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The Infamous Declaratory Act of 1892

One hundred years ago this month the Declaratory Act was passed in the Assembly of the Disruption Free Church. Fifty years had not fully elapsed from the time when the Free Church had come forth from a vitiated Establishment to maintain a witness for the crown rights of the Divine Redeemer, until this infamous Declaratory Act destroyed the foundation on which that Church had been laid. Much had taken place between 184. and 1892 which clearly revealed that the Disruption Free Church was on a backsliding course. A latitudinarian spirit had entered that noble Church. Evils in doctrine and practice were tolerated which foretold greater evils to come. The attraction of wider Church unity took possession of men's minds to such an extent that they were ready to sacrifice Scriptural principles to achieve their end. The result for Scotland was disastrous. The present ills from which the nation suffers can be directly traced to the failure of the Free Church in the last century to hold fast to the whole counsel of God. The true gospel of Jesus Christ soon ceased to be proclaimed from the pulpits of the land and another gospel took its place. This led inevitably to the forsaking of the house of God by the people of the land. Consequently the vast majority in Scotland are unchurched and the children of today are growing up as ignorant of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the proverbial Hottentots. As with Israel of old, the nation has forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and is hewing out for itself broken cisterns which can hold no water.

The Declaratory Act played no mean part in bringing about this result. The Act constituted an insidious attack on the doctrines of the Confession of Faith and on the Bible on which these doctrines were based. An exposure of the subtle way in which the Declaratory Act undermined so many of the doctrines of the Confession of Faith is given in the early

issues of the Free Presbyterian Magazine. Its passing by an overwhelming majority indicated the lamentable state into which the Disruption Free Church had fallen. The doctrine of the inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures had been undermined by an unbelieving and rationalistic higher criticism, so that the Free Church was left without chart or rudder.

Men who had fallen out of sympathy with many of the doctrines of God's Word — if they had ever been truly in sympathy with them — now pleaded, under the guise of liberty of conscience, for a relaxation of the Scriptural standards to which the Church had been sworn. The Declaratory Act proved a most suitable vehicle for relieving their supposed conscientious scruples, not by declaring that the standards were false but by falsely declaring that they meant something other than they were ever intended to mean. If this removed the scruples of conscience of these men, it did not, and never could, relieve them of the guilt under which they lay as violators of Scripture teaching and of the vows which they had voluntarily come under at their ordination. Such men have long since gone to their account to answer for their perfidiousness.

The Constitutional Party entered a dissent and protest when the infamous Act was passed, and an appeal was made to the Assembly of 1893 to repeal the Act. However, when in 1893 the Assembly refused that appeal only one man, Rev. Donald MacFarlane, Raasay, tabled his Protest and left that Church, which had parted from its moorings, to form a Church which would raise again the standard which had fallen and maintain a testimony for the Word of God in its entirety.

Sermon

by Rev. John Willison, Dundee

"Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach; that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God? — Joel 2: 17.

At this time twenty-one years ago, (viz, Oct. 1712,) I opened the synod by a sermon on 1 Sam. 4: 13, concerning Eli's heart "trembling for the ark of God." Many of the members of the synod are removed by death since that time; but those who survive may remember it was a very threatening time to that church; yet it pleased our gracious God to save us from the storm then impending, and allow her many halcyon days since, though, alas! badly improved: wherefore the clouds seem to gather again, and look

very black; and a new storm from another quarter, if God prevent not, is ready to blow. I have chosen therefore this text, which calls us to more than trembling hearts for the ark, even weeping eyes, and praying lips also; and O that all these qualifications might meet in us at this time!

In Joel's time, the church and people of God were threatened with a desolating judgment: to prevent it, he calls them to public national fasting and humiliation; duties most proper for a people exposed to public national calamities. In the text, we have a number of special directions given to ministers for carrying on this work; in which let us

Observe, 1. The persons addressed, the priests or ministers of God. Why? Because they who were the people's mouth to God, upon other occasions, were especially called at this time to stand in the open, to turn away God's wrath from the church. Though others are not exempted from this duty, yet it is the business of ministers, in a special manner, Joel 1: 13, "Lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God." When others mourn in the day, it is your duty to mourn both night and day.

2. Observe the place where they are to mourn and wrestle; "between the porch and the altar," that is, the stately porch built by Solomon, and the great brazen altar, the public place where they used to attend the offering of the sacrifices, there they are to pour out their tears and prayers in view of all the people, that, by the minister's example, the people may be affected and wrought into the like pious disposition of mind.

3. Observe the words the ministers are directed to use and enlarge upon in their prayers to God: "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach," &c. In which there are several strong arguments used to prevail with God for the church:

(1.) They are to cry, "Spare, O Lord," *q. d.*, "We confess our guilt and ill deservings; we acknowledge the justice of thy proceedings, though we should be cut off; all our relief is in thy sparing mercy, and this we humbly look up to, and plead for, with a merciful God."

(2.) Another plea is taken from the relation they stood in unto God; "We are thy people, thine heritage:" "We are the people thou hast set thy love upon, separated from thy church, taken into covenant with thee, ransomed from Egyptian bondage, delivered from many enemies and dangers, and preserved from ruin by a train of miraculous providences; Lord, spare the inheritances thou hast purchased for thyself at so dear a rate."

(3.) They are to plead the reproach and contempt which would fall upon the church and people of God, if God give up with them; "give not up thine heritage to reproach," *q. d.* "If thou send a famine upon us, which

was the judgment immediately threatened, then the fruitful land of Canaan, the glory of all lands, shall be reproached as a poor, beggarly, and barren land, insufficient to afford sacrifices for the temple: yea, we shall soon fall under the reproach of servitude to our heathen neighbours, who will make an easy prey of us, if once we be famished, and deprive us both of our civil and spiritual liberties, and especially of God's ordinances, the symbols of his presence, and means of communion with him; which we value as our great honour and happiness above other nations."

Lastly, They are to plead in prayer, that the reproach of the church will some way reflect upon her God and protector; "Wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God?" *q. d.* "These barbarous people, who watched for our halting, will not consider our sins and ill deservings at God's hand, but will talk reproachfully of God, saying, Where is the God they trusted in, the God of whose power, mercy, and faithfulness they boasted so much? They will say he is either weak, and could not help them in extremity, or unkind, and would not. Lord, spare and pity the church, for thy name, thy glory's sake. The matter of our reproach is not so great; but, Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great and glorious name?"

Doct. — In time of the church's danger, ministers are especially called to mourn, plead, and wrestle with God for her, that she may not be abandoned or given up to reproach.

In prosecuting this subject I propose to show,

1. When it may be said, that a church is left or given up to reproach.
2. Why ministers should be so earnest with God to prevent this calamity.
3. Make improvement suitable to the case of the church.

I. The *first* head is, to show when a church may be said to be left or given up to reproach and contempt.

And here I shall mention several reproachful and church exposing evils, which ministers ought mournfully and fervently to deprecate, especially when a church is threatened with them. As,

1. When a church falls into a backsliding condition, religion in her is under a visible decay; her members leave their first love, degenerate from their predecessors' piety and zeal, turn loose and indifferent about God's truths, their former declared principles, and the solemn engagements they lie under to maintain them; and not only so, but turn careless also about the practice and duties of religion, such as family-worship, secret prayer, sabbath-sanctification, and gospel-holiness: when people lose their former spirituality and liveliness in God's service, and their duties dwindle away into a dead formality: when they content themselves with external

ordinances and communions, without communion with God in them: when they turn carnal in their conversation; Christian love declines, malice, hatred, and envy increases: then it is that a church is left and given up to reproach; these are church-disgracing evils, which ministers should earnestly deprecate, and cry, "Spare."

2. When destructive schisms and divisions invade a church, so that good men, both ministers and professors of religion, entertain rough thoughts, and break out into uncharitable reflections, and severe censures one against another, and will not use lenity or forbearance to them who differ from them in some lesser things. These are evils we should earnestly pray against, seeing they manifestly tend to expose and ruin a church; for they put a stop to the progress of the gospel, the conversion of souls, and in bringing of strangers to Christ: they hinder the sweet fellowship of Christians together, and their mutual prayers with and for one another; and open a flood-gate for innumerable other evils: as, for instance, they take us off from the vitals and essentials of religion, the life and power of godliness; and, in the room thereof, engage and employ us into many needless disputes, passionate strivings, envious whispers, unChristian backbitings, and revengeful actions. How sadly verified do we find that word of the apostle, James 2: 16, "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work!" We have reason to plead and cry against this woeful spirit of strife and contention; for where it takes place, the church's best friend is highly provoked, the "prince of peace;" and she herself is sadly exposed to the scorn and derision of her enemies.

3. It is most reproachful to a church, when doctrinal errors creep into her, when her teachers begin to resile from the pure truths of God handed down to them, and vent doctrines which have a tendency to Arminianism, Arianism, or Deism; when they extol natural reason more than revelation, the power of corrupt nature more than effacious free grace, men's own moral performances more than imputed righteousness, Jesus Christ as a pattern more than as a propitiation; or any other opinions which tend to sap the foundation of Christianity, or reproach the Holy Spirit's operations, and life of faith, with the name of enthusiasm: these are church-exposing evils, which we ought to bewail and pray against.

4. It is reproachful to a church, when she is smitten with barrenness and unfruitfulness, with respect to converting of souls, and bringing forth children to God: when the great doctrine of regeneration and the new-birth is little preached or experienced in her; or, when in judgment she has given her a *miscarrying womb and dry breasts*. "Lord, spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to this reproach."

5. It is a church-disgracing evil, when God withdraws his Holy Spirit and his gracious influences from her ministers and teachers, in any measure or degree; of which there are many, and each of them is to be dreaded and appreciated by us. As, (1.) When we are deprived of the gifts and qualifications we once had. (2.) When the light and knowledge we retain, hath no influence on our consciences. (3.) When we lose our spirituality and liveliness in the worship and service of God. (4.) When we are straitened in our approaches to God. (5.) When we begin to think duty a weariness, and our hearts are alienated from it. (6.) When heart-plagues and indwelling corruptions prevail and increase, as heart-atheism, unbelief, carnality, &c. (7.) When we incline towards the temptations of sin, and society of ungodly men. (8.) When wonted restraints are taken off, and we turn loose and profane in our lives, so as, like Eli's son, to tempt men to abhor the offerings of the Lord. "O Lord, spare thy people, and give not thy church to this reproach."

6. It is reproachful to the Lord's vineyard, when breaches are made in her walls and fences, so that her enemies, the foxes and wild beasts, break in and spoil the vines; when strangers devour her strength, those of a different persuasion and communion spoil her of her ancient rights and liberties: when patrons and their abettors thrust in pastors upon Christian congregations against their will, whereby God's ordinances are deserted, the ministry is contemned, the Lord's day is profaned, the flock of Christ is scattered and exposed as a prey to seducers. These are evils we should bewail and pray against with tears, crying, "Lord, spare thy church, and give her not up to this reproach."

7. It is disgracing to a church, when God hides his face from her, when under oppression and distress, and covers himself with a cloud, that their prayers cannot pass through; so that enemies are ready to say, as in the text, "Where is their God?" "Where is the fruit of all your prayers? where is he in whom you trusted for help? where is your covenanted God, of whose promises to relieve you in trouble, you were wont to boast?" This reproach is as a sword in his people's bones, Psal. 42: 10, against which let us pray, "Lord, spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to this sad reproach."

8. It sadly exposes a church when her pillars are removed; when those are discouraged or taken away, who were wont to weep and wrestle between the porch and the altar, and stood in the breach to keep off wrath from her; when her burning and shining lights are extinguished; the precious sons of Zion are thrown by as earthen pitchers; when faithful teachers are removed into corners or graves, and such put in her room,

who are inexperienced in religion, harden people in their sins, or lull them asleep in a Christless and unregenerate state. It is distressing to a church, when her pillars are struck at, persecution is intended against the champions of Christ's cause, whereby others are intimidated with fear to own it. How low was the church brought in Herod's time, Acts 12 when James was killed with the sword, Peter in prison ready to be executed, and all the rest of the apostles were designed as a sacrifice! Then the pillars shook, the disciples trembled, and the enemies triumphed. This was a time of reproach; and it becomes all the ministers of the Lord to weep between the porch and the altar, and cry, "Spare thy people, O Lord, give not thine heritage to this reproach, or any other church disgracing evil."

II. The *second* head I proposed, was, to show why ministers should be so earnest with God, to avert these church-exposing evils. Reasons for it.

1. Because God expressly requires this at their hand, as in the text, and also in Isa. 62: 6, 7, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem." — "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence. And give him no rest, till he establish Jerusalem." Where we may see the great end for which God sets ministers in such public posts; it is not to keep silence in an evil time, as other prudent men may do, but to speak aloud in Zion's behalf, and to intercede and wrestle with God for her. And we see God requires faithfulness in this matter.

2. This hath been the approved practice of the Lord's prophets and ministers in all ages. How earnest was Moses, in wrestling and pleading for the church in his day! Exod. 28: 11-13, "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power and a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and consume them from the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest," &c. Here is an intercessory prayer for Israel, full of the most powerful arguments, worthy of our imitation. In like manner was the prophet Samuel employed for the church in his time, 1 Sam. 12: 23, "As for me, saith he, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you." So the prophet David wrestled for the church, Ps. 14: 7, "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion." Psal. 25: 22, "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles," Psal. 51: 18. "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem." So Asaph, Psal. 80: 14, "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and visit this vine," &c. Likewise

the prophet Isaiah was thus concerned, Isa. 62: 1, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And so the prophet Daniel wrestled fervently for the church, Dan. 9: 16-19. So did Nehemiah, Neh. 1: 5-9, &c. And so did the apostle Paul, Rom. 1: 9; 10: 1; Eph. 1: 16, 17. But I have a greater pattern to lay before you than all these, even that of the angel of the covenant, the great prophet and teacher of the church, Zech. 1: 12. How earnestly doth he plead for the church in distress! "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these seventy years?" Let us imitate him.

3. Because God is exceedingly delighted with such pleadings, and allows great familiarity to those who intercede for his church, Isa. 45: 11, and promises prosperity to them, Psal. 122: 6.

4. Ministers should be more earnest for the church in trouble than other men, because they are Christ's principal servants, who should be more zealous for their glorious master than others, and know best the near relation the church stands in to him, that she is his city, his house, his heritage, his spouse, his body, and the purchase of his blood. And therefore ministers, for their master's sake, should interpose with the greatest earnestness for the church.

5. "Because ministers are, by their office, bound to have more compassion than others on precious souls, which cannot miss to be in a miserable situation, when the church is distressed with spiritual judgments, as the withdrawing of the Spirit from ordinances, and the plague of dry breasts.

6. Because at such a time the souls of ministers are like to suffer, as well as others; for the church, being the mother of us all; if it be ill with her, and her condition sickly and pining, our souls must languish with other men's.

7. Because ministers should best know the hazard of being silent and unconcerned about the church's danger and trouble; seeing there is a heavy woe denounced against them, "who are at ease in Zion, and are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Amos 6: 1,6. And they know what wrath was threatened against Esther, if she kept silence when the church was in danger, Esther 4: 14, "For if thou altogether hold thy peace at this time, then shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed."

III. Head *third*. — *The Improvement*. — *First, Use may be of Lamen-*

tation, upon the account of our silence and unconcernedness who are ministers about the church of God when in danger and distress. Ah! how few are there among us of Eli's disposition this day, whose hearts are trembling for the ark of God! How few weeping between the porch and the altar, and crying, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine inheritance to reproach." Witness the infrequency of fast-days, and the cold entertainment given to motions for observing them. What! is it a time for silence and easiness, when the affairs of Zion are in such a melancholy situation both at home and abroad? Is it time for us to dwell at ease in our ceiled houses, when the Lord's house is threatened to be laid waste by our woeful backslidings, and destructive divisions? Is it becoming the character of Christ's ambassadors to show an indifference about his church's danger, and to act the part of a heathen Gallio, to care for none of these things? O what cause have we to bewail the case of those who can be easy about the public interest of the church, if it go well with their own private affairs; who care not, if they can swim in prosperity, though the church be drowned in tears and blood! What is this! but to be like the king and Haman, who sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed, Esther 3: 15. For a Christian minister to mind his private concerns, and neglect the public, is as great folly, as if a sailor in a storm should notice only his private chest, and neglect the vessel in which he and his effects are embarked. It is recorded, as a praise-worthy action, and a noble evidence of a public spirit in one Terentius, a captain under the emperor Valens, who, having done some special service to the emperor, for which he judged him worthy of an eminent reward, he bid him ask what he would have, and it should be granted. Whereupon, after an advisement, he wrote a petition to the emperor, That the orthodox Christians might have liberty of a church by themselves, where they might worship God separately from the Arians. The emperor, being Arian himself, was much offended with the petition, tore it in pieces, and threw it away, bidding the captain ask something for himself: but he, carefully gathering up the pieces of his torn petition, said, If he could not be heard in Christ's cause, he would ask nothing for himself. Alas! that we who are Christ's ministers, should fall so much short of this soldier in concern for Christ's interest!

But the best improvement we can make of this doctrine is for amendment; and therefore I shall proceed to a

Second use of Exhortation. — And here, my dear brethren, suffer me to be your humble remembrancer, and my own monitor; and the duty exhorted to, is, that I have been insisting upon from the text, weep and

pray for all the churches of God that are in distress, and especially the church of Scotland, our mother church, which at this day is in danger of being torn in pieces and destroyed, if God, in his mercy, do not prevent it. O let us cry with all our might. "Lord, spare thy people, and give not thine heritage, in Scotland, to reproach: wherefore shall they say among the people, Where is their God?" And, for your encouragement to wrestle and plead with God in her behalf, let me offer these considerations:

1. Such pleadings are most acceptable to God, and prevalent with him. Who are they but the wrestlers that deliver the church, and preserve the island?

2. Those who are most concerned for the church in danger, shall have the greatest share in her comforts when God rescues her. They who sow most of the seed of tears for Zion, shall reap most of her joys, when the harvest comes.

3. We have noble arguments to make use of in pleading with God for his poor church, as well as they had of old for Israel.

As, (1.) The compassion of his nature, which hath often interposed for this church, when he seemed to have given her up. So was it in the case of Israel, Judg. 10: 14, where God appeared to reject them, and bid them "Go cry to the gods they had chosen, and let these deliver them in the time of their trouble;" yet when Israel persisted in crying for pity, it is said, ver. 16, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, and he delivered them."

(2.) We may plead the glory of his name, as of old, Jer. 14: 21, "Lord, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory," viz, the temple where thy glory is displayed: *q.d.* "Lord, we deserve to have disgrace put upon us; but O let it be in such a way that the disgrace may not reflect upon thyself, upon thy worship, thy ordinances, thy attributes, thy promises. Let not our enemies have occasion to reproach thy name, or to say, "Where is now their God?" "Where is the God they always boasted of, as superior to all the gods of the nations?" So may we say, "Lord, do for thy own name sake;" it is no great matter what become of the ministers or professors of Scotland; but what wilt thou do for thy great name that may come some way to suffer with them? "Lord, what will the Egyptians say?" Exod. 32.

(3.) We may plead his covenant with us, as they did, Jer. 14: 21, "Lord, remember and break not covenant with us". Though we have broke to thee, Lord, do not thou break to us. We are a people in covenant with thee more explicitly than other nations; we are a land peculiarly given to

Christ by the Father's donation, as being amongst the ends and uttermost parts of the earth, and among the isles, which have seen his salvation, and waited for his law; we are a land most solemnly devoted to God by our reforming ancestors, who, in a national way, avouched the Lord to be their God; and at the same time gave up themselves and their posterity to the Lord; and thou, Lord, didst declare thyself well pleased with the bargain; thou didst fill the temple with thy glory, work great deliverance for us, and raised up saviours unto us, when we were brought very low. O do not now forsake thine inheritance!"

Letter

by Rev. Hugh Martin, D.D.

Montrose, 17th March, 1880.

My Dear Friend, — Your last letter pleased me much, with the exception of one sentence in which you say "I wish I could believe that God was as favourably disposed towards me as you are." You will next be saying, in the supremacy of your theological attainments, "I wish I could believe that God was as wise and as good as you are." Now, why am I doomed to be thus always affectionately finding fault with you? Suppose that my letters are, as you say, "cheering and helpful," are they not very far from being "good and perfect?" You know well that "every good and perfect gift cometh down alone from above, from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Why are you still "off and on" in this way? Why ever saying — "I could not take *this*, I would not presume to believe *that*, I fear such and such a promise of the Word was not meant for *me*." Who was it meant for, if not for you and the like of you? We read that "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and if I say "that's for me, that suits me — a sinner — a chief sinner," would you take the bread of life out of my mouth and say, "No, that's not meant for you." Well, if you would scarcely do so to me, why do it to yourself? Do you think God is honoured thereby? Far otherwise; for if we are not, as sinners, to bring our needs and our wants alongside the promises of God in His word, and plead their fulfilment to our own special case, I do not know for what reason He has put these promises in His Word, or how else we are to get the benefit of them? O! it's a grand thing to gather up, as it were, everything — everything — all that we are and have been and have done, as lost, self-destroyed sinners, and all that we need that Christ should do for us; and lay the

weight of all, over on the grace and faithfulness of the promise that tells of a Saviour to the uttermost, and give that promise a fair trial, and see if it will bear us, and all our weight of sin and guilt, of helplessness and misery. For the promise was not to Abraham and his seed through the righteousness of the law, but through the righteousness of faith; and if they which are of the law be heirs, then faith is made void and the promise made of none effect. "Faith made void and the promise made of none effect" — what a collapse! Then all from Abraham downward who have relied on the promise have their foundation taken away, and heaven is made empty if the promise is made of none effect. It need not now be asked — "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence *came* they?" but "whither are they *gone*?" Also these holy beings who never sinned, but who stand confirmed by the Word of the Lord, they may call on the rocks to pity them and fall on them, for if the promise is made of none effect their foundation is insecure and uncertain. But these are only creatures placed in jeopardy, but what of the unchanging Jehovah, our Lord and our God? What of Him? Is His Word, by which the heavens were of old and by which all things consist, is His Word to go out in smoke and to vanish into eternal falsehood? For so it would be if faith is made void and the promise made of none effect. "Oh!" you say, "these are terrible thoughts." Not more terrible than true, for if we are to contemplate faith made void and the promise made of none effect, we must contemplate *all* the consequences that would relentlessly follow thereupon. If there were reason to doubt by one hair's breadth the veracity of that Word which upholdeth all things in heaven and in earth, if there were reason to suspect by one jot or by one tittle that faith would be made void and the promise made of none effect, there were equal reason to assume the eclipse and collapse of all that glory of God which by His unalterable Word He has manifested and made known. But blessed for ever be He who hath said — "The Scripture cannot be broken. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away."

Somehow I cannot help thinking that the time is not far off when it will please the Lord to batter and break down these secret nooks and corners of unbelief that you are too fond of hiding in, to bring you out from these false refuges that you are too fond of sheltering in, and to make you see that they will never do. It is when we are hunted out from every vain confidence that we are fitted to hear the Lord's declaration of free saving mercy, and to listen with silent adoring wonder to such gracious avowals as this — "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." "Let me see thy

countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." And should her disconsolate countenance be that day blurred and blotted with tears — as well it may be — and should her voice be broken and dissonant — as indeed it is — yet when Christ's voice is heard in accents of grace and love, her countenance will be no more sad but will be worthwhile even for Him to look upon, and her voice will be no more songless but will be worthwhile even for Him to listen to, for all that is within her shall that day leap for joy; and there shall be none in heaven or in earth to hinder her, yea, not a voice raised even in hell to say "What doest thou?"

Somehow, as I said, I think this day is not very far off. Go away then and seek it, and plead for it on the ground of Christ's own promise — "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they *shall* be comforted." — Yours, &c.

Hugh Martin.

Sources of True Repentance*

By the Rev. John Colquhoun, D.D., Leith

In the first place, I am to consider the Springs or Sources of true repentance. And I. The exercise of true or evangelical Repentance flows from the work of the Holy Spirit, in regeneration and sanctification. — God hath exalted Christ "with His right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5: 31). The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, implants the principle of it in the heart at regeneration, and converts this principle into a habit in sanctification. True repentance is not the work of nature, but of grace; not of a man's own spirit, but the Spirit of Christ. As it is the office of the adorable Mediator, to give repentance, so He gives it to His elect, by performing these promises to them: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36: 26). "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him" (Zech. 12: 10). True repentance, which is an evangelical contrition of heart, and a fixed resolution of spirit, to turn from all sin to God, is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit being given without measure to Christ, He, in the day of His

*This is an extract from Dr. Colquhoun's View of Evangelical Repentance. Dr. Colquhoun was a master in Israel and his preaching and writings were warmly received by the Lord's people. — Editor.

power, communicates the same Spirit to His elect, who, by His almighty operation, breaks their hearts from, and for sin, and converts them from sin to holiness. This is the primary source, from which, a true penitent's views of the malignity of sin, and his feelings of regret for it, do spring. They all result from the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. It is His peculiar province, as the Convincer of sin and misery, and the gracious Comforter, to implant in the soul that holy principle, and to excite and regulate all its exercise. In producing and strengthening the habit, and in directing the exercise of this grace, the Holy Spirit commonly employs His blessed word. He makes use of His law to break the hard heart, and of His gospel as a fire, to melt it into godly sorrow for sin. "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23: 29). Thus, the awakened sinner is, on the one hand, driven by the law, and on the other, kindly drawn by the gospel, to the exercise of sincere repentance.

2. Meditation or consideration of such subjects, as tend by the Holy Spirit to produce an increase in the heart, evangelical repentance, is one of the springs of it. — Multitudes remain impenitent for want of consideration. Thus saith the Lord, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" (Jer. 8: 6). Impenitence is, in a great degree, the effect of extenuating notions of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Repentance, therefore, must spring from a deep consideration, and a true sense, of its infinite malignity and demerit. It flows from deep and affecting meditation, on the majesty and glory, the holiness and justice, the authority and law, the threatenings and judgments of God; and on His just severity against the angels who sinned, against Adam and all his posterity, against Sodom and Gomorrah, the nations of Canaan, and the Jews, in the final destruction of their city and temple, and in the continued dispersion of their nation. These awful examples of His inexorable justice, and tremendous fury, show us, what His judgment of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the dreadful punishment which awaits the impenitent sinner, is. And they are left on record, that they may direct us, to judge of the sin of our nature, and of the transgressions of our life, as God judges. And we may be sure, "that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Rom. 2: 2). The exercise of true repentance flows, in an eminent degree, from a deep and affecting meditation on the doleful anguish, and amazing death of the Lord Jesus, our adorable Surety. When we seriously consider, who He was, for whom He suffered, and what He endured, we cannot but perceive God's infinite, and irreconcilable abhorrence of all iniquity. Here we see

that, rather than leave sin unpunished, or permit angels and men to be ignorant of His infinite detestation of that abominable thing, He would deliver up His only begotten Son, in whom His soul delighted, to the most direful anguish, agony, and death. Here we perceive that, the fiery indignation of God against sin, does not proceed from the smallest defect of love to sinners as His creatures; but from that infinite abhorrence of sin, which arises from a full view of its infinite malignity, and contrariety to the holiness of His nature and law. It is, then from spiritual and heart-affecting views of the Lamb of God, bearing our sins and carrying our sorrows, that the exercise of evangelical repentance immediately flows. Reader, behold in the glass of the holy and righteous law, and especially, in that of the adorable Redeemer's unparalleled sufferings, what an evil thing and bitter, sin is (Jer. 2: 19). It is not only their love of sin, but their false apprehensions of the evil and demerit of it, that make sinners persist in cleaving to it. Were they to contemplate, under the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, the infinite malignity and desert of the sin of their nature, and of the aggravated transgressions of their life, they would flee from them with horror. Were convinced sinners but to consider seriously, the heinousness of their innumerable sins, — the afflictions and warnings, — the counsels and reproofs, — the mercies and deliverances, — the light and knowledge, — the obligations and vows, against which they have sinned, their eyes would affect their heart, and their repentings would be kindled together (Hos. 11: 8).

3. The exercise of evangelical repentance, issues from a true sense of sin. — A genuine sense of sin consists of an affecting sight, and a painful feeling, not only of the hurtfulness and danger, but also of the deformity and hatefulness of sin (Exod. 36: 31). When the Holy Spirit strikes home the doctrine of the law upon the conscience, the consequence is, that the sinner is instructed, and then He smites upon His thigh (Jer. 31: 9). A true sense of sin, includes an affecting sight, or discernment of it, by the enlightened mind. "My sin," says the Psalmist, "is ever before me" (Psal. 51: 3). No sooner are the eyes of a sinner's understanding opened, than he begins to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, in his heart and life. He sees his innumerable provocations, and discerns that malignity in sin, which he never saw before. He sees, and is deeply affected with the sight of, his great transgressions against an infinitely holy, and gracious God. The holy law, as a looking glass, is held before his eyes; and he therein discerns his pollutions and deformity. And now that he has begun to see, he searches every corner of his heart, and every period of his life, which were before neglected as the sluggard's garden; and multitudes of secret

abominations are set in the light. Now his mouth is stopped, and his sins at length have found him out (Num. 32: 23). A true sense of sin, includes also such a consciousness or conviction, as is a painful feeling of it. Now that the sinner is spiritually alive, he has not only spiritual sight, but spiritual feeling. He begins to feel the sores of his diseased nature. The sin which sat lightly on him before, becomes now a burden too heavy for him (Psal. 38: 4). It is such a burden on his spirits, as sinks them; on his head, as it is impossible for him to discharge; and on his back, as bows it down. I am bowed down greatly, says the holy Psalmist, I go mourning all the day long (Psal. 38: 6). Accordingly, when the awakened sinner is coming to Christ, he is described as one who has a heavy burden upon him (Matth. 11: 28). "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, say unto Him, Take away all iniquity," *Hebrew* 'Lift off all iniquity as a burden' (Hos. 14: 2).

A true sense of sin, is an affecting sight and feeling, especially of the exceeding sinfulness or malignity of sin. It is a sense, not only of our evil doings, but of the evil of our doings; not only of our sin, but of the exceeding sinfulness of our sin; and not merely of things which are in themselves sinful, but of the iniquity even of our holy things. The true penitent has a deep and affecting sense of the evil, that cleaves even to his best performances (Isa. 64: 6). Of all evils, he concludes that sin is the greatest; and of all sinners, he often thinks that he himself is the chief. He sees and feels, that the innumerable evils which compass him about, are the weightiest of burdens, the heaviest of debts, the foulest of stains, and the worst of enemies. He has a true sense of the evil of sin, in reference to himself (Rom. 6: 21), and of the evil of it, with respect to God. He sees that, it is the very opposite of the infinitely holy and amiable nature of God in Christ (Hab. 1: 13). The true penitent loves God supremely, and therefore his sins are a heavy burden to him. He loathes himself, because he has walked contrary to the holy Lord God, and thereby insulted, reproached, and provoked Him (Lam. 5: 16). He sees also that, sin is contrary to that law of God which is holy; to that commandment which "is holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7: 12). Discerning the perfect equity, and purity of God's law, the penitent sees the great evil of every transgression of it (1 John 3: 4). He sees the sinfulness of sin likewise, with respect to Jesus Christ. He has an affecting discovery of it, as the procuring cause of the unparalleled sufferings of his dear Redeemer (Zech. 12: 10). The doleful anguish, and excruciating death of the Lamb of God, are comments on the evil and demerit of sin, which the penitent reads with deep attention. The agonies and groans of that adorable, that dying

Saviour, who loved him and gave Himself for him, rend his heart, and afford him the most affecting view of the evil of sin. Hence, he has such a true sense of the sinfulness of his sin, as is an abiding source of evangelical repentance.

4. Lastly, A spiritual apprehension of the pardoning mercy of God in Christ, is one of the springs of the true repentance. — Without the begun exercise of saving faith, or the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, there may be a sense of sin, but not a true sense: there may be a sense of sin, as hurtful to the sinner himself (Gen. 4: 13); but not a sense of it, as hateful to an holy God (Hab. 1: 13). To apprehend the mercy of God in Christ is, to exercise the faith of His pardoning mercy. It is to rely by faith on the surety-righteousness of Jesus Christ, for a right to pardon, and acceptance as righteous in the sight of God, and to trust in His redeeming mercy. Accordingly the holy Psalmist says, “I have trusted in thy mercy” (Psal. 13: 5). And, again, “I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever” (Psal. 52: 8). Such a knowledge of sin as is only by the law, may produce slavish fear and worldly sorrow; but it is the faith of redeeming mercy alone, as revealed and offered in the gospel, that paints iniquity in such hateful colours, as to make the penitent ashamed and confounded. A deep sense of sin, indeed, may proceed from the faith of the law; but a true sense of it, must arise from the faith, both of the law and of the gospel. The faith of redeeming mercy, is a spring of true repentance, and that by which, the exercise of it is influenced and regulated. Though the graces of faith and repentance are, in respect of time, implanted together and at once; yet, in order of nature, the acting of faith goes before the exercise of true repentance. The sinner, then, must cordially believe or trust in Christ for pardon, in order to exercise evangelical mourning for him, and turning from it unto God. True repentance is very pleasing to God, “but without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11: 6). To trust firmly in the Lord Jesus, both for pardon and purification, is that which, under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, will be most effectual, to melt down the heart into true repentance. It is, when sin is contemplated by the believer, as a base, a criminal, outrage against the Father of mercies, and his own God and Father, that a sense of the malignity of it, is deeply impressed on his heart. And it is this affecting persuasion, that, by his innumerable sins, he in particular pierced the adorable, the dear Redeemer; or, that the Redeemer was wounded for his transgressions or bruised for his iniquities — it is this, I say, that melts his heart into godly sorrow, and penitential mourning, for his aggravated crimes (Zech. 12: 10). It is evident, then, that the exercise of true repen-

tance, flows from the acting of unfeigned faith in a crucified Redeemer, and in the mercy of God through Him; and that, in proportion as the acting of faith is frequent and lively; the exercise of repentance will be deep and spiritual.

These, though they do not merit evangelical repentance, nor give sinners a federal right to it; yet are the springs from which the exercise of it flows.

Is a true sense of sin, one of the springs of evangelical repentance? Then it is manifested, that the unconvinced sinner, is not only an impenitent, but an unregenerate sinner. Reader, if ever the Holy Spirit has regenerated you, He has given you a spiritual sight, and a painful feeling of the sin of your nature and of the transgression of your life. He has brought home to your conscience the precept and penalty of the Divine law, as a broken covenant. The consequence has undoubtedly been, that you have been truly convinced, not only of your sin, but of the malignity of your sin; not only of your evil doings, but of the evil of your doings; not merely of doings which are in themselves sinful, but of the iniquity even of your holy things; and not only of their desert of punishment, but of everlasting punishment. If you never had in any degree this sense of sin, you have never exercised true repentance. You may have perhaps, been trying to wash away your sins, with the tears of a legal repentance; but without this sense of sin, you have not exercised that repentance, which is the consequence of having washed them away, in the blood of the Lamb.

(To be continued)

Prayer for the Church

by Rev. John Willison

What things shall we pray for at this time unto this church, for preventing her reproach, retrieving her credit, and promoting her welfare?

Ans. 1. Let us pray for a spirit of repentance, mourning, and supplication, to all ranks among us, that we may all be disposed to humble ourselves before the Lord, and mournfully to bewail our sins, our backslidings, and defections, which have provoked God to withdraw from us, and threaten to give us up to reproach. O that Scotland were brought to the temper of penitent returning Israel, 1 Sam. 7: 2, where it is said, that "all Israel lamented after the Lord!" Were all ranks moved in a penitent manner to come and lament after a departing God, it would be a hopeful token for the land.

2. Let us pray for God's pouring out his Spirit from on high upon the ordinances and assemblies of this land, for convincing, enlightening, and converting of souls to the Lord: for our affairs will never take a turn to the better, "until the Spirit be poured out from on high," Isa. 32: 15; till then, our wilderness will not be turned to a fruitful field. Well, then, let us all pray for a time when gospel-ordinances, dispensed by us, shall be remarkably backed by God's power, and presence; for a time when, by the effusion of the Spirit, a great and effectual door shall be opened to us, as was to Paul at Ephesus, 1 Cor. 16: 9, "a door of utterance" opened in ministers' mouths, and a door of entrance in sinners' hearts; a time when ministers' minds shall be enlightened, their hearts warmed, memories strengthened, and tongues loosed; so that they shall have a great facility in uttering their thoughts; "their hearts shall indite a good matter, and their tongues be as the pen of a ready writer." Let us pray for the time when ministers' mouths shall be opened, and hearers' appetites sharpened, when ministers' hearts shall be enlarged, and hearers' hearts melted; when the arrows of the word shall be directed by a powerful hand, to pierce the consciences of men, and they brought thereby to make serious inquiries about their eternal state, "What must we do to be saved?" This would retrieve our credit.

3. Let us pray earnestly for the down-pouring of the Spirit upon young students and expectants of the holy ministry, that God may make them acquainted with regeneration-work in their younger years, and raise up amongst them eminent instruments of his glory; make them burning and shining lights, men of public spirits, who will desire to spend and be spent for the glory of Christ and the winning of souls; men that will prefer Jerusalem to their chiefest joy; men that will be suitably weighted with the work they are undertaking, and concerned to be cleared about their having God's call to it; men that will not rush forwardly upon the work, have an active hand in thrusting themselves into the vineyard, and so run unsent, but wait patiently till God clear their way. O that God would raise up such a ministry in Scotland for the next age! O that he would send such labourers into his harvest! This would prevent our reproach, and retrieve our credit.

4. Let us pray for the continuance of the purity of doctrine and worship in the land, that God may preserve us from deism, and whatever hath a tendency thereto; and from all Popish, Socinian, or Arian errors; and that he may deliver us from all Pelagian and Arminian tenets and opinions; that so men may see and acknowledge God in every thing; whereas Pelagians and Arminians scarce see God in any thing, but make man

himself, as it were, a god, by ascribing all to his natural powers, and making him independent with respect to his conversion and spiritual performances. O what a reproach would it be to us, if such errors should prevail among us!

5. Let us pray for the preservation of the peace and unity of this church, and that our breaches may all be healed, and greater breaches prevented; that God may pity us in our present situation, and raise up peace-makers amongst us; that he may inspire all the ministers of this church with a spirit of meekness, charity, and forbearance towards their brethren, who cannot attain to the same light with them in some lesser matters; and that he may deliver us from a spirit of bitterness, malice, or persecution, against our brethren. O how monstrous and reproachful will it be, for those who bear the character of Christ's lambs and doves, to fall to a-biting and tearing one another, like lions and beasts of prey!

6. Let us pray for the removing of all these things which are the causes of division and contention amongst us; and, particularly, for deliverance from all spiritual oppression, and encroachments upon the rights and liberties of this church, by patrons and others, that so congregations may be supplied with pastors, with the consent and good-liking of the members thereof; this would contribute much for the welfare, and prevent our reproach.

7. Let us pray that God would pour out a spirit of reformation, and of zeal for piety, and against all manner of sin and vice, upon all ranks of persons amongst us; such as magistrates, ministers, elders, heads of families, parents, and teachers of youth; so that every person, in their respective stations, may vigorously exert themselves for suppressing sin, and recommending the exercise of godliness amongst those committed to their charge; and hereby the credit and prosperity of the church would be in a great measure promoted.

A Directory of Life

by Samuel Rutherford

Some helps for a more exact and close walking with God, framed by a directory of life.

1. That hours of the day, more or less, be given to read God's Word, and to prayer, preferring it to the greatest affairs and employments of the man's calling though ye spend the shortest time therein; and let the first fruits of the morning thoughts smell of such religious duties as excluding all else till they have taken possession.

2. In the midst of worldly employments some thoughts of sin, judgment, death, eternity, and God's free love would be; with a word or two of prayer to God, or, at least, by ejaculation.

3. Not to grudge howbeit ye come from prayer without sense, or downcasting, or sense of guiltiness, but let such sharpen your appetite for another hearing, and not resting on what is done.

4. That the Lord's Day from morning till night be spent always in private or public worship, even to the taking account of smallest thoughts, it being set apart from the rest of the days of the week for the Lord's worship only, as not being lawful to have our own thoughts.

5. That wandering and idle thoughts be observed and avoided as being the harbingers of unsavoury speeches, the ushers to profane actions.

6. Beware of wandering of heart in private and public prayer to God; as in private to make your hearts go alongst with your tongues, so in public with hearty joining, as if ye felt the present necessity pressing you to it; and join in praises with a feeling heart proceeding from a principle of love, to exalt His glory.

7. That all discovered and revealed sins that are against the conscience be eschewed as most dangerous preparatives to hardness of heart; and still to be governed by conscience, not it by thee.

8. That in dealing with men our faith and truth in covenants, in trafficking, sincerity, conscience of idle words, and our lying be regarded; and our carriage such, as they shall speak honourably of our sweet Master; not in any wise wronging our profession, but carrying a life answerable to the outward shew, and that not in appearance but in effect we may be Christians indeed.

9. To haunt and frequent the company of those most with whom the soul may be most benefited, and cast off all discourses to gather spiritual uses, striving to edify one another in mutual confidence, cherishing heavenly thoughts, sympathising with the sufferings of our mother the Church, and in all our prayers to hold up her condition, and the condition one of another.

10. To eschew the company of the profane and of such as are without, except that it be to the bringing them into the knowledge of Christ by convincing their judgments, and in no wise abstaining to reprehend their erroneous vices, as choosing rather to incur their wrath than God's glory to suffer in the least measure; and better thou suffer vindicating His cause than that thou be guilty by participating in dishonouring sin: for what thou sufferest in that, thou sufferest as a member of Christ.

11. Not to content thyself with morning and evening reading of God's

Word and sacrifices of prayer: but what is read or heard by any of God's people to digest by meditation and to turn it over in praises oft-times a day, as occasion shall proffer, not sparing thy most important affairs.

12. Every night to call thy thoughts, words, and actions to a strict account. See wherein thou hast omitted, gone back, stood still, or come short, and making, with sorrow, promise and purpose to amend what hath been amiss, that it being thy sole practice it may possess thy night-dreams, and waken with a desire to pray and praise.

13. In afflictions or crosses, either upon body or mind or friends, thou may oft study submission in acknowledging nothing to fall out by accident, but by an over-ruling Providence, and gather sweetness out of bitterest portions, as serving to make thee more heavenward, and not to trail, but bear, Christ's cross cheerfully.

14. To eschew passion, hatred, desire of revenge, even of such as persecute the truth; for we often mix our zeal with our wild-fire; carrying charitable thoughts of those that are without: not being a slave, but commanding thy passion, and let it most out against thine own corruption.

15. Daily trying thy growth in grace, which if thou see not grow daily sensibly yet by this (trial) thou must find (growth) insensibly, otherwise doubt thyself. For as standing water corrupteth, so grace not growing must decay, and so thou come short of thy mark.

16. When idle thoughts enter thy heart suppress them quickly, for they are like the thief that will open the door to the rest to break in till they be the strong man, and then fall to action which cannot be so easily resisted. So that it is best to smother it in the birth before it come to its infancy, and far more before they come to full strength that hardly they can be rooted up.

17. Not to content thyself with flashes of good resolutions before or after the Sacrament, or in the heat of public or private ordinances, which are suddenly choked, which are like the seed among the corn, by spending their life in their birth. Neither be discouraged with the clouds of God's absence but rather judge thyself which occasioneth it, still lying patiently, not idly, under the cloud, till He break forth with the beams of His countenance to enlighten thy deserted but not rejected condition.

18. If possibly thou canst write every thought of the day both good and bad, and that thou mayest make more conscience of them, summon them before thee at night to be censured according to their demerits, persuading thyself to be so strictly examined before God's tribunal in the day of the Lord.

19. Not to let Idol-self have such a reigning power in thee, but rather

discourt with it that Christ may take possession: for to be less thine own is to be more His, which obligeth thee to study more, mortification and the new man.

20. To strive against doubting, and if thou want feeling of faith to complain bitterly for the want of it, and seek out where the sin lieth that hindereth it. And use all means whereby thou can get the Lord's countenance, and no less to entertain it.

Bunyan's "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners"

By Rev. Donald Beaton

"Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" has by no means obtained such a world-wide reputation as Bunyan's immortal allegory, "The Pilgrim's Progress," nevertheless it is a book bearing the impress of one of the finest writers in our literature, and relates in graphic and eloquent language the long and, at times, terrible experience of a soul fleeing from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. In the introduction to the work, he warns against all expectancy of fine literary finish in language characteristic enough. "I could also have stepped," he says, "into a style much higher than this in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do; but I dare not. God did not play in convincing of me; the Devil did not play in tempting me; neither did I play when I sank as it were into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold of me; wherefore, I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was." This is Bunyan's own estimate of his work, as far as "Grace Abounding" is concerned, but it may be no exaggeration to say that no one with any sense of the power of language can have any other feeling than that it is written in a masculine and graphic style, and that, while it may be lacking in the beautiful literary grace and masterly analysis of Christian experience which give such charm to "The Pilgrim's Progress," it has passages which can equal any in the great allegory. It is the life story of Bunyan's awakening to some sense of the great realities of eternity, and ere his course was run these matters were no empty shadows to him. He

struggled on if by any means he might get into the Celestial City, and this book is the narrative of these struggles. "The Philistines understand me not," he says. "It is something of a relation of the work of God upon my soul, even from the very first, till now; wherein you may perceive my castings down and risings up, for He wounded, and His hands made whole. It is written, the father to the children shall make known the truth of God. Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai, to see the fire and the cloud and the darkness that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life upon the earth, and tell of His wondrous works to my children." The work was written for the benefit of those who acknowledged Him as their spiritual father.

The life story of the author is known to most. It is a life of strange vicissitudes and wonderful providences. He first saw the light at Elstow, in the month of November, 1628. His father's home, he tell us, was of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land, and being such he could make no boast of high-born state according to the flesh; nevertheless, in considering all things, he expresses gratitude to God that He brought him in by this door to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the Gospel. In the old documents, his father is described as a "braseyer," which is practically equivalent to our blacksmith. His mother died before he had reached the age of sixteen, and on his father marrying again he left the shelter of the parental roof. He enlisted in the Parliamentary army, and though under arms for only a few months he had some very narrow escapes. After a short experience of soldiering he returned to Elstow, where he laboured at his father's trade. The first indication of any serious thoughts about eternity were awakened by reading two books belonging to his wife — Dent's "Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven" and Bayly's "Practice of Piety." He now set about reforming himself that he might be more acceptable in the sight of God. He attended church regularly, adoring with great devotion the priest, the clerk, and the vestments. Under the spell of this delusion, he tells us he could have lain down at the clergymen's feet and been trampled upon by them, so much was he bewitched by their name, garb, and work. But the thought that he was a sinner had not as yet crossed his mind. The day, however, that was to him the beginning of days was near at hand. On the Sabbath the pastor had preached a sermon on the duty of observing the Lord's Day and keeping it holy. Bunyan, after hearing the sermon, according to his usual custom, proceeded to Elstow Green to have a game at cat. He was just beginning the game when, with all the suddenness of a flash of lightning, he heard a voice, as it were, speaking to his soul. "Wilt thou

leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell," was the startling question. Bunyan stood awed before the solemn question, and felt that it demanded an answer. Around him were his companions, utterly oblivious of the mighty problems that had all of a sudden presented themselves to his mind. They played their game with the lightheartedness of those who had never faced these momentous truths that were stirring the soul of John Bunyan to its depths. He felt as if the heavens had opened, and the angry face of Jesus was all he could see. There came immediately after this a temptation that tried him severely — Christ would not forgive nor pardon him his transgressions inasmuch as he had sinned so greatly and grievously against Him. He now determined to allow himself to drift with the stream, as there appeared no more hope for him. The recollection of these things in after years drew from him the grateful and touching acknowledgment to the God who showed him mercy — "The good Lord, whose mercy is unsearchable, forgive me my transgressions." It was after he had made the above resolution, when he went after sin with great greediness of mind, that there occurred the well-known incident of his swearing, and the rebuke administered to him by a woman whom he describes as a wicked and ungodly wretch. Here is his own account of the matter:— "One day, as I was standing at a neighbour's shop window, and there cursing and swearing and playing the madman, after my wonted manner, there sat within the woman of the house, and heard me; who, though she was a very loose and ungodly wretch, yet protested that I swore and cursed at the most fearful rate, that she was made to tremble to hear me, and told me further that I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that ever she heard in all her life; and that I, by thus doing, was able to spoil all the youth in the whole town if they came but in my company." "By this reproof," he says, "I was put to secret shame, and that, too, as I thought, before the God of heaven." This rebuke, so sharply administered, and coming from such an unexpected quarter, cured him effectually of the vice of swearing. He now fell in with a man who made profession of religion, and being influenced by him, he took to reading his Bible, especially the historical parts, for as yet he could not understand the writings of Paul and the other Scriptures, being still ignorant of the corruptions of his nature. There was now a great reformation in his life, and his neighbours took him to be a very godly man. This pleased him immensely for, as he tells us, he was proud of his godliness. He now left off dancing and other practices, and by this time he had become such a slave to his own self-righteousness that he thought no man in England could please God better than he. He was, sometime after this,

called to Bedford to work at his calling, and, in passing through the streets, he came across three or four poor women sitting in a door and conversing on their experiences. "I drew near," he says, "to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk talker myself in the matters of religion. But I may say I heard but I understood not, for they were far above me, out of my reach. Their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature." This conversation, though very disconcerting to his self-righteous ideas, had a most beneficial effect. He could not get rid of their words, and he was irresistibly drawn to frequent their company every opportunity he could get. The Holy Spirit in this mysterious way was carrying on His gracious work, and he leaves it as his testimony that at this time it was as difficult to take his mind from heaven to earth as it afterwards was to get it again from earth to heaven. A great questioning now arose in his soul as to whether he had faith or not. Without faith he knew he would perish, and so pressing had the matter become to him that he determined to put an end to his questioning by attempting to work a miracle. Fortunately, however, he was kept back from this temptation. About this time the state and happiness of the women whose conversation had been so beneficial to him were presented to him in a kind of vision. He saw them set on the sunny side of some high mountain, refreshing themselves with the pleasant beams of the sun, while he was shivering and shrinking in the cold, afflicted with the frost, snow, and dark clouds. Between him and them there was a wall, and through this wall his soul greatly desired to pass, for he concluded that if he could obtain his desire he would be in the very midst of them, and there be comforted with their Sun. He searched the wall diligently for an opening but was unsuccessful for a time, but at last he saw a narrow gap. He attempted to get through but it was too narrow. After repeated attempts he managed to get his head through, and after a struggle his whole body. "Then was I exceeding glad," he says, "and went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted by the light and the heat of their Sun." The interpretation of this beautiful and striking vision, as given by Bunyan himself, is as follows: "The Mountain signifies the Church of the living God; the Sun, the comfortable shining of His merciful face on them that were therein; the Wall was the Word of God, that made a separation between the Christians and the world; the Gap in the Wall was the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way to God the Father. But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not, but with great difficulty, enter thereat, it showed me that none could enter into life but those who were in downright

earnest, and unless also they left this wicked world behind them; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin."

The question of being elected to eternal life now agitated his distressed soul. "It is neither in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that showeth mercy," ever came up before the mind of this earnest seeker in every attempt he made to take a forward step. "Neither in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth," Satan kept repeating to him, until at last he almost sank in despair. While in this condition of mind, a certain passage in the book Ecclesiasticus "fell with weight upon his spirit": "Look at the generations of old and see; did ever any trust in God and were confounded." He searched the Scripture diligently for this passage, but could not find it. At length he came across it in the Apocrypha. This at first somewhat daunted him; but he blesses God that though it was not in the canonical books, yet inasmuch as it contains the sum and substance of many of the promises, he considered it his duty to take comfort from it. Some reference must now be made to what may be called the greatest temptation which harassed his soul, and to the description of which he has devoted so many pages of "Grace Abounding." There came a time in his life when his love to Christ was so great that he speaks of it as hot as fire; but the great Tempter, ill at ease at the progress Bunyan was making, came to him saying, "Sell Christ! sell Christ!" He was troubled with this temptation for about a year, and it followed him so persistently that he was not rid of it for a day, nor even an hour for many days together, unless when he was asleep. He could neither eat his food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, or cast his eye on anything, but he would be met with the temptation, "Sell Christ for this, or sell Christ for that; sell Him, sell Him." And under this stress of deep emotion, all his body in motion, he would cry out, "I will not, I will not, I will not; no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands of worlds!" At last the awful moment came when in desperation he cried out, "Let Him go if He will." "Now was the battle won," is his own melancholy comment, "and down I fell, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt and fearful despair. Thus, getting out of my bed I went moping into the field; but, God knows, with as heavy a heart as mortal man, I think, could bear; where, for the space of two hours, I was like a man bereft of life, and as now past all recovery and bound over to eternal punishment." The case of Esau was forever coming up before his mind — the repentance that had been sought with tears but had not been obtained. He thought of Manasseh, of David, and of Peter; they had committed great sins, but none of them were like him; he had parted with Jesus, he had sold his Saviour. He prayed earnestly,

but at every prayer Esau rose up before him, as it were, to ban his earnest pleading. At last, through certain passages of Scripture coming to his mind, he began to think that his sin was not unpardonable after all, and he prayed as a soul seeing a faint glimmer of light in the awful gloom. And this was his prayer: "O Lord, I beseech Thee, show me that Thou hast loved me with an everlasting love." He had no sooner said this than the words came with sweetness, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Yet the Tempter did not leave him, but he drew comfort from the message he had received as he mused on the gracious promise: "I loved thee whilst thou wast committing this sin, I loved thee before, I love thee still, and I will love thee forever." This was by no means the end of the dreadful struggle, but he had a comfortable outgate at last, as the old divines would put it. It is this wrestling with the principalities and powers, in severe and protracted conflict, that makes the "Grace Abounding" such a treasure to other pilgrims passing on to the Celestial City. Space forbids us enlarging further on other incidents recorded in this remarkable autobiography; but if it is the Lord's will the next article, dealing with "The Pilgrim's Progress," may touch on some interesting incidents in the later life of the author of the immortal dream.

Notes and Comments

An Outgoing Government and Gambling

A former Conservative Government marred the national life of the country by introducing gambling in the form of Premium Bonds where the interest payable on loaned money is put at stake. Before leaving office the present Conservative Government has indicated its intention to introduce a national lottery for the support of the arts and for other objects. At the time of writing we do not know whether the Conservative Government will be returned to office but if it should do so, how lamentable it is that they should succumb to this form of immoral behaviour in order to provide for what they deem to be good causes. Surely if the causes were good then an appeal to the generosity of the people would be sufficient without appealing to the sinful gambling spirit in man.

The Pope's Universal Catechism

An R.C. bishop returning from a visit to Rome tells of a new Catechism outlining the teaching of the Church of Rome which the Pope is preparing and is soon to be published. The bishop said that the Catechism would emphasise the commandments and the teachings of Christ. The bishop

had gone to pray at the tombs of St Peter and St Paul and to meet and pray with the successor of St Peter, according to a Press report. From this it is clear that the same darkness which prevailed in the Church of Rome in the past abides there still. The teaching of the Church of Rome is but the blind leading the blind, and that can only ensure that they both fall into the ditch. How different it might have been for the bishop if he had Luther's experience at Rome when there was sealed on his heart and conscience that great truth that "the just shall live by faith". That would have given the lie to all that the Church of Rome teaches.

The Queen and the Romanist Cardinal

At the dedication of a church in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, the Roman Catholic Cardinal Basil Hume preached before the Queen. It is said that it is the first time that a Romanist Cardinal preached to a reigning British monarch since the 17th Century. The church which was dedicated — whatever that means — is an ecumenical church, the building being shared by the Baptists, the Church of England, the Methodists, the United Reformed Church and the Roman Catholics. This form of ecumenism is growing. What is alarming is the increased exposure of the Royal Family to Romanist influence. It is in direct conflict with the Protestant vows undertaken by the Queen at her coronation.

The Queen was also present a short time ago at the Commonwealth Day Observance service held in Westminster Abbey. At this service there were not only readings from the Scriptures but from Jewish, Moham-medan, Sikh, Budhist and other writings. This syncretistic worship is God dishonouring in the extreme and the Queen's attendance at it is contrary to her coronation vows.

Mission News

Miss MacLennan wrote recently to say that the main news item was the heat and drought. The weather was said to be the hottest this century. Rivers and dams had dried up. Since Miss MacLennan wrote there have been a few showers and the temperature has fallen slightly.

The staff at Mbumba were happy to have Dr Mercer from Oxford with them assisting in the hospital. He is a friend of Tim Ramsbottom who assisted in a similar way two years ago. Both young men are sons of Strict Baptist ministers.

There was a special appeal in "The Bulawayo Chronicle" for food for Binga. The appeal came from Chief Binga himself. Mr Neil Murray set

off for Binga with a load of mealie-meal and beans. On his arrival one hundred and fifty people gathered round for food. Some had not eaten for several days. Mr Murray did not have sufficient food for them all, which was distressing for him as well as for them. Children stood by the roadside begging for food.

At the John Tallach School there are well over five hundred pupils this session. A small minority are day pupils. To provide adequate food for so large a number, mealie-meal is rationed and sugar and oil are unobtainable, must be an anxiety, especially for Miss Marion Graham.

Miss MacLennan says there is quite a community of former John Tallach pupils at Harare University (three hundred miles further north than Bulawayo). She feels it is a pity we do not have a church there, as a congregation could be built up in Harare as was done in Bulawayo.

All are enjoying the presence of the two Inverness elders, Mr Eleneth Sutherland and Mr Iain MacLean. Quite an exhausting programme was planned for them. Despite the extreme heat their energy and resilience have amazed everyone. They conducted prayer meetings here and there, and would have spent the final weekend of their visit at Ingwenya Communion. Mr Dick Vermeulen was also expected there.

There were two young African men at Ingwenya, Simeon Rianga from Kenya and Ephraim Tembo from Malawi. They were to meet the Presbytery with a view to their studying for the ministry. J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 13th May at 7.15 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 9th June at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 9th June at 6 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 16th June at 6 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 23rd October at 2.30 p.m.

Meeting of Synod

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland will meet within St Jude's Church, Glasgow on Tuesday, 19th May, 1992 (D.V.) at 6.30 p.m. when the Retiring Moderator, Rev. D. A. Ross, will conduct public worship.

The Annual Synod Meeting

As the ministers and elders assemble in May as the Supreme Court of our Church to conduct the business which comes before the Court, we

would crave the prayers of the Lord's people so that all that would be transacted during the days of the Synod would be to the glory of God and for the advancement of His Cause in our midst. As usual public meetings will be held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.

St Jude's Pulpit — Tape Catalogue

A catalogue covering over 1200 recordings from the St Jude's tape library has been published, containing sermons by Rev. Donald MacLean and visiting ministers to St Jude's. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the catalogue (which is issued free of charge), should write to **St Jude's Pulpit Tapes, F.P. Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.**

The General Election

The Conservative Government, under the Premiership of Mr John Major, has obtained a fourth term of office, having obtained a majority of 21 over all other parties contending the election. In the present state of economic decline great responsibility rests on the Government to try to take action to prevent further deterioration and to effect recovery. So many factors are involved that this is no easy task. In this task we would be more hopeful of a successful outcome if our leaders were ready to acknowledge their need of Divine guidance and help. It is our view that the spiritual and moral state of the country is the most alarming aspect of our national life. Only a recovery in this field will make possible a sustained recovery in the economic state of the nation. We need as a nation an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God in repentance in order that we may be restored once again to the favour of God.

London Communion Services

The services at the London Communion are as follows:— Thursday, 7th May, 1992 7 p.m.; Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 2 p.m. (Gaelic); 3 p.m. (English); 5.30 p.m. (Prayer Meeting); Sabbath 10th May 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.; Monday 7 p.m. Rev. F. MacDonald, Portree and Rev. A. Morrison, North Uist are expected to assist (D.V.).

Sydney Communion

The Sydney (Australia) Communion will be held on the first Sabbath of June this year.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr R. A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE wishes to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Sustentation Fund: Anon., £100 per Rev. D. M.; Anon., £40 (Greenock).

Foreign Mission Fund: D. F. G. M. £20 (Zimbabwe); Donation from Painting £150 (Kenya); Miss J. M. £25 (Blind Children); D. K. C. £200 (Binga); Two Friends £800 (Wheelchair for Zimbabwe).

Eastern Europe Fund: Anon., £10; Anon., £10; Mrs S. M. £20.

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

Beauly: Mrs M. M. £10 for Door Coll.

Bonar, etc: Anon., £50, where most needed (Bonar); Dr D., Lairg £40.

Bracadale — Strath: M. S. £10 where most needed; Coll. at Mtg. with Rev. D. A. Ross £69.80 for Eastern Europe Fund, both per D. G. B.; Miss W. O. B. S., Wick £50; Mr and Mrs J. O. £50; Friend, Raasay, £50 all where most needed, all per Rev. G. G. H.

Breasclete: Friend of the Cause £20 for Coll.; Anon., £50, where most needed; Anon., £20 for Sust. Fd.

Daviot — Stratherrick — Tomatin: North Uist Friend £20 for Church Fds; Miss W. S., Wick £50 for Tomatin New Church; Anon., £1000; Bequeathed by the late Miss Margaret E. Dunbar, Invercen £1000.

Dingwall: Mrs A. G., £10 for Magazines.

Dundee: Larne Congr. £20 for General Treasurer.

Glasgow: Anon., £10; Est. of late Mrs Sutherland, Wick £50 per Rev. D. M.; Anon., £50, all for Congr. Fd.; Anon., £150; Anon., £10; Anon., £5; N. H. £10 per Rev. D. M., all for Sust. Fd.; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; M. M. A., £10; K. M., £10; Matth. 6: 3 £10; A.M. £20; Anon., £20, all for Bus. Fund; B. R. £5; Anon., £10; Anon., £20; Anon., £20; Anon., £100, all for T.B.S.

Glendale: Glendale Friend £10, where most needed; W.O.B.S. £50 for Congr. Purposes, both per Rev. D. Nicolson.

Greenock: 2 Friends, Stockinish £15 per Rev. K. D. M.; M. G., Glasgow £10; D. R. M., Glasgow £30, both per Rev. L. M., all for Congr. Fds.

Laide: Collecting boxes, Tolsta £40 per Mrs D. A. R.; D. K. C. £250 per Rev. D. A. R.; Friend, Aultbea £2 for postage per Mrs C. R.; Friend, Sheildaig £3.50 for postage per D. A. R.; Friend, Inverness £26 per D. A. R.; Senior Citizen, Uig £25 per Rev. D. J. M.; Anon., Sheildaig Congr. £50 per Rev. D. A. Ross; Mrs M. C., Alloway £25 for postage per K. M., all the above for Eastern Europe Mission; Friend, Aultbea £20 for Church Fds; R. M. £10 for Ch. Door Coll.; W. O. B. S., £50 for Congr. Fds; Friend, Aultbea £20 for Ch. Fds, last four per D. A. R.; Friend, Tolsta £10 for Ch. Fds. per C. R.; Friend, Aultbea £20 for Ch. Fds.; Friend, London £25 for your missionary work in Italy; Frasers, Auctioneers, Inverness £20 for work in Romania, last three per D. A. R.

North Harris: M. M. & S. M., Cluer £20 per J. McL.; Friend, Leacklee £50; Anon., Tarbert £10; M. M., Tarbert £10, last three by envelope in plate; Friend, Grosebay £10 per J. McL.; Anon., Stockinish £10; Anon., Stockinish £2; Anon., Stockinish £5; Friend, Stockinish £10, last four per Rev. K. D. M., all for Comm. Exps.; R. McL., Cluer £5 per J. McL.; Anon., £10 (envelope in plate); Anon., Harris £20 (envelope in plate), last three for Bus Fund; Stockinish, Friend £10 for Mag. Free Dist. Fd., per Rev. K. D. M.; In memory of late Mr R. MacKay, Cluer, £200, where most needed per J. McL.; Anon., Grosebay £5 for Bus. Fd., per J. McL.

North Uist: Friend, Tarbert £5 for Communion Coll., Miss I. Macd., Clarkston £100 for Sust. Fd.; Miss W. S., Wick £50; where most needed; last two per Rev. A. M.; Mrs M. M., Struan £6 for Bus. Fd.

Portree: W. S., Wick £50; Edinburgh Friend £100; Tolsta Friend £5, all for Congr. Purposes, all per F.M.; Anon., £4; Anon., £10, both for Bus. Fund; P. A. R. £40 for Door Coll., last three by envelope in plate.

Raasay: Stornoway Friend, £10 where most needed; J. N. N. £10; D. MacK., £10, all per Rev. J. R. T.; Wellwisher, Inverarish £20, last three for Car Fund; Envelope in plate £40 for Bibles for Russia.

Shieldaig: In memory of Alick MacLennan and his parents £1200 for Shieldaig Congr. Purposes.

Stirling: Friend of the Cause £20 (October) and £20 (January) for Congr. Fd.

Stornoway: Miss K. A. MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish, £100, where most needed and £30 for Sust. Fd., M., Dun Eisdan £142 for Sust. Fd., and £16.68 for Door Coll.; Friend, North Tolsta £10, for Comm. Exps.; Friend £5 for petrol, all per Rev. J. MacLeod; Breasclete Friend £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £5 all for Comm. Exps.; Anon., £10 for petrol; Anon., £2, last five in Church Plate.