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The Blessed Man

The Psalmist begins the Church's book of praise by describing the man who is blessed and by contrasting him with the ungodly.

The blessed man is the man who hates sin and avoids the company of the ungodly. He has come to see the evil of sin as that is revealed in the Scriptures of truth and has come to know it in his own experience. He sees sin, not only in its effects upon men, but also as it is against God, an infinitely holy God. He recognises clearly the dishonour done to God by sin and has been brought to say with Joseph: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Besides, he has come to see that sin deserves eternal death, and that nothing can atone for sin but the blood of the divine Redeemer. He has himself looked by faith to the crucified One and has obtained life through His name. He has come, too, to know his need of the blood of sprinkling for daily living in this world. He understands the meaning of these words: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The blessed man avoids the way of the ungodly. He is still in the world and therefore necessarily on occasions comes in contact with the ungodly or else he must needs go out of the world. But in their thoughts, their ways, their talk he has no delight. He is like Lot, that just man, who in Sodom vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the filthy conversation of the ungodly. Let the blessed man have business to transact with the ungodly world, then having transacted it he does not stop to linger there. He knows his danger. He knows that his own heart is like tinder that could be set alight in a moment and burst into flame. He desires to be preserved from the way in which destroyers go, and looks to the Lord for his safe-keeping.

The blessed man delights in the law of the Lord and makes it his meditation. Others have their own source of pleasure, but this is his. He can say: Thy Word was found and I did eat it and it was unto me as the

joy and rejoicing of my heart. What others find no delight in, that is, in the Word of God, he finds special delight in. He says: "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all that day." He has found in the Bible what he could find nowhere else, that is, salvation for his soul. He has found Christ in it, the pearl of great price. Is it any wonder then that he values it and sets such store by it? The longing of his soul with regard to the Word of God is set out in these words: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." He desires to be taught, to be led, to be quickened, to be revived. And the Lord is not a wilderness to him. He does not leave him with his desires. The Lord grants him his desire for teaching and keeping and over and above it all gives him His gracious presence to delight him and encourage him on his wilderness journey.

The blessed man flourishes, for he is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. He may himself be mourning over his unfruitfulness and yet all the while be bringing forth fruit and more fruit, yet unknown to himself. He may be grieving at heart over the little measure of his love to God and yet at the same time be loving God more and more. He may be complaining of his sinfulness and complaining more and more of it, and in the very midst of these complaints be growing more holy in heart and life day by day. He may be sad at heart because he is so little like Christ whose image he would desire to be conformed to perfectly, and all the while be putting on Christ more and more. It must be so with the blessed man for "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

"Those that within the house of God
are planted by His grace,
They shall grow up, and flourish all
in our God's holy place."

But what of the end of the blessed man? He shall stand in the assembly of the just. Not so, the wicked. The ungodly are to be cut off. They are as the chaff which is driven away. They shall not prosper as the righteous shall prosper. Their end is to be burnt up. Upon the wicked the Lord "shall reign snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." But the Lord shall bless His people with peace. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace." There they shall abide for evermore.

The Peace that is no Peace

by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon

"Peace, peace, when there is no peace." (Jeremiah vi. 14)

Ministers are fearfully guilty if they intentionally build up men in a false peace. I cannot imagine any man more greatly guilty of blood than he who plays jackal to the lion of hell, by pandering to the depraved tastes of vain, rebellious man. The physician who should pamper a man in his disease, who should feed his cancer, or inject continual poison into the system, while at the same time he promised sound health and long life — such a physician would not be one half so hideous a monster of cruelty as the professed minister of Christ, who should bid his people take comfort, when, instead thereof, he ought to be crying, 'Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion: be troubled, ye careless ones.' The work of the ministry is no child's play; it is a labour which might fill an angel's hands — did fill the Saviour's heart. Much prayer we need, that we may be kept honest; and much grace, that we may not mislead the souls whom we are bound to guide. The pilot who should pretend to steer a ship toward its proper haven, but who should meanwhile occupy himself below with boring holes in her keel that she might sink, would not be a worse traitor than the man who takes the helm of a church and professes to be steering it towards Christ, while all the while he is ruining it, by diluting the truth as it is in Jesus, concealing unpalatable truths, and lulling men into security with soft and flattering words. We might sooner pardon the assassin, who stretches forth his hand under the guise of friendship, and then stabs us to the heart, than we could forgive the man who comes towards us with smooth words, telling us that he is God's ambassador, but all the while foment rebellion in our hearts, and pacifies us while we are living in revolt against the Majesty of heaven. In the great day when Jehovah shall launch His thunderbolts, methinks He will reserve one more dread and terrible than the rest, for some arch-traitor to the cross of Christ, who has not only destroyed himself, but led others into hell.

But, my dear hearers, it is a lamentable fact, that, without any hireling-shepherd to cry, 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace,' men will cry that for themselves. They need not the syren song to entice them to the rocks of presumption and rash confidence. There is a tendency in their own hearts to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter — to think

well of their evil estate, and foster themselves in proud conceit.' No man is ever too severe with himself. We hold the scales of justice with a very unsteady hand when our character is in the balance.

My solemn business this morning shall be — and O may God help me in it! — to drag forth to the light some of you who have been pacifying your own consciences, and have been crying, 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace.'

It is no uncommon thing with me to meet with people who say, 'Well, I am happy enough. My conscience never troubles me. I believe, if I were to die, I should go to heaven as well as anybody else.' I know that those men are living in the commission of glaring acts of sin, and I am sure they could not prove their innocence even before the bar of man; yet will these men look you in the face, and tell you that they are not at all disturbed at the prospect of dying. They laugh at death, as though it were but a scene in a comedy, and joke at the grave, as if they could leap in and out of it at their pleasure. Well, gentlemen, I will take you at your word, though I don't believe you. I will suppose you have this peace, and I will endeavour to account for it on certain grounds, which may render it somewhat more difficult for you to remain in it. I do pray that God the Holy Spirit may destroy these foundations, and pull up these bulwarks of yours, and make you feel uneasy in your consciences and troubled in your minds; for un-ease is the road to ease, and disquiet in the soul is the road to the true quiet. To be tormented on account of sin is the path to peace; and happy shall I be if I can hurl a firebrand into your hearts this morning; if I shall be able, like Samson, to turn at least some little foxes loose into the standing corn of your self-conceit, and set your heart in a blaze.

1. The first person I shall have to deal with this morning, is the man who has peace because he spends his life in a ceaseless round of gaiety and frivolity. You have scarcely come from one place of amusement before you enter another. You are always planning some excursion, and dividing the day between one entertainment and another. You know that you are never happy except you are in what you call gay society, where the frivolous conversation will prevent you from hearing the voice of your conscience. In the morning you will be asleep while God's sun is shining, but at night you will be spending precious time in some place of foolish, if not lascivious, mirth. Like Saul, the deserted king, you have an unquiet spirit, and therefore you call for music, and it hath its charms, doubtless — charms not only to soothe the stubborn breast, but to still a stubborn conscience for awhile; but, while its notes are carrying you

upwards towards heaven, in some grand composition of a master author, I beseech you never to forget that your sins are carrying you down to hell. If the harp should fail you, then you call for Nabal's feast. There shall be a sheep-shearing, and you shall be drunken with wine, until your souls become as stolid as a stone. And then you wonder that you have peace. What wonder! Surely any man would have peace when his heart has become as hard as a stone. What weathers shall it feel? What tempests shall move the stubborn bowels of a granite rock? You sear your consciences, and then marvel that they feel not. Perhaps, too, when both wine and the viol fail you, you will call for the dance; and the daughter of Herodias shall please Herod, even though John the Baptist's head should pay its deadly price. Well, well, if you go from one of these scenes to another, I am at no loss to solve the riddle that there should be with you, 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace.'

And now sit for your portraits, and I will paint you to the life. A company of idolaters are gathered together around an hideous image. There sits the blood-delighting Moloch. He is heated hot. The fire blazes in his brazen centre, and a child is about to be put into his arms to be burnt to ashes. The mother and father are present when the offspring of their own loins is to be immolated. The little one shrieks with terror; its little body begins to consume in this desperate heat. Will not the parents hear the cry of their own flesh, and listen to the wailings of the fruit of their own bowels? Ah, no, the priests of Moloch will prevent the appeal of nature! Sounding their drums and blowing their trumpets with all their might, they drown the cries of this poor immolated victim. It is what you are doing! Your soul is the victim to Satan! It is being destroyed now; and if you would but listen to its cries, if you would give yourself a little quiet, you might hear your poor soul shrieking, '*Oh! do not destroy me: put not away from me the hope of mercy; damn me not; send me not down to hell!*' These are shrieks that might penetrate your spirit, and startle you into wisdom. But no; you beat your drums, and sound your trumpets, and you have your dance and your merriment, that the noise of your poor soul may be hushed. Ah, sirs! there will be a day when you will have to hear your spirit speak. When your cups are empty, and not a drop of water can be given to your burning tongue; when your music has ceased, and the doleful 'Miserere' of wailing souls shall be your Black Sanctus; when you shall be launched for ever into a place where merriment and mirth are strangers — then you will *hear* the cries of your soul, but hear too late. Then shall each voice be as a dagger sticking in your souls. When your conscience shall cry, 'Remember, thou

hadst thy day of mercy; thou hadst thy day of the proclamation of the Gospel, but thou didst reject it;' then thou wilt wish, but wish in vain, for thunders to come and drown that still, small voice, which shall be more terrible in thy ears than even the rumbling of the earthquake or the fury of the storm. Oh, that ye would be wise, and not fritter away your souls for gaiety! Poor sirs! poor sirs! There are nobler things for souls to do than to kill time — a soul immortal spending all its powers on these frivolities. Well might Young say of it, it resembles ocean into tempest tossed, to waft a feather or to drown a fly. These things are beneath you; they do no honour to you. Oh, that you would begin to live! What a price you are paying for your mirth — eternal torment for an hour of jollity — separation from God for a brief day or two of sin! Be wise, men, I besech you; open your eyes and look about you. Be not for ever madmen. Dance not for ever on this precipice, but stop and think. O Spirit of the living God! stay Thou the frivolous, and dart a burning thought into his soul, that will not let him rest until he has tasted the solid joy, the lasting pleasure, which none but Zion's children know.

2. Well, now I turn to another class of men. Finding that amusement at last has lost all its zest — having drained the cup of worldly pleasure till they find first satiety, and then disgust, lying at the bottom, they want some stronger stimulus; and Satan, who has drugged them once, has stronger opiates than mere merriment for the man who chooses to use them. If the frivolity of this world will not suffice to rock a soul to sleep, he hath a yet more hellish cradle for the soul. He will take you up to his own breast, and bid you suck therefrom his own devilish and Satanic nature, that you may then be still and calm. I mean, that he will lead you to imbibe infidel notions; and, when this is fully accomplished, you can have 'peace, peace, when there is no peace.' When I hear a man saying, *'Well, I am peaceful enough, because I am not fool enough to believe in the existence of a God, or in a world to come; I cannot imagine that this old story book of yours — this Bible — is true,'* I feel two thoughts within my soul: first, a disgust of the man for his dishonesty; and, secondly, a pity for the sad disquietude that needs such dishonesty to cover it. Do not suspect the man of being honest. There are two sorts of infidels. One sort are such fools that they know they never could distinguish themselves by anything that was right, so they try and get a little fictitious glory by pretending to believe and defend a lie. There are another set of men who are unquiet in their consciences: they do not like the Bible because it does not like them; it will not let them be comfortable in their sins, it is such an uneasy book to them. They did put their heads

upon it once, but it was like a pillow stuffed with thorns; so they have done with it, and they would be very glad if they could actually prove it to be untrue, which they know they cannot. I say, then, I at once despise his falsehood, and pity the uneasiness of his conscience, that could drive him to such a paltry shift as this, to cover his terrors from the eyes of others. The more the man brags, the more I feel he does not mean it; the louder he is in his blasphemies, the more he curses, the better he argues, the more sure I am that he is not sincere, except in his desire to stifle the groans of his uneasy spirit. Ah, sir, you shall find the red-hot bullets of Divine justice too many and too terrible for your sophisms. When you shall fall under the arm of the eternal God, vain will be your logic then. Dashed to shivers, you will believe in the omnipotence, when you are made to feel it; you will know His justice when it is too late to escape from its terror. Oh, be wise; cast away these day-dreams. Cease to shut thy soul out of heaven; be wise; turn thee unto God, whom thou hast abused. For 'all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto man.' He is ready to forgive you, ready to receive you, and Christ is ready to wash your blasphemy away. Now, to-day, if grace enable you, you may be an accepted child of that God whom you have hated, and pressed to the bosom of that Jehovah whose very existence you have dared to deny. God bless these words to you! If they have seemed hard, they were only meant to come home to your conscience; an affectionate heart has led me to utter them. Oh, do not this evil thing! Suck not in these infidel notions; destroy not your soul, for the sake of seeming to be wise; stop not the voice of your conscience by those arguments which you know in your inmost soul are not true, which you only repeat in order to keep up a semblance of consistency.

3. I shall come now to a third class of men. These are people not particularly addicted to gaiety, nor especially given to infidel notions; but they are a sort of folk who are careless, and determined to let well alone. Their motto is, 'Let to-morrow take care for the things of itself: let us live while we live; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' If their conscience cries out at all, they bid it lie still. When the minister disturbs them, instead of listening to what he says, and so being brought into a state of real peace, they cry, 'Hush! be quiet! there is time enough yet; I will not disturb myself with these childish fears: be still, sir, and lie down.' Ah! and you have been doing this for years, have you? Whenever you have heard an earnest, powerful sermon, you have gone home, and laboured to get rid of it. A tear has stolen down your cheek now and then, and you have despised yourself for it. 'Oh!' you say, 'it is not manly

for me to think of these things.' There have been a few twitches at times, which you could not help, but the moment after you have your heart like a flint, impenetrably hard and stony. Well, sir, I will give you a picture of yourself. There is a foolish farmer yonder in his house. It is the dead of night: the burglars are breaking in — men who will neither spare his life nor his treasures. There is a dog down below chained in the yard; it barks, and barks, and howls again. 'I cannot be quiet,' says the farmer, 'my dog makes too much noise.' Another howl, and yet another yell. He creeps out of bed, gets his loaded gun, opens the window, fires it, and kills the dog. 'Ah! it is all right now,' he mutters; he goes to bed, lies down, and quietly rests. 'No hurt will come,' he says, 'now; for I have made that dog quiet.' Ah! but would that he could have listened to the warning of the faithful creature. Ere long he shall feel the knife, and rue his fatal folly. So you, when God is warning you — when your faithful conscience is doing its best to save you — you try to kill your only friend, while Satan and Sin are stealing up to the bedside of your slothfulness, and are ready to destroy your soul for ever and ever. What should we think of the sailor at sea who should seek to kill all the stormy petrels, that there might be an end to all storms? Would you not say, 'Poor, foolish man! why, those birds are sent by a kind Providence to warn him of the tempest. Why needs he injure them? They cause not the tumult; it is the raging sea.' So it is not your conscience that is guilty of the disturbance in your hearts, it is your sin; and your conscience, acting true to its character, as God's index finger in your soul, tells you that all is wrong. Would that ye would arise, and take the warning, and fly to Jesus while the hour of mercy lasts.

To use another picture. A man sees his enemy before him. By the light of his candle he marks his insidious approach. His enemy looks fierce and black upon him, and is seeking his life. The man puts out the candle, and then exclaims, 'I am now quite at peace!' This is what you do. Conscience is the candle of the Lord; it shows you your enemy; you try to put it out by saying, 'Peace, peace.' Put the enemy out, sir! put the enemy out! God give you grace to thrust sin out! Oh, may the Holy Spirit enable you to thrust your lusts out of doors! Then, let the candle burn; and the more brightly its light shall shine, the better for your soul, now and hereafter. Oh! up, ye sleepers; ye gagers of conscience, what mean you? Why are you sleeping, when death is hastening on, when eternity is near, when the great white throne is even now coming on the clouds of heaven, when the trumpet of the resurrection is now being set to the mouth of the archangel — why do ye sleep? why will ye slumber? Oh,

that the voice of Jehovah might speak and make ye wake, that ye may escape from the wrath to come!

4. A fourth set of men have a kind of peace that is the result of resolutions which they have made, but which they will never carry into effect. 'Oh,' saith one, 'I am quite easy enough in my mind; for, when I have got a little more money I shall retire from business, and then I shall begin to think about eternal things.' Ah, but I would remind you that, when you were an apprentice, you said you would reform when you became a journeyman; and when you were a journeyman, you used to say you would give good heed when you became a master. But hitherto these bills have never been paid when they became due. They have every one of them been dishonoured as yet; and, take my word for it, this new accommodation bill will be dishonoured too. So you think to stifle conscience by what you will do by-and-by. Ah, man, but will that by-and-by ever come? And should it come, what reason is there to expect that you will then be any more ready than you are now? Hearts grow harder, sin grows stronger, vice becomes more deeply rooted, by the lapse of years. You will find it certainly no easier to turn to God then than now. *Now* it is impossible to you, apart from Divine grace; *then* it shall be quite as impossible, and, if I might say so, there shall be more difficulties in the way *then* than even there are *now*. What, think you, is the value of these promises which you have made in the court of heaven? Will God take your word again, and again, and again, when you have broken it just as often as you have given it? Not long ago you were lying on your bed with fever, and, if you lived, you vowed you would repent. Have you repented? And yet you are fool enough to believe that you will repent by-and-by; and on the strength of this promise, which is not worth a single straw, you are crying to yourself, 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace.' A man that waits for a more convenient season for thinking about the affairs of his soul, is like the countryman in Aesop's fable, who sat down by a flowing river, saying, 'If this stream continues to flow as it does now for a little while, it will empty itself, and then I shall walk over dry-shod.' Ah, but the stream was just as deep, when he had waited day after day, as it was before. And so shall it be with you. You remind me, by your procrastination, of the ludicrous position of a man who should sit upon a lofty branch of some tree with a saw in his hand, cutting away the branch on which he was sitting. This is what you are doing. Your delay is cutting away your branch of life. No doubt, you intend to cover the well when the child is drowned, and to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen. These birds in the hand you are losing,

because there may be some better hour, some better bird in the bush. You are thus getting a little quiet, but oh, at what a fatal cost! Paul was troublesome to you, and so you played the part of Felix, and said, 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee.' Ah, sir, let me tell you, once for all, you live to grow worse and worse. While you are procrastinating, time is not staying, nor is Satan resting. While you are saying, 'Let things abide,' things are not abiding, but they are hastening on. You are ripening for the dread harvest; the sickle is being sharpened that shall cut you down, and the fire is even now blazing into which your spirit shall be cast for ever.

5. I have but one other class of persons to describe, and then I shall have done when I have addressed a few solemn sentences of warning to you all. There remains yet another class of beings, who surpass all these in their utter indifference to everything that might arouse them. They are men that are given up by God, justly given up. They have passed the boundary of His long-suffering. He has said, 'My Spirit shall no more strive with them;' 'Ephraim is given unto idols, let him alone.' As a judicial punishment for their impenitence, God has given them up to pride and hardness of heart. I will not say that there is such an one here — God grant there may not be such a man — but there have been such to whom there has been given a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie, that they might be damned because they received not the Gospel of Christ. Brought up by a holy mother, they perhaps learned the Gospel when they were almost in the cradle. Trained by the example of a holy father, they went aside to wantonness, and brought a mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Nevertheless, conscience still pursued them. At the funeral of that mother, the young man paused, and asked himself the question, 'Have I killed her? have I brought her here?' He went home, was sober for a day, was tempted by a companion, and became as bad as ever. Another warning came. He was seized with sickness; he lay in the jaws of the grave; he woke up; he lived, and lived as vilely as he had lived before. Often did he hear his mother's voice: though she was in the grave, she, being dead, yet spoke to him. He put the Bible on the top shelf — hid it away; still, sometimes a text he had learned in infancy used to thrust itself on his mind. One night, as he was going to some haunt of vice, something arrested him; conscience seemed to say to him, 'Remember all that you have learned of *her*.' He stood still, bit his lip a moment, considered, weighed chances. At last he said, 'I will go if I am lost.' He went, and from that moment it has often been a source of wonder to him that he has never thought of his mother nor of the Bible.

He hears a sermon, which he does not heed. It is all the same to him. He is never troubled. He says, 'I don't know how it is; I am glad of it; I am as easy now and as frolicsome as ever a young fellow could be.' Oh! I tremble to explain this quietude; but it may be — God grant I may not be a true prophet — it may be that God has thrown the reins on your neck, and said, 'Let him go, let him go, I will warn him no more; he shall be filled with his own ways; he shall go the length of his chain; I will never stop him!' Mark! if it be so, your damnation is as sure as if you were in the pit now. O may God grant that I may not have such a hearer here! But that dread thought may well make you search yourselves, for it may be so. There is that possibility; search and look, and God grant that you may no more say, 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace.'

Now for these last few solemn words. I will not be guilty, this morning, of speaking any smooth falsehoods to you; I would be faithful with each man, as I believe I shall have to face you all at God's great day, even though you heard me but once in your lives. Well, then, let me tell you that, if you have a peace to-day which enables you to be at peace with your sins as well as with God, that peace is a false peace.

Another solemn thought. If you are at peace to-day through a belief that you are righteous in yourself, you are not at peace with God. If you are wrapping yourself up in your own righteousness, and saying, 'I am as good as other people, I have kept God's law, and have no need for mercy,' you are not at peace with God. You are treasuring up, in your impenitent heart, wrath against the day of wrath; and you will as surely be lost, if you trust to your good works, as if you had trusted to your sins. There is a clean path to hell as well as a dirty one. There is as sure a road to perdition along the highway of morality, as down the slough of vice. Take heed that you build on nothing else but Christ; for, if you do, your house will tumble about your ears, when most you need its protection.

And now, finally, let me beseech you, if you are at peace in your own mind this morning, weigh your peace thus: 'Will my peace stand me on a sick-bed?' There are many that are peaceful enough when they are well, but, when their bones begin to ache, and their flesh is sore vexed, then they find they want something more substantial than this dreamy quietness into which their souls had fallen. If sickness make thee shake, what will destruction make thee do? Then, again, put the question in another light. If your peace is good for anything, it is one that will bear you up in a dying hour. Are you ready to go home to your bed now, to lie there, and never rise again? For, remember, that which will not stand a dying bed will never stand the day of judgment. If my hope begins to quiver,

even when the skeleton hand of Death begins to touch me, how will it shake 'when God's right arm is nerved for war, and thunders clothe His cloudy car?' If death makes me startle, what will the glory of God do? How shall I shrink into nothing, and fly away from Him in despair! Then, often put to thyself this question, 'Will my peace last me when the heavens are in a blaze, and when the trembling universe stands to be judged?'

I do entreat you, if what I have said be not an idle dream — if it be not a mere myth of my imagination — if it be true, lay it to heart, and may God enable you to prepare to meet Him. Do not be wrapping yourselves up, and slumbering and sleeping. Awake, ye sleepers, awake! Oh, that I had a trumpet voice to warn you! Oh, while you are dying, while you are sinking into perdition, may I not cry to you — may not these eyes weep for you! I cannot be extravagant here; I am acquitted of being enthusiastic or fanatical on such a matter as this. Take to heart, I beseech you, the realities of eternity. Do not for ever waste your time. 'Oh, turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die!'

John Love and the Free Offer of the Gospel

by Rev. J. M. Brentnall, B.A.

During the winter of 1776-7, John Love, later the eminent minister of Anderston, Glasgow, passed through a deep spiritual crisis, brought on by his reading of four books: Hopkins on Regeneration, Brainerd's Diary, Edwards on the Religious Affections, and Shepard's Sincere Convert. The question with which he was brought to grapple concerned the unqualified freeness of Christ in the Gospel. 'Is Christ freely offered to me as a sinner, or are some prior qualifications required of me before I have a Scripture warrant to take Him?'

Two of the passages which tortured Love's mind stress the necessity of a deep and crushing work of conviction before saving faith can be produced in the sinner. 'There are pangs and throes' writes *Hopkins*, 'that do accompany the new birth as well as the natural birth. And these are convictions and humiliations, when the soul is bowed down under the insupportable burden of its own guilt and the sense of God's wrath . . .

in all that are sanctified and regenerated they do all of them bring forth in sorrow' (italics mine). Brainerd's version of the same teaching is cast in autobiographical form: 'Being sensible of the necessity of a deep humiliation in order to a saving close with Christ, I used to set myself to work in my own heart those convictions that were requisite in such a humiliation; as, a conviction that God would be just if He cast me off forever; that if God should bestow mercy on me, it would be mere grace, though I should be in distress many years first and be never so much engaged in duty; that God was not in the least obliged to pity me the more for all past duties, cries and tears. *I strove to my utmost to bring myself to a firm belief of these things and a hearty assent to them; and hoped that now I was brought off from myself, truly humbled, and that I bowed to the divine sovereignty. I was wont to tell God in my prayers that now I had those very dispositions of soul that He required, and on which he showed mercy to others, and thereupon to beg and plead for mercy to me . . .* Thus, scores of times, I vainly imagined myself humbled and prepared for saving mercy'.

The anxiety engendered over Love's spiritual state by such teaching only increased when he read the following extracts from *Edwards and Shepard*: '*The first foundation of a true love to God is that whereby He is in Himself lovely . . . the Saints . . . do not first see that God loves them, and then see that He is lovely, but they first see that God is lovely and that Christ is excellent and glorious . . . and then, consequently, they see God's love and great favour to them*' (Edwards). 'The presumptuous unbeliever . . . seeing what sins he hath committed, and, it may be, having a little touch, and some sorrow for his sins, catcheth at Christ, hoping to be saved by Him, before he come to be loaded with sin as the greatest evil'. What, then, must the unconverted do? '*Go to Him, and take hold of Him, not with the hand of presumption and love to thyself, to save thyself, but with the hand of faith and love to Him, to honour Him*' (Shepard). Already afraid that he was nothing but a Gospel hypocrite, Love's hopes of ever becoming anything else must have been utterly dashed when faced with such counsels of despair. Previously taught to believe that all sinners are invited to come to Christ, sensible or insensible of their sin, with or without disinterested love to God, and that on coming they will find Him an all-sufficient and all-suitable Saviour, Love's anguish can be imagined. He had already believed on Christ; he had ventured his soul on Christ, for time and eternity. Now, the fear that his experience had come short of the standard set up by Hopkins, Brainerd, Edwards and Shepard, brought him almost to despair. 'I

dreaded', he wrote, 'that the experiences therein described, of awakening and comfort, were such as I was wholly a stranger to, and saw no likelihood of my ever attaining to'.

How the young divinity student was mercifully delivered from this condition, and what were his settled views on the Free Offer of the Gospel, are questions answered by subsequent events. Reflecting later on that critical winter, he thanked God for directing him to books which proved instrumental in removing those 'tormenting scruples' which had held him in such bondage, mentioning in particular Calvin's 'solid and judicious' commentaries and 'that blessed man Owen's book on the Person of Christ'.

Calvin's remarks on John 3:14-16 doubtless contributed much towards relieving Love of his perplexity. After stating that 'whosoever looks upon Him by faith receives salvation', the great Reformer continues: 'Christ shows the first cause and as it were source of our salvation. And this He does that no doubt may be left. *For there is no calm haven where our minds can rest until we come to God's free love. The whole substance of our salvation is not to be sought anywhere else than in Christ, and so we must see by what means Christ flows to us and why He is offered as our Saviour*'. Commenting on John 6:39, he writes: 'They had spoken of works; Christ brings them back to one work, that is, faith. *By this He means that whatsoever men undertake without faith is useless and vain, but that faith alone is enough, for God requires of us only that we believe . . .* This is a remarkable passage and shows that even if men wear themselves out all their lives, they are only playing at work unless faith in Christ is the rule of their lives'.

What Love's reading of Calvin did to dispel his fears over the question of prior convictions, his study of Owen did to remove his scruples over the question of pure motives. Declaring that '*Faith in the person of Christ is the spring and fountain of our spiritual life*', Owen proceeds: 'A due apprehension of the love of Christ, with the effects of it in His whole mediatory work on our behalf — especially in His giving Himself for us, and our redemption by His blood — is the great motive thereunto . . . The due remembrance of what the blessed Lord Jesus hath done for us, of the ineffable love which was the spring, cause and fountain of what He so did — thoughts of the mercy, grace, peace and glory which He hath procured thereby — are the great and unconquerable motives to fix our faith, hope, trust and confidence in Him'. Thus, it is not a loving view of the loveliness of Christ, but a believing view of the love of Christ, which is saving. 'We love Him because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19).

Several lessons of great value emerge from Love's entanglement in this subtle form of hyper-Calvinism. *First*, we learn that in the sovereignty of God *the experience of conversion differs from one to another*. 'O blessed be the Lord that He thus instructs me' he wrote soon afterwards, 'so that I may not provoke Him by limiting Him to deal with me as He did with Mr Brainerd or with any other, but may leave Him to take His own blessed way with me'. We must not live on the experiences of others, but in daily dependence on the Lord Himself for fresh communications of grace.

Second, *our experiences*, as well as our doctrine and practice, *must be brought to the bar of Scripture*. Both Brainerd and Edwards, said Love, 'seem to have been more occupied about their experiences and reasonings upon them, than about the written Word'. But does not Scripture itself teach us to offer Christ only to the weary and heavy-laden? (Matt. 11-28). 'We are not so to understand this invitation as if none were invited to come to Christ but those who are described in it' replied Love, 'for there are other invitations of equal authority with this, because coming from the same Lord. The truth, as drawn from the whole of the Word, is that all sinners of every character are invited, sensible or insensible of their sin . . . Inattention to this has led many godly men into great mistakes concerning the Gospel invitation, for the whole doctrine concerning that invitation is not to be taken from any one text in the Word, but from the sum of the texts in which such invitations are given'.

A *third* lesson from Love's experience is that *we must seek grace to discern between what is legal and what is evangelical*. By urging sinners to come to Christ out of disinterested love to His Person or under harrowing convictions of sin, these writers make a legal demand on the sinner, no less a demand, in fact, than all that the Law requires; for a pure, unselfish love to God is the fulfilling of the Law (Mk. 12:30), and crushing convictions of sin are produced by the Law (Rom. 3:20). But the Gospel never makes such demands on sinners. It invites sinners, just as they are, to come to Christ for salvation. The Gospel is not a new Law which stipulates love and conviction as conditions of salvation; it is a declaration of free mercy, even to the chief of sinners. We must come to Christ as we are, for He alone can give us what we need. Nevertheless, sinners must be convinced of sin before they will come to Christ '(i) not in the way of merit; (ii) not in the way of warrant, as if the sinner had not a right to believe till he be humbled . . . but (iii) it is necessary physically — because without it, more or less, he cannot perform that act which he has a right to do — even to take Christ, as He is freely given to him'. But is it

honouring to God to come to Christ for salvation, or is it merely an act of self-love? Love to one's own soul, expressed in coming to Christ for salvation, is what God Himself addresses in the invitations of Isa. 55:2 and Ezek. 33:11; indeed, He refuses to magnify His mercy in any other way than by meeting sinners in the Free Offer of Christ.

No less valuable is the lesson of *the unparalleled preciousness of saving faith*. 'The first right step heavenwards' wrote Love, quoting Robert Traill, 'is saving faith in Christ. Nothing savingly good can precede it, and all saving good follows it. Faith unites a man to Christ, from whom all holiness springs'. It is not lack of pure love to God, nor lack of deep convictions of sin, which keeps sinners from Christ; it is an evil heart of unbelief. Neither is faith the sinner's legal response to God's demands, but an evangelical grace freely bestowed upon the poor and needy. 'Faith is the tongue that begs pardon, the hand that receives it, the eye that sees it, but it is no price to buy it. That price is the righteousness of Christ. Faith uses that price, but is not itself the price'.

A *fifth* lesson to learn from Love's experiences is that in order to counteract the harmful effects of dwelling 'too long at a time on the searching and terrifying representation of things', as these authors do, *we should read those books 'wherein the way of access to salvation by Jesus Christ is pointed out in a more simple, direct and healing manner, such as Gray's sermons, Durham's Communion Sermons . . . and the like'*.

Lastly, we should look to the Spirit alone both to lead us to Christ and to assure us of a saving interest in Him. 'It is only the Spirit', he concludes, 'who can so clear up to us the nature of the offer or gift of Christ in the Gospel, and our warrant as sinners to take Him, as to make us hear the Lord's own voice . . . so as to be assured that it is no delusion, but that we can confidently rest our eternal well-being upon it'.

Strange Footprints of our King

There was one place in the Island of Skye where the minister used to preach. It was in the parish of Duirinish, in the northern part of the island. A little girl — Mary Bethune — lived there, and was one of his hearers the last time he was there. She was then a girl of about eleven years of age. In listening to him, she was particularly struck with his text. It was in Psalm lxxviii., 19-20 — "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the

God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."

Under this sermon her young mind began to think, and the two subjects which filled all her thoughts were — death, and the deliverance which God can give.

Her occupation was that of goat-herd, and while out with her flock day after day she kept meditating on these themes; she found it impossible to do anything else. Whomsoever she met she questioned about God, who could deliver from the jaws of death, and when she came home in the evening these were still the subjects of her conversation.

The minister who had so preached to her conscience left the place soon after, and she never saw him again. The minister of her own parish gave her no help; for, after conversing with her, he agreed with her parents and neighbours in the opinion that the girl's reason was beginning to be unhinged.

However, she was allowed to attend to her duty of keeping the herd of goats; and so she watched for opportunities of putting questions to any she met on the matter that was her great concern.

After continuing thus for some time, finding none qualified to give her information as to how she could get acquainted with that "Jehovah" to whom it belongs "to rescue fully from death" (as it is in the metrical translation of the Gaelic Psalms), and feeling more and more the necessity of being able to say, "Our God is the God of salvation," she came to the conclusion that she could not arrive at the privilege her soul hungered after while remaining in the neighbourhood in which she was. She therefore resolved on prosecuting her inquiry elsewhere.

At that time all necessary commodities not of home growth were procured from Inverness, and conveyed to Skye on horseback. In her girlish simplicity, Mary Bethune concluded that since so many and such extraordinary things were to be found at Inverness, surely "Jehovah" must be found there too! At all events, she resolved on proceeding to inquire after the knowledge of the Lord elsewhere, and not to give up the search, even if she should need to go as far as Inverness itself.

There were in those days none of the present modes of conveyance from place to place, even in localities more favoured than the districts lying between Skye and the Capital of the Highlands. There were no roads from one part of that country to the other. There were many rapid rivers and streams intervening, and none of them had bridges over them, while also the rapids of Kyle-Rhea flowed between Skye and the mainland. But of all that she took no heed. Soul-concern had complete mastery of all her thoughts, and all her affections too.

When she had her mind made up, she at once girt herself for the journey. Her toilet cost her little thought, and less time. She merely washed her hands and face in the stream that ran past her, smoothed her hair as well as she could with her fingers and bound it up with a snood. She threw her *tonnag* (a square piece of cloth) around her shoulders, and fastened it across her breast with a wooden pin or skewer, and then, bareheaded and barefooted, she proceeded in quest of the object on which alone her heart was set.

Now, it may be very properly asked, why she did not ask her parents' consent? It may also very likely be suggested, that having thus set out in disregard of the fifth commandment, she was not likely to obtain the blessing which her soul was so very anxious to gain. But let me here observe that the fault was not solely hers. From what is well known of the state of matters in the place of her nativity at the time, I plead in her behalf her never having been instructed in the knowledge of any part of the truth; and further, her certain knowledge of what the result would have been had she first revealed her resolution to those who were her natural guardians, for assuredly they would have bound her hand and foot, and confined her as a maniac. Hence, in her case, her offence was pardonable, and her resolution was justifiable. Her remaining where she was would, humanly speaking, have resulted in her growing up in as much ignorance of the true God and of the Saviour as did the kids of her flock. Accordingly, from hamlet to hamlet did Mary Bethune proceed, questioning all whom she met. See her now on the way. Some put her off gruffly; some ridiculed her as meddling with what was not suitable for a person of her years. The most regarded her as a person under some strange hallucination.

There was, however, no fear of her starving for want of food; no fear of her being any night without a bed. The county was not then so much populated as it is now. There were hamlets, consisting of from four or five to perhaps a score of households, within short distances of each other, over the greater part of the way, in places where now no traces of houses are to be seen. It was, too, the summer season, when everywhere through the hills she would come upon shielings, occupied by persons engaged in tending the flocks and attending to dairy produce. A poor helpless girl would never fail of meeting with kindness, and sharing in such comforts as the people had. Indeed, the general belief as to her being out of her mind would draw out pity towards the wanderer, whatever some might have thought of her questions, and even they who would at first have spoken roughly, would soon be melted again, so as to

help her forward on her journey. Still, there is no doubt she must have had trials and hardships by the way not a few.

Communion at Inverness

What time she took to accomplish her weary task is not now known; but the Lord whom she sought after had His blessed eye upon her, ignorant as she still was of Him. Her way, after crossing Kyle-Rhea, lay through Glenelg; and after crossing the heights, she made her way through Glenmoriston. She then found herself at Lochness, by the side of which she walked till she arrived at Inverness. She had now reached the only bridge then spanning the River Ness. It was an oaken bridge, a frail erection, which was carried off some years ago by a flood. The time was that of the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in that town. She spoke in her usual strain to those she met, but encountered many strange rebuffs on putting her questions. At last she was led to address one who at once felt a deep interest in the barefooted, bare-headed girl, who had accosted her just as she had many others before.

Mary Bethune observed a person, having the appearance and bearing of a lady, walking along the bridge on her way to the place of worship which she usually attended. To her she made up. Repeated disappointments having intensified her earnestness, she called out — "*O lady! is God in this town? and if so, where shall I find Him?*" The lady looked at first with amazement, as many others had done on similar occasions — just because an all-important question of this kind is so seldom put. She hesitated a while before replying; and then, on Mary reiterating the question with still greater earnestness, she replied — "Yes, God is in this town. Come you with me, and perhaps you may find him." She then took the girl by the hand, walked with her to the church, and led her in to the seat which she herself occupied.

The services of the day having been begun, Mary Bethune was all attention; and we may suppose her kind friend to have been deeply exercised in prayer for the salvation of the poor friendless child thus providentially thrown on her for protection. The minister engaged in the work that day is said to have been Mr James Calder, of Croy, a true man of God, as was his father before him, and as his three sons were after him. He seemed that day to find the declaration of the whole truth an easy matter, and he had one hearer at least who drank in every word he uttered concerning *God*, concerning *the sinner*, and concerning *the Saviour*. And as he became more and more earnest, and more than ordinarily simple and clear while enlarging on the subject in hand, Mary

Bethune was enabled clearly to apprehend the truth proclaimed. She could contain herself no longer. She started up, and, clapping her hands, exclaimed — *"I see Him now; I understand it all now. I have found Him! I have found Him! I have found Him!"*

Many may regard all this as rhapsody. There have been too many instances in which persons who loudly proclaimed their deliverance from ignorance, doubt and unbelief have given occasion for scoffers to deride all such experiences as delusion. In Mary Bethune's case, however, that moment in the old Gaelic Church at Inverness proved to be the moment of her spiritual birth. She soon forgot all her weary wanderings from the western shores of the Isle of Skye. She now knew One on whom she could lean with assured confidence for time and for eternity. She realised pardon for the past and the foundation for a good hope for the future. She might not at that time be able to give such clear answers to questions which might be put to her as she could at a later stage; but she had in her soul a knowledge of the same nature and kind as Anna had when she recognised the promised Messiah in old Simeon's arms in the court of the Temple at Jerusalem.

The first outburst of enraptured feeling over, she sat with all composure during the rest of the discourse, and joined in the service with the congregation. Mary could now say, "This God is *my own* God, the God of *my* salvation;" and she might fully rest on His Providence for all that concerned her welfare in life. Even should all the people in church pass out without taking any interest in her, she knew that He who kept her and shielded her all the way, and who had that day revealed Himself to her soul, would raise up some friend to act towards her the part of a guardian. She had that, indeed, already; for the kind lady who led her into church could not now part with her. She conducted her out as she conducted her in. She brought her to her own house, provided for her wants, and watched over her with a mother's solicitude.

Communion at Dingwall

Years past on. Mary was evidently growing in grace. She had found a home and employment in her benefactress' house, and continued in her service till the lady died. Then she left Inverness and obtained a place of residence in the parish of Croy, where she could enjoy the ministrations of her spiritual instructor in the Lord — Mr James Calder. Not long, however, after her removal to that parish Mary was called upon to act towards another Skye wanderer the same part that was performed

towards herself by the lady whom she met on the bridge on her arrival at Inverness.

You may have heard of the mineral waters of Strathpeffer, in the neighbourhood of Dingwall, and may have regarded those waters as if they were only recently discovered. So far, however, is that from being the case that from time immemorial it appears they were resorted to by certain classes of invalids. Superstition had long taken advantage of the curative properties of such waters. When Popery prevailed in the land, and even down to the time we are speaking of, if one went to any well such as those at Strathpeffer he would find all the bushes around covered with rags or handkerchiefs or strips of the garments left by the persons relieved — these being regarded as so many votive offerings commemorative of their thankfulness to the saint who was believed to preside over the healing powers of the wells in question. It was only at a comparatively recent period that such practices were put down by the power of the Gospel.

To this mineral water at Strathpeffer a farmer's wife from Kilmaluag, in the parish of Kilmuir in Skye, came down, in hopes of recovering from some ailment wherewith she was afflicted. She was accompanied by a daughter, and they remained for some weeks. At that time there were three parishes in the neighbourhood highly favoured. The ministers in each were men of God and men of prayer, abounding in works of faith and labours of love. They had much to do to uproot habits and practices which were the result of ages of superstition and ungodliness. Among such favoured parishes was that of Dingwall, and in good old Mr Rose's day, and in the days of his predecessor, Mr Mackenzie, the town was the resort — especially at the times of the administration of the Lord's Supper — of great numbers of people. Many of them were pious persons, while not a few were drawn by mere curiosity. Among the latter, on the occasion to which our story refers, was the girl from Kilmaluag. She had seen the Sacrament of the Supper administered in Skye; she had heard preaching, too, both on ordinary and on Sacramental occasions; but she heard now what she had never heard before. She was struck with amazement. She had begun to discover what she was in the sight of the Holy One.

She returned home to her mother under deep conviction of sin, regarding herself as lost, and as being under the curse of God. But there was a hidden something within which led her to seek more and more of the truth, however awful her sense of misery was. Nay, further, although herself under a sense of condemnation, she would have her mother go to

Dingwall next day along with her, and hear for herself what had so deeply impressed her.

You would perhaps think that her mother would bless the Lord for what she should have regarded as encouraging the hope that her child would prize the Physician of souls. Instead of that, not knowing herself what it was to be a sinner, she regarded all her daughter's fears as groundless; she moreover feared that if her daughter was to go again to Dingwall to hear a sermon, she would be lost to her, or perhaps become crazy. She therefore made preparations for their return to Skye at once; and with this purpose, she replied to her daughter's solicitations by saying:—

"Janet, you don't go to Dingwall to-morrow. You and I will stay at home to wash, and to prepare for our journey homewards on Monday."

"Wash to-morrow?" said Janet; "No, no! To-morrow is Sabbath. Neither you nor I should profane that day, and so break the fourth commandment."

But to this exhortation Janet's mother paid no regard. Sabbath found her engaged as she purposed, and she would insist on her daughter joining her in the desecration of the Lord's day.

Janet at first earnestly pleaded with her mother to desist, but it was all to no purpose. She next pleaded for leave to go to Dingwall, but this request was peremptorily refused. The daughter then told her mother that, whatever the consequences might be, she must go to hear the Word of God, and proceeded to arrange her *tonnag* for that purpose. Seeing this, her wicked mother raised up both her hands, and with fearful oaths imprecated curses on her daughter's head! She solemnly devoted her to Satan, and charged her at the same time to go away, and never be seen by her again.

Janet screamed bitterly, and ran out of their temporary place of abode. The people from that neighbourhood by that time had all moved away to Dingwall. Her first impulse was to go after them; but after proceeding some way, she felt herself so oppressed with a load of terror that she was compelled to rest.

"What is the use," said she, "of my going to Dingwall? There is no hope for me. I am under the curse of God, and my own mother has devoted me to the enemy. I can never obtain deliverance. It is as well for me to turn and direct my steps some other way."

And turn she did. But the Lord, who, unseen and unknown, had His eye on her, by His own Spirit suggested some recollection of a word she had heard — for read she could not. She turned again in the direction of

Dingwall, and had proceeded some few steps, when the enemy, though formerly foiled, again returned to the assault. Her former doubts came on with redoubled power, and she walked back again till something else occurred to her which prompted her to "hope against hope." So again she proceeded in the direction of the place where the Gospel was preached. Matters went on thus for the greater part of the forenoon — Janet sometimes progressing and again returning.

She did reach the outskirts of the congregation at last. We do not know who the minister was who at that special time was speaking; but Janet heard him commending to his hearers the blood of the Cross — holding forth the efficiency of its application for the taking away of guilt, and the removal of a sense of condemnation. As if he had been specially directed to address Janet personally, she heard him say — "Should you be sensible of the overwhelming load of the curse of God, and your mother's curse along with that, you will find more than enough in this blood for the removal of both, and for rendering you righteous before God."

Janet heard this. To her it was a word in season. It calmed the tempest within. She sat down at the feet of Christ, and heard with diligent attention. When the congregation was dismissed all went either to their own homes or to the houses of friends, who showed their hospitality to them as strangers coming to the feast. But Janet had no house to go to; her mother had discarded her; and she might be ready to ask, "What am I to do now?" The Lord had, however, been graciously revealing Himself to her soul throughout the whole afternoon and evening of that day. Why, then, should she fear? Some person might be prompted to show kindness to her; and if not, it was summer, and she could remain outside for one night at least. She heard the sermon intimated for next day, and she would wait for that before she would decide as to where to turn her steps. Still, who could doubt that, after all, poor Janet would feel something like a weight on her spirit, or rather be conscious of a blank which sadly needed filling up, when she saw the whole congregation gradually melting away, with none to speak a kind word to her?

But, stop! Who is this coming up and approaching Janet Macleod with a kindly smile? This is Mary Bethune, now grown up to womanhood, grown in faith and knowledge, and in Christian experience. She is, moreover, largely acquainted with professing Christians through the whole country, and she has come to Dingwall, along with others, expecting a "feast of fat things: of wine on the lees well refined." She

and they have not been disappointed. But now the appearance of a Skye girl has attracted her attention.

Janet's dress and manner are almost a new sight to her. She speaks to her and is convinced by her first word that they are both natives of the same isle. Her kind inquiries draw out Janet's heart all at once. The unvarnished tale is soon told; the harrowing horrors and the gracious consolation. The two are drawn to each other with an influence far more powerful than that of country and kindred. Janet finds shelter with Mary where she is herself lodged.

From this day forward the two are inseparable. Mary conducts Janet to the domicile occupied by herself in the parish of Croy. They continue to sit together under the same minister (Mr James Calder) till the day of his removal to the Upper Sanctuary.

After Mr Calder's death Mary and Janet found a place of residence, and a ministry which they relished as being profitable to their souls, in the parish of Nigg, in the County of Ross. Mr M'Adam was then newly translated to that charge after the parish had been long under the blight of a minister whose coldness had the effect of scattering the Lord's flock, and of rendering the place of worship a desolation. Under Mr M'Adam's ministry those two godly women continued to sit while they lived, supporting themselves by the labour of their hands, respected in the place, and growing in ripeness for the abode of the just, till at about the age of 80 years they were removed to the enjoyment of the communion of saints, above, and the blessedness of uninterrupted fellowship with Him whom they loved so much below.

You may perhaps inquire whether Mary or Janet had any communication with their relatives in Skye? Communication by letter was not then so easy as it is now. Neither of them had learned to write, but Mary had communication with her parents through a namesake of her own who was minister of Alness, in the County of Ross. She went once to her native place and remained there for some time, but not having the privilege which she had found so delightful in the land of her adoption she returned again to that district and never afterwards visited the Isle of Skye.

But she and her companion never failed to wrestle together in prayer for the people in their native island; and I heard a godly minister in Skye, now departed (the Rev. Roderick Macleod), give expression to the complacency he felt in connecting the spiritual influences in each of the parishes whence these women came with the continued and persevering

entreaties which they were known to have laid at the foot of the Throne in behalf of their native district.

We may learn, moreover, that a minister may be instrumental for good, while he himself may be denied the privilege of knowing that any good has been done. The minister under whom Mary Bethune's whole soul was roused to seek after the knowledge of the Lord, never knew of the effects produced till Mary and he met beyond the grave.

This story is now finished. If the recital may have the effect of stirring up any young person to follow on to know the Lord, I have my reward. If any person, young or old, be incited by the examples here related, to regard everything else as vile in comparison with the knowledge of Christ and Him crucified, I would earnestly bid him God-speed; let him press on till he know for himself this Saviour "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," till he be "begotten again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Breaking Down the Carved Work

by Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale

(Continued from page 78)

II. We come in the second place to notice, more especially, the *breaking down of the carved work*. The Westminster Standards, being adopted by the Church of Scotland, continued for many years to be accepted by that Church in their entirety, and the following question was required to be answered in the affirmative by all her office-bearers on being inducted to office:—"Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church, to be founded on the Word of God; and do you acknowledge the same as the confession of your faith; and will you firmly and constantly adhere thereto; and to the utmost of your power assert, maintain, and defend the same, and the purity of worship as presently practised in this Church? That Confession of Faith is in the Constitution of the Church which is today known as the Church of Scotland, yet, it is qualified by Declaratory Acts, passed at various times in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland, and, strictly speaking, does not mean anything of what it formerly meant, and in order to find a church

where there is an unqualified adherence to the Westminster Standards, one has to go outside the pale of the Church of Scotland.

In the verse under consideration the inspired penman represents the breaking down of the carved work as being done by "axes and hammers." Axes and hammers are very clumsy implements, and do a great deal of havoc when wielded by those who use them, but, literally, any untutored savage can wield them, and the less knowledge they have of what is beautiful and in accordance with a plan, the less respect they will have for carved work. The Westminster Standards were put together by men of knowledge and understanding, for in no other Assembly in history could one find such a galaxy of talent and learning, and that talent and learning sanctified by the grace of God. Their other writings show them to have been men who had a deep insight into the Word of God, and who had the glory of God and the good of souls in view. This is very evident in the Standards which they were instrumental in drawing up. The great Dr Charles Hodge, writing on *What is Meant by Adopting the Westminster Confession?* says, "It is the system which, as the granite formation of the Earth, underlies and sustains the whole scheme of truth as revealed in the Scriptures, and without which all the rest is as drifting sand. It has been from the beginning the life and soul of the Church, taught explicitly by our Lord Himself, and more fully by His inspired servants, and always professed by a cloud of witnesses in the Church. It has, moreover, ever been the esoteric faith of true believers, adopted in their prayers and hymns, even when rejected from their creeds. It is this system which the Presbyterian Church is pledged to profess, to defend, and to teach; and it is a breach of faith to God and man if she fails to require a profession of this system by all those whom she receives or ordains as teachers and guides of her people. It is for the adoption of the Confession of Faith in this sense that the Old School have always contended as a matter of conscience."

In the past history of the Church in Scotland many efforts were put forth to break down the carved work of the First and Second Reformations, forcing upon the Protestant Church in our land those struggles which called forth such doughty champions for the truth as Knox, Melville, Henderson, Gillespie, Rutherford, Chalmers, and a host of others too numerous to be mentioned. In the early days of the First Reformation we have an instance of these efforts in the setting up of the "tulchan bishops" who were the creatures of these landed proprietors who cast covetous eyes and laid unholy hands on the church revenues which ought to be used for advancing true religion. These were the fore-

runners of diocesan bishops who lived in affluence and immorality, and who earned the execration of all right-minded people to the present day. They stand out on the page of Scottish Church history as indelible blots on human history, and clear commentaries on the inspired statement that "the memory of the wicked shall rot." The Glasgow Assembly of 1638 cast them out as "rotten limbs of antichrist," and the Assembly closed with the memorable words of its Moderator, Alexander Henderson, "We have now cast down the walls of Jericho, let him that rebuildeth them beware of the curse of Hiel the Bethelite."

This, however, is but the ending of a chapter in the efforts of kings and bishops and traitors to break down the carved work of the Reformation in Scotland. That chapter tells of the banishment and death in a foreign land of Andrew Melville, the most erudite scholar which Scotland ever produced, the banishment to Inverness and consequent privations of Robert Bruce, the man to whom King James VI was indebted more than to any other of his subjects in Scotland for the peace and order which prevailed in his realm during his absence in Denmark. It tells also of the perfidy of the King and the sycophancy of many who at one time made a great profession of religion, and who would like to be regarded in some quarters as great upholders of Presbyterianism, while only waiting for a favourable opportunity to cast off their masks and step on to the platform of vanishing glory which, all along, they had been coveting, and for which they sold their souls. It is a chapter which amply verifies the words of one of the Lord's true witnesses, Mr Hugh McKail, that the Church of God was never without a Pharaoh on the Throne, a Haman in the State, and a Judas in the Church.

The Act of 1592, which is known as "the great charter of the Church of Scotland," ratified the government of the Church by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies. It also ratified the leading propositions in the Second Book of Discipline, and enacted that General Assemblies meet once a year or oftener as the need arose, that the Assembly had the right to appoint the time and place of its next meeting, and that the exercise of discipline and the ruling of the Church belonged to the various courts of the Church. King James VI had no intention of observing this Act. In 1618 he convened the infamous Assembly of Perth at which the following Articles were passed in the face of the protests of those ministers who remained true to their ordination vows:—that is, *Kneeling at Communion, the observance of holy days, episcopal confirmation, private baptisms, and the private dispensation of the Lord's Supper*. After the passing of these Articles the Court of High

Commission set about enforcing the observance of them by means of civil penalties. After three years of the tyranny of the Court of High Commission Parliament was called in 1621 for the purpose of ratifying the Perth Articles. This ratification was carried out by a very small majority on 4th August 1621. Dr Hetherington has given a very solemn description of the transaction. "This day, sadly memorable in the annals of the Church of Scotland, was marked also by a singular coincident event, recorded by the historians of that time. The morning had been lowering and gloomy, and as the day advanced the gloom waxed deeper and deeper, as the gathering clouds seemed to concentrate their huge voluminous masses around and over the city. At the very moment when the Marquis of Hamilton and the Lord High Commissioner rose to give the formal ratification to the acts, by touching them with the sceptre, a keen blue flash of forked lightning blazed through the mirky gloom, followed instantaneously by another and another, so dazzlingly bright as to blind the startled and terrified parliament, in the act of consummating its guilty deed. Three terrific peals of thunder followed in quick succession, appalling the trembling conclave, as if the thunder-voice of heaven were uttering denouncements of vengeance against the insulters of the dread majesty on high. Then descended hailstones of prodigious magnitude, and sheeted rains so heavy and continuous, as to imprison for an hour and a half the parliament which had perpetrated this act of treason against the King of kings, by subjecting His Church to an earthly monarch. This dark and disastrous day was long known in Scotland by the designation of 'BLACK SATURDAY' — black with man's guilt and with the frowns of heaven." — *History of the Church of Scotland, 6th ed. p. 73*. Thus we have the carved work of the First Reformation broken down by men as destitute of spiritual life as the heathen, and proving the truth of what is written, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The state of affairs created by the passing of the notorious Act of 1618 went from bad to worse during the remaining part of the reign of King James, which terminated with his death in 1625, and was left as a legacy to his son and successor, Charles I.

Charles, with blind infatuation and bigotry, carried on the work of breaking down the carved work of the Church of Scotland. The most eminent of her ministers were oppressed, and their congregations were deprived of those pastors who were bound to them by ties of the most sacred nature. Not content with this, King Charles gave unlimited powers

to the Bishops to act as they pleased, not only over the ministers, but over the nobility of the land. In accordance with this license Archbishop Laud introduced forms of worship and other matters which were not only Prelatic, but Popish. A Book of Canons was published in Aberdeen and circulated by the Bishops, decreeing excommunication against all who should deny the king's supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs. They were also excommunicated who should dare to say that the worship contained in the Book of Common Prayer was superstitious or contrary to the Scriptures, or who should assert that the prelatic form of church government had no authority in the Word of God. Every minister who did not make sole use of the Liturgy was to be deposed, no General Assembly was to be called but by the King, and no ecclesiastical business was even to be discussed except in the prelatic courts. There is something significant in the reference to the Book of Common Prayer and the Liturgy for neither had been published at the time, and seem to point to the intention that no remnant of Presbyterianism was to be left in Scotland. These matters, along with much more, made an impression on the people of Scotland, vastly different from that which the innovating party intended. The tumult in St. Giles, Edinburgh, in July 1637, was but an indication of what the Bishops had reason to expect, unless they were strangely blinded to the signs of the times. The men who were most active in the Church of Scotland, both among the ministers and the laity, chose to act in an orderly and constitutional manner. The result was the framing and subscribing of the National Covenant of 1638. Their determination to go about the signing of the Covenant in a solemn and serious manner with a consciousness of being under the all-seeing eye of God is manifested in the words of Alexander Henderson to the Aberdeen Doctors, that "some men of no small note offered their subscription, and were refused, till time should prove that they joined from love to the Cause and not from the fear of man."

At last, an important epoch of our national history arrived, that is, the constituting of the great General Assembly of 1638 in Glasgow. Despite the withdrawal of His Majesty's Royal Commissioner the Assembly continued sitting and passed an Act annulling all the corrupt Assemblies by which Prelacy had been introduced, those, namely, of the years 1606, 1608, 1610, 1616, 1617, and 1618. The Five Articles of Perth, the Book of Canons, the Liturgy, the Book of Ordination, and the Court of High Commission were condemned. Eight Bishops were deposed and excommunicated, four merely deposed, and two deposed from the prelatic station but allowed to officiate as pastors of single congregations.

Prelacy was abolished and Presbyterianism set up amidst the thankful acknowledgments of the best of Scotland's nobility and peasantry, and one would have reason to expect that the representative of the Stuart dynasty who then occupied the Throne would have learned his lesson, for here was a direct challenge to his usurpation of authority in ecclesiastical matters which none but an infatuated despot could try to ignore.

The Word of God says, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." The Church of Scotland found that out by a very costly experience. After the great deliverance wrought by God through the instrumentality of the General Assembly of 1638 there was a time of revival of religion on a nation-wide scale. The National Covenant, first signed in Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, was carried throughout the whole land, and largely signed by high and low, and there were many prospects that peace was to reign within our borders. Many factors contributed to the dashing of the hopes entertained in this connection. After the decapitation of King Charles I many fretted under the rigid rule of Oliver Cromwell and hankered after the restoration of the Stuart dynasty. The Scots never took kindly to Cromwell, and were foremost in bringing Charles II back from exile. Alas! they did not realise the perfidy of that monarch until it was too late.

(To be continued)

Church Notes

Dumbarton Church Extension

The Deacons' Court of the Dumbarton Congregation wish to intimate to friends in the Church that Building Permission has now been granted for the Church Extension, and that all contributions would be gratefully acknowledged. Donations should be sent to the Congregational Treasurer: Mr J. Henderson, 19 Overtoun Avenue, Dumbarton.

This appeal has been endorsed by the Southern Presbytery.

Notice re Synod Agenda

Clerks of Presbyteries, Conveners/Clerks of Committees, and all other interested parties should note that all items of business intended to be placed on the Synod Agenda must be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by Thursday, 12th April, 1979 (D.V.).

Young People's Conference, Kilravock Christian Centre, Croy, by Inverness, 10th-12th April, 1979

Programme:

Tuesday, 10th

2.30 p.m. John Huss — A Character Study — By Rev. J. Brentnall, Dumbarton.

7.15 p.m. The Value of the Creeds — By Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow.

Wednesday, 11th

10.00 a.m. The Young Christian's Relationship to Law and Order — By Mr Iain Macleod, Dingwall

7.15 p.m. Mission Work in Rhodesia — By Rev. D. Ross, Bulawayo.

Thursday, 12th

10.00 a.m. Is the Gospel Suitable for the Young? — By Rev. D. B. Macleod, Dingwall.

Young people who have not registered for this Conference are welcome to attend any of the individual papers listed above.

Return of Deputies

In the good providence of the Lord the Rhodesian Deputies, Rev. R. R. Sinclair and Rev. Alexander Murray, returned safely to this country at the end of February. We would acknowledge with thankfulness the Lord's preserving care over them during their visit to that troubled part of Africa. During their six weeks' visit to the Mission they were kept busy with preaching and other duties. They found the Mission Staff in good heart and not unduly affected by the dangers with which they are surrounded at the present time.

We understand that Rev. Donald Ross and family are due to return to this country in April for a much needed furlough.

We pray that the Lord will continue to put His protecting care over all on the Mission and that the work of the Gospel will prosper there even in troublous times.

The Deputies are due the thanks of the Church in undertaking and fulfilling the task for which they were sent to Rhodesia. We regret that since his return to this country Rev. Alex. Murray has had to go to hospital but trust that he will soon, in the Lord's good providence, be fully restored to health.

Gaelic Supplement

The Magazine Committee decided last year that a Gaelic Supplement to the Magazine should be produced. It will be included with this issue of the Magazine. Consequently, the Gaelic article in the Magazine itself will cease with this issue. The Supplement is to be published quarterly, and it is hoped that it will prove of benefit to Gaelic-speaking readers.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Glasgow G20, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:—

Sustentation Fund: Mrs Humphrey, Rodney, Ontario, £41.84; Mrs Dolina Clark, formerly of Assynt, £13.

Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund: Mrs Humphrey, Rodney, Ontario, £41.84; A Friend, Ontario, \$20.00; Anon., I., £50.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: Mrs Edwards, Ontario, \$10.00 (for work in Italy.).

China Mission Fund: Mrs Edwards, Ontario, \$10.00.

Trinitarian Bible Society: South Harris Congregation, £91.55; Vatten Congregation, £25.

Underground Evangelism: Anon., St Jude's Plate, £10.

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

Welfare of Youth Fund: Anon., Glasgow Postmark, £10.

Publications' Fund: North Harris Congregation, £31; Glendale Congregation, £1.

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

Dumbarton: A. McK., 40p; L.F., £1.40; G. McL., 40p; A. McD., 10p; D.A. McC. £2 (all per J.A.H. and for Magazine Fund); Anon., Cardross, for Mission work in Italy, £10 for Dominions and Overseas Fund (in plate); A Friend, Helensburgh, £5 per Rev. J.M.B. for Congregational Fund.

Fort William: A. McG., in memory of beloved wife, £10; Mrs MacD., Tyndrum, £1 (both per Rev. J.A. MacDonald).

Glasgow: In memory of Hamish, £100 for Bus Purchase Fund per Rev. D. McL.; Anon., £2 for Bus Expenses; M.McI., Thornliebank, £2 for Congregational Fund.

Kyle: Two Broadford Friends, £5; A Friend at Communion, £2; A.M., £5; Envelope in Plate, £10; Local Donation, £10 (all for Manse Building Fund); Kyle Friend, £10 for Communion Expenses.

Raasay: Mr and Mrs MacL., Inverness, £10; Friends, Raasay, £5 (both for Sust. Fund); Friends, Raasay, £5 for Church Door Collection (all per J.M. MacLeod); Friend, Raasay, £20 for Church Windows; C.F. (envelope in plate), £3; R. & C. MacL., £5 (both for Property Fund); A Friend of the Cause, late of Raasay, £5 for Congr. Fund per J.M. MacLeod; J.F., £20 for Missionary In Taiwan; J.F., £20 for Trinitarian Bible Society.

South Harris: Friend, Northton, £20 per D. MacK. for Congr. Purposes.

Stornoway: Friend, £5 for Communion Expenses per Rev. J. MacLeod.