be a sacrifice for sins, and yet never ceased for a moment to be very God. The peculiar "presence" of this blessed Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, with His Church, is the point which I want to unfold in this part of my paper. I want to show that He is really and truly present with His believing people, spiritually or after the manner of a spirit, and that His presence is one of the grand privileges of a true Christian. What then is the real spiritual "presence" of Christ, and wherein does it consist? Let us see.

(a) There is a real spiritual presence of Christ with that Church which is His mystical body, — the blessed company of all faithful people. This is the meaning of that parting saying of our Lord to His Apostles, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," (Matt. 28: 20). To the visible Church of Christ that saying did not strictly belong. Rent by divisions, defiled by heresies, disgraced by superstitions, and corruptions, the visible Church has often given mournful proof that Christ does not always dwell in it. Many of its branches in the course of years, like the churches of Asia, have decayed and passed away. It is the Holy Catholic Church, composed of God's elect, the Church of which every member is truly sanctified, the Church of believing and penitent men and women, — this is the Church to which alone, strictly speaking, the promise belongs. This is the Church in which there is always a real spiritual "presence" of Christ.

There is not a visible Church on earth, however ancient and well ordered, which is secure against falling away. Scripture and history alike testify that, like the Jewish Church, it may become corrupt, and depart from the faith, and departing from the faith, may die. And why is this? Simply because Christ has never promised to any visible Church that He will be

with it always, even unto the end of the world. The word that He inspired St. Paul to write to the Roman Church is the same word that He sends to every visible Church throughout the world, whether Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational: "Be not high-minded, but fear:- continue in God's goodness, otherwise thou shalt be cut off"* (Rom. 11: 20-22).

On the other hand, the perpetual presence of Christ with that Holy Catholic Church, which is His body, is the great secret of its continuance and security. It lives on, and cannot die, because Jesus Christ is in the midst of it. It is a ship tossed with storm and tempest; but it cannot sink, because Christ is on board. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, robbed, beaten, beheaded or burned; but His true Church is never extinguished. It lives on through fire and water. When crushed in one land, it springs up in another. The Pharaohs, the Herods, the Neros, the Julians, the bloody Marys, the Charles the Ninths, have laboured in vain to destroy this Church. They slay their thousands, and then go to their own place. The true Church outlives them all. It is a bush that is often burning, and yet is never consumed. And what is the reason of all this? It is the perpetual "presence" of Jesus Christ.

(b) There is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ in the heart of every true believer. This is what St. Paul meant when he speaks of "Christ dwelling in the heart by faith" (Ephes. 3: 17). This is what our Lord meant when He says of the man that loves Him and keeps His Word, "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14: 23). In every believer, whether high or low, or rich or poor, or young or old, or feeble or strong, the Lord Jesus dwells, and keeps up His work of grace by the power of the Holy Ghost. As He dwells in the whole Church, which is His body, — keeping, guarding, preserving, and sanctifying it, — so does He continually dwell in every member of that body, — in the least as well as in the greatest. This "presence" is the secret of all that peace, and hope, and joy, and comfort, which believers feel. All spring from their having a Divine tenant within their hearts. This "presence" is the secret of their continuance in the faith, and perseverance unto the end. In themselves

* "Whatsoever we read in Scripture concerning the endless love and the saving mercy which God sheweth towards His Church, the only proper subject thereof is this Church which is the mystical body of Christ. Concerning this flock it is that our Lord and Saviour hath promised, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands'." — *Hooker, Eccl. Polity, book 3, ch. 1, 2.*

These are wise words, and words that all Hooker's professed admirers would do well to ponder and digest. Few things are so mischievous as the common habit of applying to such mixed and corrupt bodies as visible Churches those blessed promises of perpetuity and preservation which belong to none but the company of true believers.

they are weak and unstable as water. But they have within them One who is "able to save to the uttermost," and will not allow His work to be overthrown. Not one bone of Christ's mystical body shall ever be broken. Not one Lamb of Christ's flock shall ever be plucked out of His hand. The house in which Christ is pleased to dwell, though it be but a cottage, is one which the devil shall never break into and make his own.

(c) There is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ wherever His believing people meet together in His name. This is the plain meaning of that famous saying, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18: 20). The smallest gathering of true Christians for the purposes of prayer or praise, or holy conference, or reading God's Word, is sanctified by the best of company. The great or rich or noble may not be there, but the King of kings Himself is present, and angels look on with reverence. The grandest buildings that men have reared for religious uses are often no better than whitened sepulchres, destitute of any holy influence, because given up to superstitious ceremonies, and filled to no purpose with crowds of formal worshippers, who come unfeeling, and go unfeeling away. No worship is of any use to souls at which Christ is not present. Incense, banners, pictures, flowers, crucifixes, and long processions of richly dressed ecclesiastics are a poor substitute for the great High Priest Himself. The meanest room where a few penitent believers assemble in the name of Jesus is a consecrated and most holy place in the sight of God. They that worship God in spirit and truth never draw near to Him in vain. Often they go home from such meetings warmed, cheered, stablished, strengthened, comforted, and refreshed. And what is the secret of their feelings? They have had with them the great Master of assemblies, even Christ Himself.

(d) There is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ with the hearts of all true-hearted communicants in the Lord's Supper. Rejecting as I do, with all my heart, the baseless notion of any bodily presence of Christ on the Lord's table, I can never doubt that the great ordinance appointed by Christ has a special and peculiar blessing attached to it. That blessing, I believe, consists in a special and peculiar presence of Christ, vouchsafed to the heart of every believing communicant. That truth appears to me to lie under those wonderful words of institution, "Take, eat: this is My body." "Drink ye all of this: this is My blood." Those words were never meant to teach that the bread in the Lord's Supper was literally Christ's body, or the wine literally Christ's blood. But our Lord did mean to teach that every right-hearted believer, who ate that bread and drank that wine in remembrance of Christ, would in so doing find a special

presence of Christ in his heart, and a special revelation of Christ's sacrifice of His own body and blood to his soul. In a word, there is a special spiritual "presence" of Christ in the Lord's Supper, which they only know who are faithful communicants, and which they who are not communicants miss altogether.

After all, the experience of all the best servants of Christ is the best proof that there is a special blessing attached to the Lord's Supper. You will rarely find a true believer who will not say that he reckons this ordinance one of his greatest helps and highest privileges. He will tell you that if he was deprived of it, he would find the loss of it a great drawback to his soul. He will tell you that in eating that bread, and drinking that cup, he realizes something of Christ dwelling in him; and finds his repentance deepened, his faith increased, his knowledge enlarged, his graces strengthened. Eating the bread with faith, he feels closer communion with the body of Christ. Drinking the wine with faith, he feels closer communion with the blood of Christ. He sees more clearly what Christ is to him, and what he is to Christ. He understands more thoroughly what it is to be one with Christ and Christ in Him. He feels the roots of his spiritual life insensibly watered, and the work of grace within him insensibly built up and carried forward. He cannot explain or define it. It is a matter of experience, which no one knows but he who feels it. And the true explanation of the whole matter is this, — there is a special and spiritual "presence" of Christ in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Jesus meets those who draw near to His table with a true heart, in a special and peculiar way.

(e) Last, but not least, there is a real spiritual "presence" of Christ vouchsafed to believers in special times of trouble and difficulty. This is the presence of which St. Paul received assurance on more than one occasion. At Corinth, for instance, it is written, "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee" (Acts 18: 9,10). At Jerusalem, again, when the Apostle was in danger of his life, it is written, "The night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23: 11). Again, in the last epistle St. Paul wrote, we find him saying, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (2 Tim. 4: 16, 17).

This is the account of the singular and miraculous courage which many

of God's children have occasionally shown under circumstances of unusual trial, in every age of the Church. When the three children were cast into the fiery furnace, and preferred the risk of death to idolatry, we are told that Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dan. 3: 25). When Stephen was beset by bloody-minded enemies on the very point of stoning him, we read that he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7: 56). Nor ought we to doubt that this special presence was the secret of the fearlessness with which many early Christian martyrs met their deaths, and of the marvellous courage which the Marian martyrs, such as Bradford, Latimer and Rogers, displayed at the stake. A peculiar sense of Christ being with them is the right explanation of all these cases. These men died as they did because Christ was with them. Nor ought any believer to fear that the same helping presence will be with him, whenever his own time of special need arrives. Many are overcareful about what they shall do in their last sickness, and on the bed of death. Many disquiet themselves with anxious thoughts as to what they would do if husband or wife died, or if they were suddenly turned out of house and home. Let us believe that when the need comes the help will come also. Let us not carry our crosses before they are laid upon us. He that said to Moses, "Certainly I will be with thee," will never fail any believer who cries to Him. When the hour of special storm comes, the Lord who walks upon the waters will come and say, "Peace: be still." There are thousands of doubting saints continually crossing the river, who go down to the water in fear and trembling, and yet are able at last to say with David, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me" (Psalm 23: 4).

This branch of our subject deserves to be pondered well. This spiritual presence of Christ is a real and true thing, though a thing which the children of this world neither know nor understand. It is precisely one of those matters of which St. Paul writes, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto Him" (1 Cor. 2: 14). But for all that, I repeat emphatically, the spiritual presence of Christ, — His presence after the manner of a Spirit with the spirits of His own people, — is a thing real and true. Let us not doubt it. Let us hold it fast. Let us seek to feel it more and more. The man who feels nothing whatever of it in his own heart's experience, may depend on it that he is not yet in a right state of soul.

Saint's Needy Times

by John Bunyan

Saints are like to meet with needy times, or with such times as will show them that they need a continual assistance of the grace of God, that they may go rightly through this world. This is a motive that wears a spur in its heel, a spur to prick us forward to supplicate at the throne of grace. This needy time is in other places called the perilous time, the evil day, the hour and power of darkness, the day of temptation, the cloudy and dark day (2 Tim. 3: 1; Eph. 6: 13; Luke 22: 53; Heb. 3: 8; Ezek. 34: 12; Gen. 47: 9; Matt. 6: 34). And indeed, in the general, all the days of our pilgrimage here are evil, yea, every day has a sufficiency of evil in it to destroy the best saint that breathes, were it not for the grace of God. But there are also, as I have hinted, particular special times, times more eminently dangerous and hazardous unto saints.

1. There are their young days, the days of their youth and childhood in grace. This day is usually attended with much evil towards them that are asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. Now the devil has lost a sinner; there is a captive has broke prison, and one run away from his master; now hell seems to be awakened from sleep, the devils are come out, they roar, and roaring they seek to recover their runaway. Now tempt him, threaten him, flatter him, stigmatise him, throw dust into his eyes, poison him with error, spoil him while he is upon the potter's wheel; any thing to keep him from coming to Jesus Christ. And is not this a needy time? does not such an one want abundance of grace? is it not of absolute necessity that you, if you are the man thus beset, should ply it at the throne of grace, for mercy and grace to help you in such a time of need as this is? To want a spirit of prayer now is as much as your life is worth. O, therefore, you that know what I say, you that are broke loose from hell, that are fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you, and that do hear the lion roar after you, and that are kept awake with the continual voice of his chinking chain, cry as you fly; yea, the promise is, that they that come to God with weeping, with supplication, he will lead them. Well, this is one needy time, now your hedge is low, now your branch is tender, now you are but in the bud. Pray that you may not be marred in the potter's hand.

2. The time of prosperity is also a time of need, I mean of your spiritual prosperity. For as Satan can tell how to suit temptations for you in the day of your want, so he has those that can entangle you in the day of your fulness. He has his spiritual wickednesses in the high and heavenly

places (Eph. 6: 12). He can tell how to lay a snare for you in the land of Canaan, as well as in the wilderness; in your time of receiving good things, as well as in your hungry and empty hours. Nay, such times seem to be the most dangerous, not in themselves, but through the deceits of our heart. Hence Moses gives this caution to the children of Israel, that when God had given them the promised land, and vineyards, and wells, and olive trees, and when they had eaten and were full, 'Then,' says he, 'beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage' (Deut. 6: 10-13). And again, he doubles this caution, saying, 'When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day; lest when thou hast eaten and art full,' and thou in all good things art increased, 'then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage' (Deut. 8: 10-14). All this may be applied spiritually. For there are, as I said, snares laid for us in our best things; and he that has great enjoyments, and forgets to pray for grace to keep him humble then, shall quickly be where Peter was, after his knowledge of the Lord Jesus by the revelation of the Father.

3. Another needy time is a time when men are low and empty as to worldly good; this time is full of temptations and snares. At this time, men will, if they look not well to their doings and goings, be tempted to strain curtesies both with conscience and with God's Word, and adventure to do things that are dangerous, and that have a tendency to make all their religion and profession vain. This, holy Agur was aware of; so he prayed, Let me not be rich and full, lest I deny thee; let me not be poor, lest I steal, and take the name of my God in vain (Prov. 30: 7-9). There are many inconveniences that attend him that is fallen into decay in this world. It is an evil day with him, and the devils will be as busy with him, as the flies are with a lean and scabbed sheep. It shall go hard but such a man shall be full of maggots; full of silly, foolish, idle inventions, to get up, and to abound with fulness again. It is not a time now, will Satan say, to retain a tender conscience, to regard your word or promise, to pay for what you buy, or to stick at pilfering, and filch from thy neighbour. This, Agur was afraid of; therefore he prayed that God would keep him from that which would be to him a temptation to do it. How many in our day have, on these very accounts, brought religion to a very ill savour, and themselves into the snare of the devil, and all because they have not ad-

dicted themselves to pray to God for grace to help in this time of need, but rather have left off the thing that is good, and given up themselves to the temptations of the devil, and the subtle and ensnaring motions of the flesh.

4. Another needy time is the day of persecution; this is called, as was hinted before, 'the hour of darkness,' 'the cloudy and dark day.' This day, therefore, is full of snares, and of evils of every kind. Here is the fear of man, the terrors of a prison, of loss of goods and life. Now all things look black, now the fiery trial is come. He that cannot now pray, he that now applies not himself to God on the throne of grace, by the priesthood of Jesus Christ, is like to take a fall before all men, a foul fall, a fall that will not only break his own bones, but also the hearts of those that fear God and behold it: 'Come therefore boldly unto the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

5. Another time of need is that time wherein you change your condition, and enter into a new relation. For here also the snares and traps lie waiting for thee. There is a hopeful child goes to service, or to be an apprentice; there is a young man, a young maid, enters into a married condition, and though they pray before, yet they leave off to pray then. Why, these people are oftentimes ruined and undone. The reason is, this change is attended with new snares, with new cares, and with new temptations, in the which — because through unwatchfulness they are not aware — they are taken, drawn to perdition and destruction by them. Many in my short day have gone, I doubt not, down to the pit, this way, that have sometimes been to appearance the very foremost and hopefulest in the place where they have lived. O how soon has their fire gone out and their lamps ceased to burn! How quickly have they lost their love to their ministers, by whom they were illuminated, and to the warmest Christians, through communion with whom they used to be kept awake and savoury! How quickly have they found them out new friends, new companions, new ways and methods of life, and new delights to feed their foolish minds withal! Wherefore, O you that are in this matter concerned, 'Come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

6. Another time of need is, when the generality of professors are decayed; when the custom of fancies and fooleries have taken away all gravity and modesty from among the children of men. Now pray, or you will die; yea, pray against those decays, those vain customs, those foolish fancies, those light and vain carriages that have overtaken others else they

will assuredly knock at your door, and obtain favour at your hand, the which if they do, they will quickly bring you down into the dirt with others, and put you in peril of damnation as well as they.

7. Another time of need is, the time of guilt contracted, and of the hiding of God's face. This is a dangerous time. If you now forbear to pray, you are undone, for the natural tendency of guilt is to drive a man from God. So it served our first father; and oft-times when God hides his face, men run into desperation, and so throw up all duties, and say as he of old, 'What should I wait for the Lord any longer?' (2 Kings 6: 33). Now your great help against this is prayer, continuing in prayer. Prayer wrestles with the devil, and will overthrow him; prayer wrestles with God, and will overcome him: prayer wrestles with all temptations, and makes them fly. Great things have been done by prayer, even by the prayer of those that have contracted guilt, and that have by their sins lost the smiles and sense of the flavour of God. Wherefore, when this needy, this evil time has overtaken you, pray: 'Come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'

8. The day of reproach and slander is another time of need, or a day in which you will want supplies of grace. Sometimes we meet with days wherein we are loaded with reproaches, slanders, scandals, and lies. Christ found the day of reproach a burdensome day unto him; and there is many a professor driven quite away from all conscience towards God, and open profession of his name, by such things as these (Ps. 69: 7). Reproach, when cast at a man, is as if he was being stoned to death with stones. Now ply it hard at the throne of grace, for mercy and grace to bear you up, or you will either miscarry or sink underground by the weight of reproach that may fall upon you.

9. Another time of need is that wherein a man's friends desert and forsake him, because of his gospel principles, or of those temptations that attend his profession. This is a time that often happens to those that are good. Thus it was with Christ, with Paul, with Job, with Heman, and so has it been with many other of God's servants in the day of their temptations in this world; and a sore time it is. Job complained under it, so did Heman, Paul and Christ (John 6: 66; 2 Tim. 1: 15; Job 19: 13-19). Now a man is as forlorn as a pelican in the wilderness, as an owl in the desert, or as a sparrow upon the house-top. If a man cannot now go to the throne of grace by prayer, through Christ, and so fetch grace for his support from thence, what can he do? He cannot live of himself (John 15: 4). Wherefore this is a sore evil.

10. Another time of need is the day of death, when I am to pack up

and to be gone from hence, the way of all the earth. Now the greatest trial is come, excepting that of the day of judgment. Now a man is to be stripped of all but that which cannot be shaken. Now a man grows near the borders of eternity. Now he begins to see into the borders of the next world. Now death is death, and the grave the grave indeed! now he begins to see what it is for body and soul to part, and what to go and appear before God (Eccles. 12: 5). Now the dark entry, and the thoughts of what is in the way from a deathbed to the gate of the holy heaven, comes nearer the heart than when health and prosperity do compass a man about. Wherefore this is like to be a trying time, a time of need indeed. A prudent man will make it one of the great concerns of his whole life, to get and lay up a stock of grace for this day, though the fool will rage and be confident: for he knows all will be little enough to keep him warm in his soul, while cold death strokes his hand over his face, and over his heart, and is turning his blood into jelly: while strong death is loosing his silver cord, and breaking his golden bowl (Eccles. 12: 6). Wherefore, I say, this motive wears a spur on its heel, a spur to prick us on to the throne of grace for mercy, and grace to help in time of need.

Repentance

by Rev. Alex MacPherson, London

(The following paper was delivered by Rev. A. MacPherson at the Theological Conference held in Glasgow at the beginning of December, 1989.)

Scripture makes repentance necessary.

The Word of God leaves us in no doubt that repentance is an essential exercise of soul in every case where a sinner is saved. Mark informs us that after John the Baptist had been put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel, and that his message was, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." The good news of salvation had to be received by repentance and faith. This initial intimation of the necessity of repentance which both Matthew and Mark record, is reiterated throughout the New Testament. The Saviour insists on it seven more times in the Gospels, and its absolute necessity is stressed at least thirteen times in the remaining books. And, since true religion is the same at all times, we might expect repentance to be stressed in the Old Testament also. True, the word in this sense of it, occurs only six times, but the thing that the word names is spoken of in scores of passages in ways that make very clear that it is an essential element of the exercise of a sinner saved by grace. The testimony of Scripture may well be summed up in the words, "No salvation without repentance!"

The meaning of repentance

We must now ascertain what this exercise of soul called repentance is. What does the word mean? Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms defines it as "a change of heart, an awareness of one's shortcomings morally or spiritually, or of the evil of one's actions or life as a whole." That pretty well states its meaning as used in ordinary speech, but it is not sufficient as a religious definition, as we shall see. It might be as well to dispose of at this point, another word which can be confused with repentance, namely, remorse. Remorse is a gnawing of guilt with no turning of heart from the sin.

Turning now to the New Testament words which in our version are translated "repentance", we find there are two and that there is an important difference in their meanings. The weaker word, "metamelomai" means basically, "to regret". The stronger word, "metanoeo" means "To change the mind and conduct". The first word is used in Matt. 21: 32, where Jesus, addressing the chief priests and elders, says, "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." These leaders of the Jews, unlike the publicans and harlots who believed the Baptist's message of soul-cleansing for the repentant, did not even feel regret for their sins. There are only four other uses of this word; in Matt. 21: 29; 27: 3; Hebrews 7: 21; and 2 Cor. 7: 10. In the last, Paul says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of:" The second "repent" is the weaker word "regret". Repentance to salvation is not to be regretted.

The other, stronger, much more frequently used word, and its noun, "repentance", occurs nearly 60 times, and denotes an exercise of soul that goes beyond regretting. What causes the regret merely, is some measure of remorse of conscience, along with shame, and some measure of fear also that the sin has put one into danger. But this whole emotion is selfish; its view of the sin that occasioned it, takes no account of God except in his character as Judge. True repentance, the thing denoted by the stronger word, also has the ingredients of shame and a sense of danger, but, additionally, involves pain springing from a correct view of sin as transgression of the holy, just and good law of God who is admired for what He is, holy, just and good — good especially in his mercy towards sinners for Christ's sake. And, importantly, these motions of the mind and feelings result in a turning from sin to God. The exercise is clearly not one that terminates on self, but on God. Self is a sinner: God is just yet merciful; and to God the sinner turns.

The shorter Catechism definition of repentance is admirable: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief, and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience."

Why is repentance necessary?

Now, before we approach the question, What produces true repentance? Let us consider the necessity for repentance. What makes it essential to the saving of a sinner? It is to be understood that repentance only has meaning in the context of sin and salvation. Repentance is basically an attitude to sin, a right attitude. And what should that be? Is not sin the supreme evil? What is required of every creature who comes into contact with it? Ought he not to condemn it? The sinner has a duty to do this just as much as the holiest angel. Every moral creature is bound to do right, and as he views sin, he is under obligation to condemn it. The obligation never ceases; it rests upon sinful men and fallen angels just as on holy creatures. If the sinner will not condemn any and all sin, he is condoning sin, his own sins in particular; and he is standing by the wrong he has done. On the other hand, should a sinner sincerely condemn his own sins, he is doing the right thing — he is, in short, repenting. It ought to be obvious that the God of holiness cannot save a sinner who will not condemn himself for having sinned, for having done this great evil. The evil nature of sin, therefore, is the *first reason* for the necessity for repentance.

The *second* reason is closely connected with the first. Not only does the fact that sin is evil necessitate repentance, but the eternal validity of God's law does the same. Although, as I have been saying, every moral creature whom God created righteous is required as a matter of righteousness to condemn sin as evil, it has pleased God to frame the requirements of righteousness as they affect man into a moral law. This law we know best in the form of the Ten Commandments, and it obliges sinners to repent. It does not relax its requirements because the sinner cannot meet them. It goes on saying, "Pay me what thou owest." The impertinent sinner, however, as much as says, "I won't, and I have no intention of doing right." But, when a sinner does become repentant, his attitude changes to, "It is my desire to keep God's holy commandments, and it is my intention, with God's help, to try to do so." The return to obedience, though not perfect, is nevertheless real.

A third reason for the necessity for repentance is that salvation without repentance is impossible. Salvation is nothing, if it is not from sin. Jesus

was called "Saviour" because He would save his people from their sins. "From their sins" includes "from sinning", and this means that the sinner must deplore that ever he did sin, and set his whole being against sin, and decisively turn away from it. This is the essence of repentance, a turning from sin to God. The very idea of a justified sinner entering heaven, disposed to sin just as when he was on earth, strikes one as absurd and outrageous.

The cause of repentance.

So we come to consider the cause of repentance. How does it come about that any sinner ever repents? The question is valid because the disposition of fallen man is permanently towards sin, and he regards it as perfectly natural and allowable except in some of its grosser forms. The natural man thinks nothing of his countless transgressions of God's law in thought, feeling, speech and behaviour except when his conscience sometimes troubles him. But even that he will soon get over, and will find ways of condoning, excusing, or minimising any actions that he senses are questionable. Sinning is as natural almost as breathing, and no reason is seen for changing the vast majority of his ways. As a result, the Gospel's insistent call to repent and believe, is disliked by the sinner. It calls him to a way of life entirely foreign to the one that suits him. Can we wonder that repentance is necessary to the saving of a sinner? Can we wonder that he must come to take a different view of sin, a radical change of mind regarding it? And, dare we dispute that his coming to view sin differently must be brought about by a power outwith and greater than any of his own?

The Shorter Catechism definition of repentance begins, "Repentance unto life is a saving grace." Called to repent, the sinner, even one very afraid of dying in his sins, cannot. It is his duty to do so; God calls him to the duty; yet he cannot because it is contrary to the settled state of his will which is to sin. He is helpless to take the first step towards salvation, and may well conclude that he is lost. But did Christ not say that He came to seek and to save that which is lost? And did he not inform a lost sinner, Nicodemus, that there was such a thing as the New Birth, a complete renewal of human nature? And are we not told that, "God hath exalted Him with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins?"

The Bible makes clear that the cause of a sinner repenting is that the mighty divine work of regeneration is wrought upon his soul. I give several texts here. Acts 11: 18 says, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gen-

tiles granted repentance unto life." In 2 Tim. 2: 25 we read, "... if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Psalm 80 has the words. "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and so we shall be saved," three times. In Jer. 31: 18, we find the words, "turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." The final specimen I give is the very explicit wording of Ezek. 11: 19; "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh."

To sum up, from what we have noted regarding sin, and from what the Bible informs us about repentance, it cannot be supposed that repentance can be exercised apart from saving grace. In repentance there is a true sense of sin, its evil, its vileness, the danger into which it puts the sinner. There is also grief that ever any of it was committed, and there is a genuine desire and purpose to be done with it. These thoughts and feelings are the very opposite of the previous views of sin. So, what can produce them but divine power?

Arminian reasoning against the foregoing.

Arminians take a different view of the relationship of repentance to regeneration. They hold that repentance, along with faith, and justification too, precede regeneration. We are, perhaps, most familiar with that idea in the form it takes at evangelistic meetings where the hearers are assured that, after they have believed, they will be born again. This no doubt accounts for the huge numbers of "born again Christians" in the USA. They, as they thought, believed, and were consequently "born again". The reasoning behind the idea is, *first*, based on a misinterpretation of the words, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Assuming, that David was praying for something he did not possess, the prayer is taken to be sincere. But a sincere prayer for a clean heart can only proceed from a soul that has repented of sin, therefore it was a repentant David who was praying for regeneration. The first reply to this reasoning must be that David had for a long time been a regenerate man. That did not, however, prevent him from falling into sin, and so great had been his fall into terrible sins, that he now saw his great need of divine power to enable him to overcome sin. Thus, he prays for regeneration as if it had never taken place, although it had. The second answer would be this — How can a person in a state of nature, that is, who is carnal and ungodly, have sincere desires after a holy nature? He cannot, as was stressed at the beginning of the previous section, "The cause of repentance." Death reigns in the soul of the natural man, and

he simply cannot co-operate with the Holy Spirit in the vital matter of regeneration as the Arminians allege.

The second reason for thinking that repentance must precede regeneration is that repentance is implicit in justification, and that must precede regeneration because God will not give the ability for spiritual communion with Himself before the sinner is reconciled to Him. Therefore repentance precedes regeneration. The statement reminds one of a geometrical theorem. The argument against this is involved, and likely to confuse, so I am going to leave it alone.

Does repentance precede or follow faith?

We have seen that repentance and faith are the responses looked for, yes, demanded, from the declaration of salvation through Christ. The conversion of a sinner takes the form of his or her repenting of sin and believing in Christ. These two exercises are exactly what the case demands. The sinner is constitutionally addicted to sin; if he is to be saved from sin, he must decisively turn from sin to God. This turning is what is called repentance. The returning to God is by faith in the redemptive work of Christ. One would say that that sequence of spiritual activity seems natural. The goal is salvation from sin; to attain to it, he must repent of his sins and believe in Christ as Saviour.

Yet, notwithstanding this apparent natural precedence of repentance over faith, this sequence of events has been queried. It must be said at this point that orthodox theologians are agreed that the priority is not one of time. None of them say that while a sinner is in unbelief, he first repents and then goes on to believe. Nor do any say that a sinner first believes, and after doing so, repents. None divide the two exercises by even seconds of time. Nevertheless, many of them see one of these exercises taking priority over the other in a way they call, "the order of nature". This has been illustrated by the relationship of sun and sunlight. The sun causes the light; not the light the sun. Yet they are in fact contemporaneous.

Calvin thought that faith produced repentance, and his thinking was influenced by what he saw as a need to refute certain Romish errors. Shedd's reasons for holding the same view are more easily stated than Calvin's. Shedd says that, first, repentance involves turning to God, but there can be no turning except through Christ. Secondly, if repentance precedes faith, then none but the penitent man is invited to believe in Christ. Thirdly, the Scriptures present God's mercy as the motive for repentance e.g. "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and

of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2: 13). Also, Jer. 3: 14.

Dabney, taking the opposite view, reasons in this way. First, to give primacy to faith, makes repentance mercenary and selfish, as though the sinner was prepared to let go his sin now that his pardon is assured. Secondly there can be no embracing of Christ with the heart unless sin be felt to be in itself a present evil, and there be a genuine desire to avoid it as well as its penalty. Thirdly, some passages of Scripture imply the precedence of repentance and none contradict it. Dabney cites Mark 1: 15; Acts 2: 38, 5: 31, 20: 21, and 2 Tim. 2: 25.

The opposing views do not seem to have aroused heated controversy, and properly so, because the solution can be seen to lie in the fact which both parties agree about, namely, that both exercises of soul spring from regeneration and are contemporaneous with it. They are twin graces, but unlike twin children, they cannot exist separately. Repentance includes "an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ, and faith looks to Christ for the forgiveness of sins." And, indeed, if we think of the word "turn", is it not a fact that so long as the action of turning goes on, the turning from one thing is at the same time a turning to the other? At no point of the turn can it be said that it is from and not to, or to and not from. So it is with repentance; it and faith are concurrent.

Godly sorrow for sin.

It will be evident that I have not dealt with the fine ingredients of the Shorter Catechism definition one by one. We may remind ourselves that they are:- (1) A true sense of sin; (2) An apprehension of God's mercy in Christ; (3) Grief and hatred of sin; (4) A turning to God; (5) A purpose and endeavour after new obedience. What I have done is mention them here and there as they fitted into the treatment of the various sections. Still, at this point I would like to say a little more on the third element, namely: "Grief and hatred of sin."

An important text on this subject is 2 Cor. 7: 10; "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." The "godly sorrow" here is the "grief" of the Catechism definition. This sorrow is part of the motive power, so to speak, behind repentance. It is inconceivable that a sinner would turn from his sins to God except he saw his sins as occasions for sorrowing or grieving. There is certainly plenty to grieve over. He has done wickedly, and his evil deeds came from an evil heart. He has dishonoured and shown great ingratitude to his Maker. He has despised and rejected Christ and the Gospel. And the sin that causes the sorrow is now also hated

because of its criminality, polluting nature, and danger.

All this is so different from "the sorrow of the world that worketh death. In that case, the sins regretted are words or deeds which have brought trouble or even peril to himself. It is sorrow on account of personal loss or suffering, and if the God of providence be thought of at all, it is by a questioning of His wisdom and justice in sending this trouble. "What have I done to deserve this?" is the sinner's complaint. His grief is that of a rebellious spirit that justifies itself and accuses God. It is sorrow that hardens the heart more than ever, and ushers the soul on to eternal death.

Three questions briefly answered.

Is there such a thing as a legal repentance?

Some of the old divines made a distinction between legal and evangelical repentance, as if the former were produced of the law, and the latter by the Gospel. But, as the law has a full part in producing true repentance also, the distinction is not really valid. Others, though, have thought of a legal repentance produced by the Holy Spirit employing only the law to make the person afraid, to know also that his sins are sins, to feel their vileness, and to allow that the law is right. If there is such an experience because it does not go far enough, it is not really repentance, and ought not to be called "legal repentance".

Are there any sins that do not need repentance?

The answer must be, All sins of which we are guilty must be repented of. That includes the element of original sin whose criminality we cannot put away from ourselves. I mean, "the corruption of the whole nature". We have to repress of the possession of a sinful disposition. Romanism denies that indwelling sin or concupiscence is sin in those who have been baptised, but believers feel that is a loathsome, painful condition of which they have need to repent.

Repentance of sins in general is not enough; particular sins, as far as we know them, and especially present sins, ought to be repented of. Repentance is vitally important for sanctification. It is as we repent of sins in particular that the Holy Spirit works avoidance of them. It must be insisted also that repentance is a life-long experience. Sin, even though it be progressively forsaken, especially in its outward forms, will remain while we are in this world. And all our sins, even though not of a conspicuous nature must be repented of. Where grace is in exercise, there will be repentance for thoughts, feelings, desires and motives that are contrary to God's law.

Can pardon be earned by repentance?

Some have supposed that by repenting they had gained pardon. But that is not so because (1) Pardon is given by God on the ground of Christ's substitutionary obedience unto death, and on that ground only. Repentance is not obedience. (2) Nor does repentance make any reparation for past disobedience. It does not undo the past. (3) Repentance is an acknowledgment of guilt and ill-desert. It would be absurd to suppose that a debtor could be released from paying a debt because he acknowledged that he did owe. (4) Repentance is a divine gift, so cannot be supposed to merit pardon: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5: 31).

The fruits of repentance.

Fruitbearing is one of the commonest figures of speech in Scripture, and John used it vigorously when speaking to Pharisees and others about their profession of repentance. "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," he said. As much as to say, "You profess to repent; let the reality of your profession be proved by altered characters and changed lives." Surely it is obvious; the proof that a person has repented of his sins must be seen in conduct the very opposite of his sins. The lover of pleasures will prove he has repented of that by a sincere attention to the duties of religion. The man of violence will prove he has repented by showing a new gentleness in speech and behaviour. The liar will prove that he has become a truth-lover by, over a considerable period, not only ceasing to lie and deceive, but by acquiring a reputation for veracity and integrity. Repentance will be shown by walking in all the paths of righteousness, not perfectly of course, but so convincingly that others will easily see the change. There is a turning unto God from sin, with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience.

Another fruit of repentance will be confession. This, for the most part, will be to God, as in Psalm 51. Yet, if one has wronged or harmed a fellow creature in a way that he was aware of, confession should be made to that person. Or if the sin or sins have been publicly done, and have scandalised the Church, they ought to be confessed publicly to the Church.

Even honest confession, may not, however, be a sufficient evidence of repentance. The case may be one where reparation is possible, and therefore must be made. Suppose a scandal-monger to have repented, and he knows that some person or persons have been injured by his false stories; it would be the convert's duty to undo, as far as he can, the blasting of

another's reputation. A hard duty, no doubt, but a necessary fruit of repentance.

Lastly, the most constantly produced fruit of repentance will be watchfulness against former sins, and against all sin. A tender conscience will be diligently cultivated, the Lord's help constantly sought, and no less a goal than holiness kept before the soul, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord".

Presbyterian Horizons in New Zealand

The main Presbyterian church in this country is the Presbyterian church of New Zealand. This denomination, in the colonial stage of this land, no doubt brought the whole counsel of God, for the immigrant ministers, mainly from Scotland, came armed with the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. When visiting the First Church of Otago a few years ago, the main Presbyterian church in Dunedin, someone drew my attention to the sloping floor. It was constructed this way to ensure the hallowed space would never be used for frivolities such as dancing. The magnificent building was finished in 1873, just 25 years after the first settlers arrived in Otago. The First Church of Otago however, was not the first church to be built by the Presbyterian colonizers. Under the leadership of their first minister Rev. Thomas Burns and Captain Donald Cargill, a worthy descendant of the Scottish martyr by that name, the new settlers erected a temporary church which was opened in 1848. The text was from Prov. 16: 5 "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." On the 14th January 1849, the Lord's Supper was dispensed for the first time. "It was truly a delightful season", wrote Mr Burns. "It brought forcibly to my recollection the Communion Sabbaths in Ayrshire during the summer of 1843, immediately after the Disruption, only I had no brother with me to share the duties."

These promising beginnings however were soon marred by the modernistic and higher critical tendencies that commenced to flow from Scotland as Prof. Robertson Smith and Dr. Marcus Dods began to make their influence felt. In 1901 the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand passed the same Declaratory Act as the Act that was taken into the Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland in 1892. From then on the cloven foot of Arminianism and the Romeward trend had an open field. Less than 70 years later Professor Lloyd Geering was permitted to deny the most fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith with impunity. Those who laid

a charge of heresy against Principal Geering, then principal of Knox College, must be considered as the cream of that denomination at that time. Yet one of them, Rev. R. J. Blaikie, in laying his charges confessed: "I find myself unable to accept the Westminster Confession of Faith's view of the Bible, in Chapter 1. The majority of us are heretics by that standard." Although Prof. Geering denied the resurrection of Christ from the dead, he was cleared from the charge of heresy and the General Assembly declared "its confidence in Professor Geering as a minister, theological teacher and Principal of our theological college." The so-called evangelicals of the Westminster Fellowship proved no less weak than Rev. R. J. Blaikie. Rev. Wm. MacLean in his report to the Synod in 1968 observes: "The so-called evangelicals of the Westminster Fellowship in the Presbyterian Church proved themselves the spineless successors of the sons of Ephraim who faintly turned back in the day of battle (Ps. 78: 9). Not a single one of them even dissented from the decision of the Assembly exonerating Principal Geering. Their claim to hold to the confession of Faith is false and unfounded. All the ministers and elders of the Westminster Fellowship subscribe at their ordination to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, an integral part of which is the notorious Declaratory Act of 1901, the same Act, word for word, as the Declaratory Act passed by the Free Church of Scotland Assembly in 1892."

Not only had the pure preaching of the gospel made way for the withering doctrines of Arminianism but the exercise of discipline had also ceased. Little wonder these developments evoked the comment from Rev. Wm. MacLean: "The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand has so far gone in apostacy since the passing of the Declaratory Act in 1901, that by its statement on the 'Resurrection of Christ' passed at its last General Assembly in Wellington, it has forfeited the right to be called a branch of the Christian Church." (1967 Report). "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccles. 8: 11). It has been rightly remarked that Arminianism is the very essence of Popery. All that remained to be done to complete the connection was a formal repudiation of the Westminster Confession of Faith statement that the Pope of Rome "is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God." (Chap. 25: 6). This occurred in 1986 when the General Assembly dissociated itself from all derogatory references to the Pope and the Roman church in the Confession.

One aspect of the general decline is the use of modern versions of the Bible. One of the latest versions to gain acceptance, even in Reformed circles, is the New International Version. It is very widely used in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. How many of its readers are aware that it is dominated by the Westcott and Hort theories and that even Roman Catholic theologians have had opportunity to exercise their influence in its production? It claims to be an evangelical translation and to have followed the eclectic principle of considering all available manuscripts, yet it is based mainly on the Greek text prepared by the United Bible Societies' editors (T.B.S. Mag. 501). One of the joint editors of the U.B.S. Greek New Testament is Roman Catholic cardinal Carlo M. Martini, the bishop of Milan. (T.B.S. Article 72). Another prominent Roman Catholic, the Right Reverend Monsignor Alberto Ablondi, Roman Catholic Bishop of Livorno, is a member of the General Committee and European Regional Executive Committee of the United Bible Societies. (T.B.S. Article 72). Several other U.B.S. editors deny the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures (T.B.S. Mag. 501). Edward F. Hills in *THE KING JAMES VERSION DEFENDED* (1956) points out that: "the Christian who rejects the King James Version and adopts one of its modern rivals, by this very action, places himself on the high road to modernism. For along with the King James Version he has rejected the only concept of the providential preservation of the Scriptures which gives him any assurance that a pure New Testament text has been preserved down through the ages and is obtainable today." (p.140). Such is the baneful influence of romanising scholars, such as Westcott and Hort and of Roman Catholic theologians. Roman Catholic influence, including Arminianism, as history has proved, is a blinding influence. The book of Revelation speaks of the fifth vial poured out on the seat of the beast. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. (Rev. 16: 10 and 11). Jonathan Edwards in *THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION* expresses the view that this occurred at the Reformation. All that allow themselves to come under the influence of Romanism will experience this blinding and hardening. What a solemn warning is sounded by Paul when he foretells that the antichrist shall come "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (2 Thes. 2: 10 and 11).

The latest addition to the Presbyterian scene is a small congregation

of the Associated Presbyterian Churches. When we consider that this denomination was born in the throes of divisiveness, is it any wonder to see the kind of friendships fostered by the fledgling A.P.C. congregation in Auckland? This small band of fugitives have drawn on a wide variety of the evangelical spectrum for pulpit supply — Presbyterian Church of N.Z., Evangelical Presbyterian and Reformed Church of N.Z. One might ask, can any good come from such associations? The answer from the scriptures is "Evil communications corrupt good manners." (1 Cor. 15: 33). The answer from church history lies in the Declaratory Acts passed in Scotland and New Zealand and their evil consequences.

The position of our denomination in New Zealand, as in Scotland, has been one of separation from all unscriptural practices and Arminian and Romeward tendencies. It is a place of undivided loyalty to the whole truth as confessed and subscribed to in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Surely, the future lies in maintaining that scriptural position or the ecclesiastical horizon will disappear in the dark clouds and mist of unscriptural alliances. Disappearance into some ecumenical abyss is in those circumstances a distinct possibility. May we be enabled to continue as we have commenced — holding fast the form of sound words. (2 Tim. 50: 13).

Obituary

Murdo MacIver, North Tolsta

We all have an appointment which, notwithstanding our reluctance and fears, must be kept. "It is appointed unto men once to die." It is an appointment set by the Judge of all the earth. The regenerate, as well as the unregenerate, must keep this appointment for final irrevocable judgment. Many of those who by the Lord's gift of faith have "laid hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel" are tried with regard to their saving interest in Christ. Their spiritual experiences are diverse, some are taught from their infancy; others are brought to embrace the Saviour by faith at different stages of their lives but, notwithstanding the time, it is the reality that is important. Many of the poor in spirit are in this present evil world in that condition because they are afraid that they never underwent a saving change. They see fruit-bearing in others while they can only say of themselves, "I am poor and needy." Yet the poor and the needy are given many tokens that the Lord thinketh upon them, as the psalmist professed regarding himself. Tokens are secretly received by such from their Lord that He is with them in every situation. Part of the fruit of the faithful preaching of the gospel is "that the thoughts of many hearts

might be revealed." They are not revealed to all and sundry but they are revealed to those who are Spirit-taught through the Word of God.

Murdo MacIver in the days of his youth followed the course of this world like many others before him who at a later juncture in their lives came to know the joy of salvation. He was brought up in a home where the name of the Lord was held in reverence, where family worship was attended to both morning and evening, and where members of the family were punctual upon their attendance upon the services of God's house. His father was a deacon in the congregation. His mother died while he was still in his tender years and he was reared by his God-fearing father in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. His father, along with many other naval ratings, was lost near the entrance into Stornoway harbour when *H.M.Y. Iolair*, on which he was a passenger, returning from war service, struck a rock in the darkness and sank. Many gallant sailors who were expecting a warm welcome home went into a watery grave.

Murdo when he took up employment chose the rigorous life of a merchant seaman for a while. He, like many others of his fellow islanders, was a Royal Naval reservist and was mobilised for war service at the commencement of hostilities in 1939. He had like many others who served King and country an eventful war service. Of one of these events in particular he used to say that he prayed for the first time. He had the posture of prayer but not the spirit at that time. Before the end of hostilities he was discharged from further service and thus ended his service for King and country. However, the struggle that was going on within him intensified. He was becoming keenly aware of his lost and ruined state and he felt that he "had no help of man at all." Visits to the homes of the God-fearing encouraged him but when he was on his own again he was greatly discouraged because of his sinful state. He used to refer to this situation as the slough of despond. At last he was constrained to speak to an experienced elder of his innermost thoughts and after having unbosomed himself to this man and his God-fearing wife he got a measure of relief. However, later he was grievously tempted that his friends were aware of what he took to be hypocrisy. Eventually he was constrained to reveal to his Godly friends his temptation and he was assured that if he had returned to his two friends he would have found them praying for him.

When his health began to deteriorate he was removed to hospital in Stornoway. The Lord whose eye is upon His people broke the bands wherewith he had been bound. The bed of distress and weakness was turned into a bed of blessing for him, his sorrow was turned into joy when the words

of truth entered into his mind with comfort and strength, "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." He felt that the Lord laid special emphasis on the word "all" in the passage. In the course of time he appeared before the Kirk Session seeking the privilege of sitting at the Lord's table and his fears were dispelled when he was warmly received by that court, the members of which had been taking notice of his fruit-bearing. First the blade, then the ear and finally, the full corn in the ear.

In the process of time he became an office-bearer in the congregation and he was required to take his share of duties of his office one of which was to endeavour to address the people from the word of God. This he did with much acceptance by the people. It was especially noticed that he took a special delight in speaking of the Apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans, with special emphasis on the fifth and the eighth chapters of the epistle. Often he grieved over the body of sin. But now the days of his mourning have come to an end. Sorrow and sighing have come to an end for him. No shadow of sorrow shall come between him and his Saviour for ever. To his sorrowing widow, two sons and two daughters we extend our heartfelt sympathy and commend them to the Lord and the word of His grace.

(Rev.) J. Macdonald

Book Reviews

THE HEAD COVERING by Timothy Nelson. Published by the Mourne Missionary Trust, Kilkeel, Co. Down, N. Ireland, Price not stated.

The author of this booklet of 31 pages is a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. In it he shows from his exposition of 1 Corinthians 11: 1-16 the Scriptural basis for women wearing appropriate headgear in the public worship of God. One of the plagues in the Churches of today is the informality of dress in the pew, and part of this problem is the presence of women in public worship without a headcovering. The Author demonstrates very clearly from his analysis of the above portion of Scripture that women cannot worship in spirit and in truth with their head uncovered. His knowledge of N.T. Greek is used to bring out more fully the meaning and significance of certain words in the above passage and thus to support his argument. Objections to the practice of women wearing headgear in public worship are suitably demolished. We can recommend this booklet strongly. It supports the position which we as a Church hold.

R.K.M.

PRAYER by John Bunyan. Banner of Truth Trust, 172 pp. £2.50.

This Banner of Truth paperback contains two of John Bunyan's works. The first is a Discourse Touching Prayer and the second is on the Throne of Grace. The first one answers the questions as to what true prayer is, what it is to pray with the Spirit, and what it is to pray with the Spirit and with the understanding. These are discussed in expounding the text, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." 1 Cor. 14: 15. Prayer, he takes to be "a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart, our soul, to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, for such things as God has promised."

In the discourse on the Throne of Grace he distinguishes the throne of grace from other thrones, shows who are to come to this throne and how they are to approach to it and, finally, gives motives for coming boldly to the throne of grace. As with all Bunyan's works these discourses are full of spiritual teaching and should be of encouragement to the weakest believer. Bunyan's works need no commendation. They are full of the marrow and fatness of the Gospel. D.B.M.

HEART TREASURE by Oliver Heywood. Soli Deo Gloria Publications. Beaver Falls. 400 pp. Obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom. £12.95.

Oliver Heywood (1629 — 1702) was born to pious parents in the parish of Little Lever near Bolton in Lancashire.

In later life Heywood speaks of the neighbourhood in which he was brought up, which was known as the "Geneva of Lancashire", as a place distinguished for its Christian privileges and for the number and zeal of those who professed the religion of Jesus. He observes: "It hath long been famous for glorious professors of the Gospel and powerful preachers and I take it as one of the great mercies of my life that my nativity was in Goshen under the star of Jacob's special influence."

His attitude of mind when at Trinity College Cambridge is given in these words, "My times and thoughts were most employed in practical divinity, and experimental truths were most vivifying to my soul. I preferred Perkins, Bolton, Preston and Sibbes far above Aristotle, Plato etc".

In 1650 he became minister of Coley, a small district on the moors above the Yorkshire town of Halifax. It was from this charge he was ejected in 1662 and joined the noble army of two thousand puritans who left their livings in the Church of England for the cause of truth. For forty years after his ejection, most of the time amidst persecutions and imprisonment,

he continued to exercise his ministry in Coley, where he had set apart his "best chamber" as a place of meeting.

The iniquitous Five Mile Act which followed the Act of Uniformity was designed to banish Godly ministers from the areas where they had exercised their ministry. Though Heywood continued to live in Coley he was forced to itinerate in order to avoid being apprehended. One effect of this was to extend his ministry throughout the North of England, as he travelled thousands of miles and conducted hundreds of weekday meetings and fast days each year over a very wide area. Churches exist to this day that owe their origins to the labours of Oliver Heywood.

This precious volume under review was Heywood's first book. It was written in 1666 just after the Five Mile Act had banished him from Coley such that he could only return to see his motherless children under the cover of darkness. The book is the substance of a series of sermons preached in Coley on the text, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things" (Matthew 12: 35).

Oliver Heywood defines "Heart Treasure" in this way, "It denotes the supply of holy principles and affection with which the mind of a true believer is replenished and which are ready to be called into exercise as occasion may demand" (p3). This heart treasure is to Heywood, "The furniture of a holy soul."

He writes, "Let Christians lay up supplies suitable to the several ages, states, offices, burdens, duties, relations, trials and temptations, through which they may have to pass in the course of their lives; so shall they not be unfurnished or unprepared, but whichever way the Lord may lead them in this uneven world, still their feet shall stand in an even place and go straight to heaven" (p8).

The main part of the book is concerned with directions on how the godly are to store up their hearts with holy thoughts and principles.

He identifies four rivers which water the garden of a Christian soul, and build up holy principles: — Divine Truth, Christian Graces, our experience in this world, and Divine consolations.

Of truth stored in the mind to form holy principles he says, "O what a blessed thing it is to have in man's breast the library of Jesus".

The sections giving "directions relative to attaining holy principles", and on "meditation as a means of increasing heart treasure", are examples of puritan practical divinity at its very best.

Mr Kistler of Soli Deo Gloria Publications has in the last few years put the English speaking Reformed community in his debt by the republication of books by Jeremiah Burroughs, Matthew Mead, and William

Jenkyn. He has just reprinted the works of William Bridge, and it appears from the dust jacket of "Heart Treasure" that he is considering reprinting the whole of Oliver Heywood's five volume works. We sincerely hope this project will be completed and warmly recommend to our readers this book containing the heart of Northern England puritanism.

R M, Barnoldswick.

Notes and Comments

Romanian Revolution

Romania was the last of the Eastern European nations to gain its freedom from the tyranny of Communism and from the oppression of the Ceausescu regime. President Ceausescu and his wife were executed by the Army after a brief trial before a military Court. This, along with the defeat by the Army of the Secret Police, brought to an end years of suffering by the Romanian people but there is a danger facing the liberated Eastern European countries that they will succumb to the tyranny of the Church of Rome. We trust that this will not take place but that the sending of the Word of God to these nations may be blessed to many souls and many brought to the knowledge of the truth.

The Vatican and General Noriega

General Noriega, the deposed President of Panama, sought refuge in the Vatican Embassy in the city. The U.S.A. Government want him on serious charges and have asked for him to be handed over to justice. It has proved embarrassing to the Vatican as General Noriega is regarded as a common criminal. (Since we wrote this, General Noriega has left the Embassy and is in American hands).

Britain at the end of the 1980's

The sad state of Britain as the nation enters the 1990's is revealed in statistics issued at the end of the year. We are told that there are 10,400 crimes a day in England and Wales alone and that figures for violent crimes are at their highest ever. It is estimated that about 900,000 unmarried couples live together in Britain, with more than 400,000 dependent children. While 40 per cent of all pregnancies were conceived out of wedlock, more than a third of them were terminated by abortion. There has been a decline in the recorded adult membership of the larger Christian denomination, though a growth in Pentecostal and other independent churches. Last year no less than 5,050 people were killed on the roads in Britain.

So far as material prosperity is concerned people have in general fared well. Yet how dark the spiritual and moral state of the land has become. What need there is for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the nation, so that the nation might be brought to repentance. How good it would be if this were to be so in 1990.

The Church of England and Homosexuality

The Church of England continues to shelter within its bounds clergyman who are guilty of practising sodomy, and have failed to deal with this sin according to the law of God. It is said that the report on the Church's policy towards homosexuality has not been made public as it urges the recognition of the sexuality of homosexual clergy. Yet Lambeth Palace denies that it has been kept secret for fear of provoking a backlash against such clergymen. What need there is in the Church of England and other major Churches of a return to the standards of God's Word.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 6th February at 11 a.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 13th February at 12 noon.

Northern: At Dingwall on 20th February at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 20th February at 6 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 13th March at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 13th March at 6 p.m.

Perth and Stirling Communions

The Kirk Session has decided that Communions will be held in Stirling on the 1st Sabbath in June and in Perth on the 4th Sabbath in August. The Communions in Perth on the 1st Sabbath in March and in Stirling on the 4th Sabbath in October are cancelled.

Broadford Communion

It has now been agreed by the Kirk Session that the annual Communion in Broadford will be held on the 2nd Sabbath of May and not on the 3rd Sabbath of October.

Visit to Eastern Europe

It is hoped God willing, to visit Eastern Europe in April and May of this year. On the previous visit, which was April of last year, 1000 Russian Bibles were delivered to two Russians who met us at Cop in South

East Russia, and they transported the Bibles by train to their Baptist church in Kiev. Prior to this we delivered to a pastor in the Eastern part of Hungary; Bibles, medicines and clothing for Romanian refugees. Here also and elsewhere, we left Bibles and Reformed books for Hungarians and Czechoslovakians. Transport for this trip, was provided at very little cost by an Inverness Garage.

For our next visit it is planned to carry 2000 Bibles to Russia, and provisions for Christians in need. Mr Edward Ross, Lochcarron, has promised to supply transport and to assist during the trip. The cost of the 1000 Bibles on the previous trip was £2,100, plus of course many other expenses involved in such work. I trust there will ever be a readiness to contribute towards the cost of this essential and urgent work.

God's providence is in certain aspects a deep mystery: who would have thought that in Eastern Europe, those under communist tyrannies would be so readily freed from these oppressive powers? It would be exceedingly sad if those people having been delivered from one tyranny should fall into another. Rome and other satanic powers are continually on the move, and it is clear from the present crisis in Eastern Europe that Rome is alert and making many gains. There is then an increasing need to send the Word of God into these countries.

(Rev.) D. A. Ross

Induction at Inverness

The Induction of Rev. Donald Boyd to the pastorate of the Inverness Congregation took place in the Inverness Church on Friday 8th December, 1989. A large Congregation from different parts of the Church attended the Induction. Ministers of the Church from other Presbyteries who attended the Induction were associated with the Northern Presbytery. After the Edict had been returned as served and proclamation made three times at the Church door, public worship was conducted by Rev. D. B. Macleod who preached from the portions in 2 Corinthians 2: 16 and 3: 5 "And who is sufficient for these things?" and "our sufficiency is of God". After public worship was ended, the Clerk gave a narrative of the proceedings in the Call to Rev. Donald Boyd. Thereafter the usual questions were put to Mr Boyd and the Formula was signed by him. The Moderator, Rev. J. A. MacDonald, then engaged in prayer and afterwards did, in the name of the Presbytery and by the authority of the great Head of the Church, solemnly induct Rev. Donald Boyd to the charge of the Inverness Congregation. The minister was then suitably addressed by Rev. A. F. MacKay and the Congregation by the Moderator. The following ministers from other Presbyteries were then invited to address the people — Rev. D.

MacLean from the Southern Presbytery, Rev. F. MacDonald from the Skye Presbytery, Rev. J. MacLeod from the Outer Isles Presbytery and Rev. Neil Ross from the Western Presbytery. They all expressed their good wishes to Rev. Donald Boyd and their desire that his ministry in his new Congregation would be blessed of the Lord. Similar messages of good will had been sent in by Rev. L. MacLeod, Greenock; Rev. Alex MacPherson, London; Rev. James Tallach, Raasay, and also from the friends in New Zealand and in Chesley, Canada. The Clerk referred to the passing away that evening of Mr James Grant, an elder in the Congregation and expressed the sympathy of the Court with the Congregation in the great loss they had sustained in his removal, and with the family in their bereavement. After the conclusion of the Induction by the singing of Psalm 126 and the benediction, the Congregation had the opportunity of meeting their new Pastor at the Church door. The ladies of the Congregation had prepared refreshments in the Hall of the Church for those who had come to the Induction and these were gratefully partaken of by many present. Rev. A. F. MacKay later thanked the ladies of the Congregation for the provision they had made and wished them the Lord's blessing. We trust that the ministry now begun in the Congregation will be fruitful to the ingathering of many souls into Christ's Kingdom and to the edifying of the people of God.

D. B. Macleod, Clerk of Presbytery

Acknowledgement of Donations

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

Broadford: Anon., £250, where most needed.

Dingwall: Friend, Skye £50 for Church Funds; Wellwisher £20, for Foreign Missions, both per Rev. D. B. M.

Lochcarron: Friend, Carnoustie Oct. £20, Nov. £10, Dec. £30, where most needed; Anon., £250 for Sust. Fund; Anon., £250 where most needed.

North Harris: From the Estate of the late Mrs M. A. Gillies, Tarbert, Harris, £265.32 for Congr. Fund per Rev. K.D.M.; C.M.D., Finsbay £5 (twice); K.M., Harris House £3 (twice) for Church Door Coll., last two by envelope in plate; Misses K. & J. MacK. £10 for Church Funds per J.F.M.

Portree: Friend £300; Anon., £20, both "where most needed"; A Wellwisher £50 for Sust. Fund, last three by envelope in plate; Friend £11 for Church Door Coll.; Friend £13 for Congr. Purposes, last two per F.M.

Raasay: Envelope in plate £15; Friend of the Cause £15; both for Comm. Expenses; M. D. MacL. £20 for Congr. Fund and £15 for Tapes; Envelope in plate £10 for Car Fund; Envelope in plate £5 for Trinitarian Bible Society (twice); Donations for tapes £71.50 per Mrs Tallach; M.D., £10 for Manse Central Heating per Rev. J. R. Tallach.

South Harris: Friend, Kintillavaig £50; A.M., Obbe Road, Leverburgh, £100, both per D. MacKenzie; Friend, Aberfeld £15 per A. MacCuish, all for Manse Fund; Friend, Glen £20 per D. MacDonald; Friends, Kyle £8 per Rev. K. MacLeod.

Staffin: Friend, Portree £50 for Congr. Purposes.