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The Preciousness of Time

As we enter another year we are reminded of the shortness of time. Days, weeks, months and years quickly pass away. Eternity, with all that that means, draws near. Job had to say, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," and we have to say the same as well. Time is swiftly, relentlessly, carrying us onward to the eternal world. Soon the place that knows us now shall know us no more for ever. We are reminded of this by the Lord's removal of His servants, His people and other of our fellow men from time to the eternal world. It is in the light of the shortness of time and of the great issues of eternity that we come to realise how precious time is for each one of us.

We possess immortal souls destined to exist throughout eternal ages either in the bliss and glory of heaven or in the unutterable misery of hell. At the beginning of another year it becomes us to ask where we ourselves are going. Is it to the eternity of the blessed or to the eternity of the damned? Of what infinite consequence it is to us whether we are on the narrow road that leads to life eternal or the broad road that leads to destruction. As death finds us, so shall we be at the judgment seat of Christ, and as we are at the judgment seat, so shall we be throughout the endless ages of eternity, for "as the tree falleth so it shall lie."

How precious is time when we consider that it is within the confines of time that we are to make our calling and election sure. There is no hope for sinners beyond the grave. It is in this world before time has run out that we must seek and find salvation. It is here on mercy's ground that Christ is offered in the Gospel of God's grace as the alone and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners. It is in time that we must discover our great need of such a Saviour. If Christ is ever to be precious to us as a Saviour,

then we must come to know ourselves as sinners in a day of God's mercy and grace. Christ is the Saviour of sinners, not of the righteous, therefore it is as sinners we must come to know Him. This is the revelation given in God's Word — that He is an all-suitable and all-sufficient Saviour even for the chief of sinners. How this ought to stir us up to seek Him as our own personal Saviour and Deliverer. What need there is that the Holy Spirit would come and reveal Christ to us in the Gospel.

How precious is time to the awakened soul, that is, a sinner awakened by the Spirit of God to a consciousness of having sinned against God and being under His wrath and curse and in danger of perishing for ever. How valuable is every moment in time to that soul. Expecting to be cut off at any moment because of sin and transgression, yet preserved in life for a season, such a soul seeks mercy of the God of heaven. Sin-laden and guilty though he or she be, yet the hope of the Gospel makes them plead earnestly at a Throne of grace that the Lord would show mercy to them and not cast them off. The only plea that the sinner can have which is acceptable before God is that God would show mercy to them for Christ's sake. Their own righteousnesses they must discard for these are but filthy rags, and seek to be clothed in the wrought-out righteousness of Christ, the only garment in which the sinner can stand before God in the end of the day.

How precious is time to the soul that has found salvation in and through the Redeemer in a day of God's mercy and grace. As time was a precious commodity when seeking salvation, so is it also in seeking to know Him more and more in whom the soul has come to trust. It is in time that the soul is to be sanctified and prepared for the eternal world. Time is not then to be wasted but to be used to the greatest advantage possible. The truths of God's Word are to be meditated upon and the soul enriched by God's blessing out of the treasures of God's Word. Time is precious to the living soul as it is here in this world first that the soul is to serve the Lord. The believing soul says, What wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord has work for each of His own. They are no longer their own, for they are bought with a price and they are to glorify God in their bodies and spirits, which are God's. How nobly, in the strength of divine grace, have some of His people served Him in this world. Their names were written in the Lamb's book of life. Their eye was upon eternity. As their Master for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, so did they, for the joy that was set before them bear their cross and endure the shame bound up with it. They ran the race set before them, laying aside every weight and the sin

did so easily beset them, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.

For those who value time and use it aright in seeking and finding salvation — for them time shall soon be no more. Time shall soon give way to eternity — and what a glorious eternity! There shall be no more sorrow, sighing and there God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. How precious will time be to them then in view of what they will then possess. How precious will that little particle of time be in which they lived their life here, when they consider that it was in that little particle of time here that they, by God's grace, sought and found salvation and obtained everlasting life.

In the light of this, let us value time and let us ever keep its preciousness before our minds, so that we do not abuse or barter away this precious commodity to our everlasting ruin and sorrow.

Sermon

By H. Spurgeon.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. . . . And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place. . . . Again he went out, about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and saw others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day? — Matthew 20: 1, 3, 5, 6.

We have frequently observed that we do not think it right to neglect the connection of Scripture. We have no right to tear passages of Scripture from their context and make them to mean what they were not intended to teach; and therefore I have in the reading given you, according to my ability, what I think to be the immediate design of the present parable. It is a rebuke to those who fall into a legal spirit and begin calculating as to what their reward ought to be in a kingdom where the legal spirit is entirely out of place, since its reward is not of debt but of grace. I think I may now, without any violation of propriety, dwell upon one very distinct fact in connection with the parable. It is not right to violate the drift of the parable, but having already observed it and made it as clear as we can, we believe that we are now authorized to make good one of the main circumstances mentioned in it.

This morning I intend to call your attention to the fact that the labourers were hired at different periods of the day, by which doubtless we are taught, that God sends his servants into his vineyard at different times and seasons; that some are called in early youth, and others are not

led to enter into the service of the Master until declining years have brought them almost to the eventide of life.

I must, however, ask you to remember that *they were all called*: by the mention of which the Saviour would teach us that no man comes into the kingdom of heaven of himself. Without exception, every labourer for Jesus has been called in one sense or another, and he would not have come without being so called. They are all called. Were a man what he should be he would need no pressing and invitation to come to the gospel of Christ; but since human nature is perverted, and men put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness, man needs to be called by the outward word; he needs to be invited, persuaded, and entreated; he needs, to use the strong expression of the apostle Paul, that as though God did beseech him by us we should pray him in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Nay, further than this, although some men come to work in a legal spirit in the vineyard through this common call of the gospel, yet no man in spirit and in truth comes to Christ without a further call, namely, the effectual call of God's Holy Spirit. The general call is given by the minister, it is all that he can give. If the preacher attempts to give the particular call as some of my hyper-calvinistic brethren do, confining the gospel command to a certain character and trying to be themselves the discoverers of God's elect, and to make that particular which is always universal; if the preacher acts thus, and virtually endeavours to give the particular call, he makes a sorry mess of it, and usually fails altogether to preach the gospel of glad tidings to the sons of men. But when man is content to do what he can do, namely, preach the commandment "that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and that "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent," then there comes with the general call to the chosen of God a particular and special call which none but the Holy Ghost can give, but which he gives so effectually that all who hear it become willing in the day of God's power, and turn with full purpose of heart unto the Lord. In what sense is it true that many are called but few chosen, if none are to be called by the preaching of the Word but those who are chosen? There are two callings, the one is general to all who hear of Jesus, and many who are thus called are not chosen; the other is personal and peculiar to the elect, "for whom he did predestinate them he also called." To return to our point; all in the vineyard are in some sense called. There is not a solitary exception to this rule in the entire Christian Church. The doctrine of free-will has not a single specimen to show to prove itself. There is not a sheep in all the flock that came back to the shepherd unsought; there is not a single piece of

money which leaped again into the woman's purse, she swept the house to find it: nay, I will go further, and say there is not even a single prodigal son in the entire family who did ever say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father," till first the Father's grace, veiling itself in the afflicting providence of a mighty famine, had taught the prodigal the miserable results of sin, as he fed the swine, and fain would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but could not do so.

I want you to notice another fact before I come to the subject now in hand, and that is, that *all those who are called are said to have been hired*. Of course in a parable no word is to be construed harshly; we are to give the meaning according to the drift; but still I think we may say that there is that likeness between hiring a servant and the engagement of a soul to Christ, that henceforth a man hired has no right to serve another, he serves the master who has hired him. When a soul is called by grace into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, he cries, "O Lord, other lords have had dominion over me, but now thee only will I serve." He plucks off the yoke of sin, its pleasure, its custom, and he puts upon him that yoke of which the Master says it is easy, and he bears that burden which Jesus tells us is light. A hired servant must not work for another, he works for his master; and so a man who is called by grace lives not for any sinister object or motive, but to his Master only. A hired servant, again, does not work on his own account, he is not his own master; and "ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Henceforth, though he calls no man "Master" on earth, yet he remembers that one is his Master in heaven, to whom all his service is due. There is a compact between the hired man and his master, and there is a solemn compact of spirit between the true believer and his Lord. We have devoted ourselves to his service, we have given up all liberty of self-will, and henceforth our will is at the government of our Lord, and all our powers and passions are to be, we hope will be, through God's grace, obedient to him who has hired us into the vineyard. Now the word "hired" was used in order to bring in the idea of reward. It was used to suit Peter's view of the case; it was used in order that his legal question of "What shall we have therefore?" might be clearly brought out, and its folly shown in the light of that sovereign grace which does as it wills with his own. Yet for all that believers are hired in an evangelical sense, they do not serve God for nought, they shall not work without a reward. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." We shall have our reward for what we do for the Master, and though it be not wages in the sense of debt, yet verily I say unto you, there shall not be a single true-hearted worker for God who shall not

receive of his Master most blessed wages of grace in the day when he comes to take account of his servants.

Now to the point, *the master calls these hired servants of his at different hours of the day*; and, in the second place, *distinguishing grace shines forth in each case*, and is illustrated and made more manifest in its varieties of glorious compassion and loving-kindness by the different hours at which the chosen ones are called.

I. ALL ARE NOT CALLED BY GRACE AT THE SAME TIME. Some, according to the parable, are called *early in the morning*. Thrice happy are these! The earliest period at which a child may be called by grace it would be difficult for us positively to define, because children are not all of the same age mentally when they are of the same age physically, and even in the matter of mental development we dare not limit the Holy One of Israel as to the chosen period of operation. As far as our observation goes, grace works upon some little ones at the very dawn of moral consciousness. There are, no doubt, precocious children, whose intellect and affections are very much developed, and very deeply sanctified even so early as two or three years of age. Such children usually are intended by the Master to be taken home at once. There are interesting biographies extant, which prove that holiness may bloom and ripen in the youngest heart, and many anecdotes are treasured up in such collections as "Janeway's Token for Children," of children whom I might call infants with strict propriety, out of whose mouth God ordained praise, and did, through them, still the enemy and the avenger. Little prattlers, whose tongues it would have been supposed could only have talked of toys, have been able to speak with an apparent profundity of knowledge of spiritual, and especially of heavenly things. It is certain that some have wrought their day's work for the Master in their mother's arms; they have spoken of the Saviour in tones which have melted a mother's heart and gone to a father's conscience, and then they have been taken home. "Whom the gods love die young," said the heathen, and doubtless it is no small privilege to be soon admitted into glory. Only shown on earth, and then snatched away to heaven, too precious to be left below. Precious child, how dear wert thou to the good God who sent thee here and then took thee home! Fair rose bud! yet in the perfection of thy young beauty taken to be worn by the Saviour on his bosom, how can we mourn thy translation to the skies?

"No bitter tears for thee be shed,
Blossom of being seen and gone!
With flowers alone we strew thy bed,
O blest departed one!
Whose all of life, a rosy ray,
Blush'd into dawn and pass'd away."

"Early in the morning," would also include those who have passed the first hour of the day, but who have not yet wasted the second opening hour. I mean those hopeful lads and girls who perhaps would rather I should call them youths;—those who have reached their teens, have overleaped infancy and childhood, and are growing up in the heyday and vigour of youth. Youngsters still more at home in the playground than in the work-field, fitter, as Satan tells them, to be sporting in the market-place than busy in the vineyard; such as these, to the praise of divine love, are often hired by the householder. It is worth while to warn some of our brethren who seem to be exceedingly dubious of boyish and girlish piety,—to warn them against indulging harsh and suspicious doubts. We have remarked, and I think those who have watched our membership carefully will have remarked it too, that among all the slips and falls which have caused us sorrow, we have had but little sorrow from those who were added to us as boys or girls. There are those preaching the gospel this day with acceptance and power whom these hands baptized into Jesus Christ very early in their boyhood, and there are among us honoured servants of God who have served this Church well, who while they were yet at school were joyful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. With our earliest gettings some of us got an understanding of the things of the kingdom; our Bible was our child's primer, our spelling-book, the guide of our youth and the joy of our earliest years. We thank God that there are Timothys still among us, and those not few and far between; and young Samuels, who, being brought as infants to the Lord's house, have from that day forth worn the linen ephod and served after their fashion as priests unto God, serving him with all their hearts. Happy those who are called early in the morning! they have peculiar reasons for blessing and praising God.

"Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heavenly root;
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit."

Let us spend a minute in thinking of their happy case who are saved in boyhood. Early in the morning the dew still twinkles on the leaves, the maiden blush of dawn remains and reveals an opening beauty, which is lost to those who rise not to see the birth of day. There is a beauty about

early piety which is indescribably charming, and unutterably lovely in freshness and radiance. We remark in childhood an artless simplicity, a child-like confidence, which is seen nowhere else. There may be less of knowing but there is more of loving; there may be less of reasoning, but there is more of simply believing upon the authority of revelation; there may be less of deep-rootedness, but there is certainly more of perfume, beauty, and emerald verdure. If I must choose that part of the Christian life in which there is the most joy, next to the land Beulah, which I must set first and foremost by reason of its lying so near to Canaan, I think I would prefer that tract of Christian experience which lieth toward the sun-rising, which is sown with orient pearls of love, and cheered with the delicious music of the birds of hope.

Early in the morning, when we have just risen from slumber, work is easy; our occupation in the vineyard is a cheerful exercise rather than a toil such as those find it who bear the burden and heat of the day. The young Christian is not oppressed with the cares and troubles of the world as others are; he has nothing else to do but to serve his God. He is free from the embarrassments which surround so many of us, and prevent our doing good when we would consecrate ourselves wholly to it. The lad has nought to think of but his Lord. There are his books and his lessons, but he can be fervent of spirit in the midst of them. There are the companions of his childhood, but in guilelessness and simplicity he may be of service to them and to God through them. Give me, I say, if I would have an auspicious time to work for Jesus, give me the blessed morning hours, when my heart is bounding lightest and joy's pure sunbeams tremble on my path; when my glowing breast lacks no ardour, and my happy spirit wears no chain of care.

One would prefer early conversion because such persons have not learned to stand idle in the market-place. A fellow, you know, who has been for hours standing with his hands in his pocket, talking with drunken men and so on, is not worth much at the eleventh hour, nay even by the middle of the day it has become so natural to him to prop the walls, that he is not likely to take to work very readily. Begin early with your souls, break in the colts while they are young, and they are likely to take well to the collar. There are no workers like those who commenced work while they were yet children. What a promise of a long day there is for young believers; the sun has just risen, and he has to travel to his zenith and to descend again. There is ample room and verge enough though none to spare. If God in his providence permit it so to happen,

that youngster yonder has twelve hours' work before him—what may he not accomplish? For a grand and glorious life early piety if not essential, is certainly a very great advantage. To give those first days to Jesus will spare us many sad regrets, prevent us acquiring many evil habits, and enable us to achieve good success through the Holy Spirit's blessing. It is well to begin to fly while yet the wings are strong, for if we live long in sin the wing may be broken and then they will flap wearily through the rest of our days, even when grace shall call us. Let it be the desire of parents here to have their children converted as children! And oh! may God cast that desire into the hearts of some of you young people that are here this morning that before you reach one-and-twenty, before you are called men, you may be perfect men in Christ Jesus, that while you are yet children you may be children of God. May you as "newborn babes receive the sincere milk of the Word," and the Lord grant that you may "grow thereby." Happy, happy, happy souls, whom the Master thus by distinguishing grace brings "early in the morning!"

The householder went out again *at the third hour*. This may represent the period in which we have mounted above being children and youths and are entitled to be called men. Suppose we settle the first hour as extending over the earliest seven or eight years of age, then the second hour runs on from that to twenty-one or thereabouts; and then we have a good length of time between twenty and thirty and onwards to reckon as the third, and fourth, and fifth hours. There are some whom divine grace renews at the third hour. This is late! one-and-twenty is grievously late, when you consider how much of early joy is now impossible, how much of sinful habit has now been acquired, how many opportunities for usefulness are now gone past recall. A quarter of the day has flown away.

I have no doubt there are many here who think that to be converted at one-and-twenty is very soon; but why one-and-twenty years given to Satan? Why a fourth of man's existence devoted to evil? Besides, it may not be a fourth, it may be one half, nay, in how many cases it is the whole of life. The sun goes down ere it is yet noon, and the idler in the market-place has no hope of ever being a worker in the vineyard. Death who comes when God wills, and gives us no notice, may cut down the flower before it has fully opened. "In the morning it is like grass that groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth." It is late, it is sadly late! It is a sad thing to have lost those bright days in which the mind was least engaged, and in which it was the most susceptible of forming godly habits. It is a sad thing to have learned so much of sin as one may have learned by one-and-twenty, a sad thing to have seen so much of

iniquity, to have treasured up in one's memory so much of defilement. Twenty years with God; one might have been in such a time a good scholar in the kingdom; but twenty years in the world one begins to be like scarlet that has been lying in the dye till it is stained through and through. *It is late, but we thank God that it is not too late.* Nay, it is not too late even for the grandest of purposes. Not only is this period of life not too late for salvation, but it is not too late to do much for Jesus Christ. Some of us when we were one-and-twenty, had finished five years of Christian ministry, and had been the means of bringing many souls to the cross of Christ; but if others are led by grace to begin then, why there is a good period still remaining if God in providence spares our lives. The young man is now in all his strength and vigour, his bones are full of marrow, and his heart is full of fire. He ought to have acquired a good degree of education, and be prepared to acquire more.

Now he is just in the time when he should work. His plans of life are not settled as yet; he is not married yet, probably; as yet there are no children about him to have been injured by his ill example; he has an opportunity of rearing up a household in the fear of God. He is commencing business, he has an opportunity of so conducting that business that there may never need to be a time when he shall have to tack about and steer another course. He may, if called by God's grace at one-and-twenty, begin an honourable career, in which there need not be an angle or a curve, but straight to the harbour's mouth he may steer and mark upon the sea of life one shining furrow which shall reach in a direct line from the present moment straight to the lights of heaven, which he shall reach with his sail full and a priceless cargo on board to the praise of the glory of divine grace. It is late, it is very late in some respects, but oh! it is not too late to serve the Master well, and to win a crown of great reward, the gift of love divine.

There is abundance of work to do for us who are in this third, fourth, and fifth hour of the day. In fact, I suppose the Church must look to us for its most active work. After this period and the next, a man frequently becomes rather a recipient from the Church than a donor to it in the matter of activity. Its fresh blood, its energy, its warmth of heart, its ready action, must to a great extent come from the young men who are converted. Oh, you of one-and-twenty, I would to God that you were all born from heaven! You maidens, in your early beauty may the Master in his infinite mercy bring you in! Oh, could you know the sweetness of his love, you would not need persuading! Could you understand the joy of true religion, you would not want entreating! There is more hallowed

mirth enjoyed in secret with the Lord Jesus Christ, than in all the merriment the world can yield. One ounce of Christ's love is better than a ton of the world's flatteries. The world offers bubbles with fair hues, bright to look upon, but vanishing at a breath; but Christ gives real treasure, enduring as eternity. The world's gold is all base money; it glitters, but it is not precious. There may be less glitter about the things of God, but there is a "solid joy and lasting pleasure," which "none but Zion's children know." May the Master come this morning to your hearts, and by my simple words may he call you at the third hour of the day into the vineyard.

The Master's grace was not exhausted, and therefore *he went out at the sixth hour*. We find him going into the market at high noon. Half the day was over. Who is going to employ a man, and give him a whole day's wages when twelve o'clock has come? He will not do too much if you hire him at six, what will he do if you engage him at twelve? Half a day's work! that is a poor thing to seek or to offer. The Master, however, seeks and accepts it. He promises, "Whatsoever is right, I will give you;" and there are some found who at the sixth hour enter into the vineyard and, being saved by grace, begin their work for Jesus. This may represent the period of life in which man is supposed to be in his prime—when he is past forty and onward. *This is sadly late, very sadly late*. Sadly late in a great many respects, not only because there is so little time left, but because so very much of energy, and zeal, and force, which should have been given to God, has been wasted; and has to some extent been used to fight against God. Forty years of hardness of heart! That is a long time for divine patience. Forty years of sin! That is a long season for conscience to mourn over. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," said God. In the wilderness they hardened their hearts all that time; and he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. What a blessing for you of forty and unconverted, that he has not sworn so terrible an oath concerning you, that still his longsuffering lingers, still his patience bears with you, still does he say to you, "Go, work, my son—go work this day in my vineyard." It is sadly late, because it has become so more than natural to you to walk in the way of sin. You will have so much to contend with in future, as the result of the past. Putting the ship of the soul about is not such easy work as turning a vessel by her helm; only a divine hand can steer a soul upon the tack of grace. You will need much grace to conquer those corruptions which have had forty years to take root in. You have a tenant in your house who is in possession, and you will find that possession to be nine points of the law; it will

be a hard ejection for you to effect, so hard indeed, that only a "stronger than he" can cast him out. To your dying day the recollection of evil things which you heard during these forty years of unregeneracy will stick by you; you will hear the echoes of an old song just when you are trying to pray, and some deed which you regret and mourn over, will come to check you just when you are about to say, "Abba Father," with an unstammering tongue. It is late, it is very, very late, this sixth hour, *but it is not too late*. It is not too late for some of the richest enjoyments; you can yet dine with Jesus; he can yet manifest himself unto you, as he doth not unto the world; you can have yet much time to serve him in. It is not too late yet to be distinguished among his servants. Take John Newton's life; he was called in the middle of the day, but John Newton left his mark in God's vineyard, a mark that will never be forgotten. I suppose Paul could not have been much less than of that age when he was called by sovereign grace; nay, the most of the apostles were probably very little short of this age when mercy met with them; still they did a glorious day's work. If saved by grace in middle life, my brother, you must work harder, you must let the time past suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh, and now you must redeem the time, because the days are evil. Why, a man converted at forty should go double quick march to heaven, there should not be a moment lost now. Work the engine at high pressure, and give two strokes for every one that might be given by younger men and younger minds. Seek in the divine strength to do twice as much in the time, since you have only half the time to do a life's work in. Crowns for Christ, I know you wish to win them; then be up and doing, beloved. You are saved by grace, and by grace alone. You pant to honour Christ, because of his free love to you; cannot you endeavour to honour him as much in the remnant which remains as others do in the whole length of their life? You may by zeal, and prudence, and discretion, and perfect consecration, yet serve the Master well.

The householder *went out at the ninth hour*, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Nobody thinks of engaging day-labourers at three o'clock in the afternoon. A day's work to be done from three till six! It shows you that this gospel hiring is nothing like a legal hiring; it must be all of grace, or a man would not think of doing such a thing. Well now, three o'clock in the afternoon, that is from sixty to seventy. The prime of life has gone. *It is late, it is sadly late, very sadly late*. It is late because all the powers of the man are weak now. His memory begins to fail; he thinks his judgment better than ever it was, but probably that is only his own opinion. Most of the faculties lose their edge in old age. He has acquired ex-

perience, but still there is no fool like an old fool; and a man who has not been taught by divine grace learns very little of any value in the school of providence. Sixty thousand years would not make a man wise if grace did not teach him. Now think of it, is it not late? Here is the man: if he be converted now, what is there left of him? He is just a candle end. He may give a little light, but it is almost like a snuff burning in the socket. All those sixty years, seventy years, have been spent, where? Cover it all up.

Let us go backward as Noah's sons did, and cover it all up; and oh may almighty grace cover it too! The fact is terribly appalling—sixty, seventy years spent in the service of Satan! Oh what good the man might have done! Had he but served his God as he served the world, what good he might have done! He has made a fortune, has he! How rich he might have been in faith by this time. He has built a house! Yes, but how he might have helped to build the Church. The man has been playing at card-houses; he has been like boys by the sea-shore building castles of sand, which must all come down, and must come down very soon too, for I hear the surges of the dread tide of death, it is rolling in even now. Those teeth which have fallen out, those pains and rheumatics, and so on, all show that this is not his rest. The tabernacle is beginning to crumble about the man, and the warning is loud which reminds him that he must soon be gone, and leave his wealth and his house; and so if this be all, in the end it will turn out that he has done nothing; he has piled up shadows, heaped together thick clay, and that is all he has done; when he might, if he had believed in Jesus, have done so much for God and for the souls of men. What evil habits he has acquired! What can you ever make of this man? If he be saved, it will be so as by fire. He is called, and he shall enter heaven, but oh! how little can he do for the Master, and what strong corruptions will he have to wrestle with, and what an inward conflict even till he gets to heaven! It is late, it is very late, but oh! blessed be God! *it is not too late*. We have had within these walls persons who have long passed the prime of their days, who have come forward and said, "We will cast in our lot with you because the Lord is with you." We have heard their joyous story of how the old man has become a babe, and how he that was hoary with years has been born again into the kingdom of Christ. It is not too late. Did the devil say so? The gate is shutting; I can hear it grating on the hinges, but it is not shut! The sun is going down, but he is not lost beneath the horizon yet; and if the Master calls thee, only run thou the faster because it is so; and when thou art saved, serve him with all thy might and main, because thou hast so little

time to glorify him here on earth, and short space in which to show thy sense of deep indebtedness to his surpassing love.

The day is nearly over, *it has come to the eleventh hour*, five o'clock! The men have been looking at their watches to see whether it will not soon be six; they are longing to hear the clock strike; they hope the day's work will soon close. See; the Master goes out into the market-place among those hulking fellows who are still loitering there, and he pitches upon some and asks them, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go and work! and whatsoever is right I will give you." At the eleventh hour they come in—half-ashamed to come I will be bound,—hardly liking the others to see them; ashamed to begin work so late. Still they did steal in somewhere; and there were generous labourers who looked over the tops of the vines, and said to them, "Glad to see you, friends! glad to see you, however late." There were a few, I dare say, among the labourers, at least there are if this be the vineyard, who would even stop their work and begin to sing and praise God to think that their fellows had been brought in at the eleventh hour. Now the eleventh hour must be looked upon as any period of life which is past threescore years and ten; how late it may extend I cannot tell. There is an authentic instance of a man converted to God at the age of a hundred and four, during the last Irish revival, who walked some distance to make a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ; and I recollect a case of one converted in America by a sermon which he had heard, I think, eighty-one years previously. He was fifteen when he heard Mr. Flavell at the end of a discourse, instead of pronouncing the blessing, say, "I cannot bless you. How can I bless those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ? 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha';" and eighty-one years or more afterwards that solemn sentence came to the man's recollection when he was living in America, and God blessed it to his conversion. There have been some to whom the eleventh hour has been the very hour of death; some, I say, how many or how few is not for me to know. There is one instance we know in Scripture, it was the dying thief. There is but one; God however, in his abundant mercy can do as he wills to the praise of the glory of his grace, and at the eleventh hour he can call his chosen. It is very late, it is very very, very late, it is sorrowfully late, *it is dolefully late, but it is not too late*, and if the Master call thee, come—though a hundred years of sin should make thy feet heavy to thee, so that thy steps are painfully limping. If he call thee it is late but not too late, and therefore come. Have you ever thought of how the thief worked for his Lord? It was not a fine place for working, hang-

ing on a cross dying, just at the eleventh hour; but he did a deal of work in the few minutes. Observe what he did. First he confessed Christ—he acknowledged him to be Lord, confessed him before men. In the second place he justified Christ—“This man has done nothing amiss.” In the next place he worshipped the Lord Jesus, calling him “Lord.” He even began to preach, for he rebuked his fellow sinner; he told him that he should not revile one who was so unrighteously condemned. He offered a petition which has become a very model of prayer—“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” At any rate I wish I could say of myself what I can say of the thief, *he did all he could*; I cannot say that of myself, I am afraid I cannot say it of any of you. I do not know anything the thief could have done on the cross which he did not do. As soon as ever he was called, he seems to have worked in the vineyard to the utmost extent of his ability; and so let me say to you, if you should be called at the eleventh hour, my dear hearer, though thou be well stricken in years and aged, yet for Jesus Christ’s sake out of great love for all the great things which he hath done for thee, go thy way and praise him with all thy might.

II. My time has gone, and I wanted to have shown that DISTINGUISHING GRACE SHONE RESPLENDENTLY IN EVERY INSTANCE. Those called in the early morning have delightful reason for admiring sovereign grace, for they are spared the ills and sins of life. I must content myself, however, by repeating concerning them the lines of Ralph Erskine.

“In heavenly choirs a question rose,
That stirred up strife will never close;
What rank of all the ransomed race,
Owes highest praise to sovereign grace.

Babes thither caught from womb and breast,
Claimed right to sing above the rest;
Because they found the happy shore,
They never saw nor sought before.”

What distinguishing grace is that which called us when we were young! Herein is electing love. “When Ephraim was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Some of us in time and in eternity will have to utter a special song of thankfulness to the love which took us in our days of folly and simplicity, and conducted us into the family of God. It was not because we were better disposed children than others, or because there was naturally anything good about us; we were wilful, heady, and high-minded, proud, wayward, and disobedient as other children are, and yet mercy separated us from the rest, and we shall never cease to adore its sovereignty.

Look at the grace which calls the man at the age of twenty, when the passions are hot, when there is strong temptation to plunge into the vices and the so-called pleasures of life. To be delivered from the charms of sin, when the world's cheek is ruddy, when it wears its best attire, and to be taught to prefer the reproach of Christ to all the riches of Egypt, this is mighty grace for which God shall have our sweetest song.

To be called of the Lord at forty, in the prime of life. This is a wonderful instance of divine power, for worldliness is hard to overcome, and worldliness is the sin of middle age. With a family about you, with much business, with the world eating into you as doth a canker, it is a wonder that God should in his mercy have visited you then, and made you a regenerate soul. You are a miracle of grace, and you will have to feel it and to praise God for it in time and eternity.

Sixty again. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then ye who are accustomed to do evil may learn to do well." And yet you have learned, you have had a blessed schoolmaster who sweetly taught you, and you have learned to do well. Though your vessel had begun to rot in the waters of the Black Sea of sin, you have got a new owner, and you will run up a new flag, and you will sail round the Cape of Good Hope to the Islands of the Blessed, in the Land of the Hereafter.

But what shall I say of you that are called when you are aged? Ah you will have to love much, for you have had much forgiven. I do not know that you may be in thankfulness a whit behind those of us who are called in our early youth; we have much to bless God for, and so have you. We are at one extreme and you are at the other; we would love much because we have been spared much sinning, and you must love much because you have been delivered from much sinning. Not to go through the fire is a theme for song; but to traverse the flame and not be burned, to walk the furnace and to be delivered from its vehement fire, oh! how should you find words with which to express your gratitude! Called early or called late, called at midday or called at early noon, let us together, since we have been called by grace alone, ascribe it all to the Lord Jesus, and moved by the mighty constraints of his love, let us work with body, soul, and spirit—work for him till we can work no longer, and then praise him in the rest of glory.

I pray you, brethren, suffer no idleness to creep over you. If you have sought to extend the Redeemer's kingdom, do it more. Give more, talk more of Christ, pray more, labour more! I often receive the kind advice, "Do less." I cannot do less. Do less! Why, better rot altogether than live

the inglorious life of doing less than our utmost for God. We shall none of us, I am afraid, kill ourselves with working too hard for Jesus. It were such a blessed act of suicide that if there be a sin that is venial, it would certainly be that. I am not afraid that you are likely to perpetrate such an enormity. Work for the Master! Labour for the Master! We must spend and be spent, and wear ourselves out for him! Make no reserve for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it! And oh, how happy shall we be, if we may be privileged to finish the work, and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." May the Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

Who can be against us?

By Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale.

In view of God's dealings in providence many a true Christian will say with Jacob of old, "All these things are against me." It was true that the good man was in a very sad condition, for he considered that two of his sons were dead and a third one, even the one whom he loved greatest, having the same fate hanging over him. He seemed to have a lurking suspicion that his other sons were the cause of all the evil that came upon him in this connection, for he says, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." That the accusation which he directs towards his sons was not a hastily uttered remark but the outcome of a settled conviction seems clear from his reiteration of the accusation when he says, in relation to Benjamin going with his brethren to Egypt, "If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." That he had good grounds for this suspicion we know, but that all these things which befell him, in relation to his children, is contrary to what was really true we also know, and also contrary to what God revealed to Jacob of His purposes. However, if we misread God's providences our sin is much greater than that of Jacob, for we have a fuller revelation of God's mind than ever Jacob had in this world.

Though Jacob could not see aright, through the darkness in which God's providences were wrapped up, yet he ought to have remembered God's promise to Abraham concerning His care for Abraham's seed, and that ought to have checked the hard conclusions to which he came. Further, might he not have read in this very providence something which betokened the fulfilment of that promise? — "Know of a surety that thy

seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." However, God Himself had to read His own providences to Jacob, and He read them in such a way that not only had Jacob to cease from mourning for Joseph as dead, but had to say, in pronouncing a blessing on Joseph's offspring, "God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

From Jacob's lamentation in prospect of losing Benjamin we can see that he had, for the time being, given way to unbelief, and lost sight of God's faithfulness as a covenant-keeping God. The most of God's dear children, if not all, are time and again found in the same ditch and, often, for lesser reasons than that which put Jacob there. To guard against this we ought to keep our eye firmly fixed on the revelation which the Holy Spirit had given us of God's character. In the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle brings before us the foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification of the believer as a chain of which God is the Maker, and every link of which is so strong that no power in heaven, earth or hell can break it, and triumphantly asks the question, "What shall we then say to these things?" and answers it by putting another question, "If God be for us who can be against us?" and then proposes a series of questions which can lead to only one conclusion, and that is, a persuasion that no power can separate the child of God "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The "all these things" which the believer concludes are against him "work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Many of these things, however, which the true Christian has to encounter in this world are bitter to flesh and blood, but they are all under the over-ruling power of the Most High. Moab, on many an occasion, dealt in a hostile manner with the children of Israel, but the Lord, speaking through the Psalmist, could say, "Moab is my washpot;" signifying that He could do with it as He pleased, and it pleased Him on many an occasion to use their enemies as a means to draw His people closer to Himself, and when that work is accomplished, to destroy their enemies, and to make them like Moab of which it is written that it "shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill."

Thus we see that instead of coming to hard conclusions the duty of the Christian is to wait on the Lord at all times, and to learn from David when he says, "I had fainted, unless I believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

Extracts from Thos. Hooker

WHO CAN TELL? When Jonah cried against Nineveh saying "yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Mark here how the king resolves — Jonah 4: 19, Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger that we perish not?" Therefore the devil tells you and says "God appointed a way of salvation and you have had the means, and did not profit by them, therefore God will never show you mercy or give you grace." How can the devil tell that? Surely all the devils in Hell cannot tell it. Say to yourself — "let me walk in that course which God commands, and do that which I ought, and then I may say, and with comfort say it" — "who knows but God may break the heart of a proud, rebellious, contrary sinner, such as I am." None verily knows but God whether or no.

COURT OF CONSCIENCE. It should be with a poor sinner as with a wise man when he would make his lands sure unto him and his posterity by evidence and writings sealed. He is not content here only to have his evidence in his own keeping, but will have them enrolled in chancery on such a date, that if he should lose his deeds, he might be sure where to find them. So it should be with the distressed soul; it should not only be willing to have all objections to the contrary of it answered, but it should further get them recorded in the court of conscience, as in chancery; that when sense and feeling are lost, yet it may readily go to the high court of conscience, and there find the day and the year when God's love was made sure unto it.

SATAN deals with the soul as the enemies in war. When Joshua defeated the men of Ai, he got them out of the city; then they lay in ambush, went and took it and burnt it with fire. So the devil doth. Our castle or city is the promises, the word and ordinances of God. Now if the devil can but get you out of this castle, he has you where he would. If you will listen after every word of carnal reason and temptation that comes you are gone. If he can get you from the sure hold of the promise, he will entangle you in the snare of unbelief, and so prevail against you.

JUDGE THY SOUL BY THE WORD and look upon that sacred piece in the glass of itself, and let it bear witness for thee and what the Word of

God doth evidence to thee, do thou maintain, and hear nothing against it. This is the way to receive comfort and go on cheerfully in thy Christian course.

THE POOR WOMAN in the gospel had spent all her goods upon physicians. If she had but a little means left (for any thing that I know) she would never have gone to Christ. But when all failed then she was forced to seek to Christ, who was ready and willing to do that for her.

SWIMMING. As in the art of swimming, he that will swim, must pluck his feet from the bottom, and commit himself to the stream to bear him up; so in this, our purpose to Heaven, we must draw our hearts from the vain things below, and though we have honour and preferments, we must put no confidence in them, but loose our affections from them, and learn, by our believing to commit ourselves wholly to the power of the promise, to receive comfort.

JACOB and JOSEPH. Jacob would not believe that Joseph was alive; or if he was alive, he had but little means and was poor, Gen. 45: 26-28. But when he saw the chariots that Joseph had sent him, then he believed and said "It is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive." The wagons sent from Joseph to Jacob brought Jacob to Joseph. So every believing soul is poor and feeble, and not able to go to God, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, look into the chariots of Israel first and that will convey you to the promise. As it is with the miller, first he prepares the mill fitly, and orders all, and when the stones are fit and laid to go, yet it will not, till the sluice be pulled up, and the water runs which drives the mill. So the soul is humbled and lies before the Lord and His truth and is content to yield to His conditions. Now the soul of itself and in itself cannot go, till He let down the sluice of the promise. Let that come to your heart — it will bring it to the Lord.

ASSURANCE. Another Christian labours much for the assurance of God's love, and cannot obtain it. He seeks to God in the use of the promises, and yet he cannot find it settled. Well God will give comfort and consolation in His own order. Commonly the Lord never debars the soul of comfort, but He sees the heart not fit for it. The heart would be proud and careless, and thy sail would overturn the boat. Therefore when God has abased your heart, and made you content to want what He denies, then He will give assurance, but it must be in His own order.

FEED ME WITH FOOD CONVENIENT FOR ME — Proverbs 30: v.8. There was faith; he wholly refers himself to God. When a man comes to the tailor to have a garment made, he does not cut out the garment himself, but leaves it to the judgment of the workman. So must we refer

ourselves to God. God promises nothing but as He sees fit for one's good. As it is with a potter to make so many vessels of honour, so if the Lord will make of you a vessel of honour go away contented, it is enough that thou art elected to eternal happiness.

THIS DAY IS SALVATION COME TO THIS HOUSE, Luke 19: v.9; not to the walls of the house but to those in it. They did not come to salvation but salvation came to them. The Lord sent salvation to salute the house of little Zacchaeus.

(Taken from Hooker's Doubting Christian)

Time for Secret Prayer

The times wherein we live call aloud for secret prayer. Hell seems to be broken loose, and men turned into incarnate devils; land-destroying and soul-damning wickedness walk up and down the streets with a whore's forehead, without the least check or control, Jer. 6: 15, "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." They have sinned away shame, instead of being ashamed of sin. Custom in sin had quite banished all sense of sin and all shame for sin, so that they would not suffer nature to draw her veil of blushing before their great abominations. The same words are repeated in chapter 8: 12. How applicable these scriptures are to the present time I will leave the prudent reader to judge.

But what does the prophet do now that they were as bold in sin and as shameless as so many harlots? That you may see in Jer. 13: 17: "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears." Now they were grown up to that height of sin and wickedness, that they were above all shame and blushing; now they were grown so proud, so hardened, so obstinate, so rebellious, so mad upon mischief, that no mercies could melt them or allure them, nor no threatenings nor judgments could in any way terrify or stop them. The prophet goes into a corner, he retires himself into the most secret places, and there he weeps bitterly, there he weeps as if he were resolved to drown himself in his own tears. When the springs of sorrow rise high, a Christian turns his back upon company, and retires himself into places of greatest privacy, that so he may more freely and more fully vent his sorrow and grief before the Lord. Ah, land, land, what pride, luxury, lasciviousnes, licentiousness, wantonness, drunkenness, cruelties, injustice, oppressions, fornications, adulteries, falsehoods, hypocrisy, bribery, atheism, horrid blasphemies,

and hellish impieties, are now to be found rampant in the midst of you! How are the Lord's Sabbaths profaned, pure ordinances despised, Scripture rejected, the Spirit resisted and derided, the righteous reviled, wickedness countenanced, and Christ many thousands times in a day by these cursed practices afresh crucified! Land, land, were our forefathers alive, how sadly would they blush to see such a horrid degenerate posterity as is to be found in the midst of you! How is our forefathers' hospitality converted into riot and luxury, their frugality into pride and prodigality, their simplicity into subtlety, their sincerity into hypocrisy, their chastity into chambering and wantonness, their charity into cruelty, their sobriety into drunkenness, their plain-dealing into dissembling, their works of compassion into works of oppression, and their love to the people of God into utter enmity against the people of God! And what is the voice of all these crying abominations, but every Christian to his closet, and there weep, with weeping Jeremiah, bitterly, for all these great abominations whereby God is dishonoured openly.

Oh weep in secret for their sins who openly glory in their sins, which should be their greatest shame. Who knows but that the whole land may fare the better for the sakes of a few that are mourners in secret? But however it goes with the nation, such as mourn in secret for the abominations of the times, may be confident that when sweeping judgements shall come upon the land, the Lord will hide them in the secret chamber of His providence; He will set a secret mark of deliverance upon their foreheads that mourn for the crying sins of the present day, as He did upon theirs in Ezek. 9: 4-6.

Rev. Thomas Brooks.

"They haif said: Quhat say they? Let them say."

The mighty pen of the late Rev. Donald Beaton wrote these words as the heading of his leading article in the November 1946 issue of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. On reading over what he wrote and taking into account the views expressed in the October 1983 issue of the *Monthly Record*, we deem this an appropriate time to anew draw attention to it. This is what Mr Beaton wrote:

'These Scotch words in their archaic dress form the motto of the Keiths (the Earl Marischals of Scotland). It would be hard to find words so forcible to express the speaker's utter disregard of and detachment

from the babel of irresponsible tongues by which he was surrounded. The Keiths, of course, like other Scotsmen, did not always act up to their motto. They were as keen as others of their countrymen to draw the sword and give a good account of themselves when occasion demanded it.

There are circumstances, however, in which it might be necessary in the interest of truth not to "lat them say." At the beginning of the Free Presbyterian Church a host of sharp shooters met us and aimed their arrows at the struggling cause. Some of these bowmen were mighty men in their own estimation and had never learned to use their words in moderation. Here is how one of them expressed himself: "The Free Presbyterian movement is the most mischievous movement of modern times and calculated only to do most serious harm to the cause of truth and godliness in our beloved Highlands." This slinging, reckless charge came from a quondam friend, the Rev. Murdo Macaskill, who at another time said: "If this Declaratory Act becomes part of our constitution, what remained of our former principles is wholly obliterated and any one who pleases may pronounce the funeral oration of the once noble Free Church of Scotland . . . She is no longer the Free Church of our early love and loyal adhesion but a false claimant to honours and dignities which she has wilfully and shamefully forfeited." But enough of this talk. Let us now turn to another phase of attack.

At this time there arose an order of prophets who evidently were carried away with the idea that they were called upon to prophecy and the burden of their prophecy was the extinction of the F.P. Church. They felt fortified in this foolish idea by the fact of her weakness and lack of funds. They only saw a leaderless Church as far as influential men of the world were concerned. So without ever considering that God does take the base things of the world to confound the mighty they went on with their prophesying. There was no hesitating note in their utterances — the Free Presbyterian Church was doomed and they were the men who saw it and must announce it. It is now over 60 years since this order of prophets arose. Their prophetic utterances came to nothing and their bodies have long ago turned to dust. Such a fate one would have thought would be a warning to others who had a desire to don the prophetic mantle. But no! Only recently a paragraph appeared in the official organ of the Free Church which we are reproducing for the benefit of our readers who may not have seen it — what the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church thinks of the Free Presbyterian Church.

The heading of this extract and the italics are ours. The critic begins on

a fairly high level preaching the finer virtues of our faith but he soon descends to a lower level and we have in the criticism an illustration of the gulf that may exist between preaching and practice. Here is the paragraph as it appeared in the *Free Church Monthly*:—

"The Free Presbyterian Church. — Hitherto we have scrupulously avoided any reference in these columns to the more recent internal dissension that bids fair to rend the Free Presbyterian Church into fragments. This was not because we were totally ignorant of the facts — our information, strange as it may seem, was both first-hand and detailed — but because we regarded it in the light of the Divine chastisement of a body that had been entrusted, as we believe they were in 1893, with a precious deposit of truth but that had, under misguided leadership, used their position to foster towards their fellow-Christians in other denominations a self-righteous and malignant spirit that is now accomplishing its perfect work within the denomination itself. An article, however, from one of their ministers, that receives pride of place in the May issue of the Free Presbyterian Magazine has driven us to the conclusion that it is no chastisement that is being meted out to that body, but fearful judgment from the hand of the Most High. Chastisement is a merciful dispensation that leads to penitence, humility and restoration, but, if the article in question be any true guide (and if it is a misrepresentation it ought never to have seen the light), the turmoil of dissension and strife through which they are passing has but confirmed them in spiritual pride and self-righteousness. We do not wish to quote from a document that from beginning to end is un-Christian in our understanding of the spirit of Christ in His Church, but its gratuitous attempts to besmirch a sister Church that owes its origin to the same determination to conserve Divine truth and witness, savours so much of the judicial blindness and hardness of heart that are the precursors of destruction that we agree with the many who regard the Free Presbyterian body as passing out of existence in the Nemesis of fearful retribution. We regard this prospect with unfeigned regret, for spurious as have been its official pretensions and misguided its leadership, It had and still has, within its communion men and women who feared the Lord and trembled at His Word. Far from this being a matter for the Free Church to gloat over, it provides her with a beacon of warning and confirms before her eyes the truth of Scripture that they who sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." — August, 1946.

Fortunately for himself, unlike some mushroom prophets (to use a Canadian description of the order) that spring up during convulsions in

the world, our critic does not mention a date when the threatened catastrophe is to happen. Our readers, however, need not be unduly disturbed in their minds as though something terrible is to happen. The Church which was broken into fragments and rent from top to bottom, is showing by her activities at home and abroad that it would be a wise thing for prophets of doom to look to other quarters and other events.

Might we conclude by saying that Job's "miserable comforters" who without any hesitation set about interpreting God's providential dealings in His afflictive dispensations towards His people met with the crushing rebuke of heaven, and ought to make us very certain of our ground before we set out classifying these under "chastisements" and "judgments." We are loathe to believe that the *Free Church Monthly* criticism represents the mind of the best people in the Free Church but as far as we know there has been no protest against it. So to fall back on our critic's own deliverance — if it expresses the mind of the Free Church then our leaders were clear-sighted men when they warned Free Presbyterians not to unite with the Free Church and if it only represents the opinion of the critic, "it ought never to have seen the light," for it certainly does not savour of that charity which thinketh no evil.'

That was in 1946. What do they say in 1983? If the sentiments expressed in the October 1983 issue of the *Monthly Record* are anything to go by the attitude of the Free Church in general towards us remains what it was. We are sure that the views expressed do not reflect the thinking of the best people in the Free Church, and would be unworthy of a reply, were it not that the *Monthly Record* is the official organ of the Free Church and what it says is no doubt taken seriously in some quarters. "We are told," says the editor, "that some of the younger brethren of the Free Presbyterian Church are more open and tolerant and less inclined to regard their own denomination as the only true Church in Scotland. These brethren should have more courage. They should rid themselves of the fear of their people and challenge the oligarchy which is leading their church further and further away from the theology of the Reformation. The plain truth is that neither John Calvin, Charles Hodge, Thomas Chalmers nor William Cunningham could be admitted to membership in today's Free Presbyterian Church. It is not yet too late to change direction but if pride makes that unthinkable — if our brethren cling to the outrageously popish notion of their denominational infallibility — the result will be an arrogant sectarianism totally out of keeping with the Protestant tradition." We believe the "plain truth" to be that if these bright shining Christian ministers of the past were alive today they would

be just as unwilling to join the present Free Church as we are and for reasons that would be quite as obvious to them as they are to every true-hearted Free Presbyterian. Thirty years ago, if the Rev Kenneth MacRae's assessment of the situation in the Free Church at that time was correct, John Calvin would not surely have been very comfortable in the Free Church listening to what was to be heard from some pupils where according to Mr MacRae "a robust Calvinism had given place to a colourless presentation of the doctrines of grace which would neither satisfy a Calvinist nor offend an Arminian." We have no reason to think that he would find the atmosphere any more congenial in 1984. Would John Calvin join himself to a church that is happy to have as one of its professors one who freely expresses in the pages of its own denominational magazine the pleasure he derived from watching on television the frivolities associated with that annual, wordly, gaudy Vanity Fair — the National Mod — and who sees no inconsistency in appearing on television himself singing vain songs. Is this not a church lacking in discernment and discipline? The Professor expresses concern over the Free Presbyterian Church's attitude to others, making the oft-repeated charge that we regard ourselves as denominationally infallible. In doing so he seems to have forgotten his own maxim that one should take care as to how one treats an authentic church! If there are "younger brethren" in the Free Presbyterian Church who may be disposed to listen to him then, we think, they should consider well before taking his advice. Does he wish them to break their ordination vows? If so, is the giving of any such advice or encouragement, with all its implications, worthy of one professing to be a Christian minister? What does Professor MacLeod desire to see? The Free Presbyterian Church rent by internal dissension leading to its eventual disappearance from the Scottish ecclesiastical scene? That might well be a relief to the Professor and his ilk but the Lord, we trust, will prevent it.

We have no intention of letting the momentous issues of 1892-1893 be forgotten whatever reproach may be cast at us and from whatever quarter. We humbly believe that the Reverend Donald MacFarlane by his orderly separation from the Declaratory Act Free Church "conserved to us inviolate the constitution of the Reformed Church of Scotland." We are still of the view that the Lord committed His testimony in Scotland to the few who stood then and we believe that it is to remain there until He come in His millennial glory to revive His cause in Scotland and elsewhere. In the meantime, as to our relations to other Churches we shall continue

to be guided as others before us were: "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." Mr Beaton, we feel, would be of the same mind.

J. McL.

Book Review

"Jehovah Shepherding His Sheep," Sermons on the Twenty-third Psalm by Rev. J. R. Beeke. Price, \$13-50, discount price \$7-50. Netherlands Reformed Book and Publishing Committee, 1020, N. Main Avenue, Sioux Centre, Iowa 51250.

This volume of sermons is an elaborate work after the thorough, methodical manner favoured by the Dutch divines. Each verse of the psalm is dissected and made the subject of 3 to 5 sermons in which every word of the text is minutely examined and the spiritual experience of the believer drawn out. The sermons are steeped in the writings of the Reformers and Puritans and the Scottish Divines are given a prominent place such as Hugh Binning, Halyburton, John Brown of Haddington and even McChesney is noticed, etc., along with Augustine, Calvin, Luther, and Whitefield, Flavel, Bunyan, etc. of whose writings extensive use is made. The preacher complains of the "doctrinal shallowness" of the present day. "There is little true religion left in our modern world," he says. There is no shallowness here, however. On the words of verse 1, 'I shall not want,' room is found for a somewhat full discussion of the theological problem of the relation of the Predestination of God to the fall of man. The distinction is moral as the Divine Decrees are eternal. Infralapsarianism, 'below the fall' insists that the decree of Divine Predestination must morally follow the divine decree of creation and the fall. Supralapsarianism, 'above the fall,' teaches that the Divine Predestination must morally precede the decree of creation and the fall. The former view is regarded as a 'loving act of grace in which God decreed to save certain individuals whom He already viewed as created and fallen,' while the latter is 'a pure, sovereign act of good pleasure in which God decreed to elect certain individuals and reprobate certain individuals.' The Dutch view adopted by Beeke is the latter, while Infralapsarianism has always been the Augustinian, Reformed and our Westminster Confessional view. These sermons were prepared for public reading in congregations without a stated pastor, a practice which seems to be quite prevalent in the Dutch Churches of Holland and America. Each sermon is scaled down to suit the needs of each congregation. Illustrations, discussions, extensions, etc. are enclosed within brackets, to

be omitted, if need be, without impairing the flow of the sermon. It was said of the Erskines, that after they had delivered several sermons on any text of scripture, they left the subject threadbare for anyone following them. This is true also of the present volume which is thoroughly evangelical, richly experimental, and eminently scriptural.

If any criticism may be allowed, it is that among the divisions and numerous sub headings of the sermons, the true meaning of the text is apt to become obscure. It would also, we think, have been an improvement if the appendix at the end of the book, consisting of sermons, preached on special occasions, such as the dedication of Church organs and buildings, the ordination of ministers, and farewell addresses had been omitted. This applies also to the 9 line drawings that accompany the text. With these reservations, it may be said that this large, handsome volume of 451 pages, selling with a discount rate for churches and church people of \$7-50, is offered at a remarkably low price. Those who can find time to study this weighty volume will be amply rewarded for their trouble and patience.

A.F.M

Notes and Comments

Church Killings in Northern Ireland

A new phase of IRA atrocities in Northern Ireland opened in November with the murder of three people and the injury of seven others, when gunmen opened fire during a service in a Gospel Hall in Keady, County Armagh, near the Southern Irish border. The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr Prior, condemned this cold-blooded murder of people at worship. "The shootings," he said, "show the true nature of terrorism and the true nature therefore not only of those who perpetrate it but also of all those who advocate and support it." Other parties in Parliament joined in his condemnation of these killings.

Our sympathy goes out to those who have lost loved ones through this barbarous act and to those who have been injured, as well as to the many who have been bereaved or who have suffered injury throughout the Northern Ireland conflict. What is perfectly clear is that such a prolonged campaign of violence could not be mounted or sustained over such a long period of time without support from many quarters, not least from the Roman Catholic Church, however much it tries by its words to

dissociate itself from these actions. May the day speedily come when Ireland will cast off the shackles with which it is bound to the Roman Catholic system. In that day Ireland will enjoy the peace for which many of her people now long.

Lord Lane's Call to the Nation

Lord Lane, the Lord Chief Justice, in giving a lecture at Cambridge called on people to fight against crime and the immoral society. It is heartening to hear one of the Law Lords speaking in this way as the situation in the land is so rapidly deteriorating. It is a call, however, that is easier made than responded to. The measure of order that once prevailed was the fruit of Christian values inculcated from childhood. The abandonment of the Bible and of a fixed moral code has left the young in the land exposed to every moral danger. The real solution is a return to the Word of God, for a humanistic ethic will not do to guard the young from the snares set for their feet. Let the Bible be restored in the schools and homes of our land and order will once more return to the streets of our towns and cities.

Corporal Punishment in Schools

In November the Highland Regional Council's Education Committee decided by 13 votes to 12 to recommend the abandonment of corporal punishment in Highland schools at the end of the present session. The proposal supporting this was moved by Councillor Rev. Jack Macarthur, Broadford, a Church of Scotland minister and a former member of the Western Isles Council. His argument in putting forward this proposal was that the Council could not swim against the tide of the European Court's decision and that the Council would be out of step with every other authority in Scotland. The question of being out of step with the Bible appeared of secondary importance to the majority, while the approval of a European Court was reckoned a wiser choice than the approval of God. The testimony of Scripture is unambiguous in this matter. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." And again, "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." And further, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Proverbs 22: v.15; 23: v.13, 14; 29: v.15).

Church Notes

Death of Rev. Donald Campbell, Edinburgh

It is with deep sorrow that we record the passing away of Rev. Donald Campbell, Edinburgh, on Sabbath, 20th November, 1983, the Sabbath of his own Communion. Mr Campbell became unwell in church and had to be removed to the Royal Infirmary where he passed away that afternoon. His passing is a great loss to the Church as a whole as well as to his congregation and his family circle. His interest in the Cause of Christ was not confined to our own land but, as Convener of the Dominions and Overseas Committee for many years he concerned himself with the interests of Christ's Cause overseas. His labours for the Lord in this world have now ended and he has, we believe, entered into the joy of His Lord. To his widow, his sons and daughter, his sisters and other relatives we extend our sincere sympathy in their great loss, as well as to the Edinburgh congregation in the removal of a loving Pastor who ever sought their highest good.

Acknowledgment from Holland

It being impossible to answer everyone personally for their expressions of sympathy during the illness and after the death of our very beloved husband, father and grandfather — SAMUEL NIEUWENHUIS — we now thank all the Mission-friends from Scotland, England and Zimbabwe for their deep interest and the many letters we received. Also, many thanks that one minister represented you at the funeral. It gave us much comfort to witness the large place that our very beloved husband, father, and grandfather had in your hearts.

H. Nieuwenhuis ten Bolsher,
Children and Grandchildren,
IJweg 999, 2133 ME, Hoofddorp, Holland.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 24 January at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 27th January at 2.30 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 7th February at 11 a.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 6th March at 4 p.m.

John Tallach Secondary School, Ingwenya

A vacancy exists for a Science Teacher with Physics qualification and with full registration to undertake a 2-year term of duty at the above

school in our mission in Zimbabwe. Vacancies are likely to occur for teachers of other subjects at short notice. Enquiries to be made to Rev. A. Murray (Clerk to the Foreign Missions Committee). F.P. Manse, Applecross, Strathcarron, Ross-shire, IV54 8LT (Tel: 052-04-207).

Mbuma Mission Hospital

The Foreign Mission Committee expect that the hospital which is presently operating on a clinical basis will resume full-time working as soon as that will prove practical. A medical Superintendent is required and the Committee wish to hear from a suitably qualified doctor to fill this post. Enquiries to Rev. A. Murray (Clerk to the Committee), F.P. Manse, Applecross. (Tel: 052-04-207).

Nursing Sister for Mbuma Hospital

A Nursing Sister is now required for Mbuma Mission Hospital. Applicants should be fully trained and be qualified midwives. Enquiries to Rev. A. Murray, F.P. Manse, Applecross.

Ministers' Illnesses

We are glad to record that Rev. Angus Mackay, Tarbert who has been ill for some months is now slowly recovering at home. Rev. Alex Murray, Applecross, and Rev. D.J. MacDonald, Perth, who both underwent operations in recent times, are now much improved and it is to be hoped that, in the Lord's good providence, they will soon be able to resume their duties. In the light of these visitations we are reminded that the labourers are few. May we pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest.

Australian and New Zealand Deputy

Rev. A.E.W. MacDonald, Gairloch, who has been engaged as Church Deputy in Australia and New Zealand during the last two or three months, was due to return to this country on the 20th December. We pray that his labours in those countries may be followed by a rich blessing. Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow, who is in New Zealand at the present time, visited Sydney and Grafton before going on to New Zealand. His services in those parts will, we are sure, be greatly appreciated by the friends there, and, we trust be richly blessed.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Ontario, \$100.00 (twice) for relief of hunger in Zimbabwe.
Dominions and Overseas Fund: Fowler-Gibson family, in memory of their mother, Christian Fowler-Gibson, \$100.00; Spanish Evangelical Mission, Holland, £1,200 for the Mission in Italy, to be used for provision of literature in that country.
Home of Rest: "May God bless," Tarskavaig postmark, £35.

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

Dumbarton: Two Inverness friends, per Thos. MacRae, for Manse Repairs — £30.

Dundee: Inverness friend, per E. M. S. — £20; two London friends, per A. Mc. — £10; M. Staffis, per Rev. D. J. M. — £20.

Edinburgh: Mrs P. Dunbar, Inverness, for Cong. Fund — £10; Envelope in plate (Anon.), Sust. Fund — £10.

Gairloch: Dornoch friend, per Rev. A. M., for Cong. Fund — £10; A. Matheson, Edinburgh, from Melvaig M House — £5; Mrs Irvine, per Rev. A. M., for Sust. Fund — £30.

Glasgow: Anon., per Rev. D. M., for Cong. Fund — £30; Mrs Mack. — £4, Ulster friend — £5, Dutch friend — £10, Mrs MacKinnon — £4, all for Cong. Fund; A. C. — £3, Matt. 6: v.3 — £10, Anon. — £3, Anon. — £10, J. P. and P. W. D. — £13, I. C. — £10, Matt. 6: v.3 — £10, Anon. — £10, Anon. — £5, all for Bus Fund; Anon., for T. B. S. — £20; Anon., for Sust. Fund — £10; Anon., for Dominions and Overseas Fund — £5; A. M. Home Mission — £20; H. M. Home Mission — £10.

Greenock: R. H. C., N. I. — £15; Mrs G. A. C., Liverpool — £20, both for Cong. Fund; Wellwisher, Tobermory, Mull — £10, for Comm. Coll.; Mrs M., Glasgow — £15, for Sust. Fund, last two per Rev. L. Macleod.

Inverness: Ulster friend, Malachi 3: v.16 — £10.

Kames: Friends, Gourock, for Church Funds — £25.

Lochcarron: Anon., for Door Collections — £5; Pensioner's Mite, for B. T. S. — £1; C. F., B. T. S. — £1.50; C.F., B. T. S. — £1.50.

North Harris: Friend, Harris House, per R. MacC., for Door Collection — £4; Envelope in plate (Tarbet), where most needed — £50; Envelope in plate (Stockinish), where most needed — £40; Friend, Tarbet, for Pulpit Supply — £10. Correction for Nov. '83 — should read — Friend Leacklee, for Car Fund, per Rev. A. MaK — £10.

Oban: Friend — £4; Two N. Ireland friends — £25; Miss Hamilton — £4; Mr and Mrs MacIver, Edinburgh — £5, all for Cong. Fund and per Rev. A. M.; Envelope in plate — £20.

Raasay: In memory of beloved brother, A. M. — £5, and a friend at comm. — £3, both per J. M. M., where most needed; Rachel and Sheila, Inverarish, Comm. Expenses — £10; Friend, Foreign Mission — £20.

South Harris: Friend, Stornoway, Sust. Fund, per Rev. D. M. — £5; Harris friend, Inverness, Sust. Fund, per D. Mack. — £20; Friend, S. Harris, Cong. Fund, per R. M. — £2; Friend, Leachlee, Sust. Fund, per Rev. D. M. — £10; Friend, Leachlee, Car Fund, per Rev. D. M. — £5; Friend of the cause, Seilebost, Renovation Fund, per I. Mack. — £20; Friend, Liverburgh, Car Fund, per I. N. — £20; Mr and Mrs MacAskill, Kyles, Cong. Fund, per I. N. — £5.

Stornoway: Uig Deacon's Court, per Rev. J. M., for Car Expenses — £60.

Strath, Skye: Janet MacPherson, 2 Heaste, Comm. Expense — £15, Sust. Fund — £2.50; Dominion and Overseas — £5, Strath Report — £5, all per Rev. H. I. M.; Anon., Sust. Fund, in plate — £10; Anon., Dominion and Overseas Fund, in plate — £1.

Uig: A. Macleod, Dun Eisdan, in memory of Christina and Anna Bella Morrison, Kneep — Church Repairs, per Miss, K. Morrison — £200.