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God's Choice

God has made it plain in His Word that His thoughts and His ways are very far from ours. Through the prophet Isaiah he declared: "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." We can be partial in our thoughts and we can be unequal in our dealings with men but it is not so with God. We are ready to accuse Him of partiality and unequalness in His dealings with His creatures but this is not so. He is right in all His ways and holy in all His works. It is with us that these evils are to be found and not with God. We, because of our fallen nature and sin-darkened understanding, do not judge things aright but God is ever just, being unerring in His judgment.

Against partiality with respect to persons the Word of God warns us. James in His Epistle, written under divine inspiration, says: "If there come unto our assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou here, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves and are become judges of evil thoughts?" This warning is needful or else it would never have been written in the Word of God. We are in danger, through our fallen nature and its tendency to be partial, of despising the poor. This might seem a little matter to us until we see from the Word of God that on this despised people the choice of the Lord has mainly rested. "Hearken, my beloved brethren," James says, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath prepared for them that love Him."

The Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians in his First Epistle speaks in a similar vein. He says: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how

that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." The explanation for this is also given: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence." How clearly this establishes the mind of God. He has chosen the poor of this world. They are not only of the poor of this world but of the poor in spirit, referred to in the Beatitudes to whom belongs the kingdom of heaven. They are a people who are taught of the Lord and instructed in His ways and led by Him. They are to Him as the apple of His eye. He defends them and watches over them and provides for all their needs as He promises in His Word. Of them He says: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

He will never leave nor forsake them, for He has graven them upon the palms of His hands and their walls are continually before Him. They are poor in the things of this world but rich in the things of eternity.

It is true that the Lord has had among His people a few of those who were rich with the riches of the world but such were of the poor in spirit. It was not in their wealth they trusted, for example, Job and Abraham, but in the Lord their God. They understood what Jeremiah at a later time declared: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

God's choice rests, then, upon the poor of this world, a people who are rich in faith. He passes over many of the high and the mighty and the rich of this world. Out of the poor He has chosen a people to be a people for Himself, a people who are despised by the world and even, at times, by some who have a place in the Church in the world. Though they are so largely despised yet they are heirs of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him. Of them the Lord has given assurance in His own Word: "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his

own son that serveth him.” Let us not then despise the Mordecais and poor Lazeruses, the humble and godly, though of the poor of this world. Rather let us acknowledge them as the people whom the Lord has blessed.

Outlines of a Sermon

By the late Rev. John MacQueen, Daviot, Inverness-shire.

Preached on 29th April, 1883.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)*

“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” — Mal. 3: 16.

- I.—*Their Character*—They “feared the Lord”;
- II.—*Their Conduct*—They “spake often one to another”;
- III.—*The Listener*—“The Lord hearkened and heard”; and
- IV.—*The Record*—“A book of remembrance was written before him,” etc.

I.—*Their Character*—They “feared the Lord.”

1. The fear of the Lord was the Old Testament term for genuine piety. Such persons, under the New Testament, are called disciples or believers. The knowledge of Christ and the Gospel, as then revealed, wrought effectually by the power of the Spirit upon men’s hearts, to cleave to God, to fear Him, and to depart from evil. They were to be spared “when wrath burned as an oven” (chapter 4), and they spoke of it together in evil times beforehand. Surely a wise, beneficial practice — a safe example to follow.

2. Godliness then was called the fear of the Lord, because the Spirit of adoption was not so abundantly given to believers as under the New Testament. “The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Christ was not yet glorified.” It was meet that when Christ Himself received the fulness of the Spirit, the Church should receive more of this sweet blessing. Precious grace! implanted in the heart by the Spirit of all grace. A promise for the New Testament Church: “I will *pour* upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication” (Zech. 12: 10). It was a time of *pouring* then!

* These outlines were issued in leaflet form by one of the Daviot congregation. They are slightly revised, but with no material alteration. — Ed.

3. They feared the Lord, not man. Christ said, "I will show you whom to fear," etc. The more of His love in the heart, the more will they fear to offend Him. "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods." They stand in awe of the judgments which may befall the Church and the world because of sin. This fear implies the true knowledge of God, love to God, and fear of His holiness and goodness. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." How ready are we to be cowed by the fear of man!

II.—*Their Conduct*—"They spake often one to another."

It appears they knew each other, which the world will deny. If another is within reach, they will find him. Grace has an *affinity* for grace. "He honoureth them that fear God" (Ps. 15: 4). This is the qualification grace looks for — not whether they be rich or noble. It was said to the imbecile, Angus Macleod, "You might well wonder, Angus, that Mr Livingston brought you into his dining-room." "Ah", was the reply, "he might wonder that he ever got the grace to humble him so to act." There was a time when "the Lord was coming to his temple" — a time of high-handed iniquity. Even in such a time the Lord had a few who felt for His cause and for His glory.

They loved one another, and held meetings, to talk together of the state of the Lord's cause, to enquire to Him by prayer, and to *mourn* for the backsliding of the Church. Such meetings are highly profitable and mutually edifying — greatly called for in our day!

Such will speak of the gracious experiences of the divine life in the soul. You can only speak of that to one who fears the Lord — others cannot understand it. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul" (Psalm 66: 16). Oh, I should like to hear you on the subject. The Lord's people are ready to forget the sweet seasons they have had and the truths which revived their hope. In order to that, they must have their memories quickened by the Holy Ghost, which is one of His offices. "But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, which the Father shall send in my name, shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14: 26). How ready to forget what He said, owing to their infirmities and cares, and trusting too much to their own memory and understanding! How often was Christ away, before you understood what His teaching meant! Oh, what need of this work of the Spirit, as well as His comforting and sanctifying! Consider your helplessness and need,

and He will bring to your remembrance, and then the truth is as warm and fresh as ever in your heart. Do you pray for the Spirit as a Remembrancer?

It is the same with regard to the dispensation of the Lord's providence. We are deeply moved by some trying dispensation, and ready to suppose we shall never forget this. But how soon the impression becomes dim, except the Spirit affect us with it anew! It was after a long interval Jacob said to his household — "Let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went" (Gen. 35: 3). His doings are intended to be remembered.

III.—*The Listener*—"The Lord hearkened and heard." How little is this considered, what is fit to be spoken before God and even before men! Is what you say fit for you to utter, fit for God to hear? This ought to be a restraint upon tongues on Sabbath and week-days. Do we live under the belief that men shall render an account for every idle word spoken? The Lord noticed a conversation going on — for His love is upon these people, and He will observe all that is said by them. He listened and heard every word *distinctly*; He might listen long before He heard anything good spoken of Himself in many a family. "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and as ye stand? (Luke 24: 17). They were the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Take heed, man, what He hears from you. He hears enough about the world and vanity, but little about Himself. "If ye see him, tell him I am sick of love." O, He knows it. There is nothing done to His people but He will hear. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out." Whoever tells it, He hears all.

What reason have we all to feel ashamed, and lie low in the dust, for what we have uttered amiss before Him! O, that we had spoken more of the Eternal King's beauty and love — more about His *sufferings and death* — pouring out His soul on "the cross" unto death. If we felt this aright, our talk would oftener turn upon the grand theme of "the cross."

IV.—*The Record*—"A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." It seems that the Listener thought what He heard worthy to be written down and recorded. He keeps a book, then, *the book of His remembrance*, and they have a book. His book is "for them." A book between Him and them is kept.

He gives them *the book of conscience* to keep, which at present is but an imperfect copy of the book of His remembrance. However, we can

efface nothing from it, though in our own keeping. When conscience is touched by omnipotent power; it then faithfully records for or against us.

But there is many a thing in their book against themselves, which is not in God's book. The foul deeds and sins of youth, which you remember, have been blotted out of God's book, if you have come to the blood of Christ with them. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions," etc. (Isaiah 44: 22). He will not leave the awful debt standing against them, when forgiven. "In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." etc. (Jeremiah 1: 20).

God's book is written *for them*, *i.e.*, on their behalf. Their good things are written in it, because they are ready to forget them themselves. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee?" (Matt. 25: 37). Ah, the cup of cold water will be recorded. Every good word and good thought for Christ is there. The time of their espousals to Christ is in this register and where and when converted (Acts 17: 34; Psalm 87: 4).

Every injury done to them is noted in the book. He hath a bottle for their tears and a book for their sorrows. "Put my tears into thy bottle; are they not in they book?" Every kindness done to them is remembered; so the benefactors will not be losers.

But here, we see, the Lord exerciseth the faith of His people in this life. Matters written in a book are not for *immediate settlement*. "The just shall live by faith"; the formalist from hand to mouth. They often pray and see little appearance of being heard — they suffer and seem to be forgotten. Ah! but it comes to the same thing, or rather better for you; your prayers and deeds are recorded, and will surely be answered in the Lord's good time. "The book of records of the chronicles" was read before King Ahasuerus. Mordecai's good deed for the king turned up; and the king said — "What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?" "Nothing." But the deed was recorded, and now Mordecai begins to reap the reward (Esther 6). Be not discouraged, dear believer, your wrong is not forgotten, your prayer is not forgotten; it shall be heard. He has a tear of yours in His bottle, a wrong of yours in His book! It will turn up to your account. If He do not openly reward you with temporal deliverance, you shall soon have the comfort of it before His throne. O brethren, He is now hearing and booking.

Their *thoughts* are recorded; "that *thought* upon his name." Why the thoughts? Because there is, perhaps, more grace, more of Christ in your thoughts than in any service you ever gave Him outwardly. Take heed to

your thoughts. Some of your thoughts are more performed by the Holy Ghost than any outward obedience rendered. The best service ever given to Christ has not come up to the desire in your thoughts. "But the Lord said to David, forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine *heart*" (2 Chron. 6: 8). "I will take *that* for the building." David's thoughts were as good in the estimation of the Lord as Solomon's temple in all its glory. The thoughts of your heart are "your treasure."

Inferences. — (1) We are deeply concerned to order our thoughts and words before the Lord. (2) His infinite delight in His people, and the care exercised over their interests. (3) Their "Advocate" faithfully records their prayers and their trials, and will plead them on their behalf.

I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under; and yet, at another time, the whole Bible hath been to me as a dry stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it that I could not conceive the least refreshment, though I have looked it all over. — *Bunyan's "Grace Abounding."*

Christ and the Two Thieves

by Bishop J. C. Ryle

(Continued from page 77)

"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 art 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.

IV. You are meant, in the next place, to learn from these verses, that *believers in Christ when they die, are with the Lord.*

This you may gather from our Lord's words to the penitent thief: "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise. And you have an expression very like it in the Epistle to the Philippians, where Paul says he has a desire to "depart and be with Christ." (Phil. 1: 23).

I shall say but little on this subject. I would simply lay it before you,

for your own private meditations. To my own mind it is very full of comfort, and peace.

Believers after death are "with Christ." That answers many a difficult question, which otherwise might puzzle man's busy, restless mind. The abode of dead saints, their joys, their feelings, their happiness, all seems met by this simple expression, — they are with Christ.

I cannot enter into full explanations about the state of departed believers. It is a high and deep subject, such as man's mind can neither grasp nor fathom. I know their happiness falls short of what it will be when their bodies are raised again, and Jesus returns. . . . Yet I know also they enjoy a blessed rest, — a rest from labour, — a rest from sorrow, — a rest from pain, — and a rest from sin. But it does not follow because I cannot explain these things, that I am not persuaded they are far happier than they ever were on earth. I see their happiness in this very passage, "They are with Christ," and when I see that I see enough.

If the sheep are with the Shepherd, — if the members are with the Head, — if the children of Christ's family are with Him who loved them and carried them all the days of their pilgrimage on earth, all must be well, all must be right.

I cannot describe what kind of place paradise is, but I ask no brighter view of it than this, — that Christ is there.* All other things in the picture which imagination draws of paradise, are nothing in comparison of this. How He is there, and in what way He is there, I know not. Let me only see Christ in paradise when my eyes close in death, and that suffices me. Well does the Psalmist say, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." It was a true saying of a dying girl, when her mother tried to comfort her by describing what paradise would be: "There," she said to the child, "there you will have no pains, and no sickness; there you will see your brothers and sisters, who have gone before you, and will be always happy." "Ah, mother," was the reply, "but there is one thing better than all, and that is, Christ will be there!"

Reader, it may be you do not think much about your soul. It may be you know little of Christ as your Saviour, and have never tasted by experience that He is precious. And yet perhaps you hope to go to paradise when you die. Surely this passage is one that should make you

* "We ought not to enter into curious and subtle arguments about the place of paradise. Let us rest satisfied with knowing that those who are engrafted by faith into the body of Christ are partakers of life, and there enjoy after death a blessed and joyful rest, until the perfect glory of the heavenly life is fully manifested by the coming of Christ." — Calvin's Commentary of the Gospels.

think. Paradise is a place where Christ is. Then can it be a place that you would enjoy?

Reader, it may be you are a believer, and yet tremble at the thought of the grave. It seems cold and dreary. You feel as if all before you was dark, and gloomy, and comfortless. Fear not, but be encouraged by this text. You are going to paradise, and Christ will be there.

V. The last thing you are meant to learn from these verses is this, — *the eternal portion of every man's soul is close to him.*

"Today," says our Lord to the penitent thief, "today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." He names no distant period, — He does not talk of his entering into a state of happiness as a thing "far away." He speaks of today: "this very day, in which thou art hanging on the cross."

Reader, how near that seems! How awfully near that word brings our everlasting dwelling-place. Happiness or misery, — sorrow or joy, — the presence of Christ, or the company of devils, — all are close to us. "There is but a step," says David, "between me and death." There is but a step, we may say, between ourselves and either paradise or hell.

We none of us realize this as we ought to do. It is high time to shake off the dreamy state of mind in which we live on this matter. We are apt to talk and think, even about believers, as if death was a long journey, — as if the dying saint had embarked on a long voyage. It is all wrong, very wrong. Their harbour and their home is close by, and they have entered it.

Some of us know by bitter experience, what a long and weary time it is between the death of those we love, and the hour when we bury them out of our sight. Such weeks are the slowest, saddest, heaviest weeks in all our lives. But, blessed be God, the souls of departed saints are free from the very moment their last breath is drawn. While we are weeping, and the coffin preparing, and the mourning being provided, and the last painful arrangement being made, the spirits of our beloved ones are enjoying the presence of Christ. They are freed for ever from the burden of the flesh. They are "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Reader, the day that believers die they are in paradise. Their battle is fought; — their strife is over. They have passed through that gloomy valley we must one day tread; — they have gone over that dark river we must one day cross. They have drank that last bitter cup which sin has mingled for man. They have reached that place where sorrow and sighing are no more. Surely we should not wish them back again. We should not weep for them, but for ourselves.

We are warring still, but they are at peace. We are labouring but they are at rest. We are watching, but they are sleeping. We are wearing our spiritual armour, but they have for ever put it off. We are still at sea, but they are safe in harbour. We have tears, but they have joys. We are strangers and pilgrims, but as for them they are at home. Surely, better are the dead in Christ than the living. Surely, the very hour the poor saint dies, he is at once higher and happier than the highest upon earth.*

I fear there is a vast amount of delusion of this point. I fear that many, who are not Roman Catholics, and profess not to believe in purgatory, have, notwithstanding, some strange ideas in their minds about the immediate consequences of death. I fear that many have a sort of vague notion that there is some interval or space of time between death and their eternal state. They fancy they shall go through a kind of purifying change, and that though they die unfit for heaven, they shall yet be found meet for it after all.

But it will not stand. There is no change after death. There is no conversion in the grave. There is no new heart given after the last breath is drawn. The very day we go, we launch for ever. The day we go from this world, we begin an eternal condition. From that day there is no spiritual alteration, — no spiritual change. As we die, so we shall receive after death. As the tree falls so it must lie.

Reader, if you are an unconverted man, this ought to make you think. Do you know you are close to hell? This very day you might die, and if you died out of Christ, you would open your eyes in hell, and in torment.

Reader, if you are a true Christian, you are far nearer heaven than you think. This very day, if the Lord should take you, you would find yourself in paradise. The good land of promise is near to you. The eyes that you closed in weakness and pain, would open at once on a glorious rest, such as my tongue cannot describe.

And now let me say a few words in conclusion, and I have done.

This tract may fall into the hands of some humble-hearted and contrite sinner. — Are you that man? Then here is encouragement for you. See what the penitent thief did, and do likewise. See how he prayed, — see how he called on the Lord Jesus Christ, — see what an answer of peace

* "We give Thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." — Church of England Burial Service.

"I have some of the best news to impart. One beloved by you has accomplished her warfare; has received an answer to her prayers, and everlasting joy rest upon her head. My dear wife, the source of my best earthly comfort for twenty years, departed on Tuesday." — Venn's Letter to Stillingfleet, announcing the death of his wife.

he obtained. Brother or sister, why should not you do the same? Why should not you also be saved?

This tract may fall into the hands of some proud and presumptuous man of the world, — Are you that man? Then take warning. See how the impenitent thief died as he had lived, and beware lest you come to a like end. Oh, erring brother or sister, be not too confident, lest you die in your sins! Seek the Lord while He may be found. Turn you, turn: why will you die?

This tract may fall into the hands of some professing believer in Christ. — Are you such an one? Then take the penitent thief's religion as a measure by which to prove your own. See that you know something of true repentance and saving faith, of real humility and fervent charity. Brother or sister, do not be satisfied with the world's standard of Christianity. Be of one mind with the penitent thief, and you will be wise.

This tract may fall into the hands of some one who is mourning over departed believers. — Are you such an one? Then take comfort from this Scripture. See how your beloved ones are in the best of hands. They can not be better off. They never were so well in their lives as they are now. They are with Jesus, whom their souls loved on earth. Oh, cease from your selfish mourning! Rejoice rather that they are freed from trouble, and have entered into rest.

And this tract may fall into the hands of some aged servant of Christ. — Are you such an one? Then see from these verses how near you are to home. A few more days of labour and sorrow, and the King of kings shall send for you; and in a moment your warfare shall be at end, and all shall be peace.

A Dying Pastor's Address to his People.

by the Rev. John Brown of Haddington*

My Dear Hearers, — Having, through the patience and mercy of God, long laboured among you, not as I ought, — far, very far from it, — but as I could, I must now leave you, to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of my stewardship. You cannot say that I ever appeared to covet any "man's silver or gold, or apparel," or ever uttered one murmur about what you gave me; or that I sought yours, not you.

* From *Memoir and Select Remains of the Rev. John Brown of Haddington*. — Edited by the Rev. William Brown, M.D.

You cannot charge me with idling away my devoted time in vain chat, either with you or others, or with spending it in worldly business, reading of plays, romances, or the like. If I had, what an awful appearance should I soon have before my all-seeing Judge! You cannot pretend that I spared either body or mind in the service of your souls, or that I put you off with airy conceits of man's wisdom, or any thing else than the truths of God. Though I was not ashamed, as I thought Providence called me, to give you hints of the truths presently injured, and the support of which is the declared end of the Secession, yet I laboured chiefly to show and inculcate upon your consciences the most important truths concerning your sinfulness and misery, and the way of salvation from both through Christ, and laboured to hunt you out of all your lying refuges, and give your consciences no rest but in Christ, and Him crucified. The delight of my soul was to commend Him and His free and great salvation to your souls, and to direct and encourage you to receive and walk in Him. "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I laboured to set life and death, blessing and cursing, before you, and to persuade you to choose life that ye might live." By the grace of God I have endeavoured, however poorly, to live holily, justly, and unblameably, among you. And now I leave all these discourses, exhortations, instructions and examples, as a testimony for the Lord against you, if you lay not your eternal salvation to heart as "the one thing needful, that good part which shall not be taken from you."

But I have no confidence in any of these things before God as my Judge. I see such weakness, such deficiency, such unfaithfulness, such imprudences, such unfervency and unconcern, such selfishness, in all that I have done as a minister or a Christian, as richly deserves the deepest damnation of hell. I have no hope of eternal happiness, but in Jesus' blood, which cleanseth from all sin, — in "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of my sins, according to the riches of His grace." It is the everlasting covenant of God's free grace, well "ordered in all things and sure, that is all my salvation and all my desire."

Now I die firmly persuaded of the truth of those things which I preached unto you. I never preached unto you any other way of salvation than I essayed to use for myself. I now, when dying, "set to my seal that God is true". After all that I have said of the sinfulness of your hearts, I have not represented to you the ten thousandth part of their vileness and guilt. Knowing in some measure, "the terror of the Lord", I endeavoured to persuade you, that is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of His wrath: but "who knoweth the power of His anger?" Knowing, in some

measure, the deceitfulness of sin, and the devices of Satan, I laboured to warn you of them. But what especially delighted my heart was, to set before you the excellencies, the love, the labours of our Redeemer, and God in Him, giving Himself, and applying Himself to sinful men; and to represent to you the work of God on the heart "in the day of His power," and the exercise of the heart in its diversified frames. What I saw, and tasted, and handled, both of the bitter and the sweet in religion, I delivered unto you. Little as I am acquainted with the Lord, I will leave it as my dying testimony, that there is none like Christ, — there is nothing like fellowship with Christ. I dare aver before God, angels, and men, that I would not exchange the pleasures of religion which I have enjoyed, especially in the days of my youth, for all the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, since the creation till the present moment, ten thousand times told. For what then would I exchange my entrance "into the joy of my Lord," and being for ever with him? Truly God hath been good to a soul that but poorly sought Him. Oh, what would He be to yours, if you would earnestly seek Him! With what heart-ravishing power and grace hath He testified against my wicked and unbelieving heart, that "He is God, even my God!" And now, "whom have I in heaven but Him? nor is there any on earth whom I desire besides Him. My heart and flesh fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Left early by both father and mother, God hath taken me up, and been the orphan's stay. He hath "given me the heritage of those that fear Him." "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. I have a goodly heritage. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup, — He maintaineth my lot:" "Yea, mine own God is He, — my God that doth me save."

Had I ten thousand worlds in my offer, and these secured to me for ever, they should be utterly condemned. "Doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; and I do count them but dung that I may win Him, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God through faith."

Now, when I go to give my account to God, think what it must be! Alas! must it be, that in too great conformity to your careless neighbours, some did not attend the means of grace at examinations, meetings for prayer, and spiritual conference, as ye ought? Must it be, that after labouring so many years among you, I left less lively religion in the congregation than I found in it at first? Must it be, that ye were called, but ye made light of the marriage with Christ, and of His great salva-

tion? Must it be, that ye contented yourselves with a form of godliness, without knowing the power of it? Must it be, that some few, trampling on their most solemn engagements, forsook me, "having loved this present world?" Must it be, that others were not careful to train up their seed for the Lord? Must it be, that ye often heard the most searching sermons, or the most delightful, and went away quite unaffected? Or must it be, that ye were awakened, that your souls looked to Jesus and were enlightened; that ye believed with your heart unto salvation; that ye harrowed in the seed of the truth, which I sowed among you, by serious meditation and fervent prayer; that ye laboured to win souls to Christ? Alas! I fear many of you will go down to hell with a lie in your right hand, — go down to hell with all the gospel sermons and exhortations you ever heard in your conscience, to assist it to upbraid, gnaw, and torment you! My dearly beloved hearers, shall I see you next, at the last day, standing at the left hand of your Judge? Shall I see those faces all in flames, and those eyes which often looked at me, looking lively bright with horror at the judgment-seat of Christ? Must I hear the Redeemer pronounce on you that awful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" And must I, who have so often prayed for your salvation, and preached for your salvation, add my hearty Amen to the sentence of your eternal damnation? God forbid!

Let me then beseech you now, without a moment's delay, to consider your ways. Oh, listen to the Lord's invitations! Believe His self-giving declarations and promises, which, times without number, have, with some measure of earnestness, been sounded in your ears. For the Lord's sake, dare not, at your infinite peril, to see me again in your sins, and refusers of my glorious Redeemer and Master! Oh, give Him your hearts, — give Him your hearts! I never complained of your giving me too little. Nay, I thought myself happier than most of my brethren as to all outward matters. But I always thought and complained that you did not use my Master, Christ, as I wished, in your hearts, lives, and houses. And now I ask nothing for myself, or any of my family, but make this my dying request, that you would now receive my Master, Christ, into your hearts and houses. Could my soul speak back to you from the eternal state, — could all my rotting bones and sinews, and every bit of my body, speak back to you from the grave, — they should all cry, "Oh, that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!" "Oh that ye would give my master, Christ, these ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved hearts of yours, that he, as 'made of God

unto you wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' might enter in and fill them for ever with His grace and truth! Oh, say not to a dying, a dead minister — rather, oh, say not to a living Redeemer, and to His Father, and to His blessed Spirit — Nay."

Dearly beloved, whom I wish to be "my joy and crown" in the day of the Lord, suffer me to speak from the dead to you. Let me exhort you, by all your inexpressible sinfulness and misery, — by all the perfections, words, and works of God, — by all the excellencies, offices, relations, labours, sufferings, glory, and fulness of Christ, — by all the joys of heaven and the horrors of hell, — now to make serious work of the eternal salvation of your souls. Try what improvement you have made of all my ministrations. Call to mind what of my texts, sermons, or other instructions you can; and pray them over before the Lord, applying them closely to your own conscience and heart. Wash yourselves thoroughly, in the blood of Jesus Christ, from all the sins of holy things since you and I met together.

With respect to your obtaining another minister, let me beseech you, by much fervent prayer, to get him first from the Lord. And let it be your care to call one whose sermons you find to touch your consciences. May the Lord preserve you from such as aim chiefly to tickle your fancy, and seek themselves rather than Jesus Christ the Lord! Let there be no strife among you in calling him. And when you get him, labour at his entrance to receive his message from Christ with great greediness. Let your vacancy make you hungry and thirsty for the gospel. And let all hands and hearts be intent on raising up a seed for Christ in poor withered and wicked East Lothian.

Oh, how it would delight my soul to be informed, in the manner of the eternal state, that Christ had come along with my successor, "conquering and to conquer!" How gladly should I see you and him by hundreds at the right hand of Christ at the great day, though I should scarcely have my ten! Oh, if Christ were so exalted, so remembered among you, as to make me scarcely thought of! I desire to decrease, that He may increase. Now "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood," and "hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace," be honour and glory, dominion and blessing, for ever and ever. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief."

The Judgment of a Human Day

By Rev. John Colquhoun

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of any man's judgment," 1 Cor. 4: 3, and thus he shows that, through grace, he was enabled to assess man's judgment at its real value. The Greek word, "hemera", translated here "judgment", is in all other places, where it occurs in the New Testament, translated, "day", and it is worthy of note that in some of the older English translations, such as that of Wycliffe and Tyndale, it is translated in this passage "day". Thus the judgment which the Apostle lightly esteems is the judgment of a "human day", a judgment which may be arrived at rashly and without mature consideration, or through insufficient evidence, or, as is often the case, through prejudice. Further, it is a judgment that shall most certainly be reviewed by the Judge of all the earth, and when it lacks equity, will assuredly be reversed.

In an article on "Theological Independence", Dr. W. G. T. Shedd understands the judgment of a "human day" as to be "judged by the spirit of the age," which, as he rightly expresses it, is but "the shifting theories of human speculation, and the changing fashions of human taste and culture." Those who judge according to the spirit of the age consider their own judgment very important and imagine that all should respect that judgment. With consummate presumption they hold themselves capable of judging on all matters, civil and ecclesiastical, secular and religious, so much so that to every age the scathing words of Job could be applied, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Job 12: 2. They never took a step in the way of holiness, but yet take upon themselves to tell the Lord's people how they should conduct themselves in the world. According to their judgment a strict adherence to the Word of God is fanaticism, bigotry, cant and hypocrisy, while a so-called "broad-minded tolerance", which pays little or no regard to the Scriptures, is judged by them to be the right thing.

In the age in which we live it is considered fashionable to declare that the Bible is full of errors, and, therefore, not a safe guide as to what man is to believe; destructive critics, who have assumed to themselves a monopoly of learning, speak of the "assured results" of their investigations, and thus the Bible is subjected to the judgment of the spirit of the age. While we hold that the Bible is its own interpreter, and that it furnishes within itself irrefutable proofs of its own authenticity and Divine

inspiration, yet the researches of the philologist, the carefully noted observations of the Eastern traveller and the spade of the archeologist, have done much to throw aside these "assured results", and we have no doubt but that in the realm of scientific discoveries such advances will yet be made as will prove beyond the shadow of a doubt, to every unbiassed mind, that the judgment of the spirit of the age, as regards the Scriptures, is based wholly upon "the shifting theories of human speculation".

As the Bible has been wrongly judged by the judgment of a "human day" so has the Lord of the Bible been judged. When He was arraigned before Pilate the spirit of the age gave its judgment when the Jews said, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him unto thee," and again when they said, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." This spirit showed itself further in its Satanic enmity when it wildly cried, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him," and Pilate accommodated himself to the spirit of the age in his judgment delivering Christ to be crucified, which judgment bears clearly the marks of being that of a "human day". Christ Himself, by way of forewarning His disciples of what they are to expect in this world, says, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord," and so Christ's servants cannot expect better treatment than their Lord. This is clearly revealed in the case of Paul when he addressed the multitude at Jerusalem after he was apprehended. Their judgment was, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." The practical results of that judgment are to be found in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where we read of some of Christ's witnesses that they "had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." These are a people of whom the Holy Ghost gives the judgment that the world was not worthy of them.

When the judgment of a "human day" is of such little value one would be inclined to think that it was more or less harmless. This, however, is not the case. The Lord's people themselves, when influenced by that weakness to which they are so prone because of unbelief, are too ready to estimate the judgment of a "human day" at a higher rate than it really has, and in the measure in which that is true of them their usefulness is marred and their own comfort lessened. There has been,

however, outstanding examples of men and women who were enabled to assess this judgment at its real value. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were judged by the spirit of the age in which they lived and it was a harsh judgment, but it was as nothing in their estimation, for they had submitted their case to a higher Judge. Prophets, Apostles and Reformers, and all who were instrumental in building the walls of Zion were judged by the spirit of the age in which they lived, but it was the judgment of a "human day", and they showed much of the spirit of Paul when he said, "I am ready not to be bound only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus". Acts 21: 13.

It is, however, on those who are still unconverted that the spirit of the age has the greatest effect, and it is with them that the judgment of a human day has the greatest weight. The world has many a weapon with which to slay would-be Christians, and among them, that of giving an unfavourable judgment of true piety.

This is the most successful weapon, as it corresponds to the natural enmity which is to be found in every human heart, and, therefore, of great weight with the unregenerate. Through the correspondence between the spirit of the age and the enmity of the heart, natural men look askance at piety, they treat religion as an imposture, and, therefore, they do not see any reason why they should bear ridicule by following it. Those who adhere strictly to the Bible are few and those who give their judgment against it are many, therefore they prefer to be among the majority, little realising that might is not right and that it pleased the Eternal Father to hide many things from the wise and prudent and to reveal them to babes.

When assessing the true value of the judgment of a "human day", it is not to the number of those who uphold it that we must look, but we must look at it in the light of the Judgment of the Great Day. Many who passed as religious in the judgment of men will be weighed in the balance and found wanting on that Day, and many who were judged as hypocrites by the world will then hear the wonderful invitation, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," The Lord's people, who in the judgment of a "human day", have been judged worthy of death, shall, in the language of the Shorter Catechism, be "raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity." When that day shall come it will be found that the worship of God is something else than what the world judged it to be, and that He dwells on this earth, not in Cathedrals where the worship is performed in a highly ritualistic manner, accompanied by the

sound of dead instruments, together with crucifixes, surplices and candles which form a prominent feature of the devotions. These meaningless baubles are to Him but vain oblations, abominations, and that which is a weariness to him, and the judgment of a "human day" with regard to them shall be set aside, and the Judge who shall preside on the Great Day shall acknowledge as worship the lisps of babes in Christ, the groanings of the prisoners, and the deep sighs of those who find that their progress in piety is not what they desire. Let us therefore seek grace to lightly esteem the judgment of a human day, and consider seriously the Judgment of the Great Day.

Cruel Pride

by Rev. J. A. MacDonald

Pride is an abomination to the Most High especially in His own dear people, as Adam found out for himself, when he and his posterity were cast out of the Garden of Eden. Pride did all in its power to prevent David from acknowledging his grievous sin before God; but when he did, Nathan soon came with the sweet news. . . . "The Lord has put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." We must always bear in mind that solemn truth in the First Epistle of John, verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

In spite of cruel pride, Moses was by faith, enabled to cast in his lot with the people of God, who at that time were looked upon by the wicked ungodly, as the offscouring of all things. Moses never regretted this decision. When he met Hobab in the wilderness and, fearing that he was lingering a little, he stirred him up with the sweet words, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Num. 10: 29.

It is obvious from God's Word that He only is the One who can subdue "cruel pride" such as we see raging in the prodigal son when he left his father's house with his share of the family spoil. He soon squandered it all and found himself in dire poverty. Oh, the wonder of sovereign grace to ever hear this proud man say, "I will arise and go to my father." Only the supernatural power bestowed by the Holy Spirit can work such a miracle. Oh, let us earnestly solicit the same favour of the Lord as Ruth did when she addressed Naomi: "Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go and where thou lodgest I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God." Ruth 1: 16, 17.

The Lord preserved the prophet Jeremiah from cruel pride on the day that He told him — "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness, have I drawn thee." During a Communion season in Tarbert, Harris many years ago the revered servant of the Lord, Rev. D. A. MacFarlane, Minister at Dingwall, was quoting the truth. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," which has been a Jacob's staff to many of the weak flock. "You take it dear, friend," he said, "and make a neat, tidy parcel of it, for you will need it as you pass through the valley of Baca on your way to the Celestial City."

It pleased the Lord not to prevent Pharaoh from cruel pride, hence his rage as he pursued the children of Israel saying, "I will pursue, I will overtake." Let us beware of this spirit. Little did he think that he would sink like lead to the bottom of the Red Sea to be forever under the Lord's divine wrath. How different he was to Moses as he viewed the children of Israel's precarious state. In his humble way, Moses had a message from God unto them. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

Oh, for the humility of the Publican in comparison to the pride of the Pharisee, who in his boastful way was using the commonly used phrase, "We thank thee," "We thank thee", as though sinful man could do that any more than he could walk on the sea in his own strength. Consider carefully who derived the benefit from entering into the temple to pray. Surely, surely it was he who could not lift up his eyes to heaven but smote upon his breast and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Oh, that the Lord would once again raise up in the church such men and women of humble piety.

What a blessing Daniel was to the Cause of Christ in his day. No, they could not find any fault in him except regarding his God whom he faithfully served, obeyed and worshipped. Notwithstanding his elevated position he was often found praying to his God with his windows open towards Jerusalem.

The writer has cause to be thankful to the Lord for the privilege which was his of being able to sit at the feet of the godly Fathers of the Church who in humility and for the sake of the truth made their firm stand in 1893 when Raineism with many other dangerous influences threatened the Cause of Christ in Scotland. He ever considers it a great privilege to have sat at the feet of the Rev. Donald Beaton and Rev. Donald MacFarlane, Dingwall and listen to their wise counsel with regard to many

things, including the importance of Church discipline. They themselves set an excellent example in their walk and conversation in the world and dressed like men of God such as Dr. Kennedy in his day. We should seek grace to follow in their footsteps to the end. The promise is that "they that endure unto the end shall be saved."

The dress and deportment of the Rev. Neil Cameron, Glasgow, was often admired by the residents of that vast city during his 40 years faithful ministry. During most of that period of years he had as his Church Officer, Alexander Ross, a native of the Isle of Skye who was considered "one who feared the Lord exceedingly". One day he called at Mr Cameron's Manse and told him of a little difficulty he was experiencing with some of the St. Jude's Church cleaners. As a result he handed the church keys to Mr Cameron who accepted them and put them in his pocket with the words, "Well Mr Ross, we met often together in the Free Church before 1893 amidst trying times but let us now part with a word of prayer." In his prayer Mr Cameron said, "Oh, blessed One, give my friend what thou did'st give David the sweet psalmist of Israel when he uttered the words:

'For in thy courts one day excels
a thousand; rather in
My God's house will I keep a door
than dwell in tents of sin.'

Psalm 84: 10.

Before the prayer was concluded Mr Ross, his dear friend, was in a pool of tears and cried out "Oh, Mr Cameron, let me have those keys." Without a moment's hesitation Mr Cameron put his hand in his pocket and handed the keys to the man of God whom he knew had the Cause of Christ at heart.

While memory lasts I hope to remember the night Mr Cameron took his leave of this vale of tears to be for ever with Christ. A large number of his congregation were gathered around the nursing home where he spent his last days, to get news of hoped for improvements in his condition. From time to time his physician Dr. Johnstone who was his faithful friend came out to inform the people of any progress in his health. When the doctor realised that the end was near he said to him: "Well, Mr Cameron, you will soon be with Him whom you loved and served faithfully in this world." Mr Cameron's reply was: "I am with Him now," and with these words he closed his eyes in death never to open them again until the resurrection morning. Like David he could say, "and with His likeness when I wake I satisfied will be." Psalm 17: 15.

The Discipline of the Church

by John Calvin

II

(Continued from page 86)

7. So far was any one from being exempted from discipline, that even princes submitted to it in common with their subjects; and justly, since it is the discipline of Christ; to whom all sceptres and diadems should be subject. Thus Theodosius, when excommunicated by Ambrose because of the slaughter perpetrated at Thessalonica, laid aside all the royal insignia with which he was surrounded, and publicly in the Church bewailed the sin into which he had been betrayed by the fraud of others, with groans and tears imploring pardon. Great kings should not think it a disgrace to them to prostrate themselves suppliantly before Christ, the King of kings; nor ought they to be displeased at being judged by the Church. For seeing they seldom hear anything in their courts but mere flattery, the more necessary is it that the Lord should correct them by the mouth of His priests. Nay, they ought rather to wish the priests not to spare them, in order that the Lord may spare. I here say nothing as to those by whom the jurisdiction ought to be exercised because it has been said elsewhere (Chap. 11. Sec. 5,6). I only add, that the legitimate course to be taken in excommunication, as shown by Paul, is not for the elders alone to act apart from others, but with the knowledge and approbation of the Church, so that the body of the people, without regulating the procedure, may, as witnesses and guardians, observe it, and prevent the few from doing anything capriciously. Throughout the whole procedure, in addition to invocation of the name of God, there should be a gravity bespeaking the presence of Christ, and leaving no room to doubt that He is presiding over his own tribunal.

8. It ought not, however, to be omitted, that the Church, in exercising severity, ought to accompany it with the spirit of meekness. For, as Paul enjoins, we must always take care that he on whom discipline is exercised be not "swallowed up with over-much sorrow" (II Cor 2: 7): for in this way, instead of cure there would be destruction. The rule of moderation will be best obtained from the end contemplated. For the object of excommunication being to bring the sinner to repentance and remove bad examples, in order that the name of Christ may not be evil spoken of, nor others tempted to the same evil courses: if we consider this, we shall easily understand how far severity should be carried, and at what point it

ought to cease. Therefore, *when the sinner gives the Church evidence of his repentance, and by this evidence does what in him lies to obliterate the offence*, he ought not on any account to be urged further. If he is urged, the rigour now exceeds due measure. In this respect it is impossible to excuse the excessive austerity of the ancients, which was altogether at variance with the injunction of the Lord, and strangely perilous. For when they enjoyed a formal repentance, and excluded from communion for three, or four, or seven years, or for life, what would the result be, but either great hypocrisy or very great despair? In like manner, when any one who had again lapsed was not admitted to a second repentance, but ejected from the Church to the end of his life (August. *Ep.* 54), this was neither useful nor agreeable to reason. Whosoever, therefore, looks at the matter with sound judgment, will here regret a want of prudence. Here, however, I rather disapprove of the public custom, than blame those who complied with it. Some of them certainly disapproved of it, but submitted to what they were unable to correct. Cyprian, indeed, declares that it was not with his own will he was thus rigorous. "Our patience, facility, and humanity," he says, are ready to all who come. I wish all to be brought back into the Church: I wish all our fellow-soldiers to be contained within the camp of Christ and the mansions of God the Father. I forgive all; I disguise much; from an earnest desire of collecting the brotherhood, I do not minutely scrutinize all the faults which have been committed against God. I myself often err, by forgiving offences more than I ought. Those returning in repentance, and those confessing their sins with simple and humble satisfaction, I embrace with prompt and full delight." Chrysostom, who is somewhat more severe, still speaks thus: "If God is so kind, why should his priest wish to appear austere?" We know, moreover, how indulgently Augustine treated the Donatists; not hesitating to admit any who returned from schism to their bishopric, as soon as they declared their repentance. But, as a contrary method had prevailed, they were compelled to follow it, and give up their own judgment.

9. But as the whole body of the Church are required to act thus mildly, and not to carry their rigour against those who have lapsed to an extreme, but rather to act charitably towards them, according to the precept of Paul, so every private individual ought proportionately to accommodate himself to this clemency and humanity. Such as have, therefore, been expelled from the Church, it belongs not to us to expunge from the number of the elect, or to despair of, as if they were already lost. We may lawfully judge them aliens from the Church, and so aliens

from Christ, but only during the time of their excommunication. If then, also, they give greater evidence of petulance than humility, still let us commit them to the judgment of the Lord, hoping better of them in the future than we see at present, and not ceasing to pray to God for them. And, to sum up in one word, let us not consign to destruction their person, which is in the hand, and subject to the decision, of the Lord alone; but let us merely estimate the character of each man's acts according to the law of the Lord. In following this rule, we abide by the divine judgment rather than give any judgment of our own. Let us not arrogate to ourselves greater liberty in judging, if we would not limit the power of God, and give the law to His mercy. Whenever it seems good to Him, the worst are changed into the best; aliens are ingrafted, and strangers are adopted into the Church. This the Lord does, that he may disappoint the thoughts of men, and confound their rashness; a rashness which, if not curbed, would usurp a power of judging to which it has no title.

10. For when our Saviour promises that what His servants bound on earth should be bound in heaven (Matt. 18: 18), He confines the power of binding to the censure of the Church, which does not consign those who are excommunicated to perpetual ruin and damnation but assures them, when they hear their life and manners condemned that perpetual damnation will follow if they do not repent. Excommunication differs from anathema in this, that the latter completely excluding pardon, dooms and devotes the individual to eternal destruction, whereas the former rather rebukes and animadverts upon his manners; and although it also punishes, it is to bring him to salvation, by forewarning him of his future doom. If it succeeds, reconciliation and restoration to communion are ready to be given. Moreover, anathema is rarely ever to be used. Hence, though ecclesiastical discipline does not allow us to be on familiar and intimate terms with excommunicated persons, still we ought to strive by all possible means to bring them to a better mind, and recover them to the fellowship and unity of the Church; as the Apostle also says: "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (II Thess. 3: 15). If this humanity be not observed in private as well as public, the danger is, that our discipline shall degenerate into destruction.

11. Another special requisite to modernisation of discipline is, as Augustine discourses against the Donatists, that private individuals must not, when they see vices less carefully corrected by the Council of Elders, immediately separate themselves from the Church; nor must pastors themselves, when unable to reform all things which need correction to the extent which they could wish, cast up their ministry, or by unwonted

severity throw the whole Church into confusion. What Augustine says is perfectly true: "Whoever corrects what he can, by rebuking it, or without violating the bond of peace, excludes what he cannot correct, or unjustly condemns while he patiently tolerates what he is unable to exclude without violating the bond of peace, is free and exempted from the curse." He elsewhere gives the reason. "Every pious reason and mode of ecclesiastical discipline ought always to have regard to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This the Apostle commands us to keep by bearing mutually with each other. If it is not kept, the medicine of discipline begins to be not only superfluous, but even pernicious, and therefore ceases to be medicine." "He who diligently considers these things, neither in the preservation of unity neglects strictness of discipline, nor by intemperate correction bursts the bond of society." He confesses, indeed, that pastors ought not only to exert themselves in removing every defect from the Church, but that every individual ought to his utmost do so; nor does he disguise the fact, that he who neglects to admonish, accuse, and correct the bad, although he neither favours them, nor sins with them, is guilty before the Lord; and if he conducts himself so that though he can exclude them from partaking of the Supper, he does it not, then the sin is no longer that of other men, but his own. Only he would have the prudence used which our Lord also requires: "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matt. 13: 29). Hence he infers from Cyprian: "Let a man then mercifully correct what he can; what he cannot correct, let him bear patiently, and in love bewail and lament."

12. This he says on account of the moroseness of the Donatists, who, when they saw faults in the Church which the bishops indeed rebuked verbally, but did not punish with excommunication (because they did not think that anything would be gained in this way), bitterly inveighed against the bishops as traitors to discipline, and by an impious schism separated themselves from the flock of Christ. Similar, in the present day, is the conduct of the Anabaptists, who acknowledging no assembly of Christ unless conspicuous in all respects for angelic perfection, under pretence of zeal overthrow everything which tends to edification. "Such", says Augustine, "not from hatred of other men's iniquity, but zeal for their own disputes, ensnaring the weak by the credit of their name, attempt to draw them entirely away, or at least to separate them; swollen with pride, raving with petulance, insidious in calumny, turbulent in sedition. That it may not be seen how void they are of the light of truth, they cover themselves with the shadow of a stern severity: the

correction of a brother's fault, which in Scripture is enjoined to be done with moderation, without impairing the sincerity of love or breaking the bond of peace, they pervert to sacrilegious schism and purposes of excision. Thus Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (11 Cor. 11: 14) when, under pretext of a just severity, he persuades to savage cruelty, desiring nothing more than to violate and burst the bond of unity and peace, because, when it is maintained, all his power of mischief is feeble, his wily traps are broken, and his schemes of subversion vanish."

13. One thing Augustine specially commends — viz: that if the contagion of sin has seized the multitude, mercy must accompany living discipline. "For counsels of separation are vain, sacrilegious, and pernicious, because impious and proud, and do more to disturb the weak good than to correct the wicked proud" (August. *Ep.* 64). This which he enjoins on others he himself faithfully practised. For, writing to Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, he complains that drunkenness, which is so severely condemned in the Scripture, prevails in Africa with impunity, and advises a council of bishops to be called for the purpose of providing a remedy. He immediately adds: "In my opinion, such things are not removed by rough, harsh, and imperious measures, but more by teaching than commanding, more by admonishing than threatening. For thus ought we to act with a multitude of offenders. Severity is to be exercised against the sins of a few." (August. *Ep.* 64). He does not mean, however, that the bishops were to wink at or be silent because they are unable to punish public offences severely, as he himself afterwards explains. But he wishes to temper the mode of correction, so as to give soundness to the body rather than cause destruction. And, accordingly, he thus concludes: "Wherefore, we must on no account neglect the injunction of the Apostle, to separate from the wicked, when it can be done without the risk of violating peace, because he did not wish it to be done otherwise (1 Cor. 5: 13); we must also endeavour, by bearing with each other, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4: 2).

Notes and Comments

Standard Grade Religious Studies

Some years ago the Scottish Examination Board introduced examinations in Religious Studies at Ordinary and Higher Grades. In line with the changes taking place in other subjects a new syllabus at Standard Grade has recently been issued. Press comment in this new syllabus has centred on the statement in the original proposals, "Public worship, the

Christian year and Rites of Passage (i.e. Baptism, Marriage etc.) will each be studied in relation to the Roman Catholic tradition and at least one other example, taken from the Reformed tradition.” In response to pressure this has in fact been modified to, “In their study of church practices pupils should seek to acquire a broad familiarity with the main Christian traditions rather than a detailed understanding of any particular denomination.” This seems to say much the same thing, but in less objectionable terms.

This represents, however, only a minor adjustment in what is a thoroughly unsatisfactory course. Parents, therefore, who value a Christian heritage firmly based on the Bible should not allow their children to choose Religious Studies as an option when they choose their course for the later years in secondary school. (It should be noted that this course is distinct from Religious Education classes, which are compulsory by law for all pupils and are non-examinable. It may be, however, in view of the content of many of these courses also, that Christian parents will feel it necessary to make more use of the provision which does exist for withdrawing their children on grounds of conscience.)

The following are *some* of the unsatisfactory features of Standard Grade Religious Studies:

(1) The course is based on the idea that religion is concerned only with “the *experience* of man in his search for meaning, value and purpose in life”. This entirely discounts the fact that Christianity is based, not on the fruits of man’s experience as he searches for God, but on the revelation of Himself that God has given to man, a revelation that is recorded in the Scriptures.

(2) Only a very small portion of the Bible is studied in the section on Christianity. It amounts only to something like nine chapters, all from Luke’s Gospel. Even then, emphasis is to be laid on “different interpretations of the Gospel stories”. This means that children will be taught, to take an example, that while some people believe in the strict truth of the Resurrection narrative, others believe that the Gospel writers never intended what they wrote to be taken literally and still others believe that they were plainly mistaken. The most serious point is that the syllabus implies that these views are all equally valid.

(3) No distinction is made between true and false “traditions” within Christianity. From the point of view of those responsible for this course, the most important Christian “traditions” will be Roman Catholicism and Liberal Protestantism. But those of us who accept the authority of the Bible dare not treat these as having equal importance with the truth.

(4) The syllabus makes compulsory the study of a second religion, in addition to Christianity. The course is thus intended to develop, not only a tolerance of other religions, but also a positive appreciation of them. What is specially dangerous here is that this is in opposition to the fact that the revelation given in the Bible is true and so every other religion is false. It is not through absorbing various ideas from different religions "in a world of divergent values" that any pupil will come to a satisfactory understanding of life, but by coming to know Christ Jesus as He is revealed in the Bible, and in the Bible alone. And if all religions are equally true it is only a short step to saying that they are all equally irrelevant.

(Note: All quotations are from the official proposals and syllabus, but italics have been added.)

K. D. M.

Sabbath Training and Sports

So far the attempts made in Parliament to allow shop opening and certain sporting activities on Sabbath to be legalised have failed. Mr Andrew Mackay M.P. also failed in his recent attempt to further secularise the Lord's Day in England and Wales by permitting horse-racing and opening of betting shops. Early in February the House of Lords held a debate on Sabbath trading but was divided over the issue. Lord Boyd-Carpenter suggested a Bill to remove all restrictions for a period of five years so that the consequences of deregulation could be seen. The Bishop of St. Albans declared that "Sunday" was too precious to be lost because, once lost, it could never be recovered. What further attempts may be made in the future to relax the Sabbath laws we cannot tell, but it is gratifying to know that on this occasion Mr Andrew Mackay did not get his way.

Ecumenism

The Anglican co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission accused the Vatican of insisting on impossible and unwanted unambiguity of ecumenical doctrinal statements. He said that any statement of the faith of the community must leave room for proper width of interpretation. He was supported by the Bishop of Oxford who said that it was impossible to discuss the faith without ambiguity. The General Synod was debating the Commission's statement on the doctrine of salvation. An evangelical speaker said he was surprised to find in the Statement the biblical and Protestant doctrine of salvation but subsequent comments by R.C. scholars made him doubt whether the Statement was really intended to mean what he had thought it to mean. Am-

biguity of statement it would appear is necessary to make ecumenism thrive. Everyone is free to take their own meaning out of what is written or stated. Such is the sandy foundation of ecumenism.

Glasgow and the AIDS Virus

Warnings have been given from different quarters of the likelihood of an AIDS epidemic affecting the city of Glasgow within two years. This appears to have been confirmed by a Roman Catholic commissioned report. A spokesman said that their survey had set alarm bells ringing. The Government has announced that cash to Scottish health boards dealing with HIV infection and AIDS was being doubled to £12 million. While the Government has to do what it can to stem this plague, yet it has to be recognised that it is the fruit of the moral degeneracy of the nation in the last two or three decades especially. The abandonment of moral restraint has brought this deadly disease in its train in accordance with the Word of God — “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

Rushdie Affair

The publication of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* has had far-reaching and unlooked for consequences. Not only has the writer's life been threatened by Ayatollah Khomeini, the fanatical Moslem leader of Iran, but diplomatic relations have been broken off between Britain and Iran. In addition there is a demand within Britain by Muslims that the law of blasphemy be extended to cover denigration of their false prophet Mahomet. This is facing the Government with a dilemma. The excuse of free speech or freedom of the Press was often claimed for false and scurrilous attacks upon Christ and Christianity and offended Christians had to suffer it. Now the followers of the false prophet Mahomet are faced with the same thing but they will not tolerate it. It will take the authorities all the wisdom they can muster to try to calm the hornet's nest which has been stirred up.

The Reformation Translation Fellowship

RTF at 40

The Reformation Translation Fellowship is this year celebrating the completion of 40 years in the work of translating evangelical and Reformed writings into Chinese. Formed during one of the darkest periods in the history of the Chinese Church it has survived to see a much

more encouraging spiritual situation in that great land. A special brochure to commemorate the occasion is being issued.

The Fellowship was founded in early 1949 as the Communist forces were over-running China. It was born out of the conviction that the great theological heritage of the Reformation that had enriched so many Churches in the West was virtually unknown in the Chinese Church. Charles Chao, a student at Newchang Bible Seminary, had under the teaching of the Principal, Dr J. G. Vos, come to an understanding of the Reformed Faith. About the same time Samuel E. Boyle, a missionary with the American Reformed Presbyterian Church Mission in Canton, had a vision for translating Reformed writings into Chinese. Boyle invited Chao to join him in Canton and in March 1949 the letter announcing the launch of the Fellowship was sent out.

In a matter of months, following the Communist take-over, operations had to be moved to Hong Kong from where the first translations were sent out and the quarterly magazine *Reformed Faith and Life* was issued. Soon, however, the Chinese mainland was closed to all things Christian. Nevertheless the work that began for the good of the Chinese Church continued to operate in South-East Asia over the years and is presently based in Taiwan. The translation work remains under the direction of Dr Charles Chao who will be 73 in August. Dr Boyle, co-founder of RTF and co-editor of the magazine over the years, is retired in Kansas, USA. Last year at the age of 83 he was able to return to mainland China, visit the places where he had worked as a missionary and meet Chinese Christians he had not seen for almost 50 years.

A United Kingdom supporting branch was formed at a meeting in London on 11 March 1954 — 35 years ago this month. The inspiration behind this was Mr Norman A. Macmillan, who became the first British Secretary/Treasurer. He was succeeded by Mr Dennis Lewis. In 1963 Mr John J. Murray took over and has just completed 25 years in that position. He was assisted from 1969 by Mr Trevor Hunt taking the Treasurership. There have been only two chairmen during the 35 years. The first was the Rev. Dr G. N. M. Collins, a founder member of the British Board, who served from 1954 to 1969. The Rev. Dr Adam Loughridge then took over and has just retired from the chairmanship after 22 years. The RTF owes a tremendous debt to the wisdom and faithfulness of those men.

At a recent meeting of the Board the Rev. John J. Murray was elected chairman and the Rev. H. I. Mackinnon, minister of the Free Presbyterian congregation in Oban, was appointed to be the new

Secretary. All enquiries about the work should be addressed to him at F.P. Manse, Polvinster Road, Oban, Argyll.

John J. Murray

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 11th April at 11 a.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 20th June at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 4th July at 6 p.m.

Zimbabwe Mission

The Foreign Mission Committee wish it to be known that there is still a shortage of staff at the John Tallach Secondary School at Ingwenya. 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.

At Mbumba Mission Hospital there are vacancies for nursing staff and the Committee would be glad to hear from suitably qualified persons who have a heart interest in the Mission Work of the Church.

Readers should continue to bear the needs of the mission-field to Throne of Grace continually. Anyone who is interested in giving a period of service to the Mission as outlined above should contact the Clerk of the Foreign Missions Committee, F.P. Manse, Saval Road, Lairg, IV27 4EH.

Kenya and Malawi

Mr Dick Vermeulen recently visited Kenya and was able to organise the start of the building of a medical clinic in the Sengeru area of Kisumu District in the south west of Kenya. He has since returned to Malawi where he is engaged in visiting the many preaching stations connected with the Church in that country. We would ask that he would be remembered at a Throne of grace as he seeks to establish Missions of the Church in both countries. He expects to visit Scotland in May (D.V.) and people will then be able to hear from him about the work in which he is engaged.

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. M., Tarbert, £50.

Home Mission Fund: A. M., Tarbert, £25.

Foreign Missions Fund: Vancouver Congregation, \$2932.00, including \$300.00 from Winnipeg Friend; A. Forgie, Redding £20; A. M., Tarbert, £25.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: Lochinver Congregation, £193; Stoer and Drumbeg Congregation £200, both for Russian Bibles. Anon., £10 per Rev. D. A. Ross for Russian Bibles.

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

Barnoldswick: Anon., £20 where most needed; Anon., £150 for Manse Fund.

Edinburgh: T.T. & H.S. £20 for Tape Ministry and £20 for Italian Mission; Anon., £10 for Tape Ministry, all per Rev. Angus Morrison.

Fort William: Mrs B. £10, envelope in plate.

Greenock: C. McK., Stornoway £20, where most needed per Rev. L. MacLeod.

North Harris: J. MacL. £30 for Sustentation Fund; K.M., Harris House £2 for Church Door Collection, both by envelope in plate.

North Uist: Anon., £50; Friend, Stornoway, £5; Friend, Inverness £20, all per Rev. A. M.; Anon., £15; Anon., £10; Anon., £7; Anon., £10; Mrs S., Avonbridge £25, all for Sustentation Fund; Envelope in plate £10 for Congr. Purposes; Envelope in plate £10 where most needed; Envelope in plate £10; Envelope in plate £20; Envelope in plate £30; Anon., £100; Anon., £100; D. A. McD., Cross Roads £30, last six for Manse Repairs; From Family of late Mrs Jessie MacLellan £30 for Church Funds.

Portree: Friends £15 for Sust. Fund per F. M.; P. R. £20 for Door Collection; Anon., £4; Anon., £2.50, both for Tapes, last three by envelope in plate.

Stornoway: North Tolsta Friend £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £5, all for Communion Expenses.