

THE
Free Presbyterian Magazine
and Monthly Record

Vol. 84

February 1979

No. 2

Peter's Denial

It may be easy for us to point an accusing finger at Peter. His thrice repeated denial of His Master might appear to us as that from which we would recoil and as a sin of which we would never be guilty. But let us remember that this was Peter's thought too — that whoever would deny the Saviour he would never do so. When the time came, however, he was as weak as water. And so it would be with us also if placed in similar circumstances. They little know the power of temptation and the weakness of the creature who speak otherwise. The Lord was to teach Peter many lessons and was to overrule this sad lapse on Peter's part for his own good and for the good of the Church down to the end of time.

First, Peter had to learn much about himself. We are not to question the sincerity with which he spake when he said, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will not I." But it was in his own strength he made the assertion. He felt in himself that he was strong and able to resist every temptation to act otherwise. He little knew his own weakness, his own readiness to fall. The Apostle Paul was to learn by trying experience that when he was weak then he was strong. Peter had to learn the same lesson in a deeper trial than that of Paul. He had to learn, as the Saviour said to the three disciples earlier, that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The power of indwelling corruption is stronger than we know. Let him, then, that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Second, Peter had to learn more about the power of Satan, the arch-enemy of souls. "Simon, Simon," the Saviour had warned him, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not and when thou art converted strengthen the brethren." This prior warning went unheeded but Peter was to experience the realisation in his own soul of what the Saviour had warned him against. He was to learn the power of temptation as he had

not hitherto known it. He was to be tried in the fire and he was to come forth, not emboldened in sin like the wicked, but chastened and melted and broken in heart for his sin.

Third, Peter had to learn that there are special seasons through which it is not easy even for the children of God to pass unscathed, and certain circumstances which give temptation an overwhelming power. The time and circumstances of Peter's denial were such. As to the particular time of his temptation — the Saviour indicated the nature of that season when He said to His enemies: "This is your hour and the power of darkness." This was no ordinary season — it was a never-to-be-repeated season. Never were the attacks of the Wicked One to be so virulent as in the time of the Saviour's deepest sufferings and betrayal. Consequently, to stand in such an hour required not only grace but superabounding grace. Carnal strength could not meet the needs of such an hour. As to the situation, Peter had entered into the palace of the high priest among the enemies of the Saviour. This was a place of especial danger. By entering there he exposed himself to danger. It is not an easy task to profess Christ in the midst of His enemies. It led to Peter's denial — his refusal to acknowledge that he was a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Saviour looked on Peter. How much there can be in a look! How much there was in the look of Christ. In Christ's look there was no approval of Peter's sin, rather the reverse. Yet it was a soul-melting look so far as Peter was concerned, for he went out and wept bitterly. Peter's sorrow was commensurate with his sin. Peter did not need a rough chiding from the Saviour to bring home to his conscience what he had done. One look from Christ was enough. There was also in that look, love, compassion and forgiveness.

He who denied his Master thrice was afterwards to confess thrice that he loved Him — and so it should be. How often do we deny the Saviour. How often do we fail to confess Him. What need there is then that Christ would look upon us as He looked upon Peter so that we might be melted under a sense of His love and of our ingratitude. How good it would be also if we were brought, also like Peter, to confess truly: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Let us be ballasted with grace, that we be not blown over, and that we stagger not.

Samuel Rutherford

Notes of a Sermon

by Rev. Neil MacIntyre

"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes'." Matt. 11:25

The glorious truths of the Gospel, though hid from some, are not lost, nor hid in the bottom of the sea, they are revealed unto babes. Revelation is not the creation or invention of something new but the manifestation of what was till then unknown. The great truths of the Gospel concerning the things of eternity are real and certain in themselves already, and do not begin to be when we begin to be acquainted with them. Yet, till God is pleased to reveal them, we have no more effective knowledge of them than if they were not.

Ignorance of things which may be very near to us may arise from different causes. (1) It may arise from the want of light. Nothing can be seen properly in the dark. For instance, if you were in a beautifully furnished room, yet if in the dark, all is lost to you. Or if you stood on a dark night on the top of a high mountain, commanding a splendid view, still you are able to see no more than if you were in a valley. (2) Because of some hindrance or obstruction between you and an object. Our dearest friend or our bitterest enemy might be within a few yards of us and know nothing of it if there was a wall between us. Death, judgment, and eternity are at our very door, yet because of the walls of ignorance and unbelief standing before the eyes of our mind, we do not see them. It is when the Spirit of God comes to break down these wall that it is revealed to the soul how near he is to these solemn realities. He then considers what a fool he was not to have seen them before.

When our Lord appeared in the world He found many enemies but few friends. More especially the great men of the world were opposed to Him, and most of those who followed Him were people in low circumstances, or whose character had been offensive to the generality of the people in the age in which they lived. Publicans and sinners and fishermen were almost the only friends He had. He here gives thanks to the Father for the mysteries of His will. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes." Consider, I. What are these things. II. In what sense are they hid. III. From whom are they hid. IV. How are they to be known. V. To whom are they revealed — babes.

I. What are these things that are hid.

1. These are no doubt the doctrines of salvation. That most men are ignorant and careless about these doctrines is plain, and so, they live as if they had no concern or interest in them. We gather from Scripture doctrines which were bitterly opposed in Christ's day and there is no change in human nature now.

(1) **The Divinity of Christ.** When He spoke of Himself as the Son of God, the Jews took up stones to stone Him. This is a mystery to human understanding. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." In Peter's answer to the question put by the Saviour, he showed his belief in the Divinity of Christ when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," but the denial of that Divinity was one of the first heresies which the Church had to contend with.

(2) **The New Birth** is a hidden thing. Nicodemus, who was a Rabbi, could not understand it. To many who are wise and prudent in their own eyes it is to this day accounted nonsense. A little acquaintance with what is published from pulpit and press, by modern theologians, will prove that there is little understanding of regeneration. A poor Nicodemus, inquiring after the way of salvation, would be entertained with ingenious essays on the beauty of virtue, benevolence, and so on, but he would hear little about Christ being raised up on the Cross.

(3) **The Mystery of Saving Faith** is hidden. You remember when Christ by a metaphor spake of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, that many who professed to be His disciples walked no more with Him, while those who were taught of God said, "To whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life."

II. In what sense are they hid?

1. Where are they hid? (1) They are hid in Christ. He is the One "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," so He is the great repository of truth. He is the Messenger by whom the will of God is made known. You can attain to no saving knowledge but through Christ. If these treasures are hid in Him it is vain labour to seek them elsewhere. Whatever knowledge you may have which does not endear Him to you is but science falsely so called, and can do you no good. (2) They are hid in His Word. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," so that we might be wise unto salvation. Yet they are not plain to every one; though they are revealed in the letter, they are still hid, and something more is necessary than merely to read the Bible, and, that is, the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Why are they hid? (1) Not for the purpose that those who seek sincerely should be disappointed. No, for He promised that those who seek shall find. (2) They are hid from certain persons — the wise and prudent. Let us use an illustration. Suppose a person had some curious cabinet which is not exposed to common view but he invites all to come and see, and that he will be pleased to show it to all who come. It is hid, but none can complain for a pass can easily be had. Some may despise the offer and say, "Why is it shut up at all?" Some may think that the precious things in the cabinet are not worth seeing, while others apply, are admitted, and are well paid for their trouble. Such are the riches of Divine grace. Christ is the Gate, faith is the pass, and none are refused admission who come by that faith which is the gift of God. The wise and prudent of this world may stand without, guessing, but a babe who has gone in, knows more than they do.

3. They are hid from the wise and prudent, that is, those who are wise in their own conceits. There are many so-called wise in this age, who seem to consider themselves sent on a special mission to find errors and imperfections in the Bible, and, sad to notice, that the more errors any of them will profess to find, the higher he is raised. Dr Moffat, Broughty Ferry, who wrote an "Introduction to the New Testament", and which is ably condemned by Sir William Ramsay and others, as a most pernicious book, is now elected to the Chair of New Testament Exegesis in Mansfield College, Oxford. Those things, to which our Lord refers, are hid from those who seek occasion to cavil at the Word of God, but are revealed to babes who come sincerely and honestly.

4. A word of advice in regard to ourselves. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." He is calling us, and it is our business, as rational beings, to make all diligence to make our calling and our election sure.

III. From whom are they hid? — the wise and prudent.

It cannot mean those who are truly so in God's account. The wise and prudent here are those who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight, or those who are generally reputed to be so by the bulk of mankind. But what is accounted wisdom by the world is foolishness with God. The wisdom of God and of men differ as much as fire from water and light from darkness. Who are the "wise and prudent" here?

1. The world considers wise those who are diligent and successful in acquiring wealth. There is no doubt that a proper concern and diligence in our secular calling is both lawful and our duty, but where this is the

main concern such wisdom is madness. Such persons are no less idolators than those who worship sticks and stones. What will riches do for us in the day of trial? If we continue making this choice as long as we live we shall bemoan our choice when it is too late. Now, such persons cannot complain if higher things are hid from them, for they have made their choice. They are told of the riches that are in Christ, but they are content that they should remain there. There is no form nor comeliness in Christ for them. He could keep His heaven to Himself if they could get their fill of the world and its pleasures. We ought to beware of this wisdom and prudence.

2. A man is considered wise and prudent who has a considerable knowledge of secular subjects. If he can talk of the motions of the heavenly bodies, if he can speak and understand several languages, and call a thing by twenty different names, such a person is considered wise. These attainments, undoubtedly, have their use, and especially when they are sanctified by grace. In reading the works of Dr Hugh Martin, who was one of the ablest mathematicians of his day, one could see how beautifully he could apply his knowledge of that subject to illustrate the Gospel. Whatever number of these pebbles one may possess, when the light of eternity will shine into his heart, he will consider them all as loss that he may win Christ, the pearl of great price. His knowledge of books, or men, or stars, or flowers, will not give him peace of conscience, nor purify it. It must be the greatest folly if these pebbles are to keep us blind to the Pearl of Great Price.

IV. How are we to know these things?

He has revealed them unto babes. The saving knowledge of Christ is a revelation of God. We see this clearly in the case of Peter when Christ commends his confession. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 16:17. Peter had Moses and the Prophets, and, no doubt, could read them as well as the scribes, but that he could acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, when they denied Him, was not, we are told, knowledge which flesh and blood gave, but was the revelation of God. Let us enquire as to how these things are to be known.

1. Revelation is not a new invention but the manifestation of what was till then unknown. God is near; Eternity is near; Death is near. The truths of God's Word are most certain, and all these things are as certain before they are revealed to a sinner as after, but because of our darkness we see them not.

2. By the power of the Spirit, accompanying the truth, light shines into the soul, and suddenly, an unthought of prospect appears before the sinner. He then sees his danger. Guilt pursues him from behind, fear and the pit and a snare are before him, God is angry with him, and whither can he go. He thought at one time there was nothing to look after but this short span of life, but now he sees an endless eternity before him, and how foolish he had been to neglect these things. Now this discovery would sink him into despair if he went no further. But the same Spirit, by the truth, reveals Christ as a Saviour to him and there he sees a way of escape. Here he discovers the amazing love of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. Now, these things were in existence before, but unknown to him until revealed.

V. The character of those to whom these things are revealed — babes. How are they babes?

1. They are esteemed by the world, generally, as babes. They are considered weak in their capacities, of small attainments, and in their lives insignificant. This was one of the reproaches cast at the Christian Church at the very beginning. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." John 7:48,49. But Christ, by them, turned the world upside down.

2. They are babes in knowledge. A babe has little knowledge, and their powers are weak, yet to these "babes" are revealed "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven". The little that they know only convinces them of their ignorance, and thus they are convinced that their views are faint and that they are easily imposed upon.

3. A child is teachable. Among men none are truly teachable but those who know that they need to be taught. The humble Christian is swift to hear, slow to speak, and open to conviction, not that he will accept anything, in matters of religion, without proof from the Word of God.

4. A child is simple and dependent. He does not reason but implicitly receives what his parents say. Such a resignation of his understanding the believer dares not to make to any man, however highly he may esteem him, but he submits implicitly to the Word of God. He allows no reasoning or questioning here, for it is enough for him that God has said it. In this temper he steers in safety across the immense oceans of conjectures and opinions where others are sunk and overpowered.

Are we among the babes?

Trial — a Help Heavenward

by Octavius Winslow, D.D.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity" to an heir of heaven. Its form may appear "ugly and venomous" — for "no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous;" but nevertheless it "bears a precious jewel in its head" — for "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Affliction is to the believer what the wing is to the lark, and what the eye is to the eagle — the means by which the soul mounts in praise heavenward, gazing closely and steadily upon the glorious Sun of righteousness. Chastening seals our sonship, sorrow disciplines the heart, affliction propels the soul onward. We should have a more vivid conception of the power of affliction as an ingredient of holiness, if we kept more constantly in remembrance the fact that all the afflictive, trying dispensations of the believer are covenant dispensations — that they are not of the same character, nor do they produce the same results, as in the ungodly. They are among the "sure mercies of David". In the case of the unregenerate, all afflictions are a part and parcel of the curse, and work naturally against their good; but in the case of the regenerate, they are, in virtue of the covenant of grace, transformed into blessings, and work spiritually for their good. Just as the mountain stream, coursing its way, meets some sanative mineral by which it becomes endowed with a healing property, so afflictions, passing through the covenant, change their character, derive a sanctifying property, and thus become a healing medicine to the soul.

Thus we find tribulation the ancient and beaten path of the Church of God. "A great cloud of witnesses" all testify to sorrow as the ordained path to heaven. Both Christ and His apostles gently forewarned the saints that "in the world they should have tribulation", and that it was "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God". Here may be descried the trail of the flock, and, yet more deeply and visibly imprinted, the footsteps of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, "leaving us an example that we should follow His steps". Who, then, with Christ in his heart, the hope of glory, would wish exemption from what is common to the whole Church of God? Who would not sail to glory in the same vessel with Jesus and His disciples, tossed though that vessel be amidst the surging waves of life's troubled ocean? All shall arrive in heaven at last, "some on boards, some on broken pieces of the ship, but all safe to land". It is not necessary, beloved reader, that in a chapter devoted to an

exposition of the blessings which flow from sanctified trial, we enumerate all, or even any, of the varied forms which trial assumes. The truth with which we have now to do is the impetus trial gives to the soul heavenward — the friendly hand it outstretches to assist the Christian pilgrim to his shrine, the traveller to his journey's end, the child to his Father's house. Our first remark, then, with regard to trial is, that it is a time of spiritual instruction, and so a help heavenward. It is not blindly, but intelligently, that we walk in the ways of the Lord, and are travelling home to God. Great stress is laid by the Holy Ghost in the writings of the apostle upon the believer's advance in spiritual knowledge. In his prayer for the Ephesian saints he asks for them, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened. In another place he exhorted the saints to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". In his own personal experience he sets no limit to his spiritual knowledge: "that I might know Christ", was the great aspiration of his soul, and he "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord". Now, the school of trial is the school of spiritual knowledge. We grow in a knowledge of ourselves, learning more of our superficial attainments, shallow experience, and limited grace. We learn, too, more of our weakness, emptiness, and vileness, the ploughshare of trial penetrating deep into the heart, and throwing up its veiled iniquity. And oh! how does this deeper self-knowledge lay us low, humble and abase us; and when our self-sufficiency, and our self-seeking, and our self-glorying is thus mowed down, then the showers of the Saviour's grace descend "as rain upon the mown grass", and so we advance in knowledge and holiness heavenward. Trial, too, increases our acquaintance with Christ. We know more of the Lord Jesus through one sanctified affliction than by all the treatises the human pen ever wrote. Christ is only savingly known, as He is known personally and experimentally. Books cannot teach Him, sermons cannot teach Him, lectures cannot teach Him; they may aid our information and correct our views, but to know Him as He is, and as we ought, we must have personal dealings with Him. Our sins must bring us to His blood, our condemnation must bring us to His righteousness, our corruptions must bring us to His grace, our wants must bring us to His fulness, our weakness must bring us to His strength, our sorrow must bring us to His sympathy, and His own loveliness and love must attract us to Himself. And oh, in one hour, in a single transaction, in a lone sorrow, which has brought us to Jesus, who can

estimate how rapidly and to what an extent we have grown in a knowledge of His person and work, His character and love? I need not enlarge upon other branches of spiritual knowledge which trial promotes — how it increases our personal intimacy with God as our loving Father and Friend; and how it opens our understanding to discern the deep things of God in the Scriptures, so that the Bible in the hour of affliction appears like a new revelation to us. Oh yes, times of trial are times of growth in experimental knowledge. We see God, and Jesus, and truth from new stand-points, and in a different light; and we thank the Lord for the storm which dispelled the mist that hid all this glory, unvailing so lovely a landscape and so serene a sky to our view. Beloved, is the Lord now bringing your religion to the touchstone of trial, testing your experience and knowledge and faith in the crucible? Be calm in the assurance that He but designs your advance in an experimental acquaintance with Himself, and His Gospel, and that you shall emerge from it testifying, "I have seen more of my own vileness, and known more of Jesus, have penetrated deeper into the heart of God, have a clearer understanding of revealed truth, and have learned more of the mysteries of the divine life, on this bed of sickness, in this time of bereaved sorrow, in this dark cloud that has overshadowed me, than in all my life before." "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law." Oh yes, we learn God's power to support, His wisdom to guide, His love to comfort us, in a degree we could not have learned but in the way of trial!

Trial quickens us in prayer, and so effectually helps us heavenward. The life of God in the soul on earth is a life of communion of the soul with God in heaven. Prayer is nothing less than the Divine nature in fellowship with the Divine, the renewed creature in communion with God. And it would be as impossible for a regenerate soul to live without prayer, as for the natural life to exist without breathing. And oh, what a sacred and precious privilege is this! — is there one to be compared with it? When we have closed the door — for we speak now of that most solemn and holy habit of prayer, private communion — and have shut out the world, and the creature, and even the saints, and are closeted in personal, solemn, and confiding audience with God, what words can portray the preciousness and solemnity of that hour! Then is guilt confessed, and backslidings deplored, and care unburdened, and sorrow unvailed, and pardon sought, and grace implored, and blessings invoked, in all the filial trustfulness of a child unbosoming itself in the very depths of a father's love, pity, and succour. But precious and costly as is this

privilege of prayer, we need rousing to its observance. Trial is eminently instrumental of this. God often sends affliction for the accomplishment of this one end — that we might be stirred up to take hold of Him. "Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them," To whom in sorrow do we turn, to whom is difficulty do we repair, to whom in want do we fly, but to the Lord? If in prosperity we have "grown fat and kicked", if when the sun has shone upon us we have walked independently and proudly and distantly, now that affliction has overtaken us we are humbled and prostrate at His feet; retrace our steps, return to God, and find a new impulse given to, and a new power and meetness and soothing in, communion with God. Be assured of this, my reader, there is no help heavenward like unto prayer. There is no ladder the rounds of which will bring you so near to God, there are no wings the plumage of which will waft you so close to heaven, as prayer. The moment you have unpinioned your soul for communion with God, — let your pressure, your sorrow, your sin be what it may, — that moment your heart has quitted earth, and is on its way heavenward. You are soaring above the region of sorrow and battle and sin, and your spirit is expatiating beneath a purer, happier, sunnier sky. Oh the soothing, the strengthening, the uplifting found in prayer beneath the cross! Thus trial helps us heavenward by quickening us to devotion, by stirring us up to closeness of walk. Child of God! want you speedier advance heavenward? Seek it in closer converse with God. Oh, what mighty power has prayer! It has controlled the elements of nature, has stopped the sun in its course, has stayed the arm of God! A man mighty in the prayer of faith is clothed with an invincible panoply, is in possession of a force which Omnipotence cannot resist, for he has "power with God, and prevails." Oh, turn your difficulty into prayer, turn your sorrow into prayer, turn your want into prayer, turn your very sins and backsliding into confession, supplication, and prayer, and on its wing your soul shall rise to a region of thought and feeling and fellowship close to the very gates of heaven. Lord, we thank Thee for the sacred privilege of prayer, — we thank Thee for the mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood, the place of prayer, — we thank Thee for Jesus' precious name, our only plea in prayer, — we thank Thee for the divine grace of prayer, — and not less, Lord, do we praise Thee for the trial, the suffering, the sorrow which stimulates our languid spirit, and wakes our dormant heart to the holy, earnest exercise of prayer!

Trials are necessary to wean us from the world. Perhaps nothing possesses so detaching, divorcing an effect in the experience of the

Christian as affliction. The world is a great snare to the child of God. Its rank is a snare, its possessions are a snare, its honours are a snare, its enterprises are a snare, the very duties and engagements of daily life are a snare, to a soul whose citizenship is in heaven, and whose heart would fain be more frequently and exclusively where Jesus, its treasure is. Oh, how the things that are seen veil the things that are not seen! — how do things temporal banish from our thoughts and affections and desires the things that are eternal! Why does the sun appear so small an orb, so minute a speck, to our eye? Simply because of its remote distance. Oh, is it not thus that Christ with His surpassing loveliness, and heaven with its winning attractions, and eternal things with their profound solemnity, and communion with God in Christ, so soothing and precious, are objects so dim and superficial, just because we, of the earth earthy, live at so great a distance from God, and allow the influence of the world an ascendancy over us so supreme and absorbing? But God in wisdom and mercy sends us trial to detach us from earth, to lessen our worldly-mindedness, more deeply to convince us how empty and insufficient is all created good when His chastening is upon us, to intensify our affection for spiritual things, and to bring our souls nearer to Himself. "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer" (Prov. xxv. 4). "I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin" (Isa. i. 25). Oh, when the heart is chastened and subdued by sorrow, when the soul is smitten and humbled by adversity, when death bereaves, or sickness invades, or resources narrow, or calamity in one of its many crushing forms lights heavily upon us, how solemn, earnest, and distinct is the voice of our ascended Redeemer, "If ye be risen with Me, seek those things which are above, where I sit at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. I am your Treasure, your Portion, your All. Sharers of My resurrection-life, you are partakers of its holy, quickening power, and its heaven-bestowing blessings. Soon to be with Me in glory, let your heart travel thitherward, and in its loosening from earth, its divorcements from the creature, cultivate the mind of My holy apostle, who desired to depart and be with Me." Oh that to this touching appeal our hearts may respond, "Lord, whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. Thou hast stricken and wounded and laid me low, but Thou wilt comfort, heal, and raise me up again. Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee; yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments. Let this trial detach me from the world, wean me from my idols, transfer my heart to Thee, and speed my

soul with a quicker step heavenward." Thus the heart, crusted by the continuous influence of earthly things, is mellowed by sorrow, through the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost; and then the word becomes more fruitful, and the Lord Jesus growing more precious, and conformity to God more promoted, earth recedes and heaven approaches, and we exclaim, in the words of the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes." Thus, "afflictions are God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our heavenly rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and on the left, we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness or other afflictions reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, can call affliction one of his best schoolmasters; and with David may say, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word.' Many thousand rescued sinners may cry, O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrow! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted! Not only the green pastures and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us. Though the word and the Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the word hath easier entrance."

Breaking Down the Carved Work

by Rev. John Colquhoun

"But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers." (Psalm 74:6).

We see from the title of this psalm that it is a "Maschil of David," that is, a psalm fitted to give instruction. The Asaph who was the penman of it was of the tribe of Levi, and was both a prophet and a poet. Like all the other true prophets of God he was a true patriot, holding forth the duty of the nation to cleave to God, and mourning over its apostacy and the consequent desolations of Sion. He could look back on times of spiritual and temporal prosperity which accompanied adherence to the true worship of God, but now it was his sad experience to witness the "perpetual desolations" which overtook the land. The psalm may be taken as both descriptive and prophetic, that is, describing what actually existed in his own day and what, by the spirit of prophecy, was revealed to him as that which was to take place. By most interpreters it is

accepted that prophecy has many stages of fulfilment, and, thus, we may apply the words under consideration to the history of the Church in Scotland down to our own times. In doing so we may notice three matters in particular: I. The Carved Work; II. The Breaking Down of the Carved Work; III. That This is a Loud Voice to Scotland.

I. The Carved Work of the First Reformation — To set up carved work requires knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. We read that when Moses was to set up the Tabernacle he directed the attention of the children of Israel to what the Lord had done. "See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." Of him and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach it is said, "Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart to work all manner of work of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer in blue, and in purple, in scarlet and fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work." (Exodus 35:30-35).

Christ, as the skilful Builder of His Church in Scotland, used men to whom He had given wisdom, understanding and knowledge. By His Spirit He taught them so that they were not only able to see the fair face of the Church of God in the Scriptures and to build according to that pattern, but they were enabled to set it up in a manner that brought conviction to the hearts of men that this was the work of God. We read that "Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the Tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount." This was the principle on which the Reformers acted in Scotland when setting up the Church of God. They had their pattern in the Bible. Thus we find that only what was expressly commanded in the Bible was allowed in the Church, which makes it different from the Church of England, for the English Reformers went on the principle that what was not forbidden was allowable. The result was that the Church of Scotland in its doctrine, worship, and discipline, presented a beautiful carved work, unique among the churches of the Reformation. In the Scots Confession of Faith, presented by Knox and other ministers of the Reformed Church, and laid before Parliament, we have a document which agreed with the Confessions issued by other Reformed Churches. It condemned the errors and idolatry of Romanism and emphasised the Fall of man, and the sinfulness and misery of man by that Fall, by declaring that by "original sin was the image of God defaced in man, and he and his posterity of nature became enemies to

God, slaves of Satan, and servants of sin;" that "all our salvation springs from the eternal and immutable decree of God, who of mere grace elected us in Christ Jesus, His Son, before the foundation of the world was laid;" and that we must "apprehend Christ Jesus, with His justice and satisfaction, who is the end and accomplishment of the law, by whom we are set at this liberty, that the curse and malediction of the law fall not upon us;" that "as God the Father created us when we were not, as His Son, our Lord Jesus, redeemed us when we were enemies to Him, so also the Holy Ghost does sanctify and regenerate us, without all respect of any merit proceeding from us, be it before, or be it after our regeneration, — to speak this one thing yet in more plain words, as we willingly spoil ourselves of all honour and glory of our own creation and redemption, so do we also of our regeneration and sanctification, for of ourselves we are not sufficient to think any good thought, but He Who has begun the work in us is only He Who continues us in the same, to the praise and glory of His undeserved grace." The foregoing is an example of the carved work of the Reformation and was so convincing, because it was based wholly on Scripture, that "Parliament abolished the Papal jurisdiction, prohibited, under certain penalties, the celebration of Mass, and rescinded all the laws formerly made in support of the Roman Catholic Church, and against the Reformed faith."

On the Head of *Doctrine*, the Reformers showed clearly that the carved work which they were instrumental in setting up was a complete reformation from Popery, as the following clearly proves:—"By preaching of the gospel, we understand not only the Scriptures of the New Testament, but also of the Old, to wit, the Law, Prophets, Histories, in which Christ Jesus is no less contained in figure, than we have Him now in verity: and, therefore, with the Apostle we affirm, that all Scripture inspired of God is profitable to instruct, to reprove, and to exhort. In which books of the Old and New Testaments we affirm, that all things necessary for the instruction of the Church, and to make the man of God perfect, is contained and sufficiently expressed. By the contrary doctrine we understand whatsoever men by laws, councils, or constitutions, have imposed upon the consciences of men, without the express commandment of God's word, such as be the vows of chastity, forswearing of marriage, binding of men and women to several and disguised apparels, to the superstitious observation of fasting days, difference of meat for conscience sake, prayer for the dead; and keeping of holy days of certain saints commanded by man, such as be all those that the Papists have invented, as the Feasts (as they term them) of the Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins, of

Christmas, Circumcision, Epiphany, Purification, and other fond Feasts of our Lady."

Of this document, Professor Alex. F. Mitchell, D.D., of St Andrews, after stating that we are not to look on the one hand for "an exhaustive and logical elaboration of the several doctrines of the system and a nicely balanced statement of complementary truths, or on the other for a careful avoidance of incidental expressions which seem dogmatically to determine points not fully or directly handled in the places where we should have expected them to be so," says:—"Yet, if we make such due allowance, look at it from the proper point of view, and peruse the work not only in the now obsolete Scotch, but also in the neat Latin version which often accompanies it, and is said to have been the work of Archbishop Adamson, we shall not hesitate to own that it holds a distinguished place among the Confessions of that age, and is a credit to our Reformer and his associates. Coinciding not infrequently in expression and agreeing generally in its definitions and doctrine with the other Reformed or Calvinistic Confessions (an agreement which its framers explicitly testified by inserting among the subordinate standards of their church, first Calvin's Catechism, and a few years after the Later Helvetic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism), the Scottish Confession of 1560 had characteristics of its own, — a framework rather historical than dogmatic, and a liberal and manly, yet reverent and cautious spirit. It probably contributed to mould the early Scottish theology into a form somewhat less minute and rigid than the Swiss, yet considerably less vague and indefinite than the earlier English." (*The Scottish Reformation*, p. 102-103).

Another part of the carved work was the setting up of church courts for the exercise of Scriptural discipline. The exercise of discipline was necessary in order that those who were unworthy should not partake of the Sacraments, and the Scottish Reformers did not appoint diocesan bishops for that end, because they found no authority for such an office in the "pattern" shown them in the Holy Scriptures. In that pattern they found authority for Church courts, and thus we find in the First Book of Discipline the appointment of elders to assist the minister of the congregation in the exercise of discipline. That discipline was exercised on high and low, from the monarch on the Throne to the meanest of his subjects, when their walk was not in accordance with the rule of Scripture. At the Assembly held in Edinburgh on 25th March 1596 notice was taken of the following items of disorderly conduct in the king's household:—(1) The reading of the Word, and thanksgiving

before and after meat, often omitted. (2) Week sermons often neglected, and he would be admonished not to talk in church with any in time of divine service. (3) To recommend to him private meditation with God in spirit, and in his own conscience. (4) Banning (cursing) and swearing is too common in the king's house and Court, occasioned by his example. (5) He would have good company about him; Robertland, papists, murderers, profane persons, would be removed from him. (6) The Queen's ministry would be reformed. She herself neglects the Word and Sacraments, is to be admonished for night-waking (revelling), balling (dancing) etc. also touching her company etc., and so of her gentlewomen. (*Row's History of the Kirk of Scotland*, p. 171).

Their attitude to the Church of Rome is brought out with no uncertain sound when they say — "(1) As we require Christ Jesus to be truly preached, and His holy sacraments rightly ministered; so we cannot cease to require idolatry, with all monuments and places of the same, as abbeys, monkeries, friaries, nunneries, chapels, chanteries, cathedral churches, chanonries, colleges, others than presently are parish churches or schools, to be utterly suppressed in all bounds and places of this realm, except only palaces, mansions, and dwelling places adjacent thereto, with orchards and yards of the same. As also we desire that idolatry may be removed from the presence of all persons of what estate or condition that ever they be, within this realm. (2) For let your honours assuredly be persuaded, that where idolatry is maintained or permitted, where it may be suppressed, that there shall God's wrath reign, not only upon the blind and obstinate idolaters, but also the negligent sufferers of the same; especially if God have armed their hands with power to suppress such abominations. (3) By *idolatry* we understand, the Mass, invocation of saints, adoration of images, and the keeping and retaining of the same: And finally, all honouring of God not contained in His holy word." *First Book of Discipline*, Chap. iii. sect. 1, 2, 3. In all their doings in connection with setting up the carved work at the time of the Reformation in Scotland our forefathers gave strict obedience to the Lord's command — "According to all that I show thee, both after the fashion of the tabernacle, and after the fashion of all the ornaments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exod. 25:9).

The Second Book of Discipline. — The First Book of Discipline was compiled to meet the needs of the Reformed Church at the time when it threw off the heresies and superstitions of the Church of Rome, and was hastily put together. Some of its arrangements were of a provisional description, and were necessarily introduced to meet the exigencies of the

time, while others, which subsequent experience showed to be of great importance, were omitted. These last were drawn up with great care by persons who had studied the subject, and who took leisure to compare and digest their views. The result was the Second Book of Discipline, which is stated to be "methodically arranged, and the propositions under each Head are expressed with perspicuity, conciseness, and precision." Dr McCrie says, "Its leading principles rest upon the express authority of the Word of God. Its subordinate arrangements are supported by the general rules of Scripture; they are simple, calculated to preserve order and promote edification, and adapted to the circumstances of the church for which they were intended. It is equally opposed to arbitrary and lordly domination on the part of the clergy, and to popular confusion and misrule. It secures the liberty of the people in one of their most important privileges — the choosing of those who shall watch for their souls, without making them the final judges of the qualifications of those who shall be invested with this office. While it establishes an efficient discipline in every congregation, it also preserves that unity which ought to subsist among the different branches of the church of Christ; secures attention to those numerous cases which are of common concern and general utility; and provides a remedy against particular acts of injustice and maladministration, arising from local partialities and limited information, by the institution of larger assemblies acting as courts of appeal and review, in which the interests of all are equally represented, and each enjoys the benefit resulting from the collective wisdom of the whole body. It encourages a friendly co-operation between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities; but it, at the same time, avoids the confounding of their limits — prohibits church courts from 'meddling with anything pertaining to the civil jurisdiction,' — establishes their independence in all matters which belongs to their cognisance, and guards against, what is the great bane of religion and the curse of the church, a priesthood which is merely the organised puppet of the state, and moves and acts only as it is directed by a political administration. It is a form of ecclesiastical polity whose practical utility has been proportionate to the purity in which its principles have been maintained." (*Life of Melville, 1856 ed., p. 58*). It may be said that in this Second Book of Discipline the "carved work" of the Reformation was brought out in bolder relief than ever before.

(To be continued)

Obituaries

by Rev. J. A. MacDonald, Fort William

TWO REAL CHRISTIAN LADIES

Mrs Jessie Fraser and Mrs Morag MacGillivray were both members in full communion in this congregation for many years. To them the house of God was a real Bethel and the word preached there proved "a savour of life unto life," to their souls. I can truly say of them what the late godly Rev. Malcolm Gillies, Stornoway, used to say of many in our church then, that is, "they could draw water out of a dry well." Many a day the writer found them a real blessing in this respect. Both, in their own quiet way, did much to uphold the "pillars" of the land (Ps. 75 v. 3). Oh how appropriate of them is this truth:

"They in the Lord that firmly trust
shall be like Sion hill,
Which at no time can be removed,
but standeth ever still." (Ps. 125 v. 1).

The former was born in the town of Oban about eighty years ago. Her father was an elder there, who conducted worship in the Church on many occasions. She had sweet and vivid recollections of the godly in Oban. She often spoke of the crowds staying at Communion seasons with them. Nevertheless, our friend lived for many years after that in a state of nature; but the loving eye of Jehovah was focussed upon her until He, as the Good Shepherd, brought her into the fold. That she was truly converted was now obvious to all who knew her in the past. In brief, she now loved the things she so little esteemed before.

While under conviction of sin her experience was like that of the Church in the song: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him but I found Him not." However the day of her deliverance was near. She came to church one Sabbath morning with a deep, deep sense of her need of Christ. The preacher's text was: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky." (Deut. 33:26). As she herself used to say so often of that day: "That was the day of my betrothal to Christ." She was a most cheerful Christian, who kept the bright side to the world in the face of her subsequent trials when assailed by Satan.

A truth on which she often chewed her cud, so to speak, was what God said to Jeremiah in his declining years: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love . . ." For days on her deathbed she was as if in a coma,

thus taking no notice of anything. When we, however, and other friends read or quoted the Scriptures to her she would then open her eyes, while her lips moved with delight in the truth. God was with her.

To her three daughters, her sister, her neice and family, we extend our heartfelt sympathy, and would pray that the God of Mrs Fraser would be their God for ever and ever.

The latter (Mrs MacGillivray) was a native of Skye, but spent most of her early life in Glasgow, where she trained as a nurse — a profession she loved, and admired. She came to Fort William in 1952, where she held the post of matron for several years. Her nursing abilities were of a high standard, and were much appreciated by patients and staff.

We believe that she came to know the Saviour when as yet quite young. A truth we often heard from her was, "I love them that love me and those that seek me early shall find me." Being spiritually minded, she often spoke of some of the godly ministers we had in our beloved church; particularly the late Rev. Neil MacIntyre, and the late Rev. Neil Cameron; their earnest zeal for souls, the way they carried the dignity of their office, both on Sabbath and weekday, their ability to defend the truth when assailed by the malignant adversary, and their kindness to those in distress or want at all times. Indeed, there were many of those excellent qualities in Mrs MacGillivray herself.

The profanation of the Lord's day was a sore grief to her. In obedience to the Divine command: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . ." my friend never allowed any of her guests to leave or arrive on that day. Like her friend Mrs Fraser, she was an out and out Free Presbyterian.

The faithful stand made in 1893, they treasured, "more than their necessary food." No compromising on their part. Her attendance on the means of grace was admirable, while on her deathbed in hospital she was most composed as she leaned, we believe, on the arm of Him whom her soul loved. The writer said to her, "You remember what the Church said in the Song of Solomon: 'His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me'." "Oh yes," she replied, "and I would be a poor soul without that now." Oh how sweet the truth.

"Dear in God's sight is His saints death,
Thy servant Lord am I,
Thy servant sure, Thy handmaid's son;
My bands Thou didst untie." (Ps. 116: 15, 16).

To her lonely husband, her daughter and son-in-law, we extend our heartfelt sympathy and may they all be His in the day when He will make up His jewels.

An Treas Rann

Ged a dh' fheudas na chaidh a labhairt a bhi chum feum choitchinn pheacach de gach gnè, co ac a ghairmeadh iad fathast le Dia no tha iad 'nan coigrich dha, gidheadh cha bhuaich sinn ann an deanamh comh-chuir choitchinn sam bith dheth, do bhrìgh gu bheil e air a rùnachadh a mhain air son aoin chrìch àraidh. Is e a tha 'nar n-aire, a bhi 'nochdadh ciod iad na ceud smuaintean a bhitheas ag éirigh ann an cridhe a' pheacaich bhochd a tha fo iomaguin anama do bhrìgh a chionta, 'nuair a tha e an toiseach ag oidhirpeachadh saorsa 'fhaotainn ann a bhi 'pilleadh a dh' ionnsuidh Dhé. Tha an lagh air ball a' cur a stigh a thagraidh na aghaidh; — tha Dia air a thaisbeanadh dha mar ann am feirg, agus 'an corruich, agus air a bhrosnachadh; agus tha uamhas an Tighearna, ann an tomhas mór no beag, 'ga chuairteachadh air gach taobh. Tha so 'ga lionadh le h-eagal, agus nàire, agus rughadh gruaidh; ionnus nach 'e fhios aige ciod a ni e. Ciod, ma seadh, a tha am peacach a' deanamh ciod iad a smuaintean anns an t-suidheachadh so? Am bheil e 'saoilsin. teicheadh o Dhia, agus gach uile oidhirp an deigh saorsa a thoirt thairis? Am bheil e 'g ràdh, "Tha an Dia so na Dhia naomh agus uamhasach; cha-n 'eil e 'nam chomas seirbhis a dheanamh dha; is dlomhain dhomh-sa 'bhi 'sealltuinn air son ni sam bith uaith ach feirg agus léir-sgrìos: agus uime sin is co maith dhomh suidh sìos as a bhi 'leantuinn air m' aghaidh 'an dòchas faotainn am fagus dha?" Cha-n fheudar 'àicheadh nach bi an samhail so de smuaintibh a' faotainn cleachdaidh anns a' chor so tre'n mhi-chreidimh, agus air uairibh nach bi an t-anam air a chur fo mhòr imcheist leò: ach cha-n 'eil cleachdadh àraidh so an anama a' crìochnachadh anns na smuaintibh so; tha toradh eile aige: tha e 'gairm a' pheacaich a dh' ionnsuidh ceud oibreachaidh àraidh an anama ghràs-mhoir 'nuair a tha e 'g éirigh nìos as a dhoimhneachdaibh. Is e sin, mar a chuireadh an céill, mothachadh agus aideachadh treibhdhireach air a' pheacadh, maille ri féin-dlètheadh ann a bhi fìreanachadh Dhé; is e so an ceud nì gus am bheil an t-anam sin air a thoirt a tha 'g oidhirpeachadh éirigh nìos as a dhoimhneachdaibh. Bha rùn coitichionn an anama, a bhi 'deanamh gnothuich choimhlionta de'n obair a tha measg a làmhan, air 'fhosgladh suas a cheana. Is e an t-ath nì chum am bheil sinn air ar treòrachadh anns na briathraibh so, a' bhuaidh a tha

aige air an anam a bhi 'beachdachadh air Dia a' comharachadh aingidh-eachd, eadhon sin a rinn sinn a nis 'ainmeachadh. Is e so am feum mòr agus àraidh a tha an creidimh a' deanamh de'n lagh; air an leudaich sinn anns an teagasg a leanas.

Chuir sinn an céill a cheana suidheachadh coitchionn an anama sin a tha air a cur thuige tre ghràs, agus a tha 'cur roimhe ann an neart gràis a bhi 'g oidhirpeachadh éirigh nios as na doimhneachdaibh anns am bheil e air tuiteam tre'n pheacadh. Rinn sinn mar an ceudna a nochdadh, ann an rathad coitchionn, ciod ris am feud e coinneachadh, seadh, a bhitheas mar is trice cinnteach coinneamh a thoirt dha. Theagamh gu'n imich e mach an toiseach mar a rinn Samson le seachd duail a chinn air am bearradh, a' saoil sinn gu'n dean e mar air uairibh eile; ach tha e gu h-aithghearr a' fòghlum gu'n do chaill e a shìth, gu bheil a chreuchdan goirt, agus a choguis fo bhuaireas, agus Dia ann am feirg, ionnus gu bheil a shuidheachadh gu h-iomlan, 'na mheasrachadh féin, ro chunnartach. Tha so 'ga lionadh de na smuaintibh a tha air an cur an céill anns an treas rann so, air chor as gu bheil e teachd a dh' ionnsuidh a chomh-dhùnaidh sin 'na inntinn féin a chuireadh an céill roimhe. Tha e nis a' faotainn gu bheil gnothuch as ùr aige ri dheanamh ris an lagh. Agus uaith so tha am mothachadh agus an t-aideachadh peacaidh sin ag éirigh, maille ris an fhéin-diteadh sin ann am fireanachadh Dhé, air am bheil sinn a nis a' labhairt. Cha-n 'eil e fàs gruamach, reasgach, mi-thoilichte, agus a' ruith air falbh o Dhia; cha-n 'eil e a' fannachadh gu buileach, no a' tuiteam fo dhlobhail misnich, agus a' sguir de na h-uile ni; ach tha e 'bualadh gu h-iomlan air féin, agus fo mhohlachadh nan nithe so tha e 'luidh sios aig cosaibh Dhé, a dh' fhaicinn ciod e am focal no am binn a thig o a bheul.

Book Reviews

The Bible Tells Us So, by R. B. Kuiper. Banner of Truth Paperback. 132 pp. Price 80p.

This posthumous work of R. B. Kuiper consists of a popular presentation of basic Christian teachings. It gives a clear presentation of the various teachings of Scripture with which it deals. It should prove of immense value to university students especially as it includes in each case a brief exposure of anti-biblical teaching. Nothing is more necessary for the young and particularly for students at university than that they would have a clear understanding of what it is that the Bible teaches and how it may be defended. There is a foreword by the late Prof. John Murray in

which he commends this as well as the other writings of R. B. Kuiper. We feel that the expression on p. 75, "hellish agony" is an unhappy one, as referring to the cry of dereliction.

D. B. M.

Christian Leaders of the 18th Century, by J. C. Ryle. Banner of Truth Paperback. 432pp. Price £1.75.

This reprint of Bishop J. C. Ryle's well-known "Christian Leaders" is very welcome. Ryle begins with a historical chapter outlining the low spiritual and moral state of England in the first half of the 18th Century. He follows this by a chapter dealing with the means God was pleased to use to bring about a mighty change in the sentiments of the people — that is by raising up a number of clergymen, chiefly of the Church of England, who went forth with the Gospel of God's grace.

The first seven of whom Ryle writes were Whitefield, Wesley, Grimshaw, Romaine, Rowlands, Berridge and Venn. "These seven men," Ryle says, "appear to me to stand alone in the religious history of England : hundred years ago." (He was writing a century ago). "Besides them, no doubt, there were many others of eminent grace and gifts. But none attained to the degree of the first seven." In addition, Ryle gives an account of four other men who were "less well known than some of their contemporaries and yet were eminently useful in their day and generation." These were Walker of Truro, James Hervey, Toplady and Fletcher of Madeley. The brief biographies Ryle draws up of these men, consisting of one, two or three chapters, are full of interest and indicate plainly the beneficial effect that the Gospel had on England in the 18th Century. Not all of these men were Calvinists. John Wesley and Fletcher of Madeley were Arminians. Yet it is not to Wesley, perhaps the most widely known of all those Christian leaders, that Ryle assigns the first place but to George Whitefield. He says: "Of all the spiritual heroes of a hundred years ago none saw so soon as Whitefield what the times demanded, and none were so forward in the great work of spiritual aggression. I should think I committed an act of injustice if I placed any name before his." Ryle does not hide the errors of Wesley and Fletcher of Madeley, nor does he defend what he calls Wesley's "objectionable opinions." He says: "Personally, I feel unable to account for any well-instructed Christian holding such doctrines as perfection and the defectibility of grace, or denying such as election and the imputed righteousness of Christ." But he goes on to plead that we should distinguish between things that are of the *essence* of the gospel and

things which are of the perfection of gospel in judging a particular preacher. How persuasively he argues his case we leave the reader to judge.

We have no doubt that ministers and others will find these brief biographies of Christian leaders of two centuries ago stimulating and helpful.

D. B. M.

Why Psalms Only? by J. W. Keddie. Scottish Reformed Fellowship. Price 35p.

This 16 page booklet argues briefly but cogently the case for the exclusive use of the Psalms in the public worship of God. A section deals with the textual evidence, particularly with the references in the New Testament to hymns and spiritual songs and concludes that there is no evidence from these texts for the use of non-inspired materials in the public worship of God. Another section deals with historical evidence. This considers mainly the recognition of the "regulative principle" by the Reformed Church and how this effectively excluded everything but the Psalms of David from the public worship of the sanctuary until a very late date when this principle was departed from in some instances. The last section summarises the conclusions of the brief study. These emphasise the unwarrantableness of anything but Scriptural Psalmody.

We welcome this booklet and recommend it.

D.B.M.

Notes and Comments

The Pope and Human Rights

In a letter to the United Nations on the thirtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Pope called the attention of the Assembly to the problem of religious freedom which, he said, is at the basis of all other freedoms. He spoke also of repressive and discriminatory action practised against vast numbers of citizens who have had to suffer all sorts of oppression, even death, simply in order to preserve their spiritual values.

No doubt the Pope had in view particularly the difficulties of Romanists under Communistic rule. It is easy for the Pope to cry out for religious liberty when it happens to be Romanists who are under pressure. We have little doubt that the Romanists themselves, if they were in power, would be as ready to persecute those who differ from them in belief, as

surely as they were in former days. Religious freedom for the Pontiff really means freedom to practise the Romanist Faith, which he regards as the only true faith.

Pope's Visit Abroad

The Pope expected to open the third General Conference of Latin American bishops in Mexico on January 27th. Later on, in May of this year, he is expected to visit his native Poland to attend celebrations marking the 900th anniversary of the death of St. Stanislaw. These journeys undertaken by the Pope have a bearing on the present strategy of the Romanist Church with regard to the spread of communism in the world. In Latin America the Romanist Church has lost many of its priests and followers to the revolutionary communistic movements found there. Any containment of the situation which a visit by the Pope might bring about would, no doubt, be welcomed by Romanists there. In Poland the R.C. Church is not so much on the defensive, but even there the Pope's visit will strengthen the R.C. Church over against the atheistic state. Besides these ends, the visits to other countries will give the Romanist Church opportunity for increased self advertisement.

Crimes in Scotland

The figures for crime in Scotland for 1977 which have just been worked out show a very significant rise over the 1976 total. The crime rate was almost 14% higher than the previous year. Murders rose from 63 in 1976 to 67 in 1977.

This increasing state of lawlessness reflects the abandoning by many of religion in every kind and form. The irreligion of the nation is bearing the fruit that might be expected. What need there is then for a day of the Lord's power that the nation might be brought back to God.

The Prince and Marriage to a Roman Catholic

Mr Enoch Powell raised a storm in December by warning of the danger to the British monarchy should the Prince of Wales marry a Roman Catholic. Mr Powell based his view of the danger on the fact that the Queen was head of the Church of England. We would like to think that there are stronger grounds than this why the Prince should not marry a Roman Catholic. The history of the nation has shown conclusively that the civil and religious freedom enjoyed by the nation is bound up

with its Protestant constitution, which ought to be maintained at all costs. This would not be possible if a Roman Catholic were to exercise influence near to the throne as the Queen of the nation. Rome's view on marriage would make it certain that the children of the Prince's marriage to a Roman Catholic would belong to that faith. But over and above all this, the anti-christian nature of Romanism makes it imperative that no Roman Catholic is ever allowed to sit on the Throne again.

Guyana Mass Suicide

The world was horrified to learn, towards the end of last year, of the mass suicide of a sect which had established a commune in north west Guyana in South America. The members of the sect came mainly from California in the U.S.A. The instigator of the suicide appeared to be the leader of the commune. Behind him, however, it is not difficult to detect Satanic agency. Only the Jewish tragedy at Massada around 73A.D. when 900 men, women and children perished by their own hand rather than face certain death at the hands of the Romans, can be compared to what happened in Guyana, only in Guyana there was no pressure to force such desperate measures except the subjection of the people to the will of a fanatical leader. Surely Satan's time is short when he is forcing men to such madness and folly.

Letter from Rhodesia

by Rev. D. A. Ross

Dear Friends,

Here are a number of news items which I am sure will interest you but above all we hope provoke you to prayer.

As you already know, all our Mission schools are closed in the Zenka and Mbumba areas; but, generally speaking, the nucleus of the Mission, the Church, remains fairly active. For this we are thankful to the Most High. However, we have to report that a number of our small outstation churches have closed down, and the few people who once gathered for worship no longer do. The main reason for this seems to be fear caused by threats from terrorists. Some of these congregations are Somakatana, Magasi, Katasa and Donsa Dam. Two places of worship not far from Mbumba, Lutsha and Bhumbu were both burnt down. The place of worship at Lutsha was a thatched classroom built in Rev. J. Fraser's time. Altogether four class-rooms were burnt at Lutsha. The following Sabbath our people worshipped under a tree, but not many weeks after, the seasonal rains

began, and they asked permission from the local school council to use the two remaining school rooms, and our Lutsha congregation now worship in one of the remaining classrooms. At Bhubu, all class rooms were burnt down as were also the teacher's cottages. Eventually, however, one of the professing women in the congregation opened her home to be used for the services on Sabbath. It appears that the best policy would be to have places of worship built specifically for that purpose, rather than to use class-rooms in school locations, as schools are often burnt down by terrorists in their animosity against anything governmental. Had we had buildings for the sole purpose of worship, at this stage, they would probably not have been burnt down. However, the future may have a different tale to tell.

One bright factor amidst all our troubles was the ordination and induction of the Rev. B. B. Dube, who is now settled at Zenka. For this we are deeply thankful to the Most High. Of this happy occasion I will say no more, since Rev. Ndebele has written to our magazine regarding the matter.

With the destruction of schools, hospitals, industries, stores, the sad effect of the local population is not hard to imagine. One obvious effect is that many are robbed of their normal means of livelihood. Then following hard on the heels of such acts is Martial Law. The whole of the Nkai Tribal Trust Land where part of our Mission is established, is under Martial Law. The pity is that many of the local people little understand the aggressive nature of war and are perplexed at the measure of Martial Law. Many people have no means of hearing or reading the daily news, and some of the older people who have little education are, at times, exceedingly perplexed as to what is taking place. The Lord's people are, however, greatly comforted from the Word of God. With all our troubles in this part of the world, and some of these are terrible indeed, especially for families who lose their loved ones in the war, and more awful, those slain by the most brutal barbarities imaginable, yet when one reads about the awful purges by Stalin, and the scale of national suffering under communist dictatorships, the sufferings of Rhodesia seem small by comparison; and we pray to God it will not accelerate, and that the time is not far off in His purposes to remove all such suffering.

At Ingwenya Mission we have been advised by Chief Ndiweni to build a security fence, and after discussion at our Field Committee we decided to proceed with the project, which should be completed in a few days time. In Bulawayo, although it is one of the areas of terrorist activity,

and many poor people the victims of their activity, yet for all this, law and order prevails, and there is no Martial Law, which is cause for thankfulness. Our services proceed as usual. In fact, in the kind Providence of the Lord, we have been enabled to open a new preaching station at Methuen, which lies about twenty kilometres from Bulawayo. The attendance is poor. We began with about sixteen adults, and now approximately eight come each Sabbath. Our hope is that this will be a permanent station and that many souls will be brought to join the armies of the Living God.

One last matter I wish to mention is the kindness of the Dutch people who constantly forward parcels of clothing to our Mission. Especially in times when the present political situation brings many forms of poverty, clothing is a most welcome aid for those in straits. Also, we have opportunity to give clothing to various organisations, for example to an African Home for the Physically Handicapped, where at the same time we distributed suitable Scripture literature. We look to God for the increase in our sowing the good seed of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Our particular wish to all our friends is as in Ephesians 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints," and what need in our case when in one congregation, almost everybody stopped coming to Church for fear of their lives. However, the congregation is back to normal numbers due, no doubt, to prayers being answered for the Church in Africa. Other congregations, as I have said, have ceased to function. Some belonging to our congregations disappeared. Others have turned back to the world. Indeed, what need for your prayers day and night, making mention of us always at a Throne of Grace. Paul said to those at Rome: "that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." "Brethren pray for us," because "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16).

The cross of Christ is the sweetest burden that ever I bear; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my harbour.

Samuel Rutherford

Church Notes

Church Deputies to Rhodesia

Rev. R. R. Sinclair and Rev. Alex. Murray left this country on 10th January for a six week's visit to Rhodesia. We have no doubt that this visit by the Deputies will be an encouragement to our people on the Mission at this particular time. Both the missionaries and also the African people themselves are exposed to great danger through the guerilla war being carried on in that land. May the day speedily come when an honourable and just settlement will be arrived at in Rhodesia by reason of which the work of spreading the Gospel may be carried on without let or hindrance. We are sure that the praying people of the Church who have been diligent in pleading on behalf of the Mission in these troublous times will also remember the Deputies who also expose themselves to danger in undertaking this task.

Miss Marion Graham returned to the Mission along with the Deputies and resumes her work in the School there. We pray that she, also all the other members of Staff, and all the African people on the Mission may be preserved from all danger and harm in these trying times.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

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

Southern: At Glasgow on 13th February at 6 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 27th February at 11.30 a.m.

Western: At Laide on 6th March at 11 a.m.

Young People's Conference 1979

This conference will be held D.V. at Kilravock Castle Christian Centre, Croy, Inverness from 12 noon on Tuesday, 10th April to 2 p.m. on Thursday, 12th April.

The Conference Chairman will be Rev. D. B. MacLeod, M.A., Dingwall. Papers to be given at the conference are as follows:—

- 1 The Value of the Creeds — Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow.
- 2 John Huss — a character study — Rev. John Brentnall, B.A., Dumbarton.
- 3 The Young Christian's relationship to Law and Order — Mr Ian MacLeod, Dingwall.
- 4 Is the Gospel suitable for the Young? — Rev. D. B. Macleod, Dingwall.

On this occasion accommodation will be paid for by the Forsyth Bequest. In order that arrangements can be finalised, it is hoped that those wishing to attend will reply as soon as possible to the Clerk of the Welfare of Youth Committee, Mr W. H. M. MacKenzie, Dee Bank, 7 Crown Drive, Inverness.

Church Extension Committee Notice

Some of our people will already know that Mr William Byers, then an elder in the Portree Congregation, left the Island of Skye in the Autumn and settled with his wife and family in Ayrshire. As he indicated to the Committee, he felt that this move was not undertaken without the guidance of God in His word and providence; and he asked us if we might consider countenancing church extension work in the Prestwick area. The Committee received Mr Byers' representations sympathetically, and asked him to report on the situation after he had been in his new home for some time. The Committee asked those of its members who were also members of the Southern Presbytery to bring this matter to the notice of their Presbytery. We also agreed in principle that, when the time was appropriate, we should support this work by means of a notice inserted in the Church Magazine.

Accordingly, we are calling the attention of our church people to the developing situation in Ayrshire, where services are now being held morning and evening on the Lord's Day in the home of Mr Byers. As a temporary measure, the house is eminently suitable for the purpose, featuring a capacious hall. Mr Byers keeps these services himself, though this burden may be eased by the sending of supply from time to time. He has called on a number of people in the area who have connections with the Church, and on three occasions there have been ten persons present at a service.

The Committee would ask our people to support this development in every way. If readers have friends, for example, in the Prestwick area, encourage them to contact Mr Byers at: 5 Maryborough Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire; *Phone Prestwick (0292) 75420*. (The house is just beside *Bruce's Well*, which is sign-posted.)

John Tallach,
Clerk to the Church Extension Committee.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: Harris Friend, £10.

Home Mission Fund: Harris Friend, £10.

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: A.F., £30; In memory of our dear mother, Mrs Christina Fowler-Gibson, £13.52.

Aged and Infirm Ministers' etc. Fund: A.F., £25.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: "The king's business requireth haste," Inverness postmark, £10 for Fede Viva.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Portree Congregation, £120.45.

Bulawayo, Rhodesia: Mrs MacK., Glasgow, £20 for books, per D.A.R.

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

Free Distribution Fund: Anon., £5 for F.P. Magazine Fund and £5 to Y.P. Magazine Fund, per Portree Treasurer.

Publications Fund: M.M., South Harris, £5; Lairg Congregation, £50.

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

Barnoldswick: Isaiah 60:13, £3; MacKenzie, England, £10; Anon., £20; J.R., Lochcarron, £6; Kirkwall Friend, £25; Glasgow & Raasay Friend, £5; Edinburgh Friend, £20; Lairg Friend, £20; Harris Friend, £5; Friend, Stornoway, £20; Friend from Scotland, £30; all for Church Building Appeal; C. A. McL., £10 for Congregational Purposes; Mr and Mrs F., Inverness, £20; 1 Chron. 4:10 (Stornoway Postmark), £5; Anon., £20, per Mr Nicolson, Edinburgh; Two Edinburgh Friends, for New Church, £6; A Friend, Inverness, Psalm 125:1, £6; Friend, £10; A little help for Church (Ross-shire postmark), £5; MacQueen, Glasgow, £50; Friend, "For your Church Building", Postal Order, South Harris, £10; Dornoch Friend, £10; Interested, Staffin, £20; Wellwishers, Portree, £10; all for Church Building Fund.

Edinburgh: E.K., Leeds, £5, for Edinburgh Church Repair Fund; Anon., Inverness, £8, for Sustentation Fund, per Rev. Donald Campbell.

Fort William: Mr and Mrs C., Lochaline, £10; Mrs C., Onich, £1, both per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow: M.D., Balfron, £15, per Mr D.M.; N.H., £1, per Rev. D. McL.; Anon., £10; all for Sustentation Fund; A Friend, Thornlibank, £2; M.S., £5; both for Communion Expenses; Anon., £7, for Home of Rest; Anon., £5, for Bus Expenses; Anon., £30; A.M., £1.50; both for Congregational Fund, and both per Rev. D. McL.; Anon., £3, for Underground Evangelism (for Bibles for Ethiopian Evangelicals).

Greenock: Anon., £115, for Jewish & Foreign Mission and Trinitarian Bible Society (envelope in plate); R.H.C., Bangor, N.I., £10, for Congregational Purposes.

Inverness: Anon., £50, for Sustentation Fund, per Rev. A.F.M.

Laide: Friend, Porthenderson, £5; Two Friends, Gairloch, in memory of loved ones, £15; Friend, Poolewe, £10; Two Friends, Laide, £5; Laide Friend, £15; Two Dingwall sisters, in memory of loved ones, £10; all for Manse Building Fund.

London: Kinlochbervie Congregation, £35, for London Church and Manse Building Fund.

North Uist: Mr and Mrs MacL., Stockinish, £5; Ness Friend, £5; J.N.M., Harris, £10; Two Friends, £30; Friend, £20; all for Manse Extension; Friend, £5, for upkeep of car; Friend, £5, for Manse Heating; Friend, £5, for Church Heating; all per Rev. A. Morrison.

Plockton/Kyle: Mr V.W. (in Plockton plate), £10; Mr J. MacB., £40; Envelope in Kyle plate, £10; all for Manse Fund.

Portree: A Wellwisher, £5, for repairs to Braes Church; Anon., £16, for Rhodesian Mission; Anon., £5, for Church Bus; Anon., £2, for Publication Fund; all in Church plate; R.L., £5, for Congregational Purposes, per F.M.; Friend, £5, for Manse Expenses.

Raasay: Psalm 59:16,17, £2, for Sustentation Fund, per J. M. MacLeod; Envelope in plate, £5; Mrs MacL., Glasgow, £2; both for Property Fund.

Shieltaig: Gairloch Friend, £5; Anon., £5, for Car Fund; Anon., Shieltaig, £3, for Car Fund.

South Harris: Friend, Northton, £40, per A. MacL.; Friend, Leverburgh, £10, per D. MacK., for Congregational Purposes.

Stornoway: Friend, N.T., £5, for Sustentation Fund, per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon., £20; Two Friends, Inverness, £12; both for Congregational Purposes, last one per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon., £10, for Car Fund, per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Thurso: C. of S. Friend, £10, for Sustentation Fund, per Rev. D. A. MacL.