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O How Love I Thy Law!

Love to the law of God is one of the marks of the true children of God whether we take the law of God to mean the whole revelation of God's Word or the law of the ten commandments. Unless we possess this mark we have no warrant to conclude that we belong to the people whom the Lord has blessed.

The Psalmist in the 119th Psalm makes abundantly plain the delight he had in God's Word. He could say, "I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches." He could speak of God's Word being his comfort in his affliction, and tell how God's statutes had been his song in the house of his pilgrimage. "The law of Thy mouth," he says to the Lord, "is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." And again "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" The Psalmist can say: "Thy law is my delight," and in verse 97 of the Psalm he expresses himself in this way: "O how love I Thy Law! it is my meditation all the day."

We have to ask ourselves if this is true of ourselves also. Have we indeed come to prize the Word of God and to find in it what uplifts and delights our soul? Jeremiah in his day had to say: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy Name, O Lord God of hosts." So it should be with us too, and may the Lord, through the blessing of His Spirit opening and applying God's Word to our soul, make it precious to us. Christ is the centre of that Word and to those who believe He is precious.

The true believer also loves the law of the ten commandments. The believer is no longer under the law of God as a Covenant of works, for Christ has fulfilled the law for him. But his eyes have been opened to see

the glory of the law as a transcript of the Divine nature. The soul that has been quickened into newness of life desires to be conformed to it, desires to be made holy in heart of life, longs after perfect conformity to the will of God in everything. Although he comes far short of this and sees sin in everything he puts his hand to, yet he so delights in the law of God in the inward man that he longs for that time when he will be able to honour God fully. These are just aspirations after heaven, where the redeemed soul will be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ and will be able to serve the Lord perfectly.

Can you say with the Psalmist, "O how love I Thy law?" If so, you have one of the marks of God's children, and you will also have to add with the Psalmist, "it is my meditation all the day." If this is true of you, then you have come to learn what Peter had learned when he said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Sermon

By Rev Jonathan R. Anderson

(This sermon was preached on 1st January 1840)

"The joy of the Lord is your strength" — Nehemiah 8:10

The earth is full of apostates from God, creatures that are condemned to everlasting destruction, that know not at what moment, nor in what place, the sentence may be carried into execution. In such circumstances, we may wonder that there is any joy among the children of men; but, such is the infatuation which hath seized upon the world, that they seem to be in love with death, and to sport with destruction; and the language of most men practically is, what licentious infidels say speculatively, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." To this charge, there are a few exceptions. There is a little flock, who appear to their fellowmen to have banished themselves from all mirth, and to have immured themselves in gloom and trouble; and yet, if truth be the balance, it will be found, that it is only among them that true joy is to be seen — they only have a title to this treasure — they only possess it, and they only are capable of enjoying it; and great and valuable are the fruits which they gather from it: for in the words of the text, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

In addressing you from these words, it is proposed, in dependence on the grace of God, to inquire:—

- 1st: Into the character of the people to whom they are addressed:
- 2nd: The nature of the joy that is commended to them, and
- 3rd: The import of the statement that his joy is their strength:

I. In regard to the character of the people here referred to, I observe, in the first place, that they are a people whom the Lord visits. By nature, they are in the same state of darkness, and bondage, and guilt, as the rest of mankind; and like them they are quite content with their state, and willing to remain in it. But that is because they are asleep, blind, dead. The Lord Christ by His Spirit visits them, and puts life into them, awakens them, opens their eyes, and lets them see their real condition, lets them feel their degradation, lets them know their servitude: and now they cry to Him out of their misery: "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord:" "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed."

In the second place, they are a people whom the Lord redeems. The visit He pays to them is the result of His sovereign and eternal love. It is paid out of respect to the covenant which is made for their benefit; and though the first effect is alarm and grief, yet these are only the shakings of the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire, that precede and prepare the way for the still small voice. In regard to the redemption which Christ effects, I remark: (1) That it is by *price*. The objects of His love are the prisoners of Divine Justice; and from its nature, it cannot let them go without a ransom. The Lord Jesus in His love paid the ransom, even His own precious blood: "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without a blemish, and without spot."

(2) The redemption which Christ effects is by *power*. The children of Israel could not move out of Egypt till the paschal lamb was slain, and its blood sprinkled on the lintels and door posts. But, after this had been done, they did not escape from their bondage, till the power of the Lord was awfully executed in laying prostrate their enemies. And just so, the price of His people's redemption was paid when Christ offered up Himself, but it is not till the Spirit of the Lord go forth, and manifest His glorious power in releasing the soul, and subduing the enemy, that they go free; "That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion."

(3) The people referred to in the text are a people whom the Lord takes into covenant with Himself. A considerable time may elapse between the first awakening of the soul, and its actual deliverance out of the bondage

and misery of a fallen state, and a farther period may elapse, ere the individual is very clear about giving himself to the Lord. Not that there is any necessity for this delay: for all things are ready on the side of Christ: but darkness is gradually removed, pride is slowly broken, the world is reluctantly given up: and as the Lord designs to conquer the will, he lays the time for this: "Thy time was the time of love."

But sooner or later, the Lord manifests Himself as in Christ the covenant God of His people, and enables them to give themselves up to be His people. The basis of this covenant is the Person, the work, and salvation of Christ, who hath the law of God within His heart, and who stands between God and his people, and mediates between them: "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow."

Now, brethren, such are the people to whom it may be said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength:" if any other will meddle with these words, we have to say to them, 'what have you to do with joy?' You are full of such carnal joy as the world affords, and therefore to offer to you spiritual joy is like putting a jewel of gold in a swine's snout.

1. The people of whom I speak feel that by nature they are entire strangers to the joy of the Lord; and he that has not felt this, and does not habitually learn it, certainly knows not what that joy is.

2. The people of whom I speak have a feeling of utter desolation, in the absence of the joy of the Lord. If people that are distressed about their sin and misery, can be satisfied with anything which the world affords, or anything but what comes from the Lord Himself, and flows through covenant connection with Him; nay, if they do not feel that the more abundant worldly good is, the more desolate they are, it is plain their distress is not of the right kind. What would you think of the wife, who should be content with any one as a substitute for her absent husband? So the soul, when it is truly awakened, feels itself a widow, and an orphan, and none but the Lord Himself can be to it a Husband, and a Father.

3. The people of whom I speak, have a conviction that nothing but the joy of the Lord will satisfy them. The idea sometimes occurs to people, that they are so far gone, so sunk in guilt, so far gone in sin, that there is nothing for them, but the blackness of darkness for ever. But these people found this idea, not on what they see in the Lord, but on what they see in themselves, and were they to look to Him, they would see as much cause of hope, as now they see of despondency.

4. The people of whom I speak have hope that they shall obtain the joy

of the Lord. This is founded on His sovereignty in giving, on Christ the channel through which it is given, on the Spirit by whom it is given, in other words on the provision of the covenant of grace. The hope is sometimes very faint, for a time altogether overborne, for a time lost in the darkness of the soul, but it will appear again: "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High."

In the *Second* place, attend to the joy of which the text speaks. Joy is a very delightful affection of the soul, which arises on the view, the possession, or the prospect of some good. The joy of the Lord, as its name imports, is a very excellent, very pure, and very precious species of joy.

Let us consider, 1st, the nature of this joy. It is supernatural — spiritual — holy — sin mars it exceedingly — it is joined with trembling — it is very sweet; it is satisfying — it is eternal.

2nd. The object of this joy. The Lord in His glory. In getting to an apprehension of this object, as indeed of every other which it embraces, the soul has to go through darkness and conflict and affliction. In seeking after the glory of His Being, one has often to encounter the thick darkness of atheism: for the heart is by nature an atheistical heart, saying and wishing it were true. "There is no God." Satan is the enemy of God's very Being, and therefore labours to hide this foundation truth: "Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him!" But it usually happens, that those who go through the thickest darkness experience the sweetest joy in the discovery of God. We value and enjoy most that which has been lost. Then, in addition to the glory of His Being, there is an apprehension of the glory of His character. "How great is His goodness, how great is His beauty!"

(2) The soul rejoices in the love of the Lord. The first feeling that arises on the discovery of the Divine glory is fear, and shame, and grief: for the conscience testifies that mountains of guilt stand between the soul, and that glory. The love of God here interposes, and discovers the way opened up in Jesus Christ whereby it may flow forth, in bestowing upon the sinner through Him, forgiveness of sin, acceptance as righteous, adoption into his family, a title to eternal life, so that the soul is enabled to

rejoice in the Lord's love! "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

(3) The soul rejoices in the counsels of the Lord — eternal, covenant — faithful.

(4) The soul rejoices in the word of the Lord. "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil," — its truth — its certainty — its purity — its suitableness — its sweetness.

(5) The soul rejoices in the works of the Lord: "For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands." His works of creation, of providence, of grace, and of judgment.

The Lord as the object of spiritual joy is revealed only in Christ: there His glory shines, there His love is manifested: there His counsels are made known: "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

He is apprehended and enjoyed only by the Spirit, and hence it is called joy in the Holy Ghost.

3rd; The spring of this joy. It is the Lord (1st) in His All sufficiency: (2nd) in His gracious character: (3rd) in His promise: (4th) in His faithfulness

4th; The end of this joy — it is the glory of the Lord.

III. The import of the statement, that the joy of the Lord is His people's strength.

This joy is their strength, (1st) for duty, (2nd) for privilege, (3rd) for conflict, (4th) for danger, (5th) for time, in death, and through eternity.

Application

1. To the people of God who possess this joy, the text points out how they are to keep it; to those who want it, the way is shown how they are to recover it. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: Wait, I say on the Lord."

2. To those who question whether they ever knew it. Some think they never will — their sins, their depravity — their temptations — so press them down that they cannot attain to it. Some hope to get it, but know not how or where. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His covenant." "Sorrowing, yet always rejoicing."

3. To those who make no pretensions to it, and are quite careless about it, the subject conveys a solemn warning. You are strangers to all true solid joy here, and you are exposed to everlasting sorrow in the world to come. "The triumphing of the wicked is short and the joy of the hypocrite

but for a moment." "Son, remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things and likewise Lazarus, evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Sin's disguises

by Ralph Venning

If sin were not an ugly thing, would it wear a mask? If it did not have evil designs, would it walk in disguise and change its name? Truth is not ashamed of its name or nakedness; it can walk openly and boldly. Sin, on the contrary, is a cheat, a lie, and therefore lurks privily and puts on false names and colours; for if it were to appear like itself — as it sooner or later will do to all, either for conversion or confusion — it would frighten men into dying fits, as it the Apostle, and when they come to themselves they would abhor and hate it, as Paul and the Prodigal did. Men would never be so hardy in sinning but that sin hardens them by deceiving them: so the Apostle says, "Take heed lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3. 13). Sin uses all manner of arts, methods and devices to attract us and inveigle us. It uses many tricks on us and has all the knacks of deceiving and cheating us. So I may with truth say that sin has not learnt but taught all the deceits, dissimulations, flatteries and false diplomacies that are found in courts; the stratagems of war; the sophisms and fallacies of the schools; the frauds of tradesmen, whether in city or country; the tricks of cheaters and jugglers, the ambushes of thieves, the pretensions of false friends, the various methods of false teachers — these and every other kind of cheat and deception in the world, sin teaches and practises upon us all to make us sin.

It is impossible to count up all the ways in which the deceitful hearts and sins of men abuse them. I will, however, give a few examples as a warning to sinners and a witness against sin.

(1) *Sometimes sin persuades us that such and such a thing is not a sin, though it looks like a sin.* Thus the Devil dealt with Eve in the beginning and so deceived her. She was a little suspicious and shy, that what the Devil urged her to do was evil, but he cunningly insinuated that however it seemed to her, yet it was not so. In this way the pride and wantonness of people is maintained — that though these things appear to be evil, they are not evil. But, alas, it is the next thing to being a sinner to look like a sinner; appearance in good is too little and in evil it is too much. It is a very hard thing to look like a sinner and talk and dress like a sinner and

not to be one. It is more than likely that what the Devil grants to be like a sin, is a sin. Those who are persuaded otherwise are deceived by him, as Eve was. If we like the picture, the odds are great against us not liking the thing. Though an idol is no God, nor even like him, yet God has utterly forbidden graven images, for they are of the Devil's carving.

(2) *Sin would persuade that what may be sin in another cannot be sin in you, all things considered, because you are necessitated.* For example, a poor man is forced to steal. But no man is necessitated to sin, even though under necessity; sin is sin in any or in all. Though temptations may mitigate and excuse somewhat, yet they cannot excuse totally from its being a sin, and they cannot un-sin sin.

(3) *It is one sin only, and this only once,* says Sin. But if sin is good, why only once, and if evil, why once? One sin though committed but once is one and once too much. Besides when the Serpent's head is in, it is hard to keep out the whole body; one makes way for the other. It is almost impossible to sin once and only once.

(4) *It is only a little one,* says Sin. But that which is against a great God and deserves so great a punishment as death cannot be a little sin; for the wages of sin and of every single sin is death (Romans 6. 23).

(5) *It is in secret and no-one will see it,* says Sin. But this is a cheat, for it is impossible to sin so secretly but there will be at least two witnesses. God and conscience know all the sins that man can commit.

(6) *Yes, but you will hate it and dread it ever after,* says Sin. Thus some go to Mass to show their distaste of it, and to plays to see the folly of them. But who would be a burnt child to learn to dread the fire? Such costly experiments may indeed cost us the loss of our souls. It is dangerous to meddle with that which is an appearance and may be an occasion of evil, and much more to parley and tamper with sin itself.

(7) *But I promise you that you shall gain by it,* says Sin. You will have so much profit, so much pleasure and so much honour. Sin's gain is loss, however; for he who gains even the world by sin pays too dearly for it. It means the loss or at least the hazard of his soul. The pleasures of sin are grievous, and its honours are disgraces and shame. Did not our first parents find it so, and do not we (Romans 6. 21)? The precious substance promised by sin ends in a pernicious shadow, and the spoils we get by sin only spoil us. Sin promises like a God but pays like a Devil. Sin tells us that we shall not die but live like gods, but we find nothing but death and such a life as they have in Hell. Sin's performance is altogether contrary to its promises; it promises gold and pays dross. If any man, then, has a mind to have true miseries, let him pay heed to sin's false promises.

(8) *But others do it, says Sin, and why may not you?* It is not what others do, however, but what they ought to do that we are to follow. We must not follow any man or a multitude of men to do evil. If others will risk their damnation, what is that to us? It will be no comfort to have had companions in sin and to meet them again in Hell.

(9) *But you have only to repent, says Sin, and God will forgive you.* To this we must say that he who promised forgiveness to them that repent has not promised repentance to them that sin. Besides, even if sin were to cost no more than repentance anyone in his right mind would be loth to buy repentance at so dear a rate; for repentance, though it may free them from greater, puts men to more grief and pain than ever sin could afford them pleasure.

(10) *Yes, but you have escaped well enough hitherto, says Sin.* No evil has befallen you. If this is so, however, it may be so much the worse for us. Not to be punished may be the worst punishment (Isaiah 1. 15; Hosea 4. 14, 17). What will it cost if God does awaken me, and if not, what will it cost when God shall damn me?

(11) *It is only your infirmity, says Sin.* You cannot help it. Tell sin that this is a thing that none but fools and children can accept. Besides, to plead for infirmities is more than an infirmity. That which is only an infirmity today may become a disease tomorrow, if not prevented. Once the will is engaged, it is past an infirmity and has become a sin.

Now if these and other arguments do not succeed, then Sin speaks more openly. It says, there is no such thing as sin. There is no difference between good and evil. As all things come alike to all, so all things are alike. And also, says Sin, evil is good in God's sight, or he would judge it (Malachi 2. 17); his silence makes you think that he is such an one as yourself (Psalm 50. 21). But tell Sin that this defeats and refutes itself and proves nothing so clearly as that sin is exceedingly sinful. If there is no sin, and no difference between good and evil, to what purpose are these different words used by Sin to prove that there is no difference? To say that it is only in imagination and not real is to deny that there is any such thing as sense and conscience, which every man admits, and no-one can deny without denying himself and God. Between good and evil there is more difference than between light and darkness, life and death, ease and pain, food and poison, and these are real, and not differences made by our fancy only. That all things come alike to all is not always true; there are contrary examples. To say that all things are alike is never true but is a manifest contradiction. To say that evil is good in God's sight and that he is such an one as a sinner is to deny God to be, for if he is not good and

just, he is not God. But this bespeaks man to be woefully ignorant, for the flood which drowned the old world, the fire which fell from Heaven on Sodom, the judgments which God executes in the earth continually, witness that God is displeased with and the avenger of sin, just as his giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons is witness that he is good and does good. The fact that his sun shines and his rain falls on the unjust as well as on the just is to persuade men of his goodness which calls for repentance and which also witnesses that sin is evil.

But if sin were not exceedingly sinful, what need would it have to use all these tricks and subterfuges? If it and its deeds were not evil, why does it seek to avoid the light? Why, like a maker of counterfeit money, does it put the King of Heaven's stamp on its base metal? Why does Jacob call himself Esau and counterfeit his brother if sin were not abominable? Why did the Gideonites pretend to have come from afar if they did not wish to be unknown? If sin were not false and a robber, why does it creep in unseen, climb up a narrow way and avoid the door? Why does it flatter and deceive? Why does it never keep its promises, but break all it ever made? It is because it is sinful sin.

I shall briefly sum up the charge against sin. That which sin is accused of and proved to be guilty of is high treason against God. It attempts nothing less than the dethroning and un-god-ing of God himself. It has unmanned man, made him a fool, a beast, a devil, and subjected him to the wrath of God, and made him liable to eternal damnation. It has made men deny that God is, or affirm that he is like themselves. It has put the Lord of Life to death and shamefully crucified the Lord of Glory. It is always resisting the Holy Ghost. It is continually practising the defiling, the dishonour, the deceiving and the destruction of all men. What a prodigious, monstrous, devilish thing is sin!

It is impossible to speak worse of sin than it really is, or even as badly of it as it really deserves, for it is hyperbolically sinful. There are not enough words; we need more, and stronger ones to speak of its vileness. And if we were to say that it is worse than death and the Devil, the very Hell of Hell, this would not be to rail at it, but tell it only the truth about itself. Sin is the quintessence of evil; it has made all the evils that there are and is itself worse than all the evils it has made. It is so evil that it is impossible to make it good or lovely by all the arts that can be used. A poison may be corrected and made medicinal, even if it is not nourishing. But sin is sin, and can be nothing else; its nature cannot be changed, not even by a pardon. It is not only ugly but ugliness, not only filthy but filthiness, not only abominable but abomination. There is not a worse thing in Hell

itself; it has not its fellow there. All this and much more may be said of and against sin.

Boston's Fourfold State

by Rev. Angus Mackay, Tarbert

The Eternal State

We now come to the chapter on Death. The believer knows that he must meet with Death, that his soul and body must needs part, that God who has set the time will certainly keep it. Though some men will not *hear* of death, yet every man must *see* death. Death is the champion all must grapple with. What are those distempers and diseases which we are liable to, but death's harbingers, that come to prepare his way. And the godly must die too, that as death entered by sin, sin may go out by death. It was a mortifying lesson which Saladin, when dying, gave to his soldiers. He called for his standard bearer, and ordered him to take his winding sheet upon his pike, and go out to the camp with it, and tell them that of all his conquests, victories, and triumphs, he had nothing now left him but that piece of linen to wrap his body in for burial.

Boston comforts the believer by showing him the brevity of time and the certainty of death. He says 'Though a man's provision for his journey be nearly spent, he is not disquieted if he thinks he is near home.' We are exhorted to make our minds familiar with death. Now, brooding over death is not profitable at all, but it is profitable to be graciously making our minds familiar with death, and many divines along with Boston advise us on this point. Crosses and trials will not last long, because what is before us of our journey through the wilderness is not long. The world's smiles and frowns will quickly be buried together in everlasting forgetfulness. Its smiles go away like foam on water, and its frowns are as a passing stitch in a man's side. If you are in Christ, you may well bear your cross, death will put an end to all your troubles. If a man on a journey be not well accommodated, where he lodges for a night, he will not trouble himself much about the matter because he is not to stay there, it is not his home. O! be not anxious for what can only serve your bodies, since, ere long, the clods of the cold earth will serve for back and belly too. The finest clothes are but badges of our sin and shame, and in a little time will be exchanged for a winding sheet, when the body will become a feast to the worms. Our life in the world is but a short **preface** to a long eternity, and much of the tale is told.

The Fourfold State brings us to the difference between the Righteous and the Wicked in their death. "The wicked is driven away in his

wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death" (Proverbs 14:32). Here we read from the pen of the Lord's eminent servant that 'foolish virgins may, and often do, hope to the last breath' but as for the elusive hope they entertain themselves with, death will root them up, and they shall forever be irretrievably miserable. The godly have hope in their death, and though the stream of the believer's hope may run shallow, yet he has still so much of it as makes him venture his eternal interests upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Many are driven to darkness sleeping; they go off like lambs, who would roar like lions, did they but know what place they are going to, though the chariot in which they are driven furiously to the depths of hell, yet, they fear not, because they are fast asleep. Death strips them of the splendid robes of a fair profession, with which some of them are adorned; and turns them off the stage, in the rags of a wicked heart and life. The word 'hypocrite' properly signifies a stage-player, who appears to be what indeed he is not. Death comes to them with the sting in it, the sting of unpardoned guilt. Death overturns the house built on the sand, it leaves no man under the power of delusion. How the hopes of many are cut off, when they seem to themselves to be on the very threshold of heaven! It is otherwise with the godly. They have a trusty good Friend before them in the other world, Jesus Christ, their best Friend is Lord of the land to which death carries them. The Lord of the land is their husband, and their husband is the judge. When friends, in mournful mood, stand by the saint's bedside, waiting to see him draw his last breath, his soul is waited for by the angels, to be carried into Abraham's bosom. Death cannot even hurt their bodies, even death is to them but sleep in Jesus. Their dying is but **as dying**, or somewhat **like dying**. Death is not to them what it was to Christ Jesus their Head. It is not the venomous ruinous thing, wrapt up in the sanction of the first covenant, the thorn of guilt is pulled out of the man's conscience. A dying day is a good day to a godly man. Yea, it is his best day, it is better to him than the most joyous day which he ever had on earth. Then comes a note of solemn warning to a believer who may have the guilt of some particular sin, unrepented of, lying on his conscience. The man who lies in a ruinous house, and awakes not till the timbers begin to crack, and the stones to drop down about his ears, may indeed get out of it safely, but not without fears of being crushed by its fall. Boston says that it is a pity that saints are so fond of life as they often are, when they ought to be always on good terms with death. 'Surely you will live as long as you have work cut out for you by the great Master, to be done for Him in this world, and when that is at an end, it is **high time** to be gone'. Boston has much more to say in this

chapter of his most precious book, but time will not allow us to say more. Should there be any professing Christian who has not read the 'Fourfold State' let him make up his mind to read it all, and to study it prayerfully, and those of us who have read it, let us read it again, and be at it from time to time.

Then we come to the chapter on the Resurrection, based on John 5:28,29, 'Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.' They are not all buried in graves, properly so called, some are burnt to ashes, some drowned and buried in the bellies of fishes, but wherever the matter or substance of which the body was composed is to be found, thence they shall come forth. We are not told when that hour will be, but that it is coming, for this, among other reasons, that we may always be ready.

At the resurrection, men shall **not** appear with other bodies, as to substance, than those which they now have, and which are down in the grave, but with the self-same bodies, endowed with other qualities. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and those who are alive, changed. Whether this shout, voice, and trumpet, denote some audible voice, or only the workings of Divine power, for the raising of the dead, and other awful purposes of that day, though the former seems probable, Boston will not positively determine. There is no question but this coming of the Judge of the world will be in greater majesty and terror than we can conceive. Boston supposes the soul and body of every saint, as in mutual embraces, to rejoice in each other, and triumph in their happy meeting again. And here we read of the soul sweetly and lovingly addressing the body, and the body in the same sweet manner addressing the soul.

The wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ as a just Judge, who is to render vengeance to His enemies. They shall come forth from their graves with unspeakable horror and consternation. They shall be dragged forth as so many malefactors out of a dungeon, to be led to execution, crying to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the Lamb. How will they cry, roar, and tear themselves! How will the jovial companions weep and howl, and curse one another! Boston, then supposes the miserable body thus to accost the soul, and the soul to curse the body — an awful sight, as depicted here in the Fourfold State.

As to the qualities with which the bodies of the saints shall be endowed

Resurrection, the apostle tells us, they will be raised incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (1 Cor. 15:42-44). They shall have an everlasting youth and vigour, being no more subject to the decays which age produced in this life. We here read of the beautiful and glorious faces of the saints, full of sweet agreeable majesty, and this beauty diffused through their whole bodies, fashioned like unto their Lord and Saviour's glorious body. And we read of the marks of the Lord Jesus, and the scars of those who suffered for their Saviour; these will be badges of distinction, and add to their glory. They shall be strong without meat and drink, warm without clothes, even in perfect health without medicine, and ever fresh and vigorous though they shall never sleep, but serve Him day and night in His temple.

Boston then proceeds to the chapter on the General Judgement, based on Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory then He shall sit on the throne of His glory" He is also called a King, the judging of the world being an act of the royal Mediator's kingly office. The Son of God in our nature will be the judge at that day. God, by raising Christ from the dead, has exhibited His credentials as Judge of the world. This is part of the Mediator's exaltation, given Him in consequence of His voluntary humiliation Phil. 2:8-10. This, His coming will be a mighty surprise to the world, which will be found in deep security, foolish virgins sleeping, and the wise slumbering. There will be then much luxury and debauchery in the world, little sobriety and watchfulness, much business but a great scarcity of faith and holiness — very like our own times, 1979. The **wedding day** of some will be their own and the world's **judgment day**. The Judge Jesus **stood** before a tribunal on earth, and was condemned as a malefactor, now He shall **sit** on his own tribunal, and judge the world. What this throne shall be, whether a bright cloud or what else, Boston says 'I shall not inquire' Our eyes will give an answer to that question at length. John saw a great white throne. Never had a Judge such a **throne**, and never had a throne such a **Judge** on it. The Man Christ being Judge, we shall see our Judge with our eyes. Then will many actions, commended and applauded by men, as good and just, be discovered to have been evil and abominable in the sight of God, and many works now condemned by the world, will be approved and commended by the great Judge, as good and just. The world now appears very vile in the eyes of those who are exercised to godliness, but it will then appear a thousand times more vile, when that which is done of man secret comes to be discovered.

Boston tells us that there are four books, 'opening the books' Rev.

20:12, that will be opened on that day, the Judgement Day. (1) The book of remembrance, (2) the book of conscience, (3) the book of the law, the book of life. All wrongs must be righted at length, and everyone set in his proper place. It was an aggravation of the misery of the Jews, when their city was destroyed, that they were ruined by one who was accounted the **darling** of the world. O, what an aggravation of the misery of the wicked will it be that Christ will pronounce this sentence also. To be damned by Him who came to save sinners, must be **double** damnation. And this sentence also, 'Depart from me, ye, cursed,' we suppose, will be pronounced with an **audible** voice, by the man Christ. We then read of the great conflagration (II Peter 3:10) not **annihilation** but purification. How will wretched worldings look, when the whole world will be all on fire! God has kept the day hid from us, that we may be every day ready for it. Sinner, that same Lord Christ, whom you now despise, whom you wound through the side of His messengers, and before whom you prefer your lusts, will be your Judge. The neglected Saviour will be a severe Judge. That rocky heart, which now holds out against Him, shall be blown up, that face which refuses to blush now, shall then gather blackness, arrows of wrath shall pierce where arrows of conviction cannot enter now. Will you say you were not warned. Live in a believing expectation of the coming of the Lord, so, when He comes whether in the last day of your life or in the last day of the world, ye shall be able to say with joy 'Lo this is our God, and we have waited for Him.'

(To be continued)

The Value of Creeds

by Rev. D. Maclean, Glasgow

II. The Practical Value of Creeds

If the Creed is left on the shelf as some interesting museum piece of previous theological thought, it can be of no practical value. None whatsoever. Such is the position of the Westminster Confession in the present Church of Scotland and the Thirty-Nine Articles in the present Church of England. The Creed must be the expression of the living faith of the Church. As such, it is not a Creed for theologians only, but for the whole body of believers in the Church. That is very important. This was the great value of the Shorter Catechism when it was taught in the secular Sabbath Schools of our land. The benefits to our people were great because they had, in brief compass the

sion and all that that meant. The Creed, therefore, must be used as an instrument in the work of instructing the people.

An instrument in the work of instructing the people — this is a very important function and it is in danger of being lost sight of. I teach theology and the Confession is done in the theological classes for our ministers. It is also studied in the Presbytery — students have to study it for the Presbytery, and so on. But that in itself is not sufficient. It is really necessary for the people of the Church so that they may grow in the knowledge of these great and wonderful doctrines. They should study the Confession for themselves. In my judgment, Shaw's Exposition of the Westminster Confession ("The Reformed Faith") is the best I know — it is well written, it is easy to read, and with some little application it can be understood. Therefore, it is one of the great practical values of the Confession or of Creeds, that they have an important function in the work of instructing the people. I have already mentioned the twin-fold use of the Creed in the work of making, preserving, and disseminating the attainments made in the various branches of the Christian Church. I hope the historical section of this paper has made the practical value of the Confession in this respect very clear. In the Confession is retained what the Nicene and the Chalcedon Creed and all these Creeds taught and this has been set down with great clarity, great theological acumen and great spiritual penetration.

Secondly, it discriminates the truth from false teaching. The Confession also has a great practical advantage as a bond of Christian fellowship. It is not good enough for somebody to come along and say, "I don't belong to any denomination, I belong to the Church of Christ." What do you believe? "I believe the Bible." Well, that does not tell me anything. What do you believe about the Bible? What do you believe about the Trinity? What do you believe about the Person of Christ? What do you believe about adoption, sanctification, etc.? These people are rather like the people in Corinth, you see, when Paul complained about them. There were those who said, "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas," and then there were very pious ones who said that they were of Christ — they came under the same sanction. You see, it is not enough to say, "I belong to the Church of Christ." That does not tell me anything about you. But where the Confession is, and somebody comes along to you and says, "What do you believe about the Trinity?" or "What does your Church believe about the Trinity?" Then you can point to the Confession, because it is the bond of Christian fellowship. If anyone asks what the Church believes, all one has to do is to point to the Confession.

We now come to the binding effect of a Confession on the individuals in the Church. The Word of God is binding upon men's consciences, and the Confession is binding only because it is founded upon that Word. A distinction is to be drawn here between what is required of members of the Church and office bearers of the Church. With regard to this word 'members of the Church' I regard all baptised people as members of the Church, and those who sit at the Lord's people as communicants. When a person is baptised, that person becomes a member of the visible church; and when a person takes the step of going forward to the Lord's Table, then that person is a communicant. Then, when I mention a distinction between the members of the Church and the office bearers of the Church, I mean, on the one hand, those who are baptised and those who are communicants, and, on the other hand those who are office bearers. Now, the former (that is, the members and the communicants) are examined as to their religious knowledge, both of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism, and that is the practice among us, and that is why we do it. We examine them on the Bible, we examine them on the Shorter Catechism, to examine them on their religious knowledge, and then of course on their profession. The Catechism is used for them as the instrument of examination because it sets down the teaching of the Confession in a simple form suitable for such. If members are found to hold false views, an attempt must be made to correct them and, if this fails, disciplinary action will have to be taken. Office bearers are in a much more serious position. They take upon themselves Ordination Vows, and so must believe in the truth and wisdom of the Constitution and the laws of the Church. So they sign what is called a Formula. I would just like to remind you about it. "I do hereby declare, that I sincerely hold and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith." Then there are the principles of Presbyterianism, and also the principles of the history of our Church involved in the Formula. This is what that person signs. "I do hold the same as the confession of my faith." And therefore, of course, he must understand about the Confession. No man, therefore, should be made a deacon or an elder without his minister going over the confession with him. They must know what they are going to sign and say, "This is the confession of my faith." When they do so, these vows are of a most solemn and binding nature, and should never be taken lightly. If broken, they place an enormous burden of guilt upon the conscience of such a person in the sight of God.

Creeds, therefore, are of real, practical value in expressing the faith of the Church, in binding the Church in fellowship together, and in

discriminating between truth and error. One thing I would like to hope is, that, as a result of the this paper, in which I have endeavoured to be as direct and as simple as I can in what is after all quite an involved subject, I have impressed upon you young people the untold benefit there is in having a Confession which is Scriptural, based on the Word of God, and sums up all the work and meditation of Christian scholars. This is set down here and given into our possession so that we can have it and that we can study it in the light of Scripture, see that it is founded there, and hope that its power may be felt.

The National Covenants

by Rev. James S. Sinclair

No doubt there is hardly one of our intelligent readers but knows something about the National Covenants of our country, and yet it is to be feared that many, especially of the younger generation, would find it difficult, if questioned, to give an intelligent account of their history, character, and aims. These Covenants were entered into during the most important periods in the history of this nation, and had much to do with the establishment of the kingdom of Christ in our midst. We all make our boast of the distinguished sufferings which our ancestors endured for Christ's Crown and Covenant; and the stimulating influence of their heroic lives and ever-memorable sacrifices is with us unto this day. Surely it would be well, therefore, to have a clear understanding of their Covenants or Mutual Agreements in the cause of God and truth, which have had such an intimate connection with the history and life of vital Christianity in the land. Much has been written on the subject; it would be easy to refer our readers simply to books,¹ and so leave the matter, but a brief statement here of the facts historical and otherwise may not be without advantage to both old and young among us.

The Covenants were the results of the Reformations from Popery and Prelacy. The Reformation from Popery began to dawn about the beginning of the fifteenth century. James Resby, "an Englishman and scholar of Wicliffe," and Paul Craw, "a Bohemian and follower of Huss," then suffered martyrdom in Scotland for their faithful testimony against the errors of Rome. But it was not until the sixteenth century, when Patrick Hamilton and other Scottish witnesses died the martyr's death, that the Reformation had made so much progress as to encourage those

¹The "Scots Worthies," "The Covenants and Covenanters," etc.

who were emancipated from Popish error and superstition to band themselves together (formally and publicly) for the maintenance and advancement of God's truth in the country. It is on record that those who were valiant for the truth entered into "bands," or covenants, at Dun in 1556, Edinburgh in 1557, Perth in 1559, and again at Edinburgh in 1560, the objects of which were to declare their renunciation of idolatry and all society with it, and to vow (as may be learned from the words of one of these covenants) that "we, by His grace, shall, with all diligence, continually apply our whole power, substance, and our very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God." In 1562 the Confession of Faith, prepared by John Knox and five other Reformers, was approved of by the three Estates of the kingdom and by the first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. "The jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome" was abolished within the bounds of the realm. In 1569 the Reformed Church was acknowledged by Act of Parliament as "the only true and holy kirk of Jesus Christ within this realm." The reformation, which thus made such remarkable strides, had as one of its eminent fruits the great National Covenant of 1580.

The National Covenant was drawn up by Mr John Craig, minister of Holyrood House, Edinburgh. It was signed by the King and his household and others, "to the glorie of God and the good example of all men," at Edinburgh, on 21st day of January, 1580, and it purported to be "Ane Short and Generall Confession of the true Christiane Faith and Religion." It appears that the special circumstances that called for this renowned Covenant was a Jesuitical effort by the Pope to retain his hold of the kingdom, in connection with which he granted a secret dispensation to his followers to profess the Reformed religion, and at the same time to do all in their power to advance the interests of the Roman faith. The National Covenant begins with a declaration by its subscribers to the effect that they are "thoroughly resolved in the truth by the Spirit and Word of God," and that they confess and affirm "before God and the whole world the true Christian faith and religion, which now is, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel." received by the Church and State as God's eternal truth, and "expressed in the Confession of our Faith," grounded upon God's written Word. They then proceed to declare their detestation of all contrary religion and doctrine, and make particular reference to the Roman Antichrist, his "usurped authority upon the Scriptures of God, upon the Kirk, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men," with specific mention of many of the erroneous opinions, superstitious practices, and corrupt

decrees of Rome. They conclude with a solemn oath to defend the king's person and authority, according to the following terms:— "We shall defend his person and authority with our goods, bodies, and lives, in the defence of Christ, His evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies within this realm or without, as we desire our God to be a strong and merciful defender to us in the day of our death, and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory eternally. Amen." The time of this Covenant was a blessed one in the history of the Church of Scotland. Calderwood, the historian, writes:— "The Kirk of Scotland was now come to her perfection, and the greatest purity that ever she attained unto, both in doctrine and discipline, so that her beautie was admirable to forraine kirks. The assemblies of the sancts were never so glorious."

The period of rest and external prosperity did not long continue. Soon Charles I, began to exert a tyrannical authority over the Church. Knowing that Prelacy lent itself to his despotic schemes rather than Presbytery, the friend of freedom, he endeavoured to force the former system, with its bishops and canons, upon the Scottish people. But his efforts were largely in vain. Andrew Melville and other noble witnesses for God's truth resisted the king's encroachments upon the purity and liberty of the Church. Janet Geddes flung her stool at the Deans head in St. Giles, when he began to read Laud's liturgy in divine worship, and this was the signal for a remarkable display of popular feeling against the inroads of Episcopacy. The Council of the State vainly imagined that they could extinguish the agitation by a proclamation "condemning all meetings against the Episcopal Canons and Service Book," but their attempts to suppress only fanned the fire into a more vehement flame. Satan, as he often has been, and will be, was outwitted by his own stratagems. The result was a public and most impressive renewal of the National Covenant, with additions for the times. One of these additions was the following notable passage:— "And because, after due examination; we plainly perceive, and undoubtedly believe, that the innovations and evils contained in our supplications, complaints, and protestations, have no warrant of the Word of God, are contrary to the articles of the foresaid Confession, to the intention and meaning of the blessed reformers of religion in this land, to the above written Acts of Parliament, and do sensibly tend to the re-establishing of the Popish religion and tyranny, and to the subversion and ruin of the true reformed religion, and of our liberties, laws, and estates; we also declare, That the foresaid

Confessions are to be interpreted, and ought to be understood of the foresaid novations and evils, no less than if every one of them had been expressed in the foresaid Confessions; and that we are obliged to detest and abhor them, amongst other particular heads of Papistry abjured therein. And, therefore, from the knowledge and conscience of our duty to God, to our king and country, without any wordly respect or inducement, so far as human infirmity will suffer, wishing a further measure of the grace of God for this effect; we promise and swear, by the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD, to continue in the profession and obedience of the aforesaid religion; and that we shall defend the same, and resist all these contrary errors and corruptions, according to our vocation, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put in our hands, all the days of our life."

The renewal of the National Covenant took place on the 28th February, 1638, in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh, and presents one of the most famous scenes in Scottish history. Alexander Henderson was the grand directing personality of that age, and his testimony about this memorable day, on which "Nobles, Gentlemen, Barons, Burgesses, and Commons" met to put their hands to the cause of God, was, that it was "the day of the Lord's power," the greatest day that had yet appeared in our Scottish Israel. Hundreds of copies of the Covenant were circulated throughout the kingdom, and were signed by all ranks and classes. Great success attended the efforts of the Reformers at this time. The King was reluctantly compelled to yield to their just claims. He abolished his courts and liturgies, and articles, and gave consent to the calling of a General Assembly of the Church, the first free Assembly that was held for the long period of forty-two years. It met in Glasgow on the 21st day of November, 1638.

The second great national agreement on behalf of truth was the Solemn League and Covenant, which was subscribed in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, on the 25th September, 1643. This document was animated by the same spirit and embodied the same principles as the former Covenant. It was, however, more comprehensive in its scope; was adopted by Englishmen as well as Scotsmen; and aimed at the furtherance of religion and reformation in the three kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland. It is the crown of all the covenants ever entered into within the bounds of these realms, and has been well designated by Hetherington as "the noblest in its essential features of all that are recorded among the international transactions of the world." Members of the English Parliament and the Westminster Assembly of

Divines, embracing representatives of both nations, lifted their hands in solemn oath to God, and declared their agreement with the terms of this Covenant. This remarkable union in the faith resulted, through the wonderful providence of God, from the despotic measures of Charles, who compelled the peoples of both nations thus to band together for the defence of their civil and religious liberties, for the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, and for the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland. And all this was engaged in under the deepest sense of the need of humiliation before God for sin, and with the utmost dependence upon the grace of God for the accomplishment of their intentions. Notice the concluding passage:—
“And because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against God and His Son Jesus Christ, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruits thereof; we profess and declare, before God and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of these kingdoms; especially that we have not as we ought valued the inestimable benefit of the Gospel; that we have not laboured for the purity and power thereof; and that we have not endeavoured to receive Christ in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of Him in our lives, which are the causes of other sins and transgressions so much abounding amongst us; and our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties we owe to God and man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the Lord may turn away His wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these churches and kingdoms in truth and peace. And this Covenant we make in the presence of Almighty God, the Searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by the Holy Spirit for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success as may be deliverance and safety to His people, and encouragement to other Christian Churches, groaning under, or in danger of, the yoke of anti-Christian tyranny, to join the same or like association or covenant, to the glory of God, the enlargement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the peace and tranquility of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths.”

It is lamentable to reflect that the principles of this noble Covenant do not seem ever to have been carried out with general zeal and hearty thoroughness in England. The Commonwealth came to an end in 1660,

and the Stuart dynasty was unhappily restored to the throne. Charles II, who had subscribed the Covenant on two occasions, became a perfidious traitor to them, no sooner had he gained the crown. He pursued the same policy as his father, and exercised all his power to overturn the whole work of the Covenanted Reformation. The Acts Recissory were passed, in which the Covenants were annulled and declared treasonable and seditious articles. Thus began the period of the 28 years' persecution. James II, succeeded Charles, and acted with greater severity than his predecessor. The Covenanters were hunted with dragoons on the moors of Scotland, and many of them endured most painful sufferings and died most cruel deaths for the sake of Christ's Crown and Covenant. At length, in the gracious providence of God, the Revolution came in 1688, when William and Mary, a Protestant king and queen, were set upon the throne, with the result that the persecutions were brought to an end, and an era of religious freedom dawned. The Presbyterian Church was established in Scotland and the Episcopal in England — not quite the ideal of the Covenanters. The Covenants were not formally acknowledged again, and the Acts Recissory remained on the statute book of the realm. More than two hundred years have elapsed since that time, and still we are nationally in the same, if not a worse, position. But a better day may yet dawn, when, under the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God, these kingdoms will repent of their backslidings, and renew their solemn engagements with God, thus realising the fulfillment of the famous prediction of James Guthrie, the martyr, uttered on the scaffold, in immediate prospect of beholding the face of God and the Lamb, "The Covenants, the Covenants, will yet be Scotland's reviving."

How to Spend Every Day

By the Rev. Jonathan Edwards

God has concealed from us the day of our death, without doubt, partly for this end, that we might be excited to be always ready, and might live as those that are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, agreeably to the counsel which Christ gives us, Matt. xxiv. 42, 43, 44; xxv. 13. That watchman is not faithful who, being set to defend a house of thieves, or a city from an enemy at hand, will at any hour venture to sleep, trusting that the thief or the enemy will not come. Therefore it is expected of the watchman, that he behave himself every hour of the night, as one who doth not depend upon it that the enemy will tarry until the next hour. Now therefore, let me, in Christ's name, renew the call and counsel of

Jesus Christ to you, to watch as those that know what hour your Lord will come. Let me call upon you who are hitherto in an unrenewed condition. Depend not upon it, that you will not be in hell before to-morrow morning. You have no reason for any such dependence; God hath not promised to keep you from it, or to do without His wrath so long.

How can you reasonably be easy or quiet for one day, or one night, in such a condition, when you know not but your Lord will come this night? And if you should then be found, as you now are, unregenerate, how unprepared would you be for His coming, and how fearful would be the consequence! Be exhorted therefore, for your own sakes, immediately to awake from the sleep, and sleep no more, as not depending on any other day. Let us exhort you to have no dependence on any future time; to keep every Sabbath, and to hear every sermon, as if it were the last. And when you go into your closet, and address yourself to your Father who seeth in secret, do it in no dependence on any future opportunity to perform the same duty. When you that are young go into company for amusement and diversion, consider that it may be the last opportunity of the like nature that ever you may have. In all your dealings with your neighbours, set as if you were never to make another bargain. Behave in your families every day, as though you depended on no other. Here I shall offer you two motives.

(1) Consider, if you will hearken to this counsel, how much it will tend to your safety and peace in life and death. It is the way really and truly to be ready for death; yea to be fit to live or fit to die; to be ready for affliction and adversity, and for whatever God in his providence shall bring upon you. It is the way to be in, not only an habitual, but actual preparedness for all changes, and particularly for your last change. It is the way to possess your souls in a serene and undisturbed peace, and to enable you to go on with an immovable fortitude of soul, to meet the most frightful changes, to encounter the most formidable enemies, and to be ready with unshaken confidence to triumph over death whenever you meet him; to have your hearts fixed, trusting in God, as one that stands on a firm foundation, and hath for his foundation the munition of rocks, that is not afraid of evil tidings, but laughs at the fear of the enemy. It will be the way for you to possess that quietness and assurance spoken of, Isaiah xxxii. 17: "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." The servant who always stands watching, will not be at all surprised at the news that his Lord is coming. This will be the way for you to live above the fear of death. Yea, if heaven and earth should shake, you may stand firm and

unshaken, being settled on a rock, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. O how happy are such persons, who have such safety and peace! What a blessed peace is that which arises from such a constant preparation for death! How happy therefore is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing!

(2) What dismal calamities and miseries mankind are subject to for want of this, for want of behaving themselves every day, as not depending on any future day! The way of the world is, one day foolishly to depend on another, yea on many others. And what is the consequence? Why, the consequence with respect to the greater part of the world is, that they live all their days without any true peace or rest of soul. They are all their lifetimes subject to bondage through fear of death. And when death sensibly approaches they are put in to a terrible fright. They have a dismal view of their past lives; the ill improvement of their time, and the sins they have been guilty of, stand staring them in the face, and are more frightful to them than so many devils. And when they look forward into that eternity whither they are going, how dismal is the prospect! O how do their hearts shrink at the thought of it! They go before the judgment-seat of God, as those that are dragged thither, while they would gladly, if they could, hide themselves in the caves and dens of the earth.

And what is worse yet than all the disquietude and terror of conscience in this world, the consequence of a contrary behaviour, with respect to the bulk of mankind, is their eternal perdition. They flatter themselves that they shall see another day, and then another, and trust to that, until finally most of them are swallowed up in hell, to lament their folly to all eternity, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Consider how it was with all the foolish virgins who trusted to the delay of the bridegrooms coming: when he came they were surprised, and found unprepared, having no oil in their lamps; and while they went to buy, those who were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut against them, and they came afterwards crying in vain, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Book Reviews

The Writings of John Bradford Banner of Truth Trust.

John Bradford was one of the noble band of martyrs who suffered during the reign of the infamous "Bloody Mary." He was a close friend of Latimer, Ridley and John Knox, who all thought highly of him.

In his preaching we are told that he "sharply reproved sin — sweetly preached Christ crucified."

The Writings of this great and good man have been republished by the "Banner of Truth" in 2 volumes. In reading these books one seems to get to know the author and to love him for the lowliness and humility that were so characteristic of the man. Of these "Writings" Bishop Ryle (no mean judge) says:— 'they consist chiefly of sermons, short treatises, meditations, prayers, declarations, exhortations and letters. All are good, and all deserve reading. He that can read them without feeling his soul stirred within him, must be in an unsatisfactory condition. To my mind, there is not only scriptural soundness in all that Bradford writes but a peculiar fire, unction, warmth and directness which entitles him to a very high rank among Christian Authors'. With this estimation of the works of Bradford we wholeheartedly agree.

The English is old fashioned and in some places a little obscure but one soon gets used to the style and the little extra concentration required will be amply rewarded.

Vol. 1 costs £5-50, Vol. 2, £5-00 or £9-50 for the set. The binding is excellent and well up to the usual standard of the Publishers.

L.M.

The Traditional Text of the New Testament

This 8-page pamphlet has recently been issued by the Trinitarian Bible Society. It has been prepared by Andrew J. Brown and is in reply to an article by Prof. D. MacLeod which appeared in the February issue of the Evangelical Times on the question of the received text. A similar article by Prof. MacLeod appeared in the January issue of the Free Church Record.

Copies of the pamphlet may be obtained from the Trinitarian Bible Society, 217 Kingston Road, London, SW19 3NN.

D.B.M.

The Way of Life by Charles Hodge. Banner of Truth Trust. £1.25.

In an age when there is no small degree of confusion regarding the nature of true religion, the reproduction of this invaluable paper-back, is a most welcome and timely contribution to our bookshelves. A better

book on the subject of Christian belief and experience could hardly be found. To any, seriously enquiring after the way of life we heartily recommend this sane — safe — sound — solemn and instructive work. It was evidently written by one deeply taught of God, and endowed with a capability to arrange his thoughts on his subject with clarity, precision, and spiritual poise. In Hodge's treatment of this intricate yet basic topic relating to the faith and experience of the child of God, we find nothing extreme or superficial, but much that is decidedly searching, helpful and edifying. The very arrangement and sequence of the chapters give ample indication of a compound of gracious fidelity, tenderness, and spiritual expertise, on the part of the author. Such a composition from the pen of this great theologian and humble servant of God and the Church, merits prayerful perusal, and the widest possible circulation. What a mercy there is a 'Way of Life' to write and read about!

F.M.

Hebrews by Geoffrey B. Wilson. Banner of Truth Trust. £1.25.

With no less than one hundred works of reference consulted, the author of this Digest of Commentary on Hebrews might well be expected to distil the best wine for the spiritual palate. Some would no doubt concede that he has succeeded in doing so. Personally, we hesitate to give G.B. Wilson this encomium. That does not mean that the book is not worth reading. Naturally, with such a superfluity of authors to quote from, there are excellent and most enlightening comments even on extremely difficult passages. The frequency with which Dr. Owen's name appears, speaks for itself, but there seems to be a lack of fluency in the attempt to fuse the varied comments together. It may well be that the nature and structure of this Epistle does not lend itself to this kind of welding of thoughts from so many different minds. Quite frequently the reader is left puzzled after reading what is ostensibly the best comment on a certain verse. Perhaps it would have been better if the paragraph rather than the verse had been taken as a unit, and commented upon. Whatever the reason, we feel that the skill to weave the diverse strands of thought has eluded the writer as far as Hebrews is concerned.

F.M.

Galatians by Geoffrey B. Wilson. Banner of Truth Trust. £1.25.

The closing sentence of the author's Introduction seems to sum up the design and tone of this Digest of Reformed Commentary. Speaking of

Paul's care for the purity of the Gospel, and the safety of his readers, he aptly concludes in the following words — "In days of widespread doctrinal decline, one would do well to remember that there can be no pastoral concern for the souls of men without a similar zeal to maintain and defend the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." The writer's attitude thus expressed determines and explains the polemical quality of select comments skilfully woven together into one, insofar as that is possible. Galatians is not an easy Epistle to understand, and requires prayerful and careful study. To be acquainted with the contents of this miniature Commentary will no doubt help to elucidate the meaning of the Epistle as a whole, and shed light on the more difficult passages. While the proper connotation of specific terms and phrases increases the value of the book, perhaps the most pleasing feature is the devotional element. Any disagreement with the author, we found more adapted to make us think again, than to foster a spirit of criticism and alienation. The use of Authorised Standard Version and other versions is not intended to call in question the peerless superiority of the Authorised Version. At least, this is our impression. It is never the author's intention to use a translation subversive of the truth, or calculated to pander to falling contemporary tastes and standards.

F.M.

1st Corinthians by Geoffrey B. Wilson. Banner of Truth Trust. £1.50.

The extensive range of the varied doctrines and topics dealt with in this Epistle is well known to those who study the Word of God. The subjects treated are of vital importance and of abiding relevance for the church in every age. With the arrival and preference for situational ethics, the need for, and the value of this Epistle is increased rather than decreased. The comments on the Epistle culled from so many different sources are replete with good matter, and provide us with a mine of information in very small compass. With such a diversity of subject matter and authors, this book makes interesting reading. A useful synopsis at the beginning of each chapter, is followed by the rich spoils of terse and diversified comments from wellknown Theologians, Commentators and Greek Scholars. These are not only linked together by the author, who has the peculiar gift of finding the proper blend, but interspersed with his own contributions. We do find a certain degree of ambiguity in places, but this deficiency is rare, and should not deter us from a fair-minded reading of a Digest that contains so much that is stimulating, edifying and instructive.

F.M.

2nd Corinthians by G. B. Wilson, Banner of Truth Trust. £1.50.

This little book on 2nd Corinthians follows the pattern of the work previously reviewed. It has intrinsic worth as part of the Canon of Scripture, and special interest, because of its relation to 1st Corinthians. The comments strung together are suggestive and thought provoking. Contributions from Calvin perhaps deserve special mention for soundness and solidity. A most pleasing feature is the amount of light cast on difficult verses so often abused by errorists and modernists, to form a basis for some erroneous theory. On the other hand we found some startling comments. In some ways the book is academic, yet never beyond the average intelligence of the earnest reader. To purchase and possess a copy of G. B. Wilson on 2nd Corinthians, is to have easy access to a wide and varied range of thoughts on the Epistle.

F.M.

Notes and Comments

Zimbabwe Election Result

The General Election in Rhodesia has resulted in the election to power of Mr Robert Mugabe, one of the leaders of the Patriotic Front. Though himself a Marxist, Mr Mugabe has declared himself ready to form a broadly based government to rule the now legally recognised independent nation of Zimbabwe. In view of this it is likely that the country will return to a normal state of affairs in a very short time, and this should continue for the immediate future. What the more distant future holds for the nation may be a matter of some concern.

The question uppermost in the minds of the Christian Community in Rhodesia and especially in the minds of the people connected with our Mission in that Country will be — what will these changes in government mean for the Church in that land? We trust that Mr Mugabe will show wisdom and statesmanship in recognising that the Christians of the nation are one of its greatest assets, both for its stability and prosperity, and therefore refrain from persecuting them as other Marxist-led nations have done to their own impoverishment.

It is surely a time, in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere, for those who fear God to put their trust in the Lord for their preservation and for the advancement of the Lord's Kingdom in the world. Has He not said: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness?" Is. 41:10

Corporal Punishment in Scottish Schools

Owing to a case brought before the European Commission of Human Rights by two Scottish mothers, by which they have sought a ruling that the use of the belt constitutes inhuman or a degrading treatment or punishment, it is thought likely that the Commission will find in their favour and require our Government to end the use of the belt in Scottish schools by next year.

This attitude to the use of corporal punishment in schools is perfectly in line with the permissive outlook that has been in vogue for some time. In view of the increasing indiscipline in Scottish Schools at present, this move to abolish corporal punishment can only aggravate an already serious situation. The need of salutary correction for wrong-doing has been recognised world wide even amongst those who did not have the Bible to give guidance on this. What folly then on the part of legislators or educationalists to abolish the means by which that correction can be administered!

Sabbath Court Sitings

It would appear that in the new Bail (Scotland) Act which comes into operation at the end of March allowance has been made for Courts to sit on Sabbath if necessary in exceptional circumstances to consider bail applications. A Scottish Office spokesman has said that this provision will rarely if ever be required. While this may be so it is regrettable that such a provision should ever have been included in this piece of legislation. The secularisation of the Lord's Day is proceeding at a terrible pace and will bring its own judgments with it. It would be folly on the Government's part to pass legislation which might in any way increase it. It is to be hoped that amending legislation can be passed to delete the part of the Act which permits these Courts to sit on the Lord's Day even in exceptional circumstances.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 8th April at 11a.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 8th April at 6 p.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 15th April at 2.30 p.m.

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, 10th April, 1980. (D.V.)

(Rev.) Donald MacLean,
Clerk of Synod.

Note

The New Year's Day Sermon which appeared in the January issue of the Magazine was preached in 1975 by Rev. J. A. T. Van Dorp, Gisborne.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr. W. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: A. Forgie, £30; Bethel Street Baptist Chapel, Shirley, Surrey, £50.

Aged & Infirm Ministers etc Fund: A. Forgie, £30.

Dominions & Overseas Fund: Anon., Canada \$20.00 for Italian Mission: Mrs Campbell, California, "In memory of my mother, Mrs. R. S. MacKenzie," £65.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Kyle Congregation, £43.21; Plockton Congregation, £12; Vatten Congregation, £41. Brackadale Congregation, £41.50.

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The Publications Treasurer, Mr R. W. M. MacKenzie CA, Hilton of Cadboll, Fearn, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

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

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Oban: Mrs F., Stirling £20 per J.M.; Mr Angus MacD., Blanefield £50 per Mrs J.M., both for Congr. Fund.

Perth: Mr D. Stein — In memory of the late Mrs Stein, Perth £100.

Portree: Tunbridge Wells, Friend £10 for Congr. Purposes per F.M.

Raasay: In memory of loving sisters and brothers, Inverarish £9; C. F. Inverness £5, both for Sust. Fund; Friend, Raasay £20 for Home Mission; A Friend of the Cause, Inverarish £10 per M. D. MacKay; A Friend, Inverarish £5 per J. M. Macleod (twice); Raasay Friend away from home £5, last four for Property Fund.

Shieldaig: From a Free Presbyterian £2; Anon £5 for Car Fund; Anon £15.84 for Car Replacement Fund; Anon, O.A.P., Shieldaig £50 for Manse Extension.

South Harris: Friend, Horgabost £10 per Rev. D. Maclean for Car.

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Waternish: In loving memory of beloved parents and sisters £3 for Church Funds.