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The Choice of Israel as a People

It is evident from the Word of God that Israel was chosen by the Lord as His peculiar treasure. As the purposes of God are from eternity, it is clear that the choice of the Lord rested upon that nation from eternity. The Lord had a favour towards her which came to light when He separated her from the other nations of the world to be a people for Himself. The first manifestation of God's love to her was in the call of Abram and the promises given to him. "Now the Lord had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation." The Lord in this way called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees to go first to Haran in Syria, and afterwards to the promised land. Not only did the Lord direct him to leave his own country but assured him that He would bless him, "And I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." These were singular privileges which the Lord was bestowing upon him, promising him the favour and protection of heaven. Yet over and above all this the Lord goes on to intimate to Abram the most signal blessing of all — "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This was a Messianic prophecy, making known to Abram that from his line was to come the Saviour of Israel.

The choice of Abram and the choice of Israel as a nation was wonderful indeed. It was the Lord's sovereign choice. Moses was at pains to make this plain to Israel at a later date. He reminded them that the Lord their God had chosen them to be a special people unto Himself, above all people upon the face of the earth. But then he went on to say: "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because

He loved you." No other explanation will suffice other than this — He loved them because He loved them. There was no reason why the Lord should love them seeing that they also were of the stock of Adam.

As it was with Abraham and Israel so is it with the people of God in ever age of time. They are a chosen people — chosen in Christ before the world began. God's love went out to them from eternity and embraced them. It was not for anything that was in them that He loved them. His sovereign love went out to a people wholly undeserving of that love. He loved them because He loved them. No other reason can be given for His love to them. It will be a wonder to them in time and throughout eternity that He ever loved them. All ground of boasting is taken away as it was out of His free favour that he loved them. If we are objects of the electing love of God then we should be humbled in the dust at the thought of it.

The knowledge of God's love towards them ought to have kept Israel humble and obedient. Yet how often they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit. How often had they to be corrected and chastised for their many backslidings from their God. Yet this was all done out of love to them by their Covenant God. What wonders the Lord had shown to Israel on so many occasions, yet how often they forgot Him. When we think of our own nation, once so highly favoured of God and receiving so many benefits and blessings at His hand, how solemn our situation is now as a nation that has backslidden from Him. What manifestations of His love we have received. What a poor return we are giving to Him for His mercies and His love toward us. May He yet return to us in His covenant love and raise up once again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down. To Him will be all the glory of it, for we are unworthy of the least of His mercies. May He come over the mountains of our national and personal sins and draw near to us in His love as the God of our salvation and our covenant God and Redeemer.

A Sermon

By the Rev. Donald Macfarlane, Dingwall

Preached by him as Retiring Moderator before the Opening of Synod at Inverness, on Tuesday evening, 16th May, 1916.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." — 2 Peter 1: 19.

In this Second Epistle the Apostle Peter exhorts those to whom he writes to grow in grace, to add one virtue to another, as the fruits of the Spirit,

and thus to manifest in their practice that they were true Christians. By their fruit they were to be known. He exhorts them especially to give diligence to make their calling and election sure. By doing so he assures them that they shall never fall away from the faith, as many nominal Christians did, but persevere to the end, when an entrance would be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They would enter heaven with light and liberty, while others of the Lord's people, who neglected to give the same diligence to make their calling and election sure, would enter heaven in darkness, doubts, and fears, and escape as a man escapes with his life when his house is burning.

The apostle is more earnest in pressing his exhortations by the consideration that he is soon to put off the tabernacle of the body, as the Lord Jesus Christ had shown him. He reminds them of the truth of the doctrines of the Christian religion, which he and the other apostles taught. Those doctrines were not cunningly-devised fables, as some said they were, but doctrines which could be proved to be of divine origin. Christ, the author of Christianity, was the principal subject of their preaching. His power and coming they made known to their hearers. The Jews denied that He was the Messiah promised. But they declared, on the strongest evidence, His Godhead, humanity, death, resurrection, and ascension, and exaltation at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The Messiah came and finished the work the Father gave Him to do, and He shall come again at the last day to judge the quick and the dead. The evidence the apostle adduces in proof of this was the testimony of his own eyes and the eyes of others who saw Christ; the testimony of God the Father, who spake from heaven, saying, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him"; and the testimony of Old Testament prophets, who foretold His coming.

In speaking from the text, as the Lord may enable me, I shall notice four things, viz.:—

- I. The word of prophecy;
- II. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was the chief subject of prophecy;
- III. That the word of prophecy is more sure than what is seen by the eye or heard by the ear; and
- IV. Our duty in regard to the word of prophecy.

I. The word of prophecy. — The apostle here refers to Old Testament prophecy. There were many prophets under the Old Testament dispensation. Their work was chiefly to reveal the mind of God concerning future

events. We have a great deal of prophecy recorded in Scripture. When prophecy was fulfilled — as much of it has been fulfilled — it passed into history. The New Testament is a history of Old Testament prophecy fulfilled. For instance, Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of Christ in the flesh. This is now a matter of history. The Messiah, who was to come, came, and we are not to look for another. John the Baptist pointed Him out to his disciples, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In speaking further on this head I wish to call attention to two points: (1) the *divine origin* of prophecy, and (2) the *interpretation* of prophecy.

(1) The divine origin of prophecy. In the 21st verse of this chapter it is written:— "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The first thing to be noticed here is that the prophets whom the Lord employed to reveal His mind to men were *holy* men. They were subjects of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Sanctification as well as the Spirit of Inspiration. Some men, as Balaam and others, spoke what was true, but they had not the Spirit as the Spirit of Sanctification. Second, the prophets themselves were inspired as well as the revelation they gave of the mind of the Lord. They were "moved by the Holy Ghost". It was not their own will they declared, but the will of God, and in order to that they were under the control and guidance of the Spirit in such a manner as that their message was infallible and inerrant. Third, their words by which they expressed the matter which the Spirit revealed to them were inspired. There are some who deny verbal inspiration, but the Apostle Peter tells us that the prophets "*spake* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Apostle Paul speaks to the same effect:— "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. 2: 13). If the words were not inspired we could not depend upon Scripture as our warrant of faith. But the Psalmist said, "My hope is in thy word." We believe in verbal inspiration, and our hope is in God's word, which is our warrant to come to Christ, as the only way to the Father. And I cannot understand what warrant those who deny verbal inspiration can have to come to Christ. We have now the canon of Scripture completed, and there are not any inspired men now. This is denied by many in our day. They say that, inasmuch as Christians are taught by the Spirit, they are *inspired*. But they say this in ignorance of the distinction between *inspiration* and *spiritual illumination*. All Christians, who are effectually taught by the Spirit, are illuminated in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He hath

sent, but no Christian now is inspired. No Christian now can justly presume to receive a new revelation from heaven, which is implied in being inspired. That Christians now are inspired had been held, and is still held, by men of whom better things might be expected. When the new Creed, contained in the Declaratory Act of 1892, was being framed, a minister, who was a classfellow of mine in Divinity, wrote a book in support of the change, in which he stated something to the effect that Christians now were inspired in the same sense as the Apostle Paul was. I was at Kilmallie then, and the late Dr Ross Taylor, who spent his holidays at Kilmallie for several years, had a copy of the book, and gave me a reading of it. When I returned the book, Dr Taylor asked me what I thought of the book. I said that the writer of the book made one great mistake, that he made no distinction between inspiration and spiritual illumination. Dr Taylor said nothing. Having studied theology, he must have known that there was a difference between the two things, though he did not seem to have observed the mistake in the book. At a meeting of the General Assembly I met the writer of the book, and I pointed out the error he made. When professing Christians forsake the Word of God and adopt in its place their own carnal notions, they are given up to spiritual blindness, so that they cannot see their error, unless they are brought to repentance.

(2) The *interpretation* of prophecy. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (verse 20). We have spoken of the divine origin of Scripture; we are now to consider the interpretation of Scripture. All who have the Scriptures have a right to read them, and it is their duty to seek divine guidance to understand them; and it is the duty of ministers of the Gospel to expound the Scriptures to their congregations. Christ expounded the Scriptures to His disciples, and opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24: 27,45). The key to open Scripture is Scripture itself. Scripture is its own interpreter. That readers of the Bible might understand the Word of God, there are texts of Scripture put on the margin of the Book for reference — one passage of Scripture throwing light on another passage. No other key can open the Word of God. Christ charged the lawyers — those whose duty was to interpret the law or Word of God — with having taken away the key of knowledge. They took another key — the tradition of men — to open the Scriptures, but they could never ascertain the meaning of Scripture in that way; and they excluded themselves, and those who received their false teaching, from the kingdom of heaven. They have many followers in this backsliding age.

II. — That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was the chief subject

of prophecy. — If there were no Saviour provided for sinners of the human race we would have no prophecy, no Bible, and no Gospel. Jesus Christ is the very heart and soul of the Scriptures. Take away Christ from the Bible, and it is an empty Book — like a dead body without a soul. A Popish clergyman said that the religion of Protestants was without a soul because they had no *Mass* in it. What is the Christ they have in the *Mass*? *A wafer!* Away with the wafer-Christ; we will have nothing to do with it. We welcome the personal and real Christ, the only-begotten Son of God the Father, and Saviour of the world, to our poor and needy souls. All our hope for salvation, grace, and glory is in Him. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4: 12). Peter had no *wafer-Christ*. The prophets foretold and made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was powerful as God, healing by word of mouth all manner of sickness among the people, calming the tempest, casting out devils, and raising the dead to life. He had only to say to Lazarus, dead in the grave, “Come forth”, and he that was dead came forth, alive again. The two disciples, going to Emmaus on the day of Christ’s resurrection, said that He was “a prophet, mighty in deed and word”. The officers sent by the priests and Pharisees to apprehend Him said, “Never man spake like this man”; that is, Jesus of Nazareth must be more than a mere man; He is God.

The first account we have in the Old Testament of our blessed Saviour is in the third chapter of Genesis and fifteenth verse, where it is foretold that He, as the seed of the woman, would bruise the head of the serpent, the devil, and that in doing so the devil would bruise His heel. It is to be observed that in the first revelation given of Him He is spoken of as in human nature — “God manifest in the flesh”. His heel implies a body, though He did not actually assume human nature till four thousand years after the first promise. It was by His death in human nature He bruised the head of the devil (Heb. 2: 14). It is remarkable that the higher critics say that the first three chapters of Genesis are a myth. By this they would overthrow the doctrine of sin and the fall of man; and they would overthrow a greater doctrine — that of salvation; for both doctrines are taught in the third chapter. Great is the guilt of these men, and if they die without repentance they shall be lower in hell than the devil and his angels. And those they were the means of bringing to hell by their error shall be cursing them throughout eternity!

It would take up too much time to refer to all the passages of Scripture where Christ is spoken of in the Old Testament. But all the prophets spoke

of Him, as Christ himself reminded two of His disciples when he said, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24: 25-27). The prophet Isaiah, in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy, speaks of the sufferings of Christ as if he had been an eye-witness of His crucifixion:—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." (5th verse). He speaks of His sufferings as past, though Christ did not suffer till about six hundred years after the prophet spoke these solemn words, to show the certainty of the fulfilment of prophecy. Christ referred the Jews, who denied that he was the promised Messiah, to the Scriptures; (of the Old Testament), saying, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5: 39). Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the chief subject of prophecy. He is all in all in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. He is all in all in the preaching of the prophets and apostles; and He is all in all in the preaching of His ministering servants in all ages. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Where Christ is not preached, the Gospel is not preached.

Peter and the other apostles made known the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He came first in human nature to work out everlasting redemption for His people. He shall come again the second time at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead. "He shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thes. 1: 7-9). He shall also glorify the bodies of His redeemed in union with their souls in heaven, where they shall be for ever with the Lord. The state of the lost in hell shall be as everlasting as the state of the saved in heaven. In the original it is the same word that is used in both cases.

III. That the word of prophecy is "more sure" than what is seen by the eye or heard by the ear. — Peter, James and John saw a glorious sight of Christ on the mount of transfiguration. "Christ was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17: 2). The glory of His Godhead broke forth through His human body, and even through His raiment, to show that in His state of humiliation, when He veiled the glory of His Divine person, He was

the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. It was also an earnest of the glorification of His human nature after His ascension to heaven, to be glorified with the Father and with the glory which He had with Him before the world was (John 17: 5). They also heard a voice from heaven which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." But, notwithstanding what they saw and heard on the mount, Peter says that the word of prophecy is "more sure". It is not more sure as to the truth of what they saw and heard. But the word of prophecy is more sure, as it is more lasting — written in the Bible for the benefit of coming generations to the end of time — whereas what was seen and heard on the mount was transient and confined to a few individuals, Peter, James, and John. What they saw and heard is past, but we *have* the word of prophecy present with us always. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1: 25).

IV. Our duty in regard to the Word of God. Our duty is to take heed of it. "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." We are not now to expect to see Christ by the bodily eye, or to hear a voice from heaven. The days of extraordinary visions and voices from heaven are past. God now speaks to us, in His written word, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It is our duty therefore to read and search the Scriptures, which "principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

All we need to know in order to be saved and to serve the Lord is clearly set forth in the Scriptures. The Bible is our only rule of faith and practice. We need not ascend to heaven to know what we ought to do. "The word is nigh unto us." It is our duty to take heed to this Word of the Lord, because it is a light — the only true light — to guide us to Christ, the Saviour, and to God the Father, through Christ, the only Mediator between God and men. The Word of God in the Scriptures is "a light that shineth in a dark place." The world would be a dark place without the Word of God. Scotland was a very dark place under the reign of Druidism before the Word of the Lord came to our land, but when it pleased the Lord to send us this light it exposed and dispelled the darkness. Druidism was banished from our coasts, and the light of the Gospel shined in our country. Heathen countries that are still without the Bible are dark places, and our fellow creatures in these dark places are dying in their sins, and are lost for ever. We who have the Bible ought to send it to the heathen.

The heart of man by nature is a dark place — very dark, indeed —

without the least ray of the knowledge of God which man had at his creation. So great is this darkness that the fool says in his heart, "There is no God". But God, in His infinite love, mercy, and grace, gave us His Word as the means of enlightening the dark heart of man; so that those who were not only dark, but darkness itself, were made light in the Lord. The Word of God is a light to show the state of all men, by nature, as sinful and lost. It shows, also, the inability of man to satisfy God's law for his sins by anything he can do or suffer, and it reveals the way of salvation by the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ — the only but all-sufficient ground on which sinners can be saved from sin and its penalty. The Word is the means of salvation; it is the Spirit that makes the Word effectual unto salvation. To those to whom the Word is blessed as the means of their salvation, it continues to enlighten them more and more during their time on earth, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in their hearts.

I understand by the *day* here the day of glory in heaven, where there is no night or shadow of darkness of any kind. Our text speaks of the dawn of that day, and also of the day-star arising in the heart. In nature the day-star or morning star rises before the sun rises, and when one sees the morning star the light of day is not far away. The day-star arises inwardly in the hearts of believers before they pass from time to eternity, to give them light going through the valley of the shadow of death, and to dispel their doubts and fears, by which they had often been harassed in the wilderness, and to enable them to say in the full assurance of faith, "We are going home to behold the glory of Christ, and to sing, 'Unto him 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'." (Rev. 1: 5,6). When the Lord manifests Himself graciously to the believer, when hearing the Gospel or preaching the Gospel, and pours abundantly the comforts of the Spirit into his soul, he does not dread to enter eternity that moment, though he is willing to wait the Lord's time.

In conclusion, I wish to make the following practical remarks:—

I. As we as a Church took up a separate position in defence of the doctrines of the Word of God, twenty-three years ago, when the great majority of ministers and other office-bearers in the Free Church repudiated these doctrines, as they are contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and adopted an unscriptural creed instead, let us adhere faithfully to that position to the end. Some called us *seceders*; but we are not seceders. The word "secede", according to its literal meaning, is to step aside from

the position in which one is. But we refused to step aside from the position of the Church of Christ in Scotland for centuries. It is those who left that position that are *seceders*.

2. The Lord has been sifting our Church for some years, with the result that a number of students and ministers left our Church from selfish motives; but we are getting on with our work better without them.

3. Like Peter, we, ministers, should put our congregations in remembrance of the doctrines of God's Word, though the Lord's people know them, and are established in them. We need precept upon precept, and line upon line, in order to persevere in the faith to the end, that each of us may be able to say, "I have kept the faith". We should keep the faith so as to hand it down pure and entire to coming generations, as others handed it to us. If we do so, as we resolve by grace to do, we shall go to eternity with a clear conscience.

4. Although the Lord did not make known to me as He did to Peter, that I must soon put off the tabernacle of the body, yet at my time of life I cannot expect, according to the course of nature, to live many more years in the world. It will be a wonder to me if I shall be at a meeting of Synod again at Inverness, and it is not at all likely that I shall ever be moderator of Synod again. This thought should make me more earnest in pressing on all present here this evening the duty of adhering steadfastly to the "more sure word of prophecy". And I should be more diligent in serving the Lord while it is day, remembering that the night of death cometh when no man can work. One of the reasons of regret which Christ's ministers shall have when they are about to leave the world is that they have to give up preaching the glorious Gospel. But when they get to heaven they shall be fully satisfied to be among the hearers of the only Preacher there — the Lord Jesus Christ — who shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters, for ever. May the Lord add His blessing, and to His name be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Sources of True Repentance

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

(Continued from page 146)

Hence also it is plain that, legal convictions of sin, and legal terrors of conscience, are not true repentance. They are, sometimes, introductory to the exercise of it, but they form no part of that exercise. These are but like unripe fruits. They must be ripened by the warm sun of gospel-

influence, before he who has them, can exercise in the smallest degree, evangelical repentance. Or rather, they may be compared to the blossoms which appear before, and differ in kind from the fruit. They often fall off, or go up as dust, and no fruit of true repentance follows. The first fruits of the second death, are alas! often mistaken by many for the pangs of the second birth. And therefore, if the reader has ever had them, he should examine well, if he has experienced a favourable issue out of them; if his soul has renounced itself for justification, and for sanctification; if he has come to the Lord Jesus Christ and Him only, both for justifying righteousness, and for sanctifying grace (Isa. 45: 24); and if his heart has been melted and grieved for his innumerable sins, because they have been committed against God in Christ, as a gracious God and Father (Jer. 31: 18). This is the threefold harbour at which they arrive, who come rightly out of those frightful depths. But alas! many plunge to and fro in them for a time, and land again on the same side, at which they went in.

Does the exercise of evangelical repentance, spring from the faith of pardoning mercy? The proper way, then, of dealing with the hard heart to bring it to true repentance, is, to press the sinner to believe in Jesus Christ, for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. This, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is the way to soften and melt the heart, and to dispose it, willingly to exercise genuine repentance. The impenitent sinner should be exhorted, to imitate those fowls, which first fly up, and then dart down upon their prey; first, to soar aloft, by trusting in the redeeming mercy of God in Christ, and then, to come down in the exercise of evangelical humiliation. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him" (Zech. 12: 10). Unbelief or distrust of pardoning mercy, hardens the heart, and removes it farther and farther from God; whereas the spiritual faith of pardon, touches the rebel's heart and makes it relent.

From what has been said, the reader may learn what a true sense of sin is. It is such a spiritual sight and feeling of sin, as arises from the faith of pardoning mercy; and is such a sense of the malignity and deformity of sin, as makes the penitent conclude, that of all evils it is the greatest. He sees the evil of sin, not only with respect to himself, but with regard to God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit. — It is a distinct sense of the particular evils, of the heart and life. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," says David, "and done this evil in thy sight." (Psal. 51: 4). It is a real, and not an imaginary sense of sin; and so it surpasses a merely rational conviction of sin, as far as that sense of the bitterness of gall, which is attained by tasting it, goes beyond that which is got by the bare

report of it (Jer. 2: 19). It is also an abiding, a permanent sense of iniquity. "Mine eye," says the afflicted church, "trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission." (Lam. 3: 49). The removal of the plague, put an end to Pharaoh's consciousness of sin; but in the true penitent, the wound is deep, and so the sense is abiding. In a word, it is lively and operative. The eye of the true penitent affects his heart; and when the heart is suitably affected, it excites all the powers of the soul to action. There is a sense of sin, which discovers itself in nothing but indolent wishes, and fruitless complaints. But a true sense of it, stimulates the penitent to immediate, and diligent endeavours.

Hence also it is evident, that it is the duty of every sinner, to attain without delay a true sense of sin. For this purpose, meditate frequently on such subjects, as tend to beget and increase in your heart, a deep sense of the odiousness and demerit of sin. Impenitence is greatly the effect of extenuating notions of the infinite malignity of transgression; whereas repentance flows from a true sense of its malignity and odiousness. Meditate also on the direful anguish, and ignominious death of the Lamb of God, when his holy soul made itself an offering for sin. In these you may see plainly, that God's abhorrence of sin is so inexpressibly great, that he would sooner deliver up his only begotten Son, in whom his soul delighteth, to the most direful agony and excruciating death, than leave it unpunished. To contemplate Gethsemane and Golgotha, is, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, eminently conducive to evangelical repentance. Consider, too, that how light soever, your crimes may sit on your spirit, they are a heavy burden to the Spirit of God. "Behold," said Jehovah, "I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves" (Amos 2: 13). The lighter that your sin lies upon your mind, the more grievous it is to the Holy Spirit of God. And if you do not sincerely repent of it, he will ease himself of that burden, by pouring out upon you, the fury of his great indignation (Isa. 1: 24). Consider, I entreat you, that without an effecting sense of the hatefulness of sin, there is no humiliation; that without humiliation, there is no true repentance; and that without such repentance, it will be impossible for you to escape the wrath to come (Luke 13: 3). Study, then, in dependance, on promised grace, and that without delay, to obtain a true, and a deep sense of the exceeding sinfulness of your sin.

From what has been said it is obvious, that you ought also to use all the appointed means, of attaining evangelical repentance. The Lord has appointed various means, and commanded you to use them. Employ them all, therefore, and instead of depending on them, or relying on your use

of them, trust that the Lord Jesus will render them effectual. If you sincerely desire to repent, you will manifest your sincerity, by using with diligence every instituted means. Meditate seriously, then, on the sin of your nature, heart, and life, and especially on the exceeding sinfulness of it. "Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent." (Rev. 2: 5). Consider your ways. "I thought on my ways," says holy David, "and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psal. 119: 59). Survey minutely your inclinations and thoughts, your words and actions, even from your earliest years. Put to yourself seriously such questions as these: "What have I been intending and pursuing all my days? What has been the rule of my conduct? the maxims of men, or the word of God? the customs of the world, or the example of Christ? What has the supreme love of my heart been fixed on? Whether have I given to Christ, or to the world, my strongest desires and warmest attachments? Whether has it been my habitual intention, to please God, or to please myself? Has it been His glory, that I have aimed at in every pursuit, or my own gratification, wealth or honour? Whether is it in heaven or upon earth, that I have chiefly been aiming, to lay up treasures for myself? Has God in Christ, been the delightful subject of my frequent meditation and conversation? or, have I regarded religious thoughts and converse, as insipid and wearisome? Have I been out of my element, when employed in the delightful work of prayer and praise, of reading and hearing the glorious gospel? and have I found more pleasure, in licentious mirth and trifling conversation? Have I kept the Sabbaths, and with holy reverence, frequented the Sanctuary, of the Lord? or have I profaned His Sabbaths, and poured contempt on His ordinances? And have I relied, for all my right to eternal life, on the surety-righteousness of Jesus Christ, and trusted cordially in Him for all His salvation? or have I relied for a title to life, partly on my own works, and trusted in Him for a part only of His salvation?" Propose with impartiality these questions to yourself, and suffer conscience to return a faithful answer; in order that, you may so discern your self-deformity, as to abhor yourself, and repent in dust and ashes. — When you use the means, believe with application the promises, of true repentance (Ezek. 36: 31). Upon the warrant of their being directed in offer to you, apply and trust and plead them. To believe the promises, and yet not to use the means, is presumption; and to use the other means, and yet not to employ the principal mean of trusting Christ and the promise, is self-righteousness.

When you are employing the means of evangelical repentance, be constantly on your guard, against every hindrance to the exercise of it. Inconsiderateness, the not apprehending the mercy of God in Christ,

slothfulness, the love and cares of the world, prejudices against the exercise of faith and the practice of holiness, and presumptuous confidence, are some of them. As these are powerful obstructions, to the habit and exercise of true repentance, be always on your guard against yielding to any of them. In the faith of the promise, and with importunate supplication for the Spirit of grace, labour to mortify them.

In conclusion: it may justly be inferred from what has been advanced, that it is not sound doctrine to teach, that Christ will receive none but the true penitent, or that none else, is warranted to come by faith to Him for salvation. The regenerated sinner must first, by faith embrace Christ, and apprehend the pardoning mercy of God in Him, before he can exercise true repentance. Accordingly, the invitations of the gospel to every sinner who hears it, are there:— “Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Rev. 22: 17). “Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.” (Isa. 55: 1). The evil of that doctrine is, that it sets needy sinners on spinning repentance, as it were, out of their own bowels, and bringing it with them to Christ; instead of coming to him by faith, to receive it from Him. It also tends to prevent convinced sinners, from attempting to come to Christ; as it teaches them to keep aloof from Him, till they be assured, that they have true repentance to bring with them. For a sinner cannot lawfully come to the Saviour till he be sure, that he has a present warrant to do so. If Jesus Christ will receive none, but him who is satisfied that he has genuine repentance, then none else, is invited and commanded to believe in Him; for surely, he who is invited and commanded to come to Christ, will be welcome to Him. Besides, if none be invited but the true penitent; then, — impenitent sinners are not bound to come to Christ; for none is warranted or bound to come to Him, but he who is invited. And if a sinner who is not invited nor commanded, do not come, he cannot be justly blamed for not coming; for where no law is, there is no transgression. The truth is, every sinner who hears the gospel, is both invited and commanded, to believe in the compassionate Saviour; and every one who cordially believes in Him, will, in consequence, exercise evangelical repentance, as a part of that salvation, for which he trusts in Him.

Well-grounded hopes of heaven will be far from giving the least encouragement to sloth and sinful security; on the contrary, they should stir us up to use the greatest care and diligence in religion.

Matthew Henry.

Letter

by Rev. Hugh Martin, D.D.

MONTROSE, 22nd April, 1880.

My Beloved Friend,* — I want to come in spirit beside you, for I would fain turn aside and see the voice that speaks with us, even although I should fall at His feet as dead; for He lays His right hand upon us and says — “Fear not, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of the unseen world and of death.”

We have all heard the sound of these “keys,” as they hang at the golden girdle of our risen, ascended Lord, and which have been the means, I believe, of bringing to dear _____ the first ecstasy of perfect love, perfect certainty, and perfect bliss, and of calling forth the first rapturous cry — “Unto Him 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.” And we shall all soon need the use of these “keys” for our own poor weary souls, and sweet music shall they be to those who have already heard the sound of the “golden bells” that adorn the hem of the garments of our great High Priest, as from within His holy place He is the minister of peace to His sin-stricken people — that peace from which spring true humility, holiness, and love, and which springs itself from forgiveness of sin, even from redemption through the blood of the Lamb.

I cannot write to you, but I have wept sore with you and for you these days. What did the Lord mean by making me — a blind, ignorant creature — give you warning that He was coming? — coming, as I said, to break down the secret fortresses in which you were hiding, and to bring you out to meet with Himself. And now that He *has* come, I trust it is in order to His enabling you to fall down before Him and to say — “Thy will be done. Be it unto me even as Thou wilt.” Seize, then, the opportunity of His coming very nigh, and seek by grace to make an absolute and complete surrender of yourself, and of all that concerns you, into the Lord’s hands. O! it is a sweet sight — a sight that even Jehovah delights in — when a humbled sinner is brought to lie low at the feet of the sovereign Lord, at the feet of infinite love, at the feet of crucified grace, and, while recognising His holy smiting hand, yet looks up, even amid breaking heart-strings, and says — “Thy will be done.” For, in a love that hath been from everlasting, are there never to come moments of rapture? — moments

* Written on getting notice of a bereavement.

giving token of the time when, the flesh being abolished, that which is born of the spirit and is spirit shall look forth through creation and providence with an eye like unto God's own eye, and in response to His "I am the Lord thy God, worship thou Me," shall reply in deepest, lowliest adoration, "Thou art the Lord my God." Ah! a broken-hearted sinner at Christ's feet has a keen scent and a tender feeling, though it may have poor logic, and then is the time when one may be trusted not to abuse grace but to welcome it, and to rejoice in it, and in it alone.

I shall not intrude further. It may be a little while before you can write to me, but never mind, I shall get a letter by-and-bye, when it will be no effort. Remember David's gracious meekness, how he arose and anointed himself and went into the house of the Lord and worshipped. Grace and peace be with you. — Your smitten brother,

Hugh Martin.

Religious Experience and Diary of Alexander R. Coltart

We have pleasure in submitting to our readers the following sketch of religious experience and diary of the late Mr A. R. Coltart, a native of Kirkcudbrightshire, in the south of Scotland. He was the youngest of a large family. The father attended the Church of Scotland, and the mother was a pious and steadfast Cameronian, a member of the R. P. Church. Another son was the late Mr John Coltart, a member of whose family in Glasgow, has kindly placed these writings at our disposal. Alexander lived as a farmer at North Glen, Buitle, in Kirkcudbright, and died there on 19th February, 1877, in his fifty-seventh year. We learn that he was a man of considerable intelligence, but of a quiet humble life. When asked during his later years to leave his home and stay in another part of the country, he refused for the reason that almost every spot near where he dwelt was dear to him by spiritual associations, having enjoyed in these places the Lord's gracious presence.

FIRST RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The first time I had any serious thoughts of religion was in the month of May, 1837, when, considering myself under the curse of the law of God, a consideration which was very painful for several days, I tried to console myself thus:— There are thousands of persons who have as much cause for alarm as I have, who are, for all that, happy, cheerful, and respected. But I could obtain no rest from this comparison, as I concluded that they

must all know of some way of escape (which I could not find out), which accounted for the appearance of happiness they seemed to enjoy. Meantime, my own uneasiness went on increasing, until I looked on myself as one for whom there was no Saviour. I would gladly have joined the company of any thoughtless, careless persons to escape from my own thoughts, and stifle the pain and horror I felt. But, when alone, the dreadful reality of my case was presented before me with additional frightfulness. I prayed, read, and thought anxiously to find a way to end the misery I endured, but without any success. Nothing but galling agony seemed to be my lot, until, one Sabbath afternoon, my suffering was so extreme, that the sweat broke out over my body, and I went out of the house, and entered into a plantation, and prayed long to God for relief, but no comfort or abatement came. All the means I had tried and could think of, having failed, I thought I would leave all care of obtaining salvation for myself to Christ, trusting that, if there was any mercy for me, He would procure it, and I ended my prayer by saying, "I deliver all into Thy hands, Lord Jesus." This I was enabled to do with my whole heart, and upon which, at that very instant of time, ere even I could move out of the position I was in, I felt through my whole being that I was entirely discharged from guilt. The assurance of this was intensified so that no shadow of a doubt remained, being filled with joy and gladness, peace, calm and serene, together with breaking of heart, and the purest love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus for what he had done, in giving me this strange, wonderful, and complete deliverance, every way so glorious and excellent.

This frame of mind continued several days, subject to a gradual abatement, until I soon sank into an easy security, and instead of following on to know the Lord, I became indolent, and allowed my mind to wander after vain thoughts, and to entertain curious ideas of my late condition, and became gross and presumptuous in prayer, and confused in mind. I could not attain to anything like clearness of understanding. Besides, strange, unholy thoughts of God passed through my mind, which I could not make to cease. I became much excited, and the harder I tried to suppress them, the more frequent they grew, and the more horrid they became, and were suggested with a quickness that astonished me. It appeared as if I were blaspheming God, I thought He had forsaken me, and I became desperate, thinking God could not pardon such wickedness. And for many a day I thought I had committed the unpardonable sin, being so highly favoured lately by the grace of God, and now to fall into such wickedness. I saw my heart to be unclean, and most terribly wicked. Its corruptions were of the most horrible and loathsome description, and being, as I

thought, guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, I dare not apply for pardon.

It was no little concern to me as to how I should spend the remainder of my life in this state of mind, and now I knew the worst. There was still a ray of hope left for this life to make it tolerable. I was all the time conscious of entertaining a secret love and gratitude to Jesus Christ, and I resolved that, for what He had done for me, I would, whenever an opportunity offered, do all I could for His cause, and for those I took to be His servants. With this idea, came the first joy I have experienced for about four weeks. It seemed quite inconsistent that I could be guilty of the unpardonable sin, and yet love Christ or His people. Reasoning from this, I became satisfied that I had not committed that awful sin. With a mind freed from that dreadful apprehension, with gladness of heart, I sought after truth, and was in some measure successful, experiencing great joy in the assurance of being in a reconciled state with God. But I could not abide in this happy state, as my mind was long racked and tossed about continually. I was unable to keep in that calm temper which is essentially necessary to the growth of grace in the heart, and soon again fell into confusion and perplexity. My heart, I thought, was still unchanged, and I began to doubt and at last to conclude that all my late views of being in a reconciled state with God were a delusion of the devil. Despondency and horror again closed over me, and I saw plainly I could do nothing whatever to free myself; all my reasoning and planning for that purpose were perfectly useless and fruitless. I, as it were, waited to see the end of this condition of mind which seemed to become more disordered the more I tried to clear it. In a few days my understanding became clearer, and a serene and healthy state ensued, and I was made to understand God's plan of salvation, and the near and glorious relation the believer stands in to Him, in virtue of what Christ has done, and that the Holy Spirit alone must apply His merits, and work out every operation of grace given by God the Father. With joy unspeakable I experienced the noble support derivable from a holy trust in God.

Of this I am as sure as I am of my existence that God really was present in His special grace to my soul, and that He does communicate grace, and that His grace is distinctly and clearly seen, and so infinitely above anything I have ever attained to by my own power, as to leave comparison out of the question. Whether I look on Him as a teacher, a comforter, or a convincer, the Spirit, the great worker, is almighty. The terror and dismay He can bring on the soul is far beyond that arising from all other causes. The consolations He works are also infinitely more sweet and

joyous than those which can possibly arise from all other things. His teachings assures and makes plain in an infinitely more perfect way any instruction coming through the senses.

I must never, under any circumstances, allow myself to doubt the reality and truth of God's dealings with my soul. If in course of time I may be weak enough to listen to those who may write or speak as unbelievers, let their arguments be never so plausibly and imposingly advanced, or if ever in despondency of spirits, or in whatever condition or circumstances I may be placed, I may always look back to what I have experienced, and be assured of God's mercy, and never forget that Jesus Christ did all for me, and always remember that it was by trusting Him with all that I found peace and joy. Union with Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit of so mysterious a nature that none but those who have tasted or found it can understand it. When the soul can cast all on Him, trust all to Him, and abide in Him, then does it realise the blessed condition of being united to Him in that high state of grace. The prayers we offer are His prayers then faith becomes very strong, and the words seem drawn away to God. Christ fills all, and is all to the soul. The members of the body seem His, a part of Him, and it is shown that He is honoured or dishonoured according as they are kept pure or impure. Our hands being His we dare not do evil.

There seems to be a stamp, an impression of joy, a sweetness felt, even to the taste, lingering, as it were, about me (except in those periods when I have shamefully backslidden from God, neglecting and almost forgetting Him, for such is my base ingratitude), since the first great joyfulness and gladness felt at the discovery of God's mercy. Those sweet, joyful, short, teaching impulses visit me from time to time, sometimes consoling, approving or recalling the mind, but always gladdening and pointing to Jesus Christ. Can this be the unction spoken of in 1 John 2: 20-27.

DIARY

August, 1859. — God is able to make the soul, which He enables to trust in Him, perfectly happy. His goodness at this time is so revealed to me that Christ's Spirit is, as it were, around and within my soul manifesting His loving-kindness to such a degree that nothing is left to desire or wish for besides. All within seems part of Himself. Joy, gladness, and love to Him, permeates my being. My own thoughts convey instruction to me making an impression strong, clear, elevating, and with such prevailing force as abundantly to assure me of the presence of the Lord Jesus, conveying to my mind such promises as these — "Fear not, for

I am with thee, I will uphold thee; I am thy strength, thy guardian. Why hast thou distressed thyself about this matter, and art cast down? Behold I can fill thy heart and soul with joys and comforts infinitely better and greater than all the world can give. Fear nothing that the world can do. Have not I made it, and do I not still uphold all things? Abide in me and I will give thee strength and peace of mind which nothing can impair or take away. It will defend thee against all these evils which have vexed thee. Always trust in me, and nothing will annoy. Learn that I am thy strength. Rest in me continually, and you shall have abundant peace and joy. This is abiding in me. Lo! I now sustain and comfort, and will lead thee and teach thee to pray in my name. Be of good courage, for it is I who rule all things.”

September 27th — Today the consciousness of being in a reconciled state with God, and seeing the merits of Christ to be my own and the assurance that through Him my prayers are heard, doth fill my soul with joy so sweet that it tells in a sensible manner on my feelings, cheering and brightening all that my eyes do look upon. O! the wondrous joy that is felt in realising Christ’s work and merits to be mine. This view is most surely the work of His Spirit. Suddenly began a singularly sweet spirit conveying those noble impulses which enable me from my whole heart to forgive and to love all my fellow-creatures. But this is easy to one who is conscious of the favour of God. The affronts and offences of the world are this day nothing to me, for enjoying those draughts of God’s loving-kindness, all joys and sorrows of the world sink into insignificance.

22nd. — The same satisfying, gladdening influence is still present, leaving the divine stamp of Christ’s spirit on all my thoughts and conceptions. To love Christ, and to believe in Christ seem to be heaven itself. It is abiding in Him, it is walking with Him.

30th. — Oh, I have to lament the commission of another sin, and have used His goodness and tender mercy so ill as to do that which He has forbidden and contrary to the motives and late teachings of His good Spirit. Not against His law so much is the evil, as foul ingratitude to my gracious Redeemer. Strange thing, that after a season of much spiritual enjoyment I should be so weak. I am poor, vile, and wretched, and unless I live entirely by Christ’s strength I cannot stand. Oh, Lord, take away my sin and impurity for Thine own name’s sake!

— F.P. Mag. Vol. II

Samuel Rutherford's Directory

A CHRISTIAN COURSE FOR WAYS OF BENEFITING

1. In time of journeying, riding, or walking, to be taken up with high and excellent thoughts of Christ's free grace, with base thoughts of thyself: of death, eternity, the joys of heaven; how unspeakable the pains of hell are, and how intolerable; and after by giving thyself to some ejaculations or short prayer.

2. By abstinence, fasting, humiliation, frequent prayer, setting days apart for suchlike worship.

3. By frequenting the society of the saints; mutual edification, exhortation, searching out of the impediments of grace, and scruples within thyself, seeking to have them resolved by others; by holding up one another's condition; and by making an errand to God for them, thou mayest get something for thyself.

4. To be certainly persuaded with thyself that God heareth prayers, yea, even of smallest importance: and not to be discouraged with a refusal if lawfully put up: and assure thyself that if He grant not the thing that thou askest He will grant thee as good, and that which is better for thee nor that which thou askest.

5. Be not discouraged to march under the banner of Christ though thou mayest run counter with foul footsteps, not standing to set thy face against the wind for His cause though thou shouldest meet with many calumnies, reproaches, nicknames; comforting thyself that thy Kingdom is not of this world: but be sure always to take no bigger coat of profession nor thou art able to fill.

6. By making conscience of atheistical thoughts, not questioning if there be a God or heaven which troubleth the best. And set before thine eyes the all-sufficient omnipotence, omniscency, of an eternal God who is not only privy to thy words and actions but to thy very thoughts, that it may be an awband* above thy head.

7. By studying daily a growth of grace, and means sought to further it; shortcoming and falling from thy first love mourned for; the estate of our Mother the Church always in remembrance, sympathising with her members, fellow-feeling.

8. By studying all means for advancing God's glory, letting it always carry the pre-eminency before thine own particular. By making thy call-

* "Christ by His covenant layeth awe of grace upon us." — *Influences of the Life of Grace* (1659), p.2. "The awe of heaven hath a stronger impression than the terror and awe of hell." — *Covenant of Grace* (1655), p.218.

ing and election sure hearaway, carrying a preparatory disposition for the day of the Lord's visitation, and not resting on means only.

9. When thou art merry, give thyself to Hymns and Songs; and in a sad condition to pour out thine heart to Him as the only cheerer up of hearts, and not Saul-like by seeking unlawful means.

10. By spiritually applying all mercies, deliveries, visitations, upon body, mind, or friends, and out of bitterest portions to drink sweetest draughts. And suffer nothing to escape without spiritual use even in most natural and profane objects.

11. By not complying with an erroneous conscience, and not shutting thine eye to greater light but rather to seek after it; and not shifting away of convictions, but to give conscience a hearing, not suffering it to be hood-winked, but let it have its full strength to make way for conviction. And not to rest here only: but using the means of knowledge till thou attain unto the power and practice of religion, to grow therein. And being converted, strengthen thy brethren.

12. By setting before thine eyes the strictest professors, the closest walkers with God, by way of imitation: by striving to reform the vices of those that are without. In admiring and blessing the Lord's free grace in bestowing a greater measure upon thee who by black Nature was an imp of the same stock; and what thou hast gotten bestow it to His glory who gave thee anything beyond thy desert.

God's Word Must Stand

Some thoughts on Mark 13: 31: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

We look at our hills and mountains and the other main features of the landscape around us, and we think of them as perfectly permanent. What we see is what our fathers saw — and many generations before them also — and we expect it all to endure indefinitely. If we look at our environment with a mind enlightened by truth, we will see all these features as evidence of our Creator's power.

It was He who ordered that every aspect of our landscape, and of every part of this universe, should be as it is. And He has ordered the events of history so that heaven and earth — this whole universe — will pass away at the time which He has appointed. Peter, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, thus describes the impressive scene: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3: 10).

Peter also spoke of the scoffers who ask, "Where is the promise of his

coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3: 3f). So our generation wishes to ignore the idea of a God who can intervene in the course of human history or, for that matter, in anything that happens in any part of the universe. Scientists have pronounced on the origins of the universe, and, whatever disagreements there are among themselves, there is something of a conspiracy to make everyone who does not accept the Theory of Evolution appear unscientific.

There are, of course, scientists who believe the Biblical account of creation, but the scientific establishment refuses to countenance this fact even as a remote possibility. Accordingly a writer whose contributions used to appear in the *Scientific American*, one of the world's most prestigious scientific periodicals, believes that he was dropped because he believes in Creation, although his articles for the magazine never took to do with this subject. Apparently *Scientific American* was afraid that its standing in the scientific world might be undermined merely by having as a regular writer someone who was identified with the Creationist camp. So much for freedom of thought in some parts of the scientific world! As so often previously, when man has struggled to be free from God's authority, he has submitted instead to the authority of his fellow-creatures.

According to the current of thought within the scientific establishment today all questions about the origins of mankind, and of living things generally, have to be explained in terms of uniformitarianism, the theory that current natural processes are quite sufficient to account for the present condition of the world — in other words, that "all things continue as they were from the beginning." But this is not so, "for this they willingly (or, wilfully, for they do not wish to know) are ignorant of, that . . . the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished" (2 Pet. 3: 5, 6). That there was universal flood is a fact revealed in the Bible, and it is supported by the evidence of geology. When men shut their eyes to the revelation given by God in the Bible they will almost inevitably go wrong in attempting to understand God's revelation in nature.

This is not to dismiss Science as a whole; far from it. But it is worth making the point that a scientific law, where it meets the tests of time and truth, is only a statement of the principles whereby God orders the course of nature. Einstein's discovery, for instance, of the relationship between the energy released and the amount of material destroyed during radioactive decay is not only a discovery about how radioactive substances work, but a statement of the properties God gave them when he created them.

Just as this whole universe had a beginning, through the exercise of God's power at creation, so also by the exercise of God's power the universe will come to an end; "heaven and earth shall pass away." Human existence in the time state must therefore come to an end. On the individual, and more immediate, level each of us must leave the world and pass into eternity, for "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9: 27).

Yet, though the fact of death is as certain as it is, the time when it will take place is to us completely unknown. The time of our death is just as uncertain as the time when the world will end — that time about which the Saviour gave the warning, "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Mt. 24: 44). We can expect to be taken out of this world by death, rather than by Christ's coming again at the end of the world, just because the prophecies about abundant and universal spiritual blessing have not yet been fulfilled. Yet, just as Christ will bring directly to the judgement seat those who are alive on earth at His second coming, so we may think of everyone else as being brought to judgement by way of death.

Death is assuredly not the end of our existence — however much today's unbelievers may wish that it was — for it is not only appointed unto men to die, but "after this the judgement" (Heb. 9: 27). Neither does death bring to an end to the consequences of the unbeliever's sins, "for God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc. 12: 14). And the solemnly awful consequences of unforgiven sin will follow the sinner throughout eternity in hell.

It is absolutely certain that heaven and earth will pass away. Yet there is something even more certain: Christ's words will never pass away. He, in fact, uses a particularly strong form of words, often translated *in no wise*, so that it could be expressed, "My words shall in no wise pass away." The point is not just that they will be accurately preserved in the Bible till the end of time, but that they will have the same authority for each succeeding generation. We must start with the fact that God is the unchanging God. So He is thus addressed: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Heb. 1: 10-12). These words are quoted from Psalm 102, where they are addressed to God, but in Hebrews 1 they form one of two Old Testament quotations introduced by the words, "Unto the Son He saith" (v8). As

the Son of God, Christ shares all the divine attributes with the Father — not only unchangeability, but also truth. Christ's words are therefore unchangeably true, and they must accordingly have abiding relevance.

Today the relevance of the Bible is generally questioned. It will be allowed that it was helpful centuries ago; it doubtless gave people a feeling of security to believe that there is a God, a God who cares for the individual, and as a result they lived happier and more fulfilled lives — irrespective altogether of the *truth* of the Scriptures. The Bible may even fulfill the same function today, but what self-respecting intellectual can now believe that the Bible is true? And the uneducated are usually content to assume that Science has proved the Bible false. What is assumed about the Bible is assumed also about Christ's words in particular. And all such assumptions make it all the easier for man to suppress the facts: that he is a sinner before God, that there will be a judgement and that there is a hell.

Uncomfortable though these ideas are for the man with a guilty conscience, they are facts — and they are relevant facts, even in the scientific age. Christ's teaching about sin and its consequences is still absolutely relevant — and always will be — simply because every human being is a sinner. Even in 1992 the words, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn 8: 24), demand our attention if we are to have God's blessing in this life, and in the next.

In a world of sin and sorrow, in a world of so much despair and hopelessness, how tremendously relevant and encouraging should be the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn 3: 16). Christ could speak in this way because "the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many" (10: 45). He took the place of the guilty and paid the price of man's redemption. So He calls, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11: 28). And when Christ speaks like this it is not so that the person who listens to them might *feel* better, although it will turn out that there is no reality behind them. These words are a divine revelation; they are therefore true, and every one who believes in Christ as a crucified Redeemer has a sure foundation for his eternal well-being.

Christ's words also have relevance for the day of judgement: "he that heareth my word", He said, "and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation" (Jn 5: 24). Salvation is a permanent blessing, as Christ promised: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that

I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life" (Jn 4: 13f). These promises of Christ are sure, and they are worthy of our total reliance. If we disbelieve then we make Him a liar. If we ignore them we, in effect, say that Christ, His promises and His warnings are of no importance — that, at least, they are irrelevant to this generation. What an insult to the unchanging God!

Such blessings as Christ proclaims would be received immediately and universally were it not for man's natural enmity to what is spiritual and holy. Apart from the drawing power of the Holy Spirit no one will consider the personal relevance of Christ's words. It is not only the openly ungodly, the professed atheist and the agnostic who reject the gospel and treat Christ as irrelevant to them personally; many who hear the gospel regularly do exactly the same thing. But we can have no other foundation for our life in this world — at least none that will prove secure. The salvation that God has provided for sinners in Christ Jesus is exactly suited to the needs of every sinner, for it is provided by man's Creator. In particular, the teachings of Christ are exactly suited to the need of sinners in every generation; they are therefore permanently relevant and reliable. And they are just as relevant to the spiritual need of this generation as to any other. However much he may learn about outer space, the core of the earth, the atom, or anything else, large or small, man without God is lost — and man without God's revelation is totally without worthwhile spiritual knowledge.

We are to make practical use of this revelation from God — the whole Bible and, in particular, God's revelation about death and the end of the world. Why have we been favoured with this knowledge if we are not to make good use of it? We should receive it in the light of the Saviour's counsel, "Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is" (v33). Accordingly we need to pray, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law" (Ps. 119: 34). And our resolve should reflect the Psalmist's claim, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I should not sin against thee" (Ps. 119: 11).

Christ pointed out the results of how we treat His words: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock . . . And everyone that . . . doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built the house upon the sand" (Mt 7: 24-27). We all know what happened to each of those houses. Far more serious altogether are the consequences of our reaction to the words of Christ.

Book Review

THE WORKS OF JOHN BUNYAN Vol I, II and III. Banner of Truth Trust. £49.95 for the set.

The Banner of Truth Trust is to be commended for reprinting the 1854 Edition of Bunyan's Works. This gives readers an opportunity to purchase this attractively produced set of Bunyan's writings. These writings need no recommendation. His well-known allegorical works "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Holy War", also his autobiographical work "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" have been highly prized throughout the English speaking world and regarded as masterpieces of Christian literature.

In addition to "Grace Abounding" the first volume contains, among other writings, "The Jerusalem Sinner Saved", "Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ", "Saved by Grace", a "Treatise on the Fear of God" and "A Discourse Touching Prayer". The second volume, among other precious writings, deals with the Saints Knowledge of Christ's love, the Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Judgment, the Pharisee and the Publican, a defence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ and a Holy Life, the Beauty of Christianity. The third volume contains his allegorical works. In addition to the two better known works there are among others, The Barren Fig Tree and the Life and Death of Mr Badman.

It would be a token for good in our land if the republication of these volumes would stir up professing Christians throughout the land to return to the solid and edifying reading found in Bunyan and other Puritan writers.

D.B.M.

Notes and Comments

The Doctrine of a Lost Eternity

The new Education Secretary, Mr John Patten, has come under fire from any quarters because he expressed the view that, if the doctrine of hell-fire was preached today in the Churches, there might be less serious crime in the nation. In this Mr Patten is right, but for expressing such a view, he has been ridiculed in the Press and regarded as someone who is out of touch with reality. The doctrine of a lost eternity the men of this present 'enlightened' generation cannot abide, no more than they can suffer many other teachings of God's Word. However the time is coming when men will have to face up to the reality of hell — in eternity, if not in time, according to the testimony of the Lord Jesus — "These shall go away into

everlasting punishment.” Men will then be faced with these solemn questions — “Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”

No doubt Mr Patten’s view of a lost eternity is affected by his acceptance, as a Roman Catholic, of the doctrine of purgatory. Yet, even then, the mere mention of hell-fire stirs up a hornet’s nest of revilers of the Word of God.

The Mother’s Union and Prostitution

The Mother’s Union, long regarded as a defender of Christian morals, is to debate the legalisation of prostitution. It is a concern for the growing danger of Aids which has brought this about. The Bishop of Liverpool supported the move but said he was not condoning prostitution. The decision of the Mother’s Union is a controversial one, and has angered some people who think the debate will be seen as condoning prostitution. Mrs Mary Whitehouse, referring to the Bishop’s comments, said that this will encourage the use of brothels rather than encouraging chastity before marriage and faithfulness within it. It should surely require no debate to establish that the most urgent need of these women is deliverance from the degradation to which they have brought themselves, and have been brought through the lusts of men. Only the Gospel of God’s grace can effect this.

The Resurrection of Christ

It is clear that Dr David Jenkins, Bishop of Durham, is not the only clergyman in the Church of England who denies such doctrines as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Christ. A recent television documentary brought others of the same ilk to the fore. One of the clergymen interviewed, when asked if he believed in the bodily resurrection of Christ said he did not think so and, on scientific ground, it seemed difficult to believe. The abandonment of belief in the fundamental doctrines of the faith continues in the Church of England and in other Churches, too. Men will only accept what conforms to their own natural reason. All else must be jettisoned. A day of reckoning is coming, when men, to their dismay, will meet the Risen Christ whom they have rejected.

Rock Stars, the modern gods

Rock charity shows have become popular. At these shows rock stars perform and obtain for charities large amounts of money. A recent one was held at Wembley Stadium in London which thousands attended. The

concert was in memory of a rock star who became an Aids victim. Many rock stars participated and through television there was estimated to be an audience of half a billion people. Millions of pounds were expected to be raised for Aids charities. Often it is thought that the end justifies the means. Not so at all. In this case it appears all too obvious that these rock-star entertainers have become modern gods to their votaries. The adulation they receive from their worshippers is such that they must be regarded by them as gods. This generation, having forsaken the Living and True God, must find other gods to worship. These have been found in the cult of rock music and rock musicians. How sadly has our nation fallen when devil-inspired false worship of man-made gods takes the place of the worship of the God of heaven! Young people need to be warned of these dangers.

Former Archbishop and the Bible

Lord Runcie, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, and the present Archbishop, Dr Carey, have one thing in common at least, that is, that they hate fundamentalism. Referring to the text in 2 Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," Lord Runcie said that out of this text comes the absurd fundamentalist belief that the words of the Bible cannot be faulty or in error. He was giving his presidential address to the Classical Association. He said that the Church owed a debt of gratitude to the classics, because with the help of the classics the Church had repeatedly rescued itself from fundamentalism. It is obvious from this that poor, spiritually-blind, Dr Runcie, has never been delivered from the mythical world of the classics. Had he studied the Bible as well as he has studied the classics, it may well be that his eyes would have been opened to see the glory of those truths concerning the Person and work of the Divine Redeemer which the fundamentalists hold dear. He may also have learned that, in holding fast to the Word of God in the entirety, he had a sure anchor to which he could hold fast in passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

Mission News

We are pleased to hear that Mr and Mrs Murray have secured a small house in Famona, a pleasant suburb of Bulawayo. There is quite a large garden of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre with fruit trees growing in it, and a place for a borehole, which is reassuring as water is very scarce in Bulawayo. Both water and electricity are rationed. 'We pray that the Lord will bless us

in all our concerns for the good of His cause,' Neil writes. Apart from work in Binga there is much to be done in and around Bulawayo. There are at least four places where services are held regularly, Umguza, Llewellyn Barracks, Lobengula Church and Thembiso Children's Home. Mr Ndebele mentions in a report that when taking a Prayer-Meeting in the hall attached to Thembiso it is not unusual to have 700 adults and children. On Sabbath the children and some of the workers attend the services in Lobengula.

Neil says in a recent letter that he had paid another visit to Binga with fifty bags of maize, twenty-five bags for Lubu and twenty-five for Samende. In Samende he spoke on Isaiah 55 verse 3, and in Lubu he spoke on John 3 verse 16. The people were very attentive. One poor man said he had not eaten for four days. Some are looking for wild berries, others are eating grass.

It was good to hear that at Ingwenya supplies of mealie-meal and sugar had been secured for the new term D.V. On the other hand it was alarming to hear that the Kyle Dam which gives the appearance of being a huge lake is completely dry. The Triangle cane sugar estates were irrigated from the dam.

We hear that the Rev. Z. Mazvabo has been in South Africa seeing an eye specialist. It would indeed be welcome news to hear that, if it is the Lord's will, something can be done to prevent the deterioration of his eyesight. Mr Mazvabo has two elders, Mr Fanuel Sibanda and Mr Naison Siziba, but there are eight places of worship. What a large field there is for the Church in Zimbabwe, in Malawi and in Kenya. The Saviour commanded "Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the Harvest that he send forth labourers into the harvest." Mr Dick Vermeulen is spending three weeks in Malawi and three weeks in Kenya before reporting home to the Synod.

I omitted to say earlier that Mr Murray was highly appreciative of gifts received from Mr Rambottom's congregation, and gifts from two other English friends. J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

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.

Skye: At Portree on 23rd June at 11 a.m.

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

Resignation of Rev. D. Nicolson, Glendale

At a meeting of the Skye Presbytery on 4th February 1992 a letter tendering Rev. D. Nicolson's resignation from the active ministry of the Church was read. At the following meeting of Presbytery on 14th April 1992 the following motion was passed "that in the circumstances and with reluctance, Rev. D. Nicolson's request to resign be accepted by the Presbytery, the resignation to take effect from the end of April 1992 (D.V.)."

Induction at Dundee

On 27th March, at 7 p.m., the Southern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland met in the Dundee Free Presbyterian Church for the purpose of inducting Rev. Alexander McPherson to the pastoral charge of the Perth, Stirling and Dundee congregation. A large congregation, representative of various parts of the Church were present when the Presbytery, augmented by Revs N. M. and D. A. Ross, with Rev. J. Goldby entered the church to begin the service. The Moderator, Rev. D. MacLean, conducted public worship, preaching from the words in Acts 10: 33: "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

A congregation was prepared in Caesarea by God inclining the God-fearing Cornelius to pray for someone to come and declare the way of salvation. Similarly, this centurion's household and many others were moved by the Lord to gather to hear that good news. The preacher, the apostle Paul, was himself prepared to preach to this congregation when he also was praying. He saw a vision which was interpreted for him by the visit of Cornelius's messengers to mean that the Gospel must now be preached to Gentiles as well as Jews. The Holy Spirit then instructed Peter to answer the call to Caesarea. It can be seen that it was God who by various means prepared both congregation and preacher. It is God who prepares men to preach and others to hear the glorious Gospel of His grace towards sinners, in our day as well as in that which we have been considering.

Peter's sermon declared that by the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, God fashioned a way by which sinners could be brought into a state of peace with Him. Faith in Christ as the Saviour of sinners leads to the peace which issues in everlasting rest in the holiness of heaven. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through out Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5: 1). Rejection of Christ as Saviour, will, however, mean meeting Him as Judge, for "it is he which was ordained

of God to be Judge of quick and dead.” The sermon was blessed to all the hearers, for we read that, “the Holy Ghost fell on all of them which heard the word.” Again we see that God is the One who acts all through in such a way that He blesses whomsoever He will, even as He obliges Gospel-hearing sinners to believe in Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Observe, finally, that all these things took place within the Visible Church. How valuable that divinely produced society and its ordinances should appear in our eyes who belong to it!

Sermon being ended there was read a brief narrative of the proceedings in the transaction of the Call. Mr McPherson then answered satisfactorily the Questions put by the Moderator. Next, the Formula was read, and signed by Mr McPherson. The Moderator then engaged in prayer, and received and admitted Rev A. McPherson to the pastoral charge of the Perth, Stirling and Dundee congregation, and gave him the right hand of fellowship. The members of Presbytery did likewise.

The Moderator then called on Rev. D. B. Macleod to address the minister, and Rev. L. MacLeod to address the congregation. The service was concluded with praise and the benediction, and the new minister then went to the door of the church to shake hands with the congregation as they left. Most went round to the hall of the church where the women of the congregation made a bountiful provision of tea and refreshments. It is to be hoped and prayed for that the Lord will bless this latest ministry to the upbuilding of His cause in these parts.

A. McPherson, (Clerk of Presbytery).

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Binga, Zimbabwe: Dr M. £50; Mrs T., Stranraer £50; Miss K. M. \$200, all per N. M.
Bracadale-Strath: Inverness Postmark, £20 for Portnalong Comm. Expenses, per Rev. G. G. H.

Dumbarton: Glasgow Friend, £20; Miss J. McD., £20; Anon, £10 (in plate), all for Congr. Fund.

Edinburgh: Friend, Ardaneasken, £10 for Minister's Car Expenses; Friend £20; Friend £10, both for petrol.

Inverness: Anon £10; £30 for Minibus Maintenance; Anon £5; £50; £20; £50; £2; £30; £20; £50 all for Sust. Fund; Anon £10 for Foreign Mission; Anon £10 for Home Mission; Anon £10 for General Building Fund, all per envelopes in plate.

Kinlochbervie: W. S., Wick, £50, where most needed; M. S. £10.