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An Evil Generation

Some generations are more wicked than others, for not all run to the same excess in evil. Yet how true it is that man left to himself can only go in the way of sin. Man, as fallen in Adam, has a propensity to sin. He drinks in iniquity like water and if not restrained by some inward or outward restraint will grow worse and worse. It is very clear that man of his own volition will never give up sinning. The carnal heart of man delights in what is evil and corrupt and consequently will go on in the ways of sin and death unless delivered from those ways by the mighty power of God. "The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked who can know it?" This is the testimony of God's Word and is proved day by day in the godless lives of men and women, of old and young. We read in the Word of God how God "looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." The conclusion He came to is recorded in Holy Writ: "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This is the solemn state of man as separated from God by sin, with a mind alienated from God His Maker, and a will that knows only how to do evil. There is no inclination towards good in the fallen heart of man. Before that can be a new heart must be put within him.

Not all generations are equally evil and wicked. Some generations have restraints put upon them, external restraints that keep them from much evil in which they would engage were it not for these restraints. Where the Word of God is sounding forth in the midst of a people, that Word cannot but have a restraining effect upon the people of that generation. As the Word of God, and particularly the law of God witnesses in the consciences of individuals so it puts a restraint upon them preventing them

going to the same extremes in evil to which they would otherwise go. Where there are many of the children of God in a generation, their witness has a restraining effect upon their fellow men which prevents these persons doing evil in the same way as they would do it if these godly persons were not among them. Where there are righteous laws in a generation these laws have a salutary restraining effect upon the men of that generation. It is good that it should be so, as otherwise the generation would become more and more openly wicked in their desires and practices. God also puts His restraining grace upon men so that they are not allowed to do the things they would do if that restraint was not there. How terrible a world it would be if there were no restraints upon men. How impossible a place it would be for man to live in as evil would be continually breaking out on every hand.

Yet how clear it is also that there are generations in this world that are clearly marked out for their wickedness. At such times evil reaches a great height and men are exposed to the wickedness of the wicked at such a time in no common degree. Sometimes, it is true, the wickedness of the generation has been confined to certain areas of the world, as in the time of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. God had to say of their sin that it was very grievous, and of Sodom it is recorded that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Such was the state of Sodom and Gomorrah when God in judgment poured down the vials of His wrath upon them, for we read: "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities." At other times it is the whole generation that is wicked. We have an instance of this in the old world. Of that time we read: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It was this that provoked the Most High to send a flood upon the earth to destroy man from the face of the earth, only Noah finding grace in the eyes of the Lord. What sudden and swift destruction came upon the old world, for God is not mocked but what a man sows that shall he also reap.

A further instance of part of a generation being found wicked in God's sight, is the land of Canaan before the children of Israel came to dwell in it. At an earlier period the Lord had to say to Abraham that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. But the time came when it was full — for there is a limit which the Lord sets beyond which He will not allow a people to go without bringing upon them swift destruction. Such was the state of the nations of Canaan when the Lord gave them into the hands

of the children of Israel. The evils practised by these nations had reached great depths of depravity, therefore the Lord would destroy them. They were devoted to slaughter because of their heaven-provoking sins. The children of Israel were given specific instructions: "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." Their end was that they be destroyed utterly. Such is the reward of sin in a nation or in a generation. So it was also with the children of Israel themselves when they fell into idolatry and every manner of evil and sin. They were given over in large measure to the sword of their enemies. They had to learn by bitter experience that it is an evil thing and a bitter to sin against God.

We see something of the progression in sin and iniquity that overtakes a people left on record in God's Word in the first Chapter of Romans. Here is recorded the state of the heathen nations before the gospel of God's grace reached them. It was a progression in sin and a being given over more and more to sin by the withholding of restraining grace from men. Men may provoke God to withdraw His restraints from them. So it was here. "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful . . . professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man. . . ." "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." This was not the end for we read that "they changed the truth of God unto a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. . . ." As a consequence God gave them up to vile affections. But this was not the end. We read further that "as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." How low will man sink if the Lord withdraws His restraints is evident from the description of this people who were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, etc. This is man in all the evil of his fallen nature when he is left without restraint. Surely such a people constitute an evil generation.

But we must ask ourselves how it is with our own generation. Are we any better than they? Is this present generation a God-fearing generation? Or must we say that it is in large measure a God-forsaken generation — a generation which has provoked the God of Heaven to withdraw in a great measure His restraining grace from us. The evidences are all too patent for us to see that we have forsaken God and that He has forsaken us. Our sins, as a generation, are crying out to heaven for vengeance. If God

will visit us as our sins deserve, then who will stand? What instruments of destruction there are in the hands of men, if God in His wrath will permit men to use them for the execution of His wrath! What sudden destruction would come upon this evil generation if our cup comes to be filled up — and how much it has the appearance of being steadily filled up. Also the judgments of God are already abroad in the earth in wars and pestilences and famines and in many other ways. When the Lord arises to shake the earth terribly then who shall stand? We are in the midst of an ungodly generation. The question arises as to whether we are part of that ungodly generation or whether we are of those who sigh and cry for the abominations that are done in the land. What need there is to plead with Habakkuk in this ungodly generation when he said: "O Lord, I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

Sermon

by Rev. J. A. Macdonald, Fort William

"And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me." Psalm 50: 15.

It is when the Holy Spirit convinces us that God is, that we begin earnestly to approach a throne of grace for mercy. Here, in this verse it is as if God were saying to us, "Come either day or night unto Me, remembering that there are no consulting hours with Me, as the only Physician that can heal your soul and beautify it for eternity." David knew that when he said:

"When I to thee upon my bed
remember with delight,
And when on thee I meditate
in watches of the night." Psalm 63: 6.

Many of God's people often found the bed a good place for meditation. However, what is behind it all is the Lord Jesus Christ's delight in the salvation of poor sinners.

Asaph knew how foolish, and futile it was to call upon saints or angels in Heaven, because they could not adequately supply any of his needs.

The foolish virgins learned this upon discovering themselves to be graceless. We hear their desperate cry to the wise virgins, who in the mercy of God were enabled to seek the Lord while He was to be found. "And the foolish virgins said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." Matt. 25: 8. May the Lord in His infinite compassion deliver any of us from such a fearful experience at the end of our sojourn here. Ah, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Many are so blinded by the adversary of their souls that they pray even to the virgin Mary, who has no more authority or power in Heaven than any of the other saints, which were redeemed by the alone Saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are four points which stand out in this verse:

1. God's delight in the salvation of poor sinners. He says, "Call upon me. . . ." David was relating his own personal experience in Psalm 34, when he said, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." It is both sweet and refreshing to read in God's word how Jacob, with a deep sense of his own need, wrestled with the Lord until break of day. When the Lord said to him, "Let me go, for the day breaketh," he replied, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." This boldness was precious in the sight of God as was the strength of his faith.

In another Psalm David was purposing to call perpetually upon God to the end of his sojourn here:

"I, while I live, will call on him,
who bow'd to me his ear." Psalm 116: 2.

Be wise, dear friends for eternity, and purpose likewise, and it shall be well with you when the heavens are no more. All we can do as we approach the gates of death is what blessed Stephen did, that is, to call upon God; "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Acts 7: 59. This our blessed Redeemer did too at Calvary, when He was crucified for the sake of His people: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit,' and having said thus He gave up the ghost." The Father took perfect care of Him, so that not a bone of Him was ever broken; whereas we read in God's Word regarding the two malefactors how their bones were broken by the soldiers. "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs." This a proof of His surpassing love.

2. The Time specified — “In the day of trouble” Days of trouble proved for many to be like those of the sons of Ephraim who went back in the day of battle. Ps. 78: 9. It was really then that their courage, strength, and faithfulness was so necessary if the adversary was to be defeated Yet their strength failed then. David found sorrows, tribulations and strife to be spiritually most beneficial. Ps. 119: 71. It is often an indication of God’s love to be under His chastening hand. “Those whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” Heb. 12: 6. Sweet indeed are the words which the sisters of Lazarus said to Jesus regarding their brother in the time of their distress: “Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick.” Satan assails us with many temptations when we are sick, or in any trouble. Therefore let us protect ourselves, as it were, with this sure shield, “He whom thou lovest is sick.” John 11: 3.

As in the days of old, too, the Lord uses troubles to purge His church of wicked men and hypocrites. The apostle Paul on the other hand, had many days of affliction and trouble in the providence of God. The one particularly before our mind is, when he had the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. I heard the Rev. D. N. MacLeod, Ullapool, speak of the time when the Apostle Paul’s request in prayer was refused three times, and when a gracious promise was afforded him: “My grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness” 2nd Cor. 12: 9. Mr MacLeod said: “I can as it were hear Paul acquiescing thus in the will of God: ‘Well, if I can serve Thee better with a thorn in my flesh, leave the thorn there. Thy will be done’.” As a church, many a day of trouble and anxiety we have had, while defending the Truth of God and Reformation principles, those doctrines and practices which the Declaratory Act in the Free Church Assembly of 1893 so terribly violated. Notwithstanding, when the testing times were ended, our church, as always, came forth as gold; as was blessed Job’s experience when he said: “When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” As it is written: “It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” Jer. 30: 7.

“A day of trouble.” This the poor woman of Nain experienced as men carried what was mortal of her one and only son to his grave. In the providence of God, Jesus was passing that way and took notice of her tears. Then He drew near to them and touched the bier, and to their great joy, He said, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” I think I can hear her say, as you say yourself so often, when God manifests His loving kindness, and tender mercies to you:

“Whom have I in the heavens high
but thee, O Lord, alone?
And in the earth whom I desire
besides thee there is none.” Ps. 73: 25.

Observe, also, the blessed experience of the Apostles in times of trouble and of severe persecution to the extent of imprisonment. Obviously the tender eye of Jehovah was focussed upon them; because in the case of Peter and the other apostles on His command, “the Angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth.” Acts 5: 19.

On the day of judgment when all must appear before the great white throne, God will address His church, after her coming through great tribulations, saying: “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.” Notice also Mary Magdalene’s great day of trouble when she found the Saviour’s tomb empty. There she wept bitterly with a sore lamentation until the Saviour manifested himself to her, saying: “Woman why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?” To the angels she had said: “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” John, 20: 13, 15.

3. The Gracious Promise — “I will deliver thee.” God’s promises never fail, as Paul reminds the Church: “Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it.” God often rebukes the storms. We need supernatural care and guidance, because our adversaries are many. As Jesus reminded Simon Peter, “Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.” But blessed be the Lord, He as our good Shepherd never lost one of His flock. Further, Paul’s unique experience in the sea of Adria one night shows this also. “And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship;” and so it was, for we read: “And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.” Acts 27: 44.

In the Red Sea deliverance, almighty power and omnipotence are obvious here; when Pharaoh sought the complete destruction of the people of God. As he breathed out severe threatenings against them: “I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil.” Exod. 15: 9. Soon, however, we hear Moses on the authority of God, commanding the Israelites to “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” They soon witnessed this, and also the destruction of Pharaoh and his host.

The final deliverance of the people of God comes on the resurrection morning and is clearly and fully brought before us in the Word of God. To the wicked who trampled upon the blood of the covenant it shall be

said: "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Whereas, it will be said to the righteous: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, . . . enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Matt. 25: 21.

4. The confidence God had in them — ". . . And thou shalt glorify me." This is truly the sincere wish of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have a true sense of how God delivered them, "from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay." I trust you can say with the confidence of the blind man: "One thing I know that whereas I was blind, now I see." O, may God endue your soul with the God-honouring confidence of the sweet Psalmist of Israel:

"All that fear God, come, hear, I'll tell
what he did for my soul." Ps. 66, 16.

Mark well how the Church in the Song of Solomon, glorified Him when she proclaimed: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." The Apostle Paul endured much more than any of the children of men of whom we read in God's Word, and notwithstanding it all, listen to how he extolled God's name: "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." 2 Tim. 1: 12.

The Holy Spirit did in the past and continues to do so still — to take of the things that are Christ's and reveal them to the poor and needy. This, together with the words which proceeded from the Redeemer's lips, show how we should seek to extol the Lord Jesus Christ continually. He could say to the Father: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou givest me to do." The prophet Isaiah said of Him to all people by way of extolling His blessed name: "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath done excellent things, this is known in all the earth." God shall be eternally extolled in giving the Atheist, the Agnostic and the infidels and all the Lord's adversaries their portion, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

As a Minister of the Gospel in his declining years, I am much concerned for the salvation of your immortal soul, and I would pray and plead with you thus: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Remember, dear friends, what Christ said to every individual: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Ah, be you like godly Ruth, when she lovingly addressing Naomi, saying: "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee." Ruth 1: 16.

"He Lingered" (Gen. 19: 16)

by J. C. Ryle

(Continued from Page 324)

IV. Let us enquire now *what kind of fruit Lot's lingering spirit bore at last.*

I would not pass over this point for many reasons, and especially in the present day.

There are not a few who will feel disposed to say, "After all Lot was saved, — he was justified, — he got to heaven. I want no more. If I do but get to heaven, I shall be content."

Reader, if this be the thought of your heart, just stay a moment, and listen to me a little longer. I will show you one or two things in Lot's history which deserve attention, and may perhaps induce you to alter your mind.

I think it of first importance to dwell upon this subject. I always will contend that eminent holiness, and eminent usefulness, are most closely connected, — that happiness and following the Lord fully go side by side, — and that if believers will linger, they must not expect to be useful in their day and generation, or to enjoy great comfort and peace in believing.

Mark then, for one thing, *Lot did no good among the inhabitants of Sodom.*

Lot lived in Sodom many years. No doubt he had many precious opportunities for speaking of the things of God, and trying to turn away souls from sin. But Lot seems to have effected just nothing at all. He appears to have had no weight or influence with the people who lived around him. He possessed none of that respect and reverence which even the men of the world will frequently concede to a bright servant of God.

Not one righteous person could be found in all Sodom, outside the walls of Lot's home. Not one of his neighbours believed his testimony. Not one of his acquaintances honoured the Lord when he worshipped. Not one of his servants served his master's God. Not one of "all the people from every quarter" cared a jot for his opinion when he tried to restrain their wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn," said they, "and he will needs be a judge." (Gen. xix 9.) His life carried no weight. His words were not listened to. His religion drew none.

And truly I do not wonder. As a general rule, lingering souls do no good to the world, and bring no credit to God's cause. Their salt has too

little savour to season the corruption around them. They are not epistles of Christ who can be known and read of all. (2 Cor. iii 2.) There is nothing magnetic, and attractive, and Christ-reflecting about their ways. Remember this.

Mark another thing. *Lot helped no relation towards heaven.*

We are not told how large his family was. But this we know, — he had a wife and two daughters at least, in the day he was called out of Sodom, if he had not more children besides.

But whether Lot's family was large or small, one thing, I think, is perfectly clear, — there was not one among them all that feared God.

When he "went out and spake to his sons-in-law, which married his daughters," and warned them to flee from the coming judgments, we are told, "he seemed to them as one that mocked". (Gen. xix. 14) What fearful words those are! It was as good as saying, "Who cares for anything *you* say?" So long as the world stands, those words will be a painful proof of the contempt with which a lingerer in religion is regarded.

And what was Lot's wife? She left the city in his company, but she did not go far. She had not faith to see the need of such a speedy flight. She left her heart in Sodom when she began to flee. She looked back from behind her husband, in spite of the plainest command not to do so (Gen. xix 17), and was at once turned into a pillar of salt.

And what were Lot's two daughters? They escaped indeed, — but only to do the devil's work. They became their father's tempters to wickedness, and led him to commit the foulest of sins.

In short, Lot stood alone in his family. He was not made the means of keeping one soul back from the gates of hell.

And I do not wonder. Lingerer souls are seen through by their own families, and, when seen through, despised. Their nearest relations understand inconsistency, if they understand nothing else in religion. They draw the sad, but not unnatural conclusion, "Surely if he believed all he professes to believe, he would not go on as he does." Lingerer parents seldom have godly children. The eye of the child drinks in far more than the ear. A child will always observe what you do much more than what you say. Remember this.

Mark a third thing. *Lot left no evidences behind him when he died.*

We know but little about Lot after his flight from Sodom, and all that we do know is unsatisfactory. His pleading for Zoar, because it was "a little one", — his departure from Zoar afterwards, — and his conduct in the cave, — all, all tell the same story. All show the weakness of the grace

that was in him, and the low state of soul into which he had fallen.

We know not how long he lived after his escape. We know not where he died, or when he died, — whether he saw Abraham again, — what was the manner of his death, — what he said, or what he thought. All these are hidden things. We are told of the last days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, — but not one word about Lot. Oh, what a gloomy death-bed the death-bed of Lot must have been!

The Scripture appears to draw a veil around him on purpose. There is a painful silence about his latter end. He seems to go out like an expiring lamp, and leave an ill savour behind him. And had we not been specially told in the New Testament that Lot was "just" and "righteous", I verily believe we should have doubted whether Lot was a saved soul at all.

But I do not wonder at his sad end. Linging believers will generally reap according as they have sown. Their lingering often meets them when their spirit is in departing. They have little peace at the last. They reach heaven, to be sure, but they reach it in darkness and storm. They are saved, but "saved so as by fire." (1 Cor. iii 15.)

Reader, consider these three things I have just mentioned. Do not misunderstand my meaning. It is amazing to observe how readily people catch at the least excuse for misunderstanding the things that concern their souls!

I do not tell you that believers who do not "linger" will, as a matter of course, be great instruments of usefulness to the world. Noah preached one hundred and twenty years, and none believed him. The Lord Jesus was not esteemed by His own people, the Jews.

Nor yet do I tell you that believers who do not linger, will, as a matter of course, be the means of converting their families and relations. David's children were, many of them, ungodly. The Lord Jesus was not believed on even by his own brethren.

But I do say it is almost impossible not to see a connection between Lot's evil choice and Lot's lingering; — and between Lot's lingering and his unprofitableness to his family and the world. I believe the Spirit meant us to see it. I believe the spirit meant to make it a beacon to all professing Christians. And I am sure the lessons I have tried to draw from the whole history, deserve serious reflection.

Let me speak a few parting words to all who read this paper, and especially to all who call themselves believers in Christ.

I have no wish to make your hearts sad. I do not want to give you a gloomy view of the Christian course. My only object is to give you friendly warnings. I desire your peace and comfort. I would fain see you

happy, as well as safe, — and joyful, as well justified. I speak as I have done for your good.

You live in days when a lingering, Lot-like religion abounds. The stream of profession is far broader than it once was, but far less deep in many places. A certain kind of Christianity is almost fashionable now. To belong to some party in the Church of England, and show a zeal for its interests, — to talk about the leading controversies of the day, — to buy popular religious books as fast as they come out, and lay them on your table, — to attend meetings, — subscribe to societies, — and discuss the merits of preachers, — all these are now comparatively easy and common attainments. They no longer make a person singular. They require little or no sacrifice. They entail no cross.

But to walk closely with God, to be really spiritually-minded, — to behave like strangers and pilgrims, — to be distinct from the world in employment of time, in conversation, in amusements, in dress, — to bear a faithful witness for Christ in all places, — to leave a savour of our Master in every society, to be prayerful, humble, unselfish, meek, — to be jealously afraid of sin, and trembling alive to our danger from the world, — these, these are still rare things. They are not common among those who are called true Christians, and, worst of all, the absence of them is not felt and bewailed as it should be.

Reader, I give you good counsel this day. Do not turn from it. Do not be angry with me for plain speaking. I bid you give diligence to make your calling and election sure. I bid you not to be slothful, — not to be careless, not to be content with a small measure of grace, — not to be satisfied with being a little better than the world. I solemnly warn you not to attempt doing what never can be done, — I mean, to serve Christ, and yet keep in with the world. I call upon you, and beseech you, I charge you, and exhort you, — by all your hopes of heaven, and desires of glory, — *do not be a lingering soul.*

Would you know what the times demand? — the shaking of nations, — the uprooting of ancient things, — the overturning of kingdoms, — the stir and restlessness of men's minds? — They all say, — *Christian! do not linger!*

Would you be found ready for Christ at His second appearing, — your loins girded, — your lamp burning, yourself bold, and prepared to meet Him? *Then do not linger!*

Would you enjoy much sensible comfort in your religion, — feel the witness of the Spirit within you, — know whom you have believed, — and not be a gloomy and melancholy Christian? *Then do not linger!*

Would you enjoy strong assurance of your own salvation, in the day of sickness, and on the bed of death? — Would you see with the eye of faith heaven opening, and Jesus rising to receive you? *Then do not linger!*

Would you leave great broad evidences behind you when you are gone? — Would you like us to lay you in the grave with comfortable hope, and talk of your state after death without a doubt? *Then do not linger!*

Would you be useful to the world in your day and generation? — Would you draw men from sin to Christ, and make your Master's cause beautiful in their eyes? *Then do not linger!*

Would you help your children and relatives towards heaven, and make them say, "We will go with you"? — and not make them infidels and despisers of all religion? *Then do not linger!*

Would you have a great crown in the day of Christ's appearing, and not be the least and smallest star in glory, and not find yourself the last and lowest in the kingdom of God? *Then do not linger!*

Oh, let not one of us linger! Time does not, — death does not, — judgment does not, — the devil does not, — the world does not. Neither let the children of God linger.

Reader, are you a lingerer? Has your heart felt heavy, and your conscience sore, while you have been reading these pages? Does something within you whisper, "I am the man"? Reader, listen to what I am saying, — How is it with your soul?

If you are a lingerer, you must just go to Christ at once and be cured, — you must use the old remedy. You must bathe in the old fountain. You must turn again to Christ and be healed. The way to do a thing is to do it. Do this at once.

Think not for a moment your case is past recovery. Think not because you have been long living in a dry and heavy state of soul, that there is no hope of revival. Is not the Lord Jesus Christ an appointed Physician for the soul? Did He not cure every form of disease? Did not He cast out every kind of devil? Did He not raise poor back-sliding Peter, and put a new song in his mouth? Oh, doubt not, but earnestly believe that He will yet revive His work within you! Only turn from lingering, and confess your folly, and come, — come at once to Christ. Blessed are the words of the prophet: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity." — "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding." (Jerem. iii. 13, 22.)

Reader, remember the souls of others, as well as your own. If at any time you see any brother or sister lingering, try to awaken them, — try to

arouse them, — try to stir them up. Let us all exhort one another as we have opportunity. Let us provoke unto love and good works. Let us not be afraid to say to each other, "Brother, or sister, have you forgotten Lot? Awake! and remember Lot; — Awake, and linger no more."

"Brethren, pray for us"

As ministers of the gospel we need the prayers of God's children. The great apostle Paul felt his need of being prayed for, and he had the humility to acknowledge that need, and to ask the brethren to pray for him.

Brethren, we most sincerely thank you for how much you have prayed for us, and we certainly believe that we have been greatly helped by your prayers. We have felt at times of more evident blessing, that your prayers, rather than ours, were the more effectual. However, like every good work, we must not "weary in well doing," but rather abound in it more and more. It is then, not in the spirit of chiding you, but in the spirit of encouraging you, that we echo these words, "Brethren, pray for us."

There are many things that you can thank our gracious God for, as you pray for us — that He is still calling men to preach the gospel, and that strength, wisdom, and grace are given in measure to His servants. So, too, that He does sovereignly convince and convert, that He builds up his people, that He does convert the most unlikely persons, that He speaks in a personal way to saints and sinners through the preached word. Also that His goodness to us is far beyond what we deserve, His providence is timely and so abundant, that He does give us wonderful tokens for good, in providence and in grace. Again, that our greatest joy has been in His service endeavouring to do His work. Also, that we have in you, and in other believers, those who are fellow workers so that we are not left all alone. Also that He is patient towards us who are preachers of the gospel. Besides these, there are many more blessings you can thank our most gracious God for, on our account.

Our calling to preach, is a high and holy calling, daily we feel our inadequacy, so pray that our sufficiency would be of the Lord. We face many disappointments, in ourselves, in our congregations and in the world in general. In our congregations, some of the ones who appeared so promising, have as yet, never gone on to know the Lord, but have rather gone back. Some we have preached to many, many times, and if

anything, they are harder than ever, this breaks our heart and is a deep source of discouragement. Some show so little sign of growing as christians, although we have prayed so often for them, preached to them, and tried to set them a good example. We feel like the farmer toiling endlessly but in some corners only the minimum crop ever appears. "Brethren, do pray for us."

We, as ministers, are a mystery to ourselves, in that we are so much in God's word and yet so little of it in us, such deadness although handling the word of life, weary at times in what must be by any standard the most interesting, rewarding and worthwhile work in the world. At times totally bereft of anything to say although we have the greatest source book ever — the Bible. The proud sinful flesh we find coming in, although of all men we should be most humble and holy. Brethren, your sympathy compels you to pray for us.

We long to be used more to God's glory, to be more prayerful, more conformed to the image of Christ, more loving, more joyful, more zealous, more spiritual. Brethren can you possibly not pray for us? We come to serve you, you are dearer to us than ever, our lives are bound up with yours, you are our "joy and crown." We need your prayers, we prize your prayers. Brethren, please do pray for us.

As enabled, we rise early and stay up late in order to be useful to you. We carry you on our hearts in the pulpit and out of it, when we go to the study, when we relax, when we lie down to rest, when we awake. Brethren, in fairness pray for us.

Pray that we would do our work cheerfully as we have vowed to do. Pray that we would do it tactfully, — we are meant to be "fishers of men." Pray that we would do it faithfully, lest we be carried away by the dreaded flood of unfaithfulness which has since the fall constantly threatened true preachers. Pray that we would be full and running over with love, for we are nothing without love. Pray that we would be patient, because we have a never ending need of patience. Pray that we would be as "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Pray that we would be peacemakers, for some are bent on making trouble. Pray that we would turn the other cheek and learn of Christ who was meek and lowly, that we would be deeply humble. Pray that we would, "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Pray that we would preach powerfully, clearly, scripturally, interestingly, winsomely — from the heart and to the heart. Pray, "that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, . . . that we would make it manifest as we ought to", Col. 4: 3, 4, and, "that utterance may be given

unto us, that we may open our mouths boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which we are ambassadors . . . that therein we may speak boldly as we ought to speak." Eph. 6: 19, 20.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will bless our efforts, will use us in spite of our obvious blemishes and frailty. Brethren, we believe that by the grace of God you will continue to pray for us, and that your desire is to pray more and more for us, and we do sincerely and humbly thank you for it. You have a foremost place in our prayers, we trust we will have a foremost place in your prayers.

J. R.

A Letter to Lady Earlstoun

by Samuel Rutherford

Mistress — Grace, mercy and peace be to you. I long to hear how your soul prospereth. I exhort you to go on in your journey. Your day is short, and your afternoon's sun will soon go down; make an end of your accounts with your Lord; for death and judgment and tides that bide no man. Salvation is supposed to be at the door, and Christianity is thought an easy task, but I find it hard, and the way strait and narrow were it not but my guide is content to wait on me, and to care for a tired traveller. Hurt not your conscience with any known sin; let your children be as so many flowers, borrowed from God; if the flowers die or wither, thank God for a summer's loan of them, and keep good neighbourhood to borrow and lend with Him. Set your heart upon heaven, and trouble not your spirit with this clay-idol of the world, which is but vanity, and hath but the lustre of the rainbow in the air, which cometh and goeth with a flying March shower; clay is the idol of bastards, not the inheritance of the children. My Lord hath been pleased to make many unknown faces laugh upon me, and hath made me well content of a borrowed fireside, and a borrowed bed. I am feasted with the joys of the Holy Ghost, and my royal King beareth my charges honourably. I love the smell of Christ's sweet breath better than the world's gold. I would I had help to praise Him. The great messenger of the covenant, the Son of God establish you on your rock, and keep you to the days of His coming — Yours, in his sweet Lord Jesus, Samuel Rutherford.

Remembering all the Way

Deut. 8: 2

'Tis good to remember the way He hath led us,
To view, once again, both the track and the road;
To rest on the fact that, unfailing, He fed us,
A faithful, and loving, compassionate God.

'Tis good to review how He surely was leading,
Though we saw Him not nor knew all He had planned;
'Tis good to recall that whate'er we were needing
Was wonderfully met by His bountiful hand.

'Tis good to remember that He, Himself, brought us
Through all of life's journey, right unto this day;
Forgave all our sins, — and our blunders, — and taught us
To cleave unto Him, — and to make Him our stay.

'Tis good to remember! to pause! and to ponder!
It stirs us to wonder, and stirs us to praise:
Such retrospect helps us of Him to grow fonder,
Whose goodness and mercy have followed our days.

“All This For Me!”

A gentleman, a merchant of large fortune, had built for himself a beautiful and costly residence. The grounds were extensive and tastefully laid out, and adorned with arbours and statuary. The building was furnished throughout in a style corresponding with its own elegance, and the fortunate proprietor was duly settled in it with his happy and much envied family.

It was not long before he was visited by an old friend, recently from California, who had there acquired great wealth, and had returned to the more eastern states to enjoy it. He was shown through the elegant establishment and beautiful grounds, and was so much pleased with the whole, that he immediately proposed to purchase the entire property, offering a liberal price for it.

“No,” said the merchant, “nothing would induce me to sell it. I have

expended upon its plan much thought, and given to its execution much careful attention, in order to adapt it, as far as possible to the convenience and comfort of my family; and here I expect to spend with them the remainder of my days." His friend retired, convinced that it was useless to urge the matter.

That evening as the merchant, surrounded by his family, sat in his sumptuous apartment, engaged in family worship, he read the chapter containing that touching declaration of our dear Redeemer respecting His own extreme poverty: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

As he read, his attention was arrested as never before by the latter clause, "the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He paused, and gazed around on the splendid walls and furniture, and his heart smote him. "All this *for me*", he said to himself, "and yet the Son of Man had not where to lay His head." He was greatly troubled. He felt sorely rebuked by his own selfish prodigality. He saw, as never before, that in his case the servant was indeed not as the Master; that he had utterly failed to imitate his blessed Lord in the denial of self, but on the contrary in all his expenditures was chiefly intent upon his own selfish gratification. As well as his state of mind would permit, he closed the evening service, and retired to his private apartment.

Here again, as he looked around upon the luxurious couches and various arrangements for comfort, the thought occurred to him, "All this *for me*, and yet the Son of man had not where to lay His head." He passed a sleepless night, this one idea constantly revolving in his mind, and rose feverish and unrefreshed.

Descending to his dining-room, as he surveyed the elaborate table furniture and expensive food, his heart again smote him, and he mentally exclaimed, "All this *for me*, and yet the Son of man had not where to lay His head."

He walked forth into his garden. There the rare exotics, the beautiful statuary, the arboured walks rebuked him as he thought, "All this *for me*, and yet my divine Lord and Redeemer had not where to lay his head." He went to his office, but found himself incapable of attending to business, this one thought being ever present in his mind, "The Son of man had not where to lay His head."

As the day wore on he became more vividly impressed with the thought of his own unfaithfulness as a steward of God, and his extreme selfishness in expending *so much for himself* and comparatively *so little* for that dear Saviour who had sacrificed so much for him. He saw that

the same selfish and extravagant expenditure must prove a snare to his soul, estranging him still more from Christ, and greatly increasing that love of the world which already had much too strong a hold upon him.

Towards the close of day he sent for his friend of the previous evening, and said to him, "Sir, were you in earnest in offering me the sum you did for my residence?" "Yes," said his friend, "I should but be too happy to purchase it." "Then", said the merchant, "the place is yours. I dare not keep it, for the Son of man had not where to lay his head."

The property was soon transferred, and a comfortable but more humble residence was secured into which the merchant and his family cheerfully removed.

The large sum received for the splendid mansion was as cheerfully given to that Redeemer, "who had not where to lay His head," now ten thousand times more precious from a new and wonderful manifestation of His love, filling his soul with a peace and joy before unknown.

— From the *Christian Treasury*.

Some of Luther's Thoughts

Unknown, hidden sins are the most dangerous. Therefore, the prophet says, "Cleanse me from my secret faults".

Sin is essentially a departure from God.

The first freedom is freedom from sin.

My God, I thank Thee that Thou hast given Thy good angels, and hast set a guard of Thy heavenly princes round about us.

If we could find a man who had a heart sweet all through, and a gentle will; without subtlety, yet of sound reason; at once wise and simple. He who has seen such a heart, has colours where he may picture to himself what an angel is.

The saints are but as dew-drops on the locks of the bridegroom.

It would not be fit that we should know how earnestly the dear, holy angels contend for us with the devil; what a hard and severe strife and warfare it is. For if we saw it, we should be dismayed.

I choose to have my recompense from God, the just judge in heaven.

I will not be crowned on earth by men.

For we do not belong to this life, but are called to another, and a far better.

St. Jerome has written about the book of Job; but he wrote only thoughts, for he had not experienced the deepest temptations (*i.e.* spiritual, not fleshly). If I could have preached in my sickness, I could have made many a beautiful sermon on temptation; for then I learned to understand the psalter and its consolations a little.

I have now survived three pestilences; and have been with many who have suffered; but, thank God, I took no harm. I came home and stroked my little Margarethe on the cheek without washing my hands. But I had forgotten, or I would not have been tempting God.

We must look at what the world rewards and esteems; we must consider what God esteems and will honour in that day.

Therefore it was that Christ said to Peter, "Peter, lovest thou Me?" and repeats it three times, and then says, "Feed My sheep". It is as if he said: "If thou wilt be a true shepherd and friend of souls, thou must be so from love to Me." Otherwise it is impossible. For who will and can suffer ingratitude, spend his health and substance in study, and, for a remark, stand in the greatest peril? Therefore he says: "It is necessity that thou shouldst love Me."

Visit to the Eastern Bloc

It has been the mind of the Free Presbyterian Church for some time to endeavour to help Christians in communist countries. This has been done on a regular basis by supporting organisations which had direct contact with Christians in these closed societies. However, we felt it more appropriate to seek *personal* contact with persecuted believers in their difficult circumstances.

An opportunity came to do this when a vehicle donated to Franco Maggiotto in Italy was to be driven by Rev. J. W. Ross to Italy via the Eastern European countries. Thus while Mr Ross was making contact with believers in these parts, the opportunity of my doing likewise was presented. I believe that this has not been without some success. It is hoped that the contacts made on this trip will develop and that appropriate help will be given directly by our church to as many of the Lord's persecuted people as He will graciously direct us to.

I will relate just a few examples of the difficulties which believers are under in these parts. While in some communist countries there is more freedom to worship God than in others, one of the great crimes in the eyes of communist regimes is the *propagating* of religion. One cannot go into the street and distribute Christian literature for example. Each country has its laws to regulate how the people should worship, and while the people can come and worship in church buildings, any religious activity outside that is suspect, and is often viewed by the authorities as a political crime against the state.

In one particular country a group of Christian people which we were among met covertly in a house to have the Word of God expounded by a pastor. While going to and from this meeting place it was rather nerve-racking when our guide would occasionally look over his shoulder to check that nobody was following, and when someone had to go ahead to see if anyone appeared to be spying on us as we proceeded along the way to and from the place of worship.

Another person whom we met, who was trained to be a pastor but was not granted license to preach because he was active in propagating the Word of God, took us to a run down area where he does some mission work. Here he has been harassed by the police, who demand explanations about his visits to this place. Our visit to this place had to be quick for fear of being reported to the police for loitering.

At one point our friend wished to give his greetings to a household in the area. He had to park his car in a hidden place, leave us in it, and walk

by foot for fear of being seen with visitors outside this home. Visitors in some parts are allowed to lodge in the home of friends provided their presence is reported to the police. However in other places no visitors are allowed to stay in a private house but must stay in hotels. These are but a few of the many points which could be mentioned to indicate the pressures believers are under in these closed societies. So much for communism and its claims to cure the ills of society. There is such a thing of course as being cured to death!

We have much cause for thankfulness to the Lord for graciously giving freedom of worship in our own nation. We ought to pray for the continuance of that favour, and on the other hand, pray for them who do not have that freedom, that they may yet be rid of persecution and be able to worship God freely; and that despite many restrictions in these countries God would cause His Word to have "free course and be glorified". Pray too that this first venture of our church into these parts may prosper. There are many religious groups active in spreading religious literature in closed societies, but that does not relieve us of the duty of spreading the Word of God. The task is all the more urgent when much of the religious literature sent abroad is downright erroneous or suspect in one way or other, as also when versions of the Bible not faithful to the original are distributed. Ought we not to be doing what we can in those parts to spread sound versions of the Word of God and to disseminate literature which faithfully transmits the Reformed Faith?

D. A. R.

Book Reviews

The New Birth by Stephen Charnock. Banner of Truth Trust. Price £9.95.

This volume is a reprint of the fourth volume of Charnock's original works. It is an able treatise on the New Birth as one would expect from the Puritans who were sound and masterly on all the fundamental doctrines of the Truth. They were undoubtedly "able ministers of the New Testament", "workmen who needed not to be ashamed rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

The volume extends to well over 500 pages. In the course of the first 300 pages he sets forth in three or four sermons the necessity, nature, Author and instrument of the New Birth or regeneration.

In the first sermon which is on the well known passage: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" in the third chapter of John, the Puritan gives an unmistakeable and precise description of man in a state of nature and shows clearly his need not only of the coming of Christ but also of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil and to make an end of sin but there is also the necessity of the coming of the Spirit because the sinner is dead, polluted, naked and helpless, hence the need of the Spirit to effect in the sinner this change from death to life.

Secondly Charnock expounds the nature of the New Birth from the words: "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." It is not the giving of new faculties or an addition of nature. It is not a piece of cloth sewed on an old garment but "putting off the old man and putting on the new man."

In the third section we have a discourse on the Author of regeneration or as Charnock calls it "the efficient of regeneration" from the words: "Which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God." He goes on to say: "Of his own will begat He us exclusive of all the other wills mentioned before. It is the sole efficiency of God, He hath the sole hand in it therefore we are said to be both begotten and born of God."

In the last sermon on the New Birth Charnock has much to say on the instrument of regeneration which is the Word of God. "Sin entered into the heart of Eve by the word of the Devil but grace enters into the heart by the word of God; that entered by a word of error, this by a word of truth."

We agree with the publishers when they say: "being born again has come to mean many different things, from an incommunicable, mystical experience to a formal membership in a church body." And we would add that even some religious people speak of "offending homosexual Christians," which shows that the concept of many with regard to true godliness and the New Birth is erroneous and wide of the mark, therefore there is all the more need for the doctrines contained in the writings of the Puritans.

The remaining part of the volume consists of two sermons. The first on God as the Author of reconciliation and the last on the cleansing virtue of the "blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sins." The doctrines contained in these last two discourses are handled with the same skill, ability and faithfulness which characterises the first part of the volume.

The Banner of Truth are doing good services to the Cause of Truth in continuing to publish and reprint the writings of the Puritans.

D. N.

JONATHAN EDWARDS. A New Biography, by Iain H. Murray. Hardback. 503pp. £9.95. Banner of Truth Trust.

This comprehensive, penetrating biography of one who was once described as "the greatest, wisest, humblest and holiest of uninspired men" cannot be too highly commended. Painstaking research and fidelity of treatment are laced with a warm, sympathetic understanding of the subject. Edwards' sanctified mental endowments, his personal piety, his devotion as a pastor, combined with his qualities as a loving husband and father, are all faithfully presented in their various facets. His frailties, of which he himself was so deeply conscious, are treated honestly, but with rare tenderness.

Iain Murray's conviction that there can be no real understanding of Edwards or of his writings without a clear appreciation of "what was at the front of Edwards' own thinking" is a guiding principle in this biography and gives it an authenticity absent in the works of many writers on Edwards.

Having placed Edwards in his New England context, Iain Murray guides the reader through his conversion, his preaching ministry in New York, his pastorate in Northampton which was to end with his being dismissed most cruelly after 23 years, his removal to Stockbridge, his trials and tribulations (spiritual and temporal) in connection with these events, his work among the Indians, and his brief tenure of office at Princeton as President of the College until he was called home on 22nd March, 1758.

Of particular interest is the analytical account given of the "Great Awakening." Here the biographer, drawing on Edwards and others, gives a clear exposition of the kind of preachers and preaching blessed by the Lord in the conversion of sinners. Three short quotations will suffice to exemplify Iain Murray's treatment of this topic, so relevant to our contemporary religious scene, where, frequently the superficial passes for the profound and the spurious for the genuine:

1. "... true heart-searching, humbling and convicting preaching requires an experimental acquaintance with the Spirit of God on the part of the preacher."
2. "A band of men was being raised up for whom the gravity of sin, the

possibility of an unsound progression of Christ, and the carelessness of a lost world were pressing burdens. Behind their public utterances was their vision of God and of eternity."

3. "Possibly the greatest practical lesson from the 1735 revival for the pulpit of our day is that when ministers have to deal with indifference and unconcern they will simply beat the air unless they begin where the Holy Spirit begins, 'And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment' (John 16: 8)."

Although the biography is intrinsically, absorbing and edifying, the biographer has set his sights far beyond the confines of this work: "Our chief purpose in writing this biography has been to further encourage the reading of Edwards himself." With this in view the author provides an invaluable aid in an appendix which, not only lists Edwards' published writings in chronological sequence, but also gives guidance to initiates.

The high standards set in Banner of Truth publications are more than maintained in this tastefully produced volume, which is liberally illustrated and meticulously indexed.

A. G.

Expository Thoughts on John Vols. I - III by J. C. Ryle, Banner of Truth Trust, Vols. I and II £2.95 each and Vol. III £3.50.

These paperback volumes of Ryle's Commentary on the Gospel of John are similar to Ryle's volumes on Matthew, Mark and Luke already favourably reviewed in the Magazine. The volumes on John, however, contain in addition extensive notes on each portion dealt with by the writer, hence the necessity for three volumes. The commentary, as with the other volumes, is warmly evangelical in tone and very edifying in content. In the Notes Ryle gives the views of different commentators and then indicates his own preference respecting different interpretations of passages. He does so in a reasoned and judicious way. In places the notes are very detailed, e.g. the meaning of "thus" in the sentence "sat thus on the well" takes up almost a whole page and the question of the sixth hour of the day and the mode of reckoning time occupies more than two pages. Ryle had great ability in grasping the main thrust of the different passages and in drawing out the lessons to be learned from them and this is seen throughout these volumes. Also he faces up to difficult passages and endeavours to establish their true meaning. In dealing with some of the universal texts we cannot agree with all the statements made as e.g. when he says of the Saviour that "He did not suffer for a few persons on-

ly, but for all mankind'', though almost immediately he seems to correct the wrong impression that might be given by the above statement by saying that "His atonement on the Cross was sufficient for all mankind, though efficient only to them that believe." But then he says, "the sin that He took up and bore on the cross was the sin of the whole world."

Apart from this and occasional references to "Sunday" and also to religious festivals, etc, we are glad to commend these volumes on the Gospel of John.

D. B. M.

Notes and Comments

Need for Moral Revival

The Home Secretary has appealed for a revival of moral standards at home, in the classroom and on television in order to prevent the rise in crime. He claimed that crime rates had stopped rising in some of the worst urban areas. Mrs Thatcher also met the heads of television companies to impress upon them her concern about television sex and violence. While the Hungerford massacre put a temporary curb on the most violent programmes, this is not likely to last. When it is realised that almost every home in Britain is now thought to have a television set and that it is reckoned that three million TV addicts sit glued to television for 11 hours a day, the Home Secretary's call does not seem out of place. However, it will take more than a moral revival to change the face of Britain. What our land needs is a spiritual revival and then the moral revival would immediately accompany it. It is the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit which will bring this about. Let us then continue to pray for it.

Ecumenism Run Riot

A Press report in July stated that a Church of Scotland minister's child was baptised by a Roman Catholic priest. This is alleged to have happened in Dunbar, East Lothian. The minister declared in his defence that "this is the logical consequence of recognising each other's baptism and ministry". Whether any action was taken by the Church of Scotland against the minister for doing this we have not heard. If not, surely it is high time that some restraint was put on ecumenicals in the National Church before Rome comes in and takes over the Church and all who are in it.

Family Planning

Britain is reckoned to lead the world in family planning. This is not to be wondered at when we remember that Britain also was one of the first countries to legalise abortion. How strange it is in the light of these matters that experimentation with fertility drugs goes on apace, and tens of thousands of immigrants are brought in each year to a country already reckoned to be overpopulated! It would seem that men have lost their reason as well as their moral judgment in dealing with these matters. We have little doubt that much of the confusion and evil that abounds with regard to these issues arises from a humanistic approach to these matters. When, in better days, a Biblical view will prevail in all these fields, then matters will be very different. May the Lord be pleased to hasten such a time before divine judgments overtake us.

Spread of Aids

The Department of Health has indicated that twice as many people have this virulent disease now compared with a year ago. By the end of August it was reckoned that 572 people in the country had died with it. If the same trends continue it is expected that there will be 2500 cases a year from now. By some it has been compared to the Black Death, but in this instance the vast bulk of cases concern Sodomites and intravenous drug abusers. It is all too evidently the judgment of God on all who refuse to give heed to the warnings of God in His Word. Only a recognition of the binding obligation of the moral law can bring any alleviation to the situation.

Zimbabwe Mission News

Before beginning to write these notes, I had a great desire to have first-hand news of the friends in Zimbabwe. So I dialled Bulawayo and in a couple of minutes, or less I was able to speak to Mr Campbell, and then to Miss Graham. One never ceases to marvel at this rapid means of communication.

It was a great pleasure to learn that little Naomi Mary Hicklin had arrived two hours previously, in Bulawayo Hospital. She is Mr and Mrs Hicklin's third child. Mrs Neil Murray had been attending a special One Week Nursing Course in Bulawayo, but had left for Ingwenya Communion services. Neil Murray and David Ndlovu had been on a trip to

Binga, a very needy part of the country, just south of the Zambezi River. This was not their first visit, and they had been impressed with the great poverty, physical and spiritual. They went laden with clothes and food and, no doubt, portions of Scripture for those who can read. They were given a warm welcome, and we trust the message of the Gospel was blessed to, at least, some.

Some readers may remember that while Mr Campbell was in Scotland he was collecting for an Intercom System for use between Mbumba Hospital and the Church. With the assistance of Miss Sheila Macleod the equipment arrived safely in Bulawayo, but was held up by Customs. However, it is now available for use.

There had been a recent visit to the Mission by four Dutchmen, in connection with the transfer of Thembiso Home and the Religious Bookshop to the care of the Free Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe. As was mentioned previously, Thembiso was opened as a Children's Home by Mr and Mrs van Woerden, and run successfully for a number of years with the devoted help of young Dutch and African helpers. The work has now extended to include, in addition to a maximum number of 54 children in the Home, ranging in age from babies to children of sixteen years old, school classes for the children of the neighbourhood, pre-school classes, primary and secondary school classes, and an evening Adult Literacy Class. As can be seen this is a huge undertaking. The Rev. A. B. Ndebele has been made responsible for the religious education of the pupils, and for the supply of religious Services.

The old School bus which twice weekly brought supplies from Bulawayo for the John Tallach Boarding School had become very unreliable. Mr Campbell said that a new school bus had arrived. No doubt this new acquisition's arrival had been preceded by months of negotiations and correspondence. So for many reasons, its advent would be extremely welcome, and would considerably lessen the anxiety of providing food for around 400 hungry youngsters.

Miss Coote leaves on October 21st D.V. for Zimbabwe, after a short furlough. Miss Graham had one month at home, chiefly to be with her mother, who is in a Nursing Home in Inverness.

It is encouraging to hear of large congregations attending our services. Mbumba Church has been extended. The 600 children who attend primary school there would require a church for themselves at the weekday Service which they attend! Mrs Murray in a recent circular letter which she sent home, quoted the words of the famous missionary, J. D. Fraser, of Lisuland; "I believe it will only be known at the Last Day how much has

been accomplished in Missionary Work by the prayers of earnest believers at home. Solid lasting missionary work — is done on our knees. What I covet more than anything else is earnest believing prayer.”

So would say our missionaries in Zimbabwe.

J. N.

Church Notes

Church Deputies

After visiting Canada Rev. Fraser Tallach continued his journey to Australia arriving in Sydney on 26th September. In Australia he spent four weekends including the weekend of Grafton Communion. On 20th October he was due to cross over to New Zealand in time for Gisborne Communion. Most of his remaining time will be spent supplying Auckland Congregation until he leaves for home via Hong Kong on 14th December. He is expected to reach London (D.V.) on 23rd December. We trust that he will be brought on his way safely in the Lord's kind providence and that his labours may be blessed in those places which he has visited.

Rev. L. MacLeod, Greenock, accompanied by his wife, left this country in the middle of October in order to give six week's supply to Chesley. He is expected to return home during the last week of November. We pray that the Lord's Hand will be on them for good during their journeys and that the Word will be blessed to the good of never-dying souls and to the encouragement and strengthening of the Lord's Cause in Chesley.

Medical Missionary for Kenya

The Foreign Missions' Committee wishes to hear from any person who would be interested in engaging in Medical Missionary work on its behalf in the Kisii District of Kenya. Enquiries to Clerk of the Committee, Rev. A. Murray, F.P. Manse, Lairg, Sutherland, IV27 4EH. Telephone 0549-2176.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 24th November at 12 noon.

Northern: At Dingwall on 24th November at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 29th December at 11 a.m.

Skye: At Portree on 16th February, 1988 at 11 a.m.

Theological Conference — 1987

The Conference will be held in the Glasgow Church on Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd December (D.V.) It is expected that the following papers will be read:-

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------|--|
| Tuesday | 2.30 p.m. | The place of the Westminster Confession of Faith in Scottish History
<i>by Rev. D. M. Boyd, Farr.</i> |
| | 7 p.m. | Covenant Theology
<i>by Rev. J. MacLeod, Stornoway.</i> |
| Wednesday | 10 a.m. | Faith (An Exposition of Hebrews 11: 1)
<i>by Rev. D. Nicolson, Glendale.</i> |
| | 2.30 p.m. | Contemporary Problems in the Ministry
<i>by Rev. D. J. MacDonald, Perth.</i> |
| (Public) | 7 p.m. | The Fundamentals of the Faith
<i>by Rev. F. MacDonald, Portree.</i> |

The Conference Chairman will be Rev. D. B. Macleod, Dingwall.

As usual all ministers, office-bearers and male members are eligible to attend.

(Rev.) D. J. MacDonald,
Convener,
Training of the Ministry Committee.

Seeking after God

"It were my heaven till I come home, even to spend this life in gathering in some to Christ. I have still great heaviness for my silence, and my forced standing idle in the market, when this land hath such a plentiful thick harvest; but I know that His judgments, who hath done it, pass finding out. I have no knowledge to take up the Lord in all His strange ways, and passages of deep and unsearchable providences; for the Lord is before me, and I am so bemisted that I cannot follow Him; He is behind me, and following at the heels, and I am not aware of Him; He is above me, but His glory so dazzleth my twilight of short knowledge that I cannot look up to Him; He is upon my right hand, and within me, and cometh and goeth, and His coming and going are a dream to me; He is round about me, and compasseth all my goings, and still I have Him to seek; He is every way higher and deeper and broader than the shallow and ebb handbreadth of my short and dim light can take up; and therefore I would that my heart could be silent, and sit down in learnedly-ignorant wondering at the Lord whom men and angels cannot

comprehend. I know that the noon-day light of the highest angels, who see Him face to face, seeth not the borders of His infiniteness. They apprehend God near hand, but they cannot comprehend Him. And, therefore, it is my happiness to look afar off, and to come near to the Lord's back parts, and to light my dark candle at His brightness, and to have leave to sit and content myself with a traveller's light, without the clear vision of an enjoyer. I would seek no more till I were in my country than a little watering and sprinkling of a withered soul, with some half out-breakings and half out-lookings of the beams, and small ravishing smiles of the fairest face of a revealed and believed-on Goadhed. . . . Oh! let this bit of love of ours, this inch-and-half span length of heavenly longing meet with Thy infinite love! Oh, if the little I have were swallowed up with the infiniteness of that excellency which is in Christ! Oh! that we little ones were in at the greatest Lord Jesus! Our wants should soon be swallowed up with His fulness."

Samuel Rutherford.

Hints to Preachers

"Mind no sermon is of any value, or likely to be useful, which has not the three R's in it — Ruin by the Fall. Redemption by Christ. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit." — *Dr. Ryland*.

"My aim in every sermon is, a stout and lusty call to sinners, to quicken the saints, and to be made a universal blessing to all." — *Sydney's Life of Rev. R. Hill*.

"Keep in mind that excellent rule — never preach a single sermon from which an unenlightened hearer might not learn the plan of salvation, even though he never afterwards heard another discussion." — *Legh Richmond*.

"Said a minister once, when I gently hinted to him that he had not preached the gospel that morning. 'No', he said, 'I did not mean to preach to sinners in the morning, but I will preach to them in the evening,' 'Ah?' said I, 'but what if some of your congregation of the morning should be in hell before the evening?' " — *Spurgeon*.

"Many a time when we stand in the pulpit some sinner may be present to whom we are addressing our last message; who will never hear the gospel or be exhorted to take care of his soul again. Should we not wish to pour upon such an one the whole force of our powers of persuasion; to speak to him emphatically in the words of Richard Baxter, 'as a dying man to dying men'." — *Christian Review*.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, Room 7, Seafield House, Seafield Road, Inverness, IV1 1SJ, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:—

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Staffin: Correction: The July Magazine printed Anon. £100 for Staffin Congr. Funds, whereas it should have read Anon. £400 for Staffin Congregational Funds.

Stornoway: Friend, Stockinish, £10 for Petrol Expenses; Friends, Tarbert, £20 for Congregational Funds, both per Rev. J. MacLeod.