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A Visit to Africa

In view of my recent visit to Africa it might seem appropriate that I would give readers of the Magazine some impressions of my visit.

First of all I visited Kenya. The general impression which one gets of this land, ruled over by a Christian President, Daniel Moi, is that there is much outward profession of religion. Church services appear to be well attended and even when meeting people they will readily speak on religion. The influence of Missions on the Kenyan people is clearly discernible, yet it is to be feared that a considerable amount of Christian profession and teaching is of a very superficial nature. So far as Sabbath keeping is concerned it is almost non-existent. Church attendance in the morning can be followed by buying and selling at the Market in the afternoon. The Churches generally have never insisted on Sabbath keeping, except perhaps the SDA's who keep the Jewish Sabbath. The need of instruction in this aspect of Christian practice as well as in the other doctrines of the truth is sorely needed. Those among whom we worked expressed a desire to be taught more fully the doctrines of the truth. The teaching of God's Word as set forth in the Shorter Catechism was put before them and to these they gave their assent as being Scriptural. Yet they desire to learn more and would welcome one who would go out to teach them the truth. Only the Lord can raise up servants for His own Cause.

In Malawi which I visited next the need for labourers who would instruct the people in the truth is also urgent. In this land, apart from the main denominations, there are hundreds of small groups usually under a Pastor who acts as a leader. He may have a number of helpers who keep services in the different congregations which are attached to the group. The teaching in these groups appears to be generally of a very shallow

nature, as they are often begun by persons recently professing conversion. It can be seen therefore that instruction in all the doctrines of the faith is essential if any progress is to be made. The groups with which we were in contact all expressed a willingness to be taught these doctrines and to come under the oversight of our Church. This was true also of the congregation to which we ministered in the Mozambique refugee camp. They wished an assurance from us that our Church would not forsake them when they would eventually return to their own land.

The third country I visited was Zimbabwe where our Mission has been established for more than eighty years. Here I found myself in an environment similar to that at home. On the Mission there is a Christian witness in the midst of the surrounding darkness. Here the Gospel goes forth from Sabbath to Sabbath in its purity and the ordinances of God's house are carried on according to His appointment. Two communion seasons were included in my visit and there large congregations gathered overflowing the Churches in which the Communion were held. The Lord has His servants and people there who seek the glory of His great name. It was pleasant indeed to renew acquaintance with them and give some little help in ministering the Gospel to them. In this as well as in the other countries the cry is the same: "Pray ye the Lord of the Harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest." In Zimbabwe medical and educational facilities have been built up over the years and in Kenya and Malawi the need is the same for schools, hospitals and medical clinics. The door is wide open at present in Kenya and Malawi and we trust that in the Lord's kind providence our Church will be able to take advantage of this and come to the help of those who are in such great need.

I have not spoken of the difficulties necessarily involved in a visit to Africa. Language difficulties there must be but these can be overcome by the use of an interpreter or, as at the Communion service at New Canaan, by the use of two interpreters, one translating into the Shona language and the other into Sindebele. Travel in Africa is reasonably straight forward when one keeps to the main roads but when one has to travel on side roads which we had to do for most of the time then it becomes a nightmare and one returns home completely exhausted in body and mind. Visits to homes can also pose difficulties when hospitality is shown but the African food may not agree with one used to a European diet. Yet all these difficulties are not worth reckoning as difficulties when we read the list of trials and difficulties which the apostle Paul met with in going forth with the Gospel of God's grace. To be sent on such an

errand ought to be reckoned a privilege of the highest sort and not regarded as a burden. Our desire and prayer is that the Lord will raise up many to go to these distant lands to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, as well as raising up many in Africa itself to proclaim the truth.

Christ and the Two Thieves

by Bishop J. C. Ryle

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

"But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou are in the same condemnation?

"And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds — but this man hath done nothing amiss.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Luke 23: 39-43.

Reader, you know these verses, I suppose. It would be strange indeed if you did not. Few passages in the New Testament are more familiar to men's ears.

And it is right and good that these verses should be well known. They have comforted many troubled minds. They have brought peace to many uneasy consciences. They have been a healing balm to many wounded hearts. They have been a medicine to many sin-sick souls. They have smoothed down not a few dying pillows. Wherever the Gospel of Christ is preached, they will always be honoured, loved, and had in remembrance.

Reader, I wish to speak to you about these verses. Listen to me while I try to unfold the leading lessons which they are meant to teach. I cannot see the state of your heart before God, but I can see truths in this passage which no man can ever know too well.

I. First of all, you are meant to learn from these verses, *Christ's power and willingness to save sinners.*

This is the main doctrine to be gathered from the history of the penitent thief. It teaches you that which ought to be music in the ears of all who hear it, — it teaches you that Jesus Christ is mighty to save.

I ask you if any man's case could look more hopeless and desperate, than that of this penitent thief once did?

He was a *wicked man*, — a malefactor, — a thief, if not a murderer. We know this, for such only were crucified. He was suffering a just punishment for breaking the laws. And as he had lived wicked, so he

seemed determined to die wicked, — for when he first was crucified, he railed on our Lord.

And he was a *dying man*. He hung there, nailed to a cross, from which he was never to come down alive. He had no longer power to stir hand or foot. His hours were numbered. The grave was ready for him. There was but a step between him and death.

If ever there was a soul hovering on the brink of hell, it was the soul of this thief. If ever there was a case that seemed lost, gone, and past recovery, it was his. If ever there was a child of Adam whom the devil made sure of as his own, it was this man.

But see now what happened. He ceased to rail and blaspheme, as he had done at the first. He began to speak in another manner altogether. He turned to our blessed Lord in prayer. He prayed Jesus to “remember him when He came into His kingdom.” He asked that his soul might be cared for, his sins pardoned, and himself thought of in another world. Truly this was a wonderful change.

And then mark what kind of answer he received. Some would have said he was too wicked a man to be saved. But it was not so. Some would have fancied it was too late: the door was shut, and there was no room for mercy. But it proved not too late at all. The Lord Jesus returned him an immediate answer, — spoke kindly to him, — assured him he should be with Him that day in Paradise: pardoned him completely, — cleansed him thoroughly from his sins, — received him graciously, — justified him freely, — raised him from the gates of hell, — gave him a title to glory. Of all the multitude of saved souls, none ever received so glorious an assurance of his own salvation, as did this penitent thief. Go over the whole list, from Genesis to Revelation, and you will find none who had such words spoken to them as these: “Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

Reader, the Lord Jesus never gave so complete a proof of His power and will to save, as He did upon this occasion. In the day when He seemed most weak, He showed that He was a strong deliverer. In the hour when His body was racked with pain, He showed that he could feel tenderly for others. At the time when He Himself was dying, He conferred on a sinner eternal life.

Now, have I not a right to say, Christ is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him? Behold the proof of it. If ever a sinner was too far gone to be saved, it was this thief. Yet he was plucked as a brand from the fire.

Have I not a right to say, Christ will receive any poor sinner who

comes to Him with the prayer of faith, and cast out none? Behold the proof of it. If ever there was one that seemed too bad to be received, this was the man. Yet the door of mercy was wide open even for him.

Have I not a right to say, by grace ye may be saved through faith, not of works: fear not, only believe? Behold the proof of it. This thief was never baptized. He belonged to no visible Church. He never received the Lord's Supper. He never did any work for Christ. He never gave money to Christ's cause. But he had faith, and so he was saved.

Have I not a right to say, the youngest faith will save man's soul, if it only be true? Behold the proof of it. This man's faith was only one day old, but it led him to Christ, and preserved him from hell.

Why then should any man or woman despair with such a passage as this in the Bible? Jesus is a physician who can cure hopeless cases. He can quicken dead souls, and call the things which be not as though they were.

Never should any man or woman despair! Jesus is still the same now that He was eighteen hundred years ago. The keys of death and hell are in His hand. When He opens none can shut.*

What though your sins be more in number than the hairs of your head? What though your evil habits have grown with your growth, and strengthened with your strength? What though you have hitherto hated good, and loved evil, all the days of your life? These things are sad indeed; but there is hope, even for you. Christ can heal you. Christ can raise you from your low estate. Heaven is not shut against you. Christ is able to admit you, if you will humbly commit your soul into His hands.

Reader, *are your sins forgiven?* If not, I set before you this day a full and free salvation. I invite you to follow the steps of the penitent thief: come to Christ, and live. I tell you that Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. I tell you He can do everything that your soul requires. Though your sins be as scarlet, He will make them white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Why should you not be saved as well as another? Come unto Christ, and live.

Reader, *are you a true believer?* If you are, you ought to glory in Christ. Glory not in your own faith, your own feelings, your own knowledge, your own prayers, your own amendment, your own diligence. Glory in nothing but Christ. Alas, the best of us knows but little of that merciful and mighty Saviour! We do not exalt Him and

* "O Saviour, what a precedent is this of Thy free and powerful grace! Where Thou wilt give, what unworthiness can bar us from Thy mercy? When Thou wilt give, what time can prejudice our vocation? Who can despair of Thy goodness, when he, that in the morning was posting to hell, is in the evening with Thee in paradise?" — Bishop Hall.

glory in Him enough. Let us pray that we may see more of the fulness there is in Him.

Reader, *do you ever try to do good to others?* If you do, remember to tell them about Christ. Tell the young, tell the poor, tell the aged, tell the ignorant, tell the sick, tell the dying, — tell them all about Christ. Tell them of His power, and tell them of His love. Tell them of His doings, and tell them of His feelings. Tell them what He has done for the chief of sinners. Tell them what He is willing to do the last day of time. Tell it them over and over again. Never be tired of speaking of Christ. Say to them, broadly and fully, freely and unconditionally, unreservedly and undoubtingly, “Come unto Christ as the penitent thief did: come unto Christ, and you shall be saved.”

II. The second lesson you are meant to learn from this passage is this, — *if some are saved in the very hour of death, others are not.*

This is a truth that never ought to be passed over, and I dare not leave it unnoticed. It is a truth that stands out plainly in the sad end of the other malefactor, and is only too often forgotten.

What became of the other thief who was crucified? Why did he not turn from his sin, and call upon the Lord? Why did he remain hardened and impenitent? Why was he not saved? It is useless to try to answer such questions. Let us be content to take the fact as we find it, and see what it is meant to teach us.

We have no right whatever to say this thief was a worse man than his companion. There is nothing to prove it. Both plainly were wicked men. Both were receiving the due reward of their deeds. Both hung by the side of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both heard Him pray for His murderers. Both saw Him suffer patiently. But while one repented, the other remained hardened. While one began to pray, the other went on railing. While one was converted in his last hours, the other died a bad man as he had lived. While one was taken to paradise, the other went to his own place, the place of the devil and his angels.

Now these things are written for our warning. There is warning, as well as comfort in these verses, and that very solemn warning too.

They tell me loudly, that though some may repent and be converted on their death-beds, it does not at all follow that all will. A death-bed is not always a saving time.

They tell me loudly that two men may have the same opportunities of getting good for their souls, — may be placed in the same position, see the same things, and hear the same things; and yet only one shall take advantage of them, repent, believe, and be saved.

They tell me, above all, that repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and are not in a man's own power; and that if any one flatters himself he can repent at his own time, choose his own season, seek the Lord when he pleases, and, like the penitent thief, be saved at the very last, — he may find at length he is greatly deceived.

And it is good and profitable to bear this in mind. There is an immense amount of delusion in the world on this very subject. I see many allowing life to slip away, all unprepared to die. I see many allowing that they ought to repent, but always putting off their own repentance. And I believe one grand reason is, that most men suppose they can turn to God just when they like. They wrest the parable of the labourer in the vineyard, which speaks of the eleventh hour, and use it as it never was meant to be used. They dwell on the pleasant part of the verses I am now considering, and forget the rest. They talk of the thief that went to paradise, and was saved, and forget the one who died as he had lived, and was lost.*

Reader, take heed that you do not fall into this mistake. Look at the history of men in the Bible, and see how often these notions I have been speaking of are contradicted. Mark well how many proofs there are that two men may have the same light offered them, and only one use it; and that no one has a right to take liberties with God's mercy, and presume he will be able to repent just when he likes.

Look at Saul and David. They lived about the same time. They rose from the same rank in life. They were called to the same position in the world. They enjoyed the ministry of the same prophet, Samuel. They reigned the same number of years. — Yet one was saved and the other lost.

Look at Sergius Paulus and Gallio. They were both Roman Governors. They were both wise and prudent men in their generation. They both heard the apostle Paul preach. But one believed and was baptized, — the other "cared for none of these things."

Look at the world around you. See what is going on continually under

* "He that puts off his repentance and seeking for pardon to the very last, in reliance upon this example, does but tempt God, and turn that to his own poison, which God intended for better ends.

"The mercies of God are never recorded in Scripture for man's presumption, and the failings of men never for imitation." — Lightfoot. Sermon. 1684.

"Most ungrateful and foolish is the conduct of those who take encouragement from the penitent thief to put off repentance to a dying moment; — most ungrateful in perverting the grace of their Redeemer into an occasion of renewing their provocations against Him; — and most foolish to imagine that what our Lord did in so singular circumstances, is to be drawn into an ordinary precedent." — Doddridge.

your eyes. Two sisters will often attend the same ministry, listen to the same truths, hear the same sermons; and yet only one shall be converted unto God, while the other remains totally unmoved. Two friends often read the same religious book. One is so moved by it, that he gives up all for Christ; the other sees nothing at all in it, and continues the same as before. Hundreds have read Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" without profit: with Wilberforce it was one of the beginnings of spiritual life. Thousands have read Wilberforce's "Practical View of Christianity," and laid it down again unaltered; — from the time Legh Richmond read it he became another man. No man has any warrant for saying, Salvation is in my own power.

Reader, I do not pretend to explain these things. I only put them before you as great facts. And I ask you to consider them well.

You must not misunderstand me. I do not want to discourage you. I say these things in all affection, to give you warning of danger. I do not say them to drive you back from heaven; — I say them rather to draw you on, and bring you to Christ while He can be found.

I want you to beware of presumption. Do not abuse God's mercy and compassion. Do not continue in sin, I beseech you, and think you can repent, and believe, and be saved, just when you like, when you please, when you will, and when you choose. I would always set before you an open door. I would always say, "While there is life there is hope." But if you would be wise, put nothing off that concerns your soul.

I want you to beware of letting slip good thoughts and godly convictions, if you have them. Cherish them and nourish them, lest you lose them for ever. Make the most of them, lest they take to themselves wings and flee away. Have you an inclination to begin praying? Put it in practice at once. Have you an idea of beginning really to serve Christ? Set about it at once. Are you enjoying any spiritual light? See that you live up to your light. Trifle not with opportunities, lest the day come when you will want to use them, and not be able. Linger not, lest you become wise too late.

You may say, perhaps, "It is never too late to repent." I answer, That is right enough, but late repentance is seldom true. And I say further, You cannot be certain if you put off repenting, you will repent at all.

You may say, "Why should I be afraid? — the penitent thief was saved? I answer, That is true, but look again at the passage which tells you that the other thief was lost.

The Divine Glory of Christ

Rev. Charles J. Brown published in 1868 a little book which gathered and arranged the indirect or incidental testimonies of Scripture to the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This edifying and devotional book was reprinted by the Banner of Truth in 1982. This edited extract is intended to encourage our readers to read the whole book.

Indirect testimonies to the Divinity of Christ from commendations of His transcendent excellency by Himself and His servants, and from incidental references to His rank and place as in relation to God the Father.

1. COMMENDATIONS of his transcendent excellency *by himself*.

We fail of perceiving how strange this is only because we have grown so familiar with the language of those commendations. For it is a principle witnessed alike by Scripture and by the instincts of our nature, that it is unbecoming in a creature to utter his own praise; that while it is altogether befitting the adorable God to commend his own excellency, the rule for creatures on the contrary is, "Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips" — "for men to search their own glory, is not glory" (Prov. 27: 2; 25: 27). Emphatically, no doubt, the principle applies to *men*, to frail, imperfect men. But it holds also, in reality, of all created and dependent beings, even of the highest angels, who at best can do no more than their duty to God; who thus can never have anything to boast of; and who, bound accordingly to "cover their faces and their feet with their wings" in His presence, have shrunk back, as often as men, awed by their superior purity and dignity, have bent before them in worship, going no further respecting themselves than that word of one of their number, "I am Gabriel which stand in the presence of God."

But now, what manner of man is this whose voice we hear, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys", "I am the bright and morning star", "I am the good Sheperd", "I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple", "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here", "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart", "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"! I do not take other words, without number, such as, "I am the first and the last"; "I am the resurrection and the life"; "before Abraham was, I am", because these are not mere self-commendations, but direct claims to Divinity, if language have any significance, and do not therefore fall within our field of indirect testimonies. I take simply *the principle of self-commendation*. And here it is well worthy of being noticed that, not only is it not felt to

be a thing unbecoming our Lord Jesus to speak his own praise, but, just as the glorious God never appears more glorious than when proclaiming his own excellencies (as to Job, for example, out of the whirlwind), so Christ never seems fairer, or more attractive, than when commending himself, as I remember to have heard of a humble, godly woman, who said of him, "*It sets him weel to commend himself.*" O yes, Paul was obliged in some of his epistles to speak his own praise. But again and again he apologises for it, calls it "*speaking as a fool*", and declares he had recourse to it only because the Corinthians had compelled him. The Lord Jesus, offering no apology, never seems lovelier in the eyes of his people than when saying, "*I am the good Shepherd*", "*I am the rose of Sharon*", "*I am meek and lowly in heart*", "*I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star*". The fitting response on our part, what is it but Thomas's, "*My Lord and my God*"?

2. But let us now, a little more fully, look at some commendations of the Saviour's transcendent excellency *by his servants*. I select John the Baptist, the Gentile centurion of Capernaum, and the apostle Paul.

First, the forerunner of Christ: Luke 3: 16, 17, "John answered saying unto them all, I indeed baptise you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." *One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose*, or, as Mark has it, *to stoop down and unloose*. Ah! who is this for whom the stern and unbending John, that would not have quailed before the mightiest potentate on earth, counted himself unworthy to do even the office of a slave? It is the practice, it seems, in China, for persons brought before the higher authorities on a criminal charge, to kneel before them on both knees. A few years ago, a devoted Scottish Missionary was charged with an offence connected with his great work, and on being summoned before one of those authorities, was ordered to kneel in the usual manner. "I am willing", he replied, "to kneel, if you desire it, on one knee, as I would before the sovereign of England. But I cannot go down on both knees before any but Jehovah." Oh, I think John the Baptist is bending lower than on both knees before Christ in these words, "*One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.*"

But the testimony, the commendation, is not done: "*Whose fan is in*

his hands, and he will thoroughly purge his floor” — *his* floor — so that the whole visible Church on earth is the property of Jesus Christ, “*his* floor”. “And he will gather the wheat into his garner.” All heaven too, it seems, is his property — “he will gather the wheat into *his* garner; but the chaff *he will burn* with fire unquenchable.” Hell also, it seems, is his, kindled by his breath — “*He* will burn the chaff.” Compare those words, 2 Thess. 1: 7, 8, “When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire *taking vengeance* on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “The chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.” O Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world, let thy precious blood be ever upon my poor soul; and baptise thou me with the Holy Ghost, that “fire” which consumes only the sin, but melts and refines and purifies the sinner!

Second, the Gentile centurion of Capernaum: Luke 7: 6-8, “Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefor neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority having under me soldiers: and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” See, first, how this believing soldier ascribes to Jesus so transcendent a purity and glory, that neither is he himself worthy so much as to approach him, nor worthy that Jesus should approach at all to *him* — “Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.” And further, behold how he ascribes to him such a resistless, unlimited authority and power, that with the same ease wherewith *he* could say to one of his soldiers, Go, and he should go, with the very same ease Jesus had but to speak to death, to disease, to all nature, and it should obey him — “say in a word, and my servant shall be healed: for I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth”. He does not even think it necessary to draw the conclusion in as many words, The like absolute authority, Lord, hast thou over death, disease, all things whatsoever. He silently assumes, takes it for granted.

But Jesus perhaps will shrink back from such a commendation, in the spirit of that angel who, when the apostle John in an unguarded moment fell at his feet, said, “See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this

book; worship God"? Nay, for it is written in the next verse, "When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found *so great faith*, no, not in Israel." Thus He whom we just now found uttering his own praise, and offering no kind of apology for it, bids welcome the praise of the centurion as nothing more than his due, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." With which compare, in passing, the Syrophenician woman's words, "Lord, help me. But he said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" — I, the dog; thou, the master! "Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, *great is thy faith*; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It is, and can be, none other than the God to whom the prophet of old addressed himself, "Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise."

Third, the apostle Paul, I take two examples from his Epistles. First, his remarkable words addressed to the Cornithians (1 Cor. 2: 2), "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." *Not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ?* Behold an inspired teacher of religion, passing from city to city, from church to church, determined to know but one thing, as it were; teach but one thing; publish, commend, enforce, glory in one thing — a creature? O frightful thought, and contradiction in the very terms! For religion is but another word for God. God is religion; religion is God. When this inspired teacher, therefore, determines not to know anything in the churches save Jesus Christ, he evidently assumes and presupposes that Christ is God — God the Son, who, for us men, and for our salvation, became flesh, and therein died, the Just for the unjust. "I determined not to know any among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Then, a second example of Paul's commendations of the transcendent excellency and beauty of the Lord Jesus: Eph. 3: 17-19, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." *The breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.* It is enough simply to say here, that no higher commendation *can* be pronounced, or conceived, of the love of the eternal God. The inspired apostle here exhausts all the powers of language in the praise of the love of *Christ*, so that, were He not very and eternal God, there could remain no higher possible praise

for the Divine love to receive — “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge”. If anything could add to the force of this indirect testimony to the Divinity of the Lord Jesus, it would be those words of the Saviour himself (unless, indeed, he and his apostle flatly contradict each other!), “There is none good but one, that is God”; of course teaching that so entirely alone, and unapproached in excellency, is the goodness and love of Jehovah, that all the love, the goodness, even of *the highest and noblest creatures in the universe*, brought into comparison with it, are extinguished as some taper-light in the sun, and are as if they had no existence. “There is none good but one, that is God.” “That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know *the love of Christ*, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

The Extent of the Atonement and the Gospel Offer

by Principal William Cunningham, D.D.

(Our Scottish divines, though Calvinists of unquestioned orthodoxy, have all along held the doctrine of the free offer of the gospel while holding that Christ died only for those who were given Him by the Father. We find this teaching in the sermons of the most honoured of the Scottish preachers such as Samuel Rutherford, Thomas Boston, Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, Robert Murray MacCheyne, Dr. John Macdonald and Dr. John Kennedy, etc. This is the doctrine taught in our Confession of Faith. It is to be clearly distinguished from the Arminian view that the free offer of the gospel is a corollary of the doctrine of a universal atonement. Dr. Cunningham in the following extract brings out certain points that are worthy of consideration.)

By far the most important and plausible of the scriptural arguments in support of it (a universal atonement), and the only one we mean to notice, is the alleged necessity of a universal atonement, or of Christ's having died for all men, as the only consistent ground or basis on which the offers and invitations of the gospel can be addressed indiscriminately to all men. We fully admit the general fact upon which the argument is based, namely, that in Scripture, men, without distinction and exception, have salvation, and all that leads to it, offered or tendered to them, that they are invited to come to Christ and to receive pardon, and assured that all who accept the offer, and comply with the invitation, shall receive everything necessary for their eternal welfare. We fully admit that God in the Bible does all this, and authorises and requires us to do the same in dealing with our fellowmen. Very few Calvinists have ever disputed the

propriety and the obligation of addressing to men indiscriminately, without distinction or exception, the offers and invitations of gospel mercy; and the few who have fallen into error upon this subject . . . have usually based their refusal to offer to men indiscriminately pardon and acceptance, and to invite any or all to come to Christ that they might receive these blessings, upon the views they entertained, not about a limitation of the atonement, but *about the entire depravity of human nature, man's inability to repent and believe*. This topic of the consistency of a limited atonement with the unlimited offers and invitations of gospel mercy, or of the alleged necessity of a universal atonement as the only ground or basis on which such offers and invitations can rest, has been very fully discussed. We can only suggest a few hints in regard to it.

There are obviously two questions that may be entertained upon this subject: *First*, Is an unlimited atonement necessary in order to warrant ministers of the gospel, or any who may be seeking to lead others to the saving knowledge of the truth, to offer to men, without exception, pardon and acceptance, and to invite them to come to Christ? And, *secondly*, Is an unlimited atonement necessary in order to warrant God in addressing, and in authorising and requiring us to address, such universal offers and invitations to our fellow-men? The neglect of keeping these two questions distinct has sometimes introduced error and confusion into the discussion of this subject.

It is the *first* question with which we have more immediately to do, as it affects a duty which we are called upon to discharge; while the *second* is evidently, from its very nature, one of those secret things which belong unto the Lord. It is very evident that our conduct, in preaching the gospel, and in addressing our fellow-men with a view to their salvation, should not be regulated by any inferences of our own about the nature, extent, and sufficiency of the provision actually made for saving them, but solely by the directions and instructions which God has given us, by precept or example, to guide us in this matter, unless, indeed, we venture to act upon the principle of refusing to obey God's commands, until we fully understand all the grounds and reasons of them. God has commanded the gospel to be preached to every creature; He has required us to proclaim to our fellow-men, of whatever character and in all varieties of circumstances, the glad tidings of great joy, to hold out to them in His name, pardon and acceptance through the blood of atonement, to invite them to come to Christ, and to receive him, and to accompany all this with the assurance that "whosoever cometh to Him, He will no wise cast out." God's revealed will is the only rule, and ought to be held to be the

sufficient warrant for all that we do in this matter, in deciding what is our duty, in making known to our fellow-men what are their privileges and obligations, and in setting before them reasons and motives for improving the one and discharging the other. And though this revelation does not warrant us in telling them that Christ died for all and each of the human race, a mode of preaching the gospel never adopted by our Lord and His Apostles, yet it does authorise and enable us to lay before men views and considerations, facts and arguments, *which, in right reason*, should warrant and persuade all to whom they are addressed, to lay hold of the hope set before them, to turn into the stronghold as prisoners of hope.

The *second* question, as to the conduct of God in this matter, leads into much greater difficulties, but difficulties which we are not bound, as we have no ground to expect to be able, to solve. The position of our opponents is in substance this, that it was not possible for God, because not consistent with integrity and uprightness, to address such offers and invitations to men indiscriminately, unless an atonement, which is indispensable to salvation, had been presented and accepted on behalf of all men, of each individual of the human race. Now, this position bears very manifestly the character of unwarranted presumption, and assumes our capacity of fully comprehending and estimating the eternal purposes of the divine mind, the inmost grounds and reasons of the divine procedure. It cannot be proved, because there is really not any clear and certain medium of probation, that God, by offering to men indiscriminately, without distinction or exception, through Christ, pardon and acceptance, contradicts the doctrine which He has revealed to us in His own Word, as to a limitation, not in the intrinsic sufficiency, but in the intended destination of the atonement. And unless this can be clearly and conclusively proved, we are bound to believe that they are consistent with each other, though we may not be able to perceive and develop this consistency, and of course we reject the argument of our opponents as untenable. When we carefully analyse all that is really implied in what God says and does, or authorises and requires us to say and do in this matter, we can find much that is fitted to show positively that God does not, in offering pardon and acceptance to men indiscriminately, act inconsistently or deceptively, though it is not true that the atonement was universal. And it is easy to prove that He does no injustice to anyone; since all who believe what He has revealed to them, and who do what He has given them sufficient motives or reasons for doing, will certainly obtain salvation. And although difficulties will still remain in the matter,

which cannot fully be solved, it is easy to show that they just resolve into the one grand difficulty of all religion, and of every system of theology, that, viz., of reconciling, or rather of developing, the consistency between the supremacy and sovereignty of God, and the free agency and responsibility of man. In arguing with Calvinistic universalists,* there is no great difficulty in showing that the principles on which they defend their Calvinistic views, upon other points, against Arminian objections, are equally available for defending the doctrine of a limited atonement against the objection we are now considering; and that the distinctions which they attempt to establish between the two cases are either altogether unfounded, or, if they have some truth and reality in them (as, for instance, that founded on the difference between natural and moral inability, a distinction which seems to have been first fully developed by Cameron, and with a special view to this very point), do not go to the root of the matter, do not affect the substance of the case, and then leave the grand difficulty, though slightly altered in the position it occupies, and in the particular aspect in which it is presented, as strong and as formidable as ever.

Though the advocates of a universal atonement are accustomed to boast much of the support which, they allege, their doctrine derives from the scriptural statements about God's loving the world, Christ's dying for all; yet many of them are pretty well aware that they really have but little that is formidable to advance except the alleged inconsistency of the doctrine of a limited atonement with the unlimited or indiscriminate invitations and commands to come to Christ and to lay hold on Him, which God address to men in His word, and which He has authorised and required us to address to our fellowmen. The distinction between the ground and warrant of men's act and of God's act in this matter, not only suggests materials for answering the arguments of opponents, but it also tends to remove a certain measure of confusion, or misconception, sometimes exhibited upon this point by the defenders of the truth. Some of them are accustomed to say that the ground or warrant for the universal or unlimited offers of pardon, and commands to believe, is the infinite intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's atonement, which they generally hold, though denying its universal intended destination or efficiency; while others profess to rest the universal offers and commands upon the simple authority of God in His Word, making them Himself, and requiring us to proclaim them to others.

Now it is evident that these two things are not, as the language of some

* *The Hypothetical Universalists of Saumur such as Cameron, Amyrald, etc.*

orthodox divines might lead us to suppose, contrasted with, or opposed to, each other. The sole ground or warrant for men's act, in offering pardon and salvation to their fellow-men, is the authority and command of God in His Word. *We have no other warrant than this*; we need no other; and we should seek or desire none; but on this ground alone should consider ourselves not only warranted, but bound, to proclaim to our fellow-men, whatever be their country, character or condition, the good news of the kingdom, and to call upon them to come to Christ that they may be saved, the Bible affording us sufficient, yea, abundant materials for convincing them that, in right reason, they ought to do this, and for assuring them that all who do, shall obtain eternal life. But this has manifestly nothing to do with the question as to the ground or warrant of God's act in making unlimited offers, and in authorising us to make them.

In regard to the allegation often made by orthodox divines that this act of God is warranted by, and is based upon, the infinite intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's atonement, we would only remark, for we cannot enter into the discussion, that we are not aware of any scripture evidence that these two things, namely, the universal intrinsic sufficiency and the unlimited offers, are connected in this way, that we have never been able to see how the assertion of this connection removed or solved the difficulty, or threw any additional light upon this subject, and that, therefore, we think it best while unhesitatingly doing ourselves, in our intercourse with our fellow-men, all that God's Word authorises and requires, to be contented with believing the general position, that God in this, as in every thing else, has chosen the best and wisest means of accomplishing all that He really intended to effect; and to be satisfied, so far as the objection of opponents is concerned, with showing *that it cannot be proved* that there is any inconsistency or insincerity, that there is any injustice or deception, on God's part, in anything which He says or does in this matter, even though the intended destination of the atonement was to effect and secure the salvation of the elect only, even though He did not design or purpose, by sending His Son into the world, to save any but those who are saved. — *Historical Theology*, ii 344-348.

Westminster Confession

Chapter 20 — *Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience.*

I. The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel, consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, and condemning

wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love, and willing mind. All which were common also to believers under the law; but under the new testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.

II. God alone is lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

III. They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practise any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty; which is, that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

IV. And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate.

The Church's Authority and Liberty of Conscience

by Rev. D. Beaton

In connection with the subject of the authority of the church an interesting and important question meets us. Does the right of liberty of conscience undermine and invalidate the lawful authority of the Church? Or are there limits to the right of liberty of conscience? These questions were raised in an acute form during the Civil Wars when the Sectaries carried the claims of the rights of liberty of conscience to indefensible lengths. The Brownists carried "pretended liberty of conscience" against all church authority while the Fifth Monarchy men did the same in reference to the state. Then there were the thorough-going Anti-nomians who pressed the claims of liberty of conscience against the authority of God's law and the Libertines who held that men were at liberty to hold any opinions they pleased provided these were held conscientiously. It will be seen that the extraordinary confusion caused by these various parties all in the interests of liberty of conscience required some clearing up. Men of sound judgment saw clearly that such confused thinking required correctives. Hence we find in Edwards' *Gangraena*; Baillie's *Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time*; Rutherford's *Pretended Liberty of Conscience*, etc., an exposure of these errors and an indication of the limits of liberty of conscience when confronted with lawful authority in Church or State. The Westminster Divines in their usual well-balanced way state clearly the claims of liberty of conscience and its limitations. "God alone is Lord of the conscience," they assert, "and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship" (*Confession of Faith*, chap. 20: sec. 2). This has rightly been regarded as one of the finest statements on the rights of liberty of conscience that has ever been penned. But the Divines further add: "And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, *resist the ordinance of God*" (*Confession of Faith*, chap. 20: sec. 4). These sections conserve the rights of liberty of conscience and the authority of the State and the Church. On the one hand, they teach that the authority of the State or Church is not absolute for it is limited by the rights of conscience. On the other hand, the rights of conscience are not absolute for they are limited by the lawful authority of Church

and State. The teaching of the Confession asserts that conscience and lawful authority, civil or ecclesiastical, are not antagonistic and inconsistent: for both are ordinances of God; they limit one another but are not antagonistic.

We live in an age when the liberty of the individual is emphasised with almost as much outcry as it was in the French revolutionary period though fortunately not accompanied with such insensate madness. Men who are obsessed with a sense of the infallibility of their logic and who keep their eye fixed unmoved on the liberty of the subject are liable to be troublers of peace in Church and State. It never seems to dawn on them that there are other rights than those of liberty. So they set about building a structure in which they entrench themselves with a complacency that for the time being makes them believe that they shall never be moved. Their attention is so intently fixed on liberty that they ignore, if ever they acknowledged it, the claims of authority. It is one of the delusions of the age and we need not be surprised if it should seek to enter the ecclesiastical as well as the civil sphere and work havoc in both spheres.

It is not our intention to deal here with the question of Toleration and bringing the Confessional doctrine of the power and duty of the civil magistrate in regard to religion into the discussion of which the doctrine of the rights of conscience enter. We have seen that according to the teaching of the Confession the rights of the liberty of conscience have certain limitations civil and ecclesiastical. For the present it is with the latter we are mainly concerned. What are these limitations? This is a question that is easier put than answered; but without attempting to lay down precisely, even if that were possible, the extent and limits of liberty of conscience there are certain general principles which may be noted. 1. The rights of liberty of conscience are limited by the divine law. Divine authority cuts right across the rights of the individual and the claims of liberty of conscience. In the nature of things God's law must be supreme and no claim made in the interests of the conscience can invalidate that authority in the slightest degree. There can be no liberty, it has been well said, under whatsoever pretext or plea, to think, act or believe in opposition to that law. The specious plea, often uttered by unthinking men, that we are free to think whatever we please is immoral and strikes in the very face of divine authority. We are not at liberty to think what is wrong. To maintain the opposite is barefacedly to put in a plea for licentiousness. We have no right, at the bidding of a mistaken conscience to do that which is against the divine law. God's law and the conscience of man are not co-ordinate authorities. They are not to be regarded as each supreme in its

own sphere. The conscience is subordinate to the divine law and any claims made by it must come within the ambit of God's law and not go against or beyond it. There is a limit beyond which liberty of conscience cannot go and that limit is the authority of God's law. It is anarchy of the worst kind to deny this limitation and act as if it did not exist. 2. Liberty of conscience is further limited by the lawful authority of the Church. The Church is an ordinance of God. As such it is invested with a certain measure of authority as we have seen. The Church has authority to declare the truth of God and in doing so, to determine upon the faith and profession of its members for its own purposes. Its decisions in connection with controversies of doctrine and its declarations of the truths of the gospel are to be received and submitted to by its members where these decisions and declarations are in accordance with the Word of God. The Church also has authority in regard to the exercise of discipline, to proceed by admonition, censure, reproof and, if necessary, excommunication. "Such discipline too," says Dr Bannerman, "is to be revered and submitted to because of the authority of the Church, as divinely appointed to exercise it. Here too, then, we have the lawful exercise of : lawful authority that must oftentimes come into contact with the liberty of conscience in the case of individuals. And conscience may be pleaded, and pleaded honestly, on behalf of opinions and practice in the case of her members, which yet may be right and indispensable for the Church to condemn or restrain by means of the spiritual authority committed to her. Shall we say that the spiritual sword is to be stayed, and the authority of the Church disarmed, in consequence of the authority of conscience on the part of the offender? Shall we say that the exercise of that authority is unlawful, and its censures null and void, because of the liberty of conscience that is pleaded in opposition to them? To do so would be to deny the right of Church authority altogether; it would be to set aside, in any case in which conscience might be alleged, all ecclesiastical judgment or restraint as regards the offender, and to make religion entirely a matter of personal and individual concern, in regard to which the Church had no right to interfere and no commission to act. Such an interpretation of the liberty of conscience on the part of her members must destroy Church authority altogether, and must leave the kingdom of Christ without government or order, utterly helpless to redress wrong or restrain offences, and without power to guard its own communion from open profanation and dishonour. The plea of absolute and unlimited liberty of conscience is inconsistent with the authority and existence of a Church" (*The Church of Christ*,) I. 169-70.

Letter

by Rev. John Newton

A Letter to a Friend, on the Question, Whether the Sins of Believers shall be publicly declared at the great Day? Or how are we to understand the Apostle's Assertion, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. 5: 10, compared with Rom. 14: 12.

My dear Sir,

My heart congratulates you. What changes and events many in younger life may be reserved to see, who can tell? but your pilgrimage is nearly finished. — You stand upon the river's brink, with the city full in view, waiting and wishing for the appointed hour: you need not be anxious concerning your passage, for every circumstance attending it is already adjusted by infinite wisdom and love, and the King himself will be ready to receive you. While you continue here, I am glad to hear from you, and should be glad to contribute in any way or degree to your satisfaction, or even to show my willingness, if I can do no more. I can propose little more than the latter, by offering my thoughts on the subject you propose from 2 Cor. 5: 10, and the apparent difficulty of understanding that passage, in full harmony with the many texts which seem expressly to assert, that the sins of believers are so forgiven as to be remembered no more.

There is doubtless, (as you observe,) a perfect consistence in every part of the word of God; the difficulties we meet with are wholly owing to the narrowness of our faculties, and the ignorance which in some degree is inseparable from our present state of imperfection. And we may, in general, rest satisfied with the thought that there is a bright moment approaching, when the vail shall be wholly taken away. It is the part of faith to rest upon the plain declarations of Scripture, without indulging a blamable curiosity of knowing more than is clearly revealed; yet while we humbly depend upon Divine teaching, it is right to aim at as enlarged a sense of what is revealed as we can attain to. Every acquisition of this kind is more valuable than gold, especially respecting those points which have an immediate tendency to comfort and support as under the view of an approaching dissolution; the question you have proposed is undoubtedly of this nature.

May the Lord direct my thoughts and pen, that I may not "darken

counsel by words without knowledge.” — I have been looking over the passage you refer to in Dr. Ridgley, and think I might be well excused from saying any thing further on the subject, as he hath briefly and fully stated all the arguments that have occurred to me on either side of the question, and closes with a proper caution not to be peremptory in determining, lest by attempting to be wise above what is written, I should betray my own folly. — Yet as you desire to have my thoughts, I must say something. — I wish I may not give you reason to think that this caution has been lost upon me.

I think all the great truths in which we are concerned, are clearly and expressly laid down, not only in one but in many places of Scripture; but it sometimes happens, that here and there we meet with a text, which, in the first and obvious sound of the words, seems to speak differently from what is asserted more largely elsewhere; which texts, singly taken, afford some men their only ground for the hypothesis they maintain. Thus the Arians lay a great stress on John 14: 28, and the Arminians on James 2: 24 &c. But their true interpretation is to be sought according to the analogy of faith. They are capable of a sense agreeable to the others, though the others are not intelligible in the sense they would fix upon these. In like manner I would say, whatever may be the precise meaning of 2 Cor. 5: 10, we are sure it cannot be designed to weaken what we are taught in almost every page, of the free, absolute, and unalterable nature of a believer's justification; the benefit of which, as to the forgiveness of sin, is signified by the phrases of “blotting out,” — “not remembering,” — “casting behind the back,” — and “into the depths of the sea.” — The sins of a believer are so effectually removed, that even when, or if, they are sought for, they cannot be found. For Jesus has borne them away: believers are complete in him, and clothed in his righteousness. — They shall stand before God without spot or wrinkle. Who shall lay any thing to their charge?

But it is probably that those stray expressions chiefly, if not entirely, respect the guilt, imputation, and deserved consequences of sin. None can suppose that the Lord will or *can* forget the sins of his people, or that they can be ever hid from his all-comprehending view. Neither can I think they themselves will forget them. Their song is founded upon a recollection of their sins and their circumstances in this life, Rev. 5: 9; and their love, and consequently their happiness, seems inseparably connected with the consciousness of what they were, and what they had done. Luke 7: 47. And I think those are the sweetest moments in this life, when we have the clearest sense of our own sins, provided the sense of

our acceptance in the Beloved is proportionably clear, and we feel the consolations of his love, notwithstanding all our transgressions. When we arrive in glory, unbelief and fear will cease for ever; our nearness to God, and communion with him, will be unspeakably beyond what we can now conceive. Therefore the remembrance of our sins will be no abatement of our bliss, but rather the contrary. When Pharaoh and his host were alive, and pursuing them, the Israelites were terrified: but afterwards, when they saw their enemies dead upon the shore, their joy and triumph were not abated, but heightened, by the consideration of their number.

With respect to our sins being made known to others, I acknowledge with you, that I could not now bear to have any of my fellow-creatures made acquainted with what passes in my heart for a single day; but I apprehend it is a part and a proof of my present depravity, that I feel myself disposed to pay so great a regard to the judgement of men, while I am so little affected with what I am in the sight of the pure and holy God. But I believe that hereafter, when self shall be entirely rooted out, and my will perfectly united to the Divine will, I should feel no reluctance, supposing it for the manifestation of his glorious grace, that men, angels, and devils, should know the very worst of me. Whether it will be so or no, I dare not determine. Perhaps the difficulty chiefly lies in the necessity of our being at present taught heavenly things by earthly. In the descriptions we have of the great day, allusion is made to what is most solemn in human transactions. The ideas of the judgment-seat, the great trumpet, of the books being opened, and the pleadings, Matt. 25: 37-44, seem to be borrowed from the customs that obtain amongst men, to help our weak conceptions, rather than justly and fully to describe what will be the real process. — Now, when we attempt to look into the unseen world, we carry our ideas of time and place, and sensible objects, along with us; and we cannot divest ourselves of them, or provide ourselves with better: yet perhaps they have as little relation to the objects we aim at, as the ideas which a man born blind acquires from what he hears and feels, have to the true nature of light and colours. Mr Locke mentions one, who, after much thought and conversation, supposed he had got a tolerable notion of *scarlet*, and that it was something nearly resembling the sound of a trumpet. Perhaps this is no improper emblem of the utmost we can attain to, when we are endeavouring to realise the solemnities of the judgment-day. What we mean by memory and reasoning, may possibly have no place in the world of spirits. We guess at something more suitable, perhaps, when we use the term *intuition*. But I apprehend

we must die before we can fully understand what it signifies: perhaps thoughts may be as intelligible there as words are here.

In a word, my dear sir, if I have not given you satisfaction, (I am sure I have not satisfied myself,) accept my apology in the words of a much wiser, and an inspired man: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Ere long we shall know: in the mean while our cause is in sure hands, we have a Shepherd who will guide us below, an Advocate who will receive and present us before the throne above. I trust we meet daily before the throne of grace, hereafter we shall meet in glory. The paper will allow no more.

Believe me yours in the Lord, &c.

Book Reviews

My Life and Books by S. M. Houghton. Banner of Truth Trust. 173pp. £4.95.

This interesting book contains reminiscences of S. M. Houghton. Mr Houghton passed away in 1987 in his 88th year. From his retirement as a teacher until his death he gave valued service to many Christian organisations. He was editor of the Bible League Quarterly for many years and engaged in much editorial work for the Banner of Truth publications. He was also a member of the Trinitarian Bible Society Committee. He was a gracious man and a Christian gentleman whom it was a privilege to meet. His reminiscences bring out the great amount of work he did in the Lord's service. His great interest was in sound Christian literature of which he collected a large library. In this book he comments on the books which he found particularly helpful and attractive to himself. He, like many others, was a great admirer of the writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, as well as of the Puritans whose writings he particularly valued. We are glad to commend this little book some of the chapters of which already appeared in the Banner of Truth Magazine.

D. B. M.

The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century by Rev. D. MacFarlane. Free Presbyterian Publications. 312pp. £4.75.

This book contains an account of the revivals of religion which took place in various places in Scotland in the eighteenth century but particularly at Cambuslang. It has pleased the Lord at different times to revive His Church and this book records one of those seasons of reviving when many parts of Scotland received the promised showers of blessing.

Cambuslang was particularly favoured but other parts also shared in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the land. Such accounts of days of the right hand of the Most High are eminently fitted to stir up the hearts of the Lord's people to seek renewed outpourings of the Spirit of grace and of supplications. The change that took place in individuals and communities was altogether remarkable. The things of God became paramount and other things faded into insignificance beside them. The life of the soul was what mattered most then, not the life of the body. May the Lord be pleased to grant similar revivals to His Church before the twentieth century, which has known so little of them, draws to a close.

D. B. M.

Notes and Comments

Air Tragedy

In December the sad air tragedy occurred in which a United States Pan Am plane was destroyed by a bomb explosion, the plane falling on houses in Lockerbie and killing a number of residents there. The crew and all the passengers in the plane perished in the tragedy. It has been proved that this was the work of an international terrorist agency. The callousness and total disregard for life shown by terrorist agencies is beyond belief and places them beyond the bounds of civilised society. Clearly these agencies, whatever their political outlook may be, are Satanic in the methods they adopt to pursue their political ends! How little do they realise that they will yet have to give in their account to the God of eternity for the evil that they have done. The sympathy of all right thinking people goes out to all those who lost loved ones in this tragic event. This is only one of many calamities which occurred in different parts of the world in recent times. The Lord is speaking loudly in these events to a generation that has largely turned its back upon Him. He is saying to the children of men — "Prepare to meet thy God".

Gideon's International

In an earlier issue of the Magazine intimation was given that Gideons International had ceased to distribute the N.I.V. We have since been informed that at the International Convention in July 1987 the decision was hotly contested by the British contingent and as a result British Gideons were permitted to continue to distribute the N.I.V. as their modern language version. An article in the Summer issue of "Gideon News" tells how the Gideons were allowed to place N.I.V. testaments in

a Roman Catholic hospital run by the Sisters of Mercy as the New International Version was most acceptable to the Roman Catholic Church. This surely speaks for itself.

Free Church and Christmas

The *Press and Journal* of 24th December contained the following item of church news:- "Clyne Free Church 'Sunday' School, Brora, held their Christmas party last night in the Church Hall." If this press report is true then surely it is time that it was brought to the attention of this congregation that such activities form no part of Reformed practice but are some of the remnants of Romansim. Perhaps some of the incumbents of the Free Church College, which is advertised as "committed to the historic Reformed faith" could undertake this task.

Free Church Record Letter

A letter writer in the Free Church Record in December finds fault with two articles in the October issue of the F.P. Magazine. The writer seems oblivious to the fact that the article on the Free Church Declaratory Act of 1892 had nothing whatsoever to do with the present Free Church which only came into existence in 1900, and there is no reference to the present Free Church in it. So all the letter writer's heat is wasted energy. With regard to the other article, we are certain that the writer never believed in nor intended to imply a two-fold personality in the Divine Redeemer. Even if he had done so, we hope that Free Presbyterians are sufficiently well instructed as not to receive such false doctrine. The letter writer, while restraining his inclination to make a man an offender for a word, ought also to consider that the grass is not always greener on his own side of the fence.

"Spirit of '88" Commemoration Bible Presentation to Members of Parliament at House of Commons.

This interesting event took place on 8th December, 1988, within one of the Committee Rooms at the House of Commons.

The United Protestant Council organised the event. The Bible, which was in the Authorised Version, contained illustrations of the following historic events in the history of Britain.

1. The setting up of the great Bible in every Parish Church in England by Royal Injunction — 1538.
2. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.
3. The Glorious Revolution in 1688.

The following letter, signed by five prominent evangelical ministers in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, accompanied the Bible, which has been sent to all Members of Parliament.

House of Commons
Westminster
LONDON. SW1

On behalf of a number of Christian Societies who believe in the inestimable value of the Holy Scriptures to the people of our land, we ask your acceptance of this copy of the Word of God. Primarily the Bible reveals to man his sinful and lost condition before a Holy God and the only way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. It also lays down the necessary moral principles for the right ordering of Society which historically have formed the basis of our governmental system.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul . . .
The statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart: the
commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

Psalm 19: 7-8

The present year has recalled several outstanding events in our national history, in each of which we trace the gracious guidance of God, who has bestowed signal blessings on Britain. We refer particularly to the setting up of the open Bible for all to hear and read in English parish churches in 1538; to the deliverance from an alien power and way of life in 1588, by the defeat of the Spanish Armada; and a century later, in 1688, to the establishment of constitutional rule, and a Protestant monarchy through the Glorious Revolution. These three events had the effect of making known and preserving the Christian Gospel which had been hidden to a great extent by centuries of superstition and idolatry prior to the Reformation.

In recent years a marked decline in spiritual values and in moral standards has taken place in Britain.

There is a great need for a return to those standards of faith and practice so plainly proclaimed in the Bible, so succinctly stated, for example, in the Book of Proverbs (14: 34) "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people".

One way in which spiritual and moral direction can be given to Britain today is by the determination of members of the House of Commons to frame our laws in accordance with the divine principles found in Holy Scripture. This we earnestly and respectfully ask you to do.

We pray that in these "lively oracles" you may find personal guidance, and the divine assistance for your public work.

Yours sincerely,

The Rev. H. Clement, B.A., Minister of Tonypany, Calvinistic Methodist Church of Wales.

The Rev. D. MacLean, Clerk of Synod, Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The Rev. N. Porter, Minister of Orangfield Baptist Church, Belfast.

The Rev. Dr. D. Samuel, Director, Church Society.

The Rev. J. F. Shearer, B.Sc., Hon. Secretary U.P.C., Rector of Nuffield.

Each Bible contained the following inscription —

"This commemoration edition of the Authorised Version of the Bible has been published in 1988 to mark the anniversaries of several notable events in the history of the United Kingdom, when the gracious hand of Almighty God was to be clearly seen ordering the affairs of Church and State, to the great spiritual and temporal welfare of the nation. May the Lord grant a similar merciful intervention in our own day and generation."

"Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Psalm 144: 15.

The meeting for the presentation of the Bibles was opened with prayer by Rev. Brian Green, who then read an appropriate part of the Word of God, and spoke of the value of that Word. An address was given on the words in Psalm 119: 130 — "The entrance of thy words giveth light", by the Secretary of the United Protestant Council, Rev. J. F. Shearer B.Sc. Apologies for absence from the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the House of Commons had been intimated. The Speaker did send a representative to receive his Bible on his behalf.

Twenty five M.P.'s were present, and each came forward to receive the Bible, which was handed out by Rev. H. Clement, one of the signatories of the letter. All the signatories were present. The remainder of the Bibles, together with the accompanying letter, will be posted to the other Members of Parliament. There was a short meeting with the Press afterwards. No reports of this interesting event in the House of Commons appeared in the Media. They are not interested in the Word of God, nor in the Protestantism which is founded on that Word.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 7th February at 11 a.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 14th February at 12 noon.

Northern: At Dingwall on 14th February at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 21st February at 6 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 16th March at 6 p.m.

Editor's Return from Africa

In the kind providence of the Lord, the Editor returned to this country safely on 22nd December after 14 weeks spent in Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe. He would desire to acknowledge the Lord's goodness to him during his time in Africa and prays that the Lord may abundantly bless His Cause in those lands. Mr Dick Vermeulen continues to labour in Malawi and Kenya and we would commend him to the prayers of the Lord's people in the work in which he is engaged in seeking to establish our witness as a Church in those lands.

Committee Meetings (D.V.)

The following Committees will meet at Inverness Church:

Tuesday, 21st March

9.00 a.m. - 10.00 a.m.

10.00 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.

11.00 a.m. - 12 noon

12 noon - 1.00 p.m.

2.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m.

2.00 p.m. - 4.30 p.m.

3.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.

4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.

7.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.

Church Centenary Committee

Training of Ministry

Church Magazines

Publications

Welfare of Youth

Finance

Sabbath Observance

Dominions and Overseas

Religion and Morals

Foreign Mission

Canadian Presbytery: Student Received

At a meeting of the Canadian Presbytery on 8th September, 1988, Mr John McGill, a member in the Toronto congregation, was received as a student studying for the ministry of the Church.

M. MacInnes,
Clerk of Presbytery.

Church Deputies

Rev. L. Roberts, accompanied by his wife and son, left for Zimbabwe in early January. Mr Roberts expects to be at the Mission for a period of three months. Rev. D. Beattie, Vancouver, is presently on a visit to New Zealand as Church Deputy. We trust that both deputies will in due time be brought back in safety and that their labours may be blessed.

Notice to Conveners/Clerks of Standing Committees

The Conveners/Clerks of all standing Committees should note that all Committee Reports must be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by Thursday, 23rd March, 1989, for printing purposes (DV). These reports should contain information of the Work of the Committees during the year. Recommendations and proposals should be sent up as separate items for the Synod Agenda.

(Rev.) Donald MacLean,
Clerk of Synod.

Notice re Synod Agenda

Clerks of Presbyteries, Conveners/Clerks of Committees, and all other interested parties, should note that all items of business intended to be placed on the Synod Agenda must be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by Tuesday, 4th April, 1989 (DV).

(Rev) Donald MacLean,
Clerk of Synod.

Synod Decision — 1960

For the information of our people the following are the facts with regard to a Motion moved and seconded in a private meeting of Synod on 19th May, 1960. The terms of the Motion were as follows:-

“I move that, on account of the continual backsliding of the Churches in our day from God’s inspired Word, the Synod recommend to all men professing godliness within our Church, in future to dissociate themselves from them at funeral services until they return to the law and to the testimony.”

A Counter-motion was moved in the following terms:-

“I beg to move that the Synod pass from this business.”

With 31 votes to 5, the Counter-motion, that the Synod pass from the business, became the finding of the Court.

(Rev.) Donald Maclean,
Clerk of Synod.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: A. Macleod, Unapool, £25.

Foreign Mission Fund: Laide Congregation, £240; Friend, Stornoway, £50; Two friends, Edinburgh, £10, all per N. Murray. Anon., £100 for blind pupils at Ingwenya; A. Macleod, Unapool, £10.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: St. Jude's Congregation, £280 for bibles to the Eastern Bloc (Collection at lecture by Mr Wm. Campbell).

Free Distribution of Magazine Fund: M. M., £5; Rassay Friend, £10.

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

Bracadale: In memory of my parents, Mr and Mrs Morrison, 1 Portnalong £100, where most needed.

Breasclete: Anon., £80 for Sust. Fund; Anon., £30 for Door Collection; Anon., £10 for Sust. Fund; Anon., £5 for Door Collection.

Dundee: Anon., Inverness £50; R.J.M., Dundee £30, both where most needed, both per Rev. D. C. M.

Fort William: A. MacG. £10 for Communion Expenses, Anon., Eph. 2: 8, £10,000 for new Manse Fund.

Glasgow: Mrs MacK. (3 Donations) £28; Anon., £10, both for Congr. Fund; Anon., £5; Anon., £10; Mrs A. £10; Anon., £10; Matth. 6: 3 £10; Harris Friend £20 per Rev. D. M.; Anon., £20; D. M. £30 per Rev. D. M. all for Bus. Fund; I.R.G. £27; I.M.C. £50; Anon., £50, all for the Sponsor a Blind Child; Gal. 6: 10, £30, African Famine Relief; Anon., £20 Bibles for Eastern Europe; Anon., £100 for African Mission; Anon., £5; Anon., £5; Anon., £10; Anon., £20, all for Sust. Fund; Anon., £50 for T.B.S.

London: Miss Marion MacDonald, South Africa £50 for Sust. Fund, in loving memory of her dear Aunt Mary Kate, "Broomhill" and Penny Ardvey per Mrs Jessie Maclean.

North Harris: Friend, Stockinish £10; Friend, Tarbert £10; Envelope in plate £10; M.M., Tarbrt £20; M.A.M.L., Tarbert £10; Friend, Stockinish, £10, all for Communion Expenses; Friend of the Cause, Tarbert £20; Friend, Stockinish, £10; In loving memory of the late John Morrison, Tarbert £100, all "where most needed"; Friend, Stockinish £10 for Door Collection and £10 for African Relief Fund; Envelope in plate £10 for upkeep of hearing aids; Friend, Tarbert £100 for Church Decorating; Friend, Tarbert £5 for Welfare of Youth.

Portree: Friend £15 per F.M.; In memory of a beloved husband and Dad, Job 1: 21, £100, both for Sust. Fund; Anon., £50 where most needed; Anon., £20 for Home Mission Fund, last three by envelope in plate.

Raasay: In loving memory of a dear wife £10 for Sust. Fund; Mrs D. N. £20 for Church Home of Rest per Rev. J. R. Tallach; Mrs C. MacL. £20 for Tapes per Mrs J. R. Tallach. **Shieldaig:** "Passer By" £40 for Sust. Fund; Anon., £25 per D.A.R. for Sust. Fund; Anon., £10 per D.A.R., Anon., £10 per D.M.C., both for Church Repair; Anon., £10 for Communion Exp., Mrs N. MacC. £5 per D.M.C.

Stornoway: Miss K. A. MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish, Isle of Lewis £50 for Sust. Fund per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anonymous £1500 for Congregational Funds.

Strath: Envelope in plate £15 for Sust. Fund.

Tomatin: Anon., £10 for Sust. Fund.