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Religious Worship or Religious Entertainment

We live in a day when true delight in the spiritual worship and service of God is rare. Few in our day sincerely echo the heart-felt utterance of the Psalmist when he said: "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "I was glad", he had also to say, "when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." To him a day in the Lord's house was better than a thousand.

In past days the religious services of God's sanctuary were thronged with eager worshippers. Though there were those at that time who had no spiritual understanding of the great things of God's law, there were many others who had real spiritual delight in the things of God and who counted it a privilege to draw near to God in the courts of His own house. In those days Communion seasons were not decried as mere Highland traditionalism but were regarded as joyful spiritual feasts where the poor of the flock and seeking souls were fed with the manna of God's Word. In believably partaking of that manna, how often they found themselves partaking of the True Bread that cometh down from heaven. What sustenance they derived from such spiritual feasts where Christ was set forth in all the glory of His Person as the Divine Son of the Everlasting Father and in all the perfection of His finished work! Christ and Him crucified was the main theme at such times and for the living exercised soul it meant a sumptuous repast and a time of joy in their spiritual experience.

So it must have been, too, to the spiritually exercised in Israel in days

of old in going up to Jerusalem to take part in the set feasts. It is true that they did not possess the full measure of light which the Church is now possessed of in New Testament times, yet how well they used the measure of light which they had then. If we think of Abraham who lived in earlier times even, what light he possessed, what an entrance into divine things he obtained when Christ could say of him: "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." But whether Old Testament or New, the spiritually exercised people of God always had delight in the spiritual worship of Jehovah.

Today, how different is the tale! Where religious worship has not been altogether abandoned, as is the case with multitudes, there is little, if any, spiritual relish for the things of God. To many religious worship is regarded as something stale and uninteresting — and the more spiritual the worship is the more it is despised — and men turn away from it in the hope of finding something that will more appeal to the natural heart of man. We do not need to be surprised to find that there are those who are more than ready to provide for such tastes. Consequently in our day religious entertainment is beginning to usurp the place once occupied by religious worship.

Religious entertainment in its grossest form no doubt means the use of religious drama in what is supposed to be the worship of God. Today this is quite a common practice in many churches and is defended by many as a legitimate practice. The forms that religious entertainment can take are many, including dramatic presentation from the pulpit of religious teachings, something abhorrent to the Spirit-taught child of God and utterly out of keeping with the solemnity and weightiness of the doctrines taught and with the issues involved.

In professed evangelical circles religious entertainment often comes in the form of religious meetings of one kind or another — meetings that are often of little spiritual value. To these meetings many are ready to gather who would absent themselves if these were gatherings for true spiritual edification. This preference for what is unspiritual or of little spiritual value reflects on the glory of the gospel of Christ and on Him who is not only the Author of that gospel but the sum and substance of it as well. This desire for religious entertainment rather than for religious worship is an indication of the low spiritual state to which the professing Church has fallen in our time. When the Lord will again build up Zion it is certain that things will be very different. The courts of God's house will then be thronged with worshippers eager for the spiritual services of His sanctuary.

How is that the present state of affairs has risen in the Church! We know that in order to appreciate spiritual worship a spiritual mind is required. If then we show a preference for religious entertainment surely this indicates that either we have no spiritual mind or else that spiritual life is at a very low ebb in our soul. Where the carnal mind reigns or is in the ascendancy there is ever a desire for novelty but where grace is in living exercise in the soul, the soul finds spiritual feeding not only in the unfolding of what is new but in the oft-repeated truths of God's Word as well.

What need there is to be taken up with spiritual things, delighting in them as those things that are life-giving and enduring. The natural man cannot delight in the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual man delights in them and seeks an entrance into them more and more. Let us then ask of the Lord that He would be pleased, for the sake of His beloved Son, to give us a spiritual mind and to send His Holy Spirit to lead us into spiritual things. Only then will the worship of God become truly a delight to our soul and we will then be of one mind with the Psalmist when he says:

“One thing I of the Lord desir'd,
And will seek to obtain,
That all days of my life I may
Within God's house remain.

That I the beauty of the Lord
Behold may and admire,
And that I in His holy place
May rev'rently enquire.”

Ps.27: 4.

Notes of a Sermon

by Rev. D. A. Macfarlane, M.A., Dingwall

(Preached at St. Jude's, Glasgow, on Monday of the Communion,
27th April, 1936).

“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

The breaker is come up before them; they have broken up and passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them."—Micah chap. 2. verses 12-13.

We have here great and precious promises. The Lord is giving these promises to the Church, and the Lord grant that by His Holy Spirit, in His sheer mercy, our souls may have a saving interest in these promises. This prophecy was given by Micah for the comfort and consolation of the Church in his day and generation. He prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, and we are told this prophecy was concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, but the great matter for us this evening is to refer to some extent to the evangelical aspect of it, and at the back of our minds we have the historical aspect. These words were coming somewhat strongly before my mind just for our service this evening, and there are some expressions here which are difficult to follow or to grasp. Nevertheless, we should take time over them, and then leave these difficulties in the Word of God that we may not have the same entrance into, but at the same time we should leave them at the back of our minds or simmering in our minds, and be on the Watch-Tower for some understanding as to their meaning.

My remarks with regard to this holy portion of the Word of God must be tentatively or provisionally subject to abundant revision but the great matter is, that if we seek to be four-square with the Word and labour and pray and seek some entrance into it, we may gather here a little and there a little, and get something to benefit our souls.

Let us look to a suitable historical background, wherein this Prophecy was in part fulfilled, even as an illustration, before going on to remark on the evangelical aspect. The main part is the evangelical part. As far as the historical background is concerned, you see that Micah prophesied then before the long captivity, and he tells them in advance this revelation from the Most High, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted; it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction." They were saying in fact, Jerusalem is our rest, and Micah and Jeremiah are false prophets, and the best thing we can do is to cut them off altogether and get rid of them — throw them into a dungeon, and just give them bread and water. At the same time, the Lord had a Jacob among them — a real Jacob of God — the "remnant of Israel." This expression "O Jacob" is opened up to us in the expression, "the remnant of Israel." It is a parallel remark throwing light upon the other. We have in the 24th Psalm a statement made with regard to who the spiritual Jacob are, and who wear the "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

These form the Jacob of God and the remnant of Israel — the Israel inside the external Israel. Not all that had the circumcision and the Covenants were the true Israel, but the Lord had a “remnant,” and that was His own, and if we are not of the internal Israel then we cannot have part with the true Israel of God. We do not know what real holy fear is and the power of holiness unless we are like this Jacob “who seek His face with their whole heart’s desire,” and who are gradually learning. Seek to be among them. You may just here now shut your eyes, if that will help you better, and plead with Him that He would graciously bless you, not for your sake — do not have the rashness to do so — but for the Redeemer’s sake. The Redeemer fills eternity and inhabits it, and He is infinite in His being, and He is inexpressibly worthy, and He can place you among them, not for our sakes — and we do not want that, I hope — nevertheless He may bless you and me for Christ’s sake “at our request.” That is a very nice phrase in the Bible and search you for it.

This portion of Scripture was given for the glory of God for more ways than we know in order to be bread and wine to his broken-hearted Jacob. If we had as much feeling and were enabled to put ourselves in the place of these excellent men of God, — Micah, Jeremiah and Isaiah — these noble servants of the Most High, then if we had been with them you could see that they were speaking with a lump in their throat — they were giving out these things — excellent, excellent, very good — there is a remnant left of us — a stump in the ground, but if you listened to them there was a sob in the voice — the tears were trickling down and God was at their back and putting their tears in His bottle and writing them in His book. Another brother came along and said — “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.” In the midst of it, the Lord whispered a word in the ear of Micah, and he said, — “say this to my Jacob and this remnant of Israel — these godly women in the village and these men — this is to be a rod and a staff to them, for there is to be a dark valley ahead and it will last 70 years, and the Holy City will be left for a long, long time. Will he forsake them for ever? Oh no! “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold.” And although the Lord’s people suffered outwardly on account of the calamity that came upon the land as a whole — Daniel and Ezekiel and hundreds more — nevertheless they had the secret consolations of the Holy Ghost — the hand of the Lord was upon them for good, and “the Angel of the Lord encamped round about them.” This was a smoked glass to show them

that the Lord would bring down His hand on Jerusalem, but would "stay his rough wind in the day of the east wind" — He would never make a full end of them because He had a Cause and the Redeemer was to come in the fulness of time and hundreds of prophecies were to be fulfilled.

How was this prophecy fulfilled in due course say after the captivity? My answer is, so far as is needful at present, in what Ezra did. You have the case of Nehemiah also, coming to the land of His fathers, and mourning on account of how the Temple was, and Jerusalem was, and the land of the sepulchres of the godly. The very dust of the godly is dear to the people of God. If you keep to the example of Ezra — you have an account in his own book, how he became the leader of the people in the days of Artaxerxes king of Persia, and perhaps that throws some light on this. You see there that the people gathered at the river of Ahava and fasted there and pled with the Lord to bless them and to take care of them, and Ezra was their leader, and spiritual leader too, and the Lord blessed them and the Lord was "entreated of for them." If I may use the language of Solomon in the dedication of the Temple, — "If they sin against thee (for there is no man which sinneth not) and thou be angry with them and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee" — there you have it being historically fulfilled to the letter — how they had this prayer at the River Ahava, and how the Lord was entreated of for them. The Lord answered their prayer by giving a token for good. I cannot say if the Lord gave Ezra some special revelation or message, but in any case the Lord showed His favour towards them, so that what we read of was fulfilled historically.

If so be this will help us later on in the evangelical aspect of the promise, What are we to understand by the Breaker? And in what sense did He come up? Was Ezra the Breaker? I think he was. If you consider their condition in the land of their captivity they were "scattered sheep," and the Lord caused Cyrus to publish a publication that they should return,

and the Lord lifted their heads and breathed into the souls of many the Holy Spirit, and they were brought to say, "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord. We desire to get back now to Jerusalem and the land of Judah to see if we can help with the building of the temple." The Lord was Himself the Breaker, and He gathered in, in this way, from the different cities one here and one there — they were all touched with the finger of the Most High. Where are the people being gathered? At the bank of the River Ahava. That bank of the River Ahava I take tonight to be a suitable illustration of the "fold" that we read of here. They were gathered to a "fold" and they entered into a covenant with the Most High, and they pled for mercy from the Most High, and the Lord was entreated of them, and He blessed them and visited them, and from that "fold" by the banks of the River Ahava, they went away safely. Ezra was offered a bodyguard but he refused, and put his trust in the Most High.

The Most High was the Breaker, breaking up obstacles in the way, and from that "fold" where they made great noise "by reason of the multitude of men," the Lord still continued the "Breaker," and although there was no visible pillar of cloud going before them as the Angel of the Covenant was going before them in the wilderness to seek a place of rest, He was really going before them. "The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your reward." Ezra was on that occasion under the Most High, and the Breaker or leader of the people, and their counsellor perhaps in a similar way as Moses was towards the children of Israel, and from that "fold" when the day came, and they knew that they got a token for good, and probably a comfortable message from the Most High, they went forward, and the Lord was with them and was their King. If you will look at the matter from the historical point, and I think that is so far useful in order to show how that was followed in the case of Ezra, and I suppose in the same way with Nehemiah, and with that by way of just a preliminary opening, it is well for me now to pass on to the great matter, which is the evangelical use to be made of this prophecy. Although we may usefully refer to the historical matter, still, we shall endeavour to pick out particularly the points evangelically which are useful for the Church of God in all ages.

The first thing is to point out that we are all in captivity, just as these were literally. All who form the true Jacob of God, they are brought to know that they are in captivity. It is brought home upon them by the Holy Spirit. The second thing is the "Breaker," and we shall emphasise here that the Most High is the Breaker, for He may use Ezra and others as Ambassadors under Him, but in the Person of the Saviour, the Lord

Jesus Christ, the Bishop of our souls, is the "Breaker" — the divine Breaker, and He first of all brings them to the "fold." The third thing is that once the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit brings them to the "fold," as they gathered at the River Ahava, from that point onwards till they reach the Promised Land in Glory, He is still the Breaker, and goes before them and gathers pasture for them, guiding them in the good way. The moment they come to the "fold" they have passed through the gate of the enemy, and out of the land of captivity — goodbye to the land of captivity. However we are, and however the Lord may deal with us, He will never leave nor forsake us. "Goodbye Babylon," and from that day they are in a state of reconciliation. It is unchangeable as the Divine Essence is unchangeable, and from that point onwards — from the state of regeneration and from the passing out of the gate, they have entered into covenant and are joined to the Lord, and a flow of love and liberty — a flow and reflow of light and life between their heart and the heart of the Saviour — then you have there the beginning of the new life — reconciliation and regenerating grace, and you are in the fixed estate of justification and adoption, and you go on with the Saviour as the Breaker up all the way until He brings you to the Father's House, and the King pass before you. Will that be a careful and scriptural and evangelical use of such a prophecy as this? I hope it is. I hope we would not have the presumption to offer it to you otherwise, but may the Lord be guiding us into the enriching and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

The first thing from the evangelical aspect is this, beginning from the first of those who were brought in to those who are not born yet — they are all in captivity, and their captivity is more dreadful than ever the captivity of Babylon was. Ask yourself, — Did my soul find out I was in captivity — morally, and by nature a captive in my mind? Ask the Lord to show you that, and how you are a captive of prejudice and of ignorance. I am a lump of ignorance, and although godly parents would tell us of the love of a Divine Saviour, the whole thing would be as a "root out of a dry ground" to us, unless the Lord in infinite pity anoint us with spiritual discernment, and He may have to shake us over the mouth of perdition so that we see the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone and see the waves splashing on the shores of eternity before we will be convinced. Unless you have grace, you will be found cursing God in a damned eternity. Think of it. Remember that part of the work of those who will be sent away is to be cursing God. Ask you the Lord — cry to Him if you cannot pray — say to Him, "For the Redeemer's sake show me in mercy myself." What does that man mean saying my soul is a

captive of this bitter root — pride, and self-seeking and worldliness, and the like of that? Have mercy upon my soul — “Thy mercy unto me do thou extend.” Seek you in earnestness and seriousness down in your heart — plead with the Lord not to leave you shallow and superficial — some nice morality on the surface without the truth of the Law and the sanctifying truth of the Gospel in you. Ask Him to put it down into you and under you and wrapped round you so that the Devil can never untie it. If your soul is bound up in the bundle of life and well knotted in the Covenant and you get Christ in the promise, then happy you will be, and you will be safe, and you are delivered from your captivity. The captivity of my soul by nature is a captivity to the love of sin, and that means darkness, and that means rebellion, pride, and worldly-mindedness, and no appetite for the worship of God. Who here has an appetite for the vicarious atonement of the Saviour? Show me a person who is getting a sweet taste of it, and if the vicarious atonement is as warm blankets round their soul, I would like to shake hands with them, and with the blood of the covenant sprinkled on us, I think we will meet in Heaven even with all our failings.

The next thing is, you are a captive of Satan. He can lead you captive at his will, and perhaps you will not know it is him. Perhaps it may be in your closet and you think you had first-class liberty, and all the time you are doing the work of the Devil. You are in captivity to sin and Satan, and usually where that is the case, you can speak about a hundred things, music, literature, Greek Philosophy and moral philosophy, and what not, and be a scholar, and be moral (and outward morality is a great blessing through restraining grace), but when a godly man or woman will speak to you about regeneration and about justification, your mouth is closed, or else you will put the cart before the horse and pretend you are godly and show yourself a fool, and speak about things you know not, showing that you do not know what you are speaking about. If you don't know, hold your tongue. “Even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise.” I remember when I was young, being in the room with the late Mr MacFarlane, and him saying, “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” and I remember thinking it was some fierce animal that was so savage as to attack the Most High, and I thought I would like to frighten it away. I had no more knowledge of the Word of God than one of the lower animals.

We are not only captives to sin and Satan — what more? Captives to the Law. Captivity to the Law invariably follows captivity to sin. Where there is the root principle of hatred to holiness and opposition to God,

which is in us by nature, that man is in captivity to the Law. That is another way of saying the Law has something to do with you, and however easy we may feel, and however far away we are putting the day of death, if we go to eternity without getting married to the Lamb and united to Him, as the branches are to the vine, and lying down and drinking in the merits of the atonement, and glorying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, — “Whereby the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world” — if we have not that in our consciences and hearts, the Law sooner or later will want to speak to you. Oh, but I have plenty of liberty in the world. I pay my way at the butcher and grocer, and what noise is being made about this holiness and my unholiness and sin and lack of preparation for eternity, and the want of the fear of God and holy love and so on? I am free — I am my own master. I am not going to pay attention to you. “Stand here,” the Judge will say, — “Do you love that Law?” Your conscience may be asleep and doped, but when the Most High touches it, it will burst like a volcano, and burst on you, and you will agree with it when it charges you, and although you may be able to hush it till death, I desire to tell you in compassion and in love, you will turn against yourself and waken in remorse — not repentance — it is entirely different.

When your minister will be preaching to you, be you watching with lynx eyes what he sets before you, and keep your mouth well open and swallow down the truth as it is in Jesus, and see if it helps your soul, for when the Law turns on you, if you are not in Christ and in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, your condition will be truly awful — it cannot be put in language the anguish and remorse and pale face you will have that day, and you will go down before the look of the Most High under the sentence of the Law. You have heard this in the letter from the Ambassador of the Lord who used to be here, for years and years, and from your present minister, and I am only trying to put in a word or two as this came strongly before me today. We have to consider the two sides of the Law — the demand of the Law, and the penalty of the Law. So long as we do not satisfy the demand of the Law, we must face the penalty of the Law. The Saviour met the demand of the Law and He said, “I love you and I will fulfil you,” and He met the penalty, “I am to satisfy you. The sword of Justice will pass into me, but it will not pass through me. I will open my bosom to the flaming sword, but not one inch will come out on the other side, for I am going to quench you in my soul and exhaust you for ever and ever.” Unless you are in Christ Jesus and under the shelter of His wings, there is nothing for you but the holiness of God to come in-

to conscious contact with your stark naked soul, and if the infinite essence of the Most High come judicially into contact with your naked soul, you are bathed in Hell. That is what happens, and you are in a fixed estate — you can neither go North, South, East or West — you are in the presence of the being of the Most High there, and away from His judicial presence you cannot get.

They were evidently scattered sheep away in Babylon, and see how we are told that we are scattered on the mountains of vanity, “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way . . .” — some of us to the way of the flesh, another to greed for money, another to greed for learning, but in any case, we are all scattered sheep on the mountains of vanity. That was true of all who are saved — millions and millions like the sand on the sea-shore, although they are brought to be like Jacob in grace, and we better not gather stones to throw at poor Jacob’s faults — as far as possible, it is wise and loving and tender to cover over the faults of the people of God, and if we have to mention them, as David had to be dealt with, and Peter had to be dealt with, and Jonah too — the Lord put him into the whale’s belly to learn a lesson or two — let us do it in love and tenderness. It will not do for you and me to speak superciliously of Jacob — What right had you to be deceitful and so subtle? — we need not go past our own bosom. “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. . .”, and if the Lord will not begin the good work and carry it on, and even where it is carried on, if left, we break out again almost as if we had no grace at all, and we should see then our need of the Saviour and His finished work on account of seeing the old Jacob in here, and that deceit and subtilty that poor Jacob exhibited. That would be bitter to the excellent man Jacob who was very beautiful at last, and is today beautiful in the palace above, but what would be more bitter to him in later days was not so much that he deceived Isaac, but that he deceived himself. He thought he had plenty of liberty, and he was deceiving himself all the time — he was self-deceived. Have we not to look back to the time when we thought we were our own masters, and have to say to our heart — Fool, you deceived yourself? If you got mercy, you will acknowledge that sin deceived you — you were self-deceived. That is a little as to their state.

The second thing is this, the Breaker bringing them to the “fold.” I take it that the “breaker” is the Redeemer, and He is also brought before us as the King. The Father in the divine essence did not speak directly, but spoke indirectly. The Lord Jesus Christ was set up in the everlasting covenant, and be you much in it. You can say to yourself, this bit here —

this blessed prophecy — is in the Bible. What other Book is it in? This is an extract from the Book of Life. The Lord has the Book of Life in Glory, and He and the Angel of the Covenant agreed on this — the wisdom of God, the Messiah, the daysman and near kinsman — when they shook hands in Eternity, they put down in a Book all the names of the elect, and although that is not what we have to with first and foremost, at the same time we know a lot of them by name — the godly men and women in the Old Testament that we read about, and in the New Testament too. Here you have the Breaker, and He was to be a Breaker in a two-fold way. First of all, the Second Person as the Servant of the Father — the elect servant, the chosen and the choice Servant; — in eternity the Father said to the Redeemer, — My dearly beloved Son thou wilt be the Breaker for them. What did that mean? Christ in His work of redemption was to free them from the grasp of the Law. Do you not mean the grasp of Satan? Which is first? Freed from the grasp of the Law or freed from the grasp of Satan? There are people here tonight and they know from the inside what the answer is, and I will not give you it just now. You will set to and roll up your sleeves spiritually and find out which is first, and that by the Shorter Catechism and the Confession of Faith, and watching what the minister here says, and what the elders say, and if you cannot arrive at it, ask them point blank and pocket your pride and throw it in at the back of the fire, but alas! it will come back again, the thief that it is, but seek you to find out for your own good whether the work of the Saviour has pre-eminently to do first with the power of sin or with the claims of the Law. We will leave it at that just now, but I am afraid we are giving away our little problem. He not only met the claims of the Law on behalf of the Israel of God, but He also now in virtue of that, received the Holy Spirit, not according to measure. He said, "I undertake to meet the claims of the Law," and the Father said, "I promise you and anoint you with the everlasting Spirit and you will also ransom them by Thy power from the grip of Satan." The Law says, "I am very well pleased. Everyone that runs to the cleft of the Rock I am delighted with them. Be gone the whole lot of you and flee to the Rock of Ages!" The Redeemer has also the power of an endless life to bring poor sheep to the Fold. He convinces and brings sinners to what we may call the "Fold of reconciliation" or you can call it the 'fold of salvation' which is just the same — the fold of justification and adoption. The first fold they are brought to is the fold of justification and adoption, and they are shown that the Redeemer saves by price and by power, and when he leads the blind by a way they know not, and secretly grips them

and awakens their consciences and asks them to hear the Gospel, and convinces them and regenerates them, and when by His Holy Spirit they are made willing in a day of power, they are out of the gate of the enemy and enter by the "fold" to eternal salvation and regeneration, and there you have them in that blessed state in that way. He was their Breaker-up, and they would never get through the Law were it not for His sufferings and death. Satan was there and their lusts and bad companions and the fear of man and the fear of being mocked at — they were getting so good and godly — and the Redeemer had to break up their way through these thorns and briars and deal with them. He brought Manasseh and Paul and the Eunuch of Ethiopia and the Philipian Jailor and three thousand on the Day of Pentecost and countless numbers all down from the days of Abel till the time He came Himself, and onwards till the blast of the last trumpet will sound. He is the great Breaker of all obstacles by the price of his death and His divine power, giving the Spirit of wisdom to understand — light for the mind and power for the soul and holiness and love for the heart, whereby the soul touches the hem of His garment and sweetly takes Him in in a day of regeneration, and you will have to say, He was the Breaker up of my way so far to this fold of peace with Jesus Christ. The justification that you have tonight, however you may feel, if you are one of His, it is just the same justification as you will have in Glory — the infinite merit of the Redeemer, and you are perfect in Him as to your state, and 'You will stand upon His merit, and know no other stand, not even where Glory dwelleth, in Immanuel's land.' It is all of the graciousness of God. It is all gratis — all for nothing, and the Lord grant that it would be our portion.

The third thing is this — How the Breaker brings in those that the Father gave Him. You are invited — "Come and welcome to the Lord Jesus," and He is gathering in now. Some were gathered in here and came forward to witness for Him at His Table yesterday, and would that scores had come forward at this Communion Season! May the Lord bless poor sinners in that way. A nation can be born in a day. See how they are coming forward in South Africa — Dr. MacDonald down there knows more than I do about it — about the godly men and women they have out there, and what a source of comfort it is. Mr Tallach used to tell us about some of them, so earnest and willing — exercised christians. They knew what they were speaking about — the Holy Spirit came in and gave them the knowledge of the holy, which is understanding, so that by the work of the Breaker for them and in them, they "overleaped a wall" and got into the blessed land of holy liberty — Christ kissing them, and they kiss-

ing Him. There is a going on — a progressive progress, when they get a saving look at the Redeemer. Those literally in our background — the Israelites — when they got the presence of God and confessed their sins with noise — although I said it already, it is worth repeating — they made a great noise, and every poor sinner when first brought to the “fold,” he will make a great noise. What is this noise that they make? I read it in the prayer of Solomon — their lamentation and weeping, and their smiting on the thigh, and saying like Ephraim, — “I was like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; — Turn thou me and I shall be turned . . .” Be merciful to me the sinner. Wash me and then I shall be whiter than the snow. That is the noise they make, and they will be praying for faith, and when they get it, they will be lifting up their voices to the Lord and singing the 116th Psalm. That is a good example of “making great noise by reason of the multitude of men.” What a sweet song they must have had and what a blessed noise in the realm of bliss when the revivals were at Kilsyth and Cambuslang and Skye and other places, and there are songs going up still although not in the same degree, nevertheless the Lord is hearing music from the eyes of poor sinners. How from the eyes? Show you me a tear of sorrow falling down the neck of a poor sinner, and crying to the Redeemer — Lord be merciful to me and wash me and put Thy raiment round me — that is sweet music in the realms of bliss, and there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one prodigal that returns to the Father, and when there are hundreds of them, what a blessed noise they will make returning to Zion! “The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads . . .” That is the joy that is going to flow into the ocean of eternity. The joy is there and the road is there and if it will not always be there, the fault is our own on account of our carelessness. The Lord have mercy on us and make us wise and honest, but the Ransomed of the Lord return with a blessed noise to Zion. “I love the Lord, because my voice and prayers He did hear. I while I live, will call on Him who bowed to me His ear.” Why? “My bands He did untie.” He cut them and He breathed into the nostrils of your soul the breath of life, and made you a partaker of grace, and will bring you into the land of Glory at last. But there are a good many more bands that the Redeemer has to take scissors and cut, and once He has begun the good work, He will set ourselves to cut another lot of bands about our souls. It is progressive work. The sweet Psalmist of Israel was deeply experienced in it.

In conclusion, He is the Breaker-up of their way from the day of peace with God through union with the Saviour and by faith of the operation

of God's Spirit, and He is the Breaker onward till they reach Heaven. What is the road He is taking them from the day of justification onwards to Heaven to be for ever with the Lord? Dear fellow-sinner, it is the road of sanctification. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption — blood-bought redemption of the Church, and it is a mark on those who have not only a mere orthodox knowledge of justification, but who with their scarlet guilt were enabled penitently to drink in the merit of the atonement — that they show that they were not only pardoned and accepted in the Beloved — accepted as to their persons and adopted, but they begin while here below, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," and the way of sanctification is just the way of the Ten Commandments — the way of the first table with regard to the Most High and the Second table with regard to our fellow men. That is a broad enough field to follow, and ask you the Lord to give you true light, and those who have light, ask for more, that our path may be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Thus we are told, "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called — the way of Holiness. . ." First, take the draft and say, — there is a highway from the day of justification to the land of complete redemption — that is the way which is worth calling a way — the way of holiness, — Teach me to walk in it; the way that I walked before was folly and what I myself thought right and excused too. Dear fellow-sinner, look you in your own soul perhaps how many excuses you made since this Communion season began. Yes, that is right enough, but ——. That "but" of unbelief. There is this and that and the next thing, and there is "but" I am going to be wise yet. I promise to read my Bible yet, and be good when I am old and the like of that. That is our folly and it is natural to us. But our point is, they are on the way of sanctification, and although they are not and never will be holy as they would like here, still they would like to be, and the Lord puts that in them — an endeavour after new obedience. Help me to die unto my secret faults, and let not presumptuous sins have dominion over me. Purge out the old leaven. Will in me to do thy holy pleasure. They know the Breaker and the King, and they are His property, and are for Him and not for another, and they are going to be with Him, and going to the city of habitation. No one is on the way except those I have been speaking of. There is a way spoken of in Ecclesiastes — "The labour of the foolish weareth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." They have a lot of labour. Paul himself laboured there with his useless prayers they were not worth a spittle — they were noxious, and yet he laboured as if he

would get to heaven with them. He knew not how to go to the city, and you will never know the way till you get mercy and get Christ for you and in you and united to Him and He in you and get a drink of Him, and be like the sheep, gathered in, and the mark of the blood stamped on you, and you and I washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and then to have the "ear mark" — they hear My voice, and the "foot mark" — they follow Me, and they are on the way of sanctification then to the Father's house. There are many obstacles in the way, and they are often caught in bushes, but nevertheless He will never leave them. He is invisible and goes before them, and is their reward. The poor sheep that is caught in a thicket may say, — Here I am caught, and if no one will come to take me out, I will die. And so it would, but all the time the shepherd may have been a good bit away and he was seeing the animal, but it was not seeing him. The Lord, the Breaker-up of their way to death, and the conqueror of the last enemy — He sees them when they are in the bushes and He will take them out, and perhaps He will have to give them a good stroke or two as he did to Peter and Thomas, but Oh! the great matter is to be of them and to know what a little of sanctification is, — to have the character of the godly, and a good illustration of that is what is said of Levi in the book of Malachi, "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." That is true not only of Levi in Israel, but it is true of everyone in the way of sanctification, in a greater degree in some than others. Some are deeper than others and more watchful, and not such weathercocks — perhaps some are more ready to jump through a gap in the dyke. That is the way with believers, but what I was going to say was that where the new nature is, it will come on. Let the old nature collapse more and more, and grant more of that crucifixion — help me to mortify the flesh. As we said already of Levi, "The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many from iniquity." You may say you never turned any away from iniquity — you would be glad to climb up the hill on your knees yourself. Have you the desire that the whole earth would be filled with the glory of the Lord, and would like to show that in your walk and conversation in the world? Well, you have the principles of Levi, and seek to go on in the paths of God, dying unto sin and living on the Saviour and seeking to feed in His pastures. You have plenty from Genesis to Revelation — plenty pastures in the doctrine of the Trinity — the doctrine of the atonement and the Person of Christ, and the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and the graces of

the Spirit — the bracelets that we referred to last night. If we were growing, what would be true of us? This would be a feast to us — the doctrine of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of sanctification and everlasting glory, and the doctrine of election — all of these. Ah! they are grand doctrines. If we had some liberty you would not feel the night passing, feeding upon them, and thinking about them. It could not be better. They would make a man of you, and a woman worth calling one, if you were getting into them and they in you, and were saturated in them, and ask you the Lord to give you a little of the blessed leaven to hide in your soul, and it would permeate your whole life. Ask the Breaker up and the Saviour-Mediator, and the First-born of many brethren, who will not leave one sheep in the wilderness — “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” — Lord grant that I may be of them, and the Lord grant to bless His church, and “The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.”

This God is our God.

by Octavius Winslow D. D.

(Continued from page 77)

“This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.”

— Ps. 68: 14

We reach an impressive and precious part of our subject — *the eternity of our Divine portion*. “This God is our God *for ever and ever*.” Everything here is changing. “The world passeth away.” A rope of sand, a spider’s web, a silken thread, a passing shadow, an ebbing wave, are the most fitting and expressive emblems of all things belonging to this present time’s state. The homes that sheltered us in childhood we quit, the land which gave us birth we leave, the loved ones who encircled our hearths pass away, the friends of early years depart; and the world that was so sunny, and life that was so sweet, is all beclouded and embittered — the whole scenery of existence changed into wintry gloom. Still more sad and depressing are the spiritual vicissitudes to which our soul is constantly exposed. The waning of love, the decays of grace, the fluctuations

of faith, the languor of life — true symptoms of spiritual declension of soul — are among the most startling and affecting illustrations of the mutability of all temporal and spiritual things. But in the midst of all, "This God is our God FOR EVER AND EVER!" All beings change but God. All things change but heaven. The evolutions of time revolve, the events of earth go onward, but He upon whom all things hang, and by whom all events are shaped and controlled, moves not. "I, the Lord, change not." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Is this God *our* God? Then He is ours *for ever!* Our affairs may alter, our circumstances may change, our relations and friends may depart one by one, and our souls in a single day pass through many fluctuations of spiritual feeling; but He who chose us to be His own, and who has kept us to the present moment, is our covenant God and Father for ever and ever, and will never throw us off and cast us away. Such, too, is the immutability of Jesus. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end." We need the influence of this truth — Christ unchangeable — to soothe and solace us under the saddening, depressing effects of life's vicissitudes. We need it, too, and yet more deeply, amid the incessant fluctuations of our Christian experience through which we pass — the ebb and flow of the life of God in our soul. To know that no congealing of our love to Him can chill His love to us; to remember that, though we believe not, yet He is faithful, and cannot deny Himself — that our unbelief cannot make void His promises, nor our mutations affect the stability of His covenant — oh, this is strong consolation indeed, for which let our heartfelt praises ascend!

"For ever and ever!" Solemn words! Reader, what will *your* 'for ever and ever' be? You die once, but to live and die no more! Your soul is immortal. Your being ceases not. Death, so far from being an annihilation, is not even a momentary suspension of your existence. Your present life, if life it may be called, for which you toil so incessantly, guard so assiduously, and love so intensely, is a transient, troubled dream; yet more, it is the tide that floats you rapidly upon its eddies onwards to the solemn, endless future.

"Life is like a painted dream,
Like the rapid summer stream,
Like the fleeting meteor's ray,
Like the shortest winter's day,

Like the fitful breeze that sighs,
Like the waning flame that dies,
Darting, dazzling on the eye,
Fading in eternity."

What will *your* eternity be? *Where, how, and with whom* will you spend it? Will it be for ever and ever in heaven, or, for ever and ever in hell? There is no middle state, no dream-land isle between those two vast Continents. A deep and wide gulf divides them, and there is no passing from the one to the other. "These shall go away into *EVERLASTING punishment*; but the righteous into *life ETERNAL*." Of the first it is said, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *FOR EVER AND EVER!*" and of the second, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, *FOR EVER AND EVER*." Decide this momentous question now; antedate your future condition by seeking an interest in a *present* salvation, by accepting at this moment a divine and personal Saviour; in a word, by repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold, *NOW* is the accepted time, *NOW* is the day of salvation."

"He will be our guide, even unto death." The path to a future world is, in truth, difficult and perilous. Thousands of deathless souls undertake to travel it in the light of their own fire, in the sparks that they have kindled. Some, by the dim ray of reason; others, by the glowworm light of nature; yet others, by the treacherous light of their own righteousness. All these are false beacons: beacons which shine but to bewilder, and lead but to ensnare all they who trust to them. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, *ye shall lie down in sorrow*." But God in Christ is the guide of the just. By His light they see light along all the dangerous way. Guided by that light, they walk through darkness, as at noon; their path to heaven, as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Beloved, an unknown future is before you — a future of the present life — and a yet more real and solemn future of the life that is to come. But, tremble not, nor be dismayed. God, even your own God and Father is your Guide, and Christ, your Shepherd, goes before you, and with a skilful, faithful and gentle hand, will guide you safely to the end, yea, even unto death. "Unto death" — what a precious and solemn assurance is this! Death is that crisis of our being we all must meet, yet all so dread. Its sting, its terror, its wrench, its ulterior and changeless consequences, all enshrouded in a mystery so awful and profound, is just that one event

of life the anticipation of which throws a shadow so dark over all brightness of existence. But faith in the Divine assurance that, this great and glorious, this incarnate and redeeming, this covenant and faithful God is 'our God, even unto death,' dissolves our fetters, dispels our fears, and we can anticipate, and even at times long for, the blissful moment that confronts us with the foe, unclothes us of mortality, and invests us with the robes of immortality and eternal life, and we are "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." Cast from you, then, all your bondage through the fear of death, seeing that, down to the last moment, your God in Christ will be with you, at the presence and sight of whom, Death itself will turn pale and die. Oh, if this God is your God in life, think you that, having guided and guarded you so long and so far on your journey, He will, at that solemn moment, when heart and flesh are failing, quit your side, and leave you to go down the valley all solitary and alone? Never! "This God is our God FOR EVER AND EVER: He will be our guide even into death" — in death — through death — and beyond death — FOR EVER AND EVER ! Oh, that blissful word 'for ever!' For ever in heaven — for ever and ever associated with saints and angels — for ever and ever gazing on the beauty of Jesus — for ever and ever basking in the sunshine of His glory — for ever and ever chanting the song of the Lamb — for ever and ever swimming in the ocean of God's love — for ever and ever growing in knowledge and holiness and glory — for ever and ever with the Lord! Oh, who would not abjure the world, and crucify the flesh, and bear the cross, confess and serve the Saviour, live for Him, and die for Him who has by His death, resurrection, and ascension so blessedly opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers!

"For ever with the Lord!"

Amen, so let it be!

Life from the dead is in that word:

'Tis immortality.

"For ever with the Lord!

Father, if 'tis Thy will,

The promise of that faithfull word

E'en here to me fulfil.

"So when my latest breath

Shall rend the veil in twain,

By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain.

“Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word!
And oft repeat before the throne,
‘FOR EVER WITH THE LORD!’”

Confide in Him for the new year upon which you have embarked. Commit your every way unto Him, trust also in Him, and He shall bring to pass all that He has ordained and appointed for you in the everlasting covenant. Cast not about to know how this want shall be supplied, this difficulty met, and this affliction sustained; but, trust to the wisdom, and skill, to the faithfulness and love of your divine and heavenly Guide, until He brings you to glory. Let your one and only aim be to obey, please, and honour Him. Taking care of His glory, He will watch over your interests for time and for eternity. Take heed how you walk, and seek that a new epoch of time, a yet untried stage and untrodden path of your pilgrimage, shall be more holy, more Christ-exalting, more God-glorifying, and more heaven-meetening than any you yet have passed. The Divine command is, “Speak unto the children, that they *go forward*.” Forward in obedience and duty — forward in service and suffering — forward in conflict and toil — forward, Christian, forward, even though the foe pursues, and the pathless water roll at your feet. Onward, onward, “For the Lord thy God knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness.” Blessed Lord! “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.”

“’Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit will guide us safe home;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.”

“THIS GOD IS OUR GOD FOR EVER AND EVER: HE WILL BE OUR GUIDE
EVEN UNTO DEATH.”

I am wholly His; I am peculiarly His; I am universally His; I am
eternally His.

Thos. Brooks.

A Sacramental Sabbath in the Burn of Ferintosh

by the Rev. T. MacKenzie Fraser, M.A.

Few are familiar with the lovely scenery on the shores of the Cromarty Firth. The rugged grandeur of the Highlands combines with the softer beauty of the South to produce an almost unrivalled degree of the admiration always effected by strong and striking contrast in nature; while the splendid sheet of water, in which our whole British Navy might ride securely during the wildest gale, forms, from the choiceness of its position and the peculiarity of its shape, perhaps the chief element in the beauty of the scene. Guarded at the entrance by two immense rocks, spaciouly wooded atop, bay after bay disclosing itself in endless succession, skirted in one place by fields of corn, fringed in another by woods of varied green, and bounded in yet another by a line of sand-hills or moorland; at one time discovering a village or burgh town, and at another disclosing, amid the foliage, the mansion-house of some Highland proprietor, or the scarcely less lovely, though more humble, front of some Ross-shire manse; and fenced well-nigh all around by towering mountains, like gigantic sentries keeping watch over the loveliness within, the Firth of Cromarty leaves an impression on the mind of a spectator which is not soon to be forgotten, and creates in the traveller who has just left its scenery an almost irrepressible desire to return to it again.

At the uppermost extremity of this inland sea lies the well-known Ferintosh. Though itself not distinguished by great external beauty, in comparison with the parishes across the water, it is, nevertheless, the scene of an annual assemblage more interesting to me by far than the rarest combination of natural objects — the sacramental gathering in the Burn of Ferintosh.

A Highland sacrament is always a most solemn and interesting sight; but I question whether a spectator could have been at any time so much impressed with the scene, as when it was presided over by Dr. MacDonald in his own parish. The numbers were there swelled to an incredible amount by strangers from the neighbouring parishes and counties — the shires of Ross, Cromarty, and Inverness, and even Sutherland, pouring forth their companies to join the worshippers. It was but once that I was privileged to behold the sight — on the last public sacrament before the Disruption. As there happened to be no ser-

vice in our church on that particular Sabbath, I rode over to Ferintosh, hoping, should the opportunity occur, to behold for myself a sight of which so many glowing descriptions had been given me. I overtook on the way numbers of gigs and carts with their comfortable-looking occupants, "blue-bonnet farmers," on their ponies, and hundreds of pedestrians of both sexes travelling in groups of three or four; these last occupied almost invariably in conversing upon some Scripture text, or giving notes of the various sermons they had heard — some weighty word being not unfrequently recalled at a distance of many years. Did a minister happen to pass the travellers, every bonnet was doffed, and many an ejaculatory prayer was whispered, that the presence of the Lord might go with His servant, and that a blessing might rest on the preachers of the day.

I had intended to put up my horse at the manse stable, but found that not only were the stalls filled — three horses being often in one division — but that in the sheds and square every available inch was occupied. I was soon, however, relieved from my difficulty by a boy offering to take charge of the animal, and see it well fed; and knowing that in no possible circumstances could a Highland groom be an expensive one, I had little hesitation in accepting his offer.

At each Highland sacrament there are two congregations — the one composed of the English hearers, who worship in the church; the other, of the Gaelic population, who conduct their services in the open air. Owing to the fervour and expressiveness of the Gaelic tongue, and to the great liberty enjoyed by the preacher who employs it, the outdoor services are always attended by a far larger number than when English is spoken; and indeed it would be almost impossible to accommodate within any Presbyterian church an average Gaelic congregation on a Communion Sabbath. But at Ferintosh the number is immense (1842) — being seldom below six thousand, frequently amounting to ten, and on one occasion reaching, I was told, the enormous total of fifteen thousand souls. It reminds one of those glorious days when the cities of Germany poured forth their thousands to hear the Gospel at the lips of Martin Luther; and I question whether, even in that land of deep feeling, and these times of thrilling excitement, there was ever witnessed a scene more solemn and impressive than the gathering at Ferintosh.

The place of meeting seems cut out for the express purpose, by the immediate hand of Him who is at once the God of nature and of grace, and who, as if in anticipation of the scenes of holy interest to be presented by the locality, would appear to have included the very dip of the land and

the course of the brook among the "all things" which "work together for the good of them that love Him." At a convenient distance from the church, the Burn of Ferintosh, often almost dry in summer descends a deep hollow that forms a large oblong slightly rounded at the upper end, the sides of which slope towards each other, leaving a space of flat greensward between; and under this the waters of the Burn are carried by a drain. The sides of the declivity are deeply furrowed all around, like the parallel roads of Glenroy on a small scale, as if the waters of the Burn had collected in the space, and forced an outlet at different intervals, though much is doubtless owing to manual labour.

These furrows are the seats on which the people rest, line rising above line, in close succession, somewhat like the pews of many of our Free Churches. The appearance of the people as they sat on these Highland benches, was both interesting and uncommon. Hats were pretty numerous among the males, but rarely was a bonnet seen upon a female head — that of the maiden being generally bare, the matron wearing a "mutch" (cap), while the elderly women had grey or blue cloaks, with the hoods wrapped round their heads. The snow-white caps of the females contrasted pleasingly with the coarse blue bonnets of the men; and as my eye first caught the congregation, it dwelt with a more delighted gaze upon their homely appearance than even when, after the lapse of a few months, I looked round, at the time of the Disruption, on the vast concourse of gentility at Canonmills. A solemn interest sat on every countenance, the men in particular appearing to drink in with avidity every word that was said; and as the heart-searching address of the minister fell meaningless on my ear (not being a Gaelic speaker) I could have wept at my inability to share their strong emotions. The tent, or temporary pulpit, is placed at the lower end of the open space, which rises slightly towards the upper extremity of the area; and in front of the tent stretched one long Communion table — at which, by the way, a Highlander never seats himself till it is "fenced."

After the conclusion of the "action sermon" and the "fencing" of the tables, a large number of verses were sung in the plaintive emotional music of the Gaelic psalmody. The precentor who officiated on the occasion was a venerable-looking old man whose voice was heard, even if less distinctly, by the more distant part of the congregation; as he was joined however, by those near him, the sound gradually waxed louder and louder, till the whole eight thousand voices swelled the sacred song, and formed one vast chorus which, in power if not in harmony, in fervour if not in skill, has since the days of Gustavus Adolphus been almost wholly

unsurpassed. (During the war of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, the whole army, consisting of twenty thousand men, on the eve of battle, used to sing Luther's favourite psalm — Psalm 46). Still, I confess, I was a little disappointed in the expectations I had formed of the singing; for, though I have never heard so powerful a chorus, yet I had entertained a higher idea of the compass of so many voices than was actually realised. But a Highland congregation never sings loudly; their melody is rather deep than strong; and the greater the solemnity of the occasion, the lower is the tone in which the psalm is sung.

During the singing, the elders — "the men" of Ferintosh — assisted by a few of their brethren from neighbouring parishes, placed on the tables the elements of bread and wine, the communicants coming slowly forward to take their seats. The tardiness of the Highlander in this solemn matter is very striking — each seeming to feel that he is going to meet the Lord, and to tremble lest he should be found eating and drinking judgment to himself; and the officiating minister has to encourage, exhort, and not unfrequently to rebuke the timid believer, ere he will venture to commemorate his Saviour's dying love. I do not deny that this hesitation is often carried to an unwarrantable extent, the Highland communicant often thinking that his present frame of mind, rather than his personal interest in Christ, is to be the test of his worthiness. But still hesitation is infinitely preferable to haste, affording, as it does, pretty sure indication of a stricter compliance with the injunction, "But let a man examine himself." At the table, the solemnity was most marked; not an eye was open — each head was hung down; and, save when the elements passed, and the communicants partook of the bread and wine, scarcely a motion was visible along the whole line. It being the fourth or fifth table that I witnessed, Dr. MacDonald did not officiate. He was leaning over the front of the "tent," watching his beloved flock with a pastor's eye, and seeming to view with that delight which none but a pastor knows, the refreshment of his people's souls at the streams of living water.

Blessed old man! Twenty years had elapsed since he sprinkled the water of baptism on my face, and prayed that I might be spared for usefulness in the cause of Him from whom a scarcely-living mother had received me; and as I now stood above him on the alder-skirted bank of the Burn, my heart glowed more strongly than ever with an affection which I shall always cherish for his memory; and right sure am I, that when I then returned his prayer into his own bosom — that he now might be spared for many a useful year — the supplication was re-echoed from the breast of every child of God that had seen the person of John Mac-

Donald, or heard his voice that day. I did not stay long, and about an hour after my departure the congregation dispersed. Suitably rewarding my little groom, I returned slowly to my home, never to forget the scene which I had witnessed in the Burn of Ferintosh.

Nearly seven years have now elapsed since the gathering which I have attempted to describe, and the Elijah of the Scottish Highlands has been taken home to his God. The next Communion in the Burn of Ferintosh will to many be a Bochim indeed! The recollections of years will crowd upon the warm heart of the Highlander, as he seats himself once more upon the well-worn sod; and when the tremulous notes of the white-haired precentor are again heard, and many an eye will look almost instinctively upwards in search of the preacher who used to sit above him in the weather-beaten black "tent," and instead of the beaming old familiar face, meets the countenance of a stranger — many a spirit will cry in bitterness:— "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," and, "the people will lift up their voice and weep." And on whom has his mantle fallen; Or is he indeed "the last of the apostles." Porteous of Kilmuir, MacPhail of Resolis, and Lachlan Mackenzie of Lochcarron have preceded him, but who is to take his place; "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful faileth from among the children of men."

Notes and Comments

Russian Leader Called to his Account

President Andropov, the ruler of the vast U.S.S.R., and over-lord of much of eastern Europe has been called to his account after an illness which affected him during most, if not all of the short time he was President. Man proposes but God disposes. He came to power with an unenviable record as head of the K.G.B., the Russian secret police. Little sympathy could the long-suffering Russian people and persecuted Christians expect from his hand, but God has removed him. Atheistic in his beliefs, he has fallen into the hands of the living God in whom he did not believe. The multitude of prisoners that he left incarcerated in the prison-houses and slave camps of Russian and Siberia have more hope of escaping from these prisons than Andropov has of ever escaping out of the prison into which he has now fallen, for none ever escape out of it.

Diplomatic courtesy requires that leaders of all nations should pay their last respect to such a leader. Moral conviction surely would make

leaders in the West stay at home and say: "Let the dead bury their dead." What an account Communist rulers will have to give at last for their wanton cruelty and callous murder of their fellow-creatures.

Let us not be in any doubt as to Communist intentions and believe that a change of ruler will make any significant difference. The juggernaut of Communism runs on intent on crushing under it all the nations of the world and blotting out Christianity from the face of the earth. It will continue its progress until the Lord will say: "Thus far and no further." But that will not take place until He has used it as a scourge to chastise the nations of the world, and particularly Protestant nations for their apostasy from Him. When the Lord has finished with it as a scourge to afflict the nations, then woe to the Communist powers in Russia for the Lord will destroy them utterly — and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Aberdeen Student's Magazine

An Aberdeen Church of Scotland minister has condemned this year's Aberdeen University's charities publication "Eureka," declaring it to be "unadulterated filth from beginning to end." He also says that "practically every page is filled with puerile obscenities and where it is not downright prurient its inanity is appalling," according to a report in the Press and Journal. The Charities Committee chairman in reply says: "We appreciate that not everyone is going to like all the jokes but people have complete freedom in choosing whether or not they buy it," and further defends it by referring to Edinburgh University's Charities Committee's experience when they found that cleaning up their magazine led to a great drop in sales.

It is sad to think that the young men and women now in University, who are to be the leaders of the nation tomorrow, should act in this way and produce a paper fitted only to pollute even further the already depraved minds of a generation that has largely cast off the knowledge of God. Let them devote their God-given talents to something that will be profitable and elevating, and let them extol virtue and not vice. In this way they may become leaders indeed of which the nation will ever be proud, leading the nation out of the mire and filth into which it has fallen and raising it up to occupy a place of dignity and honour in the world and not a position of degradation and dishonour. The way to this is given to us in the Bible: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." Psalm 119: 9.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 3rd April at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 3rd April at 6 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 17th April at 11 a.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 20th April at 2.30 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 24th April at 12 noon.

Western: At Shieldaig on 19th June at 11 a.m.

Staff for Zimbabwe Mission

Advertisements for staff over the past months have failed to produce any response. It has been decided to open the Hospital at Mbuma on a full time basis from the beginning of March so that the need for a suitably qualified doctor to act as Medical Superintendent is now urgent. The post of Nurse/Midwife will also require to be filled and, particularly so, if staff presently on the mission field are to have their well-earned furlough on time. Ingwenya School still has a vacancy for a Teacher with Physics qualification. I will be happy, therefore, to hear from applicants wishing to take up this rewarding work in our mission in Zimbabwe.

(Rev) Alex. Murray, Applecross, Strathcarron, Ross-shire, IV54 8LT.
Telephone 052-04 207.

Notice to Conveners/Clerks of Standing Committees.

The Conveners/Clerks of all Standing Committees should note that All Committee Reports must be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by 31st March, 1984 for printing purposes. (DV). These Reports should contain information of the work of the Committees during the year. Recommendations and proposals should be sent up as separate items for the Synod Agenda.

(Rev) Donald MacLean,
Clerk of Synod.

Notice Re Synod Agenda.

Clerks of Presbyteries, Conveners/Clerks of Committees, and all other interested parties should note that all items of business intended to be placed on the Synod Agenda must be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by Thursday, 5th April 1984 (DV).

(Rev) Donald MacLean,
Clerk of Synod.

Glasgow Minister's Return.

Rev. and Mrs D. MacLean, who were visiting Australia and New Zealand, returned safely to this country in February, in the Lord's good providence. We trust that they will have benefited from their stay there, as we are sure that the people abroad would have welcomed their presence amongst them and particularly Mr MacLean's labours in the Gospel.

Death of Dutch Committee Member

We regret to intimate the death of Ds. De Waard, a member of the Dutch Mbumba Zending Committee and we extend sincere sympathy to the bereaved relatives and to the Committee in their great loss.

Mercies

There are bitter mercies and sweet mercies — some mercies God gives in wine, some in wormwood. Now we must praise God for the bitter mercies as well as for the sweet. Thus Job, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Too many are prone to think nothing is a mercy that is not sweet in the going down, and leaves not a farewell on their palate; but this is the childishness of our spirits, which as grace grows more manly, and the Christian more judicious, will wear off. Who that understands will value a book by the gilt on the cover? Truly none of our temporals whether crosses or enjoyments — considered in themselves abstractly, are either a curse or mercy. They are only as the covering to the book. It is what is written in them that must resolve us whether they be a mercy or not. It is an affliction that lies on thee? If thou canst find it comes from love and ends in grace and holiness it is a mercy though bitter to thy taste. Is it an enjoyment? If love doth not send it and grace end it — it is a curse though sweet to thy sense. There are sweet poisons as well as bitter cordials. The saints commonly have greater advantage from their afflictions in the world, than from enjoyments of the world. Their eyes are oftener enlightened with wormwood than honey — with those dispensations that are bitter and unpleasant to sense, than with those that are sweet and luscious.

— William Gurnall.

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND **CONGREGATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS SENT TO GENERAL TREASURER — 1983**

Places	Ministers and Missionaries	Sustenance Fund	Home Mission Fund	Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund	Aged and Infirm Ministers, etc. Fund	College Library and Book Room Fund	Organisation Fund	General Building Fund	Dominions and Overseas Fund	Publications Fund	TOTAL
NORTHERN PRESBYTERY											
Aberdeen	Rev. J. M. Tallach	£2171.44	£49.00	£77.50	£76.22	£5.00	£25.00	£16.00	£31.34	£40.00	£2491.50
Bonar Bridge		900.00	120.00	120.00	40.00	34.00	35.00		25.00	35.00	1309.00
Lairg	Mr. D. M. Campbell	978.00	126.00	168.00	30.00	30.00	45.00	24.00	28.00	25.00	1454.00
Dornoch	Mr. D. M. MacLennan	461.00	341.50	302.00	27.55	26.20	34.72	22.60	25.50	24.40	1265.47
Rogart		200.00	250.00	145.00	40.50	30.00	35.00	40.00	32.40	34.20	807.10
Beauly	Rev. D. B. MacLeod	2082.74	145.44	653.26	91.85	81.35	78.50	88.60	111.25	72.20	3405.19
Dingwall		3370.00	322.43	414.43	130.29	136.03	109.28	125.98	120.28	4.00	4732.72
Fearn	Rev. J. Ross	1800.00	130.00	130.00	80.00	70.00	55.00	55.00	55.00	50.00	2425.00
Tain		1500.00	227.00	241.00	364.00	114.00	94.00	84.00	87.00	90.00	2801.00
Halkirk		545.00	60.14	84.14	42.14	20.00	23.00	31.14	31.14	20.00	856.70
Thurso		535.00	25.00	20.00	15.00			15.00			610.00
Strathly		389.00	397.00	267.00	67.10	68.00	68.20	35.10	77.00	58.95	1427.35
Inverness	Rev. A. F. MacKay	12000.00	2000.00	2000.00	600.00	600.00	700.00	600.00	600.00	550.00	19650.00
Kinlochbervie	Rev. S. F. Tallach	1693.20	207.00	273.00	55.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	42.55	40.00	2460.75
Scourie		589.10	95.00	89.00	30.00	32.30	30.00	25.80	22.40	20.00	933.60
Daviot		1100.00	198.00	237.00	79.00	63.00	66.00	70.00	90.00	55.00	1958.00
Tomatin	Rev. D. Boyd	549.00	116.00	104.00	50.00	37.00	40.00	50.00		38.00	984.00
Stratherrick		730.00	87.50	111.34	44.70	35.50	44.40	41.10	31.75	37.00	1163.29
Wick	Rev. R. R. Sinclair	2000.00	244.00	370.20	110.50	112.07	95.00	45.00	78.00	78.67	3133.44
		£33593.48	£5141.01	£5806.87	£1973.85	£1544.45	£1628.10	£1419.32	£1488.61	£1272.42	£53868.11
SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY											
Dumbarton		£2301.42	£191.07	£266.57	£94.00	£74.50	£72.14	£84.14	£73.00	£78.00	£3234.84
Edinburgh		4250.00	398.64	646.14	185.57	132.57	134.57	166.07	181.57	75.00	6170.13
Fort William	Rev. J. A. MacDonald	2514.72	131.00	280.00	101.70	95.00	96.50	89.00	103.00	82.00	3492.92
St. Jude's, Glasgow	Rev. D. Maclean	10904.38	1407.76	3122.28	591.49	625.61	562.46	510.45	568.98	411.78	18705.19
Dunoon	Rev. L. MacLeod	193.00									193.00
Greenock		2091.44	156.00	174.20	73.00	51.88	53.70	63.50	59.00	46.00	2768.72
Kames		640.00	157.40	152.00	64.50						1013.90
London	Rev. A. MacPherson	3013.45	299.90	610.25	172.20	68.50	65.00	103.00	73.00	56.00	4461.30
Oban	Rev. A. Morrison	1583.00	139.00	152.00	68.42	60.50	65.00	58.05	56.58	37.50	2220.05
Stirling		316.43	78.86	78.86	159.28	43.86	43.86	137.85	43.86	5.00	907.86
Dundee	Rev. D. J. MacDonald	232.86	26.14	61.14	32.29	13.29	6.29	6.28	25.57		403.86
Perth		372.00	93.00	71.00	40.00	18.00	20.50	14.00	28.00	6.00	662.50
Barnoldswick		800.00	45.00	150.00	35.00	25.00	35.00	55.00	30.00		1175.00
Vancouver	Rev. D. Beattie				109.89						109.89
Toronto	Rev. M. MacInnes			437.48		122.96			221.10		781.54
Chesley	Rev. D. M. Campbell										
		£29212.70	£3123.77	£6201.92	£1727.34	£1331.67	£1155.02	£1287.34	£1463.66	£797.28	£46300.70

OUTER ISLES PRESBYTERY

Achmore	Rev. J. MacLeod	£560.00	£44.00	£41.00	£27.00	£23.00	£23.00	£19.00	£29.00		£766.00
Stornoway		6752.85	640.70	643.25	248.15	256.80	302.00	250.65	281.50	241.00	9616.90
North Uist	Rev. A. Morrison	2257.46	158.50	183.00	55.75	86.70	43.55	71.00	70.00		2925.96
Breasclete		404.90	118.25	131.20	45.80	43.70	76.40	43.60	37.95	49.20	951.00
North Tolsta	Rev. J. MacDonald	4904.50	500.90	475.70	198.40	214.00	228.50	232.50	249.00	217.00	7220.50
North Harris	Rev. A. MacKay	4238.88	535.94	356.01	145.64	153.00	168.00	181.00	153.50	134.00	6065.97
South Harris	Rev. D. MacLean	4546.92	498.30	333.30	163.40	158.10	132.60	138.10	147.60		6118.32
Ness	Rev. Wm. MacLean	2658.56	110.72	278.72	23.00	24.00	24.00	24.00	23.00	5.00	3171.00
Uig		2500.00	75.00	150.00	35.00	40.00	80.00	130.00		50.00	3060.00

£28824.07 £2682.31 £2592.18 £942.14 £999.30 £1078.05 £1089.85 £991.55 £696.20 £39895.65

WESTERN PRESBYTERY

Applecross	Rev. A. Murray	£1618.18	£307.50	£287.00	£68.30	£54.40	£39.75	£36.70	£42.95	£28.05	£2482.83
Gairloch	Rev. A. MacDonald	4348.60	395.00	384.00	139.00	94.30	94.00	101.00	143.50	107.50	5806.90
Laide	Rev. D. A. Ross	2547.07	298.00	256.50	84.50	100.00	90.00	87.00	80.00	73.50	3616.57
Kyle of Lochalsh	Mr. J. D. Van Woerden	1350.36	127.32	142.70	43.80		43.45	50.20	54.30	96.20	1908.33
Plockton		181.20	19.45	25.37	5.02		19.00	9.30	6.55	24.80	290.69
Lochbroom	Rev. N. Ross	4000.00	430.00	550.00	125.00	115.00	130.00	120.00	140.00	125.00	5735.00
Lochcarron	Rev. J. W. Ross	1959.70	309.00	405.15	83.80	34.85	118.10	87.25	33.60	61.30	3092.75
Lochinver		903.29	200.00	298.00	90.00	72.60	70.50	70.00	70.00	54.50	1828.89
Stoer and Drumbeg		937.00	384.00	526.00	102.00	87.00	92.00	77.00	102.00	90.00	2397.00
Shieldaig		2287.39	176.00	179.00	42.00	28.00	47.00	40.00	24.00	27.00	2850.39

£20132.79 £2646.27 £3053.72 £783.42 £586.15 £743.80 £678.45 £696.90 £687.85 £30009.35

SKYE PRESBYTERY

Bracadale		£2164.00	£159.30	£201.00	£66.00	£63.00	£64.20	£63.80	£56.00	£54.00	£2891.30
Strath	Rev. H. MacKinnon	3400.00	246.10	297.00	71.70	9.00	61.50	76.50	67.60	62.00	4291.40
Flashadder	Mr. D. MacKay	400.00	300.00	120.00	60.35	29.90	52.20	20.00	32.00		1014.45
Glendale		1504.20	171.00	140.00	49.50	23.00	73.00	39.00	96.50	38.00	2134.20
Vatten	Rev. D. Nicolson	1007.00	91.00	136.50	44.50	31.50	44.00	45.00	43.00	38.00	1480.50
Watnish		250.00	30.00	32.00	18.00	18.00	16.00	14.00	15.00		393.00
Portree	Rev. F. MacDonald	9269.99	1429.59	1222.43	400.00	500.00	400.00	210.00	300.00	400.00	14132.01
Raasay	Rev. James Tallach	2203.02	303.70	282.57	157.94	105.50	91.50	103.00	101.50	99.00	3447.73
Staffin	Rev. D. A. MacLennan	2736.50	221.10	281.70	103.30	86.10	94.60	78.10	99.60	76.00	3777.00

£22934.71 £2951.79 £2713.20 £971.29 £866.00 £897.00 £649.40 £811.20 £767.00 £33561.59

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND PRESBYTERY

Gisborne, NZ	Rev. J. Van Dorp			£955.54	£221.46	£146.39		£117.75	£182.00	£1623.14
Wellington, NZ				20.00	20.00	20.00		48.23		108.23
Auckland, NZ				183.07	89.32			206.26		478.65
Grafton, Australia	Rev. E. Rayner			491.45	183.15			183.15		857.75

£1650.06 £513.93 £166.39 £555.39 £182.00 £3067.77

SUMMARY

Northern Presbytery		£33593.48	£5141.01	£5806.87	£1973.85	£1544.45	£1628.10	£1419.32	£1488.61	£1272.42	£53868.11
Southern Presbytery		29212.70	3123.77	6201.92	1727.34	1331.67	1155.02	1287.34	1463.66	797.28	46300.70
Outer Isles Presbytery		28824.07	2682.31	2592.18	942.14	999.30	1078.05	1089.85	991.55	696.20	39895.65
Western Presbytery		20132.79	2646.27	3053.72	783.42	586.15	743.80	678.45	696.90	687.85	30009.35
Skye Presbytery		22934.71	2951.79	2713.20	971.29	866.00	897.00	649.40	811.20	787.00	33561.59
Australia/NZ Presbytery				1650.06	513.93	166.39			555.39	182.00	3067.77

£134697.75 £16545.15 £22017.95 £6911.97 £5493.96 £5501.97 £5124.36 £6007.31 £4402.75 £206703.17

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr W. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Glasgow G12 0HE, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:

Dominions and Overseas Fund: In memory of the late Mrs R. S. MacKenzie £75.

Foreign Mission Fund: Mr and Mrs W. MacL. Colbost — £20 for Ingwenya Church extension; Netherlands Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, U.S. — \$200; Donation in Inverness Collection Plate for Zimbabwe Famine Relief — £50; £200 — from A friend; Winnipeg Friend per Vancouver Treasurer — Can. \$300; Donation from Vancouver Congregation per Rev. Ndebele — Can. \$3235, all these per Wm. Campbell.

Home of Rest Fund: Vatten Sabbath School — £20; Anon — £10; £80; £80; £40; £40.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Kyle Congregation — £38.85; Plockton Congregation — £10.40; Duirinish Congregation — £107.40; also £25 — in Vatten plate, Anon.

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

Applecross: Mr J. R. Morrison, Canada — £25 for Sust. Fund; Friend, South Harris — £20; Another Friend, South Harris — £20, both for Congr. Purposes, all per Rev. A. Murray; Glasgow Friend — £10; Friend, Alness — £30, both for Sust. Fund; Mrs MacLeod — £20 to help with Church seats per Mrs A. MacRae; Friends, Alness — £20 where most needed; Late Donald Finlayson — £100 for Applecross F.P. Church per Mr D. MacBeath; Anon, Shieldaig — £1; Mrs I. MacD. Aird, Shieldaig — £30 both per Rev. A. Murray, both for Cuaig Mission Hall; Howard Doris Educational Trust — £1,400 for Cuaig Mission Hall per Brodies W.S.; Anon — £50 for Congr. Purposes; Anon — £1.20 for T.B.S.

Fort William: Harris Friend — £5; Friend, Cabol — £10; A. MacG. — £5; D. MacD. Claggan — £10 for Sust. Fund, all per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Gairloch: Lover of the Cause, Gairloch — £600 for Strath Meeting House; Miss MacLeod, Lewis — £5 for Gairloch Congr. Funds; Mrs Irvine — £30 for Gairloch Sust. Fund.

Glasgow: Ulster Friend, Phil. V4 — £10; Mrs MacKinnon — £10; Friend, per A.M. — £10; all for Congr. Funds; "In ever loving memory, Hamish B. Grant" mother — £100; E. MM — £5; Matt. 6: v3 — £20; Anon — £10; Anon — £5; all for Bus. Fund; Anon — £5; Anon — £1; both for T.B.S.

Greenock: Friend, Glasgow — £10 for Minister's Car; Mrs M. M., Glasgow — £10 for Church Funds, both per Rev. L. MacLeod; Mrs G. A. C., Liverpool — £20 for Congr. Funds.

Inverness: Anon for Church door collects. — £5; "M.N." for Sust. Fund, per Rev. A. F. M. — £100.

Kames: Friend, Balfron — £10 for Church Funds.

London: Mr B. Walshaw, for Church and Manse Fund, per Rev. A. M. — £20.

North Uist: Friend — £10; Friend — £5; Envelope in plate — £10 (twice), all for Comm. Exps.; MacDonalds Cross Roads — £150 for Sollas Church Repairs; Friend — £40 for Minister's Car; North Uist Friends — £500 for Congr. Purposes, both per Rev. A. Morrison; Neil MacD. Clarkston — £25 for Sust. Fund.

Raasay: A. G. for Congr. Fund, per M.D.M. — £5; Friend, Raasay, Sust. Fund — £12; Friend, Raasay, Home Mission Fund — £12; Friend, Raasay, Forgn. Miss. — £12; Friend, Raasay, Aged and Infirm Ministers, etc. — £11.

Stornoway: Tolsta Friend — £5; Anon — £10; Anon — £5; all for Comm. Exps.; Friends, Point, for Comm. Exps., per Rev. J.M. — £20.

Uig: Miss J MacLeod, in memory of a beloved brother, for Church Repairs, per J.B. — £50.