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The Broad and the Narrow

When it is asserted that true Christianity is intolerant of every other religion under heaven it is but stating what the Bible makes unmistakeably clear. So clear in fact that it can only be called in question by such as deny that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments constitute the only rule to direct men as to what they are “to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.” What other conclusion can one possibly draw from plain statements such as: “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” and, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved”?

This intolerance is not, of course, to be confused with that which has, for instance, stigmatized the Church of Rome and Islam over the centuries of their existence. The intolerance we draw attention to is that which flows from recognition of Christ as the alone, almighty Redeemer of men and that love to Him and to never-dying souls which is inseparable from that Spirit-wrought conviction. The first-mentioned body may not now use the Inquisition with its terrors and autos-da-fe to compel ‘heretics’ to recant and return within its fold but she still maintains that there is no salvation outwith her bounds and that the Pope is Christ’s vicar on earth. Circumstances have changed and more subtle means must now be employed. The very existence, and what we know of the present activities of Opus Dei, is a reminder to us that Rome’s intolerance remains what it was and that her persecuting arm is still there, but now for the most part operating underground. As for Islam with its declaration of *fatwas* or ‘holy wars’ and its total opposition to Biblical Christianity, its fanaticism and intolerance are now infamous. In certain countries, to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Koran, or the authority of its ‘false prophet’, is tantamount to signing one’s own death warrant.

It was an infallible Saviour, who knew what was in men and what was true of the world in which they had their portion, who declared that there

were but the two ways to the eternal world, the broad and the narrow, with the vast majority treading the one and few treading the other. That is as true now as it was when the words fell from His holy lips almost two thousand years ago. It is not possible for us to check the truth or falsehood of the claim made by Rome that the number of her devotees world-wide is now nearing the billion mark but it is obvious, in the light of the Word of God, that multitudes, under her baneful influence and false teaching, are found among those treading the broad way to destruction. If we add to that company those who are heading for the same destination under the delusion that Islam is directing them to paradise then the number is augmented by many more millions of our fallen race. When we, further, think of the teeming multitudes who are presently under the blight of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Paganism, Pantheism, Animism and atheistic Communism, then it is indeed plain that "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

Nearer home it is very evident that multitudes who are nominally Protestant have no real saving interest in Christ and that there are found in pulpits throughout our land men, in the guise of Christian ministers, who deny Him that unique place that belongs to Him as the "one Mediator between God and men". So broad-minded is the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland that not so long ago a majority of its members declared themselves to be of the view that other faiths were just as valid as Christianity and its Moderator, at a later stage, made clear that views of the virgin birth other than the literal one were allowable within its pale. Such a church has, doctrinally, clearly departed from "the faith once delivered to the saints" and as far as practice is concerned what could be more indicative of the abandonment of Christian standards than the toleration of sodomites within its bounds and the condoning of the vile, revolting practices associated with such unnatural behaviour. If the signs of an apostate church are discernible in the Church of Scotland, what is to be said of the Church of England which tolerates within its pale even those who deny the existence of God, and, according to one senior bishop, numbers among the best of its clergy men who make no secret of the fact that they are sodomites. It is even hinted that that might be an advantage. The reading of newspaper reports of these things makes us almost rub our eyes in disbelief. What blind leaders of the blind we have here! Instead of preaching the Gospel and seeking to save souls we find leading clerics north and south of the border dabbling in politics and sounding off their views on issues which have no bearing on their office or function. Being

spiritually blind themselves, they have neither the light nor the ability to direct sinners into the narrow way. "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" But even in such bodies there are, we believe, those who are concerned over what is happening and indeed such as are God-fearing. What perplexes us is: why do they remain within apostate bodies and support them with their means? Is it not their plain duty to come out from among such and be separate? "What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Loud protests and letters to newspapers are not sufficient and will not absolve from guilt and complicity in wrong-doing those who remain within the communion of churches whose leaders are Christless and Christ-denying.

The same drift towards liberalism and modernism is now discernible in that body which came into being in 1900 when around twenty-five ministers of the Declaratory-Act Free Church decided to remain where they were rather than follow the majority into the United Free Church. The Declaratory Act was repealed in due course but the fact that it remained an integral part of its constitution until 1904 means that the present Free Church of Scotland is not the true heir of the Disruption Free Church; that distinction rightfully belongs to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and as the years pass that becomes more and more obvious to the impartial observer. One leading Free Church minister recently expressed the view that there was no difference between a Free Church and the Free Presbyterian Churches as far as either doctrine or practice were concerned. We find that an amazing assertion in view of the fact that communicant members and even ministers belonging to his church now cavort on the dance-floor at wedding receptions. Those professing godliness have been seen attending Mods, pop concerts and other worldly activities; professing women with shorn hair is the rule rather than the exception and the practice of women wearing men's garb is widespread. That, as is well known, would not be permitted in the Free Presbyterian Church. A Church which tolerates within its bosom those who openly and flagrantly preach and practice what is contrary to its own standards is in a backsliding condition if not approaching a state of anarchy. If discipline is not exercised in the Free Church and laxity has crept in to the extent indicated, then, is it to be expected that purity of doctrine has been maintained? Away back in the early fifties, the late Rev Kenneth A MacRae was declaring that "as far as some Free Church pulpits are concerned, a robust Calvinism has given place to a colourless presentation of the doctrines of grace, which will neither please a Calvinist nor offend

an Arminian''. Mr MacRae was an honest, upright man, who, notwithstanding the fact that he remained in the Free Church to the end of his days and continued to defend its flawed constitution, would not have laid these charges against colleagues in the ministry were he not sure of his ground and able to substantiate them. In any case, he was not, as far as is known, called to account by his Presbytery for making them and that fact, in itself, shows that he was correct in his assessment of what was then happening in the Free Church. We do not believe that in the interval matters have improved and that the line has been held as far as doctrine is concerned while it has been breached in so many places in regard to practice. Just under three years ago, a very forthright Free Church member wrote a most interesting and revealing letter to the Stornoway Gazette in which she, among other things, recalled that she had heard, forty years before, the Reverend Murdoch MacRae, Kinloch, "on a Monday of his communion warn his congregation of a substitute Gospel and the spiritual declension creeping into the church. The shell would remain when the kernel was gone and such delusion would prevail when the Gospel was going that some would actually believe it was never more prosperous. I was told at the time I would live to see it. The trickle has become a flood." We doubt very much if, in the Rev Kenneth A MacRae's day, the Free Church's Professor of Systematic Theology would take the liberty of preaching in Stornoway's High Church of Scotland at the very same time as Mr MacRae was preaching in the Kenneth Street Free Church five minutes' walk away. But times have changed and that it is allowed to happen in 1995 tells its own story.

Not surprisingly, it is those who seek to adhere to the doctrine of the uniqueness of Christ as the only Saviour, and who follow a practice strictly consistent with His revealed will, that attract the epithet "narrow-minded". But if, by Divine grace, we are in the narrow way which leads to life it ought not to surprise us if we are called narrow-minded. Contrary to what our detractors say we certainly do not claim perfection for ourselves as a church. We are too painfully conscious of numerous sins and shortcomings. Yet, we believe, that the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith is to be heard from our pulpits and that Scriptural discipline is still exercised by our church courts. When we look at our own congregations we find it inexpressibly sad that so many, who have been allotted their portion under the sound of the Gospel and in the midst of privileges, should yet be found treading the broad rather than the narrow way. It would be salutary for such to ponder the significance of the Saviour's words: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

A Fast Day's Sermon

Rev John Willison

(The Rev John Willison (1680 1750) was in his latter days a minister in Dundee and is well-known for his devotional works. His "Meditations on the Lord's Supper" have recently been printed in booklet form by Reformation Press. The following sermon was preached on a fast-day before the Lord's Supper and is sub-titled "Of God's Withdrawings from His people, and their Exercise under them.")

O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble; why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring-man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Jeremiah 14:8

This chapter was penned in the time of a great dearth in the land of Judah, occasioned by a grievous drought and want of rain, which fell out about the latter end of King Josiah's reign: which calamity the prophet pathetically laments, and takes as a token of God's withdrawing his gracious presence from them: whereupon, ver. 7, he makes a most humble confession of sin, in the name of the church, disclaims anything of worth or merit in themselves, and pleads only the glory of God's name.

The prophet's scope, in the text and context, is to deprecate God's judgments, and particularly that terrible one of his withdrawing his presence from his church and people. "Why," says he, ver. 8, "shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land?" and ver. 9, "Leave us not." So that he seems to pass from the consideration of the stroke of drought to that of God's withdrawing his presence from them. Whence we may observe, that God's people dread and deprecate the withdrawing of his gracious presence, more than the removal of all their creature-comforts, or any other judgment whatsoever.

More particularly, in the text we have, 1. The gracious titles he gives to God, as the grounds on which he pleads for his gracious favour and presence, "O the hope of Israel!" *i.e.* the object of Israel's hope, whose word and promise is the only foundation of their hope: "the Saviour of Israel in the time of trouble," *i.e.* the helper and deliverer of Israel in former times of distress. And then, from these grounds he doth, in the second place, humbly plead and expostulate the matter with God in a twofold question: (1.) "Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land?" *i.e.* Why shouldest thou behave to us at this time as a stranger, in keeping at a distance from us, and inclining, as it were, to drop all acquaintance and correspondence with us? (2.) "Why shouldest thou be as a way-faring

man, that turns aside to tarry for a night?" *i.e.* Why shouldst thou pay such short and transient visits, as if thou wast weary of us, and ready to depart for good and all?

Doctrine. That as it sometimes pleaseth God to withdraw himself, and behave as a stranger to his church and people; so there is nothing in the world that will be such matter of exercise and trouble to the serious seekers of God, as such a dispensation.

As this is plainly founded on the text, so also it is evident, from any other places of scripture, and the practice of the saints therein recorded, Job 23: 3-9; Psal. 13: 1, 2; Psal. 27: 7.

In handling this doctrine, I shall observe the following method: I. Premise some things for the better understanding of it. II. Show when it may be said that the Lord withdraws from, and behaves as a stranger to his people. III. For what reasons and grounds he useth to do so. IV. When it may be said, that people are duly exercised about this melancholy dispensation. V. When it is, that this dispensation is matter of such exercise and trouble to the serious seekers of God. VI. I shall make some improvement of the whole.

I begin with the first; *viz.* To premise some things for the better understanding of this doctrine and for preventing mistakes.

1. However God doth at any time withdraw from his people, yet we must remember, he never takes away his loving-kindness from them, Isa. 54: 10.

2. However God may withdraw the sensible and comforting influences of his Spirit from his people; yet he never withdraws his Spirit from them, as to his real presence and inhabitation for the preservation and support of their spiritual life, John 14: 17.

3. God's withdrawing from his people are never either total or final, but only in part, and for a time, Heb. 13: 5; Isa. 54: 7, 8. God never leaves his people altogether, but is still graciously present with them one way or other; if not in respect of some comfort, yet he is with them in respect of grace; if not in a way of quickening, yet still in a way of support; if not in enlivening their affections, yet it may be in enlightening their understandings; if not giving sensible enjoyments, yet in giving hungry desires: so that the Lord is still with them some way or other.

4. There are various degrees of God's withdrawing himself from his people; with some of them the day is only dark and cloudy; with others it is twilight, neither dark or light; but with many it is night: with some, neither the sun nor stars have for many days appeared; but with others (according to their apprehensions) it is a total eclipse.

5. We should distinguish betwixt God's withdrawing from his people in point of comfort, and his withdrawing in point of grace. These two do not still go together: for the first may be where the second is not. A believer may be deprived of the shinings of God's love and favour, when yet faith may be lively, desires strong, the heart tender, and grace in a vigorous condition; but oft-times God withdraws in point of grace, as well as in point of comfort: I do not mean in respect of the habit of grace, for this can never be rooted out, where it is once planted; but only in respect of the exercise and some particular degrees of grace: these may be lost, so as the soul becomes weak, and sometimes very feeble and languid in duty; the breath grows cold, the pulse beats low, "and the things that remain seem ready to die," Rev. 3: 2.

II. The second thing proposed, was to show when it may be said that the Lord withdraws, and behaves as a stranger to his people.

1. When he withholds his wonted acts of kindness from them; sees them in trouble, and steps not in for their relief, as in former times. Of this the church complains, Isa. 63: 15, "Where is thy zeal and thy strength? The sounding of thy bowels, and thy mercies towards me, are they now restrained?" He suffered their enemies to gather strength, to rise up and oppress them, and bring them very low; and did not seem to regard their cry, not show his mercy or power in helping them; but withdrew his hand, and behaved as a stranger that was not concerned about them. It was on this account that Gideon when the angel of the Lord appeared to him, Judg. 6: 12, and said, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." But Gideon was so much taken up with the distressed case of the church in general, that he waves the consideration of his own particular case, and says, verse 13, "O, my Lord; if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?" *q.d.* If the Lord were not withdrawn, and become as a stranger to us, surely he would not have suffered the Midianites to oppress us so sore and so long, without appearing for our help. In like manner of times reasons a poor discouraged believer, if the Lord were not withdrawn, why should my old lusts (which I once thought were both killed and buried) rise up and trouble me! Alas! I am left to struggle against them alone, and "iniquities prevail against me;" I strive to stem the tide, but it grows the more: "How long shall the enemy be exalted over me?"

2. When the Lord threatens to remove the signs and symbols of his presence from his people, viz. pure ordinances and sacraments; when he lets enemies combine, and carry on their plots for this purpose; when our springs are in hazard of being stopped or poisoned, and we put to seek

our "spiritual bread with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness," Lam. 5. 9. This hath been the lot of God's people in this land; how indeed we get our bread at an easier rate, but alas! we do not prize it, nor grow by it. May not God be provoked then to withdraw it, or send us to the wilderness again to seek it!

3. When though the Lord continues pure ordinances and sacraments with his people, yet denies the wonted blessing and benefit thereof to them, yea, blasts them, according to that sad word, Mal. 2: 2, "If ye will not hear and lay it to heart, I will even curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already." This we fear is the case of many; they have the word and sacraments in purity and plenty, but do not find them blest; God's Spirit doth not concur with them, and their souls do not thrive under them. Surely the Lord behaves as a stranger to our assemblies, when ministers are straitened in preaching, and people are straitened in hearing; when we that are sent to you, feel much coldness on our own hearts, and have a number of cold hearts to deal with, and a live-coal is not brought from the altar to kindle the fire.

4. When the Lord frowns on his people in the course of his providence, denies them outward mercies, and denounces temporal strokes and calamities, yea, actually brings them on, whereby his people are brought very low; they look to God for pity, but no relief comes; their distress is long continued, and their trials lengthened out. So when Zion's captivity was prolonged, she cried out, Isa. 49: 14, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

5. The Lord behaves as a stranger to his people, when he tries them with dumb and silent rods; trials whereof they understand not the language, and whereby they reap no benefit. This was the case of God's people, Isa. 57: 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Though God's rod should have led him to see his sin, and lay to heart the cause of the controversy, yet he took no notice of it, but went on in his former course: many, though God's hand be lifted up, they will not see. They are not bettered by his dispensations.

6. When the Lord denies access to his people in duty, and breaks off his wonted correspondence with them: they come to God's ordinary meeting-places with his people, ordinances both public and private, but he is not there; they seek him, but still they miss him, so as they are put to cry with that holy man, Job 23: 3, "O that I knew where I might find him." O that I knew the place, the duty, the sermon, the sacrament, where I might find him; there I would go and seek him; I try prayer (saith the

poor soul) but that brings me not to him; “for when I cry out and shout, he shutteth out my prayer,” as Lam. 3: 8. Alas! I get not access to God as formerly, he carries now to me as an alien; for when I come and knock, I find nothing but a shut door, and a silent God. In a word, the Lord withdraws, and behaves as a stranger to his people, when he withholds the manifestations of his countenance, the operations of his Spirit, and the special communications of light and life, which he useth to allow to them that love him.

III. The next thing was to inquire into the grounds and reasons, why the Lord deals so with his people. I grant, the Lord may thus withdraw from them out of his absolute sovereignty; but commonly he doth it for the correction of sin, Isa. 59: 2. As,

1. When they are guilty of gross sins and scandalous out-breakings, such as cast a reproach upon religion, and the good ways of the Lord, Isa. 1: 13, 14. This is plain in David’s case, see 2 Sam. 12: 14, compared with Psal. 51: 11.

2. When they turn earthly-minded and prefer the delights of sense to previous Christ, then he withdraws, Isa. 57: 17. They that have a strong relish for the flesh-pots of Egypt, are not fit to taste the hidden manna. When the Gadarenes came that length as to prefer their swine to Christ’s presence, he turned his back, and departed from their coasts, Mat. 8: 28.

3. When we turn slothful and formal in duty, and do not stir up ourselves to seek God’s face, then he withdraws, as is plain from Isa. 64: 7; Cant 3: 1. If you put God off with bodily exercise, he will put you off with empty ordinances and dry breasts: if you serve him not with your spirits, he will deprive you of his Spirit. Wherefore, if you would have the Lord be with you, ye must shake off sloth, “Arise and be doing:” according to 1 Chron. 22: 16.

4. When we neglect or slight the Mediator; by whom we have access and nearness to God, we provoke the Lord to withdraw and turn a stranger to us. And this we do, — When we do not look to Christ for strength to perform duty, but trust to our own strength for doing it. — When we make a saviour of our duties, and put them in Christ’s room: and this we are prone to, especially when we attain to any freedom or enlargement in duty. All is well now, think we, God is well pleased, this will render us acceptable to him, and atone for former guilt; and thus the glorious Mediator is forgot, and the idol self is exalted in his place; which is most displeasing to God.

5. When we miscarry under signal manifestations and pledges of God’s loving-kindness; turn unthankful, remiss, and untender in our walk, after

he hath taken us into his presence-chamber, and set us under the banner of his love. We are told how Solomon sadly miscarried, "even after the Lord had appeared to him twice;" for which the Lord was provoked to withdraw from him, 1 Kings 11: 9. And has not the Lord appeared to some of you, at communion-seasons, oftener than once or twice, and yet grievously have they miscarried after all? Great cause have ye to mourn of this account, and beg that the Lord may not plead a lasting controversy with you for it.

6. When we sin under, and after great afflictions or trials appointed to reclaim us, God is provoked to leave us, Isa. 57: 17. Has not God smitten some of you, and brought you into the furnace, so that he melted under his hand? But when in pity he delivered you again, ye soon forgot his dealings, and turned to your old ways. Is it any wonder that he frown and behave as a stranger to you?

7. God is provoked to leave us, when we do not entertain the motions and kindly touches of his Spirit on our hearts; the spouse neglected these, so that her beloved withdrew, turned a stranger to her, and it cost her much travel and sorrow ere she got his countenance again, Cant. 5: 2, 3, 6, 7,

8. When we grow hardened and impenitent under provocations, so as we have neither a due sense of our own sins, nor of the sins of the land we live in, Hos. 5: 15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face." Ah! was there ever more guilt lying on a land, and less feeling of it, than amongst us at this day?

IV. The fourth thing was to show when it may be said that people are rightly exercised under such a dispensation, as this of the Lord's withdrawing, and behaving as a stranger to them.

1. We may be said to be rightly exercised under it, when we are truly sensible of our loss, and of our sins, as the procuring cause thereof, and hence are brought heartily to mourn and "lament after the Lord", as the prophet doth in the text and context, and as Israel did in the days of Samuel, 1 Sam. 7: 2.

2. When we place all our comfort and happiness in the favour and presence of God, and are unsatisfied with all other comforts without this; count all worldly things but loss and dung; look on sun, moon, health, wealth, honours, pleasures, houses, relations, yea, life and breath, as most empty and comfortless things without God; so did the prophet in the text, with he addresses himself with this title, "O the hope of Israel!" *q.d.* All our hope is in thee, and we are poor, miserable, and hopeless creatures without thee; and so did the Psalmist, when he saith, Psal. 73: 25. "Whom

have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

3. When we are at pains to engage our whole hearts, and all the powers and faculties of our souls, to seek after a withdrawing God: "With my whole heart have I sought thee," saith David, Psal. 119: 10. And because our hearts are deceitful and ready to start aside from this work, we should be laying ties and engagements on them to be sincere and fervent about this work, for God takes special notice of such who do so; Jer. 20: 21. "Who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me?"

4. When we diligently lay hold on all opportunities, and use all appointed means for finding an absent God; like the spouse that sought her beloved about all the city, both in the streets and broad ways, Cant. 3: 2. In all duties and ordinances, both private and public, our souls should follow hard after him, and pursue him closely, as it were, from one ordinance to another, Psal. 63: 8.

5. When we wrestle with him in prayer for his gracious return to us, and fill our mouths with arguments in pleading with him, as the prophet doth in the text and context:- He pleads the glory of his name, "Do it for thy name's sake." — He pleads their hopeless and helpless case without him, who was the fountain of all help and comfort: "O the hope of Israel and Saviour thereof." — He pleads the former experiences they had of his kindness to them in their helpless condition: "O Saviour of Israel in the time of trouble." — he pleads his power; it was very easy for him to relieve them, whatever straits they were in: "Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?" — He pleads the outward symbols and pledges of his presence he had given them, his temple, his ark, and oracles: "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us." — He pleads the covenant-relation they stood in to him: "We are called by thy name." Upon all which accounts, we beseech thee leave us not.

6. We are duly exercised under God's withdrawals, when we hold on in our close pursuits after him, notwithstanding of discouragements and disappointments, like Mary Magdalene, John 20: who would not leave the sepulchre when others left it, but searched it over and over again, and waited on with patience, still looking for him, till at length she found her beloved. Thus was the psalmist exercised, Psal. 25: 15, 16, "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord. — Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted."

7. When we are unsatisfied with the best means and ordinances, unless we find God in them: David was not content with his enjoying the tabernacle, the ark, sacrifices, the passover, and other of God's pure

ordinances: but, in the midst of all, "his heart and flesh cried out for the living God," Psal. 84: 2. Hypocrites, if they have the outward means, are well satisfied; for God's presence and absence are all one to them: but sincere believers will not be put off so; if God be not in the ordinances, nothing can please them, not the most powerful sermons, though an angel were to preach them; nor the most lively communions, though a glorified apostle should come and dispense them. The absence of God is such a great want to them, that nothing in heaven or earth can fill up, but himself.

V. The fifth thing is to show, whence it is that the Lord's withdrawing and behaving as a stranger to his people, is such a matter of exercise and trouble to them.

1. Because of the incomparable sweetness and advantage they enjoy in his gracious presence, while they have it; for this is the sum and compend of all blessings, and hath all good things wrapt up in it. The divine presence brings light and life, health and strength, peace and comfort, yea, complete satisfaction to the precious soul that doth enjoy it; no wonder then, that the people of God should be so much concerned for the want of it; for then they may cry out with Micah, and with just ground too, "They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" Judg. 18: 24.

2. Because of the effects and consequences of God's withdrawals from the soul; which being very sad and melancholy, are matter of great exercise and trouble to God's people: as for instance, (1). There follows usually on it, a great darkness upon the spirit; as, when the sun goes down, darkness covers the face of the earth; so when God withdraws, thick clouds veil the face of the understanding, and the whole soul; so that the poor disconsolate soul is bewildered, knows not his way, nor what course to take, but is made to complain, as in Lam. 3: 2, "He hath brought me into darkness, and not into light." Alas! saith he, I know not God's mind nor will towards me; I see not any comfortable sign, neither know I the time how long; I meet with many dark providences, dark ordinances, dark communions, all is dark to me.

(2.) Not only darkness, but much deadness and stupidity also seizes upon the deserted soul. Why are our spirits so dead in prayer, in hearing, and so dead in communicating? Is it not because the Lord is withdrawn? What these two sisters said to Christ, John 11, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" may be well said by such a poor soul, Lord, if thou hadst been here present in such a duty, in such a sermon or communion, my heart had not been so dead; for why, as Moses saith, Deut. 30: 22, "He is thy life;" so when our life withdraws, we are dead, and all things are dead to us.

(3.) There follows also an unspiritedness and disability for duty: the soul hath neither heart nor hand for prayer, for reading, hearing, communicating, meditation, self-examination, or any duty. Deserted Heman saith, "I am as a man that hath no strength," Psal. 88: 4. David's complaint is much the same Psal. 40: 12, "Mine iniquities have taken hold on me, I am not able to look up." His spiritual strength was so wasted, that he was scarce able either to speak or look to God. Now, what is the cause of all our weakness or incapacity for duty? Oh! the Lord is withdrawn. It is a true word our Saviour saith, John 15: 5, "Without me ye can do nothing." It were happy for us, that we were most sensible of this truth, for we are most apt to trust to our own strength, and think still we can do well enough for ourselves: like Samson, when he had sinned away both his God and his strength, yet he went forth to shake himself as at other times "but wist not that the Lord had departed from him." So many are insensible of the Lord's departure, they go to communions, and think to shake themselves, as at other times; but Oh! there is a benumbedness and weakness that has seized on their spirits, they cannot now lift up their souls at his table.

(4.) There usually follows, on God's withdrawing, great witheredness and barrenness on the souls of his people; their leaf fades, their fruit drops, and they quickly turn like the mountains of Gilboa, "on which there is neither dew nor rain," John 15: 6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." It is his gracious presence only that can make us "fat and flourishing in the courts of our God."

(5.) We become exposed and liable to manifold dangers and enemies; for when God withdraws, our defence withdraws too. Hence Moses comforts Israel against their enemies, Num. 14: 9, "Ye need not fear them," saith he, "for their defence is departed from them, the Lord is with us." The Lord's presence is his people's defence against all the assaults of their enemies, whether from within or from without, against the power of their lusts, the policy of the devil, and cruelty of the wicked, but if their fence be removed, they are exposed to them all.

(6.) Another effect, which is matter of sad exercise is, great trouble and anxiety of mind for former unkindness and ingratitude to God. Hence the psalmist saith, Psal. 77: 3, "I remembered God, and was troubled." Formerly he had remembered God, and was comforted; his meditation of him was sweet, but now it was far otherwise: Oh! says he, I now remember my unkindness to him that was so good to me; my conscience upbraids me for my unsuitable carriage: "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" Where are all thy former purposes and resolutions? Thy promises

and vows made at sacraments? Are they all come to this? Oh! thou hast sinned thy God and friend away from thee! It was the thoughts thereof that broke Peter's heart and made him weep so bitterly.

(7.) There follows on its very melancholy and unwelcome thoughts of death and judgment. When God is present with the believer, he can say as in Psal. 23: 4, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." But O! it is melancholy to think of going through that valley without him, and of appearing before him while he frowns and behaves as a stranger or enemy to us.

(8.) Sometimes there follows a revived sense of wrath, old wounds begin to open and bleed afresh; the deserted soul is driven back to the foot of mount Sinai, and begins to hear its thunders and curses renewed, though he once thought they had been all silenced by the blood of Christ. Thus it was with Heman, Psal. 88: 7, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me," &c.

Lastly, The fears of utter rejection is another consequence, that oft proves matter of sad exercise to the deserted soul. Alas! I fear my cause shall never be better, that my sky shall never break, nor my clouds, dissipate; that I shall never recover God's presence again, but be banished eternally from it; wo with the psalmist, Psal. 77: 9, 10, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" And Psal. 119: 8, "O forsake me not utterly."

Application

Use I. Of Information. 1. Hence we may be informed, that there are but few true seekers of God among us, seeing there are few to whom God's withdrawing is matter of much exercise or trouble; few mourning on this account, like the prophet, and crying, "Why art thou such a stranger to my soul?" Many are troubled for other trifling losses, but few that can say with David, Psal. 30: 7, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

2. We may see the misery of those who are far from God now, and are like to be deprived of his presence for ever, Psal. 78: 27. Unrenewed persons desire not God's presence here, but say to him, "Depart from us," John 21: 14, and alas! their choice is their judgment, and shall be so for ever; for the judge's sentence against them will be, "Depart from me," &c. If the Ephesians sorrowed most of all for that parting word of Paul to them, "Ye shall see my face no more," Acts 20: 38, how much more will such a word from Christ's mouth at the last day be piercing and heart-breaking to the ungodly forever?

3. How sad must the case of those be, from who God withdraws, not

to return again! The Spirit of God comes, and strives for a time with many; but, when resisted and grieved, he goes away from an unconverted soul, he seldom returns to strive any more. When the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, he came not again, but an evil spirit in his place, 1 Sam 16: 14.

4. Believers should not conclude that God has cast them off, because he is a stranger to them for a time; for this hath been the lot of the dearest of God's children, yea, even of his own beloved Son himself, when in this world.

Use II. Of Reproof. 1. To those who are so great strangers to religion and the state of their own souls, that they know not what God's presence or absence is; and so indifferent are many about this matter, they never inquired to this day, whether God be a stranger or a friend to their souls.

2. To those believers, towards whom God may be behaving as a stranger, and yet they are insensible of it. They are become so unwatchful, and so much charmed with the delights of sense, and their spiritual senses so dull, that they are fallen into Samson's condition, Judg. 16: 20, "He wist not that the Lord had departed from him."

3. To those who, though they be sensible of the Lord's withdrawals, yet are not duly affected therewith. It is not matter of serious soul-exercise to them, as it was to Jeremiah in the text, and to Job, Job 23: 3-9, and to the Israelites, 1 Sam 7: 2, "Who lamented after the Lord."

4. To those who are so far from being suitably exercised and affected with the Lord's withdrawals from them, that they are still sinning him farther away: by their formality in duty, untenderness of walk, slighting of the Spirit's motions, and venturing on sins against light. O believer! "is this thy kindness to thy friend? Dost thou thus requite the Lord?" We do not marvel to see persecutors, and haters of God, driving him away, or to see Christ receiving wounds from his enemies: but O! it is sad, that precious Christ should get such wounds in the house of his friends.

Use III. Of exhortation, to two sorts of persons. 1. To those who are strangers to God, and know nothing of his presence. 2. To those who have known it, but he is become a stranger to them.

As to the first sort, I exhort you, in the name of the Lord, to bethink yourselves, and consider your misery in this state; for "lo, they that are far from God shall perish." It is the character of those who are in a lost state, to be "without God in the world." Now, your misery, while such, is inexpressible. — You are utterly unfit to come to the Lord's table; for "what communion can there be between light and darkness!" Or, between those that have hitherto been strangers and enemies to one another. Remember, it is only a feast for friends: strangers to God are debarred.

— Your state is most uncomfortable; the sun hath never risen upon you; God's face hath never shined upon you; it is still dark night with you, and you sit "in the region and shadow of death." — You are under the dominion of Satan, the prince and ruler of darkness. — You are under the heavy clouds of God's wrath and indignation. — You sit constantly on the very borders of hell. — O sinner! consider what a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a dying hour will prove to thee. When thy soul is stepping forth into another world, how ready will it be to shrink back, and say, How shall I appear before that God, who has always been a stranger to me, and with whom I never had the least acquaintance! Can I look for any thing but a frowning Judge, and a fearful sentence? O strangers, come and "acquaint yourselves with God now," accept of his offers of mercy, and "be at peace" with him through Christ; and "thereby shall good come unto you."

As to the second sort, viz. those who have had acquaintance with God, but he is become a stranger to them. O poor soul, be suitably affected with this dispensation; let it be matter of exercise to thee on a fast-day before the communion: it will be a heartless and fruitless communion if God continue as a stranger to thee; therefore be not easy under his withdrawals.

(To be continued)

John Welsh

Rev K. D. Macleod

1. The Early Years

It is as John Welsh of Ayr that we know him, so it comes as something of a shock to realise that his preaching in Ayr lasted for less than five years, and that for more than three and a half of these years he acted only as assistant to the minister. It is a measure of the impact which his preaching made on the town that his name has been so closely associated with it for so long. It was, as John Macleod describes Welsh's Ayr ministry in his *Scottish Theology*, "one of the brightest times of spiritual enlargement that the Church of this land ever enjoyed".

Behind the success lies the fact that the preaching was so wonderfully blessed was the preaching of a remarkably godly man. "The accounts given of his piety and of his perseverance and success in prayer", said the younger Thomas M'Crie, "are such as almost to exceed belief in this lukewarm age", and at the end of the twentieth-century the spiritual temperature

is distinctly colder than when M'Crie gave his opinion over 100 years ago. It is not surprising therefore to find John Macleod declaring, "Among the scholarly saints of the kirk, none held a higher place among the godly than did Welsh". So if justification is needed for taking time to consider the life and work of a man whose name is reasonably well known, it lies in the fact of his almost unexampled godliness. Yet, if his name is reasonably well known, I suspect that not much more is generally known about him than his name. The work of God in the life of John Welsh deserves better than that.

The date of Welsh's birth is lost in the mists of history, but it is thought most likely that 1568 was the year when this second of three sons was born to another John Welsh, a small proprietor in Colliston, Dumfries-shire. As a boy Welsh is described as "wayward and reckless", a truant who in the end left home to join the "the thieves on the English border, who lived by robbing the two nations" of Scotland and England. When his clothes were worn out, he realised that home was not such a bad place after all, but there probably were other unpleasant factors about his rebellious lifestyle that helped him to that conclusion.

After deciding to return home John made his way first to the town of Dumfries to visit his aunt, partly to get food and some other clothes, but also in the hope of using her as a go-between to plead for him with his father. He was not long in the house when the father himself arrived, but young John was at first kept out of sight. The aunt began by asking the father when he had last heard of his son. "O cruel woman," was the reply, "how can you mention his name to me? The first news I expect to hear of him is that he has been hanged as a thief." After some more conversation, young Welsh was produced. In tears he pleaded for forgiveness from his father and many were his promises of leading a better life. With the aunt's help his request was granted, and father and son soon made their way home together.

When Welsh experienced a change of heart is not known, but his biographer states that "there is every reason to think that this (his decision to return home) was at least the commencement of that sobermindedness and those devout habits which marked his subsequent career". It was a different John Welsh who spent some further time at home before being sent to the Grammar School in Dumfries, but it is unlikely that his schooldays in Dumfries were of much spiritual benefit as his teachers were suspected of having Roman Catholic sympathies. When he went to Dumfries Welsh was possibly still only about 11. But this may in fact suggest that his birth took place somewhat earlier than 1568; it does seem

rather unlikely that someone so young could have been accepted as a member of a band of Border rieviers.

Before leaving home he expressed a desire to study for the ministry. So from Dumfries he was sent to the newly-founded University of Edinburgh, where the Principal was the celebrated Robert Rollock (c1555-1599), author of a number of commentaries and a work on effectual calling. Welsh was required to do a preliminary year of study at the University as he was on arrival judged to be "not ripe enough in the Latin tongue". His education was disrupted by an outbreak of the plague, which in a short time brought to an early grave 1400 of the citizens of an Edinburgh which was then very much smaller than it now is. Political disturbances and staffing difficulties caused further interruptions to Welsh's university course, but he did make satisfactory progress in his studies and graduated MA in 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada.

The next year Welsh became minister of Selkirk. Some of his fellow students stayed on at university, either to teach or to continue their studies, but Welsh's heart was so much set on proclaiming the gospel that nothing could keep him from accepting the call to Selkirk, young as he was — only about 21 if the traditional date of his birth is correct. If it is correct, one must assume that he was already noted as remarkable for the fervour of his piety and for his preaching abilities. Rollock would have been no mean judge of his students, and the Edinburgh Presbytery had him under their supervision. It is interesting to note that, just the year before Welsh's graduation, Robert Bruce, another stalwart of the Scottish Church, was inducted to John Knox's old church of St Giles'.

It was a time in the history of the Scottish Church when there was a great scarcity of godly preachers; so, though Welsh's base was in Selkirk, his charge was enormous; it covered four parishes besides Selkirk, among them Ettrick, later to be blessed with the gracious ministry of Thomas Boston. Welsh was called to cultivate barren soil, for the whole district was irreligious, immoral and barbarous. The leading families had either given up their Romanism, or they had relapsed into it. And the people generally were, with few exceptions, ready to follow them.

Probably one of those exceptions was a small proprietor by the name of Mitchilhill who gave Welsh lodgings in his own home, as the parish had no manse. Welsh shared a room with a young boy of the family, who even in old age recalled with great affection the young minister who came to stay with them. He used to tell of how, as Welsh went to bed, he would lay a plaid over his bedclothes, and how when he would waken through the night he would throw it over his shoulders before he began to pray.

It is the first record we have of the extent to which, throughout his life, he gave himself to prayer. From the beginning of his ministry he reckoned the day ill-spent if he did not give seven or eight hours to prayer.

While he did not neglect preaching the gospel in its freeness, it is not surprising that in his situation he laid much greater emphasis on the law. So he was later to express himself: "Let us who are watchmen over the house of Israel with tears and mourning cry aloud to our congregations and spare not. . . . Let us show them their sins and their defections that, at least, they perish not for want of warning, and so their blood be craved at our hands. . . . And if they will not hear let us say to the earth, 'Earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord, let us rise up and contend with the mountains, and make the hills to hear our voice, and take them as witnesses against them'. And then we shall have the comfort in the days of our afflictions that we have not kept back the word of the Holy One. And then shall we be a sweet smelling savour in Christ, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved."

Not surprisingly, while some appreciated Welsh's preaching, others hated him — among them especially were many of the more influential men of the area. With such a wide field to cultivate, it was natural for someone as diligent as Welsh to throw himself into his work without reserve. He kept two good horses so that he could get around relatively easily, and every day he preached in some part or other of his huge congregation. Few cared to come to listen to Welsh, at least in Selkirk; he laboured diligently but many scoffed. Yet many years later when James Kirkton, a minister of the next generation, visited Selkirk he found some still alive who spoke of Welsh in terms of the highest respect. Kirkton tells of a conversation with a man called Ewart: "I inquired of him what sort of a man Welsh was. His answer was, 'O sir, he was a type of Christ' — an expression more significant than proper," Kirkton comments, "for his meaning was that he was an example that imitated Christ, as indeed in many things he did. He told me also . . . that some in that place waited well upon his ministry with great tenderness, but that he was constrained to leave that place because of the malice of the wicked."

Accordingly Welsh left Selkirk in 1593 after a ministry of only four years. A James Scott, who had been appointed a reader in Ashkirk, part of Welsh's congregation, was deposed by the general Assembly for encouraging the Romanist superstitions of the local people. He harboured a deep grudge against Welsh, and showed it by cutting the rumps of his two valuable horses, which were left to bleed to death. It would seem that Welsh himself was in a danger of a like fate. Scott may not have been

the only one in those parts who had a place in the church but had not truly embraced the Reformation, for Kirkton tells us in his biography of Welsh, "Even the ministers of that country were more ready to pick a quarrel with his person than to follow his doctrine, as may appear to this day in their synodical records, where we find he had many to censure, and only some to defend him".

It was possibly before his ministry in Selkirk ended that Welsh married. His wife Elizabeth was no ordinary woman — strong-minded and faithful to her principles, she was a true daughter of Scotland's greatest Reformer, John Knox, by his second wife Margaret. It would seem that Margaret had faithfully carried out the instructions her dying husband gave for his family: "Faithfully to travail for their good instruction and upbringing". A faithful wife to her husband, Elizabeth indeed turned out to be, but as we shall see, she was even more faithful to her Master in heaven, though there is no evidence that her duty to the two were ever in conflict.

Welsh's second charge was Kircudbright in south-west Scotland, not too far from his native Colliston; he was probably inducted there in 1595. It was only with difficulty that Welsh could find someone able and willing to transport his belongings to his new home. At last he found a young man who was prepared to help. Though poor, he was the owner of two horses. After reaching Kircudbright, at the end of what, all these years ago, must have been long and difficult journey, Welsh gave the young man a gold coin and, what was better still, his blessing; he exhorted him to fear God, assuring him that if he did so he would never be in want. And Kirkton assures us that the young man did indeed prosper; he was clearly no loser for helping the despised minister.

The previous minister of the parish was David Blyth, an able, zealous man who was murdered, as was another neighbouring minister, in circumstances which are lost in the shadows of time. Kircudbright was in fact the centre of opposition to the Protestant order of things, but it was a hopeful sign for the future that a Christian society had been set up in the district, in whose membership there were at least six elders. Kircudbright was the town where Marion M'Naught lived, the godly woman to whom Samuel Rutherford wrote more letters than to any other correspondent — more at any rate of those letters which have been preserved for posterity. "Blessed be the Lord", Rutherford exclaimed about Marion M'Naught, "that in God's mercy I have found in this country such a woman, to whom Jesus is dearer than her own heart". Marion M'Naught's husband, William Fullerton, was later to become provost of the town, but at the time of Welsh's induction she would only

have been about 20. Was it evidence of the fruitfulness of Welsh's ministry in Kircudbright that such a man as Rutherford could bear such testimony about one of his flock?

(To be continued)

Christ Sufficient

The following extract is taken from Volume 2 of The Works of John Owen — "On Communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost".

There is no man whatever, that hath any want in reference unto the things of God, but Christ will be unto him that which he wants: I speak of those who are given him of his Father. Is he dead? Christ is life. Is he weak? Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Hath he the sense of guilt upon him? Christ is complete righteousness, — "The Lord our righteousness". Many poor creatures are sensible of their wants, but know not where their remedy lies. Indeed, whether it be life or light, power or joy, all is wrapped up in him.

This, then, for the present, may suffice in general to be spoken of the personal grace of the Lord Christ:— He hath a fitness to save, having pity and ability, tenderness and power, to carry on that work to the uttermost; and a fullness to save, of redemption and sanctification, of righteousness and the Spirit; and a suitableness to the wants of all our souls: whereby he becomes exceedingly desirable, yea, altogether lovely; as afterward will appear in particular. And as to this, in the first place, the saints have distinct fellowship with the Lord Christ; the manner whereof shall be declared in the ensuing chapter.

Only, from this entrance that hath been made into the description of him with whom the saints have communion, some motives might be taken to stir us up thereunto; as also considerations to lay open the nakedness and insufficiency of all other ways and things unto which men engage their thoughts and desires, something may be now proposed. The daughters of Jerusalem, ordinary, common professors, having heard the spouse describing her beloved, Cant. v.10-16, etc., instantly are stirred up to seek him together with her; chap vi. 1, "Whither is thy Beloved turned aside? That we may seek him with thee." What Paul says of them that crucified him, may be spoken of all who reject him, or refuse communion with him: "Had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;" — Did men know him, were they acquainted in any measure with him, they would not so reject the Lord of glory. Himself calls them "simple

ones", "fools", and "scorners", that despise this gracious invitation, Prov. i. 22. There are none who despise Christ, but only they that know him not; whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded, that they should not behold his glory. The souls of men do naturally seek something to rest and repose themselves upon, — something to satiate and delight themselves withal, with which they (may) hold communion; and there are two ways whereby men proceed in the pursuit of what they so aim at. Some set before them some certain end, — and perhaps pleasure, profit, or, in religion itself, acceptance with God; others seek after some end, but without any certainty, pleasing themselves now with one path, now with another, with various thoughts and ways, like them, Isa. lvii. 10, — because something comes in by the life of the hand, they give not over, though weary. In what condition soever you may be (either in greediness pursuing some certain end, be it secular or religious; or wandering away in your imaginations, wearying yourselves in the largeness of your ways), compare a little what you aim at, or what you do, with what you have already heard of Jesus Christ: if any thing you design be like to him, if any thing you desire be equal to him, let him be rejected as one that hath neither form nor comeliness in him; but if, indeed, all your ways be but vanity and vexation of spirit, in comparison of him, why do you spend your "money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

Use. 1. You that are yet in the *flower of your days*, full of health and strength, and, with all the vigour of your spirits, do pursue some one thing, some another, consider, I pray, what are all your beloveds to this Beloved? What have you gotten by them? Let us see the peace, quietness, assurance of everlasting blessedness that they have given you? Their paths are crooked paths, whoe'er goes in them shall not know peace. Behold here a fit object for your choicest affections, — one in whom you may find rest to your souls, — one in whom there is nothing will grieve and trouble you to eternity. Behold, he stands at the door of your souls, and knocks: O reject him not, lest you seek him and find him not! Pray study him a little; you love him not, because you know him not. Why doth one of you spend his time in idleness and folly, and wasting of precious time, — perhaps debauchedly? Why doth another associate and assemble himself with them that scoff at religion and the things of God? Merely because you know not our dear Lord Jesus. Oh, when he shall reveal himself to you, and tell you he is Jesus whom you have slighted and refused, how will it break your hearts, and make you mourn like a dove, that you have neglected him! and if you never come to know him, it had been better you had never

been. Whilst it is called To-day, then, harden not your hearts.

Use 2. You that are, perhaps, seeking earnestly after a *righteousness*, and are religious persons, consider a little with yourselves, — hath Christ his due place in your hearts? is he your all? does he dwell in your thoughts? Do you know him in his excellency and desirableness? Do you indeed account all things “loss and dung” for his exceeding excellency? Or rather, do you prefer almost any thing in the world before it? But more of these things afterward.

Promiscuous Dancing

We are indebted to one of our ministers for sending us this extract from a book which has apparently been long out of print James Durham on the Ten Commandments. Durham died in 1658 at the early age of 36.

Commandment Number Seven.

“There are many other sins which come in here....

Add dancing, a thing condemned by the people of God as no honest recreation, at least when companies that are mixed, and (as we call it) promiscuous dancing, such as useth to be at marriages, and the like occasions, both of old (as may be seen in the canons of several councils), as also of late by our own authority and other reformed churches.

1. I shall say these things in short of it: First, that ye will not find it mentioned in scripture in the person of any of the godly, it becometh an Herodias’ daughter better than the professors of religion.

2. That it will be readily found to indispose for the exercise of godliness, and so to be inconsistent, or at best hardly consistent, with either a pious and lively, or a sober frame of spirit.

3. That it marreth not only the gravity of persons for the time, putting them in a sort of regular distraction, but lesseneth the esteem of such persons; this insobriety being like a dead fly that maketh the box of ointment (if any be) to stink.

4. That in scripture-examples we find this sort of dancing among profane and loose people, and recorded also as a piece of their stain or blot, rendering them in some way infamous; and oftentimes it hath also snares waiting upon it, as in the Israelites among themselves, Exodus xxxii and in the daughters of Moab with the people of Israel, and in that of Herodias’ daughter. Some also suppose those that Dinah went forth to see, Genesis xxxiv, were thus employed at some feast, or such other solemnity, where

she was ensnared and deflowered.

5. Yea, it is often, if not ever, the fruit of some former looseness and carnalness, being the effect that excessive wantonness usually breaketh out in; and can God's people warrantably have fellowship with these works of darkness? Or can they (if guilty themselves) reprove it in others? Cicero calleth it, *Postremum vitiorum, quia acta sequitur*, the last of all vices, because usually it followeth former loose carriages.

6. There is no lawful means of recreation which is useful for health of the body, but is, and may, and should be sanctified by the word and prayer; yet, I suppose neither useth this to be so, neither would any think it very suitable, or well consistent with a praying frame, and can that which standeth not with the serious exercise of repentance, and a praying disposition, or that which none would think a fit posture to meet death, or the Lord's appearing with, be in reason thought consistent with a Christian walk? Which should always be with the loins girded, and the lamps burning. It is somewhat like this, or less than this, which the Lord condemneth, Isaiah iii. 16, Walking and mincing, or tripping and making a tinkling with their feet. What is that, but disdainng the grave way of walking, to affect an art in it? As many do in our days; and shall this be displeasing to the Lord, and not the other? Seeing he loveth, and is best pleased with the native way of carrying the body. Junius and Rivet from him, calleth this mincing or tripping, "a walking or standing on the earth in an artificial way."

Notes and Comments

Remembering VE day

Fifty years ago, on the 8th day of May, 1945, the Second World War, as far as hostilities in Europe were concerned, came to an end and ever since then that date is remembered as VE Day. Plans are at present afoot to keep the event in remembrance with all sorts of events being planned some of which will be far from meriting our approval. No doubt famous generals will be remembered and famous battles fought on land, sea and in the air will be recalled with the valiant exploits of some brave men receiving special mention. Deservedly so, but who, outside our own bounds, will remember or make mention of the name of the Rev John Peter MacQueen? Mr MacQueen was a patriot of the first order; he was also a humble, holy minister of Christ who wrestled with the Lord at the throne of grace. It was Divine help he was soliciting and he was doing so in the knowledge that "the horse is prepared against the day of battle:

but safety is of the Lord.” It is on record that, at the height of the Battle of Britain, Lord Dowding, who was Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command at the time, made the following statement: “While I yield to none in admiration of our unsurpassed brave young airmen, we owe more to the Lord’s unseen praying people than can ever be estimated.” “This truthful admission”, Mr MacQueen commented, “does not, in the least degree, detract from the unprecedented prowess of those concerning whom Sir Winston Churchill said: ‘Never in the field of human endeavour have so many owed so much to so few.’ When the hands of Moses were supported, Israel prevailed. The prayer of faith is infinitely more powerful than all the combined inventions of Satan and men.” Mr MacQueen lived in Battersea, in a flat which had a balcony. From that viewpoint he was able to observe what was happening over a wide area of the heart of London. At the insistence of certain friends, in whose judgment, he tells us, he had confidence, Mr MacQueen was prevailed upon to relate certain incidents which emphasised “the opportuneness and appropriateness of prayer in all circumstances”. This is part of what he wrote: “The next most outstandingly terrible incident was the burning of the immediate vicinity of St Paul’s Cathedral with German liquid fire-bombs, the obvious, and afterwards confessed, object being the ruin of The City (the area within earshot of Bow Bells), and especially the Cathedral itself, the pride of British, and especially English architecture. The fire was to light the way for the planned sweep of bombers carrying land-mines. At 12 o’clock midnight, that Sabbath night, the whole of London was almost as brilliantly lit as if it were the mid-day sun by the fires, while smoke of various colours, red, yellow, black and blue ascended skywards in billowing air waves — a real awe-inspiring spectacle. Knowing London was receiving its most terrible visitation of the war, and worse designed to follow, the present writer prayed as follows: ‘O gracious and most blessed One, there was a day in the history of my native land when Thy blessed servant, Alexander Peden, pursued by the ruthless dragoons of “the bloody Claverhouse,” prayed, ‘Lord cast Thy skirt around poor old Sandy,’ and the dense rapidly-descending fog frustrated the evil designs of, and discomfited, the vile dragoons, so now do Thou cause such dense fog to descend upon the German aerodromes in Holland, Belgium and France as will prevent the German bombers from getting in and out, and also prevent fiendish joy this night in the heart of the devil, the Pope of Rome, Hitler, Mussolini, Goering, Goebbels and all Jesuitized Romanists. Preserve Thou St Paul’s Cathedral, as it was built for Protestant worship, but permit one bomb to get through the roof to destroy the Heaven-

provoking, idolatrous Anglo-Catholic altar. All this was answered immediately to the letter, and while newspapers and booklets have recorded the fact that German bombers over London got orders to return at once, as dense fog had descended on the aerodromes, my part in it is narrated now for the first time. The land-mines never came and bombers force-landed and crashed. Unfortunately such is the incorrigible idolatry of the vile human heart, since then another costlier Heaven-provoking altar has been rebuilt by these modern sons of Belial the Anglo-Catholic Jesuits! These facts are related now under the omniscient eye of the Supreme Judge at Whose solemn Tribunal I shall soon have to render my account. The unbeliever and the atheist will say that, admittedly, these are strange coincidences, and very wonderful, but we reply that when so-called coincidences multiply in succession over a period of years they become miracles — Divine miracles, in answer to the poor prayers of a feeble believing sinner of Adam's fallen race, but only by the grace of God."

The lack of Moral and Spiritual Leadership

If ever our nation was in need of moral and spiritual leadership it is at this present juncture in its history. The immoral and scandalous behaviour of men in high places is constantly making headlines in the public press. On their behaviour being exposed, far from acknowledging their guilt, they only do their utmost to excuse and extenuate their conduct. The list of ministers resigning from the Government on account of their adulterous behaviour being exposed is being constantly added to and we have even the thrice-married Deputy Governor of the Bank of England now being forced to resign his office. Men's private lives, immoral or otherwise, are their own business, we are told by some people, and ought not to be taken into account as long as they fulfil their public duties in an acceptable and competent manner. We believe, on the contrary, that if a man cannot be faithful to his marriage vows, we cannot have confidence in him that he will be faithful to other vows that he may come under, whether it be the Privy Council oath, as in the case of cabinet ministers, or the Coronation Oath, as far as the Heir to the throne is concerned.

Edinburgh honours the Cardinal

Edinburgh, the city where John Knox's dust lies and where the Reformation Church of Scotland had its base and where it flourished, has given an official welcome to Thomas Winning, the recently-appointed Roman cardinal. We are told that he attended, within the city chambers, a lunch held in his honour by the Lord Provost before proceeding to St

Mary's Cathedral, which was packed with 1000 people and where a celebratory mass was held. Later in the day, Lothian Regional Council's Convener hosted a reception for him. How solemn and sad that this representative of "the man of sin and son of perdition" should be honoured and feted in this manner in Scotland's capital city. What an affront to Knox's memory and all the martyrs who died bearing witness against the satanic system of which Cardinal Winning is the chief representative in Scotland. One thousand people assembled to celebrate mass where mass was at one time fearlessly pronounced to be blasphemous idolatry and accordingly abolished from the land! Antichrist is setting up his ensigns in our midst and we have reason to be concerned. Knox, who feared one mass more "than if ten thousand armed enemies were landed", did not underestimate the enemy's power and neither should we. "Arise O God, plead thine own cause!"

Two telling Photographs

Every picture, it is commonly said, tells a story and the saying seemed to be particularly apt in connection with two particular photographs which appeared recently in the public press. One was taken in St Peter's Basilica in Rome and showed a number of Roman Catholic bishops in flowing robes lying prostrate on their faces before the Pope seated on his pontifical chair. Were we looking at something which had occurred in the middle ages and had been re-enacted for some purpose or other? Perhaps the white-robed figure in the chair was that of Cesare Borgia? Or was it Gregory VII, the noted Hildebrand, who excommunicated the emperor, Henry IV of Germany, and then had the satisfaction of seeing him "barefooted, and in raiment of sackcloth, waiting three days and three nights at the castle gates of Canossa, amid the winter drifts, suing for forgiveness"? No, the caption tells us that the year is 1995, and that the figure seated on the dais to whom homage is being done in this extreme and degrading manner is none other than John-Paul II, the present incumbent of the papal chair. The message is clear: the present Pope, even if he is not publicly wearing the three-tiered tiara, is every bit as autocratic as his predecessors and any changes which have taken place in the Roman Catholic Church have been only cosmetic and very likely temporary, to remain in place until, as she hopes, her aims have been achieved. The other photograph portrays twelve young women lying prostrate on the ground with their arms outstretched but this time in front of a vehicle. The place is Madras, India, and we are informed that the young women are nuns in training. They are found in this posture in order to have "their hands

run over during a martial arts training session designed to help them deal with possible attacks.” How civilized men could cause young women to pass through such an ordeal is beyond our understanding. Loraine Boettner points out that “Christ established no convents, no nunneries. In the true Christian church there are no high stone walls, no locked doors and barred windows such as so often have been a part of the Roman convent system. Instead, the convent system is of pagan origin. Practically every Buddhist temple in India has its virgins’ consecrated to the service of the god worshipped there, complete with holy water, holy ashes, charms, bones, bells, and pictures, all blessed by priests. The historical fact is that the Buddhist convent system antedated the Roman Catholic system of pious slavery of women by more than 500 years. What, then, must be our conclusion regarding the convent system? That it is abominably cruel, unnatural, and unscriptural, and that it should be abolished by law.”

Easter “Passion Play” Profanities

New depths in blasphemy and profanity seem to have been plumbed by those responsible for the production of a “passion play” purporting to re-enact the events connected with the death of the Saviour and which was acted out in London on so-called “Good Friday”. The *Daily Telegraph* tells us that even some members of the audience walked out in tears on account of the frequency of swear words and profanities, some of which the paper went the length of quoting in its report of the event. We are sure many of its readers were as shocked as we were to read that this should take place within the precincts of Westminster Abbey and that its staging and profane language should be defended by the superintendent minister of the Methodist Central Hall from which the procession to Westminster Abbey set off. We are told that the play was financed jointly by “the Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches” and that it was watched by “thousands of spectators and tourists as well as invited guests who included senior police officers, the Salvation Army and other churches”. Among those present were Dr David Hope, who is soon to be installed as the Archbishop of York and Cardinal Basil Hume. The former is reported as having described the play as “very earthy”, while the latter simply said that he would have preferred “something more meditative”. In our view it was satanic from beginning to end. We condemn the observance of Easter as we condemn the observance of Christmas and for the same reason — they are both of Pagan, Popish origin. As the spiritual darkness deepens so we find their observance coming more and more to the fore.

Additional note: Even on the island of Skye an ecumenical "Easter Rally" was to be held in Kyleakin on April 15. The Church of Scotland minister organising the event expressed the hope that "denominational barriers will be forgotten at Easter." The main speaker was to be the Rev Kenneth MacDonald, the minister of the Free Church at Rosskeen.

Mission News

Mission friends will be sorry to hear that there has been a severe drought in Matabeleland, and a complete failure of the crops. Among the Maize plants the people grow pumpkin, sweet potatoes and ground nuts. There will be none of these vegetables this year. Where there is even one member of the family working in town his wage will help a little, but where the family depends entirely on the crops the family is in sad straits.

The cattle require green grass in order to survive in health. Hay can be bought from local farmers and lucerne can be purchased in Bulawayo but only a few can afford to buy. Donkeys and goats can be a menace. The Donkeys pull up the grass roots of the previous season and the goats eat the bark of the trees.

The Hospital at Mbuma has been very busy but not with the usual influx of malarial patients. It is thought that the spraying of D.D.T. to kill off the plague germs may have killed off the malarial mosquitoes. That would be a relief.

It has been interesting to receive a letter from Louise Lieper telling of her initial experiences and reactions to life remote Mbuma. Sister Anne Zekveld was to have been Louise's guide and mentor for the first few weeks in the wards, but Anne met with quite a serious accident on the Mission. She suffered a fractured knee and other lesser injuries and had to go to Bulawayo for treatment.

Louise says in her letter that it is a new kind of life being shut away from the outside world for weeks on end. It is often difficult to get world news on the Radio probably because of weather conditions, thunder and lightening on occasions. She has been surprised to see little African babies come to hospital with strings of beads round their tiny waists, and although the mothers smile and say they are only for ornamentation Louise is not so sure as she has heard something of the local superstitions.

On her first night of duty she met with one small crisis after another and she had to call one of the off-duty Sisters. This was a trial. However, in a few days' time when she was able to sit on the verandah of her home in the cool of the evening, to listen to the night sounds of the forest around,

and to gaze up into the extraordinary beauty of the southern sky ablaze with myriads of stars and a bright moon, she says there was so much evidence of the Creator's hand that she felt at peace and reassured.

One of the Sisters had an unusual patient, a young woman who had been trained as a 'inyanga', a Witch-Doctor. She was given a Gospel tract which she promised to read. The Sisters response was, "If we could wrestle in prayer for such benighted souls."

Mr Mziya, Administrator, and Levi Ngwenya, paid a recent visit to Binga and held services and Msenga and at Samende. There were sixty of a congregation at Msenga and about a hundred at Samende. The people had no crops whatsoever and the men were going out to the forest to look for fruit. Perhaps some readers will remember that the people at Binga are of the Tonga tribe who were moved from a valley by the Zambezi River some years ago as the Government had decided to dam up the river to form a huge lake. This lake is known as Lake Kariba and was created to operate a hydro-electric plant for supplying both sides of the gorge with electricity. The Tonga were very reluctant to move from the valley where they had an abundance of fish and arable land, to hilly, rough, stony ground where there was very little good soil and fish was no longer available except at a price.

News has come from Ingwenya of the good results received in the O Level examinations. The best pupil had nine A passes. In the non-academic stream in History and Bible the pupils did very well. These were Etta MacLennan's classes and seeing she has retired it is not out of place to congratulate her, in particular.

Church Notes

Meeting of Synod

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will meet, the Lord willing, in the Free Presbyterian Church, Inverness, on Tuesday, the 23rd day of May, 1995, when the Retiring Moderator, the Rev N M Ross B.A., Dingwall, will conduct public worship.

Meetings of Presbyteries (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 11th April at 11 am

Northern: At Dingwall on 20th June at 2 pm.

Southern: At Glasgow on 20th June at 6 pm.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 13th June at 1 pm.

Western: At Laide on 13th June at 6 pm.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 13th June at 2 pm.

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Wills

Further to the notice printed in the last issue, the "Form of Will", originally inserted in the October, 1989, issue of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* is reproduced below:

"I direct my Executors to convey and make over my entire estate/the whole residue of my estate to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, under declaration that this bequest is made strictly and exclusively in favour only of that organisation known, but expressly excluding the religious body formed by certain former Ministers, Elders, Members and Adherents of The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland following a Deed of Separation dated 27th May 1989 and known as the Associated Presbyterian Churches or any of the successors of such body; and further, that this bequest shall not be affected by any interlocutor, decree or other judgment of any court, or any Act of Parliament, any of which relate to or affect in any way the rights, property or constitution of, or any other matter whatsoever concerning, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland as constituted prior to said Deed of Separation; declaring that the receipt of the Treasurer or other authorised official of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland shall be sufficient discharge to my Executors."

Australia and New Zealand Presbytery Motion re Papal Visit

The Australia and New Zealand Presbytery deplores the recent visit to Australia of "that man of sin" and "son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God". His arrogant claim that Mary MacKillop is, by the authority and investiture of the popish church, declared to be the first saint in Australia, is an insult to all of the Lord's people who are saints in Christ. The prayer of this Presbytery is that the Lord, in mercy to His church, would hasten the day when "that Wicked . . . revealed . . . the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming . . ."

Binding of Magazines

We have been informed that Mr Neil MacLean is no longer in a position to bind issues of the Church's Magazines and that consequently magazines should not be sent to the Bookroom for binding.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer Mr R.A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE, wishes to acknowledge with thanks the following donations:

Eastern Europe Fund: A Friend, Perth, per A.N.M., £30.

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon, Canada (March), Can.\$ 100; Estate of Miss K.A. Macdonald (Staffin), £6,215.62; (Kenya), Anon, Psalm 60 v 4, £240.

Home Mission-Church Planting Fund: "The original Free Church continuing", £10.

Sustentation Fund: "Remembering the wormwood and the gall." £10; Estate of Miss K.A. Macdonald (Staffin), £6,215.62.

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

Bracadale and Strath: Friend, Stockinish, £10; Friends, Glendale, £15.

Daviot-Stratherrick-Tomatin: A.M., £100 per W.M.; Dingwall Friend, £10.

Dingwall: A Friend, Stornoway £10; A Lewis Friend, £10; Anon, Stornoway £10, All for Sustentation fund and per Rev N.M.R.

Inverness: E.McK., £13, "Door Collection"; A.Suth., £20 Petrol Reimbursement; both per D.M.B.; Anon, £40 for Communion Expenses; A.McD., £10, for Mini Bus Maintenance; both by Envelope in Plate.

Kyle and Plockton: Anon, £10 for Sustentation Fund by Envelope in Plate.

North Harris: "Tarbert", £10; Anon, £20; Friend, Leacklee, £40; M.M., £15; M.M., Cluer, £5; P.A., Grosebay, £10; All for Communion Expenses. M.M., Cluer, £5 for Bus Fund; M.G. £80 for Sustentation Fund; (All by Envelope in Plate); Friend, N. Uist £20 for Congregational Fund per Rev R. Macleod.

Portree: Anon, £200 for Sabbath School; Anon, £20 for Communion Expenses both by Envelope in Plate; D. & A.M. £50 for Congregational Purposes per F.M.; Friend £20 for Sustentation Fund per S.Y.M.; Friend, £10, Where needed per S.Y.M.; Friend, £10, Where needed per S.Y.M.; J.M. McL, £30 Where needed by Envelope in Plate; Anon, £10 for Bus Fund by Envelope in Plate; D.N.McF. £50 for Congregational Purposes by Envelope in Plate.

Correction: March issue: the donation to the T.B.S. from the estate of the late Mr Murdo Matheson should read £400 and not £4,000.

Shieldaig: In memory of a loving Husband and Father, £200, Where most needed; Envelope in Plate, £10 for Sustentation Fund.

Staffin: For Congregational Purposes, £1000, In Loving Memory of Dear ones.

Raasay: Lewis Friends, £20 For Car Fund; Raasay Friends, £200 for the poor on the Mission in Kenya; Both per Rev. J.R. Tallach; J.M. Macleod, £30, Where most needed per J Gillies; Donations, £26 for Tapes Fund per M. Tallach; Envelope in Plate, £10 for Car Fund per Treasurer; Lewis Friends, £20 for Sustentation Fund per Rev. J.R. Tallach; Friend, Envelope in Plate, £100, Where most needed per Treasurer; Friend of the cause, £5 where most needed per M.D. Mackay; W.D. in appreciation of Rev. J. Tallach visits, £10, Where most needed; Envelope in Plate, £5 for Car Fund, Both per Treasurer.

Stornoway: £180 for Sustentation Fund from Miss K. A. MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish; £10 from Mrs B; £10 for Friend; £20 from Mrs M., all for Sustentation Fund; £10 from Anon., "Where most needed", £20 from North Uist Friend; £10 from Friend, Stockinish, both for Congregational Fund; £15 a Friend, Stornoway, for "Communion Expenses or where most needed"; all per Rev J. MacL; £10 from Anon., £5 from Anon.; both for Communion Expenses; £10 from "Friend of the Cause", Breasclete, all for Communion Expenses; £5 from Anon., £500 from KMS; £20 from Anon., all for Foreign Mission Fund and per Church plate; £500 for Congregational Funds "In memory of a dearly loved husband, per Rev J. McL.