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The Earth Filled with the Glory of the Lord

The Lord has given precious promises at different times to His Church so that His people might be encouraged in trying times. One of these occasions was when Caleb and Joshua encouraged the people to go up and possess the land of Canaan after they had come out of Egypt. The twelve spies had searched out the land of Canaan and had brought back of the fruits of the land. Ten of the spies disheartened the people because of the giants which they saw there. Caleb and Joshua were of another mind and said: "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." However the people murmured and said: "Would God that we had died in Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" Fear took possession of their hearts and they rebelled grievously at this time. Only Moses' intervention saved them from being destroyed and the Lord pardoned their sin. It was then that the Lord said: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

This promise of God's Word is one of the precious promises contained in the Scriptures concerning the future prosperity of Zion. This prosperity is to be co-extensive with the whole earth. His glory is to be revealed in such a way that all the ends of the earth shall see it. The Lord is to accomplish this by His own power. When this shall be exactly we know not, but it is evident that we are in the last days from the apostacy that is going on apace in those nations that are nominally Protestant. The Lord is yet to do great things in raising up a seed to do Him service in all the nations of the World. The powers of evil in the earth are at the present time very active in seeking the overthrow of the Church of God. Yet all these efforts will ultimately fail. The purposes of God are from eternity

and cannot fail. Has He said it and shall He not do it? Surely all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. God has sworn that it shall take place. He says, "As truly as I live," it shall be so. Therefore no power in heaven, earth or hell can prevent it.

If the earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord then the power of Popery and all false religion in the world will have to be overthrown. Millions of souls scattered across the face of the earth are in bondage to these soul-destroying systems of false religion. Over what a wide empire does the Pope of Rome hold sway. Yet Christ is to destroy that system with the brightness of His coming, when He will come in the power of His Spirit to turn the hearts of men to Himself. What a glorious day that will be! What a manifestation of His power!

If the earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord then the power of Mahomet the false prophet will have to be destroyed. Mohammedanism with all its Christ-denying and Mahomet-exalting tenets will have to be exposed for the false religion which it is. Those under its power and infatuation will have to be drawn away from its ensnaring embrace. So, too, with all other false religions. The eyes of their devotees will have to be opened to the falseness of those religions which they have so long espoused. Only the power of the Lord can accomplish this.

If the earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord then all the false sects which so abound on every hand — such as, the Jehovah Witness, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists and the more modern cults — will have to be shown as systems of deceit and error leading souls to everlasting destruction. What power can destroy the hold that these sects have over the souls of men? Only the power of God.

If the earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord then Communism will have to be destroyed. This system of atheism which seeks to build a world without God must be laid low in the dust. What armies are to accomplish its overthrow? Will all the might of the armies of America and her allies accomplish this and set those free who are in bondage to it? Verily, No. Only the power of Jehovah can accomplish it. His Word in the hand of the Holy Spirit will bring down mighty systems and lay them low in the dust, setting free those who are in bondage to them.

If the earth is to be filled with the glory of the Lord, then nominal Christianity will have to give place to living, vital Christianity. The doctrines of God's Word so much denied in our day will have to be revived again as they were at the time of the Reformation. At that time they were resurrected, having lain long under the mass of superstitious beliefs and practices, but in the kind providence of God were given their rightful place

again at the very heart of Christianity. So it will be when the Lord will bring again Zion. All the false beliefs and practices current in the visible Church in our day will be discarded by a people whose eyes have been opened to see the glory of the Lord, as revealed in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If it is the Lord that is to bring about this great change, which will radically alter the face of the earth, and in which the Jews converted to Christianity shall have an important place, what can true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ do in our day to hasten those glorious days? The Word of God makes this plain. Those who fear the Lord are called upon to plead for the coming of those days. They are exhorted to pray for the prosperity of Zion. The Lord has said in His Word: "I will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Let the Lord's people be earnest at a throne of grace seeking of the Lord that He would arise and plead the Cause that is His own. His ears are ever open to hear the cry of His people. Let them earnestly desire and plead for the days that are promised and put their "Amen" to David's prayer:-

"And blessed be His glorious Name
to all eternity:
The whole earth let his glory fill
Amen, so let it be.

(Psalm 72: 19)

Brethren, pray for us

"Brethren, pray for us." — 1 Thess. 5: 25

This one morning in the year we reserved to refresh the reader's memory upon the subject of prayer for ministers, and we do most earnestly implore every Christian household to grant the fervent request of the text first uttered by an apostle and now repeated by us. Brethren, our work is solemnly momentous, involving weal or woe to thousands; we treat with souls for God on eternal business, and our word is either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. A very heavy responsibility rests upon us, and it will be no small mercy if at the last we be found clear of the blood of all men. As officers in Christ's army, we are the especial mark of the enmity of men and devils; they watch for our halting, and labour to take us by the heels. Our sacred calling involves us in temptations from which you are exempt, above all it too often draws us away from our personal enjoyment of truth into a ministerial and official consideration of it. We meet with many knotty cases, and our wits are at a non plus; we observe

very sad backslidings, and our hearts are wounded; we see millions perishing, and our spirits sink. We wish to profit you by our preaching; we desire to be blest to your children; we long to be useful both to saints and sinners; therefore, dear friends, intercede for us with our God. Miserable men are we if we miss the aid of your prayers, but happy are we if we live in your supplications. You do not look to us but to our Master for spiritual blessing, and yet how many times has He given those blessings through His ministers; ask then, again and again, that we may be the earthen vessels into which the Lord may put the treasure of the gospel. We, the whole company of missionaries, ministers, city missionaries, and students, do in the name of Jesus beseech you — “Brethren, pray for us.” — C. H. Spurgeon.

Synod Sermon

By Rev. Aaron Ndebele, retiring Moderator, on 23rd May 1989.

“That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” 1 Cor. 1: 29-31.

In this part of Scripture Paul is speaking to the Church in Corinth about the contentions there. In that church there were different nationalities — mainly Greeks (to whom the land belonged) and Jews (who went to live there). And there were arguments among them. Perhaps they were comparing their conversions and saying, “We are better converted because we were converted under the preaching of Paul,” while others were saying, “Ours is a better conversion because it was under the preaching of Apollos.” Well, these kinds of thoughts sometimes arise in the minds of people. However much they may have light, there are times when the light is somewhat obscured by their own faults and falls. The Lord may take away His light temporarily so that they are left, as it were, blundering in the dark. Then these conditions arise: one saying, “I am of Paul,” and another saying, “I am of Apollos.”

Paul, knowing the mind of the Lord, that is, knowing the Scriptures, must correct the believers in Corinth. He was directed by the Lord, who opened his mind and heart when He took possession of him so that he would guide others and teach them His Word.

In teaching these believers, Paul reminds them that as far as the salvation of men’s souls is concerned there is no power in man. Neither Apollos

nor Paul had any power in the salvation of those who were saved. It was the power of God which was exercised. So, as the Word says, no one is to glory in any person but in the Lord himself, who has done all this work.

Paul also shows that God has not saved them because they had done anything to merit His salvation. It is in His good pleasure and rich mercy that He saved them — not because they came from certain places or did anything commendable. It was in His sovereign pleasure that He sent forth the light of the gospel. So grace is not hereditary. It comes from God. It was utter folly for the Jews to say to the Lord, “We be Abraham’s seed . . . We be not born of fornication,” saying as it were, “We are the children of God by birth, being born Jews.”

Maybe this contention in Corinth was connected with nationality, some Jews saying to the converted Greeks, “Well, after all, you are a Greek.” But this work of salvation has nothing to do with whether one is a Greek or a Jew, whether he is a black man in Zimbabwe, or comes from Russia. Wherever the Lord lays His hand, opening the heart by the power of His Spirit, converting and changing the sinner from darkness to light, *there* the work of grace is done.

Paul further reminds them that this miraculous working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners is not dependent upon any greatness of man, or upon whatever man might be proud of in this world. (And remember, the human heart is proud whether a person is rich or poor. There are people we know in our country, Zimbabwe, who are beggars, but who are truly proud. You take a begger into your house and he is very friendly when you are doing everything for him. Then you say, “We will kneel down and pray.” But he will not kneel down and pray with you. He sits up straight. Pride is not only found among the rich).

Neither is salvation dependent upon knowledge. It has nothing to do with any such gifts which God has given to man, as we see in verse 26, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.” This work of grace arises out of God’s own mind, and is by His own working.

When the Lord calls sinners by His Word and Spirit He put His Word in their hearts, and He gives them humility of spirit so that they are willing to be taught by Him. They are not going to argue, “We know all things. Learning is past.” No! they are learning every day, and so their prayer is, “Lord, teach us thy way.” Believers have “become as little children,” willing to learn from the Word of God. It is only an unbeliever who thinks he has learned enough. The wise men of this world refuse to be taught

— they know everything. “What are you talking about?” they say to those who teach the truth. But this humble people will be asking, “Lord teach me? I am a child. I know not how to walk.” Solomon, when he was given the kingdom, prayed for the teaching of the Lord. God’s people are prepared to learn, and they do learn. “I did not see it in this way in the past. Now I see.” How, then, can those whom the Lord teaches look down proudly upon the teachings of the Word of God? How can they despise the Word of God when they are scholars — when they are being taught — when they are yet learning?

In being taught, the people of God learn things new and old. the wise steward of the mysteries of God brings things new and old out of the treasures of the Word of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit especially, to bring these riches out of the Scriptures; and He continues teaching believers. Right on to their death they are crying, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” because they are discovering things new and things old. They are discovering new sins, old sins; discovering the perverseness and duplicity of their own hearts. They go again and again to this treasury of the Word of God to know more and more, so that they would order their walk and conversation aright. They peruse the Bible in order also to understand the troubles and disasters they meet with. This is what they are occupied in: walking circumspectly and in awe, listening to what God says in His Word, so that they would order their own way according to it.

Also we see that God has ordained this teaching in His kingdom in order that *He would be glorified*. The Apostle says (verse 29), “That no flesh should glory in His presence.” *No one* should glory in himself for the salvation of his soul. No one should look around saying, “It is because I have done this or that,” or, “It is because this kingdom is mine by birth.” No! Salvation is freely given by the Lord — and given to the most undeserving. Their salvation was devised in heaven — it came from the hand of God. Therefore they seek to be thankful and humble, saying, “What have we got to commend ourselves? We are poor sinners. We are nothing.” God will have them to know themselves to be nothing so that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Now, that is the negative side of glorying — that there be no glorying in oneself; no glorying in what we have done; no glorying in what was done by our parents or grandparents. No! (Neither can we *depend* on what our parents did. Each one is to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, for our God is a consuming fire).

Positively, there is this aspect of glorying: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Glory in the *Lord*! It is in the place of lying low at

His feet that we will be giving glory to the Lord (and also where we will have nearness to Him); it is in the secret closet, visiting Him often in prayer, bowing down before Him and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The believer will also be glorying in the Lord by glorying in the cross and in the reproach of the cross. Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no crown without the cross. Christ says, "Whosoever will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me."

Now, what is involved in taking up of the cross daily and following the Lord? There is warfare. The man that is taking the cross will be fighting against sin. The soldier who goes to serve his King or Queen in war is mobilised. He turns his back on his people and he knows he may not return. When he goes to war there are tears in the family because *death* is written over the battle-field. So believers are called to take up the cross — called to war, to fight the good fight of faith. They are fighting against sin in high places and low places; they are at war with their spiritual enemies.

And what weapons do they use? "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal" but spiritual, and "they are mighty through God." Prayer is powerful weapon. Believers are praying all the time for the downfall of the Antichrist. And they are praying for the destruction of the communistic system. They are calling upon the Lord to come and revive His own cause upon the earth.

Believers are at war in defending the doctrines of the grace of God in the Scriptures. Satan is at large and would like to tamper with the preaching of the gospel — to water it down and make it useless — like a cruel man who would take the medicine of another man and pour water into it so that it is ruined and has no effect. That is what the devil desires to do, whether we know it or not. He tries to weaken Christian people in their warfare so that their witness will be diluted and have no effect upon the evil that is in the world.

Satan may dilute the gospel of Jesus Christ by making use of words which appear to be truly Christian. For example, he may tempt one to think, "I love my friend. I must not mention this sin. I must not reprimand my friend who has committed this sin." Well, that is not love; that is against the Scriptures.

See how Christ deals with Peter. Peter says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and Christ replies, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock (upon this fact, upon this truth) I will build my church." But they have not gone far when the Lord turns to Peter and says, "Get thee

behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." It is to this same Peter whom the Roman Catholic Church worships as the first bishop of the Church of Rome, that the Lord says, as it were, "Thou art the devil." When Peter is in danger of being captivated by the power of evil Christ tells him the truth.

Then, when Peter denies his Lord, the Lord does not leave him there. He looks into Peter's eyes, as if to say, "Peter, there you are. That is exactly what I have been telling you — watch your heart." Peter goes out into the dark and weeps bitterly. He was awakened by the look of loving rebuke which Christ gave him. You and I need to have this weeping before the Lord. Now, who would argue against pointing out sin to a friend or to any of our fellow human beings? It is a great mercy for which we ought to be thankful. The Psalmist says, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

Those who glory in the Lord will be glorying in Him as the One who is to be *followed*. We cannot take up the cross without following Christ. "Take up your cross *and follow me*," He says. Christ is the wisdom of His people, as verses 24 and 30 show; and those whom He has made wise are following Him by listening to whatever He teaches them. They follow His teaching when He says, "Take up your cross." My friends, we are travellers through this world. There can be no crown for us if we do not take up the cross. If you do not, others will.

Those who are bearing the cross of Christ should be encouraged to carry on to the end, because it will never be easy for them in this world. The Christian church, in fighting the good fight of faith, will never find it easy. It will be persecuted. Also, when the church is fast asleep, the devil knows it, for he is wide awake. He knows when the church is taken up with this world, and with the popularity of this world. Then he advances his forces to capture and destroy the church. "But be of good cheer," says Christ. "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What a mercy! The whole church is upon Himself.

They are to glory in this also — that their righteousness is in Christ. Verse 30 says about Him, "Who of God is *made unto us* wisdom, and *righteousness* and sanctification, and redemption." This righteousness which they have is the fruit of His sufferings on Calvary's cross. He laid down His life and purchased this righteousness for them. They have no righteousness of their own, but they glory in the Lord as "the Lord their righteousness."

When the Lord Jesus Christ had to suffer and lay down his life, it was not easy for Him. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." So those who have the mind of Christ learn obedience through the things which they suffer for the kingdom of God — and that is sanctification. When God the Holy Spirit takes possession of the heart He sanctifies the sinner so that his thinking is in agreement with God's word; and as sanctification goes on, he is more and more obedient to God's Word.

The believing Jews were given this assurance by the Lord Himself, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is this adhering to God's Word which shows that one is truly His disciple. But He goes on to say, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is the truth of the Word of God that will rescue you — that will free you from all persecutions, from all troubles, from the power of Satan, from the power of death, and from the power of that kingdom of darkness which is Hell itself. In being freed by the Word of Christ you are rescued by Christ Himself; "and if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

In being freed by Christ and by His Word there will be deliverance from the fear of man. John Knox said, "Show me a man that fears God and I will show you a man that fears no man." The fear of God ruling in the heart of the believer will strengthen him and cause him to be glorying in the Lord. But if our glorying be in ourselves, in our history, in our achievements, in our learning, then we shall lose very greatly. Let us heed what is written: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

In conclusion, I would like to quote from the last chapter of Revelation, verse 19, "And if any man take away from the words of the book of this prophesy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We are not to add to the Scriptures; neither are we to subtract from them. God reveals Himself as the God who will by no means clear the guilty. The only way to clear the guilty is through the blood of the everlasting covenant — the blood of Christ. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Now, this revelation of God and of His method of clearing the guilty is found only in the Word of God. Therefore the Scriptures must remain intact. They must remain intact in the hearts of believers. They must remain intact in the heart of the Church. They must remain intact in this branch of the visible church, because the Lord has said, "If ye continue

in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Departure from God's Word will cancel us from being the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore you and I who love this branch of the visible church should have this desire and prayer: that we would not depart from the rails of the Word of God in the smallest way.

When newspaper reporters asked me, "Why is your church so rigid — so unbending," I said to them, "The Word of God cannot be lowered to meet human standards. It cannot be lowered by reason of man being unable to rise up to it." That was the mistake which most missionaries made in Africa. "This is a black man. What does he know, after all. Let us lower the Word of God so that it will reach down to them." No! The Bible must be kept as it is.

There is no different faith among believers in Zimbabwe, in Malawi, or anywhere else in the world, from what there is among believers here in Britain. It is one faith. It is the work of God the Holy Spirit in the human heart, opening the heart, teaching the sinner his own sins, showing the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, and drawing that sinner unto Him who says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all man unto me." What we need is the lifting up of Christ in preaching the gospel, and in our actions in our church courts. If we lift up Christ, glorying in Him, then we will be His disciples indeed. And you will know the truth and you will be free indeed. There is no one you need fear in this world. The Lord will protect you.

May He bless His word to us. Let us pray.

Soul Nourishment First

by George Muller

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost, for more than fourteen years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that **the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord.** The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek the benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in

my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit. Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed myself in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.

I began therefore to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning, early in the morning. The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it, but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened, and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, either very soon after or at a later time, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I gave myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

With this mode I have likewise combined the being out in the open air for an hour, and hour and a half, or two hours, before breakfast, walking about in the fields, and in the summer sitting for a little on the stiles, if I find it too much to walk all the time. I find it very beneficial to my health to walk thus for meditation before breakfast, and am now so in the habit of using the time for that purpose, that when I get into the open air I generally take out a New Testament of good-sized type, which I

carry with me for that purpose, besides my Bible; and I find that I can profitably spend my time in the open air, which formerly was not the case for want of habit. I used to consider the time spent in walking a loss, but now I find it very profitable, not only to my body, but also to my soul. The walking out before breakfast is of course not necessarily connected with this matter, and every one has to judge according to his strength and other circumstances.

The difference, then, between my former practice and my present one is this: Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer, except when I felt my soul to be more than usually barren, in which case I read the Word of God for food, or for refreshment, or for a revival and renewal of my inner man, before I gave myself to prayer. But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour, on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul etc.; and often, after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began to really pray. I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word. It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this point. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is, to obtain food for his inner man. As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow. **Now, what is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God;** and here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it and applying it to our hearts. When we pray, we speak to God. Now, prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season, therefore, when this exercise of the soul can be most effectually perform-

ed is after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us. We may therefore profitably meditate, with God's blessing, though we are ever so weak spiritually; nay, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation for the strengthening of our inner man. Thus there is far less to be feared from wandering of mind than if we give ourselves to prayer without having had time previously for meditation. I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God, I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials, in various ways, than I had ever had before; and after having now above fourteen years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. In addition to this I generally read, after family prayer, larger portions of the Word of God, when I still pursue my practice of reading regularly onward in the Holy Scriptures, sometimes in the New Testament and sometimes in the Old, and for more than twenty-six years I have proved the blessedness of it. I take, also, either then or at other parts of the day, time more especially for prayer.

How different, when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day came upon one. May 1841.

(From Autobiography of George Muller, p. 152).

Letter

by Rev. John Newton

On Hearing Sermons

Dear Sir,

I am glad to find that the Lord has at length been pleased to fix you in a favoured situation, where you have frequent opportunities of hearing the gospel. This is a great privilege; but, like all other outward privileges, it requires grace and wisdom to make a due improvement of it; and the great plenty of ordinances you enjoy, though in itself a blessing, is attended with snares, which, unless they are carefully guarded against, may hinder rather than promote your edification. I gladly embrace the occa-

sion you afford me, of offering you my advice upon this subject. A remembrance of the mistakes I have myself formerly committed, and the observations I have made upon the conduct of professors, considered as hearers, will perhaps in some measure qualify me for the task you have assigned me.

The faithful ministers of the gospel, are *all* the servants and ambassadors of Christ; they are called and furnished by his Holy Spirit; they speak in his name; and their success in the discharge of their office, be it more or less, depends entirely upon his blessing: so far they are all upon a par. But in the measure of their ministerial abilities, and in the peculiar turn of their preaching, there is a great variety. There are "diversities of gifts from the same Spirit; and he distributes to every man severally according to his own will." Some are more happy in alarming the *careless*, others in administering consolation to the *wounded* conscience. Some are set more especially for the establishment and confirmation of the gospel doctrines; others are skilful in solving casuistical points; others are more excellent in enforcing practical godliness; and others again, having been led through depths of temptation and spiritual distress, are best acquainted with the various workings of the heart, and know best how to speak a word in season to weary and exercised souls. Perhaps no true minister of the gospel (for all such are taught of God) is wholly at a loss upon either of these points; but few, if any, are remarkably and equally excellent in managing them all. Again, as to their manner, some are more popular and pathetic, but at the same time more general and diffuse; while the want of that life and earnestness in delivery is compensated in others by the closeness, accuracy, and depth of their compositions. In this variety of gifts, the Lord has a gracious regard to the different tastes and dispositions, as well as to the wants of his people: and by their combined effects the complete system of his truth is illustrated, and the good of his church promoted with the highest advantage; while his ministers, like officers assigned to different stations in an army, have not only the good of the whole in view, but each one his particular post to maintain. This would be more evidently the case, if the remaining depravity of our hearts did not afford Satan but too much advantage in his subtle attempts to hurt and ensnare us. But, alas! how often has he prevailed to infuse a spirit of envy or dislike in ministers towards each other, to withdraw hearers from their proper concernment, by dividing them into parties, and stirring them up to contend for a Paul, an Apollos, or a Cephas, for their own favourites, to the disparagement of others, who are equally dear to the Lord, and faithful in his service!

You may think my preamble long; but I shall deduce my advices chiefly from it; taking it for granted, that to you I have no need of proving at large what I have advanced.

As the gifts and talents of ministers are different, I advise you to choose for your stated pastor and teacher, one whom you find most suitable, upon the whole, to your own taste, and whom you are likely to hear with the most pleasure and advantage. Use some deliberation and much prayer in this matter. Entreat the Lord, who knows better than you do yourself, to guide you where your soul may be best fed; and when your choice is fixed, you will do well to make a point of attending his ministry constantly, I mean at least at the stated times of worship on the Lord's day. I do not say, that no circumstance will justify your going elsewhere at such times occasionally; but I think, the seldomer you are absent the better. A stated and regular attendance encourages the minister, affords a good example to the congregation; and a hearer is more likely to meet with what is directly suited to his own case, from a minister who knows him, and expects to see him, than he can be from one who is a stranger. Especially I would not wish you to be absent for the sake of gratifying your curiosity to hear some new preacher, who you have perhaps been told is a very extraordinary man. For in *your way* such occasions might possibly offer almost every week. What I have observe of many, who run about unseasonably after new preachers, has remind ed me of Prov. 27: 8, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is the man that wandereth from his place." Such unsettled hearers seldom thrive: they usually grow wise in their own conceits, have their heads filled with notions, acquire a dry, critical, and censorious spirit; and are more intent upon disputing who is the best preacher, than upon obtaining benefit to themselves from what they hear. If you could find a man, indeed, who had a power *in himself* of dispensing a blessing to your soul, you might follow him from place to place; but as the blessing is in the Lord's hands, you will be more likely to receive it by waiting where his providence has placed you, and where he has met with you before.

But as human nature is prone to extremes, permit me to give you a caution on the other hand. If the minister, under whom you statedly attend, is made very acceptable to you, you will be in the less danger of slighting *him*. But be careful that you do not slight any other minister of Christ. If, therefore, when you come to hear your own preacher, you find another in the pulpit, do not let your looks tell him, that if you had known he had been there, you would not have come. I wish indeed you may never think so in your heart; but though we cannot prevent evil

thoughts from rising in our minds, we should endeavour to combat and suppress them. Some persons are so curious, or rather so weak, that if their favourite minister is occasionally absent, they hardly think it worth their while to hear another. A judicious and faithful minister, in this case, instead of being delighted with such a mark of peculiar attachment to himself, will be grieved to think that they have profited no more by his labours; for it his desire to win souls, not to himself, but to Jesus Christ. I hope you, my friend, will always attend the ordinances with a view to the Lord's presence; and when you are in your proper place, consider the preacher (if he preaches the truth) as one providentially and expressly sent by the Lord to you at that time; and that you could not choose better for yourself, all things considered, than he has chosen for you. Do not limit the Almighty, by confining your expectations to a single instrument. If you do, you will probably procure your own disappointment. If you fix your hopes upon the *man*, the Lord may withhold his blessing, and then the best men and the best sermons will prove to you but as clouds without water. But besides the more stated seasons of worship on the Lord's day, you have many opportunities of hearing sermons occasionally in the course of the week; and thus you may partake of that variety of gifts which I have already spoken of. This will be either a benefit, or otherwise, according to the use you make of it. I would recommend to you to improve these occasions, but under some restrictions.

In the first place, Be cautious that you do not degenerate into the spirit of a *mere hearer* so as to place the chief stress of your profession upon running hither and thither after preachers. There are many who are always upon the wing; and, without a due regard to what is incumbent upon them in the shop, in the family, or in the closet, they seem to think they were sent into the world only to hear sermons, and to hear as many in a day as they possibly can. Such persons may be fitly compared to Pharaoh's lean kine; they devour a great deal; but, for want of a proper digestion, they do not flourish: their souls are lean; they have little solid comfort; and their profession abounds more in leaves than in fruit. If the twelve apostles were again upon earth, and you could hear them all every week; yet, if you were not attentive to the duties of the closet; if you did not allow yourself time for reading, meditation and prayer; and if you did not likewise conscientiously attend to the concerns of your particular calling, and the discharge of your duties in relative life; I should be more ready to blame your indiscretion, than to admire your zeal. Everything is beautiful in its season; and if one duty frequently jostles

out another, it is a sign either of a weak judgment, or of a wrong turn of mind. No public ordinances can make amends for the neglect of secret prayer; nor will the most diligent attendance upon them justify us in the neglect of those duties, which, by the command and appointment of God, we owe to society.

Again, As it is our trial to live in a day wherein so many contentions and winds of strange doctrines abound, I hope you will watch and pray that you may not have *itching ears*, inclining you to hearken after novel and singular opinions, and the erroneous sentiments of men of unstable minds, who are not sound in the faith. I have known persons who, from a blamable curiosity, have gone to hear such, not for the sake of edification, which they could not expect, but to know what they had to say, supposing that they themselves were too well established in the truth to be hurt by them. But the experiment (without a just and lawful call) is presumptuous and dangerous. In this way many have been hurt, yea, many have been overthrown. Error is like poison; the subtlety, quickness, and force of its operation, is often amazing. As we pray not to be led into temptation, we should take care not to run into it wilfully. If the Lord has shown you what is right, it is not worth your while to know (if you could know it) how many ways there are of being wrong.

Further, I advise you, when you hear a gospel sermon, and it is not in all respects to your satisfaction, be not too hasty to lay the whole blame upon the preacher. The Lord's ministers have not much to say in their own behalf. They feel (it is to be hoped) their own weakness and defects, and the greatness and difficulty of their work. They are conscious that their warmest endeavours to proclaim the Saviour's glory are too cold; and their most importunate addresses to the consciences of men are too faint; and sometimes they are burdened with such discouragements, that even their enemies would pity them if they knew their case. Indeed they have much to be ashamed of; but it will be more useful for you, who are a hearer, to consider whether the fault may not possibly be in yourself. Perhaps you thought too highly of the man, and expected too much from him; or perhaps you thought too meanly of him, and expected too little. In the former case, the Lord justly disappointed you; in the latter, you received according to your faith. Perhaps you neglected to pray for him; and then, though he might be useful to others, it is not at all strange that he was not so to you. Or possibly you have indulged a trifling spirit, and brought a dearth and deadness upon your own soul; for which you had not been duly humbled, and the Lord chose that time to rebuke you.

Lastly, As a hearer, you have a right to try all doctrines by the word of

God; and it is your duty so to do. Faithful ministers will remind you of this; they will not wish to hold you in an implicit and blind obedience to what they say upon their own authority, nor desire that you should follow them further than they have the Scripture for their warrant. They would not be lords over your conscience, but helpers of your joy. Prize this gospel liberty, which sets you free from the doctrines and commandments of men; but do not abuse it to the purposes of pride and self. There are hearers who make *themselves*, and not the Scripture, the standard of their judgment. They attend not so much to be instructed, as to pass their sentence. To them, the pulpit is the *bar* at which the minister stands to take his trial before them; a bar at which few escape censure, from judges at once so severe and inconsistent. For, as these censors are not all of a mind, and perhaps agree in nothing so much as in the opinion they have of their own wisdom, it has often happened, that, in the course of one and the same sermon, the minister has been condemned as a Legalist and an Antinomian, as too high in his notions, and too low, as having too little action, and too much. Oh! this is a hateful spirit, that prompts hearers to pronounce *ex cathedrá* as if they were infallible, breaks in upon the rights of private judgment, even in matters not essential, and makes a man an offender for a word. This spirit is one frequent unhappy evil, which springs from the corruption of the heart, when the Lord affords the means of grace in great abundance. How highly would some of the Lord's hidden ones, who are destitute of the ordinances, prize the blessing of a preached gospel, with which too many professors seem to be surfeited! I pray God to preserve you from such a spirit, (which I fear is spreading, and infects us like the pestilence,) and to guide you in all things.

I am, &c.

Abundant Blessings

by Rev. K. D. MacLeod

It was with amazing calmness that Abraham made his way with his son, Isaac, to Mount Moriah. God had called him to offer Isaac up for a burnt offering. And here was his seed through whom, indirectly, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. From his offspring, Abraham knew, One was to come who was to be his own Saviour. But Abraham was obedient. By a God-given faith he was assured that "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." He carried out God's command to the point where

the knife was in his hand to slay his son. He had gone far enough to demonstrate beyond every possible doubt that he feared God "since thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me". The angel of God called from heaven; Abraham was forbidden to go further.

Here then is an example of unparalleled godly obedience which shines like a beacon to all succeeding generations. And where among all the types and shadows, which form such an important part of Old Testament revelation, will we find a clearer picture of the willingness with which an infinitely greater Father gave His only begotten Son to suffer and die for sinners? So we are told that God "*spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all.*" This greatest manifestation of God's goodness was for those — Paul and his readers in Rome among them — whom God had from all eternity foreknown and predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.

It is an awful matter for anyone to die — to undergo that unnatural separation of soul and body which is the result of sin. It would have been awful for Isaac to die at the hand of his father, especially as it was his father who was the appointed instrument of his death. But how awful a death it was that the Son of God met at Calvary when the Father laid upon Him the iniquity of all His people. Christ came willingly; the ancient prophecy of Psalm 40 represents Him as saying, "Lo, I come: i the volume of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will, (My God." Christ came in the full knowledge of all that was before Him. He took the cup that the Father gave Him and drank it to the very dregs, doing just what He asserted He would do, "The cup that My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" In the dregs of that cup was the experience, altogether unique for Him, of His Father hiding Himself from Him as on the cross of Calvary He bore the punishment of His people's sins, punishment which they themselves would have to suffer had they not been from eternity elected to Salvation. Then it was that the cry came from His lips, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Close as was the relationship between Abraham and Isaac, how infinitely closer was the relationship between Father and Son in the Eternal Trinity. Even the Jews realised that, by claiming to be the Son of God, Christ was making Himself equal with God. Son of God though He was, having united to His divine Person a true human nature He endured the full penalty of His people's sins. His Father spared Him not in the least degree but delivered Him up to that awful death with all its attendant sufferings and shame. God's people even now can read Peter's words as addressed to themselves, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with

the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." And they can repeat Paul's words too, appropriating them to themselves, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

The price of their redemption has been paid so that salvation, a full salvation, an everlasting salvation, is theirs. Forgiveness is theirs, reconciliation is theirs — and with these every blessing of the new covenant." He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, *how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" All things that they need — all things that will be for their good — are thus assured to them. This assurance should encourage conformity to Paul's counsel, "Be careful for nothing (i.e. do not give way to anxious care for anything); but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Those who do so have the promise, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Then, if we have come to lay hold on Christ as the only "name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," we are eternally secure. Paul, in the name of all believers, asked the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" With what assurance he answered! "I am persuaded," he said, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, God's love to Paul was sure; and that same love was to ensure that Paul's love to God would never fail. His abundant labours, his frequent imprisonments, his deaths oft, beatings with rods, a stoning, the forty stripes save one five times over, three shipwrecks, a night and a day in the sea, regular journeys with perils on land and sea, with perils from Jews and heathens, with perils from robbers and even false brethren, weariness, painfulness, hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness, besides his constant care of all the churches — and he calls it "light affliction, which is but for a moment" — none of it all was going to weaken Paul's love for his Master."

Paul has long since got home; his is now a partaker of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." All God's people will follow him, one by one, each to become a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light and to receive their own eternal reward. But even in heaven they will never forget that it was through Christ, who was delivered up for them,

that they have received all things. "Unto Him," they will ever cry, "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Manasseh

Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign. (2 Chron. 38: 1-20)

Much solemn and important instruction is to be learned from the life of Manasseh and God's dealings with him.

He was the son of a man, who was distinguished for personal piety and who was eminently honoured of God; one who must have been exemplary as a father, and as the head of a household. It is a high privilege to have such a father, involving in it deep responsibility. His father was removed when he was but twelve years of age. This in any circumstances would have been a terrible blow, but more especially when at so early an age he was to occupy the arduous and dangerous station of King of Judah. What particular influences were at work to ensnare and corrupt him, we are not informed. But if his father — Hezekiah — had been pre-eminent for piety, the son proved pre-eminent for wickedness. "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel" and the evil is specified with fearful minuteness. He began by insulting his father's memory and his father's God, by "building again the high places, which Hezekiah had broken down." And as though this had been a small matter he proceeded to establish idolatry, rearing up altars to Baalim, and worshipping all the host of heaven; experiencing the vanity of his idols, but endeavouring to make up by their number for their vanity. He profaned the name and the house of God, building altars in the house of the Lord, and in the two courts of the house of the Lord for all the host of heaven, and setting a carved image — the idol which he had made in the house of God. He was guilty of the most revolting cruelty as a father, causing his children to pass through the fire in honour of the idol Moloch. He made a covenant with hell abandoning himself to the most degrading superstition. He made Judah and Israel to sin, and he shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other. And all this was aggravated by his being the son of such a father, and by his being king of Judah where God was known; by past judgments of God against the wickedness of rulers and people; by his long continuance in sin; and by the solemn warnings which he received and despised — for "the Lord spake

to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken." This whole description presents the character of an outrageous and hardened sinner — past fear, feeling or shame. And who would expect anything else than that such a heaven-defying sinner, after filling up the measure of his iniquity would be driven away in his wickedness.

But "the Lord brought unto them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him; and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord — He was God." He was afflicted and his affliction was sanctified. The severest affliction has indeed no power in itself to bring the sinner to his right mind. No doubt, there are some things which a sinner must see and feel in the time of affliction; for example — the vanity of the world, the misery of being without true hope in God, the bitterness of sin; but all this may be seen and felt, and yet the heart be more hardened and closed up against God. The fetters and the dungeon, the change from outward greatness and power to misery, disgrace and ruin, might have produced in Manasseh the repentance of a Cain or a Judas, but without grace this would have been all. However in the Lord's hand, and in connection with His Word, affliction proves efficacious for breaking the stubborn heart and humbling the stoutest of sinner, and the Lord often begins a precious work with such painful dealing.

**From: Charles C. Mackintosh
of Tain and Dunoon**

A Letter from Rome

By the Late Rev. John Kennedy, D.D., Dingwall.*

Rome, 21st February, 1884

My Dear Sir — I feel exceedingly anxious to know how you have been since we left home, and how your work has been getting on, and I cannot refrain from asking you to take the trouble of writing me such information as I desire.

As for me, I am just as the Lord hath appointed, and with this I desire

* This letter was written to Mr Alexander Macdonald, Catechist, Dingwall. — Ed.

to be satisfied. I have not been quite so well for the last week. I somehow caught cold, and this has produced results which make me rather anxious. But till this came, I felt wonderfully better and quite conscious of a considerable accession of vigour.

This is our last day in this wonderful idolatrous and ungodly city. On this occasion I did what I could in looking into the worship and practice of the Romish Church, and the result has been to make me feel assured that I had previously no right conception of the monstrous deceit and blasphemy of the horrid system of Popery. I have been a witness of many services that were such an outrage on reason, as well as on all spiritual feeling, that I felt persuaded that only the power of a "strong delusion" could induce men to countenance them. Here you can enter a Church during service and walk about and talk as if you were in a museum or in a gallery of paintings, and look on what is being done before the altar, without even approaching to anything like a countenancing of it. During the service at the altar, even priests and monks are moving about among the people who are mere spectators, and are just as frivolous as those who are talking and laughing around them. The officiating priests are quite as devoid of any appearance of seriousness as those who are looking at them as they mutter and posture in a way that indicates nothing except the weariness of routine, their utter want of faith in what they would commend to others, and the facility with which they can dishonour Jehovah and His Anointed. The religious power of Popery is manifestly on the wane here, as surely as its political power is gone. But the poor people are going back into the gross darkness of infidelity instead of coming out into the light of truth. But this is not the final condition of the Romans. If severe great national calamity occurred to scare them, they would fly back into the arms of the Pope again, and be his slaves as before. I cannot but think that this ungodly city shall be the scene of dire judgments ere the Lord shall arise to shew mercy. The present condition of the people is just what might be expected. The utter deceitfulness of Popish worship — its utter emptiness of all that would meet the crave of conscience — is such that, combined with the profligacy of the priesthood, the people are driven into utter infidelity. The only religion they know is that which is represented by Popery, and how can we wonder if they say "if that is religion we chose to be without it".

But there is much, very much, here that is intensely interesting. The recent excavations have discovered remains of ancient Rome as prove it to have been the most magnificent city in the world — and its greatest works were erected by the slave-labour of Christian captives — works such

as the Colosseum, the most splendid ruin in the world, which afterwards became the scene of the slaughter of the Christians who erected it, the architect being one of the first to suffer on its arena. I was at Appii Forum and the three taverns where Paul met the brethren on his way from Puteoli to Rome. I was at his own hired house. I was in the prison in which he was confined, and I stood on the very pavement on which rested his feet when he was before Nero. All this was very interesting amid all that was grieving. How strange it seems to find oneself standing between walls that shew the paint that was so skilfully laid upon them 2000 years ago, and to stand on the mosaic pavement with which at that distant date they were floored.

Protestant congregations in this city are very few and very small, and of these some appear to be imitating Popery, rather than protesting against it. I refer to the High Church Episcopal Churches, one English, and another American. These are but helping those who worship in them pass over to the Beast. In our Free Church here there is a minister who is an able, clear, doctrinal preacher, but whose sentiment is considerably affected by the fashionable religion of the times. I preached once there, and because I used no hymns, I have never been asked again. The doctrine which I preached was not relished because I endeavoured to set forth views of scripture truth which told against current tendencies. I had promised to preach again, but since that first service I was never reminded of my promise. I find that the Scotch newspapers are down upon me because of the service which I conducted, and of course they represent the feeling of the congregation here.

I am leaving Rome, D.V., tomorrow forenoon for Florence, where I expect to be for a month. . . .

With kindest regards — I am, my dear sir, yours affectionately,

J. Kennedy

Blessing from a Martyr's Last Prayer

James Glendinning rented a sheep farm in the vicinity of Cairntable, a high mountain to the east of Muirkirk. He was a young man of great bodily strength, of a powerful and reflective mind, and of a generous disposition. He married an amiable young woman, the daughter of a small proprietor somewhere in the neighbourhood. They were Episcopalians and attended the ministry of the curate of Muirkirk. His wife who seems to have been a woman of considerable shrewdness, often conversed with him on the position of affairs in the trying times of persecution; and it was

frequently observed by them, that there must certainly be something more than common in the case of the Covenanters, who took joyfully the spoiling of these goods, and who submitted to death itself, rather than renounce their principles. Their godly and inoffensive lives, and the great privations to which they were subjected, called forth the sympathy of Glendinning and his wife in their behalf, and they frequently opened their door with an hospitable welcome to those whom they deemed worthy but injured men. It happened on one occasion that Glendinning, having gone to the metropolis with a flock of sheep for sale, witnessed the death of one of the martyrs in the Grassmarket. The scene was novel and striking and his attention was powerfully arrested. He heard the martyr's dying confession — not of any crime of which he had been guilty, and for which he was called to suffer, but of his faith in that Redeemer, who on earth had shed His precious blood for the remission of sins — and in that short confession he probably heard more of the Gospel than he heard during his whole lifetime before. He heard the martyr's dying testimony emitted against the prevailing errors of the time, and in favour of that truth in behalf of which a standard had been lifted up. From this he must have learned more of the nature of that cause in which the Covenanters were embarked than had ever entered into his mind to conceive. He heard the martyr's last prayer — which breathed of Heaven, and which was expressive of the deepest penitence, and yet full of confidence and delight in God — a prayer which uttered good-will to all men, and in which forgiveness was sought, even for those who were about to imbrue their hands in his blood. He witnessed the martyr's heroic grappling with death. . . . A new light shone into his mind; he felt himself the subject of emotions and determinations to which he had formerly been a total stranger, and he left the affecting spectacle, with a heart which God had touched, and into which the elementary principles of saving truth had entered. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

From: Robert Simpson's TRADITIONS OF SCOTTISH PERSECUTIONS

Book Reviews

HUMAN NATURE IN ITS FOURFOLD STATE by Thos. Boston. Banner of Truth Trust £8.95. 506pp.

This well-bound and attractively produced reprint of Boston's classic work on the four states of man — Innocence, Nature, Grace and Eternal — does not need recommendation from us as it has been highly prized by the godly of many generations. In it the reader is led into the glory

of man's state before he fell into sin, then on to what man became through his fall in Adam. Next Boston shows what the state of grace is into which a sinner is brought through saving union to the Lord Jesus Christ. Last of all Boston deals with the eternal state of man, covering such topics as death, resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell. The book has a biographical introduction by Rev. George H. Morrison of Dundee which has been taken from the 1899 edition of Boston's Memoirs.

D. B. M.

THE ART OF DIVINE CONTENTMENT by Thos. Watson, Free Presbyterian Publications £3.30. 109pp.

It is good to have a reprint of this work by Thomas Watson which is based on the Scripture: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." The paperback is attractively produced and contains, like the other writings of Watson, much that is of a spiritually edifying nature. The subject with which it deals is one in which every Christian ought to have an interest. What a high attainment it is in the life of grace to be content. Discontentment and murmuring is native to us as fallen creatures and only grace can bring us to be of another mind, and only fresh supplies of grace can enable us to continue to live in a contented frame of heart and mind. The Apostle could say: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." This was no small attainment.

We are glad to commend this book and all Thos. Watson's writings to our readers.

D. B. M.

PRESBYTERIAN HERITAGE PUBLICATIONS. The following two books from the above publishers are to be available from the Church Bookroom:-

WHAT MEAN YE BY THIS SERVICE? by Richard Bacon £1.65. In this 44 page booklet examines first the Old Testament practices concerning the Passover and then moves on to the institution of the Lord's Supper and its relationship to the Passover meal. He shows that communicants should be "of years and ability to examine themselves".

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH by Thos. McCrie, £12.50. (Special discount available). In this book, the biographer of Knox, deals with the subject of Church Unity. He deals with such topics as the biblical basis

of unity, the scriptural bonds of unity, reformation and revival, the evil of schism and the duty to preserve truth.

D. B. M.

Notes and Comments

Sabbath Mail

The Post Office has bowed to pressure for the introduction of a Sabbath mail collection. There is to be a limited trial of the Sabbath service from October in selected places. This service was stopped in 1976 but the Post Office claims that more than seventy per cent of its customers favour its return. The managing director says that the Royal Mail is on track to become a seven day a week service. The desecration of the Sabbath by commercial interests is proceeding apace. Men are blind to the claims of the divine law, yet God will require of this generation their trampling of His holy law under their feet.

Immorality and Divorce in Britain

It would appear from a Press report that Britain has the highest divorce rate in Europe and one in four children are born outside marriage. No less than 37 per cent of marriages end in divorce. These figures no doubt reflect the low moral state into which the nation has fallen. The permissive age has produced its inevitable fruits through the abandonment of the moral standards of the divine law. The situation has become so serious with the breakdown of family life that it is thought it could lead to a collapse of society. This should be no wonder to those who have the Bible in their hands as it plainly lays down that "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Religious Observance in Scottish Schools

A report by H.M. Inspectorate of Schools indicates that there has been a decline in religious observance in Scottish schools. The report stated that attitudes of staff and pupils in primary schools were favourable to religious observance but less so in many secondaries. The Scottish Education Minister, Mr Michael Forsyth, said that he believed it was important that religious observance should be a regular feature of our schools, as a complement to religious education.

It is becoming clear that schools are becoming more and more secularised as the interest in religion declines in the nation. In some cases the nature

of the religious education given and of the religious observances practised is such that the pupils would be better without them. It does not seem likely that there will be any radical improvement in these matters until there is a genuine revival of religion in the land.

Statement of Synod Regarding the Secession

They Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland met *pro re nata* in Inverness on Wednesday 28th June 1989 unanimously resolved to issue the following statement for the information of all concerned and especially for the information of our people.

The Synod notes that a Deed of Separation from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has been signed by a number of former ministers and elders of this Church. By this act they ceased to be ministers and elders of the Free Presbyterian Church. In the Deed of Separation, signed on various dates, the signatories allege that this Synod has violated the principles of the Christian's right to private judgment as well as denying liberty of conscience to its members. It is also alleged that in coming to its decisions the Synod was guilty of acting contrary to its own rules of procedure.

The Synod emphatically rejects all these allegations as without foundation. It also notes that prior to the separation an overture setting out certain views was submitted to the Synod by signatories to the Deed of Separation. The overture sought that a declaration of these views should be made as representing the views of the Synod. The overture also sought that all courts of the Church should have regard to that declaration in all cases of discipline and the granting of Church privileges. These views are now reflected in the Deed of Separation. The Synod feels justified in thinking that such a declaration was intended to have the effect of undermining the discipline of the Church and lowering its standards in the admission of persons to the privileges of the Church.

Since it is evident that the cases of Rev. A. Murray and Lord Mackay figured prominently in the decision taken to pursue this separation it must be the case that the ministers and elders who have separated consider that liberty of conscience extends to a Protestant minister asking a popish priest to pray, although this priest is an idolater who claims to have power through his ordination by a Roman Catholic bishop in communion with the Pope to transubstantiate bread and wine into the body and blood of our glorified Saviour. Further they evidently consider that liberty of con-

science extends to being present at the idolatrous worship of a requiem mass although the Word of God commands us to "flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10: 14).

The Synod takes the view that a properly enlightened conscience would in both cases have prevented the persons concerned from acting as they did. Since they did so act, however, it was proper for the courts of the Church, representing the collective conscience of godly men, to deal with these cases by way of church discipline. It will not do to argue that the individual conscience did not feel guilt; the whole purpose of church discipline is to bring home guilt as a first step to the godly sorrow necessary to repentance.

The Synod views those signing the Deed of Separation as guilty of the sin of schism in their unwarranted attempt to break up the Cause of Christ among us. Their statement that they deplore the fragmentation of the visible Church of Christ sounds very hollow. The Synod deplores the activity of those ministers and elders in seeking to break up congregations, the spiritual good of which was entrusted to them by Presbyteries of the Church.

The Synod considers that the people who have left the church will soon come to see that those whom they have followed differ both in spirit and in practice from the Church in which they have been nurtured through the years.

With regard to church buildings and manses, the Synod takes the view that ordinary principles of moral integrity exercising the consciences of those who have separated from the Church should lead them to vacate the church buildings and manses belonging to the Church from which they have separated.

The Synod reaffirms that it stands firmly on the constitution and practice of the Church as settled in 1893 and continued during these 96 years; and looks forward, the Lord willing, to the commemoration of the centenary of the Church in 1993. Our people may rest assured that the principles of doctrine, worship and practice which have characterised the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland from the beginning will be continued, in dependence on the grace of God.

"Therefore, by ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

(1 Corinthians 15: 58)

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 29th August at 2 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Miavaig, Uig on 13th September at 7.30 p.m. for Induction of Rev. D. J. MacDonald M.A.

Southern: At Glasgow on 19th September at 6 p.m.

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

Skye: At Portree on 17th October at 11 a.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 20th October at 2 p.m.

Church Deputy to Canada

Rev. E. A. Rayner, accompanied by his wife, left this country in July to return home via Canada. There Mr Rayner was to give three Sabbaths to Chesley and also visit other places if arrangements could be made. We are grateful to Mr Rayner for having undertaken these duties and we trust that they will arrive home safely in due course in the Lord's kind providence and that his labours will be blessed to those who hear him.

The Secession Movement

The Secession Movement has been active in seeking to win adherents to its cause. In addition to those places where its numbers are strongest, it has sought to establish services in other places in opposition to those of the Free Presbyterian Church. This attempt to break up Free Presbyterian congregations runs counter to the claim of the secessionists that they do not wish to fragment the Cause of Christ any farther. It is good to know that on the whole our people have remained loyally attached to the Free Presbyterian Church and have not been moved by these attempts to draw them aside. It is to be hoped that some of those who have followed the new movement will yet recognise their mistake and return to the Church which they have forsaken. The total number of ministers now involved in the secession is fourteen.

Church Library Duplicate Books

A book list of duplicate books in the Church Library has been prepared. Those who wish to obtain a copy should write to the Church Bookroom.

Timely Truths

Earnestness in Pulpit Work

Brethren, you and I must as preachers, be always earnest in reference to our pulpit work: we must resolve to bring it to the highest point of excellence. Often have I said to my brethren that the pulpit is the Thermopylae of Christendom: there the fight will be lost or won. To us ministers the maintenance of our power in the pulpit should be our great concern, we must occupy that spiritual watch-tower with our hearts and minds awake and in full vigour. It will not avail us to be laborious pastors if we are not earnest preachers. We shall be forgiven a great many sins in the matter of pastoral visitation if the people's souls are really fed on the Sabbath-day; but fed they must be, and nothing else will make up for it. The failures of most ministers who drift down the stream may be traced to inefficiency in the pulpit. The chief business of a captain is to know how to handle his vessel, nothing can compensate for deficiency there, and so our pulpits must be our main care, or all will go away. Dogs often fight because there is a scarcity of bones, and congregations frequently quarrel because they do not get sufficient spiritual meat to keep them happy and peaceful. The ostensible ground of dissatisfaction may be something else, but nine times out of ten deficiency in the rations is at the bottom of the mutinies which occur in our churches. Men, like all other animals know when they are fed, and they usually feel good tempered after a meal; and so when our hearers come to the house of God, and obtain "food convenient for them," they forget a great many grievances in the joy of the festival; but if we send them away hungry they will be in as irritable a mood as a bear robbed of her whelps.

C. H. SPURGEON

Stand Fast

Failure at a crucial moment may mar the entire outcome of a life. A man who has enjoyed special light is made bold to follow in the way of the Lord, and is anointed to guide others therein. He rises into a place of love and esteem among the godly, and this promotes his advancement among men. What then? The temptation comes to be careful of the position he has gained, and to do nothing to endanger it. The man, so lately a faithful man of God, compromises with worldlings, and to quiet his own conscience invents a theory by which such compromises are justified, and even commended. He receives the praises of 'the judicious'; he has, in truth, gone over to the enemy. The whole force of his former life now

tells upon the wrong side. If the Lord loves him well enough, he will be scourged back to his place; but if not, he will grow more and more perverse, till he becomes a ringleader among the opposers of the gospel. To avoid such an end it becomes us ever to stand fast.

C. H. SPURGEON

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Ontario, \$100.00.

Dominions & Overseas Fund: A. & E. M., Laide, £30; H. M., Gairloch, £10; F. M., Melon, £20, all per Rev. D. A. R., for Mission to Eastern Europe.

Bookroom Fund: The Bookroom Manager acknowledges with sincere thanks: Mother and daughter, Wick, £100, per Rev. D. MacLean, for stand taken at the Synod.

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

Daviot: Anon., £20 for Communion Expenses.

Dingwall: Friends, Wick, £100 for Sust. Fund and £45 for Church Door Collection; Friend, Bonar, £10 for petrol.

Flashadder: Two Glasgow Friends, £50 for Church Building Fund.

Glendale: Anon., £10 where most needed, per Rev. D. Nicolson; In plate, £20 for Communion Expenses.

Inverness: Anon., £200 for Sust. Fund, per Rev. D. M. Boyd.

Laide: Inverness Friend, £10 for Church Door Collection, per Rev. D. Ross.

North Harris: Mrs J. MacL., 4 Kendebig, £1000 "to be used where needed to help the Cause" per R. M. C.; Anon., £10, for Missionaries Car Exps., in appreciation; K. M., Harris House, £2, both per J. McL.; Friend, Leacklee, £13.50 where most needed; Friend, Tarbet, £10, both per Rev. K. D. McL.

Portree: Anon., £100 for Organisation Fund (envelope in plate).

Shieldaig: From the Estate of the late Miss Ina Campbell, £3334.32, per Anderson, Shaw and Gilbert; Anon., £100, in memory of a loving husband and father, for Sust. Fund; Anon., £25; Friend of the Cause, Inverness, £10, where most needed; Miss C. F., Lochcarron, £10 for Communion Expenses.

South Harris: Friend, Glen, £20; Friend, Stockinish, £10; Friend, £25, all for Congr. Fd., all per Rev. K. MacLeod; Anon., £20 for Manse Fund; Anon., £10 for Communion Expenses, both per D. MacKenzie.

Stornoway: In appreciation, £100, Miss K. A. MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish, £50 and £60; Friend, £50, all for Sust. Fund, all per Rev. J. MacLeod; Two Friends, Wick, £100, for Sust. Fund, per Rev. J. MacLeod.