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The Righteous Judgments of God

The Word of God declares that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” This aspect of the divine glory as the sin-hating and sin-avenging Jehovah has, to a large extent, been lost sight of in our dark day. Yet, notwithstanding the blindness of men to this particular revelation of the glory of God, this aspect of His glory is still being made manifest in God’s dealings with men and nations. That sin shall not go unpunished is a clear tenet of God’s Word, and men are fools when they disregard that Word, and think that is shall be otherwise than as God has revealed in His Word.

God is the infinitely righteous Jehovah. He cannot do iniquity. Righteousness is an essential attribute of His nature, otherwise He would not be God. Infinite rectitude belongs unto God. Men may charge, and do charge the God of eternity with acting unrighteously and unjustly, while all the time God sits majestically upon that throne of which judgment and justice are the habitation. Vile wretches will cast scorn upon God and seek by their reviling to demean the glory of the infinitely glorious One. Yet God is to vindicate His glory — the glory of His justice either in the eternal salvation or eternal damnation of sinners. His Name will be glorified in so doing, however it may appear otherwise to the perverted minds and imaginations of men.

The Word of God is full of instances of the execution of God’s wrath against sinners of mankind and that in justice. The destruction of the old world by a flood was a signal instance of the righteous judgment of God

upon a sinning people. The world of the ungodly perished in that flood. There was no escape for them from the righteous judgment of God upon them for their sin. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was another instance of God in righteousness executing judgment upon ungodly sinners for their vile sins and Jude refers to these cities as set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This principle in the divine administration must be maintained and vindicated and the justice of God will see to it that it is upheld.

Among other instances of divine judgment executed in righteousness during the wilderness journey of the children of Israel was that of Nadab and Abihu and that of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. In the first instance strange fire was offered before the Lord, instead of the fire of the altar in offering incense. As a result there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. This was a solemn instance of divine judgment upon officiating priests in God's sanctuary. It was a case of judgment beginning at the house of God. Concerning it Moses said to Aaron, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." The case of Korah, Dathan and Abiram was one of rebellion against Moses and against Aaron. Two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, joined with them in that rebellion. How much evil can one or two men bring about in the Church of God! How great a matter a little fire kindleth! They were called on to take every man his censer and put fire and incense in them and appear before the Lord. First it appeared as if God was to consume the whole congregation but Moses and Aaron interceded for them. Instead they were told to depart from the tents of these wicked men. Of these men Moses said: "If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord has not sent me." When he had made an end of speaking the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up. They went down alive into the pit and the earth closed upon them, while a fire from the Lord devoured the 250 men that offered incense. What a manifestation this was of divine anger against rebellion, a sin which, as Samuel later told Saul, is as the sin of witchcraft. The epitaph written on the graves of these wicked men must surely have been: "the righteous Lord doeth righteously."

When Abraham was in the land of Caanan the Lord said to him that the cup of the Amorites was not yet full. But the time came when that

cup was full and God executed the vengeance upon them for their abominable idolatries and wickedness by the sword of the children of Israel. They were devoted to slaughter in divine judgment by a righteous God. How solemn then in view of this was the judgment of God upon Israel and Judah in the captivity of Babylon. But how much more solemn is the present judgment upon the Jews for their rejection of their Messiah. To be under judicial blindness for so many centuries as a nation, apart from a remnant according to the election of grace, is surely one of the most solemn, if not the most solemn judgment that can overtake any nation. What warning there is to us as a nation in our present plight, when it appears as though judicial blindness has overtaken the leaders of the nation in Church and state, and many in the nation besides. When light is put for darkness and darkness for light how far has such a nation gone along the road of no return.

Upon the angels that lost their first estate the wrath of God has come to the uttermost. They are reserved unto judgment, delivered into chains of darkness. For them no remedy is provided and the justice of God must take its course. So it will be with impenitent sinners in the end. The judgment of God will overtake them. All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. There, at the bar of divine justice, none will have grounds for complaint that there was any miscarriage of justice, for "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right." The glory of God's justice will be vindicated in that day. Men may malign and impugn it today but in that day every mouth shall be stopped.

No greater assurance has God given to men that He is to execute righteous judgment upon sinners, than that which is displayed in the sacrifice that was offered on Calvary once for all. It was divine justice that took to do with the sin-bearer. It was divine wrath that was poured upon Him when He drank the cup of His sufferings. If God did not spare the Surety Substitute of His people from the just displeasure of God against the sins that were laid to His charge, is God going to spare the rebellious, impenitent Christ-rejecting children of men. Surely not. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right." Shall God spare nations that have risen in rejection of Him and rebellion against Him? Surely not. He will execute upon them His just displeasure. The wicked, we are told, shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget Him.

Let us not then impose on the long-suffering of Jehovah. Rather let us turn from our sins unto God as individuals and as nations of the world and find salvation in the divinely provided remedy lest His wrath overtake us and there be no escape. If we are found fleeing to the refuge that

is in Christ, as poor sinners exposed to divine judgment, and find there safety and security for our souls, we will then have reason to rejoice that His throne is a throne of judgment.

“Justice and judgment of Thy throne
are made the dwelling place;
Mercy, accompany'd with truth,
shall go before Thy face.”

Psalm 89: 14.

Sermon

by C. H. Spurgeon.

Preached at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, on a Thursday evening, during the Winter of 1858-9.

“Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?” — Habakkuk 1: 3.

In this discourse, it will be my endeavour to assign some reasons why God causes his people to see iniquity in themselves and in others.

I. We will begin with the first class, and enquire, WHY DOES GOD CAUSE US TO SEE INIQUITY IN OURSELVES? What is the reason of the discoveries, which the Holy Spirit sometimes makes to us of the evil of our hearts? It is well known, to all who love the Lord, that there are seasons when the Holy Spirit takes us into the darkest chambers of our being, and there reveals to us evils which, perhaps, we had never suspected. “Son of man,” saith he, “I will show thee what great abominations there are within thee.” He lays bare the loathsome kennel of the human heart, and lets us look at all our deformity and depravity; he takes us to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged. He bids us look with horror upon our natural state, and see what awful and hideous corruption that still remaineth in our hearts, even though we have been regenerated by him. Why doth he do this? We will answer the question in several ways.

Sometimes, he does it *to confirm us in the doctrines of grace*. My brethren, Arminianism is the natural religion of us all. I think one of the surest ways in the world to put down all our self-sufficiency, and all our erroneous views of the gospel, is for God the Holy Spirit to show us our own depravity. A man may talk glibly concerning free will as long as he knows nothing about himself; but when the Lord has shown him what he is by nature, he will say no more about that matter; or if he talks about it as a mere theory, he will not believe it in his inmost spirit. A man, un-

taught of the Spirit, says that sinners, of their own free will, turn to God; he says that they do, by their own strength, at least to a great degree, though assisted by the Holy Spirit, keep themselves; and that, to some extent, their final perseverance is dependent on their own diligence, and is not left entirely in the hands of God. But I am sure that, if the Spirit takes him into the secret chambers of his heart, and lets him see his own iniquity, he may go in talking about his own free will, but he will come out singing of God's free grace; for he will say, "O Lord, if thou hadst not begun the good work in me, it never could have originated in such a filthy pool as my heart; and if thou dost not carry on the work from first to last, it will soon come to a standstill. If I am not robed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I must stand naked before thy bar; and if the work be not entirely thine own, or if thou art to be turned away by any sin or sinfulness in the creature, then, O Lord, I know I must perish!" And this right view of the subject will drive him to believe in discriminating grace, in irresistible vocation, in omnipotent keeping, and in the infallible perseverance of all the children of God.

It is noteworthy how the belief of one of the doctrines of grace naturally leads to the belief of all the rest. The system of the gospel is so logical, its truths fit so well into one another, that you cannot get a right knowledge of one of them without, at once, or in a very short time, discovering the others. The Lord begins by teaching us this foundation truth of our utter depravity; he burns it into our conscience by bitter experience, and by terrible discoveries of our sinfulness; and he knows right well that the other doctrines will follow, and that, when this truth is really understood by us, we shall not be long before we have orthodox views of the whole covenant of grace, and the great system of the gospel of Jesus. This, I think, is one reason why the Lord gives his people revelations of their own iniquity and defilement, that they may be sound in the faith, and may believe nothing but the doctrines of grace.

Moreover, I believe that he does this *to keep them humble*. If our Master did not sometimes let us have a look at ourselves, we should be fearfully proud. The old Puritans used to say that God has given the peacock black feet, that he may not be proud of his bright feathers; and that, in like manner, he has allowed his people to have the black feet of their own sinfulness, that they may not glory in any of the graces which God the Holy Spirit has given them; but that, while they have those graces, so bright and beautiful, they may still look down on their own natural depravity, and humble themselves before God. We are all, by nature, as proud as Lucifer. If any man thinks himself to be incapable of

pride, he is very proud indeed. "Ah!" says one, "I know I never can be flattered." But sir, you flatter yourself to an extraordinary degree when you say that. Pride is natural to us all; it is woven into the warp and woof of our being; we shall never get rid of it, till the worm has eaten up our flesh; nothing will ever cover up our pride except our winding-sheets; and when our bodies are wrapped up in them, and our souls are caught up to dwell with God, then, but not till then, shall pride be thoroughly cast out of us. Our communion with Christ, our progress towards heaven, our increased knowledge, our good works, all these things have, through the evil heart of our unbelief, a tendency to puff us up, though, in truth, being all given to us by the Spirit, there is no legitimate cause for pride in any of us; and therefore, God, to keep his people in their right place, humbles them with discoveries of their own sinfulness. If their ships had all sail, and no ballast, they would soon be wrecked; so, when God fills his people with abundant revelations, he sends them also a thorn in the flesh; and the messenger of Satan is sent to buffet them, that they may walk humbly with God, and bow their heads in submission before him, knowing themselves to be still unclean, apart from the work of Christ Jesus their Lord, which he has wrought out for them.

Beloved, you can bear me witness that, when you have had sad discoveries of your own heinous guilt, you have been deeply humbled. Sometimes, your good works have been a great evil to you, because you have prided yourself upon them, and so brought yourself to the edge of the precipice of presumption. But manifestations of your guilt, brought home to your conscience by God's Spirit, have been of essential service to you, by teaching you not to be high-minded, but rather to fear, and to remember that your standing in grace is not of yourself, and therefore you must not boast. That is another good reason, if there were no other, why we may bless God for showing us our own iniquity.

A third reason why God sometimes shows his people their own wickedness is, *to make them submissive in the hour of trouble*. A Pharisee, of all people in the world, would be the worst man to be in Job's position. If I must be in a hospital, I would rather be there as a publican, than as a Pharisee. For a Pharisee, nothing would be good enough; he would think his pangs and miseries great indeed for so righteous a man to have to endure; he would think he had no right to suffer. But the poor publican would say, "I am a great sinner, and these miseries are not a millionth part of what I deserve to suffer; these aches and pains are nothing compared with what I merit at the hand of God; therefore I will bear them all with submission. Why should a living man

complain? I am still out of hell, and therefore I must not murmur." Ah! brethren, we have a great difficulty to keep murmuring down. There is very much meaning in that old English word murmur; just sound it, — it is *mur-mur*. Any child can say that; it is one of the easiest words to speak; and that is why, I think, we have that word for complaining and grumbling, because murmuring is such a very easy thing; anyone can murmur, anyone can grumble, anyone can complain. Murmuring seems to have been bred in the bones of the children of Israel; for, in the wilderness, they were almost, always murmuring; — murmuring for water when they were thirsty, murmuring for bread, then murmuring for meat, murmuring because the Anakims were tall; murmuring first for one thing, and then for another; they were always at it; they were continually murmuring for forty long years in the wilderness. Ay, and many of us are all too apt to imitate them; but the surest way to cure us of murmuring is to let us know our own ill-desert. A man, who has been taught to realize his own wickedness, and his own ill-desert, will be less likely to murmur than anyone else. The poor wretch, who has had the rope round his neck, and has been ready to be hanged, when he gets his pardon, and goes his way, you will not find him murmuring at the fare that is provided for him. He will say, "Oh! it is such a wonder to me to be alive at all, it is such an act of mercy that I have had my life spared, that this dry bread becomes like royal dainties, and this cup of cold water tastes to me like the richest wine might do to another man." The Lord does thus often take his children into the stripping-room, and into the starving-room, and lets them see that all their afflictions are less than they deserve, that their troubles are but as the small dust of the balance, compared with the mountains of tribulation and anguish which they deserve to have received in hell.

Again, when the Lord reveals to us our iniquity, it is *to put us on our watch-tower*. When he shows us the sin that is in our heart, it is like a captain pointing to a few skirmishers who have just come before an army that is advancing. "There, my men," says the captain, "you see those soldiers; they are the advance guard of the enemy; look sharply after them, for there is a great army behind them, so be on your watch." Thus the Holy Spirit discovers to us our evil desires and corruptions, he wakes us up to see them; and when we have seen them, he says to us, "Take care; this little that I have shown you is to warn you of a great army that is behind. These few evil ones that have just appeared to your vision are but the outriders of a host of black things that are ready to attack you; so, be always upon your watch-tower, be constantly looking out for

foes." I think that soldiers need to have a few alarms on their march; if they had none, they might become careless, and relax discipline; and then they might be enticed into a defile, and so be surprised, and cut off. But when they have a few enemies to harass them on the flank and rear, they are more likely to be watchful, and to keep a sharp look-out, so that, in case of a sudden attack, they would be ready to repel the foe. The absence of enemies is apt to breed a slothfulness which disables; and times of ease seldom suit God's soldiers. Holidays ruined the army of Hannibal; and it is for our good that God stirs up the Amalekites to make us ready for the battle, lest we should be surprised by even worse adversaries.

I will give only one more answer to this first question, and then I will pass to the other point. The Lord often shows us our iniquity, *to make us value salvation all the more*. You know that the man, who thinks the most of a doctor, is generally the man who needs him most. When we are well, we often make jokes concerning doctors; we talk about their killing the people, and so on; but when we get ill, we send for them. We laugh at them while in health; but we are glad to make use of them when sick. So is it with the Lord's people; they may, perhaps, think lightly of Christ when they do not see or feel any present need for him; but when they discover their own leprosy, then it is that they value the great Physician. When they realise their own ruin, then it is that they prize the God-given remedy. It is a great service to us, sometimes, to show us our bankrupt's schedule. Every man has had a bankrupt's schedule, because we are all bankrupts by nature. We set up in trade for ourselves, and we soon became bankrupts; we never paid even a farthing in the pound, but our Lord Jesus Christ paid it all for us; yet we should not know how great was his grace in doing so, did he not remind us of our debts, and of how very poor were our own hopes of meeting debts so immense, so infinitely beyond all our powers to discharge. God says to his children, "I brought you out of prison, but you do not think much of my deliverance today; so I will take you back to prison, and let you see once more what kind of place it is, and then you will think more of the Breaker who broke your chains, and set you free. I have opened a fountain that sparkles with living water; you have been drinking of it day by day, till you are full, and you do not know its value. Come, I will put you in the waste, howling wilderness, and you shall suffer the pangs of hunger, you shall have all the water in your bottle spent, and then you will know the preciousness of the rippling fountain, which grace hath opened for thirsty sinners. You have been feasting every day at my table, you have scarcely known

what hunger is; I will just put you again in the desert of conviction, and make you hunger after righteousness, and then you will prize the bread that came down from heaven, and think more of Jesus Christ, my Son, than you would have done had it not been for this showing of iniquity and grievance."

All these things, of which I have spoken, are matters of heart experience to all true believers. Many persons do not know the plague of their heart. But you, who love the Lord, will own that, however quaintly I have put these things, there is great truth in them. It is even so; we have had very solemn times, all of us who believe in Jesus, since we first knew the Lord; there have been times when we could not tell our right hand from our left in spiritual matters; when, if anyone had asked us, "Are you the Lord's?" we dared not have answered, "Yes, we are;" for our corruptions were so strong, and unbelief had become so rampant, and poor faith seemed to be so slumbering, like the fire in the ashes, that we could not tell whether there was any fire or not. O brethren, do we not remember when we have sometimes knelt down in anguish, and cried, "O Lord, I long to have this point decided, — am I thine, or am I not? If it be so, why am I thus? Why this wrestling of two armies in the Shulamite? Why is it that these contentions and these warrings are carried on in my spirit? Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and why my sin contends with me. O Lord, show me where I am vile;" and have we not found that these times of sore conflict have been of essential benefit to us? We have grown strong by these griefs; the sight of iniquity has made us wiser, more cautious, more prudent, more humble, more affectionate, and made us more firm in our belief in our Saviour afterwards, than we had ever been before.

II. Now I will try to answer the question of the text in another sense: "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?" Sometimes, the iniquity and grievance are not in ourselves, but IN OTHERS. Some of you may not have much of this world's goods; you, perhaps, live in a house where there are very ungodly people; down in your court, the Sabbath is always broken; in the street where you reside, you seldom hear anything on the Sabbath day except oaths, and curses, and profanity, and everything which constitutes a breach of the day of rest; and others of you, by your very connections, are called to mix with evil companions, whose speech, instead of being seasoned with salt, seems seasoned with brimstone, flavoured only with blasphemy, and having perpetually in it the very brogue of hell. There are some of you, who are called to labour with workmen, who, instead of endeavouring to

help you to heaven, seem trying, like Christian's neighbours and wife, of whom you read in "The Pilgrim's Progress," to pull you back to the City of Destruction. You are, perhaps, asking this question, "O Lord, why am I in such a condition? Why has thy providence put me where I am thrown into contact with evil men? 'Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?'" I will tell you three or four reasons why the Lord acts thus towards you.

The first is, *to let you see what you might yourselves have been.* John Bradford — you have probably heard the story a hundred times, — when he used to see people going past his window, on the way to Tyburn, to be hanged, said, "There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God, John Bradford too would have been hanged." When you hear men swearing, you can say, "That is what I should have done, if the Lord had not kept the door of my lips." When you see men taken up for robbery, you can say, "That is what I might have been, if God had not kept me from sin." When you hear of the drunken brawl, or the murderous affray, put your hand on your heart, and say, "Ah! the same sort of evils might have come out of this heart of mine; for human hearts are very much alike. 'As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.' There is not much difference, by nature, between one heart and another; so, that man is a picture of what I might have been, if the restraining hand of God had not kept me back from sin." You know that, sometimes, drunkards help to make men sober; occasionally, drunkards are good apostles of temperance; for, when they come reeling through the streets, in all their bestial stupidity, a man very naturally says "What a fool that fellow makes of himself!" and it leads him to say, "I must avoid that evil thing, because I would not make myself so foolish as he is." I think it was the old Greek lords who used to make their slaves drunk, in order to keep their children from the vice, by letting them see how disgraceful a drunkard looked.

Thus, perhaps, God allows wicked men to come in our way, *to make us see the evil of sin, that we may turn from it, pass by it, abhor it, and not indulge in it.* I have no doubt that the wickedness of men may be employed, under the divine wisdom, and the overruling hand of God, for the sanctification of his own people. Just as, sometimes, a book that is full of bad orthography is one of the best things for teaching a child how to spell well, by leading him to correct the mistakes in spelling, so the Lord permits us to see this other kind of bad spelling in order to teach us how to spell aright. We have to correct ourselves by the evils of others, and to learn from their wrong-doings to avoid the sins into which they have

fallen. Wrecks may sometimes be made into beacons; the ruin of one man may be a warning to another. It is so with the Christian, for he knows how to use his sight of iniquity, and of grievance, as he beholds it in others, as a reason for avoiding the same iniquity himself.

In the next place, God sometimes allows us to see the sins of others, *to teach us to admire his sovereignty*, which plucked us as brands from the burning. We look at our neighbours, and see them drinking down sin as a greedy ox drinketh down water, and we say, "What hath made us to differ from them?" Grace — free grace. And then we ask, "Why has grace come to us, and not to them? Why have these favours been given to us, and not to the rest of mankind?" And we are obliged to say, with Christ, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Why only one member of a family is converted, what a proof that is of divine sovereignty! When there is a holy mother, with an ungodly husband, and wicked children, what an illustration that is of the sovereignty of God, in that one is taken, and the others are left! And when, in a house, two women have been grinding at the mill, and one has accompanied her grinding with the songs of Zion, and the other has accompanied hers with the voice of cursing, what proof there has been of the sovereignty of God, who "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Ay, Christian, God hath put thee in the very midst of sin, to make his grace the more conspicuous. If you ride in the country, and you see a field of wheat, you will very likely not notice one of the ears at all; but as you are going along, you see a hedge, and, by some chance or other, a grain of wheat has been dropped into the ground under the hedge, and from it a single ear of corn has grown up through the brambles, and there it stands alone. Very likely you nudge your friend who is riding with you, and say, "There is an ear of wheat growing up among the brambles." It seems the more astonishing and notable from the place where it is growing. So, I think, a Christian in the Church of Christ is not a thing to be wondered at so much. The sovereignty of God is not so much seen amongst the righteous by themselves as it is when we find the Christians growing up amid the bushes and brambles of an ungodly world, and proving themselves to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Who ever noticed glow-worms in the day time? But, in the night, you will see them shining among the leaves. They were there by day, I daresay, but nobody saw them; but, in the night, with their little lamps glowing, everyone admires them. So the Christian, when he is in good company, is a blessed man,

and a great instance of divine love; but when, in the order of providence, he is put into a dark place, where there is little of gospel light and truth, then it is that his lamp begins to be most useful, and he is more noticed than he ever was before. This is why the Lord sometimes puts his people there, to make his sovereignty, his power, his might, and his grace, the more apparent. Even as men sometimes set jewels in foils to show their brightness, and put dark spots in their picture to make the lights more apparent, so the Lord, in his providence, permits his people sometimes to sojourn in evil places; like Lot, to dwell in Sodom; and like Abraham, to go down among the Egyptians, or with the Philistines, in order that divine grace may be displayed, and the Lord's name may be exalted.

I have another answer, and, I think, a better one, to the question of the text: "Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?" Why, my brethren, God shows us the sin of our fellow-men, *that we may set more earnestly to work, and that we may be the means of saving souls and extending the kingdom of righteousness*. When a captain takes his soldiers out to look at the enemy, it is like what I heard of a celebrated Scotchman, whose words I am scarcely able to pronounce correctly. "Now, lads," he said, "there they are; if ye dinna kill them, they'll kill you." That was their choice and so it is with us. God brings us to walk in this city, where harlotry and vice are to be seen on every side, almost at noonday. Now then, soldiers of the cross, if ye dinna kill them, they'll kill you. If you do not stand up for your Master, and keep the banner of the cross in the air, the enemy will be more than a match for you. I have been struck sometimes, when I have looked in a window, and seen there pamphlets full of all manner of obscenity and infidelity and wickedness, and they have had the most blessed effect upon my mind; for I have thought, "Well, if there is so much wickedness, so much the more reason is there why every minister should be in earnest, and why every Christian should seek with all his might to do good."

Some of you live in very nice villas in the country; you do not go among the poor people, and you do not know what they are like. If you were to walk through some of the back slums and narrow alleys of London, you would say, "Oh, I never thought there could have been such places upon earth!" and if you could go where I have sometimes gone, up an old creaking staircase, where you have to stoop your head for fear of hitting it against a beam, and go into a room, and see a whole family there; and go into another room, and see a whole family there; a little further, and see another family, all crowded and packed together; and then hear their language, and see their utter ignorance of everything con-

cerning Christ, almost as unenlightened as the Hottentots in their kraals in Africa; — you would go away after seeing them, and say, “There is great reason that we should all be in earnest. We ought to be up and doing, sirs; we ought to be working well for our Master, after such a sight as this!” Oh! but we cover up our iniquity in this land a great deal; we fringe all London with fine streets, so that, when a foreigner rides through them, he says, “What a grand city it is!” A varnished hypocrisy! What is there behind those streets? What will you find behind those palaces at the West-end? The very lowest places upon earth, where the poor are stowed away together by hundreds. We fringe the city with something that looks respectable; but, alas! for the internals of this city, how much of wickedness and sin dwell there! I bless God that there are some of you who are obliged to live where you see the wickedness of this city; I thank God that some of you cannot go to your houses at night, without seeing wickedness on the road. “Why,” you ask, “do you bless God that there is this wickedness?” No, I do not; but I bless God that you have to see it, because you will be the people who will go to others, and say, “Strive for the salvation of men. Work, I beseech you, to do good, because the world is still full of wickedness, and the dark places even of this city are full of the habitations of cruelty.”

It is a long time since I made a good speech at a public meeting; but I do remember doing it once. I stepped out, as one of the speakers was delivering a very pretty oration, and I went into a neighbouring house to speak with a woman who wished to join the church. It was not in London. When I entered the house, there was the husband horribly drunk; he had got his wife up in a corner, and was with all his might trying to beat and bruise her, and he was even tearing her arms with his nails till blood freely flowed from her arms and face. Two or three friends rushed in, and dragged him away. She said she had endeavoured, in all meekness, to persuade him to allow her to go to the house of God that night; and the only reason why he ill-treated her was, because he said she would always be going to that place of worship. And when I had seen that sight, and looked on the poor, bleeding woman, with tears in her eyes, I went back into the place, and spoke like a man who had got his heart, and his whole body, full of fire. I could not help it; I was all on flame against the sin of drunkenness, and sought, with all my might, to urge the members of the church to do all they could to scatter the light of the gospel in a neighbourhood which was so dark and black and filthy and abandoned. And I think it would do all of us good, when we are about to preach, if we were sometimes to be dragged through some of the worst parts of

London, to let us see the wickedness of it. It would do our Sunday-school teachers good, many of them, for they would then be more in earnest with their children; and I think it would do good to some of our old friends, who sit and sleep almost all the service through, and are never much more than sleeping partners in the concern. If they did but know how the battle was going on, how tough the struggle and how stern the conflict, they would wake up from their slumbers, and go forth to the battle, and stand shoulder to shoulder, and deal blow after blow against the common enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the welfare of man.

Ah, my brethren, we need to know more of the evil of men, to make us more earnest in seeking their salvation; for if there be anything in which the Church is lacking more than in any other matter, it is in the matter of earnestness. Whitefield said, in one of his sermons, "O my God, when I think how this wicked city is perishing, and how many are dying for lack of knowledge, I feel as if I could stand on the top of every hackney coach in the streets of London to preach the gospel." Why did he say that? Why was his zeal so burning? Because he had seen the sinfulness of men, and marked their follies. We shall never be thoroughly in earnest till we are thoroughly aware of the evil that is before us. When the horse sees the precipice, he throws himself back, and will not madly dash himself down. So is it with the Church of Christ; if she could see the evil that is before her, she would surely draw herself back with energy, to save her own children from plunging into the yawning gulf. Ay, sirs, ye have iniquity in your very midst, and at your doors; ye have iniquity everywhere round about you, and yet how few of you are striving to do anything for Christ! Ye are asked to help in this great battle; but ye have so many other things to do, ye cannot help us. Ye are asked to do something in this cause, to give it a little time; but ye cannot manage it. Ye are asked to speak; but ye have so little ability, ye cannot do it. One half of the people who call themselves Christians want to be pressed fifty times to do a thing; and then, when they are got to do it, they are not worth having, because they are only pressed men, — they are not one half so good as volunteers. I would that all of us knew the evil state of this world, and the wickedness of men; and then I think that all of us who love the Saviour would start up from our seats, and each one would say, "Here am I; let me be a volunteer against the enemy; let me, in my measure, whatever little measure that may be, go forth to serve my God, to practice virtue, and, by a holy example and by every other means, seek to stem the raging torrent of the iniquity of the age."

Now, my dear friends, in closing, allow me just this one remark to

another class of hearers. There is one who, but a little while ago, was an abandoned sinner; he could drink, he could swear, he could break the Sabbath, and curse God. One day, he stepped into the house of God, and the Lord met with him, and now he is in misery, such as he cannot describe; his heart is all broken, his conscience is as if it had been lashed with the tenfold whip of the law, and as if brine had then been rubbed into his wounds; he is smarting all over with the wounds of his conscience, inflicted by the angry and fiery law of God. He is crying, in his agony, "O Lord, I must perish, I know I must; I see such wickedness in my soul, that I must perish and be cast away." Nay, poor soul, nay, that is not the right answer to the question of the text. The question is, Why doth the Lord show thee iniquity? I will give thee the right answer. *It is, in order that he may deliver thee from it.* If God has broken thine heart, he has broken it on purpose to give thee a new one. If he has killed thee by the law, he has killed thee on purpose to make thee alive by the gospel. If he has wounded thee in thy conscience, he has done it that he may have room to pour in the oil and the balm of Christ Jesus. If he has stripped thee, he has only pulled off thy rags that he may put on thee a perfect robe of spotless righteousness; and if he has cast thee into the ditch, so that thine own clothes abhor thee, as Job words it, it is that he may take thee to the fountain filled with blood, and give thee a perfect washing. When the Lord pulls a man down, he does it in order that he may build him up again. When he breaks a man's heart, it is not for the mere breaking's sake, it is that he may make it anew. If you have misery in your conscience on account of sin, God has had dealings of love with you, and he has purposes of love concerning you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If you are a convinced sinner, Jesus died for you, for he died for sinners. If you can truly say that you are a sinner, I can tell you that Christ Jesus hung upon the cross for you. Look at him there, bleeding; every drop of blood says to you, "I drop, poor sinner, for thee." Look at that gash in his side, whence flows the double stream of water and blood; it says, "Sinner, this stream runs for thee." Art thou a sinner? If so, Christ died for thee; and he hath not died in vain, thou shalt be saved. If thou dost but know thyself to be a *bona fide* sinner, a real one, no mere complimentary sham sinner, but a real actual one, who means what he says, when he declares himself to be guilty and vile; then, as the Lord liveth, Jesus Christ died for you on Calvary; you shall behold his face with joy; you shall be numbered with the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and you shall sing eternal hallelujahs around the throne of God and the Lamb.

The Days of Old to mind I called

by Rev. James S. Sinclair

As we sit and meditate by the fireside at this season of the year our minds have an instinctive tendency to recall the past. The departure of the old year and the advent of the new, have the effect of carrying back our thoughts to similar occasions in the past, and of thus reviving in our memories the events and experiences with which we were familiar in years gone by. Reflections upon "the days of old" in personal experience form an interesting part of the mental exercise of the children of God, and when these reflections are guided by the Divine Spirit, they never fail to prove spiritually profitable to their souls. No doubt their history, in many of its natural details, is very much the same as that of the rest of the world, but viewing the various incidents of their common life in the light of God and eternity, the Lord's people may discern elements of the far-reaching importance in things that otherwise might seem most trivial and commonplace, and so they may derive corresponding benefit from the thoughtful contemplation of them.

In calling to mind the days of old, it is natural and becoming for us to think first of the days of childhood and youth. The scenes and associations of the home of our birth rise up before our mental vision. We recall affectionate parents, and perhaps godly friends, who cared for us and took a deep and abiding interest in our welfare. We remember their little deeds of kindness to us, and also their occasional sharp but loving rebukes, administered when we erred from the right path. We also recollect our youthful companions and acquaintances, not a few of whom may be now in eternity, and others scattered in various parts of the world. These days of youth were often days of folly and sin, and as they pass before our mind's eye, we would do well, like Augustine, to confess with sorrow unto God the errors of them, and cry with the Psalmist, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord." It is well, however, also, if we can recall with gratitude a childhood blessed with Christian privileges — the worship of God in the family, and instruction in the truths and doctrines of sound Christianity. The bread cast upon the waters may be found after many days. And, indeed eternity alone will reveal what the Lord may have done by means of His Word, cast into the memory in early youth — bringing it to fruition by His Spirit perhaps when the subjects were in distant lands, far from all outward privileges, and lying on a sick-bed on the brink of a lost eternity.

We may next pass on to recall the days of first spiritual impressions. The memory of those days may remind some of a startling event in providence that shook every fibre of their frame; others, of a sermon from the pulpit that seemed to speak only to them in the great congregation; others again, of some word of reproof or warning dropped by a Christian friend; and others still, of a text of Scripture that secretly yet powerfully, at an unexpected moment, broke into their minds, and fastened conviction upon their consciences. These were days of sadness and misery, when we moved about like guilty criminals, as we were, thinking that every passer-by could read our guilt in our very face. Possibly such a season of alarm as this passed away — as it has done with many — and we went back to the world again, and plunged deeper into its mire than ever. But the Lord, in His rich and sovereign mercy, did not leave us there; and so we may be able to recall subsequent seasons of conviction and a day of Gospel deliverance, when our souls were taken out of the horrible pit and from the miry clay, and our feet were set upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, a new song put into our mouth, even praise unto the Lord. It is not affirmed that the transition from death to life, or darkness to light, stands out with equal distinctness in the consciousness of all the children of God alike, but certainly all His children recall moments and seasons of spiritual hope and comfort, when they were enabled, in a way they never knew before, to behold the Lamb of God, and to delight in the thought of a finished salvation through His obedience and blood. They recall some little blinks of divine favour, when the Lord seemed to speak comfortably to them, and to shine with His countenance upon their souls. These, indeed, were sweet days, never to be wholly erased from the page of memory, and the after recollection of them often proves an occasion of renewed quickening and consolation to the soul.

The remembrance of those times of spiritual joy and liberty is fitted also to call up the figures of worthy ministers and gracious men and women of the past, whom we knew and learned to value for the excellency of their personal character, and for their usefulness, publicly and privately, in the Lord's vineyard. Most, if not all, of these may now be in eternity — the righteous have been taken away from the evil to come — and we mourn the desolation that has been made by their removal, and the loss sustained by the Church of God on earth. Indeed, no one who has any true knowledge of divine things can do anything else than recall, with sorrow, the removal of so many living and lively witnesses for Christ as have passed away in Scotland during the last twenty or thirty years. Their character, conversation, and testimony still remain,

however, as hallowed recollections to the living in Jerusalem. They, being dead, yet speak. "The memory of the just is blessed." The very remembrance of the words of truth that fell from their lips, of their humble and heavenly walk, their ups and downs, joys and sorrows, proves oftentimes, by the divine blessing, a means of revival to the souls of those left behind in the wilderness, stimulating and encouraging them to "run with patience the race set before" them, and to anticipate the day of victory and rest.

Some, at least, of the children of God, will no doubt at this season feel strongly moved to call to remembrance the sore days of trouble of various kinds through which they may have passed in their wilderness journey. The Lord alone is able to bind up their wounds that are apt to bleed afresh at the touch of memory, and it would be a happy thing in their experience if they were enabled, in the strength of grace, to rise above their sorrows, and recognise the Lord's great goodness to them amid their severest trials. He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. His way is often in the sea, and his path in the mighty waters. It is hard to sense to discern the hand of love in many of His providential dealings, but His people, generally, after a period, come to see the reason for the path in which they have been led, and are enabled to acquiesce in the sovereign will of Him of whom it is written that He doeth all things well. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." The will of God is their sanctification, and he uses sharp as well as pleasant means for the accomplishment of this great end. He will starve pride and feed humility in His people, and conform them to the glorious image of Christ. If they are to meditate upon their troubles at this season, let it be in order that they may be driven more and more in lowliness and self-abasement nearer the Lord Jehovah, who is their everlasting righteousness and strength.

Let those, then, who profess the name of Christ, remember the days of mercy as well as the days of misery. All our days, from the beginning of our career, are stamped with mercy. If God had dealt with us according to our sins, we would have been in hell long ago, but He is long-suffering, slow to wrath, and in mercy plenteous, and every temporal comfort we enjoy is an unmerited mercy direct from the hand of God. And what an unspeakable, incalculable favour it is, if we have been made heirs of the "good hope through grace!"

In conclusion, what shall we say on this subject to our readers who are still "without God and without hope"? Remember, dear friends, that if you do not now, in time seek and find pardon and salvation, your olden

days — both in respect of sin and privilege — will yet rise up in judgment against you. You may have forgotten your old days of sinning, but they are written down in the book of God's remembrance, and will yet appear to your endless confusion, unless you repent and believe the Gospel. Further, your days of privilege will even be more terrible to you than your days of sin. For they speak of warnings neglected and invitations despised. You have heard almost numberless times of your sin and danger, and of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and yet you have paid no heed, but have hardened your hearts against the truth and against your own mercy. May the Lord, in infinite compassion, incline you to pause and consider and turn, ere it be too late! Hell is at your very feet, and you have need to be snatched even as brands from the burning. The Lord Jesus even now says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

Assurance

By Rev. G. I. Macaskill, B.A.

Importance of Assurance

The question of assurance is very important for at least three reasons. Firstly, for the obvious reason that many think they are saved and are not. The Scriptures record that in the Day of Judgment many will say: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?", and He will reply: "I never knew you: depart for Me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 22, 23). Secondly, it is important because some may consider themselves outside of the kingdom of grace, when in actual fact, they are inside it, and thereby their usefulness to the Cause of Christ is severely limited. Thirdly the subject of assurance is very important for the simple reason that all within the Church of God are commanded "to make their calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1: 10). The Westminster Confession of Faith makes it abundantly clear that it is not only the duty of all believers to seek it, but that all believers may attain it by ordinary means.

Mistakes regarding Assurance

As there is much confusion about assurance, it might be helpful to begin by looking at some common mistakes regarding it.

1. It is a mistake to think that everyone who is truly converted knows that

he is, because the First Epistle of John was written to true believers, some of whom needed to be assured of their interest in Christ. John clearly states: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John 5: 13).

2. It is also a mistake to think that all who are assured are all equally assured, because although one may say that he is persuaded that nothing can separate him from the love of God (Rom. 8: 38), another can only say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." (Mk. 9: 24)

3. Another common mistake is to think that those who have assurance are always fully assured of their salvation. The Psalmist says in Psalm 119: 57 that "God is his portion", but yet he says in Psalm 31: 22 that "he is cut off". Asaph in Psalm 77 seems to have both experiences. In verses 8 and 9 he asks, "Is His mercy clean gone for ever?", yet in verses 13 and 14 he says, "Who is so great a God as our God?" and "Thou art the God that doest wonders".

4. Further, it is not correct to think that those with assurance are untroubled by sin or always receive answers to their prayers. They are not immune from sin nor do they always have sensible answers to prayer. David had to complain, "Iniquities prevail against me" (Ps. 65: 3) and "How long wilt Thou forget me, Lord?" All they can say is what Paul said: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. 1: 12)

Reasons for lack of Assurance

What, then, are the reasons why many believers do not possess this great blessing? Here are some of the most common:-

Many do not realise that it was what was in God Himself and not anything that was in man that caused Him to send Christ into the world as the sinner's Substitute. They look into their own hearts for a reason why God should save them — but there is no reason there why God should show them mercy. The reason is in heaven, in God's own bosom. The Shorter Catechism states it in this way, "... out of His mere good pleasure. . .". The Apostle John writes, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . .".

2. Some do not realise that faith alone is the condition of salvation and not faith along with the fruit that follows. It is true that faith cannot be alone in the soul, but nevertheless, it is faith alone that is the condition of salvation. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that

justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. 4: 5)

3. Others do not realise that God, being a sovereign God, may work differently with different people. With regard to conviction of sin, Paul is kept three days, the Philippian jailor about one hour, and Zaccheus not a moment. With regard to sanctification and growth in grace there is a great difference between Samuel and Samson; between David and Solomon; and between Peter and Paul.

4. Finally, many seeking assurance do not know exactly what they are looking for. They may be looking for comfortable feelings rather than grounds why they are saved. They expect some sensation when reading the Scriptures instead of searching for Biblical evidences that they are believers.

Evidences of Assurances

How then does this assurance come? The First Epistle of John seems to point to three things: 1. The Truth of God; 2. The witness of the Spirit; 3. The life of the believer. The combined evidence of these three things together bring assurance.

By the first is meant what the Confession of Faith calls “the divine truth of the promise”. John emphasises in his first chapter that “if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”, and he stresses the seriousness of making God a liar by not believing what He has said. It is God who has said that whosoever believeth on the Son shall not perish; it is God’s Word that records, “all that believe are justified”, and it is God who promises that “none perish that Him trust.”

A second matter that John mentions in the way of assurance is subjective and not objective like the first. He records: “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. The witness of the Spirit is that inner illumination which the Spirit gives whereby the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; the heart goes out to Him; and as a result the conscience enjoys peace with God. Although this is subjective, yet it is real and true. There is peace at the thought of Christ as their Saviour.

Thirdly, John states: “Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep His commandments. The behaviour and conduct of the believer is a practical and continual evidence that we are the children of God. Christ Himself said, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” The evidence of faith is love, and the evidence of love is obedience. The continual observance of Christ’s commands is a mark of the believer in Christ.

These three evidences together bring assurance: the truth of the Word; the inner peace of the Spirit, and the life of the believer. One on its own may not necessarily provide assurance. If we really put our faith in Christ as He is revealed in the Word we will be saved, but we may not have the assurance of it. It is possible to be saved and yet not enjoy the comfort of it. So we may indeed be resting on the Saviour without assurance of salvation. Similarly, we may have the subjective peace of conscience whereby we are inwardly comforted, but if we do not have the objective truth of God to anchor on, we are like a sailor who casts the anchor inside the ship instead of on to the sea bed. Again, if all we have is Christian behaviour, without direct faith in Christ or the testimony of the Spirit, then all we have is a religion of works. So it is these three things together that give assurance: the objective truth of God's Word; the subjective witness of the Spirit; and the practical life of the believer.

Blessings accompanying Assurance

In conclusion, it is surely worth noting that the Scriptures point to great blessings in the gaining of assurance. Some allege that if a person obtained assurance then that person would become proud and haughty. However, it is the opposite effect it had on Paul, for he writes: "By the grace of God, I am what I am," and "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." True assurance leads to humility, not pride, for it recognises that it is Christ's work, not our works, that saves us.

Again, others think that if they had assurance it would lead them to be careless and slothful in the pursuit of their growth in grace. "But what saith the Scriptures?" The Apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says in Hebrews 6: 11, 12 "I desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end that he be not slothful but followers" The Scriptures tell us that in order to avoid slothfulness and indifference in the Christian race it is important to obtain assurance. True assurance, then, not only leads to humility but also holiness.

Yet again others think that if they obtained assurance their lives would be in danger of being corrupted, that assurance would lead them to a trifling with sin and an over-confidence because they know that they will never be lost. But "What saith the Scriptures?" It is John again in his first epistle that replies: "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Purity of life, not sin and shame, is the effect of true assurance.

Do we need humility; zeal for holiness; a pure life? Are we anxious to know how to arrive at these three attainments? Then let us hear both Peter and Paul instruct us to be diligent to obtain assurance. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1: 10) "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope." (Heb. 6: 11).

"'Tis a Point I long to Know"

'Tis a point I long to know;
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?

If I love, why am I thus;
Why this dull, this lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure can they be worse,
Who have never heard His name.

Could my heart so hard remain,
Prayer a task and burden prove;
Every trifle give me pain,
If I knew a Saviour's love?

When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark and vain and wild;
Filled with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child?

If I pray, or hear, or read,
Sin is mixed with all I do;
You that love the Lord indeed,
Tell, is it thus with you?

Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall!
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all?

Could I joy his saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhor'd;
Find at times the promises sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?

Lord, decide the doubtful case,
Thou who art Thy people's sun;
Shine upon Thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.

Let me love Thee more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not loved before,
Help me to begin today.

— John Newton.

Notes about Angus of the Hills

We have heard the following things about Angus of the Hills, which we do not remember having seen in print, and we give them as we heard them:-

When the Rev. John Macrae was in Lewis, in one or other of the parishes of which he was successively pastor, being very fond of Angus, and having a desire to have him near himself, he got Angus to come to live at the Manse in order to look after the cows. One day Mr Macrae saw, from the study window, the cows in the middle of a field of corn, and went himself to turn them out of it. He had to keep watch on the cows a good while before Angus appeared. Mr Macrae, being a little displeased with Angus for having neglected his duties, and being afraid that he might say something which might hurt Angus, he went his way into the house without waiting till Angus came up to him. When Angus came home in the evening, Mr Macrae said to him: "Where were you to-day, Angus, when the cows got into the corn?" Angus answered: "I was praying." Mr Macrae replied: "But you ought to have attended to the cows, Angus." Angus answered: "There would not be much worth in a prayer in which the cows would be." So, seeing the herding of the cows and prayer could not get on at the same time, Angus went away.

At a prayer-meeting on one occasion he was asked to pray, and, although ordinarily he rose without refusing much, on this occasion he could not be prevailed upon to pray. After the meeting was over one of

the men said to him: "You should not have refused to pray, Angus; for you see that Jonah prayed in the belly of a whale." Angus replied: "But if the whale had been in the belly of Jonah, as it was in mine, I don't think he could have prayed."

A godly woman in Skye, with whom Angus used to lodge sometimes, tried to see if he could count a few pennies. She placed the coppers on a table, and asked Angus to count them. He began, and do what she could, she could not get him to count the pennies correctly. That same evening the prayer-meeting was held, and the woman and Angus went to the meeting. He was called upon to pray. He arose, and began to pray with light, spiritual depth, and unction, and using words so well chosen and scriptural, that the woman (although she knew his voice perfectly well) was constrained to turn round to make sure that it was Angus — the man who could not tell the numbers of a few coppers a little while before then, but was now praying like a sage.

On one occasion he went from Lochalsh, along with two godly men, to Inverness to attend Communion services. They walked all the way, taking Strathglass as being the straightest and shortest route. The men sat down to take a little rest at the roadwise beside a wood. Angus had a pair of very old and ragged trousers on. One of the men said to him that his trousers were not respectable enough to go to Inverness with, and that he should go to pray for a new pair of trousers. Angus went away into the wood, and went on his knees behind a bush. The men crept up to the other side of the bush in order that they might hear what he would say. Angus began the prayer by saying: "Lord, they tell me that my trousers are not good enough to go to Inverness with; I am quite satisfied with them myself, but if Thou thinkest them not good enough, give me another pair of trousers." He then went on with a prayer for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ in the souls of men and throughout the world, till the men at last lost patience and had to call to him to come away. When they came to Clachnaharry, on the west side of the town of Inverness, one of the men lodged there. The other and Angus went into the town. As they walked up one of the main streets, a clothier, standing at the door of his shop, saw the man and knew him. He came across the street to salute him, and, when they began to talk, Angus continued to walk on. The clothier asked the man who was this other man that was along with him? The man told that he was an eminently God-fearing man, but was weak mentally. The clothier said that he noticed that his trousers were very bad, and as he had had returned to him that afternoon a pair of trousers and vest, which were a misfit, if he would

take them for the poor man, he would oblige him. The man thanked him, and took the parcel as it was. The man and Angus came to the house where they were to lodge during the solemn season. Angus was put into a small closet to sleep. The man went into the closet after Angus fell asleep and took away the old trousers and vest, replacing them by the new. In the morning, when Angus got out of bed and took up the trousers, he exclaimed: "O Lord, Thou hast sent me a new pair of trousers straight down from heaven!"

One of the godly Gaelic schoolmasters, who were such an unspeakable blessing to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, got to know Angus in the Island of Lewis. He loved Angus so much that he often took him away long distances from the bustle of the world in order that they might have private communion with the Lord and with one another. One day he asked Angus, as they walked at the side of a river, it being the dry season of the year: "How would you, Angus, describe the way faith acts towards the promises of the Word?" Angus answered: "Faith is often comparable to a trout that would be endeavouring to come up this river, and the water so low that its back has become dry, so that it concludes that it will never be able to reach the lake from which the river comes; but bye and bye it sees a pool a little in front of it, and it makes a plunge into it. So does faith when it is almost on the point of giving up for want of the water of life; when it sees the promise it plunges into it."

N. C.

Book Reviews

The Revival of Religion, — Addresses by Scottish Evangelical Leaders Delivered in Glasgow in 1840, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh. £6.95, 1984.

This is a vintage volume of Addresses. In the years immediately preceding the Disruption of 1843 in the Free Church occurred an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in many districts of the Church including the Scottish Highlands, and a quickening of interest in preaching of the Gospel. Church meetings were well attended and when, as often happened, sites for churches were refused as in the case of the Floating Church on Loch Sunart, the people had to resort to any expedient in their power to have the Gospel preached to them. Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne in St. Peter's, Dundee conducted a class weekly of young men numbering 400 which was not uncommon elsewhere. Evangelical preachers were settled throughout the congregations of the Church, and the Lord gave His Spirit to the poor. The desert began to blossom as the rose. The church

asserted her religious freedom and in the Ten Years Conflict contended for the "Crown Rights of the Redeemer". As the shackles of State control were cast off, the main body of the people, their ministers and office-bearers severed their connection with the state church and came out. It was a time of relief and a new sense of religious freedom pervaded the people. They realised the promise proclaimed on the day of Pentecost: "Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" — Acts 3: 19. The present volume is the fruit of that time of the Lord's favour.

The lecturers, gathered together in this volume are not miscellaneous religious addresses. The lecturers were chosen from among the evangelical leaders of the Disruption Free Church and the subjects allotted to them carefully graded. "Contributors include Wm. Burns of Kilsyth, whose son W. C. Burns was so instrumental in the remarkable movement of the Spirit in Robert Murray McCheyne's congregation: John Bonar (with whom Murray McCheyne served as assistant minister) and several other outstanding Christian leaders in Scotland including R. S. Candlish, A. Moody-Stuart and Patrick Fairburn. Their biblical understanding, wide pastoral experience and personal commitment to Christ and the Gospel are woven together in this course of lectures" — cover. The opening lecture deals with "The Nature of Religious Revival", followed by such subjects as "The Work of Christ"; "The Work of the Spirit"; "Sovereignty of God"; "Work of God"; "Prayer" etc., the last lecture being on "Practical Addresses and Counsels". The table of contents has detailed headings for each chapter, a feature that will stir the interest. The Preface is by W. M. H., initials that indicate Professor W. M. Hetherington, and a short account of the lives of the 14 lecturers concludes the volume. There are not many books in the language on the subject of Revival and among the well known works, Edwards on "The Religious Affections", and "Thoughts on Revival", and Sprague's "Lectures on Revival", the present volume will be accorded a welcome place.

A.F.M.

Commentary on Mark by J. A. Alexander, Geneva Series published by Banner of Truth Trust, 1984. Pages 444. £6.95.

Since the Commentary on Mark by Prof. J. A. Alexander first appeared in 1858 it has run through several editions; one reprint was taken out by the Banner of Truth Trust as recently as 1960 and again the

present edition appeared in 1984 and confirms the place of this Commentary as the definitive work on Mark. Prof. Alexander states that Mark is the best starting point to begin the study of the other three Gospels. The work is not a compilation of the material recorded in the other three Gospels but a separate, independent work, arranged to serve the specific purpose of providing a reliable history of our Lord's public life. On its own account, therefore, Mark is an independent historical work. The shortest of the four Gospels and covering generally the same ground, in some instances Mark gives a fuller and more detailed treatment of the incidents of Christ's public life and serves to supplement the parallel narratives of the other Gospels.

To the believing reader Prof. Alexander's Commentary will at once commend itself first for the inspiration accorded to the book — "Every Gospel has a character and method of its own" and this "is perfectly consistent with the plenary inspiration of the writers and did not destroy their individuality". The ancient theory of Augustine that Mark derived his information from Matthew or the idea that Mark was merely the retailer of other men's random recollections which he wrote at the dictation of Peter may be disregarded. Again, Prof. Alexander defends the integrity of the text of Mark. The theory which was more popular in other days than today that Mark ends his book at verse eight of the final chapter at the words "for they were afraid" is also untenable. To support this idea strange reasons were offered — that the writer was called away at this point and the interrupted work was not resumed; — that the last page of the Gospel containing these last 12 verses was somehow torn off and lost, etc. Attempts have been made to supply a shorter or longer ending. The true explanation, however, is that Mark had not completed his historical account of Christ's public life with words of dismay and fear, felt by the disciples at the sepulchre. The four post resurrection appearances of Christ were designed to remove these fears, is an integral part of the inspired canon and forms a perfectly satisfactory conclusion to the Gospel. The publisher's words on the cover are therefore in place: "Alexander's exposition, clear, reverent, instructive, is an admirable guide to this Gospel."

This volume, well bound in the usual format favoured by the Banner of Truth Trust in its publications and with bold, clear print make Professor J. A. Alexander's Commentary on Mark a handsome book for the study desk or shelf.

A.F.M.

The Christian in Complete Armour. Volume 1. A modernised abridgement of the Puritan Classic by William Gurnall, Banner of Truth Trust. £2.95.

It is heartening to see a modernised abridged edition of this great Puritan classic made available to this generation. The print is large and clear; the book itself, for all its weight of spiritual wealth, is in light paper-back form; the price is more than modest at £2.95 per copy.

The reading of this precious volume has afforded me real spiritual satisfaction and delight. It also induced me to read it again and again; more prayerfully — more slowly — more thoroughly. The interest initially generated gathers momentum as one proceeds to read page after page of most edifying and informative material. Little wonder that Newton, Ryle and Spurgeon in their own day, paid tribute to the worth of the original work. Those who have read to any great extent in this sphere know how frequently allusion is made to Gurnall's "magnum opus" on spiritual warfare. This abridged edition also is literally crammed with good matter and has a solid base of sound doctrine that cannot be condemned. Moreover, it is most readable. Neither the words nor the sense are difficult to follow, yet the sheer volume and variety of ideas that keeps cascading from the author's pen, is simply breath-taking. The book is biblically structured, and is an extended exposition of Ephesians 6: 10. With rare spirituality and facility Gurnall lets shafts of light fall on difficult parts of the Word of God. Statements which seem almost casual and effortless to the reader, carry more conviction and shed more light than a whole volume from another.

I cannot resist the urge to illustrate by example:- "The Comforter abides for ever in the saint's bosom, but that exhilarating feeling of joy in the Holy Ghost comes, and is gone again with the speed of a gazelle". Many similar epigrammatical sentences are to be found in rich profusion. Every page, every sentence, every syllable drops like honey from the honeycomb. The whole work palpitates with spiritual life. We venture to say that every student, every minister *must* read it, and that all others who have a palate for good sound Christian literature will be well rewarded and enriched spiritually, if they peruse it.

I am tempted to pluck some of the deliciously scented flowers of thought, and say, "Inhale this for yourself", but this may well be beyond the province of a short review. All I would say is, that if you are in earnest about your soul's salvation, and the good fight of faith, you could not buy a better work, nor get better value for your money. For good measure the volume is preceded by a summary of the contents of

each chapter, and a short historical sketch of the author's life. Strange as it may appear to us, he was not a non-conformist.

It will be appreciated that a certain degree of latitude is afforded anyone who attempts to abridge and modernise a classic. The book in its present form reflects credit on the producer. As far as we can judge, neither the sense nor the gist of this treasury has been materially altered.

F.M.

Letter from New Zealand

Strathmore Road,
Reporoa.

20th December, 1986

Dear Mr Macleod,

It was in the Lord's providence that I was privileged to again take one of the church deputies on the, to yourself so familiar, preaching journey to the various parts of New Zealand.

I picked Rev. Neil Ross up from the Auckland Manse on the Monday afternoon from where we travelled down to Rotorua. Mr Ross stayed in the Geyserland Hotel which, as you remember, overlooks the geysers and the boiling mudpools. On the Wednesday evening Mr Ross preached in the room we usually rent in the Y.W.C.A. On the Thursday morning we left on our way down to Palmerston North and, as you no doubt remember, by far the longest journey. We arrived there about 4 p.m. The service that evening, at 7.30 p.m., was held in the Methodist Church Hall. On arriving there at approximately 7.20 p.m., Mr Ross received a most pleasant surprise, namely, a couple who had emigrated to New Zealand many years ago from Scotland. The man was actually a year ahead of Mr Ross at school but his wife had actually started primary school on the same day as himself. We hope that the words preached and the conversation afterwards over supper, at the motel, may be blessed by the Lord who in his providence was the author of this most unusual meeting. From what I understand they had not met since they had left school and that it was the advertisement in the local paper, advertising the service, and that Rev. Neil Ross, from Ullapool, was to be the minister, caused them to come.

On the Friday we travelled down to Wellington and as usual some of the afternoon and some part of Saturday was spent in visiting some of the people of the church. Sabbath morning at 11 a.m., and in the evening at 7 p.m., Mr Ross preached in the Wellington Church. You will, no doubt, remember how the people who were selling the church hoped to

get between \$90,000 and \$120,000 for it and how in the Lord's providence we were able to buy it at the day of the auction for \$60,000. Well, we had borrowed from the other congregations a total of \$35,000 and with the \$25,000 that we had ourselves, this made up the \$60,000 required. Today, through the kind donations from the church at home and abroad, after less than two-and-a-half years we owe only \$15,000 and we have nearly \$5,000 ready to pay off again, leaving a balance owing of \$10,000. We can do nothing else but say with the psalmist of psalm 136, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever."

On the Monday morning I took Mr Ross to the airport in Wellington from where he flew back to Auckland. On the Tuesday morning he boarded his flight to Canada and so back to his loved ones and his congregation in Ullapool.

Although I have already written more than I had intended I come now to the main purpose of writing to you, namely to express my thanks and I am sure, the thanks of all the people connected with the church in the various parts of New Zealand for the deputies that have been sent out.

Whenever we think of the passing away of our dear Auckland minister, the Rev. D. M. Macleod, we can do nothing but mourn at our loss. But then when we remember the kindness of the church at home in sending out men among us to again preach Christ, and him crucified, we can rejoice and say: "The Lord of us hath mindful been, and he will bless us still."

Although several times I had intended to express our appreciation of all that the church at home has done for us, each time I had put it off. Nevertheless, we do appreciate the kindness of you and your committee and also the fact that the congregations of the ministers concerned are without their own minister for a considerable time. Our desire is that the Lord would again raise one up from the church at home, or from among ourselves, to minister in this part of the Lord's vineyard and, of course, in particular in Auckland. All we can say in this respect is, brethren, pray for us. In regard to future supply I believe I could do no better than quote Christ's words as recorded in Mat. 7: 9, "Or, what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" and then, of course, we see in Acts 16 the vision of Paul in regard to the prayer of the man of Macedonia and how they immediately endeavoured to help them. And so our prayer also is that our church at home will continue to help us and that the Lord will reward her for her kindness.

Kindest regards to you and yours, Dick Vermeulen.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 10th February at 11 a.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 10th February at 11 a.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 17th February at 6 p.m.

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

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 10th March at 2 p.m.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: R. MacKay, Harris, £100.

Home Mission Fund: R. MacKay, Harris, £50.

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., S., £50 for Blind Students' Appeal; Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel, Luton, £50.

F.P. Church Bookroom: Mr A. B. MacLean acknowledges with sincere thanks £10 for Gospel Tracts from Anon. donor.

Overseas: The Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donation:- Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, Anon., \$116.00 for Building Fund.

The Treasurers of the following congregations desire to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:-

Applecross: Anon., £2.20 for Cong. Funds; "A Friend", Kirkhill, £10, "where most needed"; Anon., £200 for repayment of Forsyth Bequest loan; "Friends of the cause", £20 for Jewish and Foreign Mission; Anon., £10 "for where most needed"; Mr & Mrs M. Finlayson, Shore Street, £5 for Sust. Fund; "A friend", Kirkhill, £10 for Sust. Fund; F. Maclean, Inverness, £20 for Congregational purposes; Anon., £50 for Applecross Sust. Fund and £50 "For fund most in need" — all per Treasurer.

Daviot: Daviot Sabbath School £20 for Foreign Mission.

Dingwall: Friend, Skye, £50 for Congr. Fund.

Fort William: Friend, Fort William, £10 for Church Floor repairs; Friend, Caol, £10 for Sust. Fund per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow: Mrs Mack. (two donations), £8; Anon., £50 both for Congr. Fund. Anon., £4; Anon., £5; A. C. £5; Anon., £7; A. MacR., £10; Matt. 6: 3 (2 donations), £20 — all for Bus Fund. Anon., £10; P. W., £5; Anon., £40 — all for Sust. Fund. Anon., £20; Anon., £20 — both for Dominions and Overseas. Anon., £20 for Organisation Fund; Anon., £20 for Home Mission; "In memory of a loving brother", £50 for T. B. S.

Inverness: Anon. (envelope in plate), £25 for Famine Relief and £25 for Help the Blind.

Oban: A. MacDougall, Blanefield, £60 (two donations); Adherent, Glasgow, £20; A Friend, Perth £150 — all for Congr. Fund and per A. McP.

Perth: Friends, Chequers, Pitlochry, £3 per Rev. D. J. McD.; Friend, Perth, £100 per A. McL.; Mrs Beaton and Mrs MacMillan, £6 per Rev. D. J. McD. — all for Perth Congregation.

Stornoway: Miss K. A. Macleod, The Cottage, Callanish, £30 for petrol for Minister's car (the £30 donation from Miss Macleod acknowledged last month was for the Sustentation Fund) per Rev. J. Macleod; Anon., £10 for Zenka Mission, Anon., £10 for Ingwenya Mission; Anon., in plate, £5 for Sust. Fund — all per Treasurer.

Strath: Envelope in plate (Nov.) £15, Sust. Fund; Mrs Nellie Mackinnon, £20 for Sust. Fund.

Ullapool: Anon., Sept. £15; Anon., Oct. £10; Anon., Nov. £10, all for Sust. Fund (Collection Plate); Friend, £10 for Sermon Tapes per Rev. N. M. Ross; Mrs Davy, Grave Road., £5 for Congr. Funds (Collection Plate); From the estate of the Late Mr J. Gunn, Ullapool, £1000 for Congr. Funds per Middleton, Ross & Arnot, Dingwall.