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As Thy Days, so shall Thy Strength be

The beginning of another year is a suitable time for reflection on the past and for consideration of the future. The very fact that it has pleased the Lord to spare us to see the beginning of another year is reason for thankful acknowledgment to God for His goodness to us. "It is of His mercies that we are not consumed." The forbearance of God towards sinners yet in their sins and also to His people, notwithstanding their many backslidings, calls for wonder and praise. The living soul cannot but acknowledge —

"And over all His other works
His tender mercies are."

As we think of the past, whether the immediate past — the year that has just gone — or the more distant past — the years of our lives that have passed as a tale that is told — we have reason to remember the manifold mercies of the Most High towards us. Daily we have received of the Lord's bounties in His providence. He has sustained us in life though we have been provoking Him to anger oftentimes. He is still sustaining us, for our breath is in His hands. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." "He giveth to all life, and breath and all things." What reason then there is for us to humble ourselves before the great God of eternity and render unto Him that worship and service which is His due.

How solemn it is that if men are left to themselves they will not bow before God but will go on in the stubbornness of their own hearts in the ways of sin and death. If we are still in our sins, the beginning of another year is a suitable time to consider our ways and turn from our sins unto God. The call of God in His Word to sinners is — "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Sinners under the Gospel who have heard such a call will be found inexcusable at last if they have not obeyed it. Christ is represented in His Word as coming in the last day "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that

know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let sinners give good heed to gospel overtures of mercy and cry to the Lord for mercy while the day of mercy lasts.

The children of God have reason, at the beginning of another year, to make thankful acknowledgment to God for the blessings of His grace. The Lord was pleased in a day of His grace to reveal Himself to them in His love and in His mercy in Christ Jesus. The manifestation of His distinguishing grace will ever be a matter of wonder to them. Not only has the Lord bestowed upon His people saving grace but also sanctifying and sustaining grace. He has begun a good work in them and He is to carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. He is to perfect that which concerns them, notwithstanding their many fears and failings and backslidings. It is by His Spirit that He is carrying on this work in them. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ and reveal it unto them. He leads into the truth of God's Word and opens to them the fulness of the Covenant. He gives them to understand that there is enough and to spare for them there — that there is enough for them not only for time but also for eternity. These riches consist of all the promises of God's Word which are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

From that Covenant then we draw forth this promise: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The promise is sure to all that believe. "None perish that Him trust." Believers are called to go on in the strength of the Lord, recording His righteousness and His only. They are to be strengthened by His might inwardly so that they may go from strength to strength until they appear at last before God in Zion. Let the children of God then encourage themselves in the Lord their God. Let them ever remember that the Lord has given them His own promise — "as thy days, so shall thy strength be" — and He is faithful that promised and will be as good as His Word to them. He will sustain His people in the midst of great trials and afflictions, as well as in brighter seasons, and will bring them at last to their desired haven.

Notes of a Sermon

By Rev. Christopher Munro, Strathy.

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." — Hosea 2, 14.

In the preceding context the Lord through the prophet declares unto Israel their sin in forsaking Him, and in going after idols, and threatens

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with chastisement; but after He chastises them, He promises to have mercy on them. The manner in which He is to do this is to allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there to speak comfortably to her, or to her heart. This was likely spoken in allusion to the journey which He led them from Egypt to the land of Canaan. He might have led them by a different and far shorter route, but to lead them directly to the promised land was not the way which seemed good to Him. It was after many years of bondage in Egypt, and after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, that He fulfilled his promise to them. Their long abode in the wilderness was owing, not only to the fact that the time of the promise being fulfilled was not come, but to their disobedience to His design of teaching them many lessons of which they were ignorant, but which were necessary for them to know and practise. Their idleness, too, might have been the cause of their long abode in Egypt. They, enjoying the sunshine of Royal power, might have forgotten the promise, and have begun to make light of it and of the land of Canaan, content with Egypt, its people, its customs, and its gods; and so were left to experience the misery of tyranny and bondage, and see the folly of despising the Lord's promise, and the land He chose out for their inheritance. The fertile plains of the Nile might appear to them more preferable to the hilly country of Judea, and the religion of the Egyptians as more desirable than that of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Thus they provoked the Lord to chastise them, which He did till they repented and came up to Him, whose Throne is in the Heavens, and who in His mercy remembered His grace and truth to the House of Israel. It appears that men at their best, while here, are not less exposed to temptation in prosperity than in adversity; yea, the latter state is more conducive to a life of godliness than the former.

At the time this prophecy was written they had been many generations in the land of Canaan, and after frequent relapses into idolatry and rebukes and sore chastisements, they had again gone backward to their idols, and therefore they are threatened with far heavier judgments than any experienced by them since their departure from Egypt. But still He declared unto them that He would not altogether forsake them, nor cast them away, but remember His Covenant to Abraham, and His promises to David and his House. The manner in which He was to do this is indicated here, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there speak comfortably to her," which statement contains a rule, according to which He deals with His Church now, not only so, but with individual members thereof. God's purpose

towards His elect people is to bring them out of an estate of sin and misery and bring them to a state of perfect and glorious salvation through Christ their Redeemer, and each one of them He brings, it may be said, from Egypt to Canaan, through the wilderness, and the way He does this is set before us here, "I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness". In attempting to enlarge a little on the passage, I will speak —

- I. On His alluring her;
- II. On the wilderness through which she is brought; and
- III. Notice the purpose for which He brings her there, viz. — to speak to her heart; and then conclude with some hints by way of application.

I. I am to offer a few hints in the way of explaining the manner in which He brings her into the wilderness, which is by alluring her. To allure is to persuade one by some artful means to follow another. We may here take His leading Israel out of Egypt to the wilderness as an illustration of the manner in which it is effected. If, as hinted, Israel began to forget His Covenant with Abraham, and His promise to give to His seed the land of Canaan; to induce them to leave Egypt, He rendered it a state of hard bondage from which they were at last too willing to escape, and to go forth at the Lord's command, and follow His directions as to the route they should take. And in giving such commands, He declares unto them that He was to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey, and having so lately seen such wonderful displays of power in their behalf, they, without any hesitation, fled away, or left Egypt, and took, without any doubts or questioning, the way pointed out to them, which led to the wilderness — the great and howling wilderness — through which they were to be led to Canaan.

In the same way, He reveals the sinner's state to him as one of bondage and misery, out of which he cries and groans for deliverance. This He does by opening his eyes to see the real nature of his condition as a sinner, and besides He so deals with him as to embitter all those objects that attracted his attention and entangled his affections, in such a manner as to make that state tolerable and pleasant to the soul. The effect of this is that the soul is not only willing to be saved from a state of sin and misery, but also to abandon all his idols, to abandon and hate all his former ways, and look upon every created object with which his heart had been carried away, as mere vanity as a portion for his soul. He now looks upon the opinions, customs, and ways of the world as the broad way which leads unto death, and therefore is made willing to abandon them,

join himself to those who walk in the fear of the Lord according to Word. He makes choice of Christ as his Saviour, of God as his God, of heaven as his home, of the truth as his rule of faith and practice, of the Holy Ghost as his Comforter and his Teacher. In finding a well-founded hope here, he rejoices with great joy, and in the ardour of his love he is ready to follow the Lord whithersoever He leads him. When he is allured, he is drawn by loving-kindness and mercy, by Divine power, or by the Holy Ghost working powerfully in him, both to will and to do. In a similar manner he deals with a soul in order to heal him from a back-sliding state, sinful and grievous to him, a wretched and miserable condition from which he is willing to be delivered, and from which he is allured and drawn by Divine power, and by the application of the promises of the new Covenant. The blessing and good held forth in the Gospel commend themselves unto him as the one thing needful, as the true portion; and, having an additional proof of the emptiness of all other objects as a portion to the soul, he is anew drawn and allured to know God the Saviour; that is, to believe as He the Lord speaks, to act as He directs, to live as He commands in the Gospel of His Son. This is the will of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; to do His will is, to know Him and to be content with the disposal of all matters connected with the present life, and look upon all such things not as the chief end of being, but only as what is necessary for a few short years. When a man follows the Lord in this way He brings it to the wilderness, on which position I would now proceed to make a few remarks.

III. This statement is an allusion to the wilderness through which Israel went to Canaan, and is not to be understood as if they went a long time in their history to be brought to it, and were led through it to a place of rest, but as meaning that He would lead them to a state analogous to that in which their forefathers had been in the wilderness of Egypt. It points to their captivity in Babylon and elsewhere, and perhaps also to their dispersed state at the present time.

At present I would confine my remarks to the manner in which this statement may apply to believers in all ages. The soul's state after conversion is often spoken of as a wilderness, or as a journey through a wilderness to the land of promise. Their condition is to be looked upon as a wilderness, not in respect to their outward condition, so much as to their inward feeling or experience, or the Lord's dealings with their soul. The lively joy experienced on the believer's finding a Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life, is not as a general rule of long continuance, but in this respect may be compared to the joy and triumph of the

Israelites on finding themselves on dry land after passing through the Red Sea, and seeing their oppressors strewn dead on the shore, which was speedily forgotten in the trials that soon occurred. When they found themselves in a wilderness, without bread or water, and could not see how their wants were to be supplied, they murmured and rebelled against Moses, and not only against Moses, but against the Lord. And this temper or spirit manifested itself on various occasions after its first outward outbreak, for, although relief was obtained from that which excited this spirit, yet as soon as a second trial arose, it showed itself again, and thus they continued to behave themselves, until, by many chastisements, they were made willing to obey the Divine commandments. The experience of most believers is parallel to this. Their first transports of joy, of gladness, and of praise, are soon, perhaps, succeeded by trials and temptations, that put their faith, their hope, their patience, to a severe test. They are in circumstances that require all needed for them to come directly from God, just as the Israelites were as to bread, water, guidance, and protection. They could not procure either of the necessities of life in the usual manner, and would have perished unless a provision had been made for them in a preternatural manner. Like to this is the case of the believer, who is a spiritually quickened man, and therefore needs spiritual sustenance. He has no stores of this provision in himself, neither can a fellow-creature supply his wants; he must, therefore, depend on Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift. Whilst, however, his state renders it necessary that he should depend on God for all that he needs of spiritual nourishment, he has enough in himself and around him to put to the trial his faith, his hope, and faithfulness to his Lord and Master. He is thus in a wilderness, or his condition here, as compared with the promised rest, is a wilderness. In it he has no abiding city, no rest, no perfect peace, no full enjoyment of God, no uninterrupted communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. In it he is thirsty and hungry and weary and faint. The pools, prepared for the water that descends, prove often dry cisterns. I mean that he often finds the ordinances of grace like dry wells, and like barren trees on which he finds no fruit. He feels himself as a stranger and sojourner; as one unknown, though well-known. If his affections have been entangled by objects, with regard to which he should sit loose, he is either deprived of these, or else they are made bitter to him. He is surrounded with dangers and enemies, against whom he has to be always on his guard, and with whom, sometimes, he has to wage war. All these, on the one hand, try him, and bring to light the evil of his heart, such as

unbelief, pride, self-sufficiency, disobedience, and rebellion of spirit, and spiritual idolatry; and, on the other hand, show him his need of pardoning mercy, of renewing and sanctifying grace, of being brought down from his high places, from his self-seeking and self-glory. They are also fitted to impress on him his need of Divine guidance, protection, and living by faith on the Word of God, or on Christ in the Word of promise, in the doctrine of the Gospel of God, of living upon Him and to Him. Thus he is in a wilderness — a dry parched land — but he is not alone.

III. We have mentioned some of the elements that render the condition of believers here like unto a wilderness. We now proceed to notice the end why God brings them into such a condition, and that is in order to speak comfortably to them.

Man in his natural state has no taste or relish for the consolations that are in Christ. His ears are deaf to the voice of God; his heart is hard and insensible to the great things of which God speaks, and his mind is engrossed by carnal considerations, that never entertain any thoughts about Divine and Heavenly things. He is like one with whom a friend would begin a close and intimate conversation, which it was his interest to attend to, but who was so much taken up by some trifling business as that it prevented him from paying any attention to what his friend said. The only way to attract the attention would be to withdraw him from that which so much engrossed him, and take him aside, and then when he was disposed to listen, to tell him the matter of communication. The Lord has thus to withdraw man's heart and affections from created objects, and to dispose him to listen to Him, or to attend to His Word, believe it, and obey it. It is then only that one derives true comfort from the truth. The comforts of Christ are bestowed only on the needy. In Him there is a fulness of consolation sufficient for every one who feels his need of it, and suited to convey comfort under every circumstance in which a believer may be.

The need of comfort arises from various causes, and comfort bestowed, implies sorrow, or grief, or misery, of some kind or other. Sometimes it is a sense of guilt and wrath in God against sin that distresses the soul, so that the comfort he needs is a sense of pardon. At other times his hope is low, and so he needs its revival in order to be comforted. Sometimes he walks in darkness, and so needs light. At other times a sense of evil dwelling in him makes him sad and wretched; then he needs grace to subdue and resist evil in order to enjoy any relief. Sometimes he mourns over an absent Lord and Saviour; then it is a view of Him as his beloved that can cheer him. At other times his barrenness

causes him fear and grief; then it is a revival of the graces of the Spirit that can raise his soul. In this wilderness he also mourns over a world lying in wickedness, and can only be comforted in this matter by laying hold of God's promise, and submitting to His will as to the manner and time of its accomplishment. Here, also, he learns more and more of the bitterness of a state of absence from God, and sees that nothing can give him relief but communion with Him here, and far more intimate communion with Him above. Thus he is prepared and ripened for being transplanted into the Paradise above, where perfect rest is at last enjoyed. It is God who can speak comfort as to these matters. It is not the wilderness, it is not a sense of its barrenness, of its dangers and trials that does this, but the God of all consolation, whom outward difficulties or inward obstacles cannot prevent from coming near and from speaking to the soul whom he has prepared for enjoying the consolations that are in Christ. When He speaks it is done; unbelief is silenced, the hardness of heart is melted, and the proud bearing is brought low, even to the dust, and, on the other hand, the wounded spirit and the torn heart are healed. The weak is made strong, the fearful is rendered hopeful and courageous, the halting is made to go forward with steadfastness and increased speed.

In conclusion, I would apply this subject, first in the way of self-examination. Have you come out of Egypt, out of a state of sin and misery? Or, are you still there, at peace with sin and Satan, and his service? Or, have these been made an intolerable bondage to you? Have you come out to follow Christ? Are you in a wilderness? Are you learning there what you are and what you need? This is God's manner of dealing with His people. It is He that has brought you to this place. Endeavour to attend to the purpose why you are brought. It is first to prove, try, and show you what is in your heart, and then to comfort you, He does this. Then you may look for the spoiling of every creature comfort, and letting you see that true comfort is to be enjoyed in perfect holiness, and fellowship with Himself.

The subject, too, may be improved for comfort or consolation to the poor, weary wanderer. Christ is with her even in this dreary condition, and as it was He who led her there, so He shall lead her out of it. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" That will be a glorious issue! Christ leading his spouse and coming up from the waste howling wilderness, from Lebanon, from the top of Amana, from the den of lions and leopards, coming home with his long lost one, with her who had been frequently weary, and tossed to and fro — with her

whom He found weltering in her blood, ready to perish, now clothed in robes of needlework, and all glorious within, now cleansed from idols and from all sin — about to enter the gates of the New Jerusalem, through which nothing unclean shall enter, and these gates wide opened to admit the bridegroom with his bride. The wonder and glory of this coming up is set before us in that question, “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?” Is it she that in the day of her nativity was cast out into the open field, wallowing in her blood, and ready to perish, none to pity, none to help her? It is the very one. It is she who, after being preserved alive by a miracle of power and love, after being washed and adorned with beautiful garments, and then married to Him, who proved her deliverer, but after that, played the harlot with many lovers? Yes; it is she of whom all this is true. Why did He who is so high, so excellent, so full of majesty and glory, condescend to look on one who is so miserable and low? It was because He was sovereign, and rich in love and grace. Why did He restore her into favour after being guilty of such conduct? It was, because that having espoused her in justice, in righteousness, truth, and loving-kindness, He is unchangeable in His love, in His purpose, in His promise, and so bound by His Covenant of Peace, which must not be broken. O wonder of wonders, to behold such a sight!

“Ye gates lift up your heads on high,
Ye doors that last for aye
Be lifted up that so the King
Of glory enter may.”

Think of this poor, weary, hungry, and thirsty soul, and be concerned to be found in Him, that this may be the outlet to you from a very weary wilderness. Will you come with Him who calls you to arise and come away with Him from a state of sin and bondage and wrath? He will deliver you, and though He will lead you to a wilderness, He will not leave you there, but carry you hence with Him; and won't this be better than to be cast into hell for ever?

Cast me not from Thy presence

By Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale

In that well-known penitential psalm, the 51st, David, out of a deep sense of having sinned grievously against God, prays. “Cast me not away from thy presence.” It is a prayer that might well come from the heart of each one of us for it is true that our case is indeed desperate

unless the Lord alone will have mercy on us. We deserve to be cast away for various reasons.

First, Because of our nature. We are fallen in Adam, and the guilt of his first transgression has been justly imputed to us because he was a public person and our representative in the Covenant of Works. By his fall we, not only lost communion with God and became children of wrath and heirs of misery, but we inherited a corrupt nature, ruled by enmity against God, so that if we had the ability as we have the will, we would put God out of existence. It is therefore impossible for us to do anything that is pleasing in the sight of God, or do anything by which we might obtain his favour, and from that point of view alone we deserve to be cast away from God's presence.

Again that natural enmity of the human heart finds an outlet in our transgressions of His holy law. In thought, word and action there is want of conformity to the law and transgression of it, and each one of these sins of omission and commission deserves the wrath and curse of God both in this life and that which is to come. Together with our being at variance with the law of God there is our great sin, so often repeated, of rejecting God's great and glorious remedy, expressly provided to meet with our lost and ruined condition. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to work out a salvation by which sinners could be eternally saved and that salvation is freely offered to us in the gospel, yet in face of the gospel presentation of the suitableness and sufficiency of that Provision many continue in their sins. For this all who hear the gospel and reject Christ deserve to be cast away.

In view of their long, continued rejection of Christ sinners are in imminent danger of being cast away from God's presence. The longer one continues in sin the more hardened one gets and evil habits which have become life-long are not getting easier to break from. The gospel becomes as a tale that has often been repeated and fails to arouse interest, and Satan, in whose grasp such are, does his utmost to confirm them in their antagonism to holy things. They begin to have all the appearances of having the Gospel becoming a savour of death unto death to them and not a savour of life unto life.

Under such conditions the strivings of the Spirit become less frequent. There was a time when the reading of God's Word on the preaching of a faithful sermon would awaken a responsive chord in them, and when they were inwardly resolving to seek the Lord, but these times are getting fewer and further between. Christ has been so often rejected and the Spirit has been so much grieved by this rejection that the sinner is almost

on the point of being left to himself. This ought to occasion the cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence."

Although none of the Lord's people will be permitted to go on in sin so that they shall be finally lost, yet many of them have been allowed to go to such a length that it would appear as if they had been given over. This was the case with Manasseh, Saul of Tarsus, Mary Magdelene and many others whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life. However, in the Lord's good time they were effectually called and brought nigh so that they began to abhor sin and desire holiness. It is such who often are constrained to cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence." This does not arise from any doubt as to the final perseverance of the Lord's people, but from a fear that they themselves are not of that number.

There are many things that occasion that fear, as, for instance, when God is not speaking to them. It was under that condition that Zion said, "the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Isa. 49: 14. Again we find David, long after he was effectually called, saying, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? For ever? How long will 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?" Ps. 13: 1, 2. These are fiery trials which are sent to try the Lord's people but the effect will be that they will try to keep closer to Christ himself for they have realised the vanity of going to any other.

Again the prosperity of the wicked and their apparent triumph over the Lord's people will cause the latter to fear that the Lord is casting them away from his presence. Asaph's confession was, "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." Ps. 73: 3. Under such circumstances they are tempted to say, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed mine hands in innocency." The Tempter will try to get them joined with others who are charged with saying, "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?" These trying dispensations will at times cause them to conclude that they are actually cast out from the Lord's presence. This was the experience of Jonah when he records, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight." David had the same experience when he said, "I am cut off from before thine eyes," but when he comes to record it in the 31st psalm he tells us that it was in his haste he said it. However, when they get a right view of God's dealings they will see the folly of their hard conclusions, and say, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." Ps. 73: 22. Then they are enabled to say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine

enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Mic. 7: 8.

"Cast me not away from thy presence," is the prayer of faith, for it is the work of faith to combat unbelief and to see past the dark side of God's dealings to the bright side. Things may be very dark and present appearances may appear to support the suggestions of unbelief but the true child of God, in all his extremities, can go to none but to Christ. He has revealed Himself as the One who has compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way; He has healed the diseases of many and spoken words of comfort to their souls, and with Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. In the days of His flesh He was easily accessible to creatures in trouble and affliction, and proved all-powerful to help them, and He is the same yet, so that in answer to their prayer, "Cast me not away from thy presence," He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matt. 11: 28-30. Thus he affords them a firm ground of confidence, so that they will not go away though everything might appear to be against them.

Regeneration

But as a dead carcase swarms with vermin, arising from putrefaction in which the briskest life is observed, tho' of another order and kind from that life which was formerly in that body; so in like manner, there is a kind of life in a man spiritually dead, but it is carnal, hellish and diabolical, at the geatest distance from true life, and the more vigorous it is, it gives the more evident signs of the most deplorable death. The Apostle has elegantly joined this death and life, Eph. 2: 1, 2, "when ye were *dead* in trespasses and sins, ye walked in them, as is *the life* of this world:" so Beza translates. Macarius says, *Homil.* 12, "when Adam began to entertain evil thoughts and devices, he perished as to God: we say not, he perished altogether, was destroyed and quite dead; but that, tho' as to God he was dead, yet he was alive as to his own nature." What Macarius affirms of Adam is universally true of all: for in a man spiritually dead, there is really a natural or animal life, which tho' not active in that which is good, is doubly active in that which is evil. The understanding not apprehending the wisdom of God, looks upon it as

foolishness, 1 Cor. 2: 14, and yet, when it would find wisdom in the things of God, it so transforms them by its mad presumption, and compels them, even against their nature, to a conformity to the notions of its trifling presumptuous self-wisdom, that while it impiously presumes to correct the wisdom of God, it transforms it in a dreadful manner into down right folly. The will, not finding any thing in God wherewith it can take delight, seeks it either in the creatures without God, or which is more abominable, in the very perpetration of wickedness. The affections, shaking off the reins of reason, rush on in full career. The body, with all its members, is the throne of mad and furious lusts. And the whole man, being so averse from God, and infatuated with the fond love of himself, sets himself up for an idol, makes his own advantage his supreme end, his own pleasure, his most infallible law. This is the life of the soul, which *is dead while living*, 1 Tim. 5: 6.

And thus it is with the elect before regeneration: but by regeneration a new life is put into them, resulting from a gracious union with God and his Spirit. If we, consider this first principle of life, there is not the least doubt, but regeneration is accomplished in a moment. For there is no delay in the transition from death to life. No person can be regenerated, so long as he is in the state of spiritual death: But in the instant he begins to live, he is born again. Wherefore no intermediate state between the regenerate and unregenerate can be imagined so much as in thought, for one is either dead or alive; has either the Spirit of the flesh and the world, or the Spirit of God actuating him; is either in the state of grace, or in the state of malediction; either the child of God, or of the devil; either in the way to salvation, or damnation. There neither is, nor can be any medium here. The holy scripture divides all mankind into two classes, *sheep and goats*, and compares their goings to *two ways*; whereof the one, which is broad, leads to destruction; the other, which is narrow, to life, and there is none who does not tread in one or other of these ways.

The Semi-pelagians of Marseilles were mistaken, who insisted, that a man comes to the grace whereby we are regenerated in Christ by a natural faculty; as by asking, seeking, knocking; and that, in some at least, before they are born again, there is a kind of repentance going before, together with a sorrow for sin, and a change of the life for the better, and a beginning of faith, and an initial love of God, and a desire of grace: it is true they did not look on these endeavours to be of such importance as that it could be said, we were thereby rendered worthy of the grace of the Holy Spirit; as Pelagius and Julian professed: but yet they imagined, they were an occasion by which God was moved to bestow his

grace; for they said, that the mercy of God is such, that he recompences this very small beginning of good with this illustrious reward. But there is little accuracy in the reasonings of these men. For, first, Since our nature is become like an evil tree, after having eaten of the forbidden fruit, it can produce no fruit truly good and acceptable to God, and do nothing by which it can prepare itself for the grace of regeneration; unless a person can be thought to prepare himself for grace by sin. Secondly, it has been found that they who in appearance were in the best manner disposed for regeneration, were yet at the greatest distance from it, as the instance of that young man, Mark 19: 21, 22, very plainly shews. He appeared to be full of good intentions, and inflamed with a desire after heaven, and a blameless life before men, to a degree, that Jesus himself beholding him loved him; but, notwithstanding all these dispositions, he parted with our Lord sorrowful. Thirdly, and on the other hand, they who had not even the least appearance of any preparation, as the publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before those who were civilly righteous and externally religious; "for these last believed not John, declaring the way of righteousness; but the publicans and the harlots truly believed." Fourthly, and lastly, God testifies, that in the first approach of his grace, "he is found of them that sought him not, and asked not for him."

You will say then, are there no preparatory dispositions to the first regeneration? I confidently answer, there are none: and agree with *Fulgentius*, "with respect to the birth of a child, the work of God is previous to any will of the person that comes into the world; so also in the spiritual birth whereby we begin to put off the old man." I own, indeed, spiritual death has its degrees, but with a distinction: what is privative therein, or what it is destitute of, namely, the want of the life of God is equal or alike in all; and in this respect there are no degrees less or more. But what is positive, or, as it were, positive therein; namely, those evil habits, these indeed are very unequal. In infants there are only those evil habits which come into the world with them: in the adult there are others contracted and deeply rooted by many vicious acts and a course of wickedness. These again greatly differ, according as, by the secret dispensation of God's providence, the affections of men are more or less restrained. For though every kind of wickedness, like a certain hydra, lurks in the heart of all; yet God suffers some to give loose reins to their vices, and to be hurried on as by so many furies; while he moves others with a sense of shame, and a reverence for the laws, and some kind of love to honour and honesty; who, in that respect, may be said not to be at

such a distance from sanctifying grace, as they who are guilty of horrid crimes, which are more opposite thereto than a civil and external honesty of life. But yet whatever length any before regeneration has advanced in that honesty, he nevertheless remains in the confines of death, in which there is no preparation for life.

But we must not here omit, that the Elect, before their actual regeneration, are honoured by God with various, and those indeed very excellent privileges above the reprobate which are intended, according to the purpose of God, to be subservient for promoting their regeneration in his appointed time. For as God has a love of special benevolence for them, according to the decree of election; and they are redeemed by Christ, and in a state of reconciliation with God, and of justification, actively taken, it follows: First, That God often preserves them from those base and scandalous crimes which are repugnant to common humanity, and that by some assistance of light, of divinity, of conscience and civil honesty, with an accession of some grace, i.e. restraining grace, operating internally, and laying a restraint on the wickedness of their nature. Secondly, That all and every one of them, who are brought to the acknowledgement and the common illumination of the truth of the Gospel, are kept from the sin against the Holy Ghost. Thirdly, That by the ministry of the word, and other operations of God's special providence towards them, many evident principles of divine truth, are understood by the natural mind, and also imprinted on the natural memory, the meditation of which, immediately after they are regenerated, conduces very much to the confirmation of their faith. And thus, without knowing it, they have collected a very valuable treasure, the excellence and genuine use of which they come not to see, till they are born again. But as these things do not, of their own nature, dispose man for regeneration, though, by the appointment of God, they are so disposed, as that regeneration is certainly to follow, they cannot but very remotely be called preparations, and they will be such more from the intention of God, than from the virtue of the thing.

But when the foundation is laid, divine grace does not always grow up in the same manner. It often happens that this principle of spiritual life which had discovered its activity in the most tender childhood, according to, and sometimes above, the age of the person, God, by his singular grace preventing the full maturity of the natural faculties, grows up by degrees with the person, after the example of our Lord, who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," and of John the Baptist, who *grew and waxed strong in spirit*. Such persons make continual progress in the way of sanctification, and grow insensibly

“unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” We have an illustrious example of this in Timothy, “who from a child had known the Holy Scriptures,” and who in his tender youth, to Paul’s exceeding joy, had given evident signs of an unfeigned faith, with tears of the most tender piety bursting out at times.

On the other hand, sometimes these sparks of piety, especially which more sparingly shone forth in childhood, when in a manner covered with the ashes of I know not what worldly vanities, and carnal pleasures of youth, will appear to be almost extinguished. The allurements of the deceitful flesh, and the sorceries of a tempting world, assaulting the unadvised unwary heart with its deceitful pleasures, almost stifle these small beginnings of piety; and for months, sometimes for years together, so violently overpower them, that all their attempts against them seem to be in vain. Yet there are still, in these persons, remorses of conscience, awakening them at times, languid resolutions, and vanishing purposes, of reforming their lives, till by the infinite efficacy of divine grace, insinuating into the languid and decaying breast, they awake as from a deep sleep, and with the greatest sorrow for their past life, and utmost seriousness, apply to the careful practice of piety; the warmth of their zeal then breaks forth being exceedingly desirous to shew, by brighter flames, its having been unwillingly kept smothered under the ashes. Augustine has given us in his own person, a representation of this state in the excellent book of his confessions.

But the Elect are not all favoured with regenerating grace in their infancy. There are some adult persons whom God regenerates, and at once effectually calls, and converts, in the second act, from a worldly and hypocritical condition, or even from a state of profligate wickedness. Thus it is with those, who are born and brought up without God’s covenant, or even of those who living where this covenant is dispensed, have sold themselves wholly to sin, Satan and the world. The regeneration of these is usually followed with great consternation of soul and sorrow for sin, with a dread of God’s fiery indignation and incredible desires after grace, together with an inexpressible joy, upon finding salvation in Jesus, and a wonderful alacrity in the service of the Lord, which they can scarcely contain. All this may be observed in the jailor of whom we read, Acts 16.

On this depends the solution of that question, whether we are to look upon any as born again, but those who can specify the time, manner and progress of their regeneration? None indeed are here to be flattered or soothed, as to think it lawful for them securely to presume on their

regeneration: but then the consciences of believers are not to be racked with too severe a scrupulosity. We cannot determine this point without a distinction: we have just shewn, that the progress of regeneration is various. Adult persons, who are brought altogether from a carnal to a spiritual life, indeed may, and ought exactly to know the beginning and manner of so great a change. They who, though regenerated in infancy, have yet been carried away by the entanglements of the world, and for some time have struggled, as it were, with destruction, but afterwards have been roused by the grace of God, made to renounce the world, and give themselves wholly to piety. These may, and it is their duty to recollect, not so much the beginning of their very first regeneration, as the process of that actual and thorough conversion. But it would be wrong to require those, who, being regenerated in their infancy, have grown up all along with the quickening spirit, to declare the time and manner of their passage from death to life. It is sufficient if they can comfort themselves, and edify others, with the fruits of regeneration, and the constant tenor of a pious life. It is, however, the duty of all to recollect, not in a careless manner, the operations of the Spirit of grace on their hearts: which is highly useful, both for our glorifying God, and for our own comfort and excitement to every duty.

There cannot be the least doubt of God's being the author of our regeneration. For we become his sons by regeneration, which were born of God, John 1: 12. And even in this respect, *the sons of God by grace*, bear some resemblance to him who is *the Son of God by nature*: observing only the difference between the infinite excellency of our Lord, and that dark resemblance of it in us. Why is the Lord Jesus called the Son of God? Because begotten of the Father.

Wherein consists that generation of the Father? In this, that "as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself." And why are we in communion with Christ, called the sons of God? because his Father is our Father, John 20: 17. How is he our Father? "He hath begotten us," James 1: 18. 1 John 5: 4, 11. Wherein does that generation consist? "He hath made us partakers of a divine nature," 2 Pet. 1: 4. Thus we are even transformed into his likeness, and have upon us no contemptible effulgence of his most glorious holiness.

But there is here a special consideration of Christ: Who, *as God* is, together with the Father and Spirit, the principal, but *economically* considered, the meritorious and *exemplary* cause of our regeneration. For when he cast a vail over the majesty of the Son of God, took upon him human form, and came in the "likeness of sinful flesh, he thereby

merited for all his elect, their advancement to the illustrious dignity of the sons of God; sons, I say, not only by adoption, but by a spiritual and heavenly generation. The holy and glorious life of Christ is also the most perfect of our new life, all the excellence of which consists in a conformity with the life of Christ, who is the "first-born among many brethren."

And we may add, that Christ, as the second Adam, is become not only by merit, but also by efficacy, *a quickening spirit*. So that the regenerate do not so much live themselves, as feel, acknowledge and proclaim Christ living in them.

The seed of regeneration is the word of God. For thus, 1 Peter 1: 23, *born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever; or, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. But this seed does not operate always in the same manner: for adult persons are born again by the word of God, laying before them the deformity, horror and misery of their natural life, or rather of their living death; and at the same time, the excellence of that spiritual life, of which Christ is the author, fountain and pattern; pressing them also by the most powerful exhortations, that, denying all carnal lusts and appetites, they may give themselves up to be new moulded and formed by the Spirit of God. And in this manner, the word is to them a moral instrument of regeneration, by teaching and persuasion. If they also be thought to be regenerated of the seed of the word, it is to be understood, not of the word externally propounded, which they understood not; but of the truths contained in the word, the efficacy of which is imprinted by the Holy Spirit upon their minds, which they will come to the actual knowledge of when they grow up, but the word operates effectually in none unless when impregnated by the efficacy of the Spirit. To the external word must be added the internal, which is no less effectual than that word of God, whereby he commanded light to shine out of darkness.

It is therefore incumbent on every person who would not profanely despise his salvation, diligently to read, hear and meditate on the word of God, and constantly attend on the public worship and assemblies of his people. For though before his regeneration, he cannot savingly hear, read or meditate on the word of God; yet how does he know which may be the happy hour of his gracious visitation; which part of holy scripture, what sermon, and by whom, the Lord is to render effectual for his regeneration, by the supernatural efficacy of his spirit? Experience teaches this, that men are born again there where the word of God is

preached; a thing which is not the case in those parts of the world which God favours not with the preaching of the gospel. And though we dare not assure any one, that if he continues in hearing the word, he shall certainly be born again: yet we justly insist upon this, that there is a brighter hope of the wished-for conversion for those, who in the best manner they can, use the means which God has prescribed, than for such as forwardly neglect them. While Ezekiel was prophesying to the dry bones, behold, a shaking was observed among them, and *the breath (spirit) came and they lived.*

The Days of the Fathers . . . Question Day Notes

Question Day Communion in the district of Carloway — 27th September, 1878

The service having been conducted in the customary way, it was requested that one of the brethren present should give a portion of Scripture as the basis of the Question. The words give are in Colossians 3: 9th and 10th verses. "Lie not one to another seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." Marks of "the new man" were asked, and the knowledge the brethren had of "the old man," together with the troubles that they had as a consequence of that knowledge.

REV. JOHN MACRAE, DUIRNISH, SKYE, "opened the Question" and among other things said, "These were at one time living in sin, and doing service to many lusts etc. But the Holy Spirit was shed abundantly upon them by which they were regenerated, and renewed. Oh! the great love wherewith he loved us.

The friends have come here, and well do they like to hear the marks of "the new man". The way to crucify "the old man" is to be often looking to Christ the Mediator. They would prefer to have their lusts crucified than the riches of this world.

The following were called to speak:

MURDO MACLEOD, CATECHIST, LOCHS, who said:

There are two things before us here, "the new man" and "the old man." The Scriptures throw light upon them, and there is a sense in which there are two parties or groups in this large congregation here today, "the old man", and "the new man." The latter seek a token from

the Lord. If you would ask these if they had put off "the old man," going by the feelings that they have of "the old man", their mouths would be stopped — without answer. But "the new man" embraces Christ offered in the gospel. We need that the Lord would do this for us. Who would continue contentedly wearing the clothes of "the old man", fallen away from God, when the law of God curses the soul that sinneth? The poor soul must acknowledge everything that the law accuses him of.

Christ is formed in their souls, as the "hope of glory." They are endowed with the graces of the Spirit. Christ is precious to them in the steps (way) in which He suffered. Many an "Och! Alas! Conscience!" these have, due to the strength of "the old man". If they would only manage to exhaust him! If they do this or that, all things not of faith are made sin to them, but "the new man" delights in the law of God, yea, delights in all that God has above, and that He has below. Another mark of "the new man" — he esteems the Lord's people. "Thy people are my people" and "thy God, my God." The Sabbath Day is the day above others that "the new man" delights in. Is the Lord's Day your own delight? Some need it for a rest, but poor as you are you will go out (to church) to hear the Word of God. These desire to be clothed with their house from heaven although they are groaning while here.

ALEX MACIVER, LOCHS, who said:

We read that there are three Persons in the Godhead, and each one has a hand in the salvation of the soul. Before God awakened this people, they were "the old man" only. These obtained a sore awareness of original sin, and of actual transgression, and they had need of the hand of God going through that experience. Some made preparation to end their own life going through that experience, but God Himself kept them from doing this. This man gave up all hope of being saved. Yet the time of God came, and He revealed Christ to them in His saving power. Their eyes were opened, their conscience was healed and they thought they would have no more tribulation. That place was like Bethel (Genesis 28: 19). He erected a memorial stone where he vowed "The commandments of my God, I will keep with special care." Yea the place was a Peniel to the soul, where he and God were face to face, and he was saved. God has put a mark on this person since that day, his walk is slow (careful), the soul desires the first ripe fruit. These were at that time like Peter on the mountain, "Master it is good for us to be here, let us make three tabernacles." That was the day of their espousals, in which their hearts were drawn to Christ, their Bridegroom. They are received into the family of God but the Holy Spirit now teaches them that they are in the

neighbourhood of sin, that corruption dwells in them. Och, Och! You will see greater abominations (Ezek. 8). "The new man" grows in stature within and without . . .

DONALD MACLEAY, SHADER, who said:

We have heard much about the dealing of the Lord with his people, the nature of "the old man" and of "the new man." I will say first, that it was God who convinced them that they were sinners, and that the wages of sin is death. They acknowledged all that God had said, that they had sinned against him, and against their own soul. "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." They received Christ as sinners who were hell deserving. "They looked unto him and were lightened" (Psalm 34: 5). Their faith saw in Christ all that they needed for eternity. Their state is now altered, the person now begins to put off "the old man." He begins to separate from the old companions, turns his back upon them and turns to follow the Lord, for the love of Christ constrains him. He came to have an agreement with God's way of salvation, in Jesus Christ. You would not have known you had an "old man" till you obtained "the new man". You thought then "the old man" had been slain, but he rose up again. Poor soul it appears to you that he is set free (let loose) when he is thrashing about. This made the apostle cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This "body" follows them, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life." These follow them, as God said to Israel that the heathen whom they did not cast out would be as thorns in their sides, etc. A mark on them is that they delight not in the company of the ungodly (Psalm 1: 1).

They would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God and dwell in it, than be in the tents of wickedness. Psalm (84: 10). Christ is precious to them in the way the Church said "My beloved is white and ruddy." "The new man loves the commandments of God.

DONALD GRANT, STORNOWAY, who said:

The sharp two edged sword, law and gospel, in mercy broke their heart. They were wounded, and were healed in the day of effectual calling. "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh . . ."

These have to wage war against "the old man," and in that way they grow in knowledge of the power of "the old man", as a consequence of which they cry out, "Who shall deliver me . . ." But Christ is with them as He was with the three young men in the fiery furnace. They are conscious that they are weak and backward. "I am not," said Ruth, "like

unto the least of thine handmaids. Yet they delight in the saints on earth and the excellent . . ." (Psalm 16: 3).

KEITH MACKENZIE, CARLOWAY, who said:

Referring to the question or portion of scripture, one of these got his being from sin, the other from grace. The Lord is the portion of "the new man." He had a conscience (who is without it?), but these are conscientious in their dealings in all things, on Sabbath and week-day. The exercise of their faith is upon Christ, their Intercessor in heaven . . .

MALCOLM MACLEOD, BRAGAR, who said:

I am afraid to stand up, and I am ashamed to speak. I am afraid that when I rise "the old man" will stand up with me. I am sick tired of him. It is not just "much speech" that "the new man" has. He will not make the most noise. What he had is the groan (unuttered).

I remember John Macleod (Gaelic Schoolmaster) being asked to speak to the "Question" in the Parish of Uig. He was asked to tell if he had anything against Finlay. "It is my opinion" said the godly man "that my own hearth would first need to be swept, before that of any of the brethren."

The "old man" is so old that it was in fallen Adam we got him. Whatever people say, it is high time that I put off "the old man". "The old man" will allow you to criticise him, but that will not take you to heaven. Christ will not be pleased with anything, except "the new man" for He is Himself wrought in that person as "the hope of glory." The blood is sprinkled on these — "when I see the blood I will pass over you." There are marks on "the new man." He is warm, for if you have not love you have not God. The world ought to know these from the love they have toward each other. I ask you fishermen, would you set your fishing lines because of your love to God? And you women, would you sell a dozen eggs for your love to the Lord's people, and your union with His Cause?

When the Lord gave this people true faith, unbelief came following in its footsteps. The multitude is as ignorant of this as the brute (cows) over there opposite us. (The service may have been on the common pasture).

Another mark of the "new man." Although you would hit him in the face he would love you still. Another, if you have an enemy in the village you will not restrain prayer for him. A brother and sister may quarrel, but they have to forgive each other. One distinctive mark I give on these — they would not wish to have one thought of enmity against the brethren. Let us examine ourselves regarding this.

"The new man" prays often when he is journeying. The Lord

sometimes was better to him journeying on the highway than in secret. Many a time indeed was He better than in secret. I will confess this, that the Lord was for four years telling me that I was a great sinner before I saw that God was offering His Son to me without my own works. "The new man" has both a wakeful and humble nature, yea, the mind that is in Christ.

ALEXANDER MORRISON, STORNOWAY, who said:

Regarding the people of God, one thing is true about them, as we have in the words of the "Question." They desire to speak the truth one to another as brethren in Jesus Christ. It is very difficult to distinguish between "the old man" and "the new man." We would desire to give a mark on the weakest of these. Some may attain to such a great height in the Church of God, when mere hypocrites, while the people of God are weak, and lowly, but the Lord will raise these up eventually. I could from natural ability spend many nights in watching. We cannot adequately give the light on how a person closes in with Christ when he was seeing on the one hand that God must be glorified and on the other that his poor soul must be saved. It was not because of all he heard from other folk but he did this upon the authority of the revealed will of God, that he had given His Son for him. He had now a right privilege from the word of God. The world appeared new to him, the hills and the glens as if they had a beauty they did not have till then. The soul imagined in the light of the love of Christ who covered the sins of his people, that these sins would no more trouble them. But a lust here and a lust there began to seek a place. He began to fear if it was the real work of God that was begun in him. The "Canaanites" are too strong for him. This people cannot bring anything now before God but His free grace. The feeling he has is "against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." I will give one mark on them, — though God forgave their sins, they do not forgive themselves. Some take refuge under the "common mercy" of God, but I know some and they would desire a secret place so that they would get one word from God. I would accept that as a mark of those who seek Christ. Another mark: you seek Him in all the means of grace, you are inclined in your mind towards them and you would desire to have all the people of God in your arms. There are two things going along with "the new man," a knowledge of the way of salvation and a godly watchfulness. We ought to be as "Galileans" to the world, as if we had been with Christ; and to our consciences that we are faithful to our profession. These seek to follow Christ's example. They are sorrowful that they are so far behind.

The Apostle of the North

(From "Disruption Worthies of the Highlands.")

Among the great names that adorned the Disruption Church, none was held in higher esteem in the Northern Counties of Scotland, and among many in the South, than that of Dr Macdonald of Ferintosh. In the Highlands he was known as "Ministear mòr na Tòisidheachd". It is not consistent with fact to say that in matters of religion the Highlanders are the mere followers of their popular ministers. There were popular ministers in the Highlands whom the people forsook, because of their deserting what they held to be the cause of truth at the period of the Disruption. Yet in no part of the country are ministers of power and grace more esteemed than in the Highlands, and it cannot be questioned that the teaching and example of such ministers exercised a vast influence over the popular mind in 1843, and of none more than the subject of our sketch.

We learn from Dr Kennedy's biography of Dr Macdonald, that he was born in the parish of Reay, in Caithness, on the 12th November, 1779. His father, James Macdonald, or M'Adie, as he was called, in accordance with Celtic usage, which distinguishes the septs in the same tribe, was a man of note among the religious community. He was early brought to the saving knowledge of divine truth; and at a later period he was, with universal consent, appointed catechist of his native parish. For this post he was admirably qualified by both his gifts and his graces, and he retained the affection and the esteem of the godly over a wide district unchanged to the end of a long life of 97 years. The part of the country where he resided was at the time much torn by religious differences. The people in a body adhered to the Church of Scotland, but within the Church they were much divided. James held firmly by the Church and its ordinances, while he maintained Christian fellowship with the truly good who had separated themselves. He was a man of a bold, and yet a loving spirit. His aim was to win souls to Christ. On one occasion he met the leader of the separatist party in the parish, who began to reprove him as being too soft, and told him he should be more faithful in denouncing sinners. It was the habit of the people of the Highlands at the time to send their horses away to the hills in summer, where they were set loose; and there was often some difficulty afterwards in taking them when required. James's reply to his neighbour's reproof was, "Well, let you and me go to the hill, John, to catch the horses; take

you a whip, and I'll take a sheaf of corn, and see which of us will be most successful".

John Macdonald was the worthy son of such a father. At school he soon took the highest place, and at college, which he attended in King's College, Aberdeen, he was one of the most distinguished students. He especially excelled in Mathematics — a science which he cultivated to the last days of his life. It was during his school and college days that he was brought to the knowledge of saving truth. Dr Kennedy specifies the three means which the Spirit of God appears to have employed in bringing about this great end. They were the early teaching and example of his father, the writings of Jonathan Edwards, and the preaching of the Rev J. Robertson of Achrenny Mission, afterwards of Kingussie.

In 1805 he was licensed by the Presbytery of Caithness to preach the Gospel. Previous to his ordination he officiated as missionary in Achrenny and Halladale for some months, and in 1806 he was ordained to the mission charge at Berriedale — all in the Presbytery of Caithness. His incumbency here was a very short one, and in January, 1807, he was translated to what was then the Gaelic Chapel of Edinburgh, as successor to the Rev James Maclauchlan, afterwards of Moy. When he came first to Edinburgh, he had little of the power in preaching to which he afterwards attained. He was sound, clear, and accurate; but somewhat stiff in his manner and delivery. This might have arisen from various causes, but mainly, no doubt, was the result of youth and inexperience. Gradually this sense of constraint wore away, and he came to speak in public with wonderful eloquence and power. It was once said to the writer by an old Edinburgh hearer of his, "It was here that he got his wings". During his Edinburgh ministry an attempt was made to introduce English preaching in the afternoon into the Gaelic congregation, to meet the wishes of hundreds who wished to benefit by Mr Macdonald's ministry; but the more ardent Celts among the people resisted the change strenuously and successfully. To meet the desire, however, Mr Macdonald resolved to preach English at night — thus undertaking three regular services each Lord's day. With weekday meetings and visitations, this made his life a busy one. It was also a useful one, for during his Edinburgh ministry he had many souls for his hire. His ministry in Edinburgh extended over a period of six years; and in 1813 he was presented to the Parish of Ferintosh in Ross-shire, vacant by the death of the excellent and much-esteemed Mr Charles Calder. The scene when he parted with his Edinburgh flock was a somewhat remarkable one. He had preached in Gaelic as usual during the day, taking farewell of the people; and at night the

English congregation met in the usual place of worship in North College Street. Ere the service began, the crowd collecting was such that there was no prospect of their finding accommodation in the church, although it could accommodate 1100 worshippers. Mr Macdonald was just going to the pulpit, when it was proposed that a request should be made for the use of the West Church for the occasion. A messenger was sent for the keys, which were readily given. The West Church was opened, and Mr Macdonald putting himself at the head of his congregation, they marched westward through the Grassmarket, and soon filled the Church to the roof. Here, amidst the tears and sobs of many, he took farewell of his English-speaking hearers, who had for years enjoyed and profited by his earnest ministry.

In due time he was settled in Ferintosh, where he continued to minister with great success till the year 1849, a period of 42 years. Much of his time was spent in assisting brother ministers at their communions. In such services he was acceptable to both ministers and people, many of the ministers who differed widely from him on ecclesiastical questions making him heartily welcome. This he owed much to his kind, genial, and brotherly disposition, which displayed itself so pleasantly in the family circle, his interesting conversation, and especially his fund of anecdote, all making him a favourite with old and young. Many ministers' sons and daughters, who were young at the time, remember well how welcome he was at their father's fireside. By the people his appearance was hailed with enthusiasm, thousands collected to hear the word at his mouth, and many of these gatherings were followed by rich and abounding spiritual blessings.

He took a deep interest in the distant island of St Kilda. At the instance of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, he visited the island four times in as many different years, and preached to the people, at the time without a minister, the gospel of salvation. Besides these visits, so much valued by the people, he made strenuous efforts to secure the erection of a church and manse in the island, and on his last visit, in 1827, accompanied by the minister appointed by the Society which he represented, he found the buildings completed, and provision made for the regular maintenance of gospel ordinances. For many years the Free Church has maintained a minister on the island.

In 1827 he paid a visit to Ireland, at the request of Mr Daly, afterwards Bishop of Cashel, with a view to preaching the gospel to the Irish in their native tongue. He studied the Irish dialect of the Gaelic language, and

preached frequently in that dialect to the people along the south-west coast.

Dr Macdonald's zeal for preaching the gospel led him sometimes into difficulties. In the year 1817 he preached in a Dissenting chapel in Strathbogie, without the consent of the parish minister. For this he was brought before the General Assembly, where, although no special censure was passed upon him, such proceedings were severely censured.

His ministry was richly blessed of God. Perhaps no minister of modern times was more owned as the means of converting souls. While in Edinburgh, he took a deep and active interest in the great revival at Muthil, under the ministry of the Rev. Mr Russell. Soon after his removal to Ferintosh, a deeply interesting movement took place among his own people. After that the Word was much blessed on both sides of Loch Tay, and in Glenlyon; and he frequently visited the district and preached with great power and success. The fruits of the revival of religion there are visible to this day. There were great spiritual movements in Ross-shire, the revivals in Kilsyth and Dundee took place, and in all these Dr Macdonald took his share of the work with warm interest. Wherever he heard of the Lord's cause prospering, he made a point of being present to help it forward.

Though not disposed to take much part in ecclesiastical controversy, he found no difficulty in taking his side when the great questions of Non-Intrusion and Spiritual Independence arose for discussion in the Church. He became a firm supporter of the policy of the Evangelical party; and his weight of character and influence over the popular mind aided much the cause which they maintained in the north. At the Disruption he took a foremost place, and was selected to preach the first sermon in Tanfield Hall. His text was John 15: 16. He shewed the power of the principle which actuated him by the extent of the sacrifice which he made, for the living of the parish of Ferintosh was one of the largest in that part of the country. He was not in the habit of referring often to ecclesiastical subjects in the pulpit; but, preaching at Edinburgh, in the Gaelic Church, soon after the Disruption, he said of the Established Church as it then existed, that it was a "Christ-denying, God-dishonouring, and soul-destroying church". These were strong words — too strong, perhaps, for courtesy or for charity, but he spoke under a deep sense of wrong done to the cause of Christ. He was much censured for using them, but it does not appear that he ever withdrew, or even modified them afterwards.

At the Inverness Assembly he was associated, as Gaelic Moderator, with Dr M'Farlan of Greenock, the Moderator for the year. In this

capacity he preached a Gaelic sermon at the opening of the Assembly, and many who were then present still remember the mingled feeling of amusement and admiration which pervaded the house as he announced his text, and proceeded to expound it. The words were, "These, who have turned the world upside down, are come hither also." The sermon was one in every way worthy of his fame, and a complete vindication of the Disruption.

On the 18th April, 1849, he was called to his rest, leaving behind him a name fragrant and precious among thousands, and which shall not be forgotten, especially in the Highlands, so long as gospel truth is prized by the people.

Dr Buchanan, in his *Ten Years' Conflict*, says:-

"The devotional services at the Convocation were conducted by Dr Macdonald of Ferintosh — that eminent servant of God, of whom it is enough to say that he was the Whitefield of the Highlands of Scotland. The proudest and most powerful chieftains of the Celtic race never possessed such a mastery over the clans, which the fiery cross or the wild pibroch summoned into the field in the fierce days of feudal strife, as belonged, in these more peaceful modern times, to this humble minister of Christ. From Tarbatness to the Outer Hebrides — from the Spey to the Pentland Firth — the fact needed but to be known that John Macdonald had come, and was about to preach the Word, in order that the country for 20 miles around should gather at his call. Ten thousand people have often been swayed as one man — stirred into enthusiasm, or melted into sadness, by this mighty and faithful preacher's voice."

— T. M'L.

Notes and Comments

The Anglo-Irish Accord on Northern Ireland

The discussions which have gone on for a long time between the British and Eire Governments on the question of Northern Ireland have at last brought both Governments into a measure of agreement on this issue. The accord which has been signed gives the Southern Irish Government a say in the government of Northern Ireland, and consequently is a stepping stone to the ultimate subjection of Northern Ireland to Southern Irish Romanist control. The result, as might have been expected, is that the majority in Northern Ireland have rejected the Accord as a betrayal of their interests. How they could view it in any other light no right thinking person could understand.

The picture that has long been painted of Northern Ireland in the Press is that of a country with a bigoted Protestant majority who cannot live at peace with the Roman Catholic minority. Southern Ireland is represented as a benign neighbour state which seeks to obtain justice for the minority Roman Catholic population in Northern Ireland. The true state of matters is the very opposite. There is no question that the Protestants of Northern Ireland, left alone from outside interference could live peaceably and harmoniously with the minority Roman Catholic population. It is a bigoted Romanist Southern Ireland which has cast envious eyes on a prosperous Northern Ireland and desires to subject the Northern Kingdom to its will. Over many decades it has given succour to the IRA which has carried out a ruthless campaign of murder, arson and intimidation in order to weaken the resolve of the British Government to maintain Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. At last they have succeeded in making a chink in the armour of the British Government and the Protestants of Northern Ireland have not been slow to recognise it.

That the Roman Catholic Church has played a considerable part in the troubles in Northern Ireland, we have not the least doubt. In the skirts of that iniquitous system will be found the blood of many that have been slain in Northern Ireland. Consequently, to expect the Protestants of Northern Ireland to acquiesce in the recently signed Accord is to ask them to throw away all that they hold dear.

Our prayer for Northern Ireland is that the Lord may be pleased in His infinite mercy to preserve the people of that troubled land from their enemies and from the subtle machinations of politicians who have no adequate conception of the pricelessness of Northern Ireland's Protestant heritage.

Sabbath Trading

The attack on the sanctity of the Sabbath continues to be carried on relentlessly and it is hoped by the enemies of the Sabbath that the Government will give its full sanction to Sabbath trading. Men full of enmity to God will not suffer His day to be left at peace. This has ever been the way so far as wicked men are concerned and only the Christian conscience of the nation prevented the Sabbath from being trampled under foot hitherto. Today, the sad fact of the matter is that there is little public or private conscience about keeping the Sabbath holy. Consequently Satan sees his opportunity and will endeavour to snatch it. May the Lord be pleased to prevent it so that Britain may not slide fur-

ther down the road of apostacy from God. One thing is sure — and that is that God will yet require of Britain her already multitudinous sins of Sabbath breaking, just as He saw to it that the land of Israel would enjoy her Sabbaths when the land lay desolate throughout the 70 years of the captivity.

Sabbath Pamphlet

Focus Christian Ministries Trust has published a 12 page pamphlet entitled, *Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy*. It contains two short lectures on Sabbath observance. The first, "Why should we keep holy the Sabbath Day?" is by the late Bishop J. C. Ryle, and the other, "Sabbath Observance: The Medical Aspect," is by the late Professor D. MacCallum Blair.

It is a useful contribution to the efforts being made in resisting the proposed abolishing of restrictions on trading on the Lord's Day. There is no doubt that the pamphlet will prove edifying to the serious minded, but it is also suitable for distribution in witnessing against the Government's intention to liberalise the law against Sabbath trading.

We recommend the pamphlet, which can be obtained from: Focus Christian Ministries Trust, 6 Orchard Road, Lewes East, Sussex, BN7 2HB. There is no charge, but help toward printing and postage costs would be appreciated by the publishers.

D. A. R.

Church Notes

Return of Editor

The Editor returned to this country on 13th March after a three month tour of duty as Church Deputy overseas. During that time he visited Australia, Canada and New Zealand. He was glad to find that the Lord's Cause in those lands continues to be upheld and that the Lord continues to give tokens of His favour in the different parts. It was encouraging to see so many young people attending the services and young families growing up under the Gospel. May the Lord be pleased to bless the Gospel of His grace to them and bring many others to hear the Word. As at home, some of the young wander away looking for greener pastures to their own unspeakable loss. May those that remain be found steadfast to the truth in a dark day.

The Editor wishes to acknowledge the great goodness of the Lord to him throughout his visit abroad. His desire is that the Word preached may be blessed to many. He would also like to express his thanks to the many friends who showed kindness to him overseas and to Rev. John

MacLeod, Stornoway, who undertook the editorship of the Magazine during his absence. The kindness and help shown in this way was greatly appreciated.

Deputy to Australia and New Zealand

Rev. Alex MacPherson, London expects to leave this country for Auckland, New Zealand on 6th January (D.V.) as Church Deputy to New Zealand and Australia. Mr MacPherson expects to be away for ten weeks. Mrs MacPherson hopes to accompany her husband on his visit, and we trust that, under the Lord's good hand, they will be brought safely to their destination. They are due to arrive back in this country on 19th March (D.V.) from Australia.

Greenock Communion

The date of the Spring Communion in Greenock is being altered from the fourth Sabbath of March to the second Sabbath of February for this year as Rev. L. MacLeod hopes to leave (D.V.) in March for a period as Church Deputy overseas.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern : At Dingwall on 21st January at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 24th January at 2.30 p.m.

Canadian: At Toronto on 6th February at 2 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 11th February at 12 noon.

Skye: At Portree on 25th February at 11 a.m.

Western: At Laide on 11th March at 11 a.m.

Zimbabwe Mission — Staff Vacancies

GENERAL — Post of Administrator/Treasurer.

JOHN TALLACH SECONDARY SCHOOL — Graduate Teachers (Four Posts) with qualifications in English, History, Geography and Mathematics.

MBUMA HOSPITAL — A doctor is still urgently required, also a further Nurse/Midwife and preferably with teaching experience.

With the new situation that exists in Zimbabwe consequent upon independence it is desirable that all of the seven above posts be filled as soon as possible. The work provides a real challenge to all who may have these necessary qualifications, and all our Church people should make the needs of our Mission a matter of constant prayer.

Enquiries to Rev. A. Murray, F. P. Manse, Lairg, Sutherland, IV27 4EH. Telephone 0549-2176.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: Miss K. A. MacL., The Cottage, Callanish, Isle of Lewis, £50.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: Collection at Service in Calgary 3/11/85 per Rev. D. B. MacL., \$350; "In memory of Mrs Christina Gibson" from the Fowler family, \$100.

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

Barnoldswick: £10, for Foreign Mission Fund, per collection plate; From two friends, £20, for Communion expenses; J. G., Inverness, £15, per R. M.; Friend, Harris, £50, per Rev. D. Maclean.

Dingwall: S. C. Invergordon, £10, for Church Funds, per Rev. D. B. M.

Edinburgh: Anon Vancouver Friends, £10, for Organisation Fund, envelope in plate per Ian Mackenzie; Anon two Glasgow Friends, £5, for Communion expenses, per Treasurer; Anon, £20, for Church Renovation, envelope in plate, per Treasurer.

Flashadder: Envelopes in plate, two donations, £40, for Sustentation Fund, £20 for Home Mission Fund, £15 for Foreign Mission Fund, £10 for Dominions and Overseas Fund; M. S., envelope in plate, £10, for Communion expenses; Mr and Mrs D. N. McFarlane, £30, for Church Funds; Mrs McDonald, "Lochview", £10 for Home Mission Fund; Mrs McDonald, "Lochview", £5, Church door collection.

Fort William: Friend, Caol, £10; A. McG., £5; M. M. Nicolson, £10; last three for Sustentation Fund; Mrs Begg, £5, last four per Rev. J. A. MacDonald; Anon, £2, envelope in plate.

Glasgow: Mrs Mackinnon, two donations, £9, for Congregational Fund; Anon, £100, per Rev. D. M.; Anon £40 per Rev. D. M.; Anon £10 per Rev. D. M.; Anon, £10; J. M. D., £10; Anon, £5; Matt. 6: 3, £10, last seven for Bus Fund; Anon, £10, for Communion expenses, per Rev. D. M.; Anon, £20; D. J. M. (two donations), £10; P. W. £5, last three for Sustentation Fund; Anon, £20 for T. B. S.

Inverness: £22 for Zimbabwe Mission for sponsoring a blind child, from "A Friend", per Rev. A. F. M.

Oban: "In memory of the late Mrs Martin", £200; "In memory of parents, Mrs Townsley, Slating", £100, per Rev. A. Morrison; "In memory of late wife", £100; last three all for Congregational Fund; L. and M. Gillies, Glasgow, £10; Inverness Friend, £10; last two for Church and Manse Fund.

Perth: Friend, North Tolsta, £5, per Rev. D. J. MacDonald; Friend Chequers, £2, per Rev. D. J. MacDonald, both for Perth Congregation.

Raasay: Friend at Communion, £4, for Sustentation Fund, per J. M. Macleod; Macleods Suishnish, £15, where most needed, per J. M. Macleod; Anon, £8, where most needed, per M. D. MacKay; Friend Raasay, £20, for Home Mission Fund; Friend Raasay, £20, for Aged and Infirm Ministers etc.; Rachel and Sheila, 37 Inverarish, £12; Anon, Inverarish, £5; envelope in plate, £10; last three for Communion expenses and last five per Treasurer; Miss I. Campbell, Shieldaig, £1, Church door collection, per Rev. J. R. Tallach.

Stornoway: Anon, £60, for Sustentation Fund, per Treasurer.