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My Father's Business

When the Saviour was twelve years of age He went up with His parents to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. As they returned home the child Jesus tarried behind at Jerusalem. When they discovered that He was missing they returned again to Jerusalem seeking Him and found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. His mother chided Him with the words: "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." His answer to them was: "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business."

Well might the parents have sought such a child sorrowing in the belief that He was lost. What clear evidence His mother, Mary, had received that this was no ordinary child but one "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." The angel had told her: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." That was told to her before He was born and during the years since His birth, His parents saw Him grow and wax strong in spirit and that the grace of God was upon Him. Though they, therefore, appeared to have good grounds for mourning their loss as they sought Him sorrowing, He had an answer for them that ought to have quieted all their fears — "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

The Saviour spoke of His Father which was in heaven, for He had no earthly father. The assertion of His divine Sonship Christ repeatedly

made while He was in this world. He was the Son of the Father in truth and in love. To the disciples he could say after His resurrection: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father: to My God and your God." It was as the 'Sent of the Father' that He came into this world when He came to seek and to save that which is lost. He was chosen by the Father for the great work of His people's redemption — "Mine elect," the Father could say of Him, "in whom my soul delighteth." He was set apart from eternity to be the Saviour and Deliverer of lost sinners — "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Sion." He was to seek and to save that which was lost.

It was with the will of God who sent Him that the Saviour was concerned while in this world. To His disciples He said on one occasion: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." As the Servant of the Father He ever sought His glory. In the garden of Gethsemane when His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, it was the will of the Father with which He was concerned. This was paramount. His desire was that God the Father in all things should be glorified. Though the will of the Father led Him onwards to Calvary and to all the suffering that He was to endure there, there was no repining because of this. As He said when He came into the world, so He remained steadfast to even to the end —

"To do Thy will, I take delight
O Thou My God that art
Yea, that most holy law of Thine,
I have within my heart."

Such devotion in service as was found in the great Sin-bearer we may never expect to see again. This was the crowing act of all acts of service — a joined-ness to the will of God that was not to be severed in the midst of the greatest sorrows and pain that the world has ever known or shall know. The sufferings unto death of the Son of man, who was as to His Divine Person, the Son of God, constitute the greatest test of consecration to the will of God that ever shall be known. How glorious this would be as an example itself, yet when we take into account the redemptive purpose in this consecrated service, how unspeakably glorious it must ever be in the eyes of all those who have been embraced in that redemptive purpose. What was to Christ the Father's business, was to them the salvation of their souls. How glorious was that 'business' of which the Father was the Originator, Christ the Executor, and the Holy Spirit the Applier. Therefore to God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost will the people of God give glory throughout eternal ages.

Sermon

by Rev. Donald MacFarlane.

"And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord."—Hos. 2: v.19, 20.

Here is a promise given to the children of Israel that notwithstanding that they had forsaken the Lord who had brought them into a covenant relation with Himself, He will bring them into a covenant relation which cannot be broken—I will betroth thee forever.

In speaking from the text we shall notice,

I. The betrothal.

II. The manner in which it is to be made.

I. *The betrothal:* Although to betroth means to enter into a contract with a view to marriage, here it signifies to marry. So it is rendered in the Gaelic translation. It is in this sense we are to use it. We shall notice:

(1) The parties to be betrothed. Among the human race parties marry who are of equal rank in society, but it is not so in this case. There is an infinite difference in rank between the husband and the spouse. The former is infinite in His being and attributes, while the latter is a creature whose creator is God. "Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is His Name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall He be called" (Is. 54: v.5). What a glorious husband the Church has: there is none like Him, none so good, so powerful, and so wealthy. "The earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains" — for supplying all the temporal needs of His Church, and he has unsearchable riches of grace for supplying her spiritual needs. The party to be betrothed is not only a creature but a sinful creature. This is true of all the human race by nature. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." They were shining in the beauty of holiness as they came forth from the hand of the Creator, but are now by sin uglier than any creature on the earth. As it was to the Jews the promise was primarily made, it is a wonder that God would betroth them to Himself, for they were guilty of spiritual adultery. The Lord was their first husband, but they forsook Him, broke the marriage covenant and married another husband—a false god. "If a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted: but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord" (Jer. iii: v.1). This is a wonder indeed, but the God of all grace deals thus with sinners. What a wonder

that the Lord God would look upon such sinful creatures and bring them into union with Himself. The Church, in her natural condition, was not only sinful but miserable, liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. If the husband was rich, she was poor. She lost all the riches given her in her first creation. Nothing belonged to her in her fallen condition but sin and death, yet this is the very person to whom God says, "I will betroth thee." Like the Jews, we as a nation were brought into a covenant relation with God, but we broke the covenant, forsook our good Husband who did great things for us, and married a cruel husband who cannot do us any good but much evil. We joined ourselves to idols, yet He calls us back by the word of the Gospel to betroth us to Himself, if we return to Him with faith and repentance. We ought to wonder at this, but all His works are works of wonder.

The consent of the woman is necessary to marriage. What way or ways did God take to gain the consent of His intended spouse? (1) He hedged up her way with thorns and built a strong and high wall which made it impossible for her to take any further steps after her lovers. When the Lord begins to bring sinners to Himself He makes this world a wilderness to them, so that they find by sad experience that it will not yield to them the happiness they expected to find in it. He convinces them by His Spirit of their sin and misery. He uses His Word and Providence in dealing with them, and reminds them that it was He Himself and not their idols that gave them the temporal mercies they enjoyed. "For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hands. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines, and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me; and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord" (vv. 8-13). This way of dealing with her had the effect of making her see the vanity of idols, and the bitterness of the sin of idolatry, and of commending God to her as the giver of all good. Like the prodigal, she, finding herself in the miserable posi-

tion into which she had brought herself by forsaking God, and remembering that even the servants in the heavenly Father's house were better off than she—she by the teaching of God's Spirit resolved to return to her first Husband whom she had foolishly deserted. "I will go and return to my first Husband; for then was it better with me than now" (v.7). Her consent was gained at last, she was "made willing in the day of God's power."

Who performs the work of betrothal? Ministers join parties in marriage, but it is God only that does this work; for He says, "I will betroth thee." If you are united to God in spiritual marriage it is He that did it.

II. *The manner of the betrothal:* There are seven things in the manner.

(1) It is forever. In marriage the covenant relation lasts till the death of either party or both. It is of the law of marriage that the Apostle Paul speaks when he says, "The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (Rom. 7: v.1), but, in the case of the spiritual marriage, neither party ever dies. This is true not only of God, but it is also true of the Church. "He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life" (John 6: v.47). If you come to-day to receive Him, and be brought into covenant relation with Him, that relation shall be everlasting. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8: v.35, 37).

(2) In righteousness. It is a righteous or just thing of God to save sinners and bring them nigh to Himself. "He is a just God and a Saviour." He is as just in saving as He is in punishing. He does it in righteousness also inasmuch as the bride is not only accepted on the ground of Christ's righteousness, but because it is with the white robe of Christ's righteousness she is clothed.

(3) In judgment. The betrothal takes place not rashly, without previous consideration; everything in it was well considered and arranged in the court of God's will, and in the covenant of grace, which is well ordered in all things, and sure.

(4) In lovingkindness. In the Gaelic translation the word lovingkindness is rendered into two words, *caoimhneas* agus *caomhgràdh*—that is, kindness and tender love. Kindness is a disposition to be good to another person or persons, and is the effect of love. The love of God is the great source of salvation and the cause of all the kindness that He shows to His people. David loved Jonathan so much that he showed much kindness to his son Mephibosheth on Jonathan's account. In every right marriage there is love, mutual love in both parties. Here there is love on the part of

God, and there is love on the part of the Church. It is the love of God that is meant here which is the cause of her love to Him.

(5) And in mercies. Mercy has respect to misery. The Church before her betrothal was in misery, but the Lord had mercy on her. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3: v.4, 5). Mercy in God flows forth to sinners through the atonement of Christ.

(6) In faithfulness. In keeping the marriage covenant fidelity or faithfulness is required. Faithfulness here signifies (1) truth. The betrothal was to be accomplished not in a mere outward profession but in reality and truth. (2) Faithfulness in fulfilling all that He promised to do to His Church. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thes. 5: v.24).

(7) Knowledge of the Lord is necessary in order to the betrothal. "Thou shalt know the Lord." No sensible woman marries a man of whom she is ignorant as to what kind of a man he is. Although the Church was in the state of nature ignorant of God, she is taught by the Spirit and Word to know Him; her mind is enlightened in his knowledge as He revealed Himself in the Old and New Testaments. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: v.6). In her time of ignorance, she could make no distinction between the true God and Baal, but now she knows the Lord, and, not only so, but she is able to realise her relation to Him, and to call Him "Ishi," or "My Husband." Although she may not be able at all times in the full assurance of faith to say this, yet there are times in which she has no difficulty in saying it, and when she cannot say it in words her conduct speaks for her. After her betrothal she renounces for ever Baal, who was formerly her lord and husband. His names are taken out of her mouth by her new Husband. "For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name" (v.17). Those who keep up the memory of false gods or goddesses prove by their conduct that the living and true God is not their husband. There are many in our day who celebrate the memory of Easter, a heathen idol that was worshipped by those who were ignorant of the true God. It is lamentable that in this 20th century this false goddess is still worshipped in the land of the Gospel, and is worshipped even in Dingwall at a time which they call Easter, but which they cannot find in the Word of God. The term Easter is indeed found in Acts 12: v.4, but it

is a mis-translation of the original. The word in the original is *Pascha*, which means Passover and not Easter.

Concluding remarks: The promise of betrothal includes Gentiles as well as Jews. "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy" (v.23). The Apostle Peter applies this to the Gentiles, "Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2: v.10). The Apostle Peter speaks of this as a mystery "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men," that the Gentiles should be made fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel (Eph. 3: v.5, 6). How thankful we ought to be that the Gospel came to us who are of the Gentiles. And if it has been blessed to us in bringing us into the covenant relation with God of which we have spoken, we have still more reason to thank the Lord and praise Him for His goodness to us. In our state of nature we were not His people, and, in that state, we had no right to call Him our God and our Husband, but if we obtained mercy we are His people and He is our God. Before parties marry they have thoughts about it, and this is true of the spiritual marriage. God had thoughts about it from all eternity, and the sinner who is betrothed had thoughts about it previous to the day of his espousals. He began to think about it when he was awakened to a sense of his need of Christ revealed in the Gospel. He was by nature married to the law as an husband; but when he broke the law it began to curse him, and he found out that he could not by anything he might do or suffer come to peaceable terms with that husband, but having been informed by the Gospel that Christ the Son of God died that sinners might be saved, his thoughts were directed towards Him, in the hope that He might bring him into saving union with Himself.

Parties intending to marry not only think about the matter, but they speak of it. God spoke of it and still speaks of it in the Scriptures, and the sinner spoke of it also, especially in prayer, saying, "God be merciful to me, the sinner," or, "Oh, that I might be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Many were thinking and speaking of marrying that never married, but that is not the case with those that are saved. They in God's good time believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and were saved. Their new Husband broke down the tie between them and their old husband, the law, so that they are no longer under it as a covenant of works.

Every time the Gospel is preached sinners are invited to come to God that He might betroth them to Himself. We now invite you to come as

you are, sinful, miserable, and lost. What response are you prepared to give to His gracious call? If you refuse to comply with the invitation, and continue to refuse to the end of your life, your punishment shall be greater than that of the heathen who never heard the Gospel. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people, and thy father's house (Ps. 45: v.10).

Brief Notes of a Sermon

by Rev. D. A. MacFarlane

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Rom. 7: v.4.

Paul was instantaneously regenerated when he met Christ on the road to Damascus (of course regeneration is instantaneous anyway). I notice that some think he was only awakened and that he was not converted until afterwards. That is regrettable because we find Paul saying then, "What wilt thou have me to do?" That means that his will had surrendered to Christ. Of course he was not perfectly holy, for we have all this struggle recorded here in Chapter 7.

Seeing we read here that they have become dead to the law then we gather that at some time they were not dead, but alive to the law, Paul himself was alive to the law before he met with Christ. He was then like all unregenerate sinners, amenable to the law. There is a sense of amenable that means biddable but here it means that they were accountable to the law. This is not a something that is popular in our day. Men do not like to hear about the law and that men cannot become dead to the law but by the body of Christ. I may say in passing that there is a great need that the Lord would raise up men who know the gospel and would preach the gospel in our land and that sinners in the visible church would come to kiss the Son.

The body of Christ is just the sacrifice of Christ. The Father told Him to assume the holy body unto union with His Divine Person so that he could come under the law. He suffered the double penalty of the law to which His people were exposed. By the double penalty of the law I mean, first, the loss of divine favour and secondly the punishment of sense. He suffered, we may reverently say, until the Father sealed it on His spirit that it was all over. Then He said "It is finished."

There are hundreds, I should probably say thousands of promises of

Christ in the Old Testament. Well, will you tell me, by the way, how many grains of manna fell in a day and how many grains of manna were in the golden pot? And how many drops of water were there in the water that gushed out of the smitten rock? Surely every one was a promise of Christ. Christ was the manna and Christ was the rock. Of course we need faith to receive Him — faith of the energising of God. Faith is God-given. It is God-given indebtedness of soul to Christ. I cannot give that to you but pray that you will get the Holy Spirit and pray that thousands in our day will get the Holy Spirit. It is just an awful thing to think of multitudes in Britain, Europe, Africa and Australia going to eternity and they are not dead to the law nor to the double penalty of the law. Men may be divinity professors and have a great deal of religiosity but if they are not dead to the law, one look from the eye of God will be the beginning of eternal woe for them in the place where there is no hope. We need faith to go unto and into Christ. We need to go out of ourselves. Then goodbye to the curse of the law forever.

We need to be married to Him. If we are married to Him we are married to this Epistle and if we are married to this Epistle we are married to Him. And if we get the tip of the tongue of our souls dipped in the ocean of the merit of Christ, there will be a well of living water springing up in our souls to Everlasting Life that will sweep away all the slime and filth in our hearts.

If you have regeneration, you will have two things — First, light and, secondly, delight, in the virtue of which you will have a relish for the Divine way of Salvation. Ask that God will deal with you — that is, that God would deal with you savingly Himself.

This God is our God

by Octavius Winslow D.D.

"This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." —
Ps. 68: v14.

Strong language this! But not too strong for faith to employ. In some believing minds, of doubting, though not of *doubtful* faith, of fearful, yet not of *despairing* hearts, it may sound like a vain-glorious boast, and appear a claim almost too presumptuous for a sinful mortal to prefer. Nevertheless, it is truth, and, more or less profound, is the experience of every child of God, and may be the language without any exaggeration of the weakest believer that ever touched the fringe of the Saviour's robe. We too much forget that what has been the spiritual attainment of the

saints in a past dispensation, may be equally the experience of the saints in every succeeding one. If, amid the twilight shadows of the old economy, believers could embody their faith in language as strong as this, why should believers, dwelling amid the full blaze of the present dispensation, upon which the Son of Righteousness has risen in noon-tide splendour, speak in language more timid and doubtful? Saving Faith and its Divine Object have been the same in every dispensation and age of the Church. The faith of Adam, the first and greatest sinner of his race, which looked to the Promised Seed, ere yet the gates of Eden were closed upon him, is essentially and objectively "like precious faith," with which the penitent thief washed himself in the crimson fountain flowing at his side. Thus we must be careful of supposing that there is any eminence in the divine life, to which other saints have attained, unattainable by us. That there is any sacred height in grace, holiness, and assurance which they have reached to which we may not ascend — or, that there is any knowledge of Christ, any conformity to His likeness, any intimate relations with Him experienced by others, which may not be our experience too. Thus, strong and bold as is the language of David, there lives not a child of God who may not adopt it as his own, and exclaim; "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." Let us consider some of the sacred ideas suggested by the remarkable expression — "THIS God." It is evident that the inspired speaker refers to some especial attributes of God upon which he had been expatiating, which designate Him as the covenant and redeeming God of His people. "*This* God — *this very* God — *this great and glorious* God, is our God." What, then, are some of these distinctive attributes which expecially identify Jehovah as the "OUR God" of His people?

And in the first place, 'This God' of *revelation* is 'our God.' This God, who has made such a divine and wonderful revelation of Himself — His Being and mind, His will and heart — in His Word, is 'our God.' In other words, the God of the Bible is ours. All that that inspired and precious volume declares concerning Him, all the thoughts of His mind it reveals, all the love of His nature it makes known, all the teaching of His Spirit it conveys, all the precious promises, all the gracious invitations, and the glorious hopes, and solemn warnings and faithful admonitions it contains, are ours, because the God of the Bible is ours. Accept the Bible as *your own*. Read it as the letters of your Heavenly Father addressed personally to you. Let no sophistry shake your confidence in its divine inspiration. Beware of that false reasoning that teaches that God's Word is *in* the Bible, but that the Bible is not God's Word. The giant evil

of the day is *infidelity* unblushingly assailing the truth, and impeaching the integrity of the Sacred Scriptures. Be vigilant and prayerful here. Lose your Bible, and you lose your all. If, then, the God of revelation is yours, the revelation of God is equally yours. All that this blessed volume contains belongs of a right to you. The Divine Redeemer, the glorious gospel, the free salvation, the precious promises, the gracious invitations, the rich consolations, the blissful hopes, the holy admonitions, all, *all* are ours, because the God who wrote the Bible, who gave the Bible, who has preserved the Bible, and who dwells in the Bible, is 'OUR God.' Lay the hand of your faith upon this Divine Charter of blessings, and exclaim, "It is mine, all, all is *mine*, because the God who inspired it is my God. In giving me Himself he gave me all that was His — and this is His most precious gift next to His beloved Son, whom it reveals. Let me believe it firmly, deal with it reverently, read it devoutly, and walk in its divine precepts holily, and do all in my power to give to all who may not possess, as I do, this heavenly chart, this divine compass, this unerring light in the soul's solemn travel to eternity."

"Holy Bible, book divine,
Precious treasure! thou art mine!
Mine to tell me whence I came;
Mine to teach me what I am;
"Mine to chide me when I rove;
Mine to share a Saviour's love;
Mine art thou to guide my feet;
Mine to judge, condemn, acquit.
"Mine to comfort in distress,
If the Holy Spirit bless;
Mine to show by living faith
Man can triumph over death;
"Mine to tell of joys to come,
And the rebel sinner's doom:
Oh, thou precious book divine,
Precious treasure! thou art mine!"

This *Incarnate* God is 'our God.' The great truth of the Bible is — "God manifest in the flesh" — the Incarnation of the Son of God. And the belief of this truth, an essential doctrine of salvation, is equally essential to our being saved. No soul can possibly have eternal life who disbelieves, and, disbelieving, rejects this great cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ

is come in the flesh is not of God. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4: v.2, 3, 15). From these words we infer that, apart from faith in the Divinity of Christ, and a believing and personal reliance upon His Atonement, no man living can be saved. But how assuring and comforting is the truth that this Incarnate God is 'our' God! This God who left the heavens and came down, not in the nature of angels but of men, who was "made flesh," who was "made in the likeness of man," and as Man was encompassed with our sinless infirmities, hungered and thirsted, wearied and sorrowed as we, lived a life of toil and poverty, was sustained by charity, was assailed by persecution, moved in comparative obscurity and solitude, and then died a felon's death — this wondrous Being, this God in our veritable nature, this Incarnate God, this JESUS is our God. Claim your relation to, and your possession of, this God-man, my reader. He is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. He is "very man of very man," as He is "very God of very God." You have not a human element that did not enter into His humanity. Nothing that was human — for *sin* is a Satanic and not a human element, an accident and not an original concomitant of our creation — was foreign to Him. It is, therefore, your privilege to claim Him as your Elder Brother, "in all things made like unto His brethren," and in all your afflictions of mind, body, and estate, to repair to Him as a "brother born for adversity." Oh, what a distinguished blessing from among our precious and endless catalogue of blessings this, the blessing of knowing that Jesus is ours! That all the fulness of the Godhead essentially dwelling in Him, and all the fulness of the manhood mediatorially His, belongs to us! That every perfection of His being, and every element of His nature, and every pulse of His life, and every fibre of His heart — His every thought and affection and feeling — is *ours*! "Behold the Lamb of God!" "Behold the man!" for this God, this very God-Man, this very Man-God, is ours! Christ loves you to recognise your personal interest in Him. He is honoured by your claim of free grace to all that He personally and officially is, He is glorified by your continuous coming to the "unsearchable riches" of His grace, wisdom, and love, and from their inexhaustible fulness making large and unlimited draughts. "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Receive, then, this "Great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," which, in other words, is the great mystery of love, and prefer your personal claim to its untold wealth — exclaiming, "This incarnate God, this God who stooped to my nature, who girded Himself with my sinless weaknesses and infirmities, my sickness and sor-

rows, is my God; all the sinlessness of His nature, all the sympathy of His manhood, all the tenderness of His love, all the filial oneness of His relation as the Elder Brother, all is *mine!*”

This *Redeeming* God is our God. The Redemption of man is the achievement of God. Not so evident is creation a divine work — the sun, the moon, and the stars which He has made evidencing ‘His eternal power and Godhead’ — as is the work of man’s salvation. Upon this, His last and greatest work, He has concentrated the boundless resources of Deity. Here His glory meets in its focal power and splendour. God spake the universe out of nothing, and formed man from the dust of the earth, but in the Redemption of man, He became incarnate in the person of His beloved Son, exhausting heaven of its richest treasure, and conferring that treasure upon man in the person of Jesus the Saviour, ‘His unspeakable gift.’ Behold your divine possession!

This *Redeeming* God is our God. This God who hath redeemed us at a cost so dear and precious to Himself, as the gift, the sufferings, and sacrifice of His only-begotten and beloved Son, who charged all our sins to Him, laid all our curse upon Him, exacting from Him, as our Surety and Substitute, the utmost penalty of our transgressions and hell-deserving — this God of redemption, this redeeming God is our God. If, then — and this is the logical deduction of faith — if the God of Redemption is our God, it follows that the Redemption of God is ours. This is our warrant to believe in Christ, and to trust in God, and to commit our souls to Jesus, and to accept unhesitatingly, unreservedly, His complete and free salvation; this God, who provided so suitable and so great a redemption, is our God: therefore, we are justified in casting ourselves upon the infinite merit, the atoning work, the sacrificial death of Jesus, yea, upon Jesus, our personal Saviour Himself, and believe and be saved. Trembling, fearful saint, oh, possess this your possession! If the God who redeemed you is yours, then avail yourself of all the precious blessings flowing from that great redemption — a present salvation, a full forgiveness of all sin, completeness in Christ, peace with God passing all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. With your personal unworthiness, with your countless sins, with your deep poverty, you have nothing to do. The only object that is now to engage your thoughts, and fix your eye, and inspire your hopes, is JESUS. If you were under a great pecuniary liability, and an opulent friend were to assume your responsibility, and cancel it to the utmost fraction, you would justly reason — “What need I more be troubled about this matter? Why yield to fear and despondency? I am released from responsibili-

ty, my obligation is cancelled, my debt is paid, and I am legally discharged from all liability, arrest, and judgment. I will emerge from the shadows of my imprisonment into the bright sunshine of heaven, and will walk at liberty, bearing with me my legal protection and my full discharge, none daring to make me afraid." Apply this simple reasoning to the salvation of your soul, and see to what a blessed conclusion and happy peace it will conduct you. Christ bound Himself in the covenant of grace to be our Surety. He became responsible to the moral government of God His Father for all its claims upon His people. He said, in terms virtually in accordance with that engagement, "Upon Me let their sins meet; with Me let their curse rest; upon Me let their punishment and condemnation fall. All that my Church owes I will pay; all for which My Bride is responsible I will discharge; all that My saints have most righteously incurred I will freely and fully endure. Let these go their way." Oh, wondrous love! Oh, matchless grace! Oh, self-sacrificing mercy! Wonder, O heavens! be astonished, O earth! With such an all sufficient Saviour, with such a full, finished, and free discharge from the guilt of sin, the condemnation of the law, and the arrest of justice, will you any longer pursue your heavenly journey — your soul bowed down to the ground, like a bulrush, — your harp of song silent upon the willow, your path bedewed with tears, and the desert vocal with nought but your sighs, groans, and complaints? Rise! He calleth thee. Jesus bids thee come and walk in the light and joy of His salvation. Uplift your head, take down your harp, retune and sweep its strings to the high praises of Immanuel, for your great debt is paid, and "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." With the Church of the Old Testament let the Church of the New sing, but with a louder and sweeter strain, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

Extracts from Thomas Brooks' Works

REPENTANCE. As the flood drowned Noah's friends and servants, so must the flood of repenting tears drown our sweetest and most profitable sins. Repentance is a grace and must have its daily operation as well as other graces. True repentance is a continued spring, where the waters of godly sorrow are always flowing. My sins are ever before me. Ps. 51: v.3. Repentance is a continued act of turning, a repentance never to be repented of. A penitent has always something within him to turn

from. Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of death Rom. 7: v.24.

BAD COMPANY. Men who love their names and credits in the world, will shun the society of vain persons; how much more then should men who love Christ and love their precious souls shun such society? Look as shelves and sands do endanger the seaman, and as weeds the corn, and bad humours the blood, so does the society of evil men endanger good men. Men that keep ill company are, like those who walk in the sun, tanned insensibly.

JACOB. Laban followed Jacob with one troop. Esau met him with another, both with hostile intentions; but Jacob's ways pleasing the Lord, God by His mighty power so worked that Laban left him with a kiss and Esau met him with a kiss. He had an oath from the one, and tears from the other, and peace with both. If men make light of keeping up their peace with God, it is just for God to leave them to a spirit of pride, envy, passion, contention, division and confusion.

AFFLICTIONS. It is reported of Tiberius the emperor, that passing by a place where he saw a cross lying in the ground upon a marble stone, and causing the stone to be dug up he found a lot of treasure under the cross. So, many a precious saint found much spiritual and heavenly treasure under the crosses of affliction. Manasseh's chain was more profitable to him than his crown. Luther could not understand some scriptures till he was in affliction. God's house of correction is His school of instruction. All the stones that came about Stephen's ears, did but knock him closer to Christ, the corner-stone. The waves did but lift Noah's ark nearer to Heaven. Afflictions do lift up the soul, to more rich clear, and full enjoyments of God.

THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND. If afflictions are so sanctified as to draw out the soul to love the Lord more, to fear Him more, and to wait on, and walk with the Lord more, then they are in love. They are the wounds of a Friend indeed. It is said of the lioness that she leaves her young whelps till they almost kill themselves with roaring and yelling, and at the last gasp relieves them, and by this means they become more courageous. So, if our afflictions do increase our courage, strengthen our patience, raise our faith, enflame our love, enliven our hopes, they are "the wounds of a Friend."

THE PEN. Is an artificial tongue; it speaks as well to the absent friends as to those present. It speaks to them afar off as well as to those

near; it speaks to thousands at once not only the present age but also to succeeding ages. The pen is a kind of image of Eternity, it will make a man live when he is dead Heb. 11: v.4. Though "the prophets do not live for ever" yet their labours may. Zech. 1: v.6. A man's writings may preach when he cannot, when he may not, and when by reason of bodily distempers he dares not. Yea and that which is more, when he is not.

THE MEMORY. Men do not easily forget their own names nor their father's house, their wives, their families, nor to eat their daily bread. Yet how easily do they forget that word of grace, that should be dearer to them than all. Most men's memories especially in the great concernments of their souls are like a sieve or a riddle where the good corn and fine flour goes through, but the light chaff and course bran remain behind, or like a strainer where the sweet liquour is strained out, but the dregs left behind; or like a grating that lets the pure water run away, but if there be any straws, sticks, mud or filth, that it holds as it were with iron hands. Memories are very treacherous especially in good things. Few men's memories are a holy ark, a heavenly storehouse or magazine for their souls.

ACTION. If one's light and knowledge be not turned into practice, the more knowing one is, the more miserable will that man be in the day of recompense. Light and knowledge will be more tormenting than all the devils in Hell. When Demosthenes was asked what was the first part of an orator, the second and the third, he answered Action. If any should ask what is the first, the second, the third part of a Christian, the answer is Action. He that has a good book in his hand, but not a lesson of it in his heart or life is like the ass that carries burdens and feeds on thistles. In Divine account a man knows no more than he does. Profession without practice will but make one twice told a child of darkness. He who practices what he reads and understands, God will help him to understand, what he understands not.

IGNORANCE. Suppose a geometrician were drawing lines and figures, and an ignorant fellow seeing him should laugh, would the artist leave off his employment because of his derision? Surely not, for he knows the laughter is the fruit of ignorance therefore he holds on though the silly fellow continues to laugh. Ignorant persons deride holiness and laugh at it, yet be not ashamed of holiness but hold on. They throw dirt in the face of holiness. Be wise to wipe that off, and pursue holiness.

Selections from Samuel Rutherford

The great Master Gardener, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in a wonderful providence, with His own hand, planted me here, where by His grace, in this part of His vineyard, I grow; and here I will abide till the great Master of the vineyard think fit to transplant me.

If your Lord call you to suffering, be not dismayed; there shall be a new allowance of the King for you when ye come to it. One of the softest pillows Christ has, is laid under His witnesses' head, though often they must set down their bare feet among thorns.

God hath called you to Christ's side, and the wind is now in Christ's face in this land; and seeing ye are with Him, ye cannot expect the lee-side or the sunny side of the brae.

He delighteth to take up fallen bairns and to mend broken brows: binding up of wounds is His office.

Wants are my best riches, for I have these supplied by Christ.

I hope to over-hope and over-believe my troubles.

I think the sense of our wants, when withal we have a restlessness and a sort of spiritual impatience under them, and can make a din, because we want Him whom our soul loveth, is that which maketh an open door to Christ: and when we think we are going backward, because we feel deadness, we are going forward; for the more sense the more life, and no sense argueth no life.

There is no sweeter fellowship with Christ than to bring our wounds and sores to Him.

There is as much in our Lord's pantry as will satisfy all His bairns, and as much wine in His cellar as will quench all their thirst. Hunger on; for there is meat in hunger for Christ: go never from Him, but fash (trouble) Him (who yet is pleased with the importunity of hungry souls) with a dishful of hungry desires, till He fill you; and if He delay yet come not ye away, albeit ye should fall a-swoon at His feet.

I find it most true, that the greatest temptation out of hell, is to live without temptations; if my waters should stand, they would rot. Faith is the better of the free air, and of the sharp winter storm in its face. Grace withereth without adversity. The devil is but God's master fencer, to teach us to handle our weapons.

Forsaking All

Extract from a sermon by the late Rev. Donald MacFarlane, Dingwall, on Mark 10: vs.28-30.

It is always the duty of those who would follow Christ to forsake sin, but it is sometimes the duty of those who would follow Him to forsake those things that are lawful for them to have. It is lawful enough for us to have a house to dwell in, and friends to associate with, such as brethren, sisters, mothers, wives, children, and lands; but when these come in competition with following Christ, we are bound to forsake them. In the history of the Church, there were times when the Lord's people did this, while others did not. At the time of the Disruption in 1843, the evangelical ministers, to the number of over 400, left their manses and churches for Christ and the Gospel . . . In 1893 the same test was put on the Free Church that came out at the Disruption, and of all the ministers in the Free Church, it was only two who stood the test. There was a godly man in Strathspey, named William Grant, who predicted that there would be another Disruption in the Free Church. After speaking to the Question at Moy on the Friday of a communion, he asked leave to speak again, which was readily agreed to. He said that since he sat down it was revealed to him that this would be the last communion he would be at in the world, and that there was something on his mind, that he wished to tell them before he died, and that was that there would be another Disruption in the Free Church, and that of all the ministers in the Church only two would follow Christ and the Gospel, and that if he were alive he would be with them. When we made a stand in defence of the truth it was told to a man who had heard William Grant's prediction, that the disruption which he predicted took place. The man said that if there were more than two ministers it could not be the disruption predicted by William Grant. He was told that there were only two ministers, and then he said he believed it was what William Grant spoke of. It was lawful enough for the two ministers to have churches and manses, but they left these for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. The ministers and the people who followed them parted not only with churches and manses, but also with friends and near relations with whom they were formerly associated. Families were divided, some following the truth, and others following error. This was foretold by our Saviour when He said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her

mother-in-law . . . He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” We were blamed for causing divisions in families — it was Christ’s work. He kept some to His truth and permitted others to forsake the truth. There was good reason for the disruption that took place in 1893. This was acknowledged by some who failed to stand in defence of the truth when the trial came. When errors were coming to a height in the Free Church, Dr Aird of Creich said that the cause of the Disruption in 1843 was small as compared with the cause we have now to separate for from the so-called Free Church. It was only one doctrine that was denied in 1843, but now all the fundamental doctrines of the Bible were either ignored or denied; but when the trial came, Dr Aird remained in the Church which he so strongly condemned.

The Hebrew Church — the Mother Church of Christendom

There is a day coming in which there shall be a national conversion of the Jews or Israelites. The now blinded and rejected Jews shall at length be converted into the faith of Christ, and join themselves to the Christian Church. There are many promises of this in the Old Testament, but I shall confirm it from Romans, chap. 11, where the apostle purposely insists upon it.

1. Though that people have dreadfully stumbled, the more dreadful that Christ was the stumbling stone to them, yet they have not fallen so as never to rise again, Rom. 11: v.11. “Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy.” Now as their stumbling by unbelief did eventually cause the Gentile world to rise to their feet, after they had lain long immersed in ignorance of God, and wickedness; so God will make use of the grace bestowed on the Gentile world, to awaken the Jews to the consideration of their true interest, by way of holy emulation, that they shall think with themselves as the prodigal, Luke 15: v.17.

2. The covenant made with their fathers, particularly with Abraham, Gen. 17, that he would be the God of his seed after him, secures the conversion of that people. It was with that covenant, in respect of them, as with some rivers of which it is observed that they run a good way above ground, and then are swallowed up in the earth, and so run many miles

under ground, but at length break out again, and run above ground till they come to the sea. So that covenant runs visibly till the days of the apostles, but now its visible efficacy is interrupted, but it will break forth again in their conversion, never to be rejected more. So the apostle tells us, they are thereby still the holy nation, verse 16, the nation particularly dedicated to God, and he will not always want what is consecrated to himself. The national election is still their privilege, for verse 28, as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sake. And by virtue of the covenant made with their fathers, God has a love to that nation: and God's will will certainly terminate in good deeds at length: and that because the gift and calling of that nation to the adoption and covenant are irreversible, verse 29. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

3. The apostle expressly asserts it, verse 25, 26. In these he shews that the blindness of the Jews is only in part, and to last only to a certain time, when there shall be a national conversion, and so all Israel shall be saved. This is not meant of the spiritual Israel, for their conversion could be no mystery as this is. But as the conversion of the Gentiles was a mystery to the Jews, and to Gentiles themselves under the Old Testament, Eph. 3: v.3-6. So is that of the Jews, to the Gentiles and Jews themselves, under the New Testament. And as many Jews then would not believe the one, so many Christians now believe not the other.

Use. Believe it and help it on by your prayers. Ply the throne of grace earnestly for it. Join cordially in the public prayers for it, and remember it in your family and secret prayers. Be ashamed to say what is it to us?

Motive 1. They were concerned for us when we were in their case, and they in ours, and therefore it is but just that we repay them thus, Song 8: v.8, 9. O remember the case seriously. What think you of Pharaoh's butler that remembered not Joseph, who was so kind to him in the prison. Brethren, we of the Gentile world, were shut up in the prison of unbelief, then they walked at liberty, but minded us. Now they are in that prison and we are let out, and shall we forget them. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

2. Have you any love to our Lord Jesus Christ, to the advancing of his kingdom and glory in the world? Then pray, yea, pray earnestly for this. Are you not taught to pray, thy kingdom come. O what an accession to the Mediator's glory will the conversion of the Jews be. Would you see the crown set on Christ's head in the world more solemnly and gloriously than ever it has yet been, then let us join with the great multitude, Rev.

19: v.6. Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. And if we wish to see a great marriage day for Christ in the world, then verse 7, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." O brethren, spread out your narrow spirits be public spirited and show it here. True, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, to His glory, But O! what a farther rich revenue of glory would accrue to him, if they whose countrymen he was, and who crucified him as a malefactor, and justify their deed to this day, were brought to repentance and to own him to be so with us.

3. Have you any pity to a nation of perishing souls? then pray for their conversion. Common compassion should engage you to this, for such a case as theirs is, for the present, hopeless for eternity. "He that believeth not shall be damned." But there is more to challenge our concern for them than for any other nation in the world.

1. God himself hath shown a peculiar concern for them, not only of old, when he took them for his peculiar people, but since, in that he hath made a particular promise of the conversion of that nation, when that of other nations has been wrapped up in a general promise.

2. All the means of grace, and acceptance through Jesus Christ, that we have now, we had originally from them. They were our masters in the knowledge of God, and first put the book even the book of God into our hands, Isa. 2: v.3. Luke 24: v.47. It was their Moses, their prophets, their apostles (all of them Jews) that wrote this book, by which eternal life is brought to us. Nay it is their countryman Jesus, who is the ground of all our hope, who we believe is the Son of God. "For of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." It was the light that came out from among them, that enlightened our dark part of the world. And now that their teachers are blinded, will we not put up a petition for them, Lord that they may receiver their sight.

3. The church and all the privileges thereof, which we enjoy this day were originally theirs. "For to them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." We are well this day, and all the churches, in comparison of our fellow Gentiles, yet abiding without. And how so, but because we have got into the tents of the Jews, where the Lord shews his glory. "God shall, said Noah, enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." But alas! the original possessors are out, they have left them in a fit of madness; but there is room enough for them and us both, and shall not we pray, that they may come to themselves and return. It is their olive into which we are

engrafted, they are the natural branches, Rom. 11: v.17-21.

4. Have you any love to, or concern for the church, for the work of reformation, the reformation of our country, the reformation of the world? Any longing desire for the revival of that work now at a stand; for a flourishing state of the church, that is now under a decay? Then pray for the conversion of the Jews.

Are you longing for a revival to the churches, now lying like dry bones, would you fain have the Spirit, of life enter into them? Then pray for the Jews. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead." That will be a lively time, a time of great outpouring of the Spirit, that will carry reformation to a greater height than yet has been.

Are you longing for the increase of the church, then pray. Alas! our mother that has born seven, languisheth and waxeth feeble. Dry breasts and a miscarrying womb is much her plague this day. But then she shall renew her strength and bring forth many. "For if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Not only shall she be increased with the coming in of the Jews, but with more of the Gentiles. For their conversion shall be more the riches of the world, than their fall was; yet to that is owing all the gospel riches this day among the Gentiles. "Then shall the light of the moon be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven fold as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

(Extract from a Sermon on Zechariah 12: v.12 by the Rev. Thomas Boston)

In a review of a lecture on "The History of the Jews" by the Rev. J. R. Anderson, of Kirkfield Parish Church, Glasgow in 1838, the reviewer stated: Our author winds up with an appeal to his audience to extend to the house of Israel our compassionate regard, and to pray and labour for their conversion and future restoration, when Jerusalem shall no longer be "trodden down of the Gentiles". God hath not "cast away His people". It seems reasonable to believe that after the ingathering of the dispersed of Israel, the Jewish converts may be the foremost missionaries of the world, and that the wealth of Jewish bankers may be employed for the extension of the gospel to the ends of the earth. The lecture, the reviewer stated, deserved a wide circulation, and is calculated to deepen the interest of devout readers in the Hebrew Church as the Mother Church of Christendom.

The reviewer mentions that he had the privilege of repeatedly meeting and hearing the Rev. J. R. Anderson fifty two years ago. "He said severe things at times; but he was a Barnabas as well as a Boanerges. The doctrines of grace were the rejoicing of his own heart, and he preached a full and free Gospel to sinners of mankind with rare fidelity, unction, persuasiveness and power. What he had heard and seen and handled of the Word of life in secret study and devotion, he declared to eager solemnised, and deeply impressed listeners".

(F.P. Mag. Vol. 13 pp. 40 and 362).

W.M.

Psalm-singing in the public worship of God

Some of our readers may have noticed a letter from Rev. W. J. Seaton of the Reformed Baptist Church, Inverness in the June/July issue of that Church's small magazine entitled, "The Wicket Gate" which, amongst other things, was critical of those who exclusively use the metrical Psalms as the praise manual when worshipping God.

The trend today in most churches is to substitute God's praise manual for the more popular and appealing uninspired hymns. Many hymns are very attractive and are the product of Christian people expressing their thoughts in poetic form, but the question everyone must ask is, should that which is not inspired be on a higher plane, or preferred, to the inspired Word of God?

When assessing the pros and cons of any subject it is preferable to hear the two sides. So, from time-to-time I will quote from what Mr Seaton writes. He begins thus:

"The great bastion of the exclusive psalmody folk — the Free Church of Scotland the Free Presbyterians, etc. — is, of course, the 'Regulative Principle.' The Regulative Principle is that which is set out in the Westminster Confession, and other such documents, and it roughly states that nothing is to form any part of the Church's worship that God has not directly commanded or prescribed in His Word. It is a good principle, and none should think otherwise. But it is the Bible that must determine the application of the principle for the Church's life and worship, and it must do it *consistently*. In that area it would appear that our Presbyterian friends go rather astray. If the worship of the Church of Christ finds expression in anything it is in the two 'ordinances' that Christ has left for His

Church: the Lord's Supper and Christian baptism. We have never yet come across any direct command of scripture that would remotely correspond to the 'Communion seasons' of these Presbyterian bodies; and, much more telling, of course, is the total and absolute lack of any command of the Word of God to baptize children when the Church is met together in worship."

Although my comments are primarily on the subject of "Psalm-singing" in the worship of God, a brief observation on "communion seasons" and "baptism" is necessary. We all know, or should know, that the Word of God does not specify in minute detail everything relative to practice and worship. It is only by comparing Scripture with Scripture that we get an enlightened view of what is meant, provided, of course, we go to God's Word with an open mind.

One of the subsequent fruits of the Reformation was a greater consciousness and realisation of the solemnity of remembering the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, from which developed the biblical practice of humbly confessing one's sins, of self-examination and of preparation for the Lord's Supper. When that event was commemorated at Kirk of Shotts on Sabbath, the twentieth of June, 1630, the preached gospel and the dispensation of the sacrament were accompanied with the Holy Spirit's power to such an extent that the many people gathered there would not part on Monday without meeting to thank and praise God. This was a fitting testimony and echoes the words of the Psalmist: "Give praise and thanks unto the Lord for bountiful is he." What a day that was too! More than 500 souls saved by God through the preached Word! Is it any wonder that such a day was perpetuated? The wonder is, that in a day of spiritual declension God has still left with us seasons of communion; a by-product of an invaluable heritage which is only prized by a very small remnant.

The other matter, "Baptism," follows the trend of most anabaptists who have an uncanny knack for compartmentalising certain portions of Scripture in order to justify their practice. In that respect Mr Seaton is no exception. For instance, the common biblical phrase linked to their baptism philosophy is, "Repent, and be baptised." Full stop! Only part of the Truth, which correctly quoted is: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ ... *For the promise is unto you and to your children . . .*" (Acts 2: vs.38-39). Similarly, the wonderful conversion of Lydia whose household (possibly children), along with herself, were baptised when *she* believed — "If ye have judged *me* to be faithful to the Lord" — is not salutary reasoning to a Baptist, but what we are

concerned with is the whole of God's Word which is ably supported by that masterpiece, the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Now to the main issue of praising God in His worship. Either we accept what the Bible and our subordinate standards state on the subject or we renounce their authority. We cannot say in one breath that what the Westminster Confession states "is a good principle" and in the next infer that it doesn't agree with God's Word. Such an attitude reflects dishonour on the noble band of divines who compiled our Confession of Faith.

In defence of that noble "bastion" of psalm-singing folk our first witness will be the Word of God which is both consistent and unambiguous. Turn to Colossians 3: v.16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." And again in Ephesians 5: v.19 we have corroborative evidence: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Our next witness will be The Westminster Confession of Faith which speaks authoritatively on the subject, "Religious Worship." Part of the first paragraph in chapter 21 is most enlightening: "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture." That is a very solid basis which is as timely today as it was more than 300 years ago. Then in section 5 of the same chapter are we authorised to use uninspired hymns in the worship of God? Let us hear what it states: "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching ... with understanding, faith, reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart ..."

To those who accept the Bible as the only rule and guidance for worship that evidence coupled with the Confession of Faith should be sufficient. But there are many more witnesses prepared to substantiate that the inspired Psalms is the only manual of praise authorised in the worship of God.

Athanasius, the champion of Christ's deity in the fourth century said, "I believe that a man can find nothing more glorious than these Psalms; for they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, and the emotions of his soul. To praise and glorify God he can select a Psalm suited to every occasion, and thus will find they were written for him."

What about Augustine? He posed the question, "What is there that may not be learned in the Psalter?" He called it "an epitome of the whole Scriptures." And what about that champion of biblicism, Calvin? His pithy comment will be appreciated by Mr Seaton — "Not without good grounds am I wont to call this book" (the Psalms) "an anatomy of all parts of the soul, since no-one can experience emotions whose portrait he could not behold reflected in its mirror." While the great reformer, Luther gave his opinion of the Psalms in three words — "my little Bible."

Modern man thinks otherwise, and in the context of the Psalms Mr Seaton, as you will note from the following comments of his, does not differ.

"You can't sing hymns of praise to Christ as God in exclusive psalmody, because the name of Christ is not mentioned in the psalms. Undoubtedly, you can sing *about* Christ in the psalms — in type, and in shadow, and in picture; but, you cannot sing *of* Christ in the psalms — in the sense that you actually name the name of Christ and sing out the name of Christ as such."

It is passing strange how people (yes, religious people) will stretch their vain imagination to justify an end which is in contradiction to the mind of God, without considering the implications. It is a solemn matter to state, "the name of Christ is not mentioned in the psalms," when He Himself, by the Holy Spirit, was the author of them; when He who is the co-equal with God the Father stated in the inspired Word: "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, *and in the psalms, concerning me.*" (Luke 24: v.44). The substance of the matter is, there is more of Christ in every Psalm written by Him before He came to the world, than in any hymn written by mere men after He came.

One of the most profound utterances which differentiates between Psalms and hymns was made by William Romaine who was for many years the leader of evangelicalism in London during the 18th century: "I want a name for that man who should pretend that he could make better hymns than the Holy Ghost. His collection is large enough; it wants no addition. It is as perfect as its Author, and not capable of any improvement. Why, in such a case, would any man in the world take it into his head to sit down and write hymns for the use of the Church? It is just the same as if he were to write a new Bible, not only better than the old, but so much better that the old may be thrown aside. What a blasphemous

attempt! And yet our hymn-mongers, inadvertently I hope, have come very near to this blasphemy; for they shut out the Psalms, to introduce their own verses into the Church, sing them with great delight, and as they fancy with great profit; although the practice be in direct opposition to the command of God, and therefore, cannot possibly be accompanied with the divine blessing."

That statement by Romaine analyses fully and uniquely why only the Psalms should be used in public worship, and although some may call it "strong language," not having looked at the matter in the same light, nevertheless, it is a timely reminder to us all that there is no substitute for the manual of praise given to us by the Holy Spirit.

A fitting conclusion in defence of Psalm-singing in the worship of God is related in the following story: "As I trudged homewards, I stopped at an uncle's and spent the night there, In the evening I brought out my hymn-book and had some singing with my cousins. After I laid it down my uncle took it up, put on his glasses, and spent some time looking through it, It gave the hymns and the music, with the names of the composers of each as far as known. Uncle read a hymn, and naming the author said, 'I know nothing of him.' He read another and said, 'I have read about the author of this one. He was a Roman Catholic priest.' He read another and said, 'I have often read of this author; he was a good man and an earnest Christian minister.' He then said, 'Now John, if I were going to use one of these hymns in the worship of God tonight, which do you think I had best choose.' I replied, 'the one by the Christian minister.' 'True' said he, 'we should select the one written by the best man; and I see by looking through your book that it contains many hymns written by good men; but if I should find in it one composed by God Himself, would it not be better to sing that than one composed by any good man?' I replied, 'It surely would.' After a little he said, 'I have now carefully looked through your book and I do not find one hymn in it marked — 'Composed by God,' but I have here a little hymn-book, and God by His Holy Spirit has composed every hymn in it; for Peter says, 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' As he spoke he handed me one of our Psalm-books, and the manner in which he presented his argument made an impression upon my mind that I never forgot."

In writing this article our prayerful desire is that God's Psalter will be restored to its place in the hymnals of all Churches and used EXCLUSIVELY in the worship of God.

W. T.

Book Reviews

Collected Writings of John Murray. Vol. 4. Studies in Theology. Banner of Truth Trust £9.95.

This final volume of Professor John Murray's writings was issued a year ago and ought to have been reviewed earlier. It contains 16 studies in theology. As systematic theology was the field in which Prof. Murray laboured for thirty years of his life, these articles no doubt contain in many instances his matured thought on the subjects with which he deals. Four articles deal with Calvin's views on the inspiration and authority of Scripture, and his views on the sovereignty of God and on predestination. These could not but be of interest to students of theology, as well as the articles on the Inspiration of Scripture, the Free Offer of the Gospel, Covenant Theology and the Theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith, etc.

The last mentioned article contains a very appreciative assessment of the excellence of the Confession of Faith. The second half of the book is comprised of a further set of book reviews and covers quite a wide range of theological writings. These will no doubt prove useful, giving an assessment of the value of each particular volume dealt with, as well as an indication of its contents.

D.B.M.

Outlines of Theology by A. A. Hodge. Banner of Truth Trust. £7.50.

This well-known manual of systematic theology has just been reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust. The Trust has made available in this country many excellent books from the other side of the Atlantic and this is no exception. In question and answer form the manual deals with the many matters that arise in theology proper, anthropology, soteriology and eschatology. Dr. A. A. Hodge acknowledges his indebtedness to his father, Charles Hodge, whose own "Systematic Theology" extends to three volumes. America was greatly favoured with eminent theologians of the orthodox Calvinistic School and the two Hodes take a high place among them. The Outlines of Theology just reprinted has proved of benefit to many generations of students of theology and will, no doubt, prove beneficial to students for many years to come.

D.B.M.

Notes and Comments

Roman Catholic College

The Roman Catholic bishops in England and Wales have protested strongly at Sir Keith Joseph's decision to end initial teacher-training at De La Salle R.C. College in Manchester. The Education Secretary, however, has refused to re-consider his decision. The bishops maintained that De La Salle College remained a vital part of the total 'Catholic' provision for the supply of 'Catholic' teachers to 'Catholic' schools.

It has always appeared to us that Roman Catholics get more than their share of educational facilities, supported as these are largely out of public finances. It is certainly far more than Protestant schools and Colleges would receive in Roman Catholic countries. It should also be realised that the whole concept of separate education for Roman Catholic children is divisive and does not warrant state support. Sir Keith Joseph is to be commended for remaining steadfast on this particular matter.

Ecumenism Run Riot

A video film, which has been produced to encourage more boys to enter the Roman Catholic priesthood, has been filmed for the Roman Catholic Church by the Church of Scotland's audio-visual department. The film is to be shown in Roman Catholic schools and parishes throughout Scotland. The head of the Church of Scotland's audio-vision production said that they were delighted to assist the Roman Catholic Church.

To our mind this ecumenical venture constitutes a case of ecumenism run riot. Surely it is no part of the Church of Scotland's duty to assist in encouraging young men to enter the Roman Catholic priesthood — a priesthood that claims the power of miraculously changing the wafer of the Mass into the body and blood of Christ and which sustains in being a system of religion which is anti-Christian. Is it not long past time that the Church of Scotland authorities began to look closely at such ecumenical ventures and see where they are leading?

Sad Statistics

A report published by the Central Statistical Office shows that illegitimate births to the under-20's were more than legitimate births. Divorce has doubled in ten years. In the same period spending on alcohol rose by nearly 20 per cent. At the same time the crime rate and the

number of suicides (more than 5000 in 1981) continued to rise. All these statistics are frightening, showing a nation in spiritual and moral decline. What need there is in such a day for a return to the Word of God and to His worship and service. Unless repentance is given, in God's mercy, only the judgments of the Most High can be looked for.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

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).

Mbumba 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 Mbumba Mission Hospital

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

Perth Communion

Perth Communion will be held on the first Sabbath of March D.V.

Opening of a New Church at Dundee

On Saturday 29th October 1983 a special service was held to mark the opening of the new Free Presbyterian church in Dundee.

A large congregation gathered and there were over 250 people present. There were buses from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness as well as friends from various parts of the church. A fair number of local people were also present. Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow, preached an appropriate

sermon from the words, "Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127: v.1).

Since its inception the Dundee congregation has been worshipping in various halls and we regard it as an answer to prayer that the congregation now has a building of its own. The new church Baxter Park Free Presbyterian Church is situated at 70 Arbroath Road Dundee, in a most central location.

Our thanks are due to the Finance Committee who provided the funding for the purchase of this building and to all who, in a variety of ways, helped to prepare the building for coming into use again as a place of worship.

We would ask all who seek the prosperity of the Cause of Christ to pray that the Lord who has provided the building would now build up His Cause in this city that the "little one would become a thousand" and that many would yet praise God that He caused His Word to be preached here.

Induction at Raasay

Friday, the 23rd of December 1983 was a memorable and eventful evening for Raasay when close on three hundred people gathered to witness the Induction of Rev. James R. Tallach to the pastoral charge of Raasay Free Presbyterian congregation. The God of Providence so ruled that instead of weather hazards so common at this time of year; the evening was calm, and weather conditions ideal.

The Proceedings followed the norm for the occasion. All seven ministers from other Presbyteries were associated with the Skye Presbytery, and messages were read to the Court from Rev. A. F. Mackay, Clerk of the Northern Presbytery, Rev. R. R. Sinclair, and Rev. Angus Morrison of the Southern Presbytery.

The hearty praise led by Mr W. Byers reflected the joy and gratitude of the Raasay congregation, the Skye Presbytery, and the many strangers present for this settlement. Rev. Donald Nicolson, Glendale, a quondam minister of Raasay preached solemnly and appropriately from Acts 20: v.26. Thereafter the Moderator Rev. H. I. MacKinnon gave a brief narrative of the proceedings in the Call to Rev. J. R. Tallach, and addressed to him the questions appointed to be put to ministers at their Induction to a pastoral charge, and having received satisfactory answers to the same, and having signed the Formula in the presence of the congregation, the Moderator did, by the authority of the divine Head of the Church and in the name of the Skye Presbytery, induct Rev. James R.

Tallach to the pastoral charge of the Raasay congregation, and the brethren gave him the right hand of fellowship.

The Clerk then addressed the newly inducted minister, making reference to the man of God who made the noble and necessary stand for Truth in Scotland, and Mr. Tallach's own forebears, whose names were still fragrant in the Island. The Moderator, who acted throughout with quiet order and efficiency addressed the congregation in very pertinent and practical terms. Thereafter Rev. A. Murray, a former Interim Moderator of Raasay, and Clerk of the Western Presbytery former 'parent' of the Skye Presbytery spoke appositely and with feeling, while Rev. S. F. Tallach made an appropriate and spirited contribution to the proceedings.

Abundant provision was made by the Raasay ladies in the Manse for travellers.

We are delighted to welcome Rev. Dr. James Tallach to our Presbytery, and pray earnestly that the Lord may make his ministry now begun in Raasay a real spiritual blessing to many by the power of the Holy Spirit. We trust that many more may be added to the 103 who signed the Call at this time. Fraser Macdonald, Clerk of Skye Presbytery.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The treasurers of the following congregations wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Barnoldswick: Anon. cheque — £5; Foreign Mission Fund, per collect, plate — £20; Anon. for building fund — £21; K. M — £20; Anon. for property fund — £21; for sust. fund per collection plate — £10.

Dingwall: S. C. Invergordon, for Foreign Mission Fund — £10.

Dundee: Miss I. I. Sinclair, per Rev. D. J. M — £15; Strathy cong. — £5; Anon. 1st Chron. 29. 11-16, per Home of rest — £25.

Edinburgh — Mrs M. McDougall, Bath, for sust. fund — £5; Miss Diana Madwer, Stornaway, for sust. fund — £20; Anon. for sust. fund — £72.

Fort William — A. MacGillivray, per Rev. J. A. M. — £3; Friend Caol, per Rev. J. A. M. — £10; C.S. — £5; Mrs MacC. Onich — £10; Mrs Smallman — £30.

Inverness — Anon. for cong. funds — £5; friend for Home Mission fund — £5; Harris friend, for foreign mission fund — £10; "concerned" for distribution to poor and needy of the flock in Zimbabwe Mission — £1,000; last three per Rev. A. F. M.

Lochcarron — In memory of a loved one, for sust. fund. — £4, comm. exps — £5, church door collects — £5; Anon. for minister's car — £100; Anon — cong. purposes — £100; in memory of a loved one, for sust. fund — £8, home mission — £3, door collections — £3; Anon, college and library fund — £10; Church door collects — £10; all per Rev. J. W. R; R. Matheson, general purposes — £180; Miss Neilson, sust. fund per C. M. R. — £10; Miss Finlayson, general purposes per Miss MacD — £3.

London — Inverness postmark, Manse and Church fund, per Rev. A. M. — £30.

Oban — M. MacLean, for Manse Fund per J. M. — £10; A. MacDougall Blovefield, for cong. fund — £30; friend Perth, for sust. fund. per A. M. P. — £100; friend, for cong. fund — £10; A. Townsley Stirling, for Cong. fund, per Rev. A. M. — £10.

Portree — No. 1 Lower Ollach, sust fund — £20; Anon, foreign mission — £30; Anon, wherever needed — £25; D. G. Fraser Crescent, sust. — £30, home mission — £30, foreign mission — £25.

Raasay — friend of the cause, sust. fund — £5; cong. fund — £5; both per J. M. M.; Raasay friend, Manse Decoration, heating — £100; Mrs D. C. Kent in loving memory of dear aunt and uncle, for Manse Decoration, heating — £20; Envelope in plate, Manse Heating — £40; A. MacLennan, Glasgow, Manse Decoration — £25.

Stornoway — friend, for petrol per Rev. J. M. — £5.