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Be Sober, be vigilant

The Apostle Peter, writing under divine inspiration, warns the strangers scattered throughout the different provinces of Asia Minor of an enemy who seeks their destruction. This is the old enemy or Satan who has kept up a relentless assault on the Church of God from its inception. It was this enemy who filled the heart of Cain with enmity to his godly brother Abel which led to Cain murdering Abel. From that time until the present Satan has continued his campaign of harassment on the true Church of God in the world, and no doubt will continue it unabated until the present Satan has continued his campaign of harassment of the eternity when he shall be bound for a thousand years during the period of millennial glory of the Church.

The Apostle speaks of Satan to those to whom he is writing as "your adversary the devil." He is peculiarly their adversary on account of their being children of God. Satan is the accuser of the brethren and seeks in whatever way he can to destroy or weaken their witness. While the Saviour was in this world, Satan did not hold back from tempting and trying the Son of Man who was the Son of God. We need not expect then that he will restrain his attacks on those who are followers of the Lamb of God seeing that his hope of success must be proportionately greater. This, then, is how the Apostle would have the people of God view Satan — "Your adversary, the devil." He is opposed to them and ever will be. The Church of God must ever be aware of his activities in seeking to oppose Christ and His kingdom in the world.

The Word of God makes it plain that Satan comes in many guises. He is a subtle foe. He knows well, too, how to bait the snares and traps that he sets for the feet of the saints of God. Sometimes he comes as an angel of light, sometimes as a purveyor of Scripture truths, though with a

subtle twist to suit his own ends. At other times he comes more openly and boldly seeking to strike terror in the hearts of God's children. It is in such a form he is presented to us here — who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." When he comes in this way it is with a show of strength. That he is a powerful adversary, it would be folly on the part of the Church or people of God to deny. But he is not all power. There is One on whom they may rely faced with these assaults of the Wicked One.

The Apostle counsels the Church of God as to how such an adversary may be guarded against and overcome. He calls on them to be sober, to be vigilant. They are to be on their guard against this enemy. They are not to be listless or asleep but fully alive to their danger and on the alert for his appearing in whatever form he comes. So, too, they are to be in a proper frame of heart and mind to resist him. They are to be sober. This can only be through being alive to spiritual and eternal realities and living a life that corresponds with a saving knowledge of these things. To be otherwise can only expose to danger for Satan will find such unprepared for his assaults. The people of God are to resist the devil. "Resist the devil," the Scripture declares, "and he will flee from you." Here they are counselled to resist him "steadfast in the faith." It is not by relaxing hold of the great doctrines of the faith that they are to have success against this adversary but by holding fast to them. The darker the day becomes, the more necessary it becomes to hold fast to these things and not to be moved away from them under any pretext. The truths of God's Word are sure and these alone can guarantee a firm foundation on which to stand.

As further encouragement to steadfastness, the children of God are reminded that the same afflictions are accomplished in their brethren that are in the world. They are not to think that some strange thing has happened to them and that others are not partakers of like afflictions. The same afflictions are borne by all the children of God. Let them therefore take courage and remember as well that their Redeemer is mighty and is able to deliver them out of all their temptations and trials. What encouragement there is, too, in the thought that the Saviour Himself while He was in this world was assaulted as they are, and therefore He has a fellow feeling with them in their afflictions and will not suffer them to be tried above what they are able to bear but will with the temptation make a way of escape. Let the children of God also rejoice in the fact that Satan after all is a conquered foe. The Saviour by His death on Calvary's accursed tree has destroyed him that had the

power of death, that is, the devil. Try as he will to overthrow the Church of God, all Satan's efforts will be ultimately frustrated and the Church of God will come forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Sermon

by Rev. Robert Elder, D.D., Rothesay

(Preached in Free Gaelic Church, Greenock on 15th October 1876 on the death of Rev. John MacRae).

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Hebrews 13: 8

"The words of the Lord," says the Psalmist "are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." But there are some statements of Divine truth so glorious and comprehensive that they seem to include all the elements of faith and hope. Such is this brief and comprehensive verse, on which I wish, depending on God's grace, to fix your minds and my own for a little this afternoon. It forms, as you will notice, what I may call a golden link between the exhortation going before and the warning that follows. In the verse preceding, the inspired Apostle exhorts the believing Hebrews steadfastly to follow the faith and holy conversation of their leaders, who had, by God's grace, finished their course with joy. And in the verse following he warns them against strange doctrines and false leaders, whereby in the time to come they might be deceived, to their great injury. So he places this grand Gospel testimony in the midst, as if to tell them and us that we shall find in it — in the truth of this text — the one great secret of steadfastness in following the Lord and those who by faith inherit the promises, and at the same time the ground, from which, if we be Christ's, we must never be moved by any doctrines or guides whatsoever. Such is the manifest connection in which this statement of Divine truth occurs; and, now, humbly looking to the Lord for light and strength, and for His blessing, let me fix your attention, in the first place, on the Subject of this testimony; secondly, on the Doctrine which is taught here concerning it; and, thirdly, on the great practical Lessons which we are called to learn from it.

I. A few words, in the first place, on the *subject* of this testimony — "Jesus Christ." I pray you, my dear friends, to observe that it is not the

doctrine of Christ which is here spoken of, nor the spiritual experience of Christ in us, but Christ Himself, the grand object of faith — Jesus Christ in the glory of his person and offices — the sum and substance, I may say, of the glorious Gospel.

We have on the one hand, in this text, the grand mystery of the *person* of Christ, as we always have where the full name "Jesus Christ" is given in Scripture. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus;" "She brought forth her first-born son and he called His name Jesus." By this name He is proclaimed to us as very man — bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh: as the holy prophet of old declared, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But also Christ the Anointed and Sent of the Father — as Martha testified, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Therefore this name or title declares His previous existence as the Son of God, His eternal Son, one with the Father in nature, counsel, and operation. So in that very passage already quoted, in which He is revealed to us as an infant of days, we find that remarkable testimony also to his supreme Divinity, quoted from the Prophets, "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us." And in the beginning of our epistle you remember how it is stated, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds:— the brightness of His glory and the express image of his person." I say we have the great mystery of the person of Christ set before us in this name or title, "Jesus Christ."

Again, we have the glorious *office* of Christ presented to us by the same word, "The one Mediator between God and men." Thus, in the passage quoted from the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel we read that by God's will and appointment he was called Jesus. Why? Not merely to show that He was very man, but because "He shall save his people from their sins." Again, he is called Christ, because, as he says by the spirit of prophecy, afterwards applying it to Himself, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord anointed me," the Messiah, the Christ, "to preach good tidings to the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He is the chosen Head of God's chosen and redeemed people in the covenant of grace, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King of his church and people. There is the grand object of faith; there is the comprehensive subject of my text, briefly set forth, as revealed to us in these two words, "Jesus Christ!" Oh, for that shin-

ing in the heart which would give us such a spiritual apprehension of this glory of His person and office, that we would be enabled to say with those of old, "We beheld His glory" — "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

But now — II. Let me direct your attention particularly to the *doctrine* of my text concerning Jesus Christ the Saviour. We may read the verse, not so much as part of the foregoing one, but as a distinct statement of Divine truth. "Jesus Christ *is* the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." When we look at the connection of this statement, as already explained, we may observe an interesting aspect which it bears towards the Hebrew Christians in particular, to whom the Apostle wrote this great epistle. He bids them in the verse preceding remember those who had spoken to them the Word of the Lord, and follow their faith and conversation — such men as Stephen and James, who, having served their generation, had been taken to their eternal rest; and then in the next verse he warns them against false guides and strange doctrines, whereby they might yet be tempted and harassed. But, 'tis as if he had said, Jesus Christ was all and in all to those faithful leaders of the Church. He was the constant subject of their testimony. He was the grand and only source of their strength and victory — "the author and finisher of their faith." And, now, be assured, that what He was to them yesterday, so He will be to you to-day, and ever more, if you trust in Him, and through grace cleave to Him as they did with purpose of heart. "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." My dear friends, this is to us as well as to the Hebrew Christians, and the statement implies higher and more impressive views than even that which I have just now indicated.

1. Let us look at the *general doctrine* set before us in these words of my text. Some explain them as referring to the different dispensations which God has given in his church, and as declaring that Jesus Christ has ever been, and that he ever will be the Head — the same under the Old Testament, now of "yesterday;" and under the New Testament, "to-day;" and, on, on to the consummation of all things — "for ever." Others put it in this way: He was the same in His life on earth, "a Man of sorrows," always going about doing good, as "yesterday," and now "to-day," in glory, sitting on the throne; and, evermore:— the same in his humiliation, in his exaltation, and for ever in respect of the glory of his person and his office. Perhaps the highest view of all is, that it presents Him to the faith of his people mainly in the Divine glory and unchanging excellence of his person. He was the same in the past eternity, as it is

written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" — the same also is He in this day of the world's history; — and the same will He be in the coming eternity, for ever. It reminds us of that great testimony which we have concerning him in the first chapter of this book where quoting from the Psalms, it says in the tenth verse, "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail." So he revealed himself to John in Patmos, when he heard the Lord's voice saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending saith the Lord." And, again, "I am the first and the last, the living One; and I was dead and behold I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." All these views are true, and, when combined, serve in some small measure to bring out the glories of this grand object of faith. They may help us by God's blessing to regard him, and that is the general doctrine of my text, as the Saviour of his people, unchanging, everlasting, and Divine.

2. Let me now try to illustrate this great general truth by two or three *particulars*. And, first of all, although it implies some repetition, I put in a sentence the fundamental truth of Christ's unchangeableness, in respect of *His person as the God-man* — God manifest in the flesh. As revealed in man's nature, he passed through marvellous changes, as you know, from the manager in Bethlehem, on through labours, and sufferings, and death, up to the mediatorial throne. But, here is the great truth — that the intrinsic glory and excellence of his person were ever the same amid all these changes; and that hence the infinite merit and efficacy of all that he did and suffered as the surety and substitute of his redeemed people. My dear friends, whatever we may know or discuss, this is the great foundation truth of the Gospel; the sure and immoveable ground of hope for poor sinners, believing in Christ, and united to Him by a living faith.

But, I observe next, that He is the same from first to last, all through, in his *relation* to his church and people. This is a fundamental truth also. When he dwelt with men on the earth, he showered down blessings on the evil as well as on the good, curing all manner of diseases, and going forth in works of benevolence far and near; and now in this world of sin, this world so provoking to his holy Majesty, there is a free offer of salvation sent in his name, even to the chief of sinners, wherever the glorious

gospel comes. Oh, we say to the worst enemies of Christ, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" and we go forth in his name with the freest invitation. But let us never forget this — and it is often forgotten, and many think to magnify the grace of God by hiding it — that the Lord Jesus Christ has a church and people given him by the Father, with their names written in his book of life, in whose eternal salvation "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." So he says, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world:" "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." And we find him in another place saying, "And this is the Father's will that sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." He undertook in the counsels of eternity, and came in the flesh to obey as a servant, and to suffer as a sacrifice for sins, all as the head, surety, and substitute of this church and people, bringing in for them an everlasting righteousness, according to the terms and provisions of the covenant of grace. Yes, but here is the point — that covenant is perpetual; it never can and never will be broken. The federal relation between Christ the Head and his people never can be changed. He is "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" in this blessed relation to His own. Ah what a fundamental truth is this! He says, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live;" "And I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." For in the same prophecy it is written, "The mountains may depart and the hills be removed but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Then, again, He is "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" in respect of His *thoughts* and *intentions* towards all his people who trust in him. There is a wonderful variety in the Lord's dealings towards his people. Often they are staggered and confounded by the changes which come over them, in respect both of their spiritual and temporal condition. Sometimes the Lord manifests himself to them, and they walk in the light of his countenance; sometimes he hides his face from them, so that they cannot behold him; sometimes crowns them with the tokens of his grace and faithfulness; and at other times casts them into the furnace of affliction. Oh, but He never changes, and that is the grand truth, in his thoughts and intentions towards the people who are his, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end;" as if he had said, I will take

my own way of bringing that about, but will surely do it. Often his church and people are tempted to think it is otherwise. Zion hath said many a time in her unbelief and impatience, "The Lord hath forgotten me; my God hath forsaken me;" but you remember the gracious rebuke in the next verse where he says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." And in connection with the institution of the supper, you remember it is said of the Lord Jesus, "Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He bears the names of his people, as their great High Priest, on his breast-plate and his shoulders — their High Priest within the veil and before the throne; and, as it is said in this same epistle, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Once more: He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," in His glorious *suitableness* to our case, and *perfect ability to save*. We may have loving and very dear earthly friends who have not the ability to do for us according to their wish, and who, at the best, alas! continue not, by reason of death. So it is with all earthly props and stays; but there is never any shortcoming, nor any lack in the work of Jesus Christ, our surety and Saviour, nor in the saving application of that work to his church and people. Time would fail me fully to illustrate this position, and I shall only glance at some leading truths implied in it. Thus, his sacrifice as a sin-offering for his people is perfect for ever, so that it never needs to be repeated, and therefore it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." There is nothing else needed — "from all sin." Then, again, His surety righteousness is entire, is everlasting, "Christ the end of the law for righteousness." See! "the end," the entire fulfilment of the law, so that it can claim nothing more; can claim nothing from the sinner, believing in Christ, to complete his ground of acceptance, and foundation of hope. "He is the end of the law for righteousness to *every one* that believeth," aye, from the days of righteous Abel on to the calling of the last elect sinner upon earth. And, further, all supplies of grace, according to all the several circumstances of his people, are laid up and are sure in him, as the Apostle says in another epistle, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: and ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." But consider what is implied in that last statement, as illustrated by the Saviour himself and his Apostles. He has the gift of the Holy Ghost for his people and church — the seven spirits of God, as it is expressed in the Book of Revelation. He is the Head of his people, effec-

tually calling and uniting them by his Spirit to Himself as the living Saviour, working in them true faith, opening their hearts, sanctifying and comforting them, and fitting them for glory, honour and immortality. And, moreover, what a fulness of truth is included in this declaration, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He has the reins of universal Providence. All things are in his hands, and he is "Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And so it is written by the prophet Isaiah, where he bids all who hear, and who are drawn to think in faith on these things, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." And therefore it is written by the Apostle, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose;" and even in regard to the sharpest chastisement and suffering it is said, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

III. Now let me offer a few remarks on the third and last part of my subject, viz., the great *practical lessons* which we ought to learn from the doctrine which I have thus imperfectly explained. I have already pointed out — and there is a great lesson implied in that — that this declaration of truth concerning Jesus Christ casts light on the foregoing exhortation and on the following warning. It is like the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness to guide the people in the way, and also to guard and defend them from the enemy.

1. But let me say in particular:— Surely the people of the Lord — those who have fled for refuge, who have given their hearts to Christ and closed with him by a living faith — should learn from it (and may the Lord in mercy teach us) the great duty and privilege of cleaving in all circumstances to this glorious, unchanging Saviour. My dear friends, be sure of this:— Your hope, your strength, your comfort, your security, your holy fruitfulness, and your eternal life, are all bound up in a believing apprehension of this grand truth — "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." You will remember how the Lord puts it by his servant Malachi — "I am the Lord, I change not" — you poor changing ones, often wandering, stumbling, and falling, take notice, "I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." That is the only ground of your sure hope. "Because I live," saith the Lord Jesus,

“ye shall live also.” Oh friends and brethren, if in your hearts any of you have really — as I do not doubt you have — embraced Christ, and committed all to him, I exhort and encourage you, depending on his own grace and strength, as Barnabas did the converts in Antioch, “that with purpose of heart ye would cleave unto the Lord.” Ah, be sure of this, all your springs are in Him — not in man, not in any experience you have had, but in Himself. Thus only will you follow the conversation of those who have gone before and who are up in glory; — thus only will you be guarded against what is false, and vain, and misleading in the world. That is what the Lord Jesus teaches: “Abide in Me and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.” And what precious encouragement is there in the truth that He has Divine sufficiency, and also perfect human sympathy towards all his people. He is our life and our all, and His faithfulness shall never fail, as he says — “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

2. What a loud and urgent call is there from this subject to sinners under the Gospel, hitherto impenitent and unbelieving. My friends, it teaches you very plainly, and the Lord give you to lay it to heart, that there never was at any time — that there is not now, and that there never will be, any other refuge and Saviour for sinners but Christ — Jesus Christ here set forth. Never! “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.” Oh, bethink you, this one glorious Saviour freely invites you if you will hear his voice. “I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “Come, for all things are now ready.” These are His words, and we are his humble ambassadors beseeching you in Christ’s stead, “be ye reconciled to God.” What madness to trifle with such a Saviour, whose grace is so freely offered! Think of that solemn question in this epistle, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Oh! ponder also, that testimony in the first chapter, as applied to Christ, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom; Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.” He is a precious and unchanging Saviour to all who come to him. Yes, but remember, he is a glorious King and Judge as well; unchanging in his hatred of sin, and in his firm determination to punish the impenitent and unbelieving when they come before the judgement seat. Oh, how will you appear before him in your sins, and with the aggravated

guilt and condemnation of having rejected his offered mercy? "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they who put their trust in Him."

3. A word now to souls trembling under a sense of sin and apprehension of condemnation; hearing the Gospel, but fearing that the hope of it is not for them. Well, if there be such here, the Lord knows them; and this is what I preach to them in his blessed name. You say, Not for me! not for me! my sins and provocations have justly excluded me. But, dear friends, surely there is Divine light and consolation for such as you in this word — "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He received the worst of sinners when he was upon the earth; he saved the dying thief dropping into perdition; he plucked Saul the bloody persecutor as a brand from the fire; and be assured there is no change in Him, nor in his grace and all-sufficiency. Still he speaks in the same gracious strain to you and to all who hear, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

4. But I hasten to observe, lastly, that we should learn from this subject the true hope and security of the Church and cause of Christ. Often his people are perplexed and at their wits' end because of the craft and power of the enemies of Zion, and because of the weakness and insufficiency of Christ's servants. But the hope of the church is here — "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." You remember that touching word of old Jacob when the time of his end drew near, "Behold I die, but God shall be with you." So the servants of the Lord die; for here we have the treasure in earthen vessels, frail, brittle, and perishing. But the great High Priest, the glorious Minister of the sanctuary, ever liveth, being "consecrated for evermore" — "made a Priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

In conclusion, I need hardly say that I have been led into this train of thoughts, and indeed to the choice of this subject of our meditations, by the solemn circumstances in which I have been called in providence to address you to-day. We mourn the loss of one who during a long ministry was honoured and beloved above many, and whose labours were singularly blessed in the Lord's vineyard. Suffer me to say in a word that my own acquaintance with our revered friend and father who is gone has extended over a period of nearly forty years, and that I count it one of the greatest privileges of my life to have enjoyed so long his Christian

friendship. I cannot look back on the occasions of our intercourse without feeling — the Lord give me to feel it in the right way — that I ought to have learned much from the fellowship of one so spiritually-enlightened, and so eminent in spiritual gifts. His great natural powers and strength of character would have raised Mr M'Rae to influence in any circle wherein his lot might have been cast. But when it pleased God, in his early manhood, to arrest him in a worldly course (as he himself often testified) — in his course of ungodliness, though not of open sin, — to call him by his grace, and, after a long and sore struggle, to reveal his Son in him, and to give him peace in believing, and good hope through grace — all his great energies were consecrated to the service of Him who became all in all to his soul. No one could have intercourse with him without recognising the strong grasp of his mind, the soundness of his judgment, his great practical wisdom, the depth of his knowledge and experience in Divine things, and his single-hearted zeal for the honour of Christ, and the advancement of His cause in this evil world. I do not hesitate to say, after a pretty long life and ministry, that I never knew a man, in my judgement, more thoroughly honest in purpose, more upright in character, nor of more undaunted courage in the Divine Master's service. And yet his whole spirit and demeanour were marked by modesty and deep humility, so that none would be more ready than he to take the language of the Apostle as his own, "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Of his great and valuable services to our beloved Free Church I cannot here speak particularly. At the Disruption period he was, as I can testify from personal recollection and experience, a great power in the North and in the West, in expounding and defending, as few men could do, the glorious prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sole King and Head of his church, the independence of Christ's church with reference to civil authority, and her sole subjection to Him and his laws in spiritual things; and also in vindicating the blood-bought privileges of his church and people. Perhaps there was no minister who exerted a more commanding influence, in leading the minds of the people to clear views of duty, during that eventful crisis. Then, his unwearied toil and endurance afterwards, of which I can also speak from personal knowledge, in forming congregations, building up the Free Church in the scattered districts of our Highlands and islands, and, often in the cold winter of those regions, ministering to thousands who, up to that time, were destitute of the Gospel of the grace of God, time would fail me to describe. And, fur-

ther, his unflagging zeal and earnestness in preaching the Gospel, in maintaining the sound scriptural principles of our Church, and in promoting the cause of Christian love and unity in our own Church, and among the friends of Christ throughout the land, even when old age and growing infirmities admonished him that the end was near; these labours will cause his memory to be cherished with love and gratitude in this town of Greenock, and in many districts throughout the West and the North, where his visits were ever welcome, and were greatly blessed. I believe, my dear friends, to close this part of my notice, that there never has been, and that there could not be, a more thoroughly loyal, intelligent, devoted, large-hearted, God-fearing champion of the Church and her cause than our honoured and beloved friend, now departed.

But it was, let me say in a word, as a preacher of the glorious Gospel of the grace of God that he stood forth pre-eminent among his brethren. You in this place need no testimony on this point from me; and I trust that there are not a few now present who have a witness within of the power which accompanied his ministry. I shall never forget the clearness and power of his preaching, and especially at his communion seasons, during the years that he laboured in his full strength here. Oh, how he magnified the free grace of God as the one fountain of life and salvation to sinners! How skilfully, and yet how tenderly, did he expose the depths of man's sinfulness and helplessness. How he was enabled to exhibit the glory of Christ in His person, and offices, and finished work, and kingdom; and while proclaiming the free and urgent offer of the Gospel to perishing sinners, to set forth, as few men could, the grace and power of the Holy Ghost in all his saving operations! I, for one, don't hesitate to say that I never heard preaching to excel it, in respect of life, of tenderness, and of power. His last public effort, as I understand, was a pleasing, precious illustration of his whole character and ministry. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd" — I believe that was his subject — "He shall gather the lambs in His arms and carry them in His bosom." One felt, in listening to him, that here was truth drawn from the fountainhead; that the preacher believed, and therefore spoke. My dear friends, let me tell you it is no light responsibility that attaches to those who have been for years under such a ministry, as many of you have been. The Lord grant that it may prove a savour of life unto life to your souls, and not a savour of death unto death to some whom I now address.

I say these things, dear friends, not, I hope, to exalt the creature; but while offering my humble tribute to the memory of one whom I truly

respected and deeply loved, I would magnify the grace of God which shone forth so conspicuously in his servant. But I must close. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away," — taken him away as a shock of corn fully ripe;— "blessed be the name of the Lord." When we think of his laborious life, his unceasing labours, and his many cares, anxieties, and trials, from first to last, how sweet, how appropriate do these words seem, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." The Lord comfort, sustain, and bless his sorrowing family in this day of their distress; and the Lord grant that we who remain for a little season — it will not be long with any of us — may be stirred up to "work while it is called to-day," and by God's grace may be ready when our call comes. "Oh, Lord of the harvest," I would say, let us say it together, "Thou knowest our need; send forth labourers into Thine harvest." "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail, from among the children of men." Our hope is in Thee, thou gracious Lord and Saviour, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." May God add His blessing, and to His name be all the praise. Amen.

The Ministry of Angels

The great God works all in all in both worlds. It is He who filleth the earth with good things, causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and provides corn for the food of man. But in thus spreading a table for us He makes use of instruments. He commands His sun to shine, and rain to descend. So He is the life, strength and comfort of the renewed soul. All the streams of grace flow from Christ the fountain. But from the analogy observable in His works, we might reasonably suppose, that, on many occasions, He is pleased to use means and instruments, and particularly the ministry of angels, to communicate good to His children. Scripture expressly confirms this inference, and leaves it no longer a point of mere conjecture. He gives His angels charge over them, and they encamp round about those that fear Him. In this way honour is given to Jesus, as the Lord both of angels and men, and a sweet intercourse is kept up, between the different parts of the household of God. That angels have been thus employed is plain from the history of the Old and New Testament. They have often made themselves visible when sent to declare the will of God, as to Jacob, Elijah and David. Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and Mary; and a multitude joined in ascribing "glory to

God in the highest” when they brought to the shepherds the joyful news of a Saviour’s birth. An angel delivered Peter from prison, and comforted Paul when tossed by a tempest upon the sea.

How far the visible ministration of angels is continued in these days is not easy to determine. Many persons have been imposed upon by Satan, through such expectations; and it is not safe to look for extraordinary things; yet I do not know that we have warrant from scripture to limit the Lord so far as to affirm that He doth not, nor ever will, upon any occasion, permit His angels to be seen by men as in former times. The apostle pressing believers to exercise hospitality, uses this argument that “thereby some have entertained angels unawares,” which would hardly seem to be a pertinent motive, if it were absolutely certain that angels would never offer themselves as visitants to the servants of God in future times as they had formerly done. But waving speculation as to their visible appearance, it is sufficient to know that they are really, though invisibly, near us and mindful of us.

May we not receive assistance from the angels in our spiritual warfare? That evil angels have an influence and power to distress and disquiet us, is well known to exercised souls, and it seems quite reasonable to believe, that the good angels are as willing and as able to communicate helpful and encouraging impressions. As it is not always easy to distinguish between the temptations of Satan, and the workings of our own evil hearts, so it may be equally or more difficult to distinguish these assistances from the effects of gracious principles abiding in us, or from the leadings and motions of the Holy Spirit. Nor need we be anxious about it. We cannot err in ascribing all to the Lord. Yet there is something cheering in the thought that we are accompanied and surrounded by these blessed spirits, who have both inclination and ability to relieve, strengthen and admonish us, in ways which we cannot fully understand. Who can tell how often and how seasonably a promise, a caution, a direction, from or agreeable to the word of God is darted upon our minds by these kind messengers of our Father’s love?

We may warrantably think they are employed in restraining, overruling, and controlling the designs of Satan and his angels. The power, malice and subtilty of our enemy are very great. We may learn what he would do to us all, if he could, from the instance of Job. But the Lord rebukes him and that most probably by the ministry of unfallen angels, who are said to encamp round His people to deliver them, and doubtless their care is especially employed where the greatest danger lies. Daniel 10: v13. Revelations 12: v7. Jude 9.

They are witnesses to the sufferings and to the worship of His people, 1 Cor. 4: v9. This reflection should enliven and regulate our thoughts when we come together, for though the presence of our Lord and Saviour is the great consideration, yet this likewise may, in its proper place have some influence to compose our behaviour. Heb. 12: v22.

The ministry of angels preserves us from innumerable dangers and alarms which await us in our daily path. This is expressly taught in Ps. 91. When we receive little or no harm from a fall, or when a sudden motion of our minds leads us to avoid a danger which we were not aware of, perhaps the angels of God, have been the means of our preservation; nay it may be owing to their good offices that we ever perform a journey in safety, or are preserved from the evils we are liable to, when sleeping upon our beds, and incapable of taking any care of ourselves.

Finally they are appointed to attend the saints in their last hours and in a manner beyond our present apprehension, to keep off the powers of darkness, and bear the children of God, safely home to their Father's house. Luke 16: v22.

from — JOHN NEWTON'S WORKS.

Letter

by Mr Hugh MacKay, Vancouver

778 West 24th Ave.,
Vancouver.
Sept. 18th, 1961.

Dear Friend,

It is about time your welcome letter was answered. I have finished reading it again this morning.

I am pleased to hear that the enemies of your soul are still at war with you. You will not find an unconverted person troubled with soul enemies. Let us remember that the victory is assured to all those who fight the good fight of faith. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life." We must draw our strength to fight from Him who has all power in heaven and in earth. When He was in this world no one ever suffered from enemies as He did. Heaven, earth and hell were against Him, and yet not a word of complaint is heard from His lovely lips. He came to do the will of the Father and He took delight in doing it. He knew that only by absolute submission could He vanquish His enemy. Not only did He take our sins upon Himself, but He also took the

guilt and the curse due to sin upon Himself and that meant suffering and death on the accursed cross. In other words, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," and this One was none else than God Himself in our nature. Oh, wonder of wonders that He should do this for the vilest of sinners.

Your father and mother are in their usual way. They truly enjoyed being with you in that fruitful land of Goshen. May you all be spared to enjoy it. The Lord is not confined to any special place. Jonah found Him to be near in the whale's belly. He knows where every one of His sheep are in this wilderness and as a good Shepherd He leads them to green pastures and by still waters. He has them by day and by night in the fold of His adorable love.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear none ill:
For Thou art with me; and Thy rod
and staff me comfort still, etc.

Then to crown it all—

Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me:
And in God's house for evermore
my dwelling place shall be.

I have found much pleasure in reading some of Ralph Erskine's Sonnet's. The following is a sample.

Take well however kind Wisdom may
Dispose thy present lot;
Though heav'n and earth should pass away
Thy Husband's love will not.
Thou hast indeed the better part,
The part will fail thee never
Thy Husband's hand, thy Husband's heart,
Thy Husband's all for ever.

If you think you could enjoy reading some of these, I will send you the book containing hundreds more.

Trusting this finds you all well. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

H. MacKay.

George Carpenter of Emering

On the 8th Feb., 1527, George Carpenter was burned in Munchen in Bavaria. When he came before the council, his offences were read contained in four articles:—

1. That he did not believe that a priest could forgive a man's sins.
2. That he did not believe that a man could call God out of heaven.
3. That he did not believe that God was in the bread which the priest hangs over the altar.
4. That he did not believe that the very element of the water itself in baptism gives grace.

He refused to recant. Then there came to him a certain schoolmaster saying "My friend George, do you not fear the death and punishment which you must suffer? If you were let go, would you not return to your wife and children?" He answered. "If I were at liberty, where should I go but to my wife and beloved children?" Then said the schoolmaster, "Revoke your former opinion and you shall be set at liberty." George answered, "My wife and children are so dearly loved by me, that they cannot be bought from me for all the riches and possessions of the Duke of Bavaria, but for love to the Lord I shall willingly forsake them." When he was led to the place of execution, the schoolmaster spoke to him again, saying — "Good George, believe in the sacrament of the altar, do not affirm it to be only a sign." He answered "I believe this sacrament to be a sign of the body of Jesus Christ offered upon the cross for us." Then said the schoolmaster "Why do you so little esteem baptism, knowing that Christ suffered Himself to be baptised in Jordan?" He answered showing the true use of baptism, and the end why Christ was baptized in Jordan, and how necessary it was that Christ should suffer and die upon the cross. "The same Christ" said he "I shall confess before the whole world, for He is my Saviour, and in Him I believe."

After this came Conrade Schuter, the vicar of the cathedral saying, "George, if you will not believe the sacrament, yet put all your trust in God and say "I trust my cause to be good and true, but if I should err, truly I would be sorry and repent." George Carpenter answered, "God suffer me not to err, I beseech Thee." Then Conrade began the Lord's prayer; "Our Father which art in Heaven" Carpenter answered "Truly, Thou art our Father, and no other; this day I trust to be with Thee." Conrade went on with the prayer saying "Hallowed be Thy name" Carpenter answered, "Oh, my God, how little is Thy name hallowed in this world!" Then said Conrade "Thy kingdom come." Carpenter

answered, "Let Thy kingdom come this day to me that I also may come to Thy kingdom." Then said Conrade "Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." Carpenter answered, "For this cause, O Father! am I now here, that Thy will might be fulfilled and not mine." Then said Conrade "Give us this day our daily bread." Carpenter answered "The only living bread Jesus Christ, shall be my food."

Then said Conrade "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Carpenter answered "With a willing mind do I forgive all men, both my friends and adversaries. Then said Conrade "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Carpenter answered "O my Lord without doubt Thou shalt deliver me, and upon Thee only, have I laid all my hope." Then Conrade began to rehearse the creed saying "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Carpenter answered "O my God in Thee alone do I trust; in Thee only is my confidence, and upon no other." In this manner he answered to every word.

The schoolmaster asked "Do you believe so truly and constantly in thy Lord and God with all your heart as you so cheerfully confess Him?" He answered "It were a very hard matter for me, if I who am ready here to suffer death, should not believe with my heart, what I openly profess with my mouth, for I knew before that I must suffer persecution, if I would cleave unto Christ who says "Where thy treasure is there will thy heart be also." Then asked Conrade "Do you think it necessary after your death, that any should pray or say mass for you?" He answered "So long as the soul is joined to the body, pray God, that I be given grace and patience with all humility, to suffer the pains of death with a true Christian faith, but when the soul is separate from the body, I have no more need of prayers. Then he was asked by certain Christian brethren, that as soon as he was cast into the fire, that he should give some sign or token what his faith was. He answered "This shall be my sign and token, that as long as I can open my mouth, I shall not cease to call upon the name of Jesus."

Behold what an incredible constancy was in this godly man! His face never changed colour, but he went cheerfully to the fire. "In the midst of the town, this day" said he "will I confess my God, before the whole world." When he was laid upon the ladder, and after the executioner had put a bag of gunpowder about his neck he said "Let it be so in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." When thrust into the fire he cried "Jesus! Jesus!" Then the executioner turned him over, and again he cried "Jesus! Jesus!" and joyfully yielded up his spirit.

from: Foxe's Book of Martyrs

Obituaries

"The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

— Ps. 112: 6

With the passing of some of our worthy older folk from time to eternity we have not only lost those who loved Christ and His cause, but who were important links with the past in the history of the Grafton congregation in Australia.

Mr Donald Shaw died in his 91st year on the 3rd of March, 1983. His likeminded wife predeceased him by four months and Mrs Shaw's sister, Miss Irene Bailey also died eleven months before her sister.

Donald Shaw had the privilege of hearing the late Rev. Walter Scott who finally left the Brushgrove-Grafton district for Scotland as long ago as 1909. During these early days of Donald's life the congregation at Brushgrove, (about 25 km from Grafton,) was described as large. From the report in the 'Footsteps of the Flock,' by the Rev. W. MacLean. it is noted that during the communion service on 20th October, 1907 there was a "great concourse of people."

But without a minister for many years the congregation dwindled till there was no public worship and no church property. There was however, public worship further north in the Richmond river district. In a letter written from the home of Rev. Scott's widow in Grafton, on the 4th of October, 1935, Rev. J.P. MacQueen wrote to Mrs MacPherson on the East Coast of New Zealand as follows: "I am still in Grafton, as, different from the Richmond where the Kidd brothers conduct the services, the Brushgrove-Grafton congregation has no one to conduct the services but when the deputy is here. As the people have pressed upon me the advisability of staying here for a longer period, and as the Colonial Committee agreed to prolong the original stipulated period to two months longer, I have decided to remain in Australia till about the latter half of December. The communion services were held in the Grafton-Brushgrove congregation, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper being dispensed on Sabbath 15th September. Two new members came forward and a third left the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia and joined our church. The two new ones were Mr and Mrs Donald Shaw. Donald Shaw is a nephew of the Kidds, his late mother, who died in 1916 was a noted godly woman. There is an obituary notice of her by the late Rev. Duncan MacKenzie in our magazine for January 1917."

Mr MacQueen then traces how Donald Shaw, after returning from the First World War developed a problem with drink. To quote the above

letter again Mr MacQueen notes that it was by, "supernatural divine intervention, power and grace he could break his fetters. I baptised his young family of seven children shortly after coming to Grafton and at the same time he came before the Session for membership in full communion himself and the Kirk-Session being entirely satisfied his application was received. His wife came forward on the Saturday of the communion and when asked if she could remember any special truth and a period when she was specially affected she said that it was when I spoke from the text, 'They shall look unto him whom they have pierced and mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son and be in bitterness for him as one is in bitterness for a firstborn,' that she experienced gospel liberty, joy and blessing, and as far as can be humanly seen she is a true Christian. If so it was well worth coming to Australia for."

Miss Bailey was likeminded with her sister and brother in law. She had a keen interest in the good of Christ's cause. She was very devoted to furthering the work of the Trinitarian Bible Society in the Clarence District. As one who valued the public worship of God she continued to struggle out to services even when she was severely crippled with arthritis and a weak heart when others would have long before remained at home.

She tells about the opening of the Church in Grafton during the visit of Rev. Beaton at the opening of the second World War. "A few of the congregation were entering the church. Flora Shaw, Irene Bailey, Murdo MacGregor from Hurstville, Sydney, and among them were some visitors, Rev. Campbell Robertson and the Rev. Neil MacLeod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia and another minister. Rev. MacLeod said to Murdo MacGregor, 'After the old ladies, Mrs Scott and her sisters pass away that will be the end of the church here.' Murdo MacGregor said, 'You're a false prophet, MacLeod.' "Irene Bailey years later added, "And so he proved to be."

Miss Bailey showed much endearing quaintness in expressing herself. Something which bears this out is the way she said that the Grafton Church was built on two shilling bits, indicating that the people were not well off, but gave regularly of their ability till after long perseverance a church could be afforded.

It was during the days of Mr MacQueen's visit as deputy that Donald Shaw was asked to conduct public worship in Grafton. Services were held in the Oddfellows hall till the church was built in 1942. Donald Shaw continued to read sermons till Rev. W. MacLean became their minister. He was one of the meek of the earth and he could lead the congregation in prayer in an outstanding way. He adorned his long profes-

sion worthily till his decease, having Christ and His cause uppermost in his life.

Here it might also be noted that a namesake, but not related, Alistair Shaw, died a short while before Donald on the 24th December, 1983, aged 71. In his later years, Alistair retired from near Canberra to Sydney where he was an outstanding and respected leader among our young Sydney congregation. After the visit of Rev. D. Campbell to Australia in 1981, regular public worship was established in Australia's largest city. Rev. J.P. MacQueen wrote of his father, the late Mr Neil Shaw, "though meek and gentle and courteous in his temperamental disposition, he was as firm as a rock where spiritual principles were concerned." This was also true of Alistair. He was made an elder in 1980.

These worthy friends are now we believe gone to the rest which remains for the people of God. As was true of Abel that, "he being dead yet speaketh," it is true of them. Our sympathy is extended to all near and dear to them.

E.A. Rayner.

The late Rev. Alexander MacAskill, Lochinver.

Alexander MacAskill was born in the year 1896, in North Uist. His father, a native of Uist, later became the Church's missionary at Braes, Skye. His mother, who died when Mr MacAskill was but six years of age, was an eminently godly woman.

As a young boy, Mr MacAskill showed a readiness to comply in general with the wishes of his father. Yet, he admitted that he did feel some unwillingness when asked to sit in, on a weekday evening, and read Boston's "Fourfold State." The unwillingness, however, soon vanished after reading a few of its pages. He came to describe this book as "his treasure" and it proved to be a spiritual companion to him in later life.

As a young man he helped in the running of the croft. He could bear witness that the Lord, even then, answered his prayers. On one occasion when tending to his father's sheep, two of them had strayed, and could not be found, although he had spent several days in searching the moors of Uist. Mr MacAskill prayed over the matter and that very night he saw, in a dream, the two sheep held fast in a particular bog, to which place he went the next day and found the sheep. He had learned also to understand the rebukes of the Lord in providence.

A neighbour had returned to the island, and Mr MacAskill was anxious to hear his stories. For this purpose he unyoked the horse early, and although it was the prayer meeting evening, that was to be laid aside in

favour of his worldly interests. The horse was led to the well as usual, but the animal, which was remarkable for docility, proved intractable and kicked him. As he would say himself, "No one needed to tell me why I received that kick."

When the First World War began, Mr MacAskill readily went forward to fight for his country. Like many another person confronted with the dangers of the front line, he was brought to make many vows and resolutions to the Lord. Eventually, Mr MacAskill returned to North Uist and it appeared as if these resolutions were forgotten. The Lord reminded him of these matters and assured him that worse would come his way and then there would be no place for vows and resolutions. From now on the interests of his soul were made real to him. He was to pass through much and to learn thoroughly the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, in such a way that he could recall almost every step by which he was led. At one time, when he envisaged his appearance at the Judgement seat of Christ he felt that he would be able to defend himself against the sentence of God that he should be sent to hell. Thus began in his soul a rebellion against the law of God which proved severe and lasting. It would be hard to convey in words what his soul passed through during this trial. The first easiness of mind experienced by him was, when he came to accept the sovereignty of God and this was prior to his having any sense of comfort arising from a hope of being converted. In his attempt to answer the demands of the law and to live without sin he once imagined that he had succeeded in going a whole week without sinning, but this imagination was quickly destroyed. So hopeless did he see his case to be that he thought that there was no hope for him and he would perish. In this frame of mind he thought that to work was purposeless, and that he should "ground tools." Here, however, it occurred to him that man's duty was to work and so he carried on with his ordinary tasks. The Holy Spirit thus taught him that if ever he were to be delivered it must be by the Lord alone and that of His free grace. He waited long for his salvation and no wonder he could speak so understandingly from the words of the psalmist in psalm forty, verse one, "I waited for the Lord my God." As far as I can remember the words which ultimately gave him deliverance were the words in psalm four and the last verse, "I will both lay me down in peace and quiet sleep will take, because thou only me to dwell in safety, Lord, dost make."

I remember being with him on one occasion as he reminisced on the time of his deliverance and he quoted the words, "the fountains of the great deep were opened up," and added, "whatever others may say as

far as I am concerned it was the opening up of the fountains of the great deep of the Covenant of grace." It is little to be wondered at that he stressed so much in connection with the sinner's salvation, "God is going to have all the glory." He admired the grace of God and seemed to live out the truth he often stated, that grace would never be satisfied until it got back to the source from whence it came.

It could well be expected that Satan did not leave such an one alone. He had at this time a particularly sore trial which kept him many a night from his sleep. At last deliverance came in the words "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." What amazed him in this issue was, that God could be glorified by anything concerning him.

Being exercised in his soul with regard to making a public profession, and having, on the one hand, such a high regard for his own father, in whom he saw vital godliness so clearly exemplified, and, on the other hand, his own shortcomings and corruptions, he hesitated to take the step.

On the Saturday of a Uist Communion, the late Rev. D. N. MacLeod, latterly of Ullapool, was preaching from the words in Isaiah 40 verse 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Mr MacLeod went over the experience of Mr MacAskill stating all the fears and temptations with which he was then assaulted, and answered every one of them from the Word of God. Even while given such clear evidence, which he believed was from the Lord alone, as he sat and listened, he said, within himself, "If only Mr MacLeod would mention the words which I hope were the means of my deliverance I would go to the session." This, however, was not given.

As he came away from the church he was assaulted by the devil, who said to him that although he would be in heaven, the Lord would never again shine upon his soul on this earth. This made him weep bitterly. Eight years were to pass before he professed the Lord, and this was following upon his revered father's death.

Mr MacAskill left the croft and found employment in Fort William. From here it would appear he went forward to study for the ministry. We may rest assured that a man who held such clear views of the solemnities of eternity did not rush upon such an office. He prosecuted his studies at the University of London. At one time he was encouraged in this work by the words, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my

God. 1 Rev. 3: 12. After successfully completing his course in London, he proceeded to study under the Church tutors, and many a time he was sorely tried so as to be nearly giving up. However, he continued, and in 1937 was inducted as the pastor of the Assynt Congregation of the Church where he was to labour for well over forty years. It was here that he married Miss Flora Matheson, the daughter of the late Mr and Mrs Kenneth Matheson, Dingwall. Mr Matheson was a worthy elder in the Dingwall congregation. Mr and Mrs MacAskill had a family of two sons and three daughters.

The labours of Mr MacAskill were not confined to Assynt, but, due to the gifts with which the Lord had blessed him and to the large measure of grace given to him, he was constantly called upon to give his services at communion seasons. His outward life answered well to his pulpit ministrations. For the pulpit he prepared much by prayerful meditation on the Word. He was well read in the works of the divines. Gifted with a keen intellect, he was able to study, grasp and expound the whole theological system of the Word of God, in a most balanced manner. The experiences through which he himself passed gave a flavour to his preaching which was inimitable.

His voice was clear and arresting. As he proceeded with the sermon, it often rose to great height, as he warned sinners not to be "dupes of the devil," and assured them of the fact that Christ was free to them. Of man's utter inability to help himself, he was by no means silent, but held it in the very forefront of his preaching. In prayer, it was evident that here was a man who had come from the secret place of communion with God. There was evident a sense upon his spirit of the deep separation sin had made between man and a holy God and the consequent need for the Mediator. On the whole, he often refreshed the weary heritage of the God's elect and warned sinners of the danger of a lost eternity.

He bore his many trials meekly. The greatest of them was his own corruption. This sense that he had of sin increased with his years, although, it was plain that from the very outset he was deeply aware of the presence of sin within him. When he first sat at the Lord's table he could truthfully say that he felt himself to be the greatest sinner there. He was much exercised in the Word of God and this was flowing from his love to Christ.

He was a truly humble man and the very children could observe this. On one occasion, he was in the company of children, who were about to have a drink of orange juice. The children hesitated, wondering if it was necessary to ask a blessing. On recognising the situation, he asked a

blessing, remarking in it — “our great need of thanksgiving for what we might consider to be a small mercy — not a drop of cold water is given to a sinner in a lost eternity.”

In church matters he never put himself forward, but in the Courts of the church his counsel was waited upon. He held very clear and decided views on the position of the Church and never wavered about the stand taken in 1893. He seemed to have the highest regard for the late Rev. Neil Cameron, a man, he said, whose words had such an edge upon them that none other whom he heard had. Mr MacAskill was deeply concerned about the low state of things in the world and in the church. His belief was that matters would get worse and his reason for this view was, that the Lord had applied to his soul the words of Scripture — “Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.” The words borne into his mind were — “All the evil.” He looked upon the fact, that there was nothing to hinder sinners fulfilling their every lust, as a sign that we were nearing destruction.

His view was that the church’s duty was to hold fast, even although it would appear as if she was doing nothing. He compared the situation to that of a certain time in France, during the first war, when, for a long time, the army seemed to be at a standstill, but in fact it was holding its position.

He was able to the end to perform his ministerial duties, while his preaching retained its life and solemnity. He passed away on 15th December 1982. We had reason to feel as he himself felt for many a day — “Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.” Micah 7: 1.

His remains were laid to rest in Portree cemetery.

A. E. W. M.

Book Reviews

“The Attraction of the Cross” by Dr. Gardiner Spring; chapters xxii, pages 344, price £4.95. Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh.

This volume of fresh, stimulating studies upon the Atoning work of Christ on the Cross is in the Puritan tradition. At first glance, one might think that the title is drawn from one of the chapter headings of the book itself and made the title of the book irrespective of whether it might in-

dicade the nature of its contents or not, which is often the irritating practice found in books of sermons. But this is not the case here. The title has been carefully chosen to cover all the aspects of the Cross dealt with by Dr. Spring.

The book opens with 2 chapters upon the Narrative and the Truth of the Cross which prepares the ground for considering such subjects as the Cross regarded as a Propitiation for Sin, Completed Justification, Holiness, Test of Character, Preservation from Final Apostacy, its Triumphs, and a final chapter on the Cross Rejected as the Great Sin. A further chapter enters a plea on behalf of the Cross of Christ in the good, old, healthy Puritan spirit of applying the whole subject to the consciences and concerns of the readers and is added to conclude the 22 preceding chapters of this closely reasoned and interesting book. It is clear, therefore, that the purpose of the book is not only to explain the theology of the atoning work of Christ on the Cross but there is throughout an awareness that the gospel message is the Lord's remedy to heal the sins and diseases of sinful souls. "You may turn away from the cross of Christ," says the author, "but wherever you turn you will find no more sacrifice for sin. 'Behold then this Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. Often has he been 'lifted up' and 'evidently set fourth crucified among you'. Other efforts of his power and love you may have resisted; but there remains this highest, this last — the love and power of the cross. This is the last remaining barrier in your path to perdition. Heaven's tenderest mercy is even now beseeching you to stop at the cross of its bleeding son". And again; "Be your pilgrimage long or short never pitch your tent but in sight of the cross. More and more will it be to you the 'pearl of great price', your glory, and the crown of your rejoicing. More and more will you rest upon it the whole burden of your sins, and the whole weight of your eternity, and, with a confidence alike humbled and cheerful, ascribe present and unceasing honour to him who was 'lifted up from the earth'" — pages 343-4. These final words show the quality and earnest spirit of Dr. Spring's book.

The author was an American pastor of last century who was settled in 1810 over the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City, his first and only charge where he laboured for the next 62 years. The first few years of his ministry passed uneventfully and then the Lord visited his congregation with waves of revival under their minister's faithful preaching which lasted for 2 decades. Dr. Spring was a son of the manse. His father was a congregational minister who served as chaplain in the American War of Independence and became minister at Newbury Port, Mass., from

1777 to 1819. It is interesting to note that it was here that the great George Whitefield ended his amazing career on his 7th and last visit to America and here in Newbury Port cemetery his remains are laid to rest. This work, we believe, will be highly prized by spiritually minded readers. The printing and format and binding of this handsome volume are all that we might expect of the Banner of Truth Trust, and we hope it will enjoy a large and ready sale and be blessed by the Lord to numerous readers.

A.F.M.

Authority by D. M. L. Jones. Banner of Truth Trust. £1.50.

This light paperback of 94 pages, in large clear print, does not purport to deal with the subject of authority in general. More specifically, it is concerned with Authority in the sphere of Religion and the Church. The Doctor writes in no professional strain, but plainly, and with appealing simplicity. The booklet is comprised of 3 chapters. The first relates to the supreme authority of Christ Jesus, which is proved with refreshing clarity from Scripture itself. We are inclined to agree with the author's remarks on the probably detrimental effects of an overdose of Apologetics! The second chapter treats of the Authority of Scriptures. Perhaps the order should have been inverted, but the ordinary reader will find much that is enlightening and edifying in these pages. They contain a simple resumé of attacks made on the Holy Scriptures. In chapter 3, the subject is, the Authority of the Holy Spirit. The writer sets before us, some of the common and carnal solutions for the 'restoration' of christian authority. These are not new, but nonetheless telling and relevant. Have you heard them or even adopted them?:— Advertise the Gospel — stress social and political concerns — make greater use of the media — show that the Christian is no fool, but intelligent — abreast — intellectual — let us have one great world church. "We often quote," he continues, "Not my might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord" — and yet rely on the mighty dollar and the power of the Press and advertising. Most significantly the author adds, "we seem to have forgotten that God has done most of His deeds in the church through 'remnants'."

Apart from a passing reference to the sealing of the Spirit, we recommend this little book on a subject of permanent importance, but rendered increasingly so by the present moral, religious and spiritual climate.

F.M.

drug addict. There is no doubt that the departure from God's Word which has taken place in our land has brought many evils in its train and drug addiction is one of them. Only a return to that Word will prove a sufficient remedy for this and other plagues with which we are visited.

Crime

The Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police recently highlighted the connection there is between the increase in certain crimes and drug abuse. He indicated that more hard drugs were being used than ever before and as a result addicts are turning to more serious crime because they need the money to pay for their drugs. Burglary, too, among the young is now commonplace. Thirty eight per cent of those cautioned or found guilty of burglary were aged between 10 and 17. The Home Office is taking steps to provide lessons on law and order for schools in an attempt to combat teenage crime. The need here, as in the case of drugs, is a return to the Word of God in the homes of the nation.

Dangers to our Constitution

The Catholic Emancipation Bill was introduced as a measure to conciliate the Irish. It was urged that they would love our Protestant Constitution if they got their liberty restored. They have divorced the larger part of Ireland from the British Commonwealth of Nations, and yet they are not satisfied, nor do they love our Constitution. The activities of the I.R.A. are sufficient evidence. Before the Emancipation Bill was passed they were suppliants, now they use force.

That far-seeing nobleman, Lord High Chancellor Eldon, said in reference to the Bill of Emancipation, "Rather than consent to an alteration of laws which I hold to be fundamental and which I think to be essential to the support of the Throne, the safety of the Church, the good of the Aristocracy, and the preservation of the Constitution of the Country, I would rather hear that I was not to exist tomorrow morning, than awake to the reflection, that I had consented to an act which stamped me as a violator of my solemn oath, a traitor to my Church, and a traitor to the Constitution." — Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. Vol. XXI pp639-640, April 10th, 1829. Dr. Chalmers was in favour of the Bill, but Rev. John Kennedy, Redcastle, was afraid that it would lead to Britain's downfall. Before the Emancipation Act Papists took the position of suppliants begging for favour. They do not beg nowadays.

They demand concessions and threaten force, as in the case of Northern Ireland, for which innocent people are slaughtered by bombs in the great cities of England. Prince Charles said, in reference to the Harrod's bombers, that they would have to meet with God.

In 1873, Lord Beaconsfield, formerly Disraeli, in Glasgow said that our Empire and liberties were more in danger from a foreign priesthood, than they were when an army of invasion was encamped at Boulogne. Today, every office in the State is open to Roman Catholics but the Throne. The Woolsack can now be open to an R.C. A Bill was introduced in the House of Lords to this effect. The enemies of our faith and liberties would dearly love that the Act of Succession would be repealed, so that an R.C. could sit on the Throne. Where would our Protestant Constitution be then that the Covenanters fought for during 28 years of persecution?

(Rev.) D. J. MacAskill.

Church Notes

Notice of Synod

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will meet (D.V.) in St. Jude's Church, Glasgow on Tuesday 22nd May at 6.30 pm., when the Retiring Moderator, Rev. John MacDonald, North Tolsta, will conduct public worship.

Meeting of Synod

In view of the meeting of Synod due to be held in Glasgow this month, we would commend to the prayers of the Lord's people the Fathers and Brethren of the Church as they meet to deal with the affairs of Christ's Cause in our midst as a Church. We pray that they may be guided in all things so that all that is done may rebound to God's glory and to the good of His Cause at home and abroad.

From Zimbabwe we understand that Rev. B.B. Dube and Mr James Mpofu expect to attend the Synod and from Australia, Rev. E.A. Rayer. There may also be others present from overseas as well. Their presence will be welcomed in our midst and we trust that they will be brought in safety to this country and also carried in safety on their return home. (D.V.)

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

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

Southern: At Glasgow on 12th June at 6 p.m.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Foreign Mission Fund: "Friend in Leicestershire" — £100; Lochcarron Christian Fellowship — £26; Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel, Luton — £50; Anon., Canada — \$100 for famine relief in Zimbabwe.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Auckland Congregation — £166.48; Ness Congregation — £203.

The Publications Treasurer, Mr R. W. M. MacKenzie, C.A., Geanies House, Fearn, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Welfare of Youth Fund: Ness Congregation — £5; M. M., Gairloch — £5.

Publications Fund: Anon. — £10.

Free Distribution Fund: J.A.F.L. — £18; M. M., Gairloch — £5.

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

Dumbarton: Bequest of Miss C. Turner, late member of Dumbarton Congr. — £500 for Congr. Fd., per Messrs Bird Semple, and Crawford Herron, Solicitors.

Fort William: Wellwisher, Dingwall — £5 for Sust. Fund per Rev. J. A. MacDonald; A. MacG. — £5 per D. MacN.

Lochcarron: Anon — £5 for Ch. Door Coll. (Kishorn plate); Memory of loving Mother — £10 for Gen. Repairs per A. McK.; Anon — £10 for Church Heating per J.W.R.; Anon — £10 for Gen. Repairs; Anon — £5 for Ch. Door Coll., both in Lochcarron plate; Friend — £25 per J.W.R.

North Harris: Friend, Stockinish — £5 for Ch. Repair; Friend, Stockinish — £10 for Comm. Exps.; Friend, Meavag — £20 (£10 Ch. Door Coll., £5 Pulpit Supply, £5 Comm. Exps.); Friend, Harris House — £4 for Door Coll.; M. M. L., Harris House — £10 for Door Coll. per Rev. D. MacLean; Friend, Tarbert — £6 for Comm. Exps.; Friends, Kyle Scalpay — £3 for Door Coll. per R. MacLeod; Anon, Church plate — £20, where most needed.

South Harris: Friend, Ardaneaskan — £10 for Missionary's Car Expenses (Coll. plate); Friend, South Harris — £200 for Congr. Fund per N. MacKay; Friend, Skye — £40 for Congr. Fund; R. G. — £10 for Car Fund, last two per Rev. D. MacLean.

Portree: Miss B. G., Edinbane — £5 for Door Coll.; Miss P. M., Coolin Dr. — £20 for Comm. Exps., both in envelope in plate; Friends — £5 for Minister's petrol; K.M., Achachoirk — £185.55 for Manse Repairs, both per F.M.

Raasay: Anon, Stornoway — £10 for Church Funds, per Rev. J. R. Tallach; Friend, Raasay — £10 where most needed; J. Mach., Portree — £10 for Manse decoration.

Stornoway: Anon. — £5 for Comm. Exps.; Anon. — £5 for Foreign Missions.

Paul well joins persecution and a Pharisee together, for there was never a hypocrite but he was a persecutor. — Richard Sibbes.

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Falling into the Hands of the Living God

The Apostle Paul in writing under divine inspiration to the Hebrews warns them very solemnly of the awful danger of falling into the hands of the living God. "It is a fearful thing," he says, "to fall into the hands of the living God." It is clear that what he meant was falling into the hands of the living God as hardened and impenitent sinners and beyond the reach of mercy. This is seen when we contrast this passage with the expression to which David gave utterance when faced with the alternatives of either falling into man's hand or into the hand of God after his numbering of the people. On that occasion David said to Gad the prophet: "I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." David was on the ground of mercy and could plead for and receive mercy at the hand of God, but he knew full well that "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

There is nothing so solemn as for a sinner to fall into the hands of a sin-hating and sin-avenging Jehovah. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" To meet with God out of Christ is to expose the sinner to the everlasting curse of God. What more solemn sentence could a soul conceive of than that which shall be pronounced upon the impenitent? In the day of judgement that dread sentence shall be passed on all that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ — "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels." In that day "the Lord Jesus shall