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To this man will I look

It has pleased the Lord to reveal His mind and will in the Scriptures of truth. It is there that we are to learn all that is necessary for our spiritual and saving good. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Only in the light of divine truth may we know the way that we should go and only here also may we know how God views man. Our own thoughts will never lead us to the knowledge of God or of His ways. Man's thoughts are but vanity. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Is. 55: 8,9. What need there is then for us to come to the Word of God so that we may learn there who it is that the Lord will accept. What is it that God has to say to us on this matter? We find it in the prophet Isaiah as well as elsewhere in holy writ. Through Isaiah He declares: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Is. 66: 2. Again by the same prophet He says: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Is. 57: 15. These declarations of the Most High leave us in no doubt as to who it is that the Lord will accept.

When we consider the case of Cain and Abel there is a separation made between such as the Lord will accept and those whom He will not accept. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Gen. 4: 4,5. The reason that Abel's offering was accepted was, no doubt, not only that the offering

was according to the requirements laid down by God and so fully setting forth the One that was to come, but also because the one who offered it was right at heart with God. He was poor and of a contrite heart, as well as one who trembled at God's Word. And of such the Lord says: "To this man will I look." Cain, on the other hand, belonged to those of whom it is written, "the proud the Lord knoweth afar off."

When we think of Haman and Mordecai again we see that man's ways are not the Lord's ways. Haman was given a high place by king Ahasuerus and sought a higher place still. He was full of pride and self-seeking. Mordecai who sat in the king's gate he despised through his pride of heart. When the king said to Haman, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?", Haman thought in his heart, "To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?" He proposed therefore to the king that the person should ride on the king's horse, wearing the royal apparel and with the Crown Royal on his head and that it would be proclaimed before him through the street of the city, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." How true it is that pride cometh before a fall, and Haman was near destruction, but first he must do to Mordecai, of whom he was the sworn enemy, as he had suggested to the king. For it was not proud Haman that the king delighted to honour but Mordecai who was poor, and of a contrite heart and who trembled at God's Word. He feared the Lord and the Lord caused the king to honour him.

"To this man I will look," the Lord says, "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." So it is in our day also. It is the poor that the Lord will regard. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matth. 5: 3. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Zeph. 3: 12. Such is the mind of the Lord and he will fulfil His Word. However dark the day may be the Lord will see to it that He will have a people to whom He may look, a people who have been brought to humble themselves before Him and to seek mercies of the God of Jacob. They are a people who have been brought to mourn over their sins, for "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." They are a people who love the Lord with their whole heart, who have come to know their indebtedness to the Lord for all things, a people who delight in His Word and find in it great store, who seek to know the Lord's will and do it. It is in such that the Lord delights. He will never leave them nor forsake them. Christ is all in all to them and they are happy to put their Amen to what John the Baptist said: "He

must increase: I must decrease." They would desire that His Name might be more and more magnified and glorified. The question arises for us as to whether we are of them or not. Do we bear the character of that one of whom the Lord says, To this man will I look? If so, it can only be because the Lord has put a little of His own image upon us.

Sermon

by Rev. D. A. Macfarlane, Dingwall

"Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all . . . If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet." John 13: 10, 14.

We find that the Saviour here put his Amen to the fact that He was Jehovah manifest in the flesh. "Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am" (v. 13) He who would say, "Before Abraham was I am," rose from supper, laid aside his garments and began to wash His disciples' feet. He who is eternally the High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity, the infinitely Holy One, the heart-knowing, heart-searching, heart-purifying One, is giving Himself to poor, needy, rebellious sinners. A thousand years with Him are but as one day, and yet He is the spiritual dwelling place of His people in all generations. May He be precious to us. The One who took a basin and towel and water, was in the Father's bosom before the mountains were brought forth. This is a revelation, the food of faith, and when this supernatural revelation enters into the soul, it is an earnest of heaven. May the Holy Spirit seal it upon us that He who said to Moses, "I am that I am" was here in the upper chamber with His disciples and put His Amen to the declaration that He was God. The disciples were gradually being taught. There was a little leaven in their souls — Christ the hope of glory was there — and He would abide with them until the whole was leavened. The Lord's people are not perfect in this world. Like Peter, they may sin sadly, but Christ never loses any of His sheep. He may have to give them many a stroke, but He searches them out in the dark day, and they will never perish. He will chastise them for their faults, but will fulfil His covenant promise to the Father and to them, that He will deliver them in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch them, till at last, He presents them faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy.

“If I then, your Lord and Master” — that is in a spiritual way. The One who spoke was the New Covenant Moses, the divine prophet who cannot lie. It is He who speaks to you and to me here — the divine prophet set up from everlasting through God the Holy Spirit given to Him not according to measure. It was He who wrote the whole Bible, the spiritual library of the church of God in all ages, although in doing so He used sub-agents, lovingly-directed men. If you love the Holy Spirit today, surely you love the Redeemer, and this chapter of God’s word, and if the substance of it is lovingly hid in your heart you desire to hearken to Him and to be a servant of the New Covenant Moses.

Then, Christ was also the divine Aaron, the marrow and fat of what he typically set forth. That will cleanse the heart and feet in walk and conversation. The Redeemer in His own way is the golden plate that was on the fore-front of Aaron’s mitre — Holiness unto the Lord — to bear the iniquities of the children of Israel. If you know the truth, before you know where you are, it will wash the feet of your soul. The Redeemer is also the breast-plate, and the censer and the incense, and if you love the Redeemer as your incense, then He has a basin of water and is cleansing your feet in this church today. If you love the Redeemer because He brought everlasting satisfaction to the Father, and if this is sweet to you, then that satisfaction is brought into your soul. You say, “That cannot be, because this satisfaction is infinite, and I am finite, and the infinite can never be contained by the finite.” Thank you. That’s good! I am pleased that you are well exercised. But the food of the Lord’s people for eternity is the infinite satisfaction brought to the Father by Christ, and they feed on Him whose atoning sacrifice has infinite efficacy, and if you spiritually receive this and like it, you are bathing your conscience in the atonement of Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed, and in spite of the bad nature that is within, where Christ as the New Testament Aaron is the incense and the sacrifice, the everlasting atonement is of such boundless, bottomless value that it can save even to the uttermost. None in the church below, nor any of the godly who have gone Home, can measure the uttermost in Christ. You may say, “If you only know what sins I committed — drunkenness, thieving, telling lies.” Go to your knees and tell the Lord about them, as if He did not know. Though you were a Manasseh, or all the vagabonds rolled together, over against the infinite merit of Christ’s sacrifice, it is, as a little salt is in the salt cellar. If you are going to the Father’s house, that is all you have — all your hope — the merit of Christ’s atonement, and you will be in hell if you are not in Christ Jesus, and have a suitable, sweet, intelligent espousal to this

atoning death of Christ. He can save to the uttermost. He is the promise-making and the promise-sealing One. He is the New Covenant Moses and the New Covenant Aaron, and is incense in glory, the uncreated Angel with much incense. He has bells and pomegranates, and those in glory are hearing the bells, and extolling Him for ever and ever. "Worthy is the Lamb". They hear the bells, on the robe of their High Priest, who is sitting down at the right hand of the Father. How can the bells be heard when He is sitting down? Never mind! They are there, and He Himself is every bell and pomegranate from Genesis to Revelation. There are those in this house today who hear what God the Lord doth speak. The Saviour and divine Melchisedec is on the right hand of terrible majesty on high. Without Christ we can never go to heaven, for God is an infinite consuming fire, so that the seraphim veil their faces before the infinite majesty of the Most High, dear, dear soul.

The Saviour was pleased as part of the everlasting covenant to give this example of washing His disciple's feet. Simon Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet", or, "it does not become Thee to wash my feet". But when Christ replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in Me", Peter went the other way, the pendulum swung to the other extreme. "My hands are not very clean, and my head — oh, the roving thoughts and the imaginations of my head. The thoughts of my head and heart are terrible, like midges that cannot be numbered." Yes, but the Redeemer said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet but is clean every whit, and ye are clean, but not all." Christ knew that Judas would betray Him. His was a terrible case, left to himself and to the spirit of covetousness. We should ask the Lord to save us from what is in us, our carnal wisdom, and self will. Is it troubling yourself, is it to you a body of sin and death? Do you desire to be saved from a self-pleasing spirit? May God the Holy Spirit make it a secret burden.

"He that is washed". Here we have two things brought before us — 1. The washing of regeneration, and 2. The washing of the feet from time to time in sanctification. Peter was washed in an absolute sense in regeneration. Peter was not perfectly holy, for Christ warned him, "The cock shall not crow, till thou has denied Me." All the same Peter was perfect as regards the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. All the true disciples were born again. They were brought to see that they were lost for eternity, that they were on the dunghill and the dunghill inside them, but "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill." (Ps. 113: 7). In a suitable measure they knew their poverty. Have you had somewhat of that experience — to know

yourselves as dunghill sinners? Every one going in sincerity to the Lord's Table puts his Amen to it that he or she is by nature on the dunghill, and cannot think one holy thought. They are carnal, sold under sin, but secretly brought to discern the Lord in and through the Gospel. All are brought with a load of guilt, and a load of unholiness — a double load — to see Christ, and to touch him with the supernatural touch of regenerating grace, to get a God-created inclination to say, "That's the Gospel". These are the Lord's covenant people for all eternity, and if that will not stand, then Jesus is not the Truth. God will not be mocked, but He will not mock you if you are putting your Amen to the Gospel, if with cordiality you receive the Gospel and in the act of receiving the Gospel, you receive Christ. If to your heart the Gospel is honey, if it is a plaster for your barrenness, if you see yourself as a lump of unholiness, but the Gospel as holily excellent, then you will thereby through the golden pipe be pleased with Christ. Grace may yet be as a grain of mustard seed, but where He begins the good work He will carry it on. You will not go to glean in any other field. Owen says, "Faith in the first place is a receiving of the revelation of the Gospel, and this is a means of resting on Christ Himself." When Peter received Christ he became a Cephas, and was washed with the washing of regeneration, and his prayer was, "May Thyself come into my soul, and keep coming in, and stay in." Then something happened, that he pounced on the person and finished work of Emmanuel in the Gospel. This is the act of a regenerated soul. Jehovah our Righteousness becomes your very own. Faith is a disposition of soul to pounce on the Redeemer. Some one who saw the wonder of this experience was heard to say, "Why did I not get this before I was born?"

Though perfect in justifying righteousness, the soul still has need of its feet being cleansed. Peter was justified, dear man, yet once and again he got into the mire — not back to condemnation, for that cannot be — but perhaps he said or did something which made the Saviour answer, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Satan was whispering to Peter, and making a fool of him. Though others might leave Christ, he would stand by Him. Peter did have genuine love to the Saviour, dear Peter, but Peter did not know Peter, and Peter was to climb down and climb down. This creeping down is a great part of the life of sanctification. Now, now, Peter, there is a cock, and it is going to crow, and thou shalt deny Me. Unbelievable. But, oh, later we hear a maid say to Peter, "Thou also wast with Him." Ah, when Peter was left to carnal wisdom, the fear of being arrested, and perhaps crucified, took possession of him and he used strong language,

and yet he had faith all the time. "I have prayed for thee." We cannot understand how the tide of grace can be at such a low ebb in the soul, and yet faith is there, even in the sad temptation. May you and I be preserved from thinking censoriously of Peter and the godly as if we were up on some big stool and could afford to speak. All this was over-ruled for Peter. He was in the intercession of Christ. He went out and wept bitterly. It must have been an **awful** Sabbath day for Peter. The Lord kept his reason, but what anguish he suffered because he did what he did and said what he said, for he did love the Redeemer, and was united to Him for eternity. When He rose from the dead, He met Peter alone. We are not told what happened then, but we may be sure that He kissed the soul of Peter. He took a basin and water, and washed the feet of Peter, and strengthened and refreshed him. "Be not grieved nor angry. I am Joseph your brother." We had better leave these things. This is holy ground.

Later, at the lake side there were six of the disciples in a boat, and the Saviour was on the shore, and a fire of coals and fish laid thereon and bread. The Saviour said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." "Come along now Peter, and I'll wash your feet." How? "Lovest thou Me?" At last Peter said, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." "Thou, the high and holy One, knowest that I love Thee." The Lord never said a word to Peter doubting the sincerity of this; but gave him a command, "Feed my sheep . . . Feed my lambs." This is a beautiful, God-glorifying example of taking a basin and water and washing the feet of Peter. It is as if Christ said to him, "If you come across this man or that woman, you'll copy Me, and wash their feet in a suitable way. Seeing you went through this yourself, you will know how to help and soothe and refresh by the blessing of the Lord, and so know how to wash one another's feet."

Another example we have on the day of Pentecost, when 3000 were regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Peter was the mouth-piece and his ministry was blessed. He told of Psalm 16, "Thou wilt show me the path of life." We must conclude that while Peter was preaching by the love of the Holy Spirit, his feet were being washed anew. Peter must have felt his need of daily cleansing, but "Oh! to be allowed to preach on Psalm 16 washes my feet." The Redeemer went to the grave, and took the sting out of death and went to glory. Carrying on to 1 Peter, we find basins of water to wash the feet of multitudes till the blast of the last trump. They will thank God that ever He gave a basin of water to Peter, even this one, "Whom having not seen ye love, in Whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Do you

believe in the Gospel as the mouth of God, through Christ, and desire to be washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness? Where that is, by the unction of the Holy Spirit, you are a believer in the Redeemer, and need to be washed like Peter, all the day long.

In all the Gospels there are plenty of basins of water. Seek to wash others, lovingly and quietly. Watch not to say anything to hurt people unnecessarily, but to be a helper to them, so that they would have to say, "I like even to be corrected by that man and woman. They have a love to my soul, and desire my well-being. They seem to see more faults in themselves than ever they find in others."

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

The Worth of the Soul

by Rev. Matthew Henry

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"
— Matt. 14: 26.

The soul of man is a jewel of inestimable value. This is plainly intimated here, where the loss of the soul is represented as such a loss that the gain of all the world will not be a compensation for it. Observe here,

1. What those things are that are here compared — "the whole world," and "thy own soul;" these are here put into the scales against one another. The world here means not the universe, or the whole creation, that is more excellent than any one part, but the things that are seen, that are temporal, 2 Cor. 4: 18; the riches, honours, and pleasures, of this present time. See a map of this world, 1 John 2: 16. Now the "whole world" is here set in the balance against one soul, if that one be thy one. It is not a small estate, or a lordship, that is here supposed to be of less value than the soul, but the world, the whole world. Our temporal concernments are compared with our spiritual, the "life that now is, and that which is to come," 1 Tim. 4: 8.

2. What judgment is here passed upon them — That our own souls are of infinitely more value than the whole world. The value of a thing is reckoned partly by its nature and intrinsic dignity, and partly by its use. That is most valuable, that is most delightful, most profitable and most necessary. We reckon that is most worth that is most worth to us. Now our own souls are more to us than all the world is or can be. The design of this is to show of what little worth the world is, and the things of the

world they are weighed in the balance and found wanting; not worthy to be compared, or to be named, with the soul; Rom. 8: 18.

3. Who is that passeth this judgment. It is our Lord Jesus himself, one who had reason to know the worth of souls, for he made them, and bought them; and who, we may be sure, would not under-rate the world, for by him "the worlds were made," Col. 1: 16; Heb. 1: 2. This doctrine I shall endeavour,

1. To prove — The true worth of the soul, and that it is more to us than all the world. Consider,

1. The *production* of the soul. Trace it up to its original; and it is breathed into us by the breath of God: it is a spark of heaven; it is that part of man by which he is allied to the world of spirits; it is the masterpiece of God's workmanship in this lower world, Gen. 2: 7. The image of God is stamped upon it, Gen. 1: 26, 27. When it returns to God, it doth but as all the waters do, return to the place from whence it came. It is of a noble extraction. That which makes up the world, that men covet so much, is but of the earth, earthy:— honour is a shadow; the pleasures of the world, and the wealth of the world, are of the earth; gold and silver are but refined earth — Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine, *Herbert*. But man was made last of all the creatures, as the chief of the works of God. It is good for us often to ask whence we came; and being so nobly descended, disdain to serve the base and sordid lusts of the flesh, and to prostitute an immortal soul to the drudgery of this world.

2. The *powers* of the soul. These are very great; its apprehensions are not confined by the horizon of sense; but rove far beyond it. The faculties of the human soul are such as above any other creature prove the eternal power and wisdom of the Creator. It is the soul that knows right well how marvellous God's works are, Ps. 139: 14, by reflection upon itself. Think what the soul of man is capable of, and you will say that it is of inestimable value.

(1.) It is capable of gloryifying God in this world. It has a power of knowing God, as he has been pleased to reveal himself. It is that which is within us, that renders us capable of blessing and praising God, Ps. 103: 1, 2. It is capable of "knowledge," in which, especially, the image of God consists, Col. 3: 10. It is capable of reasoning and "bringing to mind," Isa. 46: 8. It is capable of receiving a divine revelation to this purpose, and in the use of instituted ordinances is capable of "having fellowship" with God — of being wrought upon, and witnessed with, by the Holy Spirit of God, Rom. 8: 16. It is capable of being "sanctified."

(2.) It is capable of being glorified with God in the other world; of see-

ing and enjoying him within the veil; of conversing with angels and glorified spirits, and drinking in the sweet and glorious rays of divine grace and love; things which are above, out of the sight of sense. It has a power of doing that, which the body, till it is refined and become a spiritual body, is not able to attain. It is capable of seeing God face to face, which an embodied soul, till stripped of this veil, cannot possibly do, Exod. 33: 20.

(3.) The *perpetuity* of the soul. This is one great thing which speaks the worth of the soul — that it is to last for ever, it is an immortal spirit. It is a flame that can never be extinguished. It will survive the body, and will live and act in a state of separation from it. It is one of those things which are not seen, but are eternal, 2 Cor. 4: 18. It is an awful consideration, when a child is born, to think, here is the beginning of a being that will outlive all the ages of time. The world is but for a moment, Prov. 23: 5, the fashion of it, the scheme, the outside of it, (for it is but a superficies,) “passeth away,” 1 Cor. 7: 31; 1 John 2: 17. But the soul is perpetual; the things themselves towards which its desires extend, and those desires that are so formed, are eternal. The brute creatures are mortal, but man will be immortal. This makes it such a serious thing for a man to die, above what it is for a beast to die, Eccl. 3: 21. Things are reckoned valuable according to their duration. Gold therefore is the most precious metal because it will not rust nor waste; but the utmost of the duration of this world’s goods is within time.

(4.) The *propriety* of our souls — “thy own soul.” In order to ascertain the right value of a thing it must be considered, not only what the thing is in itself, but what interest we have in it. The loan of a thing is nothing so valuable as the possession of it. Now the world is but lent us; whatever we have in it, is not to be called our own; but our souls are our own. We brought them into the world, and we shall carry them out — they are our own, they are, in fact, ourselves. The soul is the man. What is man but a “living soul?” Gen. 2: 7. Abstract the soul as living, and the body is a lump of clay; abstract the soul as rational, and the man is as the beasts that perish. It is a certain truth that the soul is the man. “Persons,” in Scripture, are often reckoned by souls, as Acts 2: 41. What we are is more to us than what we have. It is the spirit that is the substance of the man; and what is the chaff to the wheat, the shell to the kernel, the clothes to the body? This is one of the first things that the convinced sinner is made sensible of — that the soul is the man; and if he would do well for himself, he must do well for his soul.

(5.) The *projects* that are laid about souls. There is great work about

souls, more than you think of. That is valuable which those that are intelligent are concerned about. This speaks the soul of man to be of very great value. Consider,

1. What projects the love of God has to save souls. The God of infinite wisdom, whose the worlds are, has been pleased to concern himself with a peculiar care about the world of mankind, the world of souls. Some observe, that in Scripture, God is never brought in consulting with himself but when man is concerned. God has thoughts "to us ward," Ps. 40: 5. Infinite Wisdom was from eternity, devising means that poor banished souls might not be forever expelled, Eph. 1: 11, compare verse 9. God had thoughts of love to the sons of men, *i.e.* the souls of men, before the worlds were.

2. What projects the malice of Satan has to destroy souls. It is a sign the soul of man is very precious, when God and Satan, those two adverse powers, are as it were contending for it. He seeks to get and keep possession of the soul, that he may devour it, 1 Pet. 5: 8. The great dispute between Michael and the dragon is, who shall rule the souls of men. The devil's agents trade in the "souls of men," Rev. 18: 13. The devil saith, as the king of Sodom, Gen. 14: 21, "Give me the souls." There is great striving about the soul.

(6.) The *price* that was paid to redeem souls. We reckon the value of a thing by that which a wise man will give for it, who is not ignorant of it, nor under necessity. Christ the Wisdom of God, gave himself, his own precious blood, to redeem souls, and he knew what they were, and had no need of them. The redemption of the "soul is precious," Ps. 49: 8. Corruptible things, as silver and gold, would not do: then did Christ, for us men and for our salvation, make his soul an offering, 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19. "His soul was an offering" for ours, his life a "ransom" for many, Matt. 20: 28. See here the worth of souls — nothing could be a ransom for forfeited souls but the blood of the Son of God. Lo I come, saith he — for us men and for our salvation, saith the Nicene creed. Neither the fruit of the body, nor the fruit of the estate, would atone for the "sin of the soul," Mic. 6: 7, but Christ gave himself. Blood of bulls and goats would not do. God proves the excellency of his people by this, Isa. 43: 4, "I will give men for thee;" — much more doth it demonstrate the excellency of souls, when God gave his Son for them. The blood of Christ is precious blood, of immense value.

(7.) The *pains* that are taken to renew souls. God hath manifested his favour to man in the provision made for his body, that that might be put into, and kept in, a capacity to answer the end of its creation. See the

first instance of this care, Gen. 1: 29, and afterwards, Gen. 9: 3. But there is a great deal more done to provide for the soul, and to put that into, and keep that in, a capacity to answer the ends of its creation. The power of God is wonderfully exerted in this important work, to sanctify a soul, to recover it from its degenerate state, to reduce it to its integrity, and to prepare it for glory. The word of God is given for these ends, that mighty word, which is so quick and powerful, Heb. 4: 12. The spirit of God is at work for the good of the soul — the arm of the Lord is revealed — and the work of faith fulfilled with power. These things show what a value God puts upon souls. A word made us, but far more is required to new-make us.

(8.) The *preparations* that are made to receive souls. There is much in progress for them in the other world. Souls being immortal, have immortal things provided for them.

There are preparations of wrath for sinful souls, to which they are “reserved,” 2 Pet. 2: 9. There is a Tophet that is ordained of old, Isa. 30: 33, an everlasting fire, that is prepared for the devil and his angels, is reserved for wicked men, Matt. 25: 41. Is is sealed up among his treasures, treasures of wrath, after the long season of his patience.

And there are preparations of glory for sanctified souls. These must needs be of great value when there is so much laid out to make them great and happy. They have a glory proportioned to their capacities. Knowledge and love are the principal faculties of the soul; and these are sources of bliss in heaven.

(to be continued)

Letter of John Knox

Letter to his mother-in-law, Mrs Bowes

Rightly-dearly beloved mother in our Saviour Jesus Christ, when I call to mind and revolve with myself the troubles and afflictions of God’s elect from the beginning (in which I do not forget you), there is within my heart two extreme contraries; a dolour (grief) almost unspeakable, and a joy and comfort which, by man’s senses, can not be comprehended nor understood. The chief causes of sorrow be two: the one is the remembrance of sin, which I daily feel remaining in this corrupt nature, which was and is so odious and detestable in the presence of our heavenly Father that by no other sacrifice could or might the same be purged, except by the blood and death of the only innocent Son of God. When I deeply do consider the cause of Christ’s death to have been sin, and sin yet to dwell in all flesh, with Paul I am compelled to sob and groan as a

man under a heavy burden, yea, and sometimes to cry, "O wretched and miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin?" The other cause of my sorrow is that such as must gladly would remain together for mutual comfort, one of another, can not be suffered so to do. Since the first day that it pleased the providence of God to bring you and me in familiarity, I have always delighted in your company; and when labours would permit, ye know I have not spared hours to talk and commune with you, the fruit whereof I did not then fully understand nor perceive. But now absent, and so absent that by corporal presence neither of us can receive comfort of other, I call to mind how that oft-times, when with sorrowful hearts, we have begun our talking, God hath sent great comfort unto both, which now, for my own part, I commonly want.

The exposition of your troubles and acknowledging of your infirmity were first unto me a very mirror and glass wherein I beheld myself so rightly painted forth that nothing could be more evident to my own eyes. And then the searching of the scriptures for God's sweet promises, and for His mercies freely given unto miserable offenders (for His nature delighteth to show mercy where most misery reigneth) the collection and applying of God's mercies, I say, were unto me as the breaking and handling with my own hands of the most sweet and delectable unguents, whereof I could not but receive some comfort by their natural sweet odours. But now, albeit I never lack the presence and plain image of my own wretched infirmity; yet seeing sin so manifestly abounding in all estates, I am compelled to thunder out the threatenings of God against the obstinate rebels, in doing whereof (albeit, as God knoweth, I am no malicious nor obstinate sinner). I sometimes am wounded, knowing myself criminal and guilty in many, yea in all (malicious obstinacy laid aside) things that in others I reprehend. Judge not, mother, that I write these things debasing myself otherwise than I am; no; I am worse than my pen can express. In body ye think I am no adulterer; let so be; but the heart is infected with foul lusts, and will lust albeit I lament never so much. Externally I commit no idolatry; but my wicked heart loveth the self, and cannot be refrained from vain imaginations, yea, not from such as were the fountain of all idolatry. I am no man-killer with my hands; but I help not my needy brother so liberally as I may and ought. I steal not horse, money, nor clothes from my neighbour; but that small portion of worldly substance I bestow not so rightly as His holy law requireth. I bear no false witness against my neighbour in judgment or otherwise before men; but I speak not the truth of God so boldly as it

becometh His true messenger to do. And thus, in conclusion, there is no vice repugnant to God's holy will, expressed in His law, wherewith my heart is not infected.

This much written and dited before the receipt of your letters, which I received the 21st of June. They were unto my heart some comfort for divers causes not necessary to be rehearsed, but most (as knoweth God) for that I find a congruence betwixt us in spirit, being so far distant in body; for when that digestly I did advise with your letter, I did consider that I myself was complaining even the self-same things at the very moment that I received your letter. By my pen, from a sorrowful heart, I could not but burst forth and say, "O Lord, how wonderful are thy works! How dost Thou try and prove Thy chosen children as gold by the fire! How canst Thou in manner hide Thy face from Thy own spouse, that Thy presence after may be more delectable! How canst Thou bring Thy saints low that Thou may carry them to glory everlasting! How canst Thou suffer Thy strong, faithful messengers in many things yet to wrestle with wretched infirmity and feeble weakness, yea and sometimes permittest Thou them horribly to fall, partly that no flesh shall have whereof it may glory before Thee, and partly that others of smaller estate and meaner gifts in Thy kirk might receive some consolation, albeit they find in themselves wicked motions which they are not able to expel!" My purpose was, before I received your letter, to have exhorted you to patience and to fast, adhering to God's promises, albeit that your flesh, the devil, and other enemies would persuade you to the contrary; for, by the arts and subtleties that the adversary useth against me, I not only do conjecture, but also plainly do see, your assaults and trouble. And so likewise, in the bowels of Christ's mercy, most earnestly I beseech you, by the infirmity that he know remaineth in me (worse I am than I can write) patiently to bear, albeit that he have no such perfections as ye would, and albeit also your motions be such as be most vile and abominable, yet not to sorrow above measure. If I, to whom God has given greater gifts (I write to His praise) be yet so wrapped into misery, that what I would I can not do, and what I would not, that with Saint Paul, I say, I daily, yea every hour and moment I devise to do, and in my heart, fight I never so fast in the contrary, I perform and do — if such wretched wickedness remain in God's chief ministers, what wonder albeit the same remain in you? If God's strongest men of war be beaten back in their face that that they would they cannot destroy nor kill, is it any such offence to you to be tossed as ye complain, that therefore he should distrust God's free promises? God forbid, dear mother! The power of

God is known by our weakness, and these sorrows and infirmities be most profitable to us; for by the same is our pride beaten down, which is not easy otherwise to be done. By them are our miseries known, so that we, acknowledging ourselves needful, seek the Physician. By them come we, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, to the hatred of sin, and by them come we to the hunger and thirst of justice (*righteousness*) and to desire to be dissolved and so to reign with Christ Jesus, which without this battle and sorrow this flesh could never do. And so, from the griefs I proceed to the comfort.

As the causes of sorrow, which are present sin, and the lack of such company as in whom we most could delight, so are the causes of my comfort not imagined of my brain, but pronounced first by God, and afterwards grafted in the hearts of God's children by His Holy Spirit. They are likewise two; which is a justice (*righteousness*) inviolable by our flesh offered before the throne of our heavenly Father, and an assured hope of that general assembly and gathering together of God's dispersed flock, in that day when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, when death shall be vanquished, and may no more dissever such as fearing God this day in the flesh mourn under the burden of sin. Of our present justification, notwithstanding sin remains in our mortal bodies, are we assured by the faithful witness of Jesus Christ, John the apostle, saying, "If we confess our sins, faithful and just is God to remit and forgive our sins." Mark the words of the apostle; if we confess our sins, God must forgive them, because He is faithful and just. To confession of sins are these things requisite: first, we must acknowledge the sin. And it is to be noted that sometimes God's very elect, albeit they have sinned most heinously, do not acknowledge sin, and therefore can not at all times confess the same; for sin is not known until such time as the veil be taken from the conscience of the offender that he may see and behold the guiltiness of sin, what punishment by God's just judgment is due for the same. And then (which is the second thing requisite to confession) begins the hatred of sin and of ourselves for contemning of God and of His Holy law; whereof last springs that which we call hope of mercy, which is nothing else but a sob from a troubled heart, confounded and ashamed for sin, desiring remission and God's free mercy, whereupon must follow this conclusion, God has remitted and freely forgiven the sin. And why? for "he is faithful and just," saith the apostle. Comfortable and marvellous causes! First, God is faithful, therefore he must forgive sin. A comfortable consequent upon a more sure ground, for God's fidelity can no more fail nor can Himself. Then let this argument be gathered for our

comfort; the office of the faithful is to keep promise; but God is faithful, therefore he must keep promise. That God has promised remission of sins to such as be repentant, I need not now to recite the places. But let this collection of the promises be made; God promises remission of sins to all that confess the same; but I confess my sins, for I see the filthiness thereof, and how justly God may condemn me for my iniquities. I sob and I lament for that I can not be quit and rid of sin, I desire to live a more perfect life. These are infallible signs, seals, and tokens that God has remitted the sin; for God is faithful that so has promised, and can no more deceive nor He can cease to be God. But what reason is this, God is just, therefore He must forgive sin? A wondrous cause and reason indeed! For the flesh and natural man can understand nothing but the contrary, for thus must it reason: the justice of God is offended by my sins, so God must needs have a satisfaction and require a punishment. If we understand of whom God requires satisfaction, whether of us, or of the hands of His only Son, and whose punishment is able to recompense our sins, then shall we have great cause to rejoice, remembering that God is a just God; for the office of the just man is to stand content when he has received his due. But God has received already at the hands of His only Son all that is due for our sins, and so can not His justice require nor crave any more of us either satisfaction or recompensation for our sins.

Advert, mother, the sure pillars and foundations of our salvation to be God's faithfulness and justice. He that is faithful has promised free remission to all penitent sinners, and he that is just has received already a full satisfaction for the sins of all these that embrace Christ Jesus to be the only Saviour of the world. What rests then to us to be done? Nothing but to acknowledge our misery and wretchedness, which no flesh can do so unfeignedly as they that daily feel the weight of sin. And other, mother, cause have we none of despair, albeit the devil rage never so cruel, and albeit the flesh be never so frail, daily and hourly lusting against God's holy commandments, yea, striving against the same. This is not the time of justice before our own eyes; we look for that which is promised, the kingdom everlasting, prepared to us from the beginning, whereof we are made heirs by God's appointment, re-abillit, (i.e. *legitimised* or *restored*) thereto by Christ's death, to whom we shall be gathered, when after we shall never depart, which to remember is my singular comfort, but thereof now I can not write. My commendations to all whom it behoves, I commit you to the protection of the Omnipotent.

At London, the 23rd of June, 1553, your son, unfeigned, JOHN KNOX.

Obituary

Mr Angus Nicolson, Elder, North Tolsta

Over five years have now elapsed since Angus Nicolson passed away and it is a matter of great regret that up till now no obituary has appeared in the pages of this magazine. He was a good soldier of Jesus Christ who did much in his day and generation to maintain the Cause in North Tolsta and his removal from time to eternity on the 4th day of June 1982, at the patriarchal age of 91, was a great loss to the Church militant.

Angus was born in North Tolsta on the first day of January 1891 and was consequently two years of age when the Rev. Donald MacFarlane made his historic stand for the Truth. From his tender youth he had a grasp of the issues involved in the 1893 Separation having been well instructed by his mother who was, by all accounts, a woman of no ordinary intelligence and piety. He could speak of events which led up to the formation of our congregation in North Tolsta as he heard of them from her lips. In 1893, Neil Cameron, still a divinity student, had visited Lewis to explain to the people the position of the newly-formed body which was to become known as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It was, however, the Rev. J. R. MacKay who visited North Tolsta to enlighten the people. By all accounts his passage through Back on his way to North Tolsta was not without incident, that parish being then under the influence of the Rev. Hector Cameron who had chosen to remain in the Declaratory Act Free Church. It was he who told those present at a meeting in the Stornoway Drill Hall, specially convened in order that ministers might define their relationship to the Declaratory Act, that he had given himself to the study of history and as a result had found "the good old path which brought rest to his soul." "As a consequence," the press report of the meeting tells us, "he was there to express the belief and tell his hearers that the Secessionist party stood with one foot planted on ignorance and the other on deception and falsehood. With such a foundation of sand, assuredly their footing would soon be swept away, and great must be the fall of the Secessionists." There were not a few false prophets around at the time and Mr Cameron, it appears, was among them. Feelings were running high and when J. R. MacKay arrived at the North Tolsta Church it was only to find it locked and neither he nor the people who had assembled to hear him could gain immediate access. Eventually the key was procured but in the interval, so we are told, some drifted off home the day being cold and fewer than originally met heard Mr MacKay give his explanation. There were not wanting in

North Tolsta godly, discerning men and women who, the Rev. Hector Cameron notwithstanding, saw plainly that the Disruption Free Church testimony was now in the hands of those who had taken it with them when they parted company with the Declaratory Act Free Church. These were the men and women who were revered by Angus Nicolson in his youth and whose example he endeavoured to follow when he, by the grace of God and in due time, was translated into the same kingdom.

When exactly that saving change took place is not known. In March 1933 he professed Christ publicly for the first time but we regret that we have not been able to discover any details of his spiritual experience either at or before the time that this step was taken. We do know that he gave a very honoured place to the Rev Neil MacIntyre and it may well be that it was his preaching that was blessed to his soul. Mr MacIntyre left Stornoway for Edinburgh about 10 years before Angus came forward. Some light is shed on his spiritual experience by remarks made by himself when speaking to the question on the Friday of a communion season in Ness. The portion given out was, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound" and the following is a translation of what he said: "Some have to confess that they were afraid that the Truth would smite them but it is the sick that have need of the physician. The Truth began to speak to them in threatenings and promises but there was within them that which demanded that they should see miracles before they would believe. They were rebellious, but they were brought to poverty, to be found without anything that they could lay hand on. But in God's time they were brought to know this joyful sound; they got a bowed head as well and little wonder! They who have heard and understood the joyful sound bear fruit accordingly; they are found making their calling and election sure as they go on in the way. What they have now is, "In Thy law's path make me to go; for I delight therein." Such have been brought to see their own weakness and inability. Take from them the Gospel and the Truth and they would not want to live . . . They are more and more understanding what the words mean, "Without me ye can do nothing." The speaker clearly knew what it meant to be effectually called.

In 1955 he was elected to the Eldership and while able he faithfully carried out the duties of that office. With Angus the Cause of Christ came first and its prosperity in North Tolsta and throughout the world was what he earnestly desired and prayed for. He was a choice leader of the praise in the house of God.

Angus was predeceased by his wife who passed away in 1971 after having sustained a stroke 18 years before. Over that long period she was

unable to communicate by speech and the patience and tenderness with which her husband cared for her is still very much remembered to his credit and to the honour of his Christian profession. He had a family of seven daughters of whom six survive. For the last two and a half years of his life he lived with a daughter in Stornoway and it was there that he passed away. His latter end was peace.

Angus Nicolson was a man of strong convictions, transparently honest and upright. In his own sphere he faithfully contended for the faith and the maintenance of the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church was at all times what he aimed at. There is a crying need that others like-minded would be raised up in North Tolsta and elsewhere. "Help, Lord; for thy godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

To his daughters we anew express our sympathy. May their father's God be their God forever and ever; their guide even unto death.

Book Reviews

Sin and Salvation (Selections from J. C. Philpot) — edited by B. A. Ramsbottom. Published by Gospel Standard Trust. 165pp (Paperback). £4.40 (inclusive of postage).

This volume consists of 95 extracts from Philpot's writings, which have been roughly classified and grouped under six headings: Doctrine, Experience, The Christian Life, Holy Scripture, The Ministry and the Church, and Varied Topics (miscellaneous subjects on which Philpot commented during his editorship of *The Gospel Standard*).

It is obvious that, within the compass of a review, the 95 extracts cannot be dealt with individually. What can be said as a generalisation is that profound truths are expounded and applied reverently and simply by one who was deeply taught in the school of the Holy Spirit. In addition, wise comment and sound advice are found in his treatment as diverse as *The Desirability of Keeping to the Authorised Version*, *Spiritualising a Text*, *The Use of Learning*, and *Teaching Children*.

In his preface the editor explains his choice of title for the spiritual anthology. **Sin and Salvation** does convey clearly and succinctly Philpot's own definition of true religion, which he expounds in Extract 38: "But when we come to look at the nature of this mysterious, yet only true religion, we find it to consist chiefly of two branches: a knowledge of sin and a knowledge of salvation; an experience of self and an experience of Christ; an acquaintance with hell and an acquaintance with

heaven. However varied, deep or diversified our experience may be, yet, as far as it is of God, we shall find it very much to be summed up in the knowledge of these two distinct things."

The price quoted for a 165-page paperback appears high and may deter some would-be purchasers. However, when one considers the fact that the book is worthy of being a life-long companion to be dipped into one's spiritual profit, the outlay is eminently worthwhile.

The editor is to be congratulated on the inclusion at the end of a meticulously compiled index, which enables the reader to discover what Philpot has to say on 166 topics alphabetically arranged.

Having relished many tasty morsels in reading this book the reviewer warmly recommends it to readers of the F.P. Magazine. A. G.

Evolution — A Theory Crisis* by Michael Denton, 1985. Burnett Books Ltd. £17.50. 368pp.

Denton is a molecular biologist in New South Wales, Australia. In this interesting book, which is not written from a religious viewpoint, he sets out to explain, in layman's language, the gathering weight of evidence against evolution in its standard form and to point out the growing crisis in biology among scientists. While his book is very readable it will be appreciated most by those with scientific knowledge and should possibly be read by all our university students.

He gives a satisfactory account of the reasons why Darwinian evolution is now discredited among a growing number of scientists (mathematicians, astronomers, biochemists, molecular biologists, geneticists, and taxonomists). As one reads through the book, one discovers the views of Georges Cuvier, Richard Owen, and even William Paley emerging from the longed-for oblivion to which evolutionists had consigned them; it is refreshing to find written of David Hume, the principal critic of Paley, "It has only been over the past 20 years with the molecular biological revolution and with the advances in cybernetic and computer technology that Hume's criticism has been finally invalidated . . ." p340.

The book divides into two halves. The first nine chapters deal with the subject of evolutionary theory and its supposed basis in the present findings in nature and support from fossil evidence. Using present knowledge of the fossil record and the knowledge of modern embryology, Denton shows that modern science is extremely dissatisfied with the theory because the evidence has proved to be non-existent. The se-

* This review is included in the hope that it may be of help to students — Editor.

cond half of the book brings us into the author's domain. In six chapters he opens up the scientific discoveries of the past 30 years which have been casting doubt on the evolutionary theory. These are in the field of biochemistry and molecular biology.

In a few introductory chapters the author gives the history of the rejection of the Genesis account and the establishment of the Evolutionary theory as a dogma. Having considered the limited amount of truth in the theory, i.e. the variations that take place within the known natural world, he then begins with the critique of the theory, i.e. that it cannot be applied to the higher classes and distinct orders within the present natural world. Last century Cuvier, through a study of fossils and comparative anatomy observed that while living organisms undergo some degree of change, yet the degree of change is limited. This meant that the animal kingdom was classified accordingly. Therefore evolutionary theory not only struck at the basis of Cuvier's thought, but introduced its own method of classifying nature as an Evolutionary Tree. Denton details the revolution that is taking place in classification with the introduction of a new method of classification, called Cladistics, which is finding favour among scientists. This does not presuppose evolution and the evolutionary scientists are opposing it vigorously. This method of classification was recently used by the British Natural History Museum and provoked a lot of opposition from evolutionary scientists in the scientific press.

What has caused this change in scientific thinking? To appreciate the crisis in evolutionary belief in the past decades, one needs to appreciate the scientific advances that have been made in this period. A subject that is fundamental to evolutionary theory is the phenomenon of homology, the similarities found in different organisms, e.g. the limbs of animals. "The phenomenon of homology has remained the mainstay of the argument for evolution right down to the present day," p144. However, there has been a "failure to find a genetic and embryological basis for homology," p145. It used to be thought that embryology was confirming evolution because the embryos of different species looked so similar (were homologues), but more detailed embryology is demonstrating that the macroscopic homology is only a superficial resemblance which is not substantiated at a genetic and developmental level. With the demise of any sort of straightforward explanation for homology one of the major pillars of evolution theory has become so weakened that its value as evidence for evolution is greatly diminished. The breakdown of the evolutionary interpretation for homology cannot be dismissed as a

triviality and casually put aside as a curiosity for as Sir Alister Hardy reminds us: "The concept of homology is absolutely fundamental to what we are talking about when we speak of evolution — yet in truth we cannot explain it at all in terms of present day biological theory," p151. A further simple, but telling example of the failure of homology to support evolutionary theory is the pentadactyl pattern of the forelimb in vertebrates, which was so long held to be "a splendid example of homology" for the purposes of evolutionary theory (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1981). Yet the hindlimbs of vertebrates conform to the same pattern, "yet no evolutionist claims that the hindlimb evolved from the forelimb, or that hindlimbs and forelimbs evolved from a common source," p151. That is, if fore and hindlimbs have separate origins and yet are homologous, why may not other homologous structures have separate instead of common origins?

Having outlined the Failure of Homology, Denton spends two chapters on "The Fossil Record" and "Bridging the Gaps." It has been known since Darwin's day that there were large gaps in the fossil record that seemed to belie Darwin's theory of evolution, but it was hoped that the process of time would fill in these gaps. It has not done so. In a chapter on "The Fossil Record," the author relates the frantic search for "missing links" which has proved fruitless. In desperation some evolutionists are now propounding a theory of "punctuated equilibrium" which says that evolution between species occurs quickly because the intermediate form is unstable. This is supposed to explain the gaps in the fossil record. However, Denton says the effect of publicising this new theory is that "for the first time biologists with little knowledge of paleontology have become aware of the absence of transitional forms. After this revelation of what Gould has called "the trade secret of paleontology" it seems unlikely that we will see any return in the future to the old comfortable notion that the fossils provide evidence of gradual evolutionary change," p194.

The following chapter, "Bridging the Gaps," shows the theoretical and actual impossibilities in bridging the gaps between species by looking at specific examples of so-called evolution, the feather of the bird, the avian lung and the wing of the bat.

The second part of the book opens like this:

"It is difficult to think of a comparable decade in scientific history when fundamental knowledge increased as quickly as it did in biochemistry in the 1950s. Before 1950 hardly anything was known of the molecular basis of life; yet during the next 10 years a

succession of dramatic discoveries completely transformed the biological sciences and laid the foundation for a totally new description of life. . . . The biochemical knowledge about living systems that has accumulated over the past 20 years has provided a vast new body of information by which to assess evolutionary claims and as a result a number of interesting problems have arisen." p234.

It had been the hope of evolutionary scientists, specifically expressed by many authorities in the 1920s and 1930s, that as knowledge would increase we would discover that there was a continuous gradation, or evolution, from the chemistry of non-living matter to the chemistry of living organisms (biochemistry).

"Instead of revealing a multitude of transitional forms through which the evolution of the cell might have occurred, molecular biology has served only to emphasise the enormity of the gap.

"We now know not only of the existence of a break between the living and non-living world, but also that it represents the most dramatic and fundamental of all the discontinuities of nature. Between a living cell and the most highly organised non-biological system, such as a crystal or a snowflake, there is a chasm as vast and absolute as it is possible to conceive," pp249, 250.

The rest of the book reinforces this claim. In the chapter entitled "The Enigma of Life's Origin" he recounts the search for extra-terrestrial life, which until the *Viking* mission to Mars in 1976 was high in the scientists' expectations. "Since the *Viking* mission there seems to have been a discernible waning in the confidence of exobiologists and space scientists in the possibilities of life in space. It may well be that in the future the *Viking* mission will be seen to represent a psychological high water mark in the tide of belief in the idea of extra-terrestrial life. At present . . . there is not a shred of evidence for extra-terrestrial life, and there is no way of excluding the possibility of life being unique to Earth with all the philosophical consequences this entails," p260. He then deals with the traditional evolutionary story of the "prebiotic soup" on earth from which living organisms are supposed to have developed. "Considering the way the prebiotic soup is referred to in so many discussions of the origin of life as an already established reality, it comes as something of a shock to realise that there is absolutely no positive evidence for its existence," p261. Yet, "the most difficult aspect of the origin of life problem lies not in the origin of the soup but in the stages leading from the soup to the cell," p263. "The complexity of the simplest known type of

cell is so great that it is impossible to accept that such an object could have been thrown together suddenly by some kind of freakish, vastly improbable event. Such an occurrence would be indistinguishable from a miracle," p264. "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going" (Francis Crick, Nobel Prize winner) p268.

In the next chapter, he shows that the knowledge of protein structure allows, for the first time, an estimated mathematical probability to be calculated of one organism evolving into another. "Where the fossils had failed and morphological considerations were at best only ambiguous, perhaps this new field of comparative biochemistry might at last provide objective evidence of sequence and of the connecting links which had been so long sought by evolutionary biologists. However, as more protein sequences began to accumulate during the 1960s, it became increasingly apparent that the molecules were not going to provide any evidence of sequential arrangements in nature, but were rather going to reaffirm the traditional view that the system of nature conforms fundamentally to a highly ordered hierarchic scheme from which all direct evidence for evolution is emphatically absent," p277. "There is little doubt that if this molecular evidence had been available one century ago it would have been seized upon with devastating effect by the opponents of evolution like Agassiz and Owen, and the idea of organic evolution might never have been accepted. This new era of comparative biology illustrates just how erroneous is the assumption that advances in biological knowledge are continually confirming the traditional evolutionary story. There is no avoiding the serious nature of the challenge to the whole evolutionary framework implicit in these findings," p291. "The hold of the evolutionary paradigm is so powerful that an idea which is more like a principle of mediaeval astrology than a serious 20th century scientific theory has become a reality for evolutionary biologists," p306. The gap from chemistry to biochemistry is so great "we invariably face great, if not insurmountable, conceptual problems in envisaging how the gaps could have been bridged in terms of gradual random processes," p306.

The central axiom of Darwinian theory is that the initial elementary mutational changes are entirely random and occur by chance. A chapter entitled "beyond the Reach of Chance" demonstrates the impossibility of producing order out of random processes. "The inability of unguided trial and error to reach anything but the most trivial ends in almost every

field of interest obviously raises doubts as to its validity in the biological realm. Such doubts were recently raised by a number of mathematicians and engineers at an international symposium . . .” p314. Denton calculates that “to get a cell by chance would require at least 100 functional proteins to appear simultaneously in one place . . . giving a maximum combined probability of 10^{-2000} (1 in 10^{2000}),” p323. When we compare this figure with the number of atoms in the entire universe, 10^{70} , we can see that this probability is so supra-astronomically small that it is considered impossible. Hoyle and Wickramasinghe have calculated the probability of obtaining all 2000 enzymes in a random trial as one part in $10^{40,000}$, “an outrageously small probability that could not be faced even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup,” p323. “The Darwinian claim that all the adaptive design of nature has resulted from a random search, a mechanism unable to find the best solution in a game of checkers, is one of the most daring claims in the history of science. But it is also one of the least substantiated,” p324.

In the chapter, “The Puzzle of Perfection” the author succeeds in his attempt to demonstrate the complexity and ingenuity revealed in living organisms. In summarising an interesting “tour” of a living cell, he says, “What we would be witnessing would be an object resembling an immense automated factory . . . carrying out almost as many unique functions as all the manufacturing activities of man on earth. However, it would be a factory which would have one capacity not equalled in any of our own most advanced machines, for it would be capable of replicating its entire structure within a matter of a few hours. To witness such an act at a magnification of 1000 billion times would be an awe-inspiring spectacle, p329. “It is the sheer universality of perfection, the fact that everywhere we look to whatever depth we look, we find an elegance and ingenuity of an absolutely transcending quality, which so mitigates against the idea of chance,” p342.

The closing chapter, “The Priority of Paradigm”, gives several well-known examples of the lengths that scientists have gone to defend a theory, even when they have “the truth under their noses”. In spite of the lack of evidence for evolution, a large number of scientists hold to it mainly because of the lack of any alternative. This results in faith that masquerades as reasoning, “(Because) life originated on the earth, we have . . . evidence that the origin of life has a high probability.” p352. However, there are other reasons for scientists holding tenaciously to the evolutionary theory. “The failure to validate the Darwinian model has implications which reach far beyond biology. . . . The entire scientific

ethos and philosophy of modern western man is based to a large extent upon the central claim of Darwinian theory that humanity was not born by the creative intentions of a deity but a completely mindless trial and error selection of random molecular patterns. The cultural importance of evolution theory is therefore immeasurable, forming as it does the centrepiece, the crowning achievement, of the naturalistic view of the world, the final triumph of the secular thesis. . . . The 20th century would be incomprehensible without the Darwinian revolution. . . . It is ironic to recall that it was the increasingly secular outlook in the 19th century which initially eased the way for the acceptance of evolution, while today it is perhaps the Darwinian view of nature more than any other that is responsible for the agnostic and sceptical outlook of the 20th century. What was once a deduction from materialism has today become its foundation."

"The influence of evolutionary theory on fields far removed from biology is one of the most spectacular examples in history of how a highly speculative idea for which there is no really hard scientific evidence can come to fashion the thinking of a whole society and dominate the outlook of an age. . . . That it is neither fully plausible, nor comprehensive, is deeply troubling. One might have expected that a theory of such cardinal importance, a theory that literally changed the world, would have been something more than metaphysics, something more than a myth. Ultimately the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the 20th century . . . it satisfies the same deep psychological need for an all embracing explanation for the origin of the world which has motivated all the cosmogenic myth makers of the past." p358.

There are enough indications in the book that Denton does not accept the Genesis account, but he calls upon scientists to face up to the implications of life being a fundamentally discontinuous phenomenon. He does not attempt to give his own answer to man's origins, but the book is still very useful as a recent critique of the evolutionary position. The section of the book dealing with biochemistry, genetics and molecular biology is simply putting into words the very thoughts of this reviewer when he studied these matters himself as an undergraduate. Far from convincing him of the truthfulness of the evolutionary theory, they only served to reveal to him the glory and wisdom of "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 40: 28). It is with the hope and prayer that this will be the result of the study of this book that we commend it to your attention.

Students may feel that they cannot afford the price of this book, but it should be possible to obtain a copy at your library which, if it does not stock it, can arrange for you to receive it through the inter-library loan service.

D. M. B.

Notes and Comments

Education Bill

The Roman Catholic Bishop's Conference have attacked the new Education Bill saying it threatens Roman Catholic education. They criticise it on various grounds, one being that it forces religious studies to compete with a number of optional subjects for very limited time. Their view is that religious education (meaning Romanist religious education) is not one subject among many but the foundation of the educational process. They are afraid of the Secretary of State's right to determine the curriculum of voluntary aided Roman Catholic schools and also the Government's open enrolment proposals which might force them to take in too many non-Roman Catholics. They also fear that some Roman Catholic schools might be forced to close. Even the Pope has stepped into the arena praising the Roman Catholic bishops for their stand.

While we have to acknowledge that religious education in schools is altogether unsatisfactory, it is also true that the Roman Catholic schools up till now have occupied a very favoured position in this respect being able through their denominational schools to indoctrinate the Roman Catholic children with the Romanist heresies. We have to agree, however, with Lady Cox who, speaking in the House of Lords, said "As a nation, we are in danger of selling our spiritual birthright for a mess of secular pottage." The Earl of Arran gave an assurance that the Government continued to attach importance to religious education and worship, as required by statute. However, only a change in the nation spiritually will bring about a radical improvement in the present situation in religious education in our land. May the Lord be pleased to bring this about.

The Law of Blasphemy

Dr Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury has forwarded to the Lord Chancellor the report of a Committee of which the Bishop of London is Chairman. The report recommends that instead of the outright abolition of blasphemy as an offence, as suggested by the Law Commission, that there should be in its place a new offence covering all religions. *The*

Times editorial of 3rd March suggests that a general definition of religion would be hard to draft and extremely difficult for the courts to interpret and recommends that the law be left standing as it has a deterrent effect though it is seldom evoked.

Here, as with religious education, it is evident that the de-Christianising process is going on apace. What is needed is the Holy Spirit poured out from on High to turn us all as a nation from darkness to light and from the power of sin and Satan to God.

Zimbabwe News

On the afternoon of 24th February, Ingwenya Mission was struck by a tornado which swept through one side of the Station, and lifted the roofs of the girls' dormitories, of the Matron's house, of the old Assembly Hall, and of the Library. Immediately after the tornado came a deluge of rain, which drenched everything in the dormitories. The girls were at studies unaware of the catastrophe. Miss Graham was in town and unable to return that night as the rivers were in flood. Miss Macaulay was there and with the able help of the Boarding Master, Mr James Mpofu, the beds and girls' belongings were moved to the houses recently vacated by Mr and Mrs Hicklin and family when they left for New Zealand, and by Miss MacLennan when she left for Scotland. By Saturday the 27th most of the girls were back in their dormitories, and their clothes were drying in brilliant sunshine. The damage to the building was largely repaired by Mr David Mdlovu and his workmen. It was a reason for much thankfulness that no one was injured as the roofing materials, iron and asbestos, were carried a considerable distance. A number of the old trees were uprooted and among them the jacarandas which gave so much pleasure when they bloomed in purple profusion in spring.

New Canaan, where the Rev. Z. Mazvabo is minister, is about 200 miles east of Bulawayo, whereas our other stations are to the North-west. He and his people are Shona speaking whereas elsewhere the language spoken is Sindebele. Shabani area has suffered severe drought conditions for several years but we trust this year they have shared in the heavy rainfall. The presence of four hippo near the Church used to be a centre of interest for visitors, but all but one of them moved off when the river consisted of isolated pools. The Rev. Z. Mazvabo has been opening new preaching places wherever there has been an opportunity, often preaching to a small number of people under a tree.

Mr Mazvabo had been preaching at Berengwe for some time and now

the people are erecting a small church with a thatched roof. The Mission is giving them some assistance. At the time of the November Communion at New Canaan it was thought that perhaps some of the Berengwe people might like to attend. A car was sent but this was found to be too small and a small bus was sent. On their return they overtook two children who had set out on foot to reach the church. The bus was full and the disappointed children were sent home as the distance was too great for them to walk. This was a sad incident, but it is good to know the desire was there.

Another visit has been paid to Binga by Mr David Ndlovu and Mr Neil Murray. Two congregations in Scotland have sent contributions specially earmarked for Binga.

The new Assembly Hall has been completed. Several charitable organisations in Zimbabwe gave donations towards its cost. The old Assembly Hall is being used by the Blind pupils.

Many lands are closing their doors to the Gospel. We do not know how long the door will be open in Zimbabwe. Young Christian Doctors and teachers who would share in preaching the Gospel would be of great help. The time is short, the opportunity is now. There is no greater honour to be attained than to fight for the greatest of all causes in the High Places of the Field.

J. N.

Church Notes

Missionary Opportunities

At its meeting on 26th January the Jewish and Foreign Missions' Committee discussed the prospects for useful endeavour in different parts of Africa and resolved to bring to the attention of readers the following:—

1. That a Minister or other suitably qualified person is sought for to do missionary work in Malawi for an initial period of 12 months, and,
2. That although the previous request in the Magazine for undertaking missionary work in Kisii, Kenya specified a "medical missionary" (and which, incidentally, attracted no response), the Committee would now be pleased to hear from any person willing to engage in missionary work, with or without a medical qualification.
3. Since the time of the above meeting I have heard from Miss Graham, Headteacher at the John Tallach Secondary School, Ingwenya, that there is a shortage of staff and that any person with a University

Degree although not necessarily possessing Teacher Training, would be welcome there and would be acceptable to the Department of Education in Zimbabwe.

Readers should bear the needs of the mission-field to the Throne of Grace continually, and I look forward to hear from such as might feel compelled to fill one or other of the above posts.

Rev. Alexander Murray, F.P. Manse, Saval Road, Lairg, Sutherland, IV27 4EH. Telephone Lairg (0549) 2176.

Church Deputy to Australia and New Zealand

Rev. D. Boyd has continued his overseas visit by crossing to Australia and assisting at the Communion Season in Sydney along with Rev. E. A. Rayner. He also visited Grafton where our Church's witness has been for many years. Dr Boyd returned to New Zealand at the end of March to assist at the Gisborne Communion. He is due to leave for home on 26th April (D.V.). We trust that he will be brought back in safety in the Lord's kind providence, and that his labours will be blessed.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Staffin on 19th April at 6.30 p.m. for Induction of Rev. A. M. Cattanach.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 26th April at 12 noon.

Northern: At Dingwall on 7th June at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 14th June at 6 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 14th June.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 21st October at 2.30 p.m.

Opening of Leverburgh Home of Rest and Church

The opening of the Home of Rest and Church at Leverburgh took place on Friday, 12th February as intimated. In the providence of the Most High the weather was favourable and the roads open so that, thankfully, no travelling difficulties were encountered by those who came a distance to be present.

The ceremony connected with the opening of the Home and which was held in the Sitting Room began at 2.30 p.m. The Rev. Alexander Morrison presided and he began by conducting worship. The singing was in Gaelic and the precentor was Mr Alasdair Gillies, Glasgow. Thereafter, the Officer-in-Charge, Miss I. Campbell, was introduced to those present and Mr Morrison then, in turn, invited the Vice-convenor of the Western Isles Islands Council, the Chairwoman of the Western Isles Health

Board, the local officer of the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the principal of Donald MacKillop Associates, the Architects responsible for the design of the project and the head partner of Uist Builders Limited, the firm of Contractors responsible for construction, to speak.

The Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow, had been invited to perform the opening ceremony and he spoke last of all. In the course of his speech he referred to the manner in which the resources necessary for making this provision for old people had been made available in the holy providence of God. Mr MacLean then unveiled a plaque commemorating the opening of the Home and proceedings came to an end with the singing of Psalm 23 in English, Mr W. D. Fraser, Inverness, leading the praise.

All present were then invited to partake of an excellent buffet lunch prepared by the staff of the Home.

The new church was opened in the evening, the service beginning at 7 p.m. The Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow, preached a most appropriate sermon taking the words of Psalm 127 as his text. The praise, in Gaelic throughout, was led by Mr Alasdair Gillies. After the sermon was concluded, the Rev. John MacLeod, as interim Moderator of the South Harris Kirk Session, declared the building now open for the public worship of God and thanked all who had, in whatever capacity, set their hands to the work. The new church is capable of seating 380 in comfort and it was on this occasion filled to overflowing. Extra chairs being provided it was estimated that a congregation numbering over 420 was seated at the beginning of the service. Many had come long distances, travelling that evening from as far as Ness and North Tolsta. It was also gratifying to see there friends from mainland congregations. At the conclusion of the service an opportunity was given to all present to view the Home and hundreds availed themselves of it. The staff of the Home and the ladies of the South Harris congregation excelled themselves in providing an abundance of food and drink and we are most grateful to them for that.

All who love Sion are asked to pray that these developments connected with the Cause in South Harris would be Divinely blessed and that the great Head of the Church would now provide the congregation with a pastor after His own heart and make the new Leverburgh church the birthplace of many souls.

(Rev.) J. MacL.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: Anon., Skye, £50.

Aged and Infirm, etc., Fund: Anon., Skye, £50.

Organisation Fund: Anon., Skye., £50.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Kyle Congregation, £51; Plockton Congregation, £9.

Foreign Mission Fund: Aberdeen Sabbath School, £163; Dingwall Friends, £137; Miss J. Cox, N.Z., £188.41; Miss J., U.S., \$20; Miss M. M., \$40; Mr and Mrs Hicklin, \$20, all for BINGA trip, per Neil Murray; Mr A. MacK., Stornoway, \$300 for Mbuma Mission, per Neil Murray.

Ingwenya: May-Dec. 1986: Inverness Congregation, £731; Miss C. L., Wick, £20; Mrs M., Halkirk, £20; two Friends, £150, £50; Miss A. M., £5; Edinburgh Congregation, two large typewriters and two record players for use of blind pupils (approx. £350); Wick Sabbath School, £16; Friend, Stornoway, per Miss MacA., £60; Toronto Ladies Group, £278 plus one Braille machine.

1987: Lakenheath Sabbath School, £100; Glasgow Sabbath School, £250; Inverness Sabbath School, £250; Inverness Friends, £50, £150 and £100; Mrs S., Falkirk, £100; Mrs S., Wick, £100 and £200; Friend, Dingwall, £50; Mrs T., Edinburgh, £10; per Miss MacA., Z\$150 and Z\$400; Scottish Friends, £76, £60 and £45; Inverness Congregation, £577; Edinburgh Congregation, per Mrs K. T., £100; Wick Congregation, £300; Anon., London, one Braille Machine (approx. £300); Anon., Vancouver, Can\$500; Toronto Ladies and Congregation (including \$400 from Anon., Winnipeg) Can\$545 plus two Braille machines; all gifts sent to John Tallach School for use of blind pupils; Edinburgh Congregation, £425 for the needy of the Church in Zimbabwe.

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

Breasclete: Anon., £36; Anon., £16, both for General Purposes.

Fort William: Friend, Caol, £10 for Sust. Fund.

Glasgow: Mrs MacK. (two donations) £10; Anon., £8, both for Congr. Fund; M. H. A., £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; Matth. 6: 3 (two donations) £20; J. C., £20; Anon., £30; Harris Friend, £25, All for Bus Fund; Harris Friend, £25, last two per Rev. D. M.; Anon., £12; J. C., £10, last three for T.B.S.; Anon., £6 for Barnoldswick Cong.; Anon., £4 for African Relief.

Greenock: Friend, £1000 to reduce loan for Greenock Church repairs; Anon., £40 for Trinitarian Bible Society.

Laide: Friend, £30 for Church Electricity; Friend, Aultbea, £20 for work in Communist countries; Mrs Morrison, North Tolsta, £10 for Church Funds.

Portree: Miss C. M., £610 for lighting installation, per W. B.; Anon., £4 for Peace Clinic, Hong Kong; Anon., £10 for Aged Ministers etc. Fund; Anon., £20 for Foreign Mission, last three envelope in plate; Friend, £15 for Sust. Fund, per F. M.

Raasay: Envelope in plate, £10 for Sust. Fund; Friend, Raasay, £10 for Foreign Missions; Friend, Raasay, £20 for Home of Rest, per Rev. J. R. Tallach.

South Harris: For South Harris Free Presbyterian Church, 12th February, 1988, Collection Plate plus £50 donated by the daughters of the late Mr and Mrs Alexander MacLennan, Finsbay, in memory of their beloved parents; Friend, Inverness, £80; Friend, Inverness, £10; Friend, Stornoway, £3; Friend, Stornoway, £5; Friend, Tolsta, £10; Friend, Tolsta, £5; Friend, Tolsta, £5; Friend, Ness, £3, all in Church Plate; Friend, Kintulavig, £100; Friend of the Cause, £50, last two per D. MacKenzie, all for New Church Opening.

Stirling: Friends, Fort William, £10, per Rev. D. J. M.; Friend, Harris, £5, both for Sust. Fund.

Stornoway: Anon. (envelope in plate) £40 for T.B.S.

Strath, Skye: Mrs Logan, Hamilton, Ontario, £20 for Congr. Fund, in memory of a dear friend, Mrs D. Cameron; Anon., £6.25 for Cong. Fund.