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Be Sober, Be Vigilant

The warning, "be sober, be vigilant", is given to the Church of God and people of God in view of an enemy that they have to face who, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." This adversary is the same as Eve had to face in the Garden of Eden when he appeared in the form of a serpent to entice and ensnare her. His enmity to our first parents was then seen in all its hatefulness to what was good and upright. The adversary of that early time remains still the un placable foe of all in whom the grace of God is evident so that the people and church of God have still to be warned of the danger to them from this source.

In writing to the strangers scattered throughout the different provinces of Asia Minor, the apostle Peter speaks to them of this adversary whom he calls, "your adversary, the devil". The devil or Satan is the one of whom he warns them. They are required to be alert to the fact that they have such a foe who is ready to conflict with them at every turn. In our day men have to a large degree lost sight of the reality and power of Satan, the enemy of souls, who is ever active in seeking the soul's destruction and who, where he cannot achieve that, seeks in every way possible to mar the witness of the children of God by ensnaring them into evil of every kind. To lose sight of the fact that there is such an adversary exposes one all the more to his deceits. Indeed, it is one indication of his power of deception that he is able to make men think that he does not exist. What surer way can he have than this of opening his way to men's hearts and minds. How needful then is the exhortation, be sober, be vigilant.

The children of God have good reason to fear this enemy. They were long held in captivity by him when they lived in this world in their un-

converted state. It was the god of this world, Satan, who blinded their minds then and held them in bondage to sin. They were bond-slaves of the devil and it required a greater than he to deliver them out of that bondage. A stronger than the strong man armed must come if they were to be delivered, and this is what took place in their experience when Christ by His Almighty power delivered them out of the hand of the enemy. They could never have delivered themselves. Therefore they owe their salvation entirely to the One who came in God's great Name to save. He delivered them out of the miry clay of a lost state by nature and set their feet upon the Rock. He laid the foundation for this in His death when He spoiled principalities and powers and bruised Satan's head, triumphing over him in His death. This was the way Christ took, the way that infinite wisdom devised, for setting the prisoners free. Through Christ, then, the children of God may be assured that they will ultimately overcome this great adversary, the devil, for Christ has overcome him by the blood of His Cross.

The children of God, as long as they are in this world, are in a place where Satan may assault them. Yet Satan does not have free rein but is only allowed to assault them as God permits, as we see from the case of Job. They are just now in a waste howling wilderness — for that is what this world is to the people of God — and in that wilderness there are serpents and scorpions by which they may be bitten. They must not, therefore, relax and lose sight of the dangers in the way but be sober and vigilant, ever on the lookout for the enemy. He may be lurking in places they would never suspect, therefore they must never give way to vain confidence. They are to be on the watchtower, alert for the approach of the enemy when he comes as a roaring lion ready to devour. Neither are they to lose sight of the fact that the one who comes as the Prince of darkness can also come as an angel of light to deceive.

When the enemy comes the children of God are to resist him steadfast in the faith. It is not in reliance upon their own strength that they are to overcome him but in reliance upon the Lord's strength. "The Lord rebuke thee", was the archangels answer to the devil. The Lord Himself has left with His people an example of how they are to overcome this adversary. On every occasion that Satan tempted Him the Saviour's answer was the same — "the Scripture saith". The Word of God gives the lie to all Satan's lying insinuations. Let the people of God rely upon the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to overcome this enemy and let them rely on the strength of divine grace to wield it. They will overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.

What encouragement there is for the people of God in the thought that this conflict which is so hot now is to have an end. Satan may and does attack the Lord's people in this world but the time is coming when they shall be beyond his reach for ever. They will then be singing "Hosannas" to Him who delivered them out of the enemy's hand and made them kings and priests unto God and His Father. When death carries them to brighter realms they will then see the enemy they feared so much here in the world as now a foe slain on the field of battle and the victory shall be theirs in Christ.

Notes of a Sermon

by Rev. Dr. John Kennedy, Dingwall.

Preached at Dornoch Communion, June 1881.

(Taken by a hearer.)

"Rejoicing always before Him, and My delights were with the sons of men." — Proverbs 8: 30,31.

There are in these words two "rejoicings" ascribed to Christ. To one accustomed to look on the face of Christ it will not be difficult to recognise that it is of Himself He speaks as rejoicing always before God, and having His delights with the sons of men. His face was wont to be a veiled one in Old Testament times, but surely enough of glory shines here through the veil to assure the hearts of all His people that it is Jesus Christ the Son of God who now speaks, and speaks of Himself "Rejoicing always before Him, and My delights were with the sons of men." These two rejoicings must consist each with the other. It may be difficult to see how He who was ever rejoicing before the Father, finding infinite joy in His Father's communion, should have His delights with the sons of men. I do not know if we shall ever see *how* the two consist, but yet they *must* do so; for it is the same person who is "rejoicing" and "delighting", and it is the same person who tells of both. What a wonder, the Son of God telling us this! I do not wonder at His telling of His rejoicing before His Father; but what a wonder His telling of His delights being with the sons of men! But He tells it; and whether I can understand it or not, these two delights are perfectly consistent.

As that is true, so is this — these two delights must concur. At the same time that He was rejoicing He was delighting. He was "rejoicing *always*", and thus there could be no opportunity for having His delights with the sons of men except while rejoicing before His Father. There is

no change in that joy; therefore He is "delighting" while rejoicing before the Father.

As that is plain, so also is this — that these two must conspire as well as consist and concur. His great joy as the Son is in His Father; and if, also, His delights are with the sons of men, I am sure that what so delights Him must give Him an opportunity of gladness *as the Son*. His paramount joy is rejoicing as the Son in His Father's communion, and I am sure what gives Him delight towards the sons of men must be that which gives Him gladness as the Son. I wish I got faith's hold of this for myself, and you for yourselves. Whatever it is that gives joy to the love of Christ bearing on men, and gratifies that love, gives Him, I am sure, an opportunity of joy as the Son. Were it not for that, how could I enjoy the love of Christ?

What I wish specially to bring before you from the text is, that what was a delight to Christ in connection with the sons of men was a delight to Him because of His love to the Father. What views of the sons of men were before Christ when delighting in them while rejoicing before His Father? The Word of God does not leave us in doubt as to that, and as to what was in connection with them that gave joy to Christ.

I. His delights were with the sons of men because among them were those given Him by the Father. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." Again, "I thank Thee, O Father," &c. That is one cause of His delight surely.

II. It delighted Him to think of His becoming through His incarnation the Brother of the objects of His love. "I am not ashamed to call them brethren." Love seeks nearness to its objects, and so the love of Christ sought nearness to His people by becoming their Brother.

III. It was a delight to Him that He was to be their Redeemer, to set them free from the curse under which they were. Whatever it cost Christ to secure that, I am sure it did not stand between Him and delighting in them from a past eternity.

IV. It delighted Him to think of His coming forth to gather them in His time of love and day of prayer.

V. To think of shepherding His gathered ones throughout their wilderness journey.

VI. To think of them as in His presence during the eternity to come.

Let us look a little at these, and see how in connection with each of them there was an opportunity of joy to Christ.

I. As given Him by the Father. "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me." Surely it was pleasant to Christ to get a gift from His Father.

“But what a gift it was!” you say; “what a miserable set they were, poor, wretched, lost!” Yes, you may say a good deal of that about them, but let me give you two reasons why they were precious to Christ. (1.) Because He set His love upon them, and His infinite love being set upon them, how precious they were! Every object of love is precious to the one who loves. As objects of His love they were infinitely precious. (2.) Because of His Father’s purpose to save them. If that was true, their salvation became the cause of God’s glory, and that in which He was to give the highest manifestation of His glory. Precious to Him as was the glory of His Name were these. Do not think that it was not much to give the Son such as these. However vile and loathsome they were as sinners, yet, loved by the Father, and His purpose of salvation bearing upon them, they were infinitely precious; and I do not wonder at His bestowing such a gift upon the Son. And if the Son got them, as the objects of His Father’s love, and as a people with whom was connected the manifestation of the Father’s glory, I do not wonder that Christ delighted in them. And was it not a delight to Christ that the Father *trusted* Him with the loved ones, and with the manifestation of His glory by means of them? One may be trusted with that which he fears he cannot perform, and his sense of weakness prevents rejoicing. But Christ knew that He had all the resources of the Godhead in Himself, and that, through the promise of the Father to Him as Mediator, all the resources of the Godhead were pledged for the fulfilment of the Father’s purpose, and therefore there was nothing to prevent Christ’s delight in receiving this trust from His Father. Seeing in it what was gratifying to the Father’s heart and glorifying to the Father’s Name, He saw enough to give him infinite delight. Oh, if we could get into the heart of Christ in these words, “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me,” we could echo them with the words, “Thy delights were with the sons of men!”

II. The joy He had in thinking of His becoming through His incarnation the Brother of His people. It is Christ who says to His Father, “A body hast Thou prepared for Me.” A body prepared by the Father! Surely He might rejoice in everything He got from His Father. He got the people from the Father, and now He gets the body from Him. That body was the human nature. You say, “I cannot think of human nature but as seeing what befell it in Eden, trampled under the foot of the destroyer.” Yes, it has been made vile by sin — made an utter ruin! God was dishonoured in that nature, and it is now under the power of Satan! But here is human nature — perfect, true human nature — and here it is as

the tabernacle in which the Son of God is to manifest Divine glory. Think of what was *there* to the Son's love! The more I think of the entire power of the destroyer, the more certain I am that it was joy to the Son, that in this nature and on this earth the Father's Name through Him would be glorified. And remember, too, that as it gave Him joy because of His love to the Father, so also because of His love to those whom He was to call His brethren. What a joy to the heart of Christ to be able to call His loved ones "brethren" — to get such a near relation to them as to be no longer at a distance! The Divine and human natures are infinitely distant, but in the Son of God they are in one Person — no longer at a distance, and united in such a way as implies no diminution of His glory and blessedness as the Eternal Son of God. How sweet, also, to Christ His being in human nature that He might be a Brother not only in name to His people, but might act towards them a Brother's part! What joy was *this* to the love of Christ! Oh! give up your hard thoughts of Him.

III. What He was to do as the Redeemer of His people was a "delight" to Christ. You say He could not think of their redemption without thinking of the shame and suffering of His life as "the Man of sorrows", and of His death as lifted up on the accursed tree. I believe the mind of Christ was set on His own humiliation in a past eternity, but there was nothing in that to bring sorrow to the heart of Christ in that eternity. It was as Divine He was thinking of it; and there was nothing in it to diminish His blessedness, but there was in it what gave Him joy. To His love to the Father it was delightful, as seeing how the Father's purposes were to be accomplished through His humiliation. It was always a delight to Christ to do His Father's will. "My meat and My drink," He says, "are to do the will of Him that sent Me." And having His eye upon his own "finished work" throughout eternity, what delight that gave to His infinite love to His Father!

Again, he was delighting in the redemption of His people because by means of it He was to show forth the glory of the Father. What joy was it to Christ to be charged with the glory of His Father's Name, and to come forth with it through His life and death, and to unfold the treasures of glory that are in the Father's Name! Oh! there was in *this* something that was a well-spring of gladness to Christ when rejoicing before His Father! Also, what delight it gave to Christ to see in connection with the accomplishment of redemption a channel opened up through which Divine love could reach His people — that the Father could, to the praise of all His glory, express His love to each and every one of those given to the Son! As sure as I am that *He was the Son*, so

sure am I that He had infinite delight in the redemption of His Father's people. And, turning to the other side, surely there was in redemption what was delightful to Him in His love to His people. Little do we know of the love of Christ. It took in through all eternity the awfulness of Divine wrath and the curse of the broken law, and it would have its loved ones delivered from all! We can only stand on the verge of this ocean of the love of Christ. Then think what delight it was, likewise, to Christ His seeing a free and full salvation bestowed on all His people as the result of His finished work! To the mind of Christ, His work was seen as the channel through which Divine love flowed, bearing salvation, free full and everlasting, to all His people. Yes, to those here, and in this house today, in whom Christ was delighting from a past eternity, it was a joy to Him to know in reference to these that salvation was to be theirs from Him and through Him at the cost of His precious blood — of His pouring out His soul unto death! I tell you the more it was present to the mind of Christ what He had to do and to suffer, the more it was delightful to Him to think of His people as being a people *redeemed* by Him. I say again, Give up your hard thoughts of Christ. It were better to try what He is, to try what is in His heart, going as a poor hell-deserving sinner and casting yourself upon Him to see what welcome He will give you. You will never regret that experiment. You will find His love to be a "love that passeth knowledge."

IV. It was present to the mind of Christ, and delightful to Him, what He was to do in gathering His redeemed ones to Himself. What was there delightful to Him in this, as regards His love to the Father? Why, another opportunity for another gift of the same people from the Father. Do not imagine that the gift of the loved people can come too often. No, no. The Father gave them to Christ in a past eternity, and now He gives them again. "No man can come to Me except the Father draw him;" and if that "drawing" of the Father implies a fresh forthputting of His power, causing them to "come" to the Son, I am sure the Son rejoices in thus getting them from the Father. When the Son goes to gather them He is to bring them to the Father. The Father is to bring them to Him by the Spirit, and He by the Spirit is to bring them back to the Father. Think of what it is to the heart of Christ to get a poor sinner and bring him in to the mercy-seat, and to get for him there a full and free remission of sin as an earnest of all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and that poor sinner then delivered over to the Father's bosom, to have the place of a child in that bosom for evermore! That is something that must have been

a delight to Christ. Also, what joy to Him to get them into His own hands! O Blessed One, through all eternity Thou didst love Thy chosen, and for three and thirty years on earth Thou didst love until Thou didst die the death for them! I would like Thee to get them into Thy hands at last. But it must be a day of power on His part ere it can be a day of love on their part. He finds one in his tenth, another in his twentieth, another in his thirtieth year. He finds him at the appointed time, place, and means of grace, gets into his heart by His Word and Spirit, apprehends him, brings him to Himself, and gives him a place as a member of His mystical body. What must it be to Christ to get the loved one thus to Himself, to get him to bring him in to the Father, and to get the blessing of the Godhead to rest on that loved one, as now redeemed and brought back to the family of God! O my dear fellow-sinner, do not grudge that joy to Christ in connection with your own soul! If you come to Christ, although you only stepped this moment from the brink of hell, at the Gospel call, into His bosom, it would be infinite gladness to Christ to receive you, and to bring you to His Father, and to obtain for you all that you need. Would not that be wiser than leaving yourself in the hands of the enemy, "who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning"? May the Lord have mercy on all whose choice that is! Little do they know the light to which they are blind and the danger to which they are exposing themselves. Oh, may the Lord bring souls to their right mind!

V. It was a delight to Christ to think of His shepherding of them from the moment of their vital union to Himself. The love of the Son was not disposed to complain of its being a forty years' journey through the wilderness. The greater the wilderness, and the more certain that they were to be there a considerable time, amidst enemies and dangers, the more was His love to His Father gratified in having to care for them so long. And think of what it is to Christ not only to care for them so that none of them shall perish, but what it is to Him to be dealing with them in such a way as that they shall become more and more like the Father — the Father seeing them more and more conformed to His mind, the children growing more and more like their Elder Brother, and so more and more like the Father! And what must it be to Christ to see the fruit of His redemption appearing in them — in their service of His Father in the world! I was trying to conceive, friends, what it must be to Christ to see the fruit of His travail coming out in the souls of His redeemed ones in such a way as that His Father in heaven is glorified. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." I think that seeing the Father

glorified in and through them is something that must delight the Son, who lives and rejoices before His Father.

Again, what must it be to Christ to have His people a company with whom He can associate in their wilderness journey! I was to ask a question. Whether, think you, does it give more joy to Christ to bear company with them, and to visit them and bestow on them the fruit of His travail, or for His people to enjoy His presence and fellowship? I think it is infinitely more joy to Christ to have the opportunity of being with them than for them to have His company and communion. For what joy must it be to Christ to see them living by faith, transformed into the image of God, the Father's face shining on them, His likeness drawn on them, His Spirit dwelling in them and communicating to them the grace treasured up for them, until they advance from strength to strength to the journey's end! This indeed is delight to Christ as to no other.

VI. The joy of Christ in having His people during the eternity to come. All of them were so present to the mind of Christ that He knew not only what they were and are, but what they shall be at last. For do not forget that there is no tomorrow, as there is no yesterday, in the mind of God — all is *present* to him. *We* think of yesterday and of tomorrow, but He inhabits Eternity, and what is to come is as present to Him as what is past. Thus, friends, would it not be a delight to Christ to think of the Father's house with nothing in it that the Father would see out of it, and nothing out of it, that the Father would see in it; and that those who were haters of Himself and of His Father would through Him be made such as that they would spend eternity glorifying and praising God with all their hearts. There was also present to Christ the opportunity the Father would have of letting out His fatherly love to them, throughout eternity, and they for ever glad before Him! O Blessed One, Thou wert Thyself Thy Father's delight, and sure I am that no one shall ever be His delight as Thou art; but if Thy Father will have Thee in Thy place rejoicing always before Him, Thy Father, as the Father of His people, shall delight to have them as the objects of His love also before Him; and will it not be Thy joy to give Thy Father this delight — to have Thy Father's love fully gratified through the Father's people being fully blessed, and the blessed people spending eternity in the light of their Father's love, to the praise of the Father's Name? I think we may say that *this* will be delight to Christ. And will it not be joy to Him, His having His people where no wicked one shall trouble them, where none shall say "I am sick;" where there shall be no spot or wrinkle upon them, but all like Himself; where

they shall have the nearest and most intimate communion with Him, He acting the part of leading them to the fountains of living waters, and the Father wiping away all tears from their eyes?

What have I done but endeavoured to point you to one infinite field after another, while standing at an infinite distance from the well-spring of joy at which He was drinking who "was set up from everlasting." But if it has in some measure overwhelmed me, it has left some shame of heart because of coldness, and some wistfulness of desire after faith's enjoyment of that love. And what have *you* been doing while I was speaking? "You were talking high things," you say. Some are in the habit of so saying as to some lessons we would need to learn as the alphabet of Divine teaching. If I was pointing to what was high, it was as a poor scholar who has not yet got beyond the alphabet in the things of God; and let me tell you that if you are an utter stranger to the love of Christ that made Him have His delights with the sons of men, you are undone for ever!

"But," you say, "how am I to get to do with the love of Christ? I cannot say that I am an object of that love, or that Christ was thinking of me when rejoicing before the Father." I do not ask you to say that, but I will tell you how to get a sip out of the joy of which we have been speaking. The first movement in the direction of it is, to learn that you are a hell-deserving sinner, that the desert of hell is upon you, the corruption of hell within you, and the wrath of God lying over you. Until you learn *this* I despair of your learning about the love of Christ. How so? Because until then you will not be shut up to Christ as the only hope for you, a sinner. The way to know the love of Christ is for you to be brought as a sinner to cast yourself upon Him, not because He loved you from everlasting, but because He is the Christ of God, come to seek and to save the lost, and you, *as a lost sinner*, casting yourself upon Him, because He has said, "Come unto Me". What then? Christ will welcome you, and fulfil His promise, "Whosoever cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." That is the first time you will get through faith a taste of the "love that passeth knowledge."

Enough would follow that. Should there not be on the earth one so deserving of hell as you are, one with not so much of hell in his soul as you have, one who never did so much to prove himself an enemy to God as you have done, yet it would give infinite delight to the heart of Christ to get you as you are, this day, into His everlasting arms, that He might clothe you with His righteousness, seal you with His Spirit, and introduce you to the Father, and get for you, in His own right, the blessing,

even life for evermore! Oh, my dear fellow-sinners, do not grudge to Christ that delight. If He get *that*, who can tell what *you* would get? "He that findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain the favour of the Lord."

Is there any one of you today whose desire is that Christ would get delight? Then go to Him, as a fool, for wisdom, — as a criminal, for righteousness, — as a leper, for sanctification, — as a lost one, for redemption. What will be delight to Christ will be the opportunity given Him in your salvation of His being your all in all. Come to Him; He hateth putting away. His delights are in receiving sinners. His delights have been, and shall be, with the sons of men.

Days of the Fathers . . . Question Day Notes

Question Day — Communion in the Parish of Barvas — 1878

The service having been begun in the customary way one of the brethren present was asked to give a suitable portion of Scripture as the basis of the Question.

The Portion was in Hebrews Chapter 11: 4 - 26. "By faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter etc."

Marks of the genuine believer were asked for, and some of the proofs that go with these, distinguished from a false faith, with which people make a profession of godliness.

After certain matters were spoken by way of "opening the Question" some of the brethren were called to speak.

ALEX MACIVER, LOCHS:

God spoke to this people. The commandment came with power, He persuaded them they were lost sinners, bondmen to sin and the devil. They were pricked in their hearts "with a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall destroy His adversaries". This is the state that they were in till the power of God made them able to close with Christ, He being offered to them.

A Note: Some can say, "That was the place the Lord spoke to me. This was the instrument, and this was the word by which He set me free", but there are others, and they were at one time able to tell about the Lord's dealings with them, and now because of the power of corruption and unbelief, they will not allow themselves to relate the truth of the matter to the glory of God, but as face answers to face in their cir-

cumstances, agree with the feelings of the Lord's people that they hear about, or read about, and they say "If I was ever born again it was in this way that I am hearing about".

The graces of the Spirit are implanted in their souls, especially faith, hope and charity. These are to be in exercise in the soul, with their fruits breaking forth in the world . . .

D. GRANT, STORNOWAY, who said:

That "there are two kinds of faith in the world, the one is blind, and ignorant, but the other looks upon Christ as its object. This is a people that are "poor and afflicted", but they shall put their trust in the name of the Lord. They are not poor in the same sense as the Laodiceans were, having need of nothing. This people need His assistance day and night. They cannot rise till the Lord lifts them up, but they have such a faith and love that makes them able to follow the Lord in a wilderness. Their faith will be tried, but they shall come out of great tribulation and their robes will be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Their reward is ahead of them — the Lord shall wipe every tear from their eyes.

NORMAN MATHESON, SHAWBOST, who said:

"Take care" said Mr Cook "true faith will not grow in the garden of nature". When Christ said to His disciples "Whom do men say that I am?" (They replied) "They say that Thou art that one and this one" (so to speak) "But Whom do Ye say that I am", Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ . . ." "Flesh and blood (said Jesus) hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father who is in Heaven." The soul that has obtained this kind of faith will come each day to a throne of grace. This faith has two eyes, one to look at his own unworthiness, and the other to look to a Christ who is able to save unto the uttermost. They are dependent on the administration of the Spirit of all grace as long as they are in this wilderness . . .

ALEX MORRISON, STORNOWAY, who said:

Flesh and blood cannot give this faith. Only the Spirit of God can. We read that the devils believe and tremble. When the soul is convinced that he is lost he begins to pray. He may take comfort from it until his prayers are made a sin to him. Like the woman who had the issue of blood she spent all that she had, so do they. As long as she would have had one far-thing to spend she would not come to Christ. Those who have a hypocritical faith are pleased if they would be saved from Hell, but the true believer would not have salvation, if he were not persuaded that God is glorified thereby. It is the glory of God he has more in his view, than

his own salvation. In the South it is "love, love" they have. It is to be feared that that has come to the North. Justice in God's estimation is as honourable as Love. The true Christian sees infinite worth in Christ, and that his salvation is of grace.

Temptations meet with the Christian from the world the flesh and the devil. The temptations of Satan spoil their liberty. The iron chariots of the Canaanites are too strong for them. The more they have of love, the more sin wounds them, but the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God) is given to them. The Lord's people know the power of the devil. At times when they take the sword, they are sensible of the paralysis in their hands, but as a mark on them: When His Cause is low and suffering, the more they love it. When Christ said to the disciples "Let us go again to Judea" some said "Master art thou going again to that place where the Jews desired to stone thee." Godly Thomas then said "Let us also go with Him." Not a stone will be thrown at beloved Christ, but we will then be with Him.

Their faith and their love are enlarged towards all the saints. Their love is not confined to the Island of Lewis, but it reaches to the ends of the earth, to America and New Zealand. When they are on their knees in secret, some others of "the household" are praying on their behalf. They are in a large room. The Apostle makes mention of the saints in his prayers, that they would be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Where there is saving faith it will be meditating on the love of God, the great love of God.

The Lord gives them what is equal to their troubles. O what would the Martyrs have done were it not for the help that the Lord was giving them. Faith will endure trial, like the gold, though it be hammered it will only shine the more. So the work of God will endure trial.

REV. JOHN MACLEAN, BACK:

The nature of the faith is a mystery. It is given only to the elect of God. He gave it to them when He called them effectually. The devils believe and tremble but faith had authority (power) in the souls of this people. The Spirit gives a felt knowledge to this people. Faith overcomes in them. Its fruits are to be seen upon them, for it is the fruits that determine that true faith is in exercise. The Question is not when you got the faith, but are you bearing the fruits of faith. By faith Moses having come to years, chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. This was the kind of faith that Moses obtained: "Let the daughter of Pharaoh look for another son, she will not keep me by her apron-strings longer." He cast his lot

with God's people for He had a people in every age. "Where are you also going Ruth?" "I am casting my lot with the Lord's people." Therefore this is not a blind faith. The Papists believe the teaching of the priest. Their faith is as blind as they are themselves. But this people look to God and to his promises in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments believing the unchangeableness of His promises, for He cannot deny Himself.

Abraham's faith was built upon the Rock, therefore the Lord said to him not to be afraid "I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward." Moses saw two things in Egypt, Israel oppressed, their life bitter through hard bondage, making up an exact number of bricks without straw. Israel was sighing because of bondage, and when they cried their cry came up to God because of their bondage, the Lord heard their groaning and the Lord remembered His covenant with Abraham etc.

Again Moses was reared in the Palace of Pharaoh. The young "prince" was instructed in all the wisdom of Egypt, but faith was saying at the same time "the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the riches of Egypt." The reward will be great. I know, Moses could say, what kind of house this is, the eating and drinking, the drunkenness and work of the devil that goes on day and night.

O the poor people — they will yet be crying and lamenting in Hell. I know they are forsaken, but the Lord's people are happy for they are washed in the Blood that cleanseth from all sin, and united to Christ. These are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Unbelief will say to you that your troubles will be numerous, and that you may be deceived at last. You will not. He said Himself "that in this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world." Troubles are no new thing. It is through much tribulation that ye shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. It would be easy for the Lord to save His people without troubles but tribulations are to be to God's glory and their own good. There is no one who is to live godly in this world who will not suffer persecution. O cast your lot with the people of God, who come in by Christ the door, obtain a right in the promises, an inheritance in Christ, and His eternal blessings. This is the faith Moses obtained.

The Son is inviting you Himself. Although you would be like a devil in the flesh, as terrible as Manasseh, as unjust as Saul of Tarsus, as defiled as the woman of Samaria, he will receive you if you come.

Much has been spoken about afflictions, but there is no other way to the Kingdom, Christ having gone before you on that way. The world said

"He hath a devil. He is beside Himself. Why do you listen to Him?" Christ has consecrated the way of affliction for you (God's people) and He will be with you on it. He will not leave you, He will not, He will not — "I will never forsake you." So that you shall sing: "He set my feet on a rock, and established my goings. He put a new song in my mouth."

Letter to a Young Preacher

by Christmas Evans

DEAR BROTHER, — 1. Consider, in the first place, the great importance to a preacher of a blameless life. You must, like Timothy, "flee youthful lusts," as you would escape from beasts of prey; for there are kinds of beasts, living in the wilderness of man's corruption, that will charm, by means of their beauteous colours, those that walk among their haunts; there is no safety but by keeping from them, and adhering to such as live by faith, and watch and pray. It will be well for you, while you travel through the coppice of youth, to keep from all appearance of evil. May you have grace to pass through the coppice of forbidden trees, without cutting your name into the bark of one of them, or you may be upbraided at critical times by those who may wish to prove that you are not better than themselves; even the *iota*, inserted by your hand, may be produced after many years.

2. I remember the words of Luther, that *reading, prayer, and temptation* are necessary to strengthen and to purify the talents of a minister. Read to extend your general knowledge, especially as to the plan of redemption, accordingly to the Scriptures, in all its parts, from the election to the glorification, that you may, like a spiritual watchmaker, know all the relative cog-wheels, and be able to open them in the pulpit, and to connect them all by faith, hope and charity, that they may occupy their own places, and exhibit their true results on the dial-plate; thus proving yourself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Be not like that thrasher, who presumptuously took his watch to pieces in the barn, and could not put it together again, but was obliged to carry it home in his handkerchief. The messengers of God, described in the book of Revelations, are full of eyes behind and before. You must use prayer to fetch strength out of Christ, like the homer to carry home the manna in, or the water-pot of the woman of Samaria. Without the prayer of faith the preacher will have "nothing to draw with," from the well that is deep — even *the deep things of God*. Temptation is requisite to prove the nature of the metal of the preacher's

character and doctrine — “approved of God.” The piece of gold in every true minister’s ministry must be tried in some furnace prepared by divine Providence. He must, therefore, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil his ministry, endure hardness and affliction, and thus prove himself a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

3. Avail yourself, in the morning of your days, of every opportunity to acquire knowledge useful for the ministry. Let it be your constant aim to turn every stream and rivulet of knowledge in the right direction, to facilitate the work of the ministry, for the good of souls and the glory of God; as the bee, in all her excursions amongst the flowers of the gardens and the hedges, gathers honey to enrich the hive, as the common treasury of the industrious race. Always have a book to read, instead of indulging in vain conversations. Strive to learn English, as you cannot have academical training. Learn your own mother-tongue well. Learn to write a good hand by frequent practice. Avoid vain conversation instead of growth in knowledge. Remember this, that you cannot commit some loved sin in private and perform the work of the ministry in public with facility and acceptance. For a preacher to fall into sin, be it a secret one, and to live in it, is as fatal, ultimately, as the cutting of Samson’s hair. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus against all corruption.

4. With regard to the composition of your sermons: first, let the matter be evangelical. The doctrine of the Gospel is a mould from heaven, and not changed. It puts its own impress and shape on the professor that is melted into it, so that his justification, sanctification, and all his salvation flow from the merits of Christ; and all through God’s grace, and not of ourselves. The Gospel, as a glass, should be kept clean and clear in the pulpit, that the hearers may see the glory of Christ, and be changed to the same image. Every duty is to be urged by evangelical motives. “Let us have grace,” etc.

Hereby we can serve God in all the duties of the kingdom of heaven. The whole is summed up in living by faith, which worketh by love, to Him that died for us, and rose again for our justification. Secondly, let your divisions be natural to the text. Take care that your interpretation accord with the contexts. Two or three general heads; avoid many. Four or five remarks you may make on each head; see that they are fairly in the truth of the text. Thirdly, I am not inclined to make inferences or applications from the whole. When the preacher has expended his strength or ingenuity in endeavouring to impress and apply the truth to the minds of his hearers, application seems to me to be doing again what has been effected already. The blacksmith does not put the horse-shoe in

the fire after he has nailed it to the hoof, and the cook does not spread the cloth again when dinner is over. Fourthly, beware of long sermons as well as long prayers. When there is but one preacher, he should not preach for more than an hour; when there are two, both should not be more than an hour and a half, that the worship may close within two hours; whenever this time is passed, coolness and fatigue ensue. To put three ministers to preach (in one meeting) is a modern corruption, and likely to make some progress in Wales; while the English, generally, have but one sermon in one service. They excel us herein; for we do not read that, on the day of Pentecost, Peter, James and John preached after each other; but Peter, "*one* of the twelve," delivered that successful sermon. When we lose sight of the Scriptures and common sense we are driven to extremes, though it be with the kindly purpose of respecting strange ministers by putting them to preach.

5. Attend, also, my young brother, to your outward appearance in the pulpit. Beware of a proud, haughty appearance, with wandering eyes and unfeeling countenance, so that the people utterly fail to see the man of God in you. We must, in order hereunto, have something like unto Moses, when he had been on the mount with God, that will indicate seriousness, love to souls, a spirit of prayer, zeal for Christ, and longing for the salvation of men, like unto those who have felt the fear of perdition ourselves, and the infinite value of salvation by God's grace; and that we wrestle with God in order to be useful to souls. These things must be imprinted on our appearance and deportment, having transformed us, in some measure, to a heavenly form and habit. Our outward conversation should be conversant herewith, or men will despise us as hypocrites, without the fear of God.

6. Avoid, my dear brother, all foolish bodily gestures.

7. We now come to the part of the subject upon which you are most anxious to have my thoughts: that refers *to the delivery of your sermons*. It is difficult to put general rules of rhetoric into execution. After reading all that has been said by Blair, Williams, Fuller, and the Archbishop of Cambray (Fenelon), who have spoken at length of Cicero and Demosthenes, it is easy, by endeavouring to follow them, to lose the spirit of the work, and thus, by seeking the form, to forfeit the life. Preach the gospel of the grace of God intelligibly, affectionately, and without shame — all the contents of the great box, from predestination to glorification. It was the closing and concealing of this box that occasioned the opening of the venomous Mohammedan box, as well as that of Popery, together with all the vain legality that is to be found among Pro-

testants, established and dissenting. It may be said that they seek justification, but it is by the deeds of the law. The locking up and the losing of the doctrine of grace, through the merits of Christ, utterly destroyed the Jewish Church; for it was in the chest, which they locked up by their false interpolations of Scripture, that the "things which belong to their peace" were contained; "but now," says the Redeemer, "they are concealed from their eyes;" shut up under unbelief. "The things that pertain to their peace" belong also to our peace as Gentiles. The Deity of Christ, etc.; Redemption, etc. Excuse this digression, for the river of God's throne moved me along.

We were upon the best mode of delivering sermons for edification. It is not easy to reduce the rules of prudence into practice. I have seen some men of the highest powers, who understood Greek better than their mother tongue, attempting to preach according to rule, and to them the pulpit was like unto Gilboa; they neither affected themselves nor their hearers. The difficulty was the bringing of their regulations into natural practice. I saw one of those men, the most eminent for learning and genius, who found the right way, under the influence of a mighty fervency that descended upon him in the pulpit, so that his voice became utterly different from what it used to be, and his tongue at liberty, as though something was cut had hitherto restrained his tongue and affections from natural exercise.

Here you have the sum and substance and mystery of all rules: — 1. — 1. Let the preacher influence himself; let him reach his own heart if he would reach the heart of others; if he would have others feel he must feel himself. Dry shouting (or vociferation) will not do this. The shout of a man who does not himself feel the effect of what he says hardens instead of softening; locks instead of opening the heart. 2. The elevation and fire of the voice must accord with the fervency of the matter in the heart. A person said to me once, "Mr Evans, you have not studied Dr. Blair's Rhetoric." That man, with his rules, was always as dry as Gilboa. "Why do you say so," replied I, "when you just now saw hundreds weeping under the sermon? That could not be had I not first of all been influenced myself, which, you know, is the substance and mystery of all rules for speaking." Wherever there is effect there is life; and rules without life have no power. Now, brother, follow the natural course of affection and voice. Raise not the voice while the heart is dry; but let the heart and affections shout first; let it commence within. Take this comparison: — Go to the blacksmith's shop; he first puts the piece of iron in the fire, and there is no sound of striking the anvil; he collects together the coals for

heat; then he tells the boy, "Blow!" while he masterly manages the shovel, adjusting the coals, and asking 'sundry questions. He calmly looks at the fire heating the iron, and does not yet take hold of the hammer, nor order his assistants to use the sledge; but at length, seeing that the iron has attained the proper malleability, he takes it out, covered with sparkling fire, puts in on the anvil, handles the hammer, and orders his workman to take the larger one, and fashions it according to his pleasure; and so on all day long. Here, observe, he does not beat the iron in order to make it hot, for without first heating it the beating process is in vain. Equally vain is the hammer of vociferation, unless the matter is brought home with warmth into our hearts. We have often sought to produce effect, and to influence our hearers, much as though the smith merely put the iron in fire and barely warmed it; it is contrary to the nature of things to use the hammer while the material is not duly tempered. Thus I have frequently, brother, found myself in preaching. You have, above, the mystery of all effective speaking, in Parliament, at the bar, and in the pulpit; remembering the difference in the subjects, and the sources of heat. In the pulpit we speak of the deep things of God; and we are to pray for and to expect warmth from the Divine Spirit.

You complain that you cannot get your voice into a manageable key, and yet to speak with liveliness and power. Many, with a bad voice, well-governed, have become powerful speakers; while others, with a good voice, have, in consequence of not mastering a natural key, and not being able to move themselves, been most ineffective speakers. I would direct you to fix your voice at its natural pitch, which you may easily do; you may then, with facility, raise and lower it according to the subject in hand. If you commence in too high a key you cannot keep it up long. First, you cannot modulate it as the occasion may require; and you fall into an unpliant, tedious monotony, and all natural cadence and emphasis is lost. Without attuning the voice into the natural key effective oratory is impossible. Secondly, remember not to speak in your throat or nostrils. If the former, you must soon become hoarse, and harsh loudness follows; the glory and vivacity are then departed, and, instead of facility and cheerfulness, you have the roarings of death — the breath failing, with forced screams, and harsh whisperings. Thirdly, raise your voice to the roof of your mouth; do not close your teeth against it, neither imprison it in the nostrils, but open your mouth naturally, and keep your voice within your lips, where it will find room enough to play its high and its low intonations, to discourse its flats and sharps, to utter its joys and sorrows. When you thus have your voice under control, instead of you

being under its control, dragging you about in all disorder, you will find it your servant, running upon your errands, up and down, all through the camp, alternating in energy and pliability to the end of the sermon, and not becoming cold and weak, scarcely bearing you through, like Bucephalus, Alexander the Great's horse, which, mortally wounded, just brought his master out of the battle, and then expired. Fourthly, remember not to press too much upon your breath, when you have attained the natural use of it, by using very long sentences, without pausing at proper places, which (pauses) will add to the effect, as well as preserve the voice; so that you will be, like the smith, ready to strike the duly-tempered metal, prepared to give the suitable emphasis at the end of the paragraph. Let the matter raise the voice; do not attempt by the voice to elevate the subject. Fifthly, use words easily understood, that the people's affections may not cool, while the mind is sent to a dictionary, to understand your terms. The great work, the exploit of a minister, is to win the heart to believe in Christ, and to love Him. Sixthly, bear in mind, also, the necessity of keeping the voice free, without (affected) restraint; give every syllable, and every letter, its full and proper sound. (It is one of the peculiarities and excellences of the Welsh language, and proves its Eastern origin). No letter has to complain that it is (condemned to be) mute, and neglected, and has no utterance. In English many letters have this complaint; but in Welsh every letter, even as the knights of the round table of King Arthur, has, without preference, its own appropriate and complete sound. Seventhly, remember, also, to enunciate clearly the last syllable in every Welsh word; that will cause your most distant hearer to understand you; while, without this, much of what you say must be inevitably lost. Eighthly, in order to all this, carefully attend to the manner of the best and ablest preachers, and imitate not their weaknesses but their excellences. You will observe that some heavenly ornament and power from on high are visible in many ministers when under the Divine irradiation, which you cannot approach to by merely imitating their artistic excellence, without resembling them in the spiritual taste, fervency, and zeal which Christ and His Spirit "work in them". This will cause not only your being like unto them in gracefulness of action and propriety of elocution, but will also induce prayer for the anointing from the Holy One, which worketh mightily in the inward man. This is the mystery of all effective preaching.

We must be endowed with power from on high: here is the grand inward secret. Without this we (often) perceive that it is impossible, with all academic advantages, to make good preachers of young men from

any college, in the Church of England, or among the dissenters, in the English or the Welsh language. A young preacher must have the mystery of being "constrained" by "the love of Christ;" "the gift of God" must be kindled in him; and He alone, by the Spirit, can sustain that gift by the Holy Spirit. "Who is sufficient for these things?" May the Lord give you, brother, a good understanding in all things; and preserve in you the heavenly gift by the Holy Ghost! may it be rekindled where it is, and contributed where it is not! Without it we can do nothing for the glory of God or the good of souls. —

Affectionately,

CHRISTMAS EVANS.

Calvin on the Ministry

On a minister changing his place of labour

"I am in singular perplexity, having the desire to meet your wish, and to wrestle with all the grace that God has given me to get her (the Church in Geneva) brought back into a better condition, while, on the other hand, I cannot slightly quit the charge or lay it down lightly, to which the Lord has called me, without being relieved of it by regular and lawful means. For so I have always believed and taught, and to the present moment cannot persuade myself to the contrary, that when our Lord appoints a man as pastor in a church to teach His Word, he ought to consider himself as engaged to take upon himself the government of it, so that he may not lightly withdraw from it without the settled assurance in his own heart, and the testimony of the faithful, that the Lord has discharged him."

(Quoted in F.P. Mag. Vol XIV page 361)

On how to preach

"The people should be so taught as to be touched to the quick, and feel that the Word of God is a two-edged sword. I speak this, master, because it appears to me that there is very little preaching of a lively kind in the kingdom, but that the greater part deliver it by way of reading from a written discourse. This preaching ought not to be lifeless but lively. Now, you know, my lord, how Paul speaks of the liveliness which ought to be in the mouth of good ministers of God, who ought not to make a parade of their rhetoric to show themselves off, but the Spirit of God, must resound in their voice."

(Quoted in F.P. Mag. Vol. XIV page 464.)

Conversion of Alexander Henderson

When Alexander Henderson had passed his degrees at the university with great applause, he was by the Archbishop of St. Andrews, about the year 1620, preferred to be minister of Leuchars in Fifeshire. But he was brought in against the consent of the parish, to such a degree, that on the day of his ordination, the church doors were shut so fast by the people, that they were obliged to break in by a window.

He was very prelatie in his judgement at this time; but a little after, upon the report of a communion service in the neighbourhood, where Robert Bruce was to assist, he went there secretly, and placed himself in a dark corner of the church, where he might not be readily seen or known. When Mr. Bruce was come to the pulpit, he stood silent for some time as his usual manner was, which astonished Mr. Henderson, but it astonished him much more when he heard him begin with these words. "He that entereth not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." This by the blessing of God and the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, took such hold on him at that very instant, and made such impression on his heart afterwards, as proved the first means of his conversion unto Christ.

After this he became not only a most faithful and diligent minister of the Gospel, but also a staunch Presbyterian, and had a very active hand, in carrying on the covenanted work of the Reformation from the year 1638 to the day of his death. He was among the first charged by the Archbishop of St. Andrews, for refusing to buy and use the service-book, and the book of Canons then imposed by Charles I upon the church. This prompted him and others to give in several petitions, and complaints to the council both craving some mitigation therein and showing the sinfulness thereof.

From: The Scots Worthies

Reading the Scriptures and other good books

This is a duty necessary every day, but especially on the Lord's day. It is the character of the blessed man that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and he meditates therein both day and night Ps.1. Read the word that you may be taught what to believe of God, what duties you owe to God, and what sins you are guilty of against Him. Who can set forth the usefulness and excelling of it? It is a glass to discover our spots, a lamp to

guide us in the dark, a fire to warm our cold affections, a magazine to supply us with armour against our spiritual enemies. It is a garden wherein grow all sorts of medicinal herbs for our spiritual maladies. The promises are as fragrant flowers and spices in this garden. Believers take many a pleasant walk among these beds of spices. It is an apothecary's shop, out of which we may have eye-salve for our blindness, sovereign cordials in all our soul distresses. David found this to his sweet experience Ps. 119 v 50. "This is my comfort in my affliction, for Thy Word hath quickened me." Here are suitable cordials for all our various cases, be it desertion, temptation, poverty, sickness, reproach, persecution, etc. Here are the waters of the sanctuary, for cleansing us from our pollutions. Here is the heavenly rain for making soft and tender our hard hearts — The scriptures are both food and physic for our souls; here is meat for strong men, and milk for babes. The two testaments as Augustine says "are the breasts which we must suck for spiritual nourishment." And there are none of God's children that will call them dry breasts or empty cisterns; they have often afforded them strength, nourishment, light, life and comfort. Oh! how highly have God's people in all ages prized God's Word, and the liberty to read it! It has been "sweet as honey to their taste". I have read of one who, being a prisoner in a dark dungeon, when light was given him for a short time to take his meat, he would take his Bible and read a portion of it saying "I can eat without light, but cannot read without it."

I judge it very profitable to read other good books also, such as our Confession of Faith, Vincent's Catechism, Vincent on the last Judgment, Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ, Alleine's Alarm, Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, Pearse's Preparation for Death, Fox's Time and the End of Time, Doolittle's Call to Delaying Sinners, Baxter's Everlasting Rest, Gray's Sermons, Flavel's Touchstone of Sincerity and Saint Indeed . . .

These and such like books next to the Bible, I recommend to the perusal of all private Christians.

From: Rev. John Willison's Works.

Love's Walk

Oh grant that I may live to Thee
From sin and self my soul set free,
Cause me in Thy Cross rejoice
To hear in every rod, Thy loving voice
And in Thy love, Oh bathe my soul
That Thy law's end may be my goal.

Thy Word my light, my staff and stay
In every step of Baca's Way
That to the rest prepared for those,
Who do by faith in Christ repose
I too might come; when I have ran
The race decreed by grace began.

Oh grant me grace to love my foes
And pray for those who me oppose
For want of this, now dare I say
That I would walk in Christ the Way,
If in my heart I malice cherish
What more have I than those who perish?

A name to live — a stumbling block
To the lambs and sheep of Jesus' flock
From love of self and cursed pride
Oh lead me to the Crucified
That I the spirit of Sharon's Rose
Would show to all who are my foes.

Rev. Wm. MacLean.

Book Reviews

Commentary on the Psalms by David Dickson. Banner of Truth Trust.
538 pp. £9.95.

This valuable commentary on the Psalms by David Dickson, already reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1959 and 1965 is once again reprinted by the Trust.

Dickson makes it clear that in preparing these comments he had plain-

ness and brevity in mind and he acknowledges that because of this much that might be said is left unsaid. He hoped that this would make it more acceptable to those who had less leisure to read long discourses. In his comments on the Psalms Dickson gives much that will prove edifying to the Christian reader, as well as being useful in opening up the Psalms in a way helpful to preachers of the Gospel. The volume also contains a short account of David Dickson written by Robert Wodrow.

We trust that this volume will continue to have a wide circulation.

D. B. M.

Spurgeon by Arnold Dallimore. Banner of Truth Trust. Paperback. 252 pp. £4.95.

Many readers will be familiar with the two-volume Autobiography of C. H. Spurgeon already published by the Banner of Truth Trust under the titles "The Early Years" and "The Full Harvest". These volumes gave a very full account of Spurgeon's life. The present biography of Spurgeon by Arnold Dallimore gives a briefer account of this outstanding and noted preacher of the Gospel.

It is evident that Spurgeon was greatly used of the Lord in the conversion of sinners, not only through the instrumentality of his preached sermons but also through his printed sermons which were scattered broadcast all over the world. Only the Great Day will declare the amount of blessing that souls received from them. In this paperback Spurgeon's work and personality are graphically set forth and the book should prove helpful to those who are not likely to read the more extended autobiography. While Spurgeon countenanced Moody and Sankey in their evangelistic campaigns, he showed a wiser attitude in his firm opposition to the incoming flood of rationalistic higher criticism which, before the end of his life, was threatening to carry all before it.

D. B. M.

A Cloud of Witnesses. Edited by B. A. Ramsbottom. Gospel Standard Publications, 69 Langham Gardens, Grange Park, London N21 1DL. 168 pp. Paperback. £4.50.

This book gives a record of the lives of 18 godly men and women, mostly of the last century. The accounts appeared in former issues of the "Gospel Standard". Particular notice is taken of the call by grace of each of the men and women and of their subsequent spiritual experience, trials, etc. Quite extended treatment is also given to their death bed experiences. The accounts are very varied yet show them to have been truly

gracious men and women. They will be of special interest to the tried and tempest-tossed children of God. Accordingly we are glad to commend this volume to readers of the Magazine.

D. B. M.

Systematic Theology by R. L. Dabney. Banner of Truth Trust. 887 pp. £9.95.

This volume on systematic and polemic theology which has recently been reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust contains the syllabus and notes on theology of the noted theologian, R. L. Dabney, of the Southern Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. Though more than a century has passed since these notes were first published, they are still of great value to ministers and to students of divinity. The volume on the whole will prove complementary to other volumes on systematic theology, such as Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* and Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, both also republished in recent years by the Banner of Truth Trust.

Dabney's method of instruction in theology was to send his students to a standard author in order to obtain a trustworthy outline of the discussion on the various points in divinity and then go on to investigate the subjects with the help of other authors. The discussions of the various topics are of great interest and Dabney weighs each matter thoroughly, stating the case for and against the particular view he holds. On the question of the Civil Magistrate he argues the case for total separation of Church and State, as is common with many theologians on that side of the Atlantic. Those who have already read Dabney's volumes of *Discussions* and his volume on *Preaching* will realise the quality of his work and the soundness of his views in general as an able exponent of reformed theology. To those not acquainted with his writings, and particularly to ministers and theological students we are glad to warmly commend this work.

D. B. M.

Romans Chap. I by D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones. Banner of Truth Trust. £9.50.

The Doctor's dislike of being pinned down by a published programme may give greater freedom in preaching the Word, but we think it detracts from the written word. It also furnishes us with a clue as to why this volume is a little lop-sided. Making allowance for the relative importance of the subject matter, it is strange that it requires 320 pages for the ex-

position of vv 1-18, while 84 pages are sufficient for vv 18-32. That apart, this book is worth reading, not so much for the polished erudition or theological acumen and precision, as for simplicity. Broadly speaking the Exposition of Romans Chap. I follows the thought pattern and treatment of previous publications in this series. Possessing a robust doctrinal content and not without experimental strands, the volume is well calculated to edify the children of God. The strong polemical note may weary some; for others it constitutes the prime merit of this posthumous publication of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. The devastating nature of Higher Critical approach to Scripture is faithfully exposed for what it is, and the Revised Version rendering of 2nd Timothy 3: 16 is rightly designated a calamitous misinterpretation. An example of the blatant hypocrisy of the World Council of Churches appears on page III, while cults and counterfeits are delineated in their true colours. What the Dr. says is relevant to the plight of the Church today. The tawdry schemes of man's remedial policies he roundly and unsparingly condemns. In divine sovereign intervention lies the only hope for the future of the Church. Repetitive almost to a fault, we would say, but it is no doubt intentional. The poverty of the author's quotations from hymns, gave us a deeper appreciation of our own manual of praise, the Psalms in metre.

F.M.

Notes and Comments

Church Unity Declaration

A joint statement made by the Church of Scotland, the Methodists, the Congregational Union, the United Free Church and the United Reformed Church declared that the five Churches had agreed to mutual recognition of their ministries and members. In signing the agreement the Churches not only recognise one another in this way but also promise to draw closer to each other. They regard it as an important step in the growth in unity of all the Scottish Churches. The Scottish Episcopal Church was not a signatory to this agreement. Lack of episcopal ordination by the other Churches no doubt constitutes a difficulty for the Episcopal Church to recognise each other's ministries as this statement does. A return to Reformed teaching and practice would be a better course for all these Churches to take than engaging in worthless talks and agreements on Church unity. The great question in regard to these is — united in what?

Ecumenical Consultation

According to a Press Report the Roman Catholic Church, for the first time in Scotland since the Reformation, has agreed to take part in an ecumenical consultation with the Protestant denominations on the fundamentals of the faith. The Inter-Church Process was launched in mid-February with a joint Act of Commitment in Edinburgh at a service in St Cuthbert's Church. Those who took part included a former Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh. Nine denominations and the Salvation Army were included. The process is to cover a period of three years.

In view of the Church Unity declaration already referred to, it would appear as though the Church of Scotland is worthy of the title Mr Facing-Both-Ways seeing that its attitude to Unity is so ambivalent. In view, however, of the progress made in this field by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, it need not surprise us though the Roman Catholic Church is able to convince these other Churches that the differences between them are not unbridgable.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Southern: At Glasgow on 1st April at 2 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 22nd April at 12 noon.

Northern: At Dingwall on 22nd April at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 30th May at 3.30 p.m.

Inverness Summer Communion

The Inverness Kirk Session has decided that the Summer Communion for 1986 should be held on the fourth Sabbath of June, instead of the fifth (D.V.).

Church Deputy to Australia and New Zealand

Rev. Lachlan MacLeod, Greenock, accompanied by his wife, left this country on 12th March for a period of six months' service overseas as Church Deputy. He will supply Auckland for a considerable part of his time out there, but will also visit other parts of New Zealand and will spend four weeks in Australia as well (D.V.). We are sure that the prayers of the Lord's people will follow Mr MacLeod during his tour of duty. The congregations overseas are grateful to the Church at home for releasing ministers for this very needful work. They find these visits an encouragement to them in their isolated situation.

Protest Re Christmas Stamps

Sir Ronald Dearing
Chairman
Post Office Corporation
Postal HQ
St Martin-le-Grand
LONDON EC1A 1HQ

Dear Sir,

CHRISTMAS STAMPS

We have repeatedly protested against the Post Office policy to portray the child Jesus on their stamps, and requested a reversal in this policy. While we would charitably like to think that the recent series of stamps portraying so-called nativity scenes was made as innocuous as possible, yet we are of the opinion that you have not attained the goal that we press for, nor even your own policy of "avoiding any topic which might be controversial".

We are seeking that the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom scripture describes as the "Word made flesh", Who is **God and man** in two distinct natures, yet one Person, should not be portrayed in art form, which is wholly inadequate for conveying the glory of His now-exalted humanity, not to mention the glory of His divine Person. The only adequate and proper medium for conveying the glory of the Incarnate Word is the divinely inspired written Word of God. Although the Apostle Peter had seen and heard of His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, he tells us in his second Epistle that the scripture is "a more sure Word" (II Peter 1: 16-21).

We believe that the solution to your perennial difficulty would be to cease to celebrate the Christmas festival, for which we have no scriptural authority. We are only sorry that you did not avail yourselves of this solution last year, and in its place had a most timely and appropriate series to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the death of John Wycliffe, the Morning Star of the Reformation, who by his industry secured to us the whole Bible in the English language, and who died on 31 December 1384. This would have been a mere centennial memorial, and more factual than the fabulous association of 25 December with the birth of Christ, and the more incredible association of the Christmas festival with the scriptural Christian religion.

We trust that you will respect and be sensitive towards these Christian convictions. We look forward to a reversal of the Post Office policy.

Yours sincerely, (Rev.) Donald M. Boyd, Clerk.

Reply

Dear Reverend Boyd

Thank you for your letter of 30 April to Sir Ronald Dearing, Chairman of the Post Office, about the 1984 Christmas stamps. It has been passed to me to reply.

I am sorry you do not agree with our choice of designs for these stamps. Whilst I have every respect for the religious convictions of members of Free Presbyterian Church, I am sure you will not be offended if I point out that, in so far as the visual depiction of Christ is concerned, these convictions are not shared by the majority of Christians in this country.

Indeed, these stamps have proved very popular and have prompted many people to write letters of congratulations and thanks to the Post Office for our choice.

I would also like to point out that it is not stated Post Office policy to always depict Christ on Christmas stamps. In fact this has only been done on six occasions over the eighteen years Christmas stamps have been issued.

We have found that the exclusion of a visual reference to Christ from our stamps prompts far greater public outcry than its inclusion. However we realise there is a sizable minority who do not agree with this approach and for this reason we alternate the subject matter of Christmas stamps between the religions and secular. I am sure you will be pleased to note that the 1985 Christmas stamps will be on the theme of that uniquely British Christmas tradition, pantomime.

We did not forget the contribution made by John Wycliffe to Christianity in this country. He was featured in a fully illustrated book of stamps entitled "Christian Heritage" issued in September last year.

I hope this clarifies our position.

Yours sincerely, David Dale,

Stamp Planning & Production, Royal Mails Marketing Department.

Protest re Homosexual Law Reform Bill

The Australia and New Zealand Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, met in Auckland on 31st May 1985, emphatically protest against the Homosexual Law Reform legislation introduced into Parliament and against that legislation becoming law.

The present legislation includes sodomy amongst the criminal offences for the very good reason that it is a perversion that in terms of Christian

ethics is exceedingly displeasing to God. It is harmful to those indulging in it both from a medical and spiritual point of view.

The discrimination that is exercised in the present legislation that makes sodomy a crime is not different from the discrimination exercised against dangerous drug users and pushers, whether they practise in public or in private. No person in his right mind would suggest the legalisation of heroin and other dangerous drugs under the pretext of unfair discrimination or the need to allow individuals greater freedom.

Legislation against sodomy is firmly based on the divine scriptures and therefore carries the weight of divine approval. Those who in the past have disregarded the only infallible guide of moral conduct have been subjected in providence to the divine wrath, amongst them the almost entire populations of Sodom and Gomorrah. Can there be any doubt that the recent emergence of the horrific disease AIDS is anything less than the clear mark of God's displeasure of sodomy?

Surely it is the duty of Government to legislate for the moral good of society and to retain in the present legislation what promotes the welfare of society and to resist the pressures of a relatively small segment of the community which will lead to further moral decline and decadence. Let the legislators bear in mind that they are responsible to God for the maintenance of laws which were handed down to them and that God will require at their hands any retrograde steps such as Homosexual Law Reform legislation. Let them also note what Lord Goddard, former Lord Chief Justice, said in Britain in connection with similar legislation in the House of Lords. He said he could not support a bill which in a few lines took out of the category of criminal law a crime which had always been treated as one of the gravest crimes which could be committed.

J. A. T. van Dorp, Clerk.

Resolution re Pornographic Films

The Australia and New Zealand Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, met in Auckland on 31st May 1985, view with deep concern the lack of censorship which permits T.V. films of a pornographic nature to be screened. A recent example is the screening of "The Awakening of Candra". This film appears to be linked with an horrific rape attack on an Auckland woman who was first gagged, had a rope tied around her neck and was dragged face first over a footpath.

The Presbytery protest against the lax legislation that allows films that give rise to such horrendous crimes and call on the Government to take immediate steps to implement appropriate legislation.

J. A. T. van Dorp, Clerk.

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.

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., £50; D. F. G. Moore, £12.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Kyle Congregation £42.50; Plockton Congregation, £8.90.

Chesley Building Appeal: Anon., £8; Anon., Wick, £50; Anon., Lairg, £40; Anon., Tolsta Friend, £10.

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

Barnoldswick: Anon. (Inverness Postmark) £25 for Congregational Purposes.

Fort William: A. McG. £10; Well-wisher £5; Friend, Caol £10, last two for Sustentation Fund, all per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Inverness: 1 Chron. 29: 14 £100; A Friend £25; A Friend of the Mission £10, all for Zimbabwe Mission Blind Sponsoring Fund, all per Rev. A. F. M.

London: A. and B. MacL. £10 per A. Gillies.

Ness: Anon., North Tolsta £5; Envelope in plate from M. MacD. £20; Friends, Stornoway £100; Friend, Ness £100; Miss A. MacK., Stornoway £25; Envelope in plate £5, all for Church Repairs; Friend, London £5 per Mrs J. F.; Friend, North Tolsta £5; Mr and Mrs M., Skigersta £10; Mr and Mrs M., Glasgow £20; Friend per A. McL. £8; Friend £10 per A. McL., all for Congregational Purposes; Friend £5; Friend, Stornoway £25; both for Communion Expenses.

North Tolsta: Friend £10 for Church Heating (in plate); Friends, Skye £40 for Congregational Purposes per Rev. J. MacDonald; Stornoway Friend £5 for Communion Expenses (in plate); "The Word of God abideth for ever" £10 for Trinitarian Bible Society; Anon. £5 for Jewish and Foreign Missions; Anon., £5 for Dominions and Overseas Fund (both in plate); Anon., In Memory of our beloved parents £15 for Church Heating.

Staffin: Free Presbyterian £100, where most needed, envelope in plate.

Stornoway: Friend, North Tolsta £20 for Sustentation Fund; P. MacL. £15, both per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon. £10, last two for Communion Expenses; Breasclete Congregation £30 per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon., £15; Anon., £10, last three for Petrol Expenses.