

THE
Free Presbyterian Magazine
and Monthly Record

Vol. 89

JUNE 1984

No. 6

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

be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance" on such and they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

The question must arise as to what kindles such wrath. The answer is a simple one. It is sin — sin against an infinitely holy God. It is the holiness of God and the justice of God that generates such wrath. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Men make a mock at sin. To men sin is a matter of little consequence, a matter that causes little concern or heart-ache to them in this world. Such an attitude to sin can only exist in this world. There is no such attitude to sin in the world to come. There sin is that which God must punish eternally and though sinners will gnash their teeth against the justice of God yet there is no escape from it, there is no escape from the hands of an angry God. There sinners shall lie down for ever under God's wrath, never to escape from it, no, not to all eternity.

What sin is to lie heaviest of all on impenitent sinners in hell? What sin is to bring the greatest weight of the wrath of God upon them? Surely it must be the sin of unbelief, the sin of rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel. No greater sin can be conceived of than that of spurning the offered mercy of God in Jesus Christ. What can equal making light of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's accursed tree? What can earn such wages as doing despite to the Spirit of God as He presents the claims of Christ in a clear light to the mind of the sinner and yet that that light is despised and rejected? Unbelief shall sink men lower than the grave. To despise Christ, the alone Saviour of sinners, the One who died the just in the room of the unjust, leaves men in the awful situation that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Where, then, do we stand in the light of these solemn truths. If we are still out of Christ, do not these solemn revelations of God's anger against sin warn us of the wrath that is to come and of our need to flee to Christ the only refuge for sinners? The wrath of God against the sins of many found full satisfaction in Him and in Him that wrath was quenched. On none who are in Him shall that wrath ever take hold, for they are hid in a cleft of that Rock which is Christ. For those who profess Christ's Name, surely these solemn truths are fitted to stir them up to examine themselves if they are in the faith, lest that day should come upon them

when fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites. The true children of God cannot fold their hands complacently and say to themselves that all is well, therefore they need not fear. They know their own hearts too well for that and that if they were left to themselves they would deceive themselves no matter what high pretensions they may presently make of being the children of God. They desire that the Lord would search them and undeceive them if they are self-deceived. They have to say with the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139: 23,24.

Sermon

by Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale

(Preached in Glendale, Sabbath evening, 11th January 1948).

"... Behold he prayeth." Acts 9: v.11 (Last part).

The chapter which has been read in your hearing begins by informing us that "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest," desiring letters, giving him authority to go to the synagogues of Damascus, in order that he would bring the Christians there bound to Jerusalem. It was a day of fear and trembling to the Christians of Damascus, for they evidently knew of it, as we can gather from verse 14, but it became a never-to-be-forgotten day, both in the personal experience of Saul and in the history of the Church of Christ. Saul of Tarsus lived according to the strictest sect of the Pharisees, and the Pharisees were noted for their long prayers, and for performing them in the most public places to which they had access, but the Holy Ghost did not leave anything on record concerning these prayers of this Pharisee. Here we have him, blind, and after fasting for three days, all his religion gone with the four winds, reckoning himself the chief of sinners, and without anything of his own by which he could be justified, and the Lord says of him, "Behold he prayeth." In this we have a clear picture of what is true concerning all who undergo a saving change. With some the change may not be so sudden, or so perceptible to themselves or to others, but the words of our text are true concerning them all, "Behold, he prayeth."

In noticing these words as they are true in the experience of every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit, I shall endeavour to draw your attention to three things in particular:—

I. From what does prayer arise.

II. To whom should prayer be directed.

III. What should our prayer consist of.

I. From what does prayer arise.

It is very evident that the prayers of the natural man are not of such a nature as to merit that notice should be taken of them in Heaven, for if they were we would have some record of the prayers of such a zealous man as Saul of Tarsus, but the fact that the Holy Spirit passes over them in silence clearly proves that they are an abomination to the Lord. It is only when the Holy Spirit begins to work savingly in a poor sinner that he begins to pray, for it is then that he comes, through a sense of his sinfulness, to see his needs. Thus we see that it is when conviction of sin fastens upon a sinner that he begins to pray. He now realises that he is a sinner in the sight of God, and is under His wrath and curse.

Very often it is the case, in the work of conviction, that the Holy Spirit puts His finger on some particular sin of which the creature is guilty, so that that sin stands out in a particular manner as deserving the wrath and curse of God both in this life and in that which is to come. It is a flagrant transgression of the Law of God, but still the creature, foolishly, imagines that by other works of his, he can atone for this great sin. This, in turn, brings all his works, words, and thoughts, to the touch-stone of God's Law, the character of which is that it is perfect. The Holy Spirit thus convinces him that he has nothing by which he can please the Lord for all his works, words, and thoughts, are polluted by sin. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul." Micah 6: vs.6, 7.

From a sense of the utter worthlessness of his actions and how polluted they are, the Holy Spirit leads the sinner to view the corrupt fountain from which they all proceed, and that that corrupt fountain is in the heart of the sinner himself. Men of the world imagine that a man may be made better by bettering his lot and improving the environments in which he is placed. The fallacy of this is proved by the fact that there are many in the world whose lot and environments are all that can be desired, from a worldly point of view, and yet their lives are far below the standard found among men in more humble circumstances. The convinced sinner is led to see that the evil is within himself, and that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." He is brought to see that this natural corruption

is the fruit of the Fall, so that he is constrained to confess with the Psalmist, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Nothing will do for him now but that the Lord would answer, in his case, the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Not only are sins of omission and commission brought to his view as his own particular sins, but there are also his sins in rejecting God's great and glorious Remedy. You are here before me who are guilty of this great sin oftener than you can count, for in a preached Gospel the Saviour of sinners has been "set forth, crucified among you," as He was among the Galatians. Preachers of the Gospel have exhorted and warned you from the days of your childhood, and you are able to read for yourselves concerning God's provision as that is set forth in the Scriptures, and yet, in the face of it all, you are still in your sins. This is what the awakened sinner is brought face to face with in the day of effectual calling, and this is the background upon which the words of our text, "Behold, he prayeth," is written so clearly. He is brought to see that he has despised the only remedy, and put himself among those for whom there is "no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

When a sinner is brought to this condition he is confronted with a sense of his need. He finds himself destitute of righteousness. Saul of Tarsus imagined at one time that he had a righteousness with which he could stand before the Lord, and that according to the righteousness which was of the law he was blameless, but when he came to Damascus on this memorable occasion he understood, as he never understood before, the words of Scripture, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." This is the case with every awakened sinner. The standard set before him by the divine law is so high that he cannot attain to it, for it is nothing short of perfection. To have a righteousness that would meet with the requirements of Justice, the sinner would need to bring to the Law holiness of nature, complete conformity to the Law in his life, and a perfect satisfaction for sin; but the Holy Spirit convinces him that he cannot do it, and that God will accept of nothing less.

Along with a sense of his need of righteousness, there is a sense of his need of grace. The man who before was so satisfied with his own prayers and his own attainments now comes to realise that he cannot pray or do anything aright without grace. How easy it was for the Pharisees to stand

in the market places and at the corners of the streets and pray. They did not require any assistance beyond what they were able to supply themselves, and the longer the prayer the surer they were that it would be heard. This is the way with natural men and their prayers, but the convinced sinner feels his need of grace to pray, and his felt need in that direction, as well as in other directions, sends him to pray. Such will not pray in vain, for it is written, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

Another need of those who pray is the need of being strengthened to resist temptation. The man or woman who begins to pray in real earnest encounters temptations, for he is exercised in a way that is troublesome to Satan. Satan cannot abide a praying sinner, and, therefore, he must either be kept from praying, or his prayers must be spoiled by making him believe that they will not be answered, or when a prayer is not answered immediately, he must be made to entertain hard thoughts about God, or tempted to question His power or His very existence. Such need, that with the temptation, a way of escape might be made, and it is only through God assisting them that they overleap these walls and similar ones. and thus proclaim with the Apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Prayer arises from the individual being harassed with perplexing thoughts. These perplexing thoughts often arise when a sinner is under the spirit of bondage. Through the knowledge which he gets of his own inward corruptions, he begins to question if one so polluted can get to Heaven, and the question, in this connection, that is often uppermost in his mind is, Was ever such a one as I saved? He then asks, Can God be just in saving such a filthy sinner as I am who not only led an ungodly life by transgressing the Law, but also crucified to myself afresh the Lord of Glory and put Him to an open shame? These are questions which, more or less, harass the awakened sinner before he gets, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, a Scriptural view of God's plan of salvation, yet this acts as a stimulus to prayer, for he has heard of other great sinners, and he reasons, in the language of the Scripture, "Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him."

Again, prayer arises from the perplexing situation in which a man finds himself when God is silent. This experience is often found in connection with a man being under the spirit of bondage, but it is not confined to that period of the saved sinner's life, yea, it is an experience that follows the most, if not all, of God's children through life. These perplexing experiences are noticeable with the Psalmist when he says,

“How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me.” Not only does he expostulate with God in this psalm about these protracted periods of silence but he prays, “Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.” These experiences are very difficult to bear, but God causes His children to pass through them in order to fulfil the wise and gracious ends He has in view. While they are in the body His people are often ready to forget that they must be continually dependent upon Him. This exposes them to many snares, which, were it not for God’s gracious care over them, would cause them many a time to have broken bones. Their assurance of His favour lies in His speaking to them through His Word, and when they miss that, they are constrained to draw near to him in their distress, and to cry for a renewal of these heavenly communications which at other times they had from Him through His Word. Thus they are in the exercise of prayer, and a praying soul is a humbled soul, and a humbled soul is in an attitude where God is pleased to give grace, “For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” From this we see that it is profitable for a child of God to be in darkness, even though the only fruit of it would be, that he would be constrained to pray in a manner that would be taken notice of in Heaven.

When wickedness abounds the real saint must be praying. He may view the world today and see it full of enmity to God. The nations are combined to plot against the Lord and His anointed, and their desire and aim is to overthrow everything that has the stamp of holiness. Fallen nature appears in its worst colours; evil is called good, and good is called evil; those who are the Lord’s witnesses are made the objects of the scorn and contempt of the ungodly, and every effort is made to turn poor sinners from sobriety and seriousness to worship at the shrine of pleasure and intemperance. From the highest to the lowest, in Church and State, there is an almost universal disregard of the Word of God, which is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy Him, and almost every one does, as far as that Word is concerned, what is right in their own eyes. This may be considered a very gloomy picture of the times in which we live, but it is a real one, as every one knows, who is giving the least attention to conditions throughout the world. The statesmen of various nations may gather in order to devise remedies to heal the world’s ills, but so far they have utterly failed, and will fail, because they are relying on their own carnal wisdom. Full well the child of God knows

that there is only one remedy for the world's woes, and that is, an out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, and equally well he knows that there is but one door at which men can apply for that remedy, and therefore the words of our text are applicable to him, "Behold, he prayeth." This leads us to notice the second thing which I purposed to draw your attention to.

II. To whom should prayer be directed.

In the Bible we read of many prayers and some of these were never answered because those to whom they were directed could not hear, or could not answer the petitions put up to them. The worshippers of Baal on Mount Carmel never got an answer to their prayers for their god could not hear. Of the prayer of the rich man in Hell someone said that it had three defects. It was put up at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and to the wrong person, for Abraham could not grant an answer. The Christian, however, has a prayer-hearing God whose ear is open to hear the confessions and petitions of sinners. "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." He has heard the prayers of a countless number who are this evening on Mount Zion above, and whose employment now is to sing the praises of redeeming love. They were made conscious of their needs through the saving work of the Holy Spirit, cast out of all refuges of lies, and brought, as self-ruined and hell-deserving sinners, to cry to Him who is Jehovah, speaking "in righteousness, mighty to save." They did not cry in vain, for their cry was the cry of the new birth, and the evidence of the beginning of a work which God has pledged himself in His Word to complete. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God."

When a sinner of our race approaches God in prayer, he cannot do so on the ground of his own righteousness, for he has none. It is only the proud Pharisee, whether he be Jew or Gentile, that has not learned that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Such imagine that by their own works they can approach God. They are blind to the depth, unbridgeable by man, which the Fall has put between them and God, and they ignore what is revealed of Him in the Scriptures, that it is He "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting." Thus their brutish folly causes them to weary themselves in a way which will never lead them to God. The

man who is truly praying has learned that there is only one way to God, and that, through Him who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life! no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In coming by that way he has his eye on the Atonement which was completed on Calvary, when the Son of God, as the Surety and the Substitute of His people kept that appointment which was made with the Justice of God from all eternity, and by the shedding of His own precious blood, paid to the uttermost farthing the debt under which His people lay, thus opening a way by which the love and mercy of God could flow out to them in a manner that is perfectly consistent with the Holiness, Truth, and Justice of God. In thus coming by prayer to God, Oh! what a comfort there is in the words, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here the poor sinner finds a sure and sufficient foundation upon which he can stand for eternity, and say with Samuel Rutherford,

"I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

When the Holy Spirit reveals this wonderful foundation to the poor sinner, he gets a ravishing view of the incomprehensible love of God and of the gracious purposes which are unfolding themselves to his view, in connection with that matter with which he is now more immediately concerned, even his own eternal salvation. It baffles the powers of his mind to comprehend how such a pure and holy Being as he sees God to be, can take such delight in a sinful worm of the dust as he knows himself to be, as to bring into exercise all the revealed Attributes of the Godhead in order to be glorified in the salvation, rather than in the condemnation, of His enemies. Full well he knows now that this wonderful dealing of God with the soul cannot be traced to any merits in the creature, and can have but one source, even the incomprehensible love of God.

The sinner, awakened by the Holy Spirit, is in a different condition to the prophets of Baal. They prayed to a god who was not able to hear or do anything for them, but the awakened sinner prays to a prayer-hearing God, and prays as a sinner. I sometimes listen to men praying at funerals; the language is grand, the style brilliant, the grammar is correct, the thoughts sublime and the diction faultless, but evidences of the broken heart and contrite spirit are conspicuous by their absence. This certainly is not the kind of prayer which the Apostle had in

Damascus, and of which notice was taken in Heaven when it was recorded, "Behold, he prayeth."

The prayer of which God takes notice, very often, has not even words. Those who utter them are very often in the same condition as the Psalmist, when he said, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak." The prayers of such very often consist in sighs and groans, and, sometimes, sighs and groans over how much hypocrisy they find in their own sighs and groans, yet these very sighs and groans manifest the desire of their hearts. Though these sighs and groans are wrung from the soul through a consciousness of sin, yet those who have them are in an enviable condition, for this is the kind of prayer which the Lord hears, for "He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." Let the groan or the sigh be ever so secret, a prayer-hearing God takes notice of it, and this is very comfortable when the broken-hearted sinner, in the exercise of faith, is enabled to say, "Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee."

To pray to God implies humility, for it is the humble who pray. They are in the dust and in the dung-hill, confessing that they have nothing but death and corruption; that they can never be dependent upon themselves or any other creature for salvation, and have been brought to realise that their greatest earthly privileges, their highest attainments, and their circumspect walk in the world are but an abomination. This is how the great Apostle of the Gentiles found matters when he said, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

III. What should prayer consist of.

Our prayer, first of all, should have confession of sin. The prayer of the Pharisee in the parable made no mention of sin, and he has many companions in our day, Sin has gone out of the vocabulary of the great majority of professors of religion in our day. There is no word of the Fall of man or the miseries which that brought upon mankind, but where the Holy Spirit is at work sin cannot be hid from the eyes of those who are the subjects of that work, Their sin is ever before them and they have to confess, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." This confession is not a mere lip one; it is accompanied with deep penitence and godly sorrow, for "they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them

mourning, every one for his iniquity.”

In prayer there are, and must be, petitions for mercy. God has revealed Himself as merciful for the sake of Christ, and it is that revelation of Him in the Scriptures, conveyed to the understanding by the Holy Spirit, which constrains the awakened sinner to pray, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” This revelation is of such a nature that it encourages the vilest sinner out of Hell to petition for mercy, for there is enough for the chief of sinners, thus encouraging such a sinner to hope for mercy.

In prayer there should also be thankful acknowledgments of God’s mercies. We have many reasons for thankfulness that God has not marked our iniquities as He did in the case of the angels that kept not their first estate causing them to be delivered unto “chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” His treatment of us is in accordance with His mercy, and should cause us to acknowledge with thankfulness that “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” We should acknowledge with thankfulness in our prayers His daily mercies bestowed so liberally on us, both in providence and in grace, and, likewise, we should acknowledge with thankfulness what He has promised to do for such as wait on Him, for all that he has promised to do is as sure as if it was in actual possession, for all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Above all we should acknowledge with thankfulness the gift of His Son and the manifestation of His love which is thereby made. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It is in the name of that Son that all our petitions ought to be offered up.

Finally, our prayers ought to have respect unto the will of God. Many ask for things that are not agreeable to the will of God to give, and that is followed by dire consequences to themselves. The children of Israel present a fearful example of this, for we read that “He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” There are many things which are lawful for us to ask, and God has revealed that it is in accordance with His will to grant them. In this connection we ought to remember that He has given many proofs that it is in accordance with His will to save sinners, and, that, therefore, we ought to be praying for that salvation, and in praying for it, that we would be seeking to have an eye to His glory. When such a revelation has been made may we be found coming as

sinners to a Throne of Grace with the prayer of the publican. "God be merciful to me a sinner."

May the Lord bless anything said that was consistent with the mind of the Spirit.

"Come Out!"

by Bishop J.C. Ryle

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." — 2 Cor. VI. 17.

The two little words which head this page touch a subject of vast importance in religion. That subject is the great duty of separation from the world. This is the point which St. Paul had in view when he wrote to the Corinthians, "Come out, — be separate."

The subject is one which demands the best attention of all who profess and call themselves Christians. In every age of the Church separation from the world has always been one of the grand evidences of a work of grace in the heart. He that has been really born of the Spirit, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, has always endeavoured to "come out from the world," and live a separate life. They who have only had the name of Christian without the reality, have always refused to "come out and be separate" from the world.

The subject perhaps was never more important than it is at the present day. There is a widely-spread desire to make things pleasant in religion, — to saw off the corners and edges of the cross, and to avoid, as far as possible, self-denial. On every side we hear professing Christians declaring loudly that we must not be "narrow and exclusive," and that there is no harm in many things which the holiest saints of old thought bad for their souls. That we may go anywhere, and do anything, and spend our time in anything, and read anything, and keep any company, and plunge into anything, and all the while may be very good Christians, — this, this is the maxim of thousands. In a day like this I think it good to raise a warning voice, and invite attention to the teaching of God's Word. It is written in that Word, "Come out, and be separate."

There are four points which I shall try to show my readers in examining this mighty subject.

I. First, I shall try to show *that the world is a source of great danger to the soul.*

II. Secondly, I shall try to show *what is not meant by separation from the world.*

III. Thirdly, I shall try to show in *what real separation from the world consists.*

IV. Fourthly, I shall try to show *the secret of victory over the world.*

And now, before I go a single step further, let me warn every reader of this paper that he will never understand this subject unless he first understands what a true Christian is. If you are one of those unhappy people who think everybody is a Christian who goes to a place of worship, no matter how he lives, or what he believes, I fear you will care little about separation from the world. But if you read your Bible, and are in earnest about your soul, you will know that there are two classes of Christians, — converted and unconverted. You will know that what the Jews were among the nations under the Old Testament, this the true Christian is meant to be under the New. You will understand what I mean when I say that true Christians are meant, in like manner, to be a "peculiar people" under the Gospel, and that there must be a difference between believers and unbelievers. To you, therefore, I make a special appeal this day. While many avoid the subject of separation from the world, and many positively hate it, and many are puzzled by it, give me your attention while I try to show you the thing as it is.

I. First of all, let me show that *the world is a source of great danger to the soul.*

By the world, be it remembered, I do not mean the material world on the face of which we are living and moving. He that pretends to say that anything which God has created in the heavens above, or the earth beneath, is in itself harmful to man's soul, says that which is unreasonable and absurd. On the contrary, the sun, moon, and stars, — the mountains, the valleys, and the plains, — the seas, lakes, and rivers, — the animal and vegetable creation, all are in themselves very good. All are full of lessons of God's wisdom and power, and all proclaim daily, "The hand that made us is divine." The idea that "matter" is in itself sinful and corrupt is a foolish heresy.

When I speak of "the world" in this paper, I mean those people who think only, or chiefly, of this world's things, and neglect the world to come, — the people who are always thinking more of earth than of heaven, more of time than of eternity, more of the body than of the soul, more of pleasing man than of pleasing God. It is of them and their ways, habits, customs, opinions, practices, tastes, aims, spirit, and tone, that I

am speaking when I speak of "the world." This is the world from which St. Paul tells us to "Come out and be separate."

Now that the world, in this sense, is an enemy to the soul, the well-known Church Catechism teaches us at its very beginning. It tells us that there are three things which a baptized Christian is bound to renounce and give up, and three enemies which he ought to fight with and resist. These three are the flesh, the devil, and the world. All three are terrible foes, and all three must be overcome, if we would be saved.

But, whatever men please to think about the Catechism, we shall do well to turn to the testimony of Holy Scripture. If the texts I am about to quote do not prove that the world is a source of danger to the soul, there is no meaning in the words.

(a) Let us hear what St. Paul says:— "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. xii. 2).

"We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12).

Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4).

"In time past ye walked according to the course of this world (Eph. ii. 2)

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. iv. 10).

(b) Let us hear what St. James says:—

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James i. 27).

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God" (James iv. 4).

(c) Let us hear what St. John says:—

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John ii. 15-17).

"The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John iii. 1).

"They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them" (1 John iv. 5).

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John v. 4).

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John v. 19).

(d) Let us hear lastly what the Lord Jesus Christ says:—

"The care of this world ... choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Matt. xiii. 22).

"Ye are of this world: I am not of this world" (John viii. 23).

"The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him" (John xiv. 17).

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John xv. 18).

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19).

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33).

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16).

I make no comment on these twenty-one texts. They speak for themselves. If any one can read them carefully, and fail to see that the world is an enemy to the Christian, and that there is an utter opposition between the friendship of the world and the friendship of Christ, he is past the reach of argument, and it is waste of time to reason with him. To my eyes they contain a lesson as clear as the sun at noonday.

I turn from Scripture to matters of fact and experience. I appeal to any old Christian who keeps his eyes open, and knows what is going on in the churches. I ask him whether it be not true that nothing damages the cause of religion so much as "the world." It is not open sin, or open unbelief, which robs Christ of His professing servants, so much as the love of the world, the fear of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the money of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the desire to keep in with the world. This is the great rock on which thousands of young people are continually making shipwreck. They do not object to any article of the Christian faith. They do not deliberately choose evil, and openly rebel against God. They hope somehow to get to heaven at last; and they think it proper to have some religion. But they cannot give up their idol: they must have the world. And so after running well and bidding fair for heaven while boys and girls, they turn aside when they become men and women, and go down the broad way which leads to destruction. They begin with Abraham and Moses, and end with Demas and Lot's wife.

The last day alone will prove how many souls the world has slain. Hundreds will be found to have been trained in religious families, and to have known the Gospel from their very childhood, and yet missed heaven. They left the harbour of home with bright prospects, and launched forth on the ocean of life with a father's blessing and a mother's prayers, and then got out of the right course through the seductions of the world, and ended their voyage in shallows and in misery. It is a sorrowful story to tell; but, alas, it is only too common! I cannot wonder that St. Paul says, "Come out and be separate."

(To be continued)

Letter

by John Newton

My dear Madam,

I should have been more uneasy at being prevented writing immediately, had I any reason to apprehend my advice necessary upon the point you propose, which by this time I suppose it settled as it should be without me. I smiled at Miss M—'s disappointment. However if the Lord favours her with a taste for the library of my proposing, she will be like the merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, and will count all other books but pebbles in comparison with those four volumes which present us with something new and important whenever we look into them. I shall be much obliged to her if she will commit the third chapter of Proverbs to her memory, and I shall pray the Lord to write it in her heart.

You surprise me when you tell me the incident of my birth-day was noticed by those I never saw. Be so good as to return my thanks to my unknown friends, and tell them, that I pray our Lord and Saviour to bless them abundantly. His people while here are scattered abroad, separated by hills and rivers, and too often by names and prejudices, but by and by, they shall all meet where they shall all know and acknowledge each other, and rejoice together for evermore. I have lately read with much pleasure, and I hope with some profit the history of the Greenland Mission. Upon the whole it is a glorious work. None who love the Lord will refuse to say, it is the finger of God indeed. For my own part, my soul rejoices in it, and I honour the instruments as men who have hazarded their lives in an extraordinary manner for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Sure I am that none could have sustained such discouragements at first, or have obtained such success afterwards, unless the Lord had sent, supported, and owned them.

I hope we shall have an interest in your prayers. I trust the Lord is yet with us. We have some ripe for the sickle, and some just springing up — some tokens of His gracious presence amongst us; but sin and Satan give us abundance of work as individuals, though through mercy as a society we walk in peace.

The toad and spider is an exhibition of my daily experience. I am often wounded, but the Lord is my health: still I am a living monument of mercy; and I trust that word "Because I live you shall live also," will carry me to the end. I am poor, weak, and foolish, but Jesus is wise, strong, and abounding in grace. He has given me a desire to trust my all in His hands, and He will not disappoint the expectation, which He Himself has raised. At present I have but little to say, and but little time to say it in. When you think of this place, I hope you will think and believe that you have friends here most cordially interested in your welfare, and often remembering you in prayer. May the Lord be your guide and shield, and give you the best desires of your heart. I pray Him to establish and settle you in the great truths of His Word. I trust He will. We learn more and more effectually, by one minute's communication with Him, through the medium of His written word, than we could from an assembly of divines, or a library of books.

Paul's Farewell Charge

(Acts 20: v26,27)

by John Newton

1. When Paul was parted from his friends,
It was a weeping day,
But Jesus made them all amends,
And wiped their tears away.
2. Ere long they meet again with joy,
(Secure no more to part),
Where praises every tongue employ
And pleasure fills each heart.
3. Thus all the preachers of His grace
Their children soon shall meet;
Together see their Saviour's face
And worship at His feet.

4. But they who heard the word in vain,
Thought oft and plainly warned,
Will tremble when they meet again
The ministers they scorned.

5. On your own heads your blood will fall,
If any perish here;
The preachers who have told you all,
Shall stand approved and clear.

6. Yet, Lord, to save themselves alone
Is not their utmost view;
Oh! hear their prayer, Thy message own,
And save their hearers too.

Spiritual Experience of John Stevenson

(John Stevenson 1655-1728 had a small farm in Ayrshire. He fought in defence of the Covenant at Bothwell Bridge).

The first time I found my heart sensibly engaged to the good word and way of the Lord, was in the days of my youth, when there was little or no open vision; because faithful pastors were driven into corners. The Lord in His providence brought me to hear Mr Thomas Kennedy, once minister in Lasswade, but at this time thrown out of his charge by the rage of the prelates. The place where I heard him was in the Hall of Killochan, where he lectured on the 129th Psalm; then and there fell I in love with the word and ordinances of God, and through grace, have, through several tribulations, adhered to the purity of doctrine, discipline, government, and worship, which is now established in the Church of Scotland. My sister, my wife, and my wife's brother, were, at the same time with me, engaged to the good way of the Lord, and were all of us about the same age.

After my heart was thus disposed seriously to work out my own salvation, I fell under great discouragement: First, Because of my ignorance. Secondly, Because of my want of Christian experience. As to the first, the Lord made me to hope it would be cured; and the word on which He caused me to hope was in Prov. 2: 3, 4, 5 verses. He bore it in on my mind, and I took it as the ground of my sure hope, and I must own to His

glory, He has sent His word and healed me of this plague in a competent measure.

As to the second, my discouragement for want of Christian experience: The Lord brought to my mind the 6th chapter of Hosea and 3rd verse, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," &c., and from this made me hope the Lord would in due time acquaint me with the experimental knowledge of Himself; and I own to His praise, He has been as good as His word.

On the back of this, I was violently assaulted with atheistical thoughts of God, and so far oppressed with them for a considerable time, that my bodily strength was impaired thereby to a great degree. At that time I was ignorant of Satan's devices, and too closely kept the devil's secrets, by not unfolding my distressed case to some Christian friend; but this I always found, that these unworthy thoughts of God filled me with horror, and I neither allowed them, nor entertained them, but at the time could not discern that they were Satan's fiery darts, but rather charged them on myself, which still increased my trouble. However, it pleased the merciful God to rebuke the tempter, by making His perfections shine on my soul when I was gazing on His wonderful creature, the sea; and gradually manifested Himself to me more and more when viewing His works, till at length I saw His glorious Being and perfections shine forth brightly in a refreshing drink of water which I took; and afterwards more and more display themselves in every pile of grass and every flower of the field, till I firmly believed that He was, and the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; which happy outgate from the "fearful pit and miry clay" filled my soul with great joy and pleasure: and long after I was allowed to read God in all His creatures with great satisfaction.

After a considerable time, in the year 1678, I heard Mr John Cunningham in the churchyard of Kirkmichael, preaching on 2 Cor. 5: v.20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." What he mainly insisted on was, That by nature we were in a state of enmity against God, and had need to be reconciled to God. When he opened up this state of enmity against God, I was filled with fear that I was in that state, yea, persuaded and convinced in my apprehension that I was so. I was made to see clearly the evil and danger of such a state; and his arrows did stick fast in me, because I concluded I was one of the "unwise sons" that had stuck long in the place of the breaking forth of children, and had not got fully out of the state of nature. When he came to apply his doctrine, he exhorted all to come out of this state of enmity, and

expostulated seriously with us in order to enforce the exhortation.

Both doctrine and application had great weight with me, and made me go away longing to be reconciled to God, and resolved never to be easy till it were so.

After this, in the same year, 1678, and 12th August, I heard Mr John Welsh, on Craigdowhill, who preached on the above-named text, 2 Cor. 5: v.20, and insisted chiefly on this, "We beseech you, be ye reconciled to God." In speaking to which words, the Lord helped His servant, not only to show what it was to be reconciled to God, but also earnestly to press reconciliation, and to make a free, full, and pressing offer of glorious Christ as Mediator and day's-man, and the great peace-maker, who would make up the breach, and bring about this much-needed reconciliation. I being fully convinced how greatly I needed this reconciliation and day's-man, who is the only way to the Father, with all my heart and soul did cordially and cheerfully make the offer welcome, and without known guile, did accept of and receive glorious Christ on His own terms in all His offices as Mediator, and did give myself away to the Lord in a personal and perpetual covenant never to be forgotten, accepting of God for my Lord, and my God, and my guide to the death, and great reward after it; resolving, though strange lords had dominion over me, yet henceforth I would be called by His name, whom I now avouched for my only God and Lord; upon which I took the heavens, earth, and sun in the firmament that was shining on us, as also the ambassador who made the offer, and clerk who raised the Psalms, I say, I took all these to witness in the great Judgment-Day, that I had uprightly and cheerfully entered into this everlasting marriage covenant, resolved through grace to be steadfast in His covenant till death. After which, my soul was filled with joy and peace in believing; it was a joy unspeakable and glorious, having now got good hope through grace, that though He was angry, yet now His anger was turned away, and He was now become my salvation. I rejoiced in the thoughts of my new relation to God the Saviour, and felt the ravishing sweetness of a reconciled state, and went away firmly resolving that I would walk all my days in the bitterness of my soul, and never be vainly lifted up, but would fear the Lord and His goodness, who has so far condescended to stoop so low as to pardon a rebel, and be reconciled and pacified to me after all I had done, and all my bones at this very time shall and do cry out, "Who is a God like unto thee, a God keeping covenant, and whose faithfulness and mercy endure to all generations?"

Though after this sensible and sweet covenanting with God on the hill of Craigdow, I always studied to improve this covenant relation with God, according to my various cases, tentations, necessities, and distresses, yet the most memorable time of my renewing this covenant was at Craigdarroch in Nithsdale, in the year 1686, where in secret prayer the Lord determined me to renew that covenant I had entered into with him on Craigdowhill, and wonderfully condescended to bring me as it were nigh to His seat, and filled my mouth with arguments, and allowed me to plead with Him as a man does with a reconciled friend; there was I helped with great enlargement to renew and adhere to the everlasting covenant, and there the kind God manifested Himself to me otherwise than to the world, and I may say that truly my fellowship was with the Father, and with His dear Son Jesus, in as sensible a way and eminent degree as ever I met with before or since, though many times He has been even since kind to my soul.

Soon after this, whilst at Craigdarroch, my spirit was overwhelmed within me on the account of a rising generation, and for fear of a departing God and glory. I was frequently obliged to retire to solitary places, and with an aching heart, trembling soul, and wringing of my hands, bewail the sad circumstances that poor posterity would be in if God should leave these lands. I saw that the rage of a prelatic persecution had banished many faithful shepherds, had put some of them to death, and was restless in pursuing others, so that they had scattered the Lord's flock, and made them wander on the mountain in the dark and cloudy day, which obliged Christ's sheep which knew His voice, but will not follow a stranger, to wander from sea to sea, and from one part of the land to another, to hear the pure and good word of the Lord, and many times could not find it. All this made my soul cast down within me, for all flesh had corrupted their way; those who were in power and authority seemed to bid Christ depart out of our coasts, and many also were the provocations of sons and of daughters; our solemn covenants wherewith we had bound ourselves to the Lord, were too little regarded by a great many: all this filled my soul with fear, lest glorious Christ should be provoked not to return again to poor Scotland; then I thought if He would not return with a preached Gospel in plenty and purity, we had been the cruel generation who had sent Him away from ourselves and poor posterity; which obliged me in deep distress to lament over a rising generation, and earnestly to entreat that "Glory might yet dwell in our land," and that He would return to us with a departed glory.

Whilst I was in this melancholy case, I had occasion to hear Mr James

Renwick preach, who dropped a word to the mourners in Zion who were sorrowful, because the ways of Zion mourned, and none going up there as formerly to her solemn assemblies. He bid such take courage, for Christ would yet comfort Zion, and return to these lands in spite of all opposition. He advanced several arguments or grounds of hope, that He would yet return with a departed glory; but I being perplexed in spirit, did in my own breast, muster up many objections against all his grounds of hope, and so still strengthened myself in my distressing unbelief; at length and at last he advanced this for our encouragement, that God had borne it in on the minds of honest ministers and Christians on scaffolds, and at the hour of death, by an irresistible gale of His Spirit, that he would yet say concerning this part of Zion, "Here is my rest, and here I desire to dwell," and that He would certainly return with the Gospel dispensation in plenty and purity. On which my discouragement vanished, for these tidings of great joy, for I persuaded myself that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and that God would never suffer "the expectation of the poor to fail for ever," especially seeing He impressed them with this hope in a dying hour, at a time when they were filled with joy and peace in believing, and some of them going as a prince before His seat, and getting an abundant entrance ministered to them into the heavenly kingdom. And now blessed be His name who banished my fears, and has since let me see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, and glory dwelling in our land near forty years together, and none of Zion's enemies now to make us afraid: the Lord has brought back our captivity like streams in the south, and when he did so, we were like men that dreamed; he filled our mouths with singing and our hearts with joy, and the righteous Lord hath cut "the cords of the ungodly crew."

And I must say to His praise, that before the mercy came, He remarkably poured down a spirit of prayer on us, and so prepared our hearts, and bowed down His ear to hear; and on after reflection as well as at the time, I am fully convinced He never bid the house of Jacob in their most melancholy circumstances "seek His face in vain" but that it is good, yea, best for us, at all times to draw near to God.

(To be continued)

Church Social Meetings

by Rev. James S. Sinclair

The moral and spiritual purity of the visible Church is something that every true Christian should be deeply concerned about. Holiness

becometh God's house for ever, and without the purity which He requires in His Word, no religious body can warrantably expect to enjoy the divine blessing or true spiritual prosperity. Looking abroad, however, upon the professing Churches of to-day, we find that the greater number of them pay little regard to New Testament purity, but introduce anything into the service of God that pleases the popular taste. Thus it is that secular and carnal elements in Church work are painfully conspicuous. One of these elements is the social meeting with its secular entertainment — a fleshly device to make religion pleasant to the carnal mind. We believe that these social meetings, however innocent they may appear to many, are nothing short of plaque spots in the life of any organisation calling itself a Church. They betray a worldly spirit wherever they flourish, and their existence tends to deepen and intensify the worldliness. Some of these gatherings are no doubt worse than others, but from the plain tea meeting to the elaborate soiree or concert, we believe they are all wrong, and ought to have no place in the spiritual work of the visible Church. It is our present purpose to endeavour to give some solid reasons for the belief that has been expressed.

1. Our first reason for thinking that these social meetings are wrong is that we have no warrant in God's Word for them. We are told that the early Christians did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, but this was done "from house to house" — not in their public assemblies for divine service. Christ fed the hungry multitude, and the early Church took steps to provide for the poor and the necessitous; but this is something quite different from bringing worldly entertainments into the house of God in order to enhance its attractiveness. "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" As for secular and carnal songs at Church meetings, such things are as entirely alien to New Testament purity as darkness is to light and sin to holiness.

2. A second reason is that they violate the Scriptural idea of the Church as a spiritual institution. The chief end for which the Church has been designed, with its various means of grace, is not to provide for the natural or common needs of men, but for their spiritual needs. Still less has it been appointed to gratify their sinful and carnal tastes. The Church is the place where God is to be worshipped with reverence and godly fear, and where "The bread of life" is to be dispensed to perishing souls. Men are under the deepest obligation to remember this in all their meetings in connection with the affairs of God's house. To introduce secular entertainment into these meetings is to bring in a lowering element that is fitted to banish that spirituality and elevation of mind necessary for

meditation on the highest things. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The Apostle Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians deals with certain abuses of the Lord's Supper that had taken place at Corinth, and not only reproves the Corinthians for partaking of the Supper, as if it were a common meal, but gives them to understand that there is a clear line of distinction between what is proper for the Church of God and what is proper for private houses. "What?" (he exclaims), "have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or do ye despise the Church of God?"

3. The third reason is that these meetings tend to destroy the fundamental distinction between the Church and the world — between what is sacred and what is secular. The blotting out of this distinction introduces confusion and every evil work into the visible Church and all other spheres of life.

As an illustration of the difference between the Church and world let us notice the relations of Church and State. Church and State are both divine institutions under Christ, but their provinces are distinct. The Church is not at liberty to do the work of the State, nor the State the work of the Church. What would be perfectly lawful for the one institution to do would be quite unlawful for the other. For example, it would not be proper for the office-bearers of the Church, as such, to look after the common taxes, or for the officers of the State to administer the Sacraments. Each "power" must exercise itself within its own province, and much harm has come to both "powers" by unwarrantable interference on the part of one or other.

An important illustration of the sacred and the secular is also to be found in the divinely ordained difference between the Sabbath and the other six days of the week. Things which are quite lawful to be done on week-days are not lawful on the Sabbath. It is perfectly lawful to buy and sell on a week-day, but not so on the Lord's Day. God has not only appointed certain kinds of business as lawful, but He has arranged the times and places when and where the business is to be done, and so it is not enough that the thing to be done is in itself lawful, the time and place must also be lawful. It is lawful, as we have remarked, to buy and sell; but what would be thought of the man that would do so within the precincts of God's house during the time of worship? And again, what opinion would be formed of a Church that would arrange a certain amount of time on the Lord's Day before, in the middle, or after divine worship, for buying and selling? Our natural sense of religion, apart from any higher emotion, would at once declare such a proceeding as

preposterous and profane; and yet buying and selling are in themselves things perfectly lawful.

In like manner, let it be observed that it is quite lawful for any man to entertain his friends to a feast in his private house, but it is not lawful to introduce common feasting or other secular entertainments into meetings or services forming a part of the work of God's house. Christian people may safely meet at table in one another's houses, and the common meal may be raised or sanctified by their mutual intercourse, but to introduce the ordinary entertainments of life into the Church, is to declare that imperfect which is absolutely perfect, as if the precious things of God needed assistance from the flesh. Holy things are thus brought down to the level of the secular and worldly — the distinction between the two classes is seriously defaced — and an inlet is made for all manner of folly and corruption.

The process of degeneration in these matters may begin in a comparatively simple way. First, the plain tea meeting, then the frivolous soiree, and lastly the thorough-going carnal concert, when the Church becomes nothing better than a theatre, with an outward veneer of Christianity.

The Late Dr Kennedy on Soirees

Quasi-religious soirees are becoming an unmitigated nuisance. This sort of thing began in treats for children as inducements to attend, and as rewards for attending, the Sabbath School. But it did not stop there. We have now congregational soirees, at which an annual opportunity is taken of parading the work done, and the money raised, during the past year, flattering speeches are exchanged by those who take kindly to be licked all over with an oily tongue, and a great deal of vapid sentiment is mixed up with exaggerated statements as to success, seasoned with bits of drollery, and interspersed with sensational music. *The attempt to sanctify all this by the Word and by prayer is successful only as a sacrilege.* What should be exalted is degraded, and the alliance of religion and the world, in that as in every other instance, is all to the gain of the latter. It would be folly to expect a spark to live if placed in the midst of ice. The ice could not be fuel for the spark, but would by the contact dissolve in water to quench it. So must it fare with spiritual fervour in contact with the surroundings of a soiree. — *The Present Cast and Tendency of Religious Thought and Feeling in Scotland.*

The Psalms and Uninspired Hymns

(Extracts from speech by Dr Hugh Martin, in the General Assembly of the Free Church, 3rd June, 1872).

First of all, then, on behalf of human hymns, it has been said, "We live now under a better and brighter dispensation than that of the Old Testament, therefore the inspired Psalms of David, and other Psalms in Holy Scripture, are insufficient." But the question is not whether the dispensation under which we now live is better and brighter than that which preceded it; but whether, under this better and brighter dispensation, there is any security for better and brigher hymns than the Psalms of David, and whether there is a promise given to any man, or any body of men, of a richer unction of the Spirit — and not a richer unction only, but a specifically inspiring action of the Spirit — for the purpose of composing hymns for the public worship of God in the Church than was given to him, of whom it is written, that in his blessed swan song he spoke as follows:— "David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His Word was in my tongue." Is there any modern hymnologist in circumstances to say that? Dr Adam must tell us who he is, before his argument from the greater brightness of the New Testament dispensation is of any worth, otherwise it is an argument not only on behalf of hymns, but against the Book of Psalms.

Further, we are told that "it would be strange if we were never to rise in this respect above the dispensation which had passed away." Yes, no doubt, when the fulness of the times was come, the Church rose above the dispensation which then passed away. But the question is not whether we are to rise above the Old Testament dispensation, but whether we are, by the help of uninspired hymnologists, to rise above the Spirit and Word of God in the mouth of "David, the son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet Psalmist of Israel." Is it modest to talk of rising above the height to which he who was "raised up on high" was raised? Still further, it has been said, "It would be strange if we were always to walk in the morning dawn, and never pass into the sunshine of the perfect day." Sir, who can fail to admire the ingenuity which has discovered the resplendent fulness of noontide glory in uninspired songs, and nothing but twilight in the Psalms of David? Was it an uninspired modern hymnologist whose pen

produced the following, or was it the Psalmist of Israel?—

“Because of life the fountain pure
Remains alone with thee,
And in that purest light of thine
We clearly light shall see.”

If the Psalms are but twilight, and human hymns the sunshine of the perfect day, then walk always in the perfect light . . . Sing nothing but human hymns, for that is perfect sunshine; and sing no Psalms of David, for that is going back to twilight. Excuse me, however, if I think that this argument of our friends is moonshine, and the logic of it is the logic of the twilight, and suited for those only who are of weaker vision. I say the Psalms are the full noonday light of Messianic glory, and the hymns are but the twilight — likely, if you trust to them, or put them on a level with the Word of God, to prove an evening and not a morning twilight, and you know the fatal difference there.

Again, it has been said that because a crowd at our Lord's entry into Jerusalem sang a quotation from the 118th Psalm, slightly modified, therefore human hymns are lawful. It is a marvellous argument, and branches out into several very marvellous syllogisms. Because an inspired psalm was sung long ago, therefore uninspired hymns should be sung now! Because a crowd, at their own instance, and not assembled for public instituted worship, chanted a quotation from a psalm, therefore Free Church ministers should give out human hymns to be sung by their people in the divinely instituted ordinance of congregational song! Because an inspired psalm was sung on a week-day in Jerusalem, therefore uninspired hymns should be sung in Scotland on the Sabbath! . . .

Then again, we have had an argument from Scripture, from the text, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” But first, let it be inquired how the Word of Christ — the Word of God — is to dwell in us richly by singing the word of man? That is a strange idea to extract from the writings of a well regulated intellect like that of Paul — not to speak of their being written under the inspiration of the Spirit. I can understand how the Word of God should dwell in us richly by singing the Word of God — dwelling on it in solemn, mediative, grave, sweet singing of it, till — to use a Scotch phrase — it *seeps* into the soul and takes its dwelling there, while in warm emotion of faith the worshipper's spirit in believing song dwells deliberately upon it. Thus it may come to dwell richly in us. But how is God's Word to dwell in us by singing man's word? How is the Divine Word to dwell in us by singing

human hymns? . . . But even though it were granted that this verse refers to uninspired hymns, and though the strange problem could be solved of how God's Word is to dwell in you by singing the words of man, how are you to prove that this text refers to public worship? Paul is not speaking in this connection of believers in their Church capacity, or in their action in public, divinely instituted, worship, I defy any man to show that the apostle is here referring to public worship at all.

But it has been asked in this house, "Are we always to sing predictions and never sing fulfilments?" But do you need to go outside the Psalms to get the language of fulfilment? Shall we sing of the Incarnation? Ps. 40: v.6 — "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; mine ears hast thou bored." Or, as in Heb. 10: v.5 — "A body hast thou prepared me." Is that the future tense? Is that mere prediction? Shall we sing of Christ's faithfulness and zeal in duty? Ps. 69: v.9 — "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Is that prediction, or is it the language of fulfilment? Shall we sing of the sufferings of our dying Redeemer? Ps. 69: v.20 — "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." If that is prophecy, is it not the language of history? And is not the spirit of prophecy the historic testimony of Jesus? Shall we praise Christ for His ascension? "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou has received gifts for men." Is that the language of mere prediction, as contra-distinguished from that of fulfilment? Sing we Christ's reward in glory? "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." Is that prophetic merely? Is it not historic? Shall we sing of Christ's intercession, and of His mediation generally? "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, whom thou madest strong for thyself." Of Christ's action in His prophetic office? "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation." What about the language of prediction, and the absence of the language of fulfilment, there? Shall we adore Christ in His priestly office? "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." His kingly office? "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." What is there, sir, concerning Christ's kingdom that is not celebrated in the Psalms in the language of fulfilment? I say that even when the mystery of God shall have been finished, and both the fulness of Israel and the fulness of the Gentiles shall have been brought in, the Church may celebrate her millennial glory in the language of fulfilment from the Psalms of David.

“He mindful of his grace and truth
To Israel’s house hath been;
And the salvation of our God
All ends of the earth have seen.”

All the ends of the earth that have seen the salvation of our God, know the Psalms of David. The psalms are the grand catholic hymnal, and the singing of them provides for Christian union and for perfect catholicity. One more *prima facie* principle, and I am almost done. The great, primary, responsible leader of all worship in the Church is our blessed Lord Himself — the minister of the true sanctuary which the Lord pitched, and not man. In this capacity He is pleased to say in the 22nd Psalm — and it is quoted in the New Testament too — “I will declare they name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” On this verse Calvin has this beautiful comment:— “It thus appears that our Lord is the leader of our songs and chief composer of our hymns.” Are they uninspired hymns which Christ composes, and leads us in singing in the great congregation? He is spiritually present with His people in their worship in the sanctuary. But were He bodily present, as in the synagogue of Nazereth, when there was given to Him the book of the prophet Isaiah, would you give Him any other book of song than the book of the Psalms of David, or other inspired songs of Scripture? Would you give Him other than His own Psalms to lead you in singing? — His own Psalms, in that they are composed by Himself; and His own Psalms, in that His soul sang them, with grace in His heart unto the Lord, in the days of His flesh. You maintain communion with Him, and He with you, when, in the praises of the sanctuary, you sing His Psalms. You may think your hymns are in accordance with His Word, but the Psalms are His very Word itself. You can sing them in faith untainted with doubt, in the full assurance of faith, unshackled from the spirit of criticism which man’s word continually provokes, yea, demands — in that faith which cometh by hearing, when the hearing is the hearing of the Word of God, and which goeth forth in songs of faith, when the songs are the songs of the Spirit of God.

Notes and Comments

Blasphemous Programme

One Sabbath, early in April, Channel 4 Television showed a programme entitled “Jesus — the Evidence.” A follow-up series of 10 programmes is intended. The first programme cast doubt on much that

is recorded in the Scriptures as well as making blasphemous statements regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. Efforts to ban the programme failed but a debate was televised about the programme after it had been shown on T.V.

Nothing need surprise us in the present climate of opinion prevailing in the land. Iniquity has reached a great height and we need not expect that Christ and Christianity will escape the lewd mockery of the scorner. What should alarm us is the height to which we, as a land, are being permitted to go in the way of evil. There are signs that the Lord in judgment is giving us up and giving us over to the reign of sin and evil. We are rapidly ripening for judgment. May the Lord in wrath remember mercy, and grant us as a nation repentance.

Drug Addiction

We referred in last month's Notes and Comments to drug addiction in Glasgow. Reports now show that the situation in Edinburgh is also serious. Heroin abuse in the capital has soared to epidemic proportions. The Edinburgh Royal Infirmary reports a four-fold increase in drug related emergencies in the past five years. The police, through their drug squad officers are doing what they can to combat this menace. The head of the drug squad in Amsterdam said that 75 per cent of the heroin and cocaine coming into Scotland and England was distributed from Amsterdam.

What need there is in our day of "the expulsive power of a new affection" in order that poor sinners may be delivered from this and every other evil. The gospel in its power would set men free from the reigning power of sin and unbelief and rescue them from the broken cisterns of this world which can never yield the satisfaction that the soul needs. A God-sent awakening and revival of true religion would do more to meet the low state of the nation than any human agency.

Children in Care

The low moral state of the nation is evidenced in many ways. One of these is the neglect of children and the need that arises for them to be taken into care by local authorities. Many factors are involved in this, such as the continually rising divorce rate and drink and drug abuse. The RSSPCC also report that there has been no falling off in the high level of the number of requests for assistance. It is sad to think that in a land which has had the Bible and Christian teaching for so long that such a state of matters should prevail. Were the Bible read in the home and

family worship kept there, we hardly think that the situation would be as it is. May the Lord bring about a return to His own Word throughout the land.

Church Notes

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 12th June at 12 noon.

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

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

Skye: At Portree on 19th June at 11 a.m.

Teacher for John Tallach Secondary School

As Miss Marion Graham and Mr Alasdair MacCormick are due to come on leave in August and Mr Murdo Lamont and family are due home in December, the Committee would like to hear shortly from an experienced teacher with qualifications possibly in English, Mathematics or Geography but who would have a prime interest in the religious side of the school and would teach Bible and in the Sabbath School. A retired teacher either male or female who would consider a 2-year term of duty might well be the answer. Enquiries to Rev A Murray, Applecross. (Tel. 052-04-207).

Staff for Zimbabwe Mission

Advertisements for staff over the past months have failed to produce any response. It is hoped to open the Hospital at Mbumba on a full time basis as soon as circumstances permit so that the need for a suitably qualified doctor to act as Medical Superintendent is now urgent. 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.

South Harris Communion

The South Harris Kirk Session have decided that the summer communion will now be held on the 2nd Sabbath, instead of the 3rd Sabbath of August so as to be within the school holidays.

Situation of Daviot Church

For the convenience of visitors attending the Daviot Church at Com-

munions or at other times, it is pointed out that the church is not in the village of Daviot but in the village of Farr, by Daviot, in the parish of Daviot and Dunlichity. To get to the church visitors should turn off the main road at Farr by the sub-post office, at the Dunlichity sign post.

Wellington Congregation, New Zealand

The Kirk Session have decided to hold the first communion in Wellington on the fourth Sabbath of August (D.V.). Rev. E.A. Rayner, Grafton is expected to assist the Interim-Moderator, Rev. J.A.T. Van Dorp at the Communion. The Congregation in Wellington are looking for a suitable section on which to build a place of worship of their own as they presently worship in a hired hall. It is good to know that the congregation is growing little by little and, though still not large, it is hoped that the Lord will be pleased to build up His Cause there. It is encouraging how the Lord has upheld His Cause there until now, where it is so much needed, as well as in other parts of New Zealand. We know that the friends in Wellington would desire the prayers of the Lord's people for the prosperity of the Lord's Cause in that city, as their thoughts and prayers are with the Church at home as well as elsewhere.

Stirling Communion

The Stirling Communion will be held on the first Sabbath of June (D.V.). Rev. J. MacDonald, North Tolsta is expected to assist at the Communion.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Dumbarton: Anon., £20 for T.B.S (envelope in plate); Glasgow Friend (1), £10; Glasgow Friend (2), £10; Mark and Isabel, £20; Friends, Raasay, £20 per T. MacRae, last four for Congr. Funds.

Fort William: K. R., £10 (envelope in plate); Ulster Friend, £15; Friend, Caol, £50; Mr and Mrs N., £10, last two per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow: Executors of late Mrs S. MacCuish, £200 for Congr. Fund (£25 for upkeep of Hearing Aids in Church); Mrs MacK., £5 for Congr. Fund; Anon., £20; Matth. 6: v.3, £10; Anon., £5, last three for Bus Fund; Anon., £15; Anon., £1, both for Sust. Fund; Anon., £5 for Aged and Infirm Ministers etc. Fund.

Greenock: Well-wisher, Mull, £10; D. R. M., Glasgow, £25; Well-wisher, Skye, £10; A Friend, Inverness, £10, all for Congr. Fund, last three per Rev. L. MacLeod.

London: Dr R. J. D., £20 for Congr. Fund.

Perth: Friend, Perth, £100; Mr I.G., Perth, £35, both for Perth Congr.; Envelope in Collection Plate, £5 for Perth Communion Expenses.

Stornoway: A Friend, £10, for Congr. Funds, per Mr A. N. MacPhail.