

JULY, 1965

The
Gospel Magazine

and Protestant Beacon:

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

The British Protestant

EDITED BY THE REV. H. M. CARSON, B.A., B.D.

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THE
GOSPEL MAGAZINE

"COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD"
"ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE"
"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOR EVER"

No. 1354
New Series

JULY, 1965

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EDITORIAL

The Christian life was never meant by God to be a solitary experience. Nothing could be further removed from the New Testament ideal than the hermits of the middle ages who tried to work out their salvation by retreating into solitude. Christians on the contrary are intended to advance spiritually in company with their fellow believers. They contribute to each other and they receive from each other. Together they learn of the things of God; together they worship; and together they bear witness. This sharing in the things of the Spirit the New Testament calls fellowship.

The fellowship which should characterize the life of the local church is stressed in various ways in the New Testament. It emerges from the teaching of the Apostle Paul that Christians have been adopted into the family of God. But this adoption involves a relationship with other members of the family who have experienced the same gracious gift. It is surely significant that when Jesus taught His disciples to pray He put on their lips a prayer which reminded them of this truth—they were to say, not "My" but "Our Father."

Then again Christians are pictured as being members of the body of Christ. As limbs in the body we share in the life of the body and that life has its source in Christ Himself, for He Himself is the life of the body. But a body is an inter-related organism in which every limb has its appointed place. It is only in the case of serious injury that the limbs do not function in harmony. So too in the body of Christ when each limb is in subjection to the head there is a mutual dependence.

The picture of the temple of God brings home the same truth. We are living stones built into that temple which is God's dwelling place, and where His glory is shown forth. But in such a building,

while the stones may be of different shapes and sizes, they all have their allotted place and function in the whole. They, with all their variety, comprise in the design of the architect a divinely given unity.

One further picture may re-inforce this New Testament emphasis. We are citizens of heaven. Our citizenship, writes Paul to the Philippians, does not belong to some earthly kingdom, but to the kingdom of God. But such citizenship binds us together in a mutual loyalty both to one another and to our king.

It is no wonder therefore that in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, there is so much stress on the privileges and responsibilities of Christian fellowship. To become a Christian is to be added to the Church by the One who saves us. When the disciples are waiting for the day of Pentecost they are all with one accord in one place. When they pray they lift up their voice with one accord. When some of the brethren are in need the others feel their responsibility to minister to them. When anyone offends against the life of the fellowship, as happened at Corinth, he is excluded from the congregation. When they gather around the Lord's Table the common loaf and the common cup declare the same lesson of their common life in the body of Christ.

To realise this truth is to learn an important lesson in Christian living. How are we to advance in our knowledge of God? Paul gives us the answer as he prays for the Ephesians. His desire is that they may know the love of Christ. But it is no individualistic excuse that they are to experience. He prays rather that they may be able to comprehend "with all the saints" for it is in fellowship with others that we learn and grow.

This fellowship will show itself in the spirit of sympathy and concern for each other which are the hall marks of healthy Christian living. Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep; Bear ye one another's burdens—these are typical apostolic injunctions. If we want to see these being worked out we watch Paul organising the collection for the poor at Jerusalem or we see the Macedonian believers rallying to the Apostles' support in his own hour of need.

Such fellowship will lead to a sharing together of spiritual experiences. In the days of the prophet Malachi "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." It is hardly likely that the prophet was referring to the kind of conversation on trivialities which goes by the name of fellowship to-day. It was doubtless a conversation about God and His goodness. It was the kind of talk which John Bunyan heard when he listened to the old ladies talking about the Saviours' goodness and which awakened him to his own

need. It was the sort of spiritual conversation which was the staple diet of early Methodist class meetings.

It is salutary to ask ourselves if the life of the Church to which we belong reflects that quality of fellowship. Doubtless we will at once reflect on the coldness, on the criticism, on the backbiting, on the selfishness. But before we begin to apportion blame we do well to examine our own heart. It may be that the trouble is there. If we are cold and dead we are hardly likely to kindle zeal and love in those around us. But if we are ourselves kindled by the Spirit then by His grace our presence may be like a glowing coal set in a fire which not only kindles the surrounding fuel but itself burns all the more brightly as a result.

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ANNOUNCEMENT:

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Literature Evangelism

It was Benjamin Franklin who said, "Give me twenty-six lead soldiers and I will conquer the world." He was referring to the power of the printing press. With our world population of 3,000 million destined to double over the next forty years, to reach an astronomical 6,000 million by the turn of the century, the only possible way of reaching mankind is through the printed page. Jesus said "Go ye therefore and teach all nations"; but the tragic fact is that in this year of grace, 1965, barely 50 per cent of the present population of the world has seen Christian printed material of any description whatsoever.

It was Lenin who said, "Every communist must be actively engaged in the distribution of communist literature." And his disciples have been much more active in this field than the disciples of Christ. It was a nephew of Mahatma Ghandi who made this statement, concerning the great sub-continent of India, "The missionaries have taught us to read, but the communists have given us the literature."

How this is being done is revealed in an article in the Readers' Digest, January 1961, under the title "World War III has already started," by Eugene Lyons.

"Throughout the Soviet Union there are 6,000 special schools maintained by the Party and devoted exclusively to training professional propagandists. These have an enrolment at any one time of 185,000 students. Above these schools are 177 Regional Propaganda Colleges to train 135,000 alumni of the local schools. And above the regional schools are a dozen higher institutes giving 'graduate training' to several thousand advanced students. Propaganda is by far the biggest industry in the U.S.S.R."

Even more disquieting is the fact that not only are the communists realistically engaged in teaching all nations they are also showing much more zeal than the Christians in carrying out the instructions of their master. Here is how a young French communist put the matter:

"The Gospel is a much more powerful weapon for the renewal of society than is Marx's philosophy, but all the same it is we who finally will beat you. We are only a handful and you Christians are numbered by the millions. But if you remember the story of Gideon and his 300 companions, you will understand why I am right. We communists do not play with words. We are realists, and, seeing

that we are determined to achieve our objective, we know how to obtain the means. Of our salary and wages, we keep only what is strictly necessary, and we give up the rest for propaganda purposes. To this propaganda we also consecrate all our free time and part of our holidays. You, however, give only a little time and hardly any money for the spreading of the Gospel of Christ. How can anyone believe in the supreme value of this Gospel if you do not practice it, if you do not spread it, and if you sacrifice neither time nor money for it? Believe me, it is we who will win, for we believe in our communist message and we are ready to sacrifice everything, even our life, in order that social justice shall triumph. But you people are afraid to soil your hands."

Face to face with this perilous situation it is necessary for the church to do a great deal of hard thinking and swift acting. What priority do we give, anyway, to literature evangelism? Are we really prepared to obey the command of our Saviour, "to teach all nations?" Are we prepared to "sacrifice everything" and to "soil our hands" in this cause?

This reprint of part of an Editorial from the "Evangelical Presbyterian" of New Zealand is a fitting postscript to the recent articles in the "Gospel Magazine" on various agencies for the spread of Evangelical literature. These articles were not simply to stir a passing interest but to stimulate practical support!

If truth be not diffused, error will be; if God and His word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the Gospel is not felt through the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end.—Daniel Webster.

"So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

*"Jesus, the Bread of Life, is given
To be our daily food;
Within us dwells that well from heaven,
The Spirit of our God."*

—John Newton.

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

ERIC T. GURR

In recent articles on "Miraculous Healing"* we have suggested that much passing by the name of "miracle" today could be otherwise explained, especially if we knew even more of the profound influence of the mind over the body, and more of the deep mysteries of psychical and telepathic phenomena. We have not said that God cannot and does not heal today, and have maintained that we believe He answers prayer for the sick and often graciously restores. But, when we have prayed long and earnestly, and used every conceivable available means to reduce pain and alleviate suffering, these tragedies and calamities are still our portion. So often do we find ourselves in the midst of impenetrable darkness—so often our minds are incurably bewildered. Oh, the heartbreaks, the injustices, the appalling agonies of humankind! Famine—earthquake pain, cruelty to children, starvation, flood! Where could we begin and where could we end a catalogue of man's woes? We feel an innate sympathy with the writer of Ecclesiastes, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind". And, the truth of the word in Job is echoed in our hearts, "Man is born into trouble as the sparks fly upwards". There were two children belonging to different neighbouring families. During an epidemic, each contracted diphtheria. The one who recovered was from a large family, and unwanted. The other, an only child, much prayed over, died! Doesn't God care? Listen at an Open Air Meeting, "I don't want to please God! I hate God! God let me down. My brother was wounded in the war! I prayed to God that my brother might live. Any decent person would have answered. But, He didn't, and my brother died". This is something of the problem of pain. I want to lay before you seven propositions. They will hardly begin to unravel these sorrowful mysteries, but nevertheless, I feel they will help us in our understanding of the ways of God.

(1) *THAT SUFFERING AND SIN BEAR SOME RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER, FEW WOULD DENY.* If I sin wilfully, in my thoughtful moments, I expect to suffer for it. We seldom complain of injustice, if we suffer in our own bodies, for our misdeeds and misdemeanours. If we over-eat, we blame no one but ourselves for our abdominal discomfort and pain. If our sexual life is promiscuous, we blame no one but ourselves for the disease and

*These articles appeared in the *Church Magazine of Melbourne Hall, Leicester.*

shame which lays hold of our bodies. Sometimes such suffering comes as a natural consequence of sin. Sometimes it is interposed by God as a mark of Divine displeasure. See I Cor. 11: 28-32.

(2) *THAT PERSONAL SUFFERING IS NOT ALWAYS THE FRUIT OF PERSONAL SIN IS ALSO SELF-EVIDENT.* You will remember the word of our Lord with regard to the man born blind, John 9: 1-3: "His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents . . ." "And, the word in Luke 13: 1-5 is also apposite, "Some told Him of the Galilaeans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that the Galilaeans were sinners above all Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." In these verses our Lord speaks of disease, He speaks of the sword, and He speaks of calamity, and in no case is that which happens attributed directly to the personal sin of the sufferers. Rather is this denied.

(3) *THIS SUFFERING OF THE SEEMINGLY INNOCENT IS EXPLAINABLE PARTIALLY BY THE FIXITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE.* If I were the only creature in the world, presumably God could have arranged for the laws of nature to be controlled by my every wish and whim! Suppose for a moment this to be so—in the present situation. Suppose the laws of nature were made alterable for my personal benefit. Gravity would obviously, generally, be a good thing, so that I could remain firmly on my feet. But, suppose that one day I slipped and was falling, and God for my sake suddenly suspended the force of gravity. CHAOS!! If the so-called laws of nature were not unalterably fixed and the same for everyone, we would not be able to make any plans or depend on anything whatsoever. We simply could not exist! Now, disease germs multiply and infection spreads according to fixed laws. The very laws which make possible an earthquake or volcanic outburst, are the same laws which make the human habitation of this planet possible. These laws are not going to be suspended suddenly because a righteous man rather than a sinful man happens to be involved. What sort of a world would this be? Certainly not a dependable one, for in any developing situation, you would not know whether the laws of nature would hold good, for you wouldn't

know the secret characters of the persons involved. THE FIXITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE! God does sometimes intervene to rescue and deliver His own, but that is not to be taken as a sign of their special righteousness, nor an indication of the lack of faith or spirituality on the part of some not so rescued or delivered. If God does deliver one, whilst seeming to be deaf to the cry of another, it is in an act bound up with His own inscrutable purposes, and with the glory of His own name. And, following, for the ultimate good of one either delivered or not delivered.

(4) *THE SUFFERING OF THE SEEMINGLY INNOCENT IS SOMETHING WHICH IS BOUND TO FOLLOW FROM THE VERY NATURE OF HUMAN SOCIETY.* Human beings are not, in one sense, separately created units, THEY BELONG TO EACH OTHER. We are a FAMILY. How frequently, in our smaller family groups, the innocent suffer for the waywardness of others. A mother's heart is broken because of the flagrant moral indiscretions of her daughter. A father's position in society is ruined because of the folly and prodigality of his son. A family bears the stigma of reproach down through the years, because in a moment of insane jealousy one of its sons raised his hand and slew a man. Another thing we have to remember about our human family is that as a family it is SIN CURSED. Many things happen to it not because God didn't or doesn't love it, but because it is sin cursed. Mother and child are walking hand-in-hand along the pavement, laughing and happy. The love of the mother for the child is beyond question. Suddenly the child lets the ball go which she was holding in her free hand. It bounces into the road. She wrenches herself free from her mother's grasp and romps after it. She romps into the path of an oncoming lorry and is killed. Humanity was in the loins of Adam, when in Eden's fair paradise he wrenched himself from the hand of God to chase after the devil's proffered enticement. He was mutilated by sin; by this broken fellowship with God. The human family is sin cursed! In any discussion of suffering in the family, and of the innocent suffering for the guilty, this has to be borne in mind. I believe that germs and other agencies which carry disease would never have done so, but for the fact that man as a family is sin cursed. Even now, I understand that some of these agencies have beneficent as well as destructive purposes. Apart from anything else, by his fall and sin THE MIND OF MAN WAS DARKENED. It was asked once by a sceptic, "Why didn't Jesus tell us about chloroform?" This, of course, was not the purpose of His coming or revelation. He came to reveal that which man could not otherwise

know. I believe that had it not been for the fall, instinctively man would have known of all the benefits locked up for him in the heart of nature, and all the mysterious mechanization of nature's laws. The establishment and growth of disease germs and agencies have come about as the result of man's ignorance and slackness THROUGH SIN. Because of the fixity of nature's laws, because of the family nature of human society, sin cursed by the fall, it is inevitable that the righteous shall suffer. Sometimes they are delivered, but not always by any means. By the Cross we are delivered from the penalty of sin, but not necessarily from its immediate consequences. The Christian faith is not an insurance policy against disease, pain, grievous material loss or earthly calamity. Were I to represent it as such, I should deny the challenge of the New Testament, and render stupidly unnecessary much of its counsel and comfort. I should also deny the sterling faith of many who through great tribulation have entered into their everlasting reward.

“Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease;
When others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?”

(5) *THE SUFFERING OF THE SEEMINGLY INNOCENT IS SOMETIMES ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE DIRECT ACTIVITY OF SATAN, UNDER THE PERMISSIVE HAND OF GOD, FOR THE PURPOSES OF CHASTISEMENT OR TESTING OR PURIFYING.* The first chapter of Job, indeed, the whole book of Job is important to our understanding of this, as the word in Hebrews 12: 6, “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth”.

(6) *WHEN WE CONSIDER THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING WE NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE END AND PURPOSE OF OUR EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE.* We seek in vain for the meaning of life in the short span of our earthly existence. If the Bible declares anything, it asserts that man is not merely body, but basically and fundamentally spirit. He was not made for time, but for eternity. In his best moments, a man knows this. As believers, heaven is our home and God is our goal and eternity is our sphere. Our eternal security is of far greater moment than our earthly satisfaction or deliverance. Paul writes in Romans 8: 18, “I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”. An order was given to exterminate the Canaanites. It was an operation calculated to dig out a cancerous growth from the body of humanity. This

cancerous growth would ultimately have gathered the whole world in to its pollution and corruptions. They had had their chance. God had given them up, and gave orders for the stamping out of the vile infection. But what of the children of the Canaanites? Yes, them as well, and what an act of mercy! ! They were to be taken into eternity before the shocking depravity they had inherited had had a chance to do its deathly work in their minds and bodies. It may well be, for all we know, that they were snatched from time in order that it might be possible to seal them for eternal bliss. Sometimes we Christians are guilty of thinking and behaving and praying as though this earthly pilgrimage were the end and purpose of all. We cling to mortal life as though in that alone is to be found the full realization of our being. Abijah, the young son of Jeroboam was sick. The wife of the King was sent in disguise to Ahijah the prophet, to enquire concerning their son. In Kings 14: 12-13 we read, "Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter the city, the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, BECAUSE IN HIM THERE IS FOUND SOME GOOD THING TOWARD THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL in the house of Jeroboam." The child was being taken out of time and into eternity as an act of great mercy. In this grace and God were triumphing, and the lad was being delivered. Eternity is of far greater moment than time! Someone rushed into Mr. Emerson's presence one day and said in a dismayed tone, "Mr. Emerson, they tell me that the world is coming to an end". Without looking up from his desk he replied, "Never mind, WE CAN GET ALONG WITHOUT IT."

(7) IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN AND HIS HAND IS UPON ALL, WHAT COULD BE THE OVER-RULING PURPOSE OF SUFFERING? Read Luke 21: 8-13, and particularly verse 13. "IT SHALL TURN TO YOU FOR A TESTIMONY." In Genesis 45, Joseph argues that the terrible thing which his brothers have done to him had turned out for good. In the first chapter of his letter to the Philippians, Paul tells them that the things which had happened unto him had fallen out to the furtherance of the Gospel. "IT SHALL TURN TO YOU FOR A TESTIMONY." In 2 Cor. 12: 8-9, Paul writes, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." IT SHALL TURN TO YOU FOR A TESTIMONY." The attitude of the Christian to suffering should be first of all to search his own heart to see if there is any known sinful reason for it. Having settled that, his next business should not be primarily to escape it, nor even

to bear it patiently. Many think they are wearing martyr's crowns when they are only wearing fools' caps. No, his next business is TO USE IT! "IT SHALL TURN TO YOU FOR A TESTIMONY." Peter and James and John were on the Mount of Transfiguration. There they saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus. We then read, "A cloud overshadowed them and they feared as they entered into the cloud." WHEN THE CLOUD HAD PASSED—THEY SAW NO MAN SAVE JESUS ONLY. THE CLOUD CLEARED THEIR VISION! "IT SHALL TURN TO YOU FOR A TESTIMONY."

Even if after all we don't understand the things which are happening to us, and this may well be the case, for reason and logic and even exposition often fall upon dulled senses in times of great grief and distress. This the Lord understands. He hasn't forgotten to be gracious and remembers that we are dust. Even in the midst of our bitter complaining, His love surrounds and overshadows us. But, when we don't understand, let us ask ourselves whether we can understand this, from Isaiah 53:10, "It PLEASED the Lord to bruise HIM." Let us also turn to Hebrews 12:3, "Consider Him that endured". and cleave unto our dear Lord, our great and sympathizing High Priest, cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, and know that when we awake, and it is morning, and all shadows, have passed and gone, WE SHALL STILL BE WITH HIM, and although the darkness has wrapped itself about us, and we haven't seen Him, nor been able to discern His purpose, He has been with us all the time! The important word is the word "STILL"!

*"The power of the Creator
Gives glory to Thy Name;
The love of the Redeemer
Enhances all Thy fame:
Creator and Redeemer,
Almighty Saviour Lord,
The power and love that saved us
For ever be adored."*

Occupation with a glorified Christ brings peace and joy to the hearts of His own.

God can only be known where Christ is known—can only be seen in His goodness and glory where Christ is recognised as the substance and expression of it.—William Kelly.

THE APOSTLE OF THE NORTH

CHARLES WALKER

The names of most of the great evangelists of the nineteenth century are known in every evangelical household: Spurgeon, Chalmers, Rowland Hill, Henry Martyn and many more. John Macdonald, known throughout Scotland in his day as "The Apostle of the North," has a rightful place among these great men. It is difficult to understand why he is now so little known, for he was better served by his biographer, Dr. John Kennedy, than almost any other evangelical leader of the time. Kennedy, who knew Macdonald well and can be regarded in some ways as his successor, was an even greater man than Macdonald, and one of the features of his greatness was his exceptionally penetrating spiritual and psychological insight. Victorian biographers too often glossed over their heroes' failings and in doing so succeeded in presenting us with pictures of beings who were either slightly super- or slightly sub-human. Kennedy, in his biography of Macdonald, aimed to present the man as he was, "warts and all." The result was a memorable book which it is to be hoped may one day be made available again in a paper-back edition.

John Macdonald was born in 1779. His father was a very godly and talented man, well known in religious circles for his work as a catechist. Men of his stamp were greatly needed in Scotland at the time, as little godliness or sound doctrine was taught by the vast majority of ministers. There was no minister in the parish of Reay in Sutherland where Macdonald was born, and his parents carried him on a cold December day in 1779 to a neighbouring parish to be baptized. The parson was out on a shooting expedition but they were fortunate enough to meet him in a field nearby. A mere baptism could not be allowed to take up much of the time so carefully set aside for sport. After a few words of prayer the minister went to a nearby frozen pool, broke the ice with the butt of his gun, sprinkled the freezing water on the poor child's head, and continued with his day's sport.

Macdonald received his early education in a parish school. His father intended that he should receive only an elementary education but the schoolmaster realised that he was a lad of ability and gave

him instruction in Latin. At the age of nineteen he went to college. His career there was distinguished, particularly in mathematics, but the great event of his college career was his conversion to Christ. This was the thing that determined his life's work. His was not an easy conversion. The agony of soul which he experienced drove him to despair and to the point of throwing himself into the sea. The light of the gospel came into his heart when he had put himself in the way of a great wave, and it was all he could do to rush back to safety. In a cave nearby he kneeled down and committed himself to Christ. Throughout his life he often returned to that cave. One of his visits there took place only a few days after his conversion. Thinking that he had the shore to himself he prayed aloud. The prayer had an effect which he had not looked for. Another young man, in the same desperate state that Macdonald had been in a few days before, was on the shore contemplating suicide. The voice from the cave made him stop and listen, and as he listened the hope of the gospel took hold of his heart and he was soundly converted.

There is no record of Macdonald's early spiritual growth. He took the view that it was indiscreet and selfish to talk of his personal experience. He did not keep a spiritual diary, although he later regretted that he had not done so. The main influences upon him in the early years of his Christian life were the teaching of his father, the preaching of a gifted layman, and the works of Jonathan Edwards.

In 1805 he was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Caithness. Great things were expected of him, merely because he was his father's son. His first sermons, however, did not come up to expectations. He was not immediately ordained to the charge of a congregation. His first task was in fact a literary one. He undertook a journey through the Scottish Highlands to make enquiries about the genuineness of certain Ossianic poems which had recently been published and which were thought by many to be spurious. During his journey he preached in every parish which he visited and no doubt then began to see the need for, as well as to gain experience in, the evangelistic work for which he later became so famous.

The following year Macdonald was ordained as minister of Berriedale in Caithness. In 1807 he moved from there to become minister of the Gaelic Church in Edinburgh. He spent six years in Edinburgh and they were years which were very beneficial to him as well as to his congregation. While there, he was able to mix with men of broader culture and refinement than he had previously known

and he learned much from them. He acquired greater facility in speaking English. These were great helps to him in his preaching, but it was not because of his new-found sophistication that Macdonald was soon in demand as a preacher all over the country. The great thing that happened to him while he was at Edinburgh was the experience of a baptism of the Spirit. His preaching, which had always been sound and lucid, now became powerful and urgent. The following account gives some idea of its effect. It was written by a man who had previously not heard of Macdonald but had walked sixteen miles to hear a then well-known minister, Dr. Mackintosh, at whose request Macdonald was preaching:

"I was greatly disappointed on seeing Dr. Mackintosh walk towards the 'manse seat,' and instead of him a smart-looking young man walk, as I thought, with too rapid progress, and with too light a step, towards the pulpit. I felt at once as though the day was lost. . . . He gave out the psalm. 'You can't spoil that at any rate,' I said to myself. The prayer began; but I hardly heard the first part of it. Gradually my attention was attracted, but toward the manse seat I found my eye still wandering. Before the prayer was over I ceased to look away from the pulpit. When the sermon began I forgot all but the doctrine I was hearing. As he warmed up to his subject, the preacher became most vehement in his action; every eye was rivetted on the speaker; and suppressed sounds testified to the effect which his sermon was producing. His second discourse was so awe-inspiring that the audience became powerfully affected. Such was the awful solemnity of the doctrine and the vehemence of the preacher's manner, that I expected, ere he was done, every heart would be pierced, and that the very roof of the church would be rent. The sermon over, all were asking who the preacher was. 'A young man from Edinburgh of the name of Macdonald,' was the only answer that could be given."

It may seem strange that Macdonald should choose to remove from a very considerable sphere of influence in Edinburgh to the comparative obscurity of a Highland parish. He did just that, however, in 1813, when he accepted a call from the church at Urquhart, Ross-shire. His predecessor there had for many years been exercising a great ministry in the parish and the people were well taught and deeply experienced Christians. Because of this Macdonald was able to carry out extra-parochial work which would otherwise have been completely unjustified. He was able to combine with his duties as minister of the parish the work of an evangelist to the many dark spots of the Scottish Highlands. Just how dark those

spots were is shown by Kennedy's description of the so-called "moderate" ministers (those who did not indulge in the "enthusiasm" of evangelicals):

"In many parishes in the north there were ministers whose influence, if the most powerful, was also the most deadly. To all the worldliness, to much of the immorality, and to some of the power of the chieftains of other days, they added as their own the hypocrisy of a profession of Christianity. It is almost impossible to conceive of some these Highland impersonations of Moderatism. If a few of them were contiguous in a district preserved from the intrusion of enthusiasts, fearing no Church censures, and feeling no restraint from the public opinion which their own influence had chiefly formed, they lived as do those who care not though all should see the brand of evil on their brow. The parson in one of these parishes was the great cattle-dealer at the market, the leading dancer at the wedding, the toast-master at the farmers' dinner, and if the last to slide off his chair at the drinking bout, it was because he was more 'seasoned' than the rest. He was the man of all others of whom evil-doers were least afraid. On Sabbath he preached a borrowed sermon which he had read so often that he himself was half asleep in delivering it, and their sound sleep alone made the infliction tolerable to those who lounged before him. He would make up to some of them for the fasting in the church by a feasting in the manse; and in gluttony and ungodly jesting he and they would spend the Sabbath evening."

Macdonald had all the qualifications necessary for the work of an itinerant evangelist. Like John Wesley, he was physically tough enough to be able almost to live on the back of a horse. ("If my mare could speak," he once said, "she would say, 'The Gospel may be good, and to others it may do good, but as for me, I am ten times tired of it'"). He was optimistic by nature and not likely to be put off by the seemingly insuperable difficulties that lay before him. Perhaps most important of all was his assurance of his standing before God. "Freed from entangling fears," wrote Kennedy, "regarding his own interest in Christ, and taught to tell his troubles only to the Lord, he could carry a sustaining joyousness of heart with him to every portion of his work. His natural cheerfulness, sanctified into Christian happiness, could win for him admission into hearts and homes and pulpits that would else have been shut against him."

Shortly after Macdonald moved to Urquhart, his wife died. Her death coincided with the time for celebrating the parish communion.

Communion in Scotland was celebrated only twice a year, each parish celebrating it at a different time. On these occasions visitors from other parishes, often far distant, came to join in the services. Macdonald preached in the open air from the text, "I will betroth thee unto me forever"—to a congregation of about ten thousand. Although his grief made him feel quite unfitted for preaching, he soon warmed to his subject and in the evening service, when he addressed the unconverted, his voice was almost drowned by the cries and groans of many who had been brought under conviction. The awakening which began that night continued for some time and spread under Macdonald's preaching to other districts. One man who heard him preaching about this time on the text, "Thy maker is thy husband," said that he himself knew fifty people who were converted by that one sermon. (He meant by conversions not mere "decisions" made at the time, but professions which were later authenticated by godly lives.)

The "moderate" ministers soon became alarmed at this "wild man," as they called him, and many of them would not allow him to preach in their parishes. One of the most endearing things about Macdonald was that his opponents could not find anything about him to take hold of apart from his preaching. In some cases, by calling on ministers who had shut the doors of their churches against him, he was able by his kindly and charming manner, to obtain an entry and to preach the gospel. Others, however, were adamant. One of these was the minister of Dornoch, whose people were eager to hear the gospel. Macdonald would not preach in the parish against the express command of the incumbent, but he felt quite free to preach in the open air a yard or two inside the adjoining parish of Creich which was not forbidden ground. The sermon which he preached on that occasion was remembered for many a day. Macdonald was an energetic preacher and on this occasion more than usually so. The action of his feet wore a pit in the ground which could be seen for many years afterwards and which was visited and inspected with greater awe than is often shown by visitors to the great cathedrals.

In 1822, at the request of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, Macdonald visited the remote and barren little island of St. Kilda in the Outer Hebrides. The population of the island at the time was 108, and according to Macdonald's report, they all seemed to be ignorant of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. He remained on the island for twelve days, preaching thirteen

sermons on the great themes of the gospel. He was not at all certain about the effect of his preaching although he reported that "the general body seem to feel more than an ordinary concern about their eternal interests." His departure from the island was a most affecting occasion. "When all was got ready, about nine o'clock, and we had been taking leave of the inhabitants, all of them in a body (children not excepted), followed us to the shore, and amidst cries and tears, in which my landlord and I were obliged to share, we shook hands with them and bade them a final adieu." The scene which he described in his journal bears a strong resemblance to the farewell of the great apostle to the Gentiles to the elders of Ephesus. Macdonald's farewell, however, proved not to be a final one. The following summer, after a trip to London to preach the anniversary sermon for the London Missionary Society, he returned to St. Kilda. His welcome was overwhelming:

"We had no sooner appeared in sight than the people flew down to the shore to meet us, and stood in a body on the shelving rock on which we were to land . . . they all pressed around me, and grasped my hand each in his turn, when I thought they would have rung the very blood out of it. Few words passed for a minute or two, but tears trickled from every eye. I was overcome myself . . ."

This time he stayed on the isle for three weeks, preaching and instructing the people. He paid a third and final visit in 1824, after which a regular minister was installed on the island. Macdonald's preaching had greatly affected the islanders and they were able then to profit from the more normal kind of ministry.

(To be continued)

I preach as though Christ was crucified yesterday; arose from the dead today; and is coming back to earth tomorrow.—Martin Luther.

SERMON

THE NEW BIRTH

H. M. CARSON

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."—James 1. 18.

You cannot read through the New Testament without seeing what a wonderful measure of unity there is. It is not a unity that is artificially imposed but is perfectly natural. The same themes keep recurring and they come in a very spontaneous way. If for example you take the third chapter of John's gospel, the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians and this first chapter of James, they are in many ways very different. One gives a narrative, an account of the meeting of the Lord Jesus with Nicodemus; the one in Ephesians deals with specific doctrine, and this one in James is a very practical epistle on Christian conduct, and yet in each of them the same kind of themes emerge. You hear the Lord speaking to Nicodemus and He is saying to him, "You must be born again." "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." You turn to Ephesians 2 and Paul is writing again about the new birth and he says, "And you hath God quickened (He has made you alive) who were dead in trespasses and sins." And here in James 1, in the midst of these practical injunctions and exhortations, James speaks about the very same thing, because of course there was a common deposit of truth, a common understanding of the Word of God amongst all these men, while they write very differently. It is rather like a family in which the members of the family are very different one from the other and yet so often we say there is a family likeness, there is a similarity. Well they could be little more different than the style of say James and the apostle Paul, and indeed the subjects with which they are dealing, and yet there is this family similarity and the same great themes of the gospel recur in each one of them.

So James is dealing here with the very theme with which Jesus dealt that night when Nicodemus came to Him, and the Lord brought home this humbling and searching truth that a man must be born again. We ask first of all, and James at once gives us the answer: Who is the author of the new birth? Who is it who brings men to the birth? James replies, "Of his own will, God begat us with the word of truth." It is from God that this gift of new life comes. There is something very mysterious about life whether you stand at the beginning or at the end. When you see a new born

babe and hear its first cry, or when you stand in that rather twilight moment when someone is passing out of this life, at both points there comes over you a sense of the mystery of it all. Of course we can say so much about life but ultimately there are secrets here which we simply cannot plumb. We can see life in its outworking—that babe begins to cry, to feed, to talk, to walk, to mature, to develop, and all these things are evidence to us of the presence of life. And when that one we loved is gone, well there is a very real sense in which life is absent now.

We know life only in terms of its outworking, and so in the same way you cannot analyse spiritual life, you cannot dissect the fact of the new birth and explain it completely. Indeed Jesus said so when He said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is a mysterious element in the new birth. We see it in its outworking of course. The person who is born again of the Holy Spirit has an appetite like a new born babe. He desires the sincere milk of the word of God. Like a child learning to crawl and to walk, the new born Christian begins to walk in the paths of holiness, he has an appetite for fellowship with his fellow Christians, and in his new life and the quality of this life, you see the working of the Spirit of God. He has been born again.

But in this new birth, this gift of life, it is the very life of God which is imparted. A father begets a son and there is a continuity as it were between the two. This son of course is an individual, he is a separate person, he develops his own characteristics, and yet there is a very real link between the two. It is not merely that they share a common human nature which they share with all around, this son is begotten by the father, this son shares his father's life. In the new birth, when we are born from above by the working of the Holy Spirit, we become new creatures and our spiritual life develops, but this new life which we have is essentially an imparting to us of the very life of God. We have been made partakers of the divine nature. To become a Christian, you see, involves a most tremendous miracle. It is not merely that we adopt a new set of beliefs or a new set of values, or that we identify ourselves with a group of people called Christians. No, something more radical happens than that. We are born again, we begin anew, and it is not the new beginning of turning over a new leaf or forming some new resolution; it is an inner transformation wrought by God Himself. We are made partakers, sharers in the very nature of God.

This great miracle which God works is essentially a miracle of

His grace. James emphasises that here. He says, "*Of his own will* begat he us with the word of truth." He says God took the initiative in this. Your new life, this wonderful new experience in which you rejoice, this transformation which you have experienced, is from God. If I were to ask any of you, Did you take the initiative in your birth, in your coming into this world? Did you choose where you should be born? Did you choose when you should be born? Did you choose the features with which you should come, the colour of hair, and the circumstances into which you should arrive? Well of course the obvious answer to all those questions is that we did not have any choice. We were begotten, we were conceived, we were born. Well James is saying that as far as the new birth is concerned, as far as your spiritual rebirth is concerned—"of his own will begat he us."

This new birth is due to the grace of God. If you and I have sought for the Lord Jesus Christ, it is because first of all He came to seek for us; "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." If we have called upon Him, calling upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that we might be saved, it is because first of all He has called upon us. It is because we have heard His call in our hearts that we have responded to that call. If we have learnt in some measure to love Him, what is the word from Scripture?—"We love Him because He first loved us." All the time it is God who takes the initiative, God who takes the first step. We are born, says Jesus, from above. This life is God's gift to us. So the Christian never takes any credit for his own spiritual experience. He never drifts into the attitude of the Pharisee who looks down from his rather lofty height upon the lesser mortals and sinners below. No, the Christian is always saying from his heart, "By the grace of God I am what I am." This that has happened to me has happened because God in His great mercy has stooped to me in my sin, He has made me anew, and to Him be all the praise and all the glory because it is of His own will that I have been begotten to this new life.

Now how does God accomplish this miracle? Well James speaks here of the means that God uses. Clearly it is God in the Person of the Holy Spirit who accomplishes the new birth. It is God acting directly upon us. It is God effecting this miracle. But how does God do it? Well, says James, He does it by the word of truth, by the word of the gospel. It is this word applied to us by the Holy Spirit that brings us to the birth spiritually. Now what is this word of truth, this word of the gospel? It is in its essential nature, the word of God. When we turn to the Bible we are not simply turning

to one book amongst many books, not even a particularly special book among many others. We are turning to a book where we say, Here God has spoken clearly and without ambiguity, and here God now speaks to men and women. This, we say, is the word of truth, this is the word of God.

Now when you speak to someone, that word in a sense can be separated from you. This is even more true if you write that word, and it goes by means of letter. It is separate from you now, and yet of course there is a link between, so that when your friend receives the letter it is almost as if you yourself have come; and some people have the wonderful facility of writing in such a way that their sympathy and encouragement come through their words. When that letter arrives it is almost as if the person himself was beside you speaking the word in your ear, and it is the person as it were giving himself in his word. This we believe is the essential nature of the word of God. Of course it is a word here as an objective thing. There is that book upon the bookstand before me but we believe it is the word that has come from heaven, it is a word from God, so that in this word and through this word, God Himself comes near to us. It is as if God is alongside, as if God is now speaking. The Bible is no dead record from the past, it is the living word of God now in this very day and hour, and it is through this word, this word of the gospel, that God brings men and women to the birth spiritually.

How does James describe it here? He describes it as the *word of truth*. This is not a word that reveals men's opinions and theories. Take up any book on any subject and you are listening to a man expounding his views on some particular theme. Whether it is philosophy or science or whatever it may be, it is his particular hypothesis and he is developing it and endeavouring to reach a conclusion, but it is very much a man's opinion, a man's reasoning. This, says James, is the word of truth. This is not something tentative; this is not men formulating theories, exploring with their imagination the truths of God. No, this is the word of truth in which God has spoken clearly, He has declared Himself, so that men may hear.

God has spoken in this word concerning Himself. This is the Book of God, and this Book of God, through the working of the Spirit, reveals God to us. We are not left in this matter to our own wisdom, to our own ability to speculate. We are not moving in a realm of guesswork in which we say, I think God is like this; I think God requires that. No, here God has spoken clearly. God says, This is my character, this is my nature, these are my require-

ments. And as we listen to this word of truth, we hear God speaking and showing Himself to us as our Creator, the very source of our life, as our Sustainer, as the One who has absolute rights over us because He has made us. We see Him here as the Lord of history, the God who has the universe in the very hollow of His hand. We see Him here as the Law-giver, the One who deals with His creatures as the Sovereign, who requires from His subjects utter obedience. We see Him as the Sovereign Judge. We see Him as the merciful One.

Right the way through, God is speaking to us concerning Himself, and of course this word of truth inevitably speaks not only concerning God but it speaks concerning us. That is why this word is no mere academic treatise in which we reflect upon the nature of God and the way in which He works. No, this is a probing word; this is a word which speaks to us; and it is such a humbling word, for it speaks to us from one particular standpoint and that is our relationship to God. It does not deal with us simply as far as our physical make-up is concerned or our mental development or our relationship with other people. No, the basic thing with which it deals, from which other things emerge of course, but the basic thing is our relationship with God. So this word of truth shows us what we are as far as God is concerned. It shows us that we are sinners, it shows us that we have transgressed against God's law. It shows us that we are rebels against His authority.

This word of truth speaks to us of Christ, and again it speaks to us of Him essentially in His relationship to God. It declares to us that this One whom men knew as Jesus of Nazareth, and whom so many misunderstood, whom so many saw as just one more prophet, one more wonder worker, this word of truth says that this Jesus is the Son of God. This is the One who from all eternity was in the presence of the Father. This is the One who has perfectly revealed God, for apart from Him no man has seen God at any time. God is the One who dwells in light, inaccessible, whom no man can approach, whom no man has seen nor can see, but God through His Son has walked this earth. God has been made flesh for us and so the word of truth is full of Christ. In fact the convergence of all the statements of Scripture are on this central point, upon Christ, upon His Person, upon His work, upon His death, His rising again, His coming again. This is the word of truth that reveals the Saviour.

Now, says James, it is by this word of truth that God accomplishes in us this miracle. It is through the word of truth applied to us by the Holy Spirit that the new birth is accomplished. Well, how is this word of truth applied? How is this word which comes

to us here as we read the Scriptures, how is the word of the gospel the means in God's hands for effecting the new birth? God through this word speaks to *our understanding*. You heard that great call this morning in the first lesson that was read from Isaiah, chapter 1, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." You get the picture of people being called round a conference table—Come and let us reason together, come and let us discuss together. This is how God deals with men and women. He reasons with us.

How does faith come? Paul has the same kind of answer, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Faith is not some emotional reaction to the atmosphere of a service or a meeting. Faith is not due to the impact of some stronger personality who compels us in a certain direction. No, says Paul, faith comes by hearing. You hear the word of God, that word comes home to you, and faith is your response to that word. God speaks to your understanding, saying, "Come and let us reason together"; and as the word comes to our understanding it comes with enlightening power because by ourselves our minds are darkened. We do not know God; we are ignorant of Him. In fact when we try and think about Him very often we create a God after our own image, and in our own likeness. Our minds are darkened by sin. The god of this world has blinded us. "The natural man," says Paul, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." And in this miracle of the new birth whereby we become Christians, our minds are enlightened. The word of God flashes into the darkness of our understanding and the spiritual gloom is dispersed and we begin to see, we begin to understand. The truth of God flames with light and we begin to see God as He is in all His holiness, in all His glory. We see ourselves as we have never seen ourselves before. We see Christ mighty to save.

But this word does not just speak to the understanding. In saying what I have just said, that we see ourselves as we have never seen ourselves before, I am saying that this word speaks also to *our conscience*, because this word in revealing the holiness and the righteousness of God, inevitably reveals us as coming short of God's glory. It probes and searches and is, says James, the word of truth. Well, a truth inevitably shows up a lie, and the word of truth when it is applied by God to us shows up all the lies that are within us, it shows up all the deception. We are basically liars as far as our relationship to God is concerned, because we are constantly saying that we are all right, that we are not so bad, that we

have done our best and all the rest; and the word of God as it were sweeps to one side all our protestations, demolishes every excuse, brushes away every evasion and shows us what we are. That is why, you know, the new birth can be such a painful experience. Birth is accompanied by travail and the new birth is accompanied very often with a spiritual travail. When a man is convicted of sin, and sees himself as being under the judgment of God, it is the word of truth which does this. It is the word of truth which humbles us in the dust, brings us to an end of ourselves in order that it might drive us to Christ.

This word also comes to *the will*. It is applied to us in such a way that not only do we begin to understand about God, about Christ and about ourselves, not merely do we acknowledge that this word applies to us in our sin, but we find ourselves being moved and stirred. Why is it that one man listens to the gospel and he goes out unmoved? He may sit under that gospel for years and be completely unmoved, and then something happens. It may be a sermon on a theme that he has heard dozens of times before but suddenly this word comes home and he finds a stirring within, a reaching out for Christ. His will has been stirred and this is what God does by the word of truth.

Now there are those who would say that this suggests that man is just like a chess piece to be moved on a board by the arbitrary will of God. Does God force you into the kingdom whether you will or not? Well, no, far from it. When Augustine, the great theologian of the early church, spoke about irresistible grace, he was not speaking about something relentless, forcing a man against his will into a position of faith. Augustine was talking about what had happened to him. In his sinfulness, in his self centred living, something tremendous had happened—he had been overwhelmed by the love of Christ, and he had been swept into the kingdom, not by some bitter fate against which he had struggled, but he had been swept to Christ, as it were, by Christ's own love. This is how the word of truth moves our wills. "We love Him because He first loved us." "God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." And it is through the word of truth that God moves our stubborn wills so that we come gladly. Indeed our wills which were formerly enslaved and in bondage are now set free, and like Wesley in his hymn, we stand up in our cell, our chains fall off and we are free; we rise, we go forth and we follow Him.

Well, says James, this is the miracle of the new birth, this is what God has done for you, if you are a Christian, through the word

of truth; He has brought you to the birth. Now what had He in view? His aim, says James, is that we might be "a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." You are back in the Old Testament of course in James' thinking. You are in the temple and an Israelite is coming in. It is the first days of the harvest. He has put in his sickle and he has begun to reap, but he knows that according to the law of Leviticus he must not take the whole crop for himself; the firstfruits belong to the Lord. In a sense the whole harvest belongs to God, but the firstfruits are God's in a special sense, and you see the worshipper coming in with the sheafs, the firstfruits of the harvest; he presents them to the priest that the priest may present them to the Lord.

This surely is what is in James' mind when he says we are intended to be a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures. The whole of creation belongs to Him. "Thou hast created all things," says the book of Revelation, "and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." But Christians, the new born, in a special sense, in a peculiar and particular sense, belong to God. Peter has the same thought when he says, You are a people for God's own possession. This is why God saved us. This is why He went to the extreme of giving His Son to die in order that we might be His. We are His by His own choice. He set His heart upon us before the world began. We are His by redemption. He has bought us. How has He bought us? "Not with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." We are His by His calling. He has called us and we have heard and we have responded. We are the firstfruits. We belong to Him in a special way.

But that sheaf brought into the temple was given to God, given completely, so the man no longer owned it. He could enjoy the rest of the harvest, but this was God's. The firstfruits of God's creatures, those who are born of the Spirit, are God's utterly and completely. So, says the word of God to you and to me, "You are not your own." You may have your own personal ambition, your plans for the future, your schemes, your ideas, but this is utterly wrong if you are a Christian. Your ambition should be to know and to do the will of God. Your concern is to give yourself utterly and completely to Him. He has redeemed you, you are His. You are the firstfruits of His creation, and you are called on to consecrate yourself wholly to the Lord.

How do you do it? Look at this worshipper again coming into the temple in Jerusalem with the sheaf, the firstfruit. He brings it to the priest and the priest offers it before the Lord. Where is our

priest? He is at the right hand of God. He is our great High Priest. He has marks in His hands and in His feet. He bears the marks of the nails and of the spear. He is the One who lived our life and died our death and now He is at the right hand of God interceding for us. Through Him we come, through this sympathetic High Priest who knows our nature, knows our sinfulness, knows our weakness, and understands, forgives, cleanses and brings us to the Father. Through Him we come and we bring the firstfruits, we bring ourselves, and through Christ we offer ourselves to this God, who "of His own will begat us with the word of truth."

I ask you this morning fellow Christian, in a word from Scripture, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Is there anything in your life for which you can claim credit? God forbid. Everything we have, everything we are, everything we ever hope to be, is due to His mercy and to His grace alone. Look at your spiritual life, look at that miracle of the new birth, and acknowledge the fact that it is God who has done it. He sought you. He sent His Son to die for you. Through the working of the Spirit He has spoken to your heart. He has taken the word of truth and He has applied it to your mind. He has convicted you of sin and He has turned you to Himself. He has given you His very nature. You are born again, are you? Well, let us together this morning bow in worship, in praise and in thanksgiving. Let us acknowledge that it is by His grace that this miracle has taken place, but let us also bow in submission. If He has done this for me, if He has given His Son to die for me, then I am His. What right have I to lay my hand upon any part of my life and say that it is mine? Every department and every aspect is His. I am His for time and for eternity. May God give us grace then to give ourselves utterly and completely to Him who, in such wonderful grace, by His holy Word, has begotten us again, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

LOVE AND ITS INDISPENSABLE CATALYST

(1st Corinthians 13)

P. J. BALDWIN

Paul's ringing exhortation to the exercise of love has exhibited a perennial usefulness, whether the church has been grappling with the evils which occasioned the penning of his first letter to Corinth or the tensions of the more contemporary scene. Today, when the very evils which manifested themselves in that local situation are to be suspected as deeply underlying larger segments of Christian communion, it would seem appropriate to take a fresh look at this familiar portion of Scripture.

In doing so, while we must confine ourselves to the main thrust of the chapter, we shall not ignore the insights of earlier believers. Rather we shall try to bring under tribute the penetrating studies of bygone years and through them seek to discover afresh Paul's meaning in his use of the word *love* and its implications for us.

Neither our Lord Jesus Christ, nor the prophets, nor Paul himself scorned the use of parables and similitudes when facing similar tasks of interpretation and communication. When Bunyan began to write the use of the *edifying similitude* was a fully developed art, ready to hand and well worthy of depicting Christian's heavenward *Progress*. Many parables and similitudes were drawn from the commonplace and timeless things of society and in consequence they have continued to speak to successive generations with amazing clarity. Nevertheless, there are situations when a modern similitude, by reason of its very currency, may be especially meaningful. It is on this premise that we have ventured to dip into the language of modern technology and employ the idea of a *catalyst* to represent something that is indispensable to the love of which Paul wrote.

Now a catalyst is a substance which when added to another substance causes a chemical reaction to take place; puts the second substance *to work* and changes its nature. The catalyst retains its identity and is often recovered on completion of the process. Our aim then by this analogy is not to demonstrate a new brand of Pauline love but to show that love cannot be of any real worth in the present situation unless it is put to work by something we shall call a catalyst.

In this article the writer has drawn freely on the writings of the Puritans including Perkins, John Ball, Owen, Howe, Bates, Thos. Goodwin and the Calvinistic Baptist, Thos. Gill.

With many of us the mere announcement of the sermon topic of *Love* will find us turning to 1st Corinthians, 13. If we should happen to be in church we almost anticipate the words of the minister as he reads: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass . . ." We expect to be told that our English word *charity* does not properly reflect the Greek *agape* which Paul used, yet, somehow we are almost certain to go home with the notion that the passage is, after all, only an exhortation to works of what we today call charity.

Let us suppose for a moment that the Divine Author is calling us to the performance of such works of charity running out into utter selflessness. Why then is He concerned, first with certain personal gifts which in some respect are radically deficient and why does He seem to deprecate certain noble acts including the supreme act of giving our bodies to be burned seeing that such acts are the essence of selfless charity? If the subject turned on outward acts alone, what is the force of the pivotal phrases, "I am become," "I am nothing" and "it profiteth me nothing"? Surely the chapter turns, therefore, on something within a man, something affecting self, something resembling a catalyst and which orients all the outgoings of his being.

Beside these clues the Bible has much to say in other places about love and these too must be co-related with our chapter for we may no more isolate a chapter of Scripture than we may tear a single text out of its context.

When God promulgated the Decalogue He manifested His love to His people with the announcement that He had in a very special way become their God. The enjoyment of that relationship involved the keeping of the Second Table, just as surely as the First, out of reciprocal love to Him. Despite numerous enjoinders in the Old Testament to "love the Lord thy God" and "thy neighbour as thyself," love was the missing consideration and principal defect which Christ put His finger upon in their faulty keeping of the Law. He stressed love to God and love to man, in that order and in the dimension He exemplified, as that on which hang all the law and the prophets. Christ so stressed the true significance of love that He could style it the great commandment and as being altogether new as it pertained to "one another" of the flock.

Paul, John and even Peter seem to vie with each other as the Holy Spirit through them takes of this emphasis of Christ's and reveals it to us. . Paul, the writer of the chapter we are considering, however, crystallizes the matter for us in his first letter to Timothy

where he says, "Now the end of the commandment is charity *out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*" It thus becomes quite clear that when Paul writes of love he has in mind a grace, wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is oriented first to God and from that relationship goes out to men.

At the end of our chapter Paul does not hesitate to declare that love taken by itself, i.e. in an absolute sense, is "the greatest" yet he tells the Galatians that the keeping of the outward works of the law avails not at all "but faith which worketh by love." Not only is love essential but it must be put to work and the catalyst that will do this is faith. One of the fathers of English Presbyterianism wrote, "faith receiveth its virtue, life and efficacy from the Spirit . . . that it may give force to all other virtues." Without faith "charity is a wild, mishappen wandering action, rising and falling amiss, coming short or running over." "Where there is greatest faith in God that is greatest love . . ." A contemporary of his, of another school, wrote, "Faith is the spiritual taste of the soul which feedeth upon the sweet and tender mercies of the Lord before the heart be enflamed with love" and "faith is therefore the life, the quickening animating principle of love and not the contrary." Yet this indispensable catalyst is not any sort of faith but faith which is compatible with the love of which we write and works itself by that love to God, Christ, His truth, ways, people, worship and ordinances.

Scriptural love will primarily have a Godward look. Such love is not, of course, in any way meritorious toward our salvation but will be filial love as becomes us as children toward our Father. It will also be adoring love as is our due as creatures to our Sovereign God. It will spring from hearts in which He has planted the gift of saving faith and thus purified our love will be fervent. It will enable us to see even His darker providences as working together for good since it "thinketh no evil" of men, much less of God. This love is the little thing that decisively differentiates between the true believer and the hypocrite. While the latter may do excellent works of charity from a bare conviction of duty rather than from love, wherever faith is living it will work by love. Without it no man by virtue of all his gifts is of any better use in the church than a little sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. We must not, however, presume for our salvation on some seeming consciousness of our love to God, no matter how strong it may be, but our trust is to be wholly in His love toward us.

Christ is the fountain of all good; faith in another similitude has been quaintly described as the conduit leading from the fountain and love the cock (or faucet) which lets out to every corner. We

are enabled to exercise this grace not only to the *unlovely* for to so characterize any persons would be to place ourselves above them. Rather our outward love is to be chiefly toward the brethren. It takes in the high principles for which they stand and delights in their progress and precision in matters of the faith. Finally, it reaches out to the needs of all including the persons of our enemies.

When this fruit of the Spirit appears, the soul will find a spring of pleasure within itself arising from a spirit of "love that suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things and never faileth." It will carry a man's spirit seemingly and suitably before God and toward all men. It will take pleasure in "the saints and excellent ones in the earth" while not despising the meanest and striving to help the worst of men.

In the present ferment of ecumenical agitation it may be useful to **consider the thoughts** of one living in a period of just as much concern for the oneness of Christ's body not only in respect of love but also in faith, worship and all things. He reminds us of the wisdom of Christ in providing in the meantime for the constant and due exercise of love *within our present fellowships*. This is to be extended to all as opportunity affords. We may not prematurely break up these present fellowships "that returning into the larger fellowship of the many, we may have and exercise love, but do thereby cast away our food that we may be strong, and to throw away our clothes that we may be warm."

While we are thus concerned to strengthen our present fellowships, interfaith dialogues, often accompanied by profuse expressions of mutual love between the parties, are very much in evidence around about us. This raises an interesting question namely, how are we to evaluate the proffered love of others. Certainly we are grateful for the civility of others toward us and gladly concede the sincerity of many who proffer us their love. Nevertheless we have completely failed to grasp the point of this paper if we assume all expenses of love are necessarily the same. In 1561 Renat Benedict professed that the love of Christ and no small desire of their salvation constrained him to warn Knox and his brethren not to bring any strange doctrine into the church. In a masterful reply two years later David Ferguson shows that while it would at first sight appear that the cause which had moved Renat to write was very godly and charitable, nevertheless upon analysis it was in all points like the desire of the

Pharisees for the conversion of the Gentiles. It was love which lacked the catalyst faith, and would lead to a conversion which according to our Saviour would make them but twofold more the children of hell than the Pharisees themselves.

Where there is no spiritual love already in reciprocal exercise among us there can be no true ecumenical outlook. In this case all our ferment may be of another kind. We must be sure that we have and hold fast to that indispensable catalyst—living faith in its true Reformed expression—for it is the more necessary of the two, but in other respects love is more than to believe because it includes belief.

Our Lord and the chief apostles were of one mind on this subject. Our Saviour set before us His own pattern, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." Peter adds, "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." But it is so easy to deceive ourselves concerning the nature of our love toward other men. If the catalyst is not present we may still perform some acts of love to men from principles other than the love of God. John, therefore, tells us how we can be sure, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

A blessed hope arises from this reflection for "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

We must not heed what others did who were before us, but what Christ did who was before all.—Thomas Fuller.

The "Ancient of Days" is to be served before all that are younger than Himself.—Stephen Charnock.

There is no wrinkle on the brow of eternity.—Thomas Manton.

God does sometimes accept of willingness without the work, but never the work without the willingness.—Thomas Watson.

THE LIVING LORD AND THE LUKEWARM CHURCH

R. J. GRAHAM

Our minds and hearts are directed in Revelation 3:14-21 to Laodicea. This city lay forty miles south east of Philadelphia and forty miles east of Ephesus near to Colosse on the river Lycus. Because it was located at the confluence of three important highways it developed into a great commercial and financial centre. During his travels in the East Cicero cashed his letters of credit here in 51 B.C. Thronged with bankers and wealthy inhabitants this metropolis was understandably proud. Pride prompted its populace to refuse the government grant proffered when it was partly wrecked by an earthquake in 62 A.D. (Tacitus Annals 14, 27). The influence of the Jewish business community was extensive in this region (Josephus 4.10.20). The ancient covenant people exacted from the Roman authorities permission to practice their own religious customs—no small concession in those days. Hot mineral springs abounded in the Laodicean district and a familiar figure stood in the town from which emitted lukewarm water. Among other things it was renowned for its wool, clothing and carpets.

Apparently Paul knew this city well—he refers to two letters sent there in Colossians 4:16. It appears that the church was founded by Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12). Ramsay calls Laodicea “The City of Compromise.”

In our scripture portion (Revelation 3:4-31) our Lord’s condemnation is remarkable in that it is unalleviated by any word of commendation. However, His compassion is evidenced in the gracious knocking at the Church door.

“These things saith the Amen . . .” (v. 14). Our Lord asserts His authority in a threefold manner.

(a) “THE AMEN . . .”

Undoubtedly our Saviour announces His Oneness with “the God of Amen” (Isa. 65:16). The God of Truth which is the equivalent of the Old Testament expression “As I live, saith Jehovah” Christ is averring by Himself the accuracy of His assessment of the Laodicean church.

(b) “THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS . . .”

He is the truthful witness who has seen with His own eyes what He attests, is competent to relate it all and now fully and freely does

so. This church is about to hear the testimony of the Friend who draws no veil over its vices.

(c) "THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD"

He speaks as the source of all creation (Col. 1: 15-18). He who has created all things (John 1 v.)) is anxious to see at Laodicea the fruits of the new creation they profess to be.

When the Reigning Christ thus reveals Himself the words of Habakkuk take on fresh meaning for us: "When I heard His voice rottenness entered into my bones." As our Saviour speaks to the Laodiceans He addresses also their successors in every age and generation. This Scripture causes Him to speak to you and me *now*.

I.—HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH OUR POSITION

"I know thy works"—what He does not know cannot be known.

He is acquainted with all our doings. This is not just a fact but a *frightening* fact. "I know my sheep and they follow me . . ." (John 10: 27). Security becomes presumption when failure towards the Lord is substituted for the following of Him. Why did Laodicea so tragically fail "the faithful and true witness"? The answer may be gathered from:

(i) *What He Declares*. "Thou are neither cold nor hot"—Once it was not so, now it is. The Lord of the Laodiceans is concerned with what they are *NOW*, not what they were a long time ago. He is emphatic—"Thou." There must be no wriggling. He means Laodicea alone—not the neighbouring churches. Respectability had replaced spirituality, fashion flourished and faith was vanishing; zeal had been tempered to "wisdom." The backbone of love—the law—had been broken. "Love God with *all* . . ." was judged a hopeless ideal, and where God's ideal goes out men's idol comes in. The law of love is the love of the law. Laodicea had lost the battle of the *mind*. The captivity of every thought brought into obedience to Jesus Christ had been compromised by their "obvious exceptions" and so the breach was made and compromise flooded the chambers of the soul. Like Ephraim, the "silly dove," their affections embraced cold temporalities instead of eternal spiritualities. Imagined strength remained, but like Samson they were shorn of their true strength. Complacent, "middle of the road" Christians complimenting themselves on their compatibility with all environs call forth the condemnation of the Head of the Church.

(ii) *What He Desires*. "I would that thou wert cold or hot." It is their Lord's desire that they be one thing or the other. He cannot abide the genius which is all things to all men to save its *self*. When the sclerosis of selfishness deadens the fervour of love and brings its tepid touch to the Lover of Souls He withdraws His confidence. He

desires at all times the unreserved warmth of committed personality which His Lordship demands. The icy indifference of a hostile world is to be preferred to the calculating compromise of a professing Church. Hatred with its tearing claws is not so wounding as a hypocrisy with its dutiful kisses—"I would that thou wert cold . . . or hot." Our Saviour desired the condition of coldness which could call upon His compassions or the consuming zest of a heart aflame with the Spirit. He uses the word *zestos* from *zeo*, to boil. His language is strong. C. H. Rieu's rendering of Acts 18: 25 concerning Apollos gives us the picture of the kind of people our Lord desired the Laodiceans to be: "He began with FIERY ENTHUSIASM to teach in detail the story of Jesus." Some are hot-headed in their contention for the cause of Christ; some are correct and cold in creed and conduct; the Spirit speaking to the Laodiceans and us would have us consumed by a Christ centred compassion. Oh to be Knights of the Burning Heart who never lose vision of the conquering King!

(iii) *What He determines.* "So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth" (v. 16). The lukewarmness of which our Lord speaks is probably a strong allusion to the tepidness of the medicinal waters of Laodicea which are so sickening to the taste. He also infers that the Church had been in this condition for some time. His determination is to bring this sad spiritual state to an end by declaring His intention to set aside this assembly as a witness-bearing Church to His glory. "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth," conveys the time-limit our Lord had set for the purpose of eliciting a speedy and sincere repentance. The seriousness of their tepid condition of soul may be gathered from that which lukewarmth bespeaks:

(i) *Unreliability.* This condition of half heartedness is untenable and intolerable. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Divided "loyalty" is treachery. It is impossible to serve two masters. Instability is the characteristic of the double minded. The callously cold leave no room for doubt as to their position—it is known to all and sundry. Lukewarmth is a weathercock which shifts with the prevailing wind.

(ii) *Hypocrisy.* "Thou sayest I am *rich* and knowest not that thou art poor." The tragedy of this torpor is that the folk concerned are not aware that their earthly estimate of themselves is evaluated differently in heaven. The disparity between profession and possession was something of which they were not conscious—"thou knowest not"—yet they were guilty of the pride such a condition engenders.

(iii) *Complacency.* "I have acquired riches." The true Witness

beheld in them a contentment with their achievements which pleased them but not Him. The benediction of the Saviour rests only on those whose lack of self-sufficiency is an ever-recurrent experience—"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." The pangs of such a spiritual hunger were as unfelt in the Laodicean Church as appetite in a dead man's stomach. The "I have need of nothing" attitude achieves nothing and is good for nothing. Matthew Henry remarks: "They may call their lukewarmness charity, meekness, moderation, largeness of soul; it is nauseous to Christ"—"I am about to spue thee out of my mouth."

II.—HIS ASSESSMENT OF OUR PROFESSION

(i) "THOU SAYEST *I am rich.*" No doubt they had forgotten that the values of time have no currency in the eternal realm. It was sad that they forgot in their temporal enrichment the needs of others and the responsibility of stewardship. The spirit which they conveyed was one of self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, and self-centredness. This world's assessment of the fashionable Laodicean church was completely discounted by our Lord. They were SELF-MADE and worshipped their maker. "They had learning and took it for religion; they had gifts and took them for grace; they had wit and took it for wisdom; they had ordinances and were taken up with them instead of the God of ordinances," says Matthew Henry. Ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of themselves. It is hardly credible that a church of Christ could ever come to the place of such self-sufficiency as to say "I . . . have need of nothing." Had this assembly forgotten the words of the Head of the Church: ". . . without Me ye can do NOTHING"?

(ii) "THOU KNOWEST NOT . . ." "I am rich" . . . "Thou art wretched." The church stands contradicted and condemned. She was suffering from spiritual insensitivity. She was ignorant of her condition BEFORE GOD. Christ now reveals her woeful plight. "Thou are WRETCHED . . ." Swollen with pride Laodicea was envied for her possessions but pitied by Christ. Can we conceive anything more pitiable than that state of mind which imagines that it is spiritual when in fact it is utterly carnal. They thought they were wonderful. Christ pronounced them wretched. Forgetful of the depth of their need they were not experiencing Christ's victory (Romans 7: 24-25a). Our Lord further gives emphasis to their wretchedness when He actually says, "Thou art *the wretched . . .*" Because their wretchedness is so terrible Christ goes on to describe them as MISERABLE, that is, PITIABLE, a word used to describe the plight of those who are without hope through hoping in a (supposedly) dead Christ (1 Cor. 15: 19). Indeed they were so spiritually retarded they were regarded

as spiritual PAUPERS—"Thou art POOR." If only they had learnt the secret of Paul: "having nothing, yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6: 10), then heaven's assessment would not have been so shattering. Having ceased to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, kindness and love they became myopic. They lost spiritual vision; they blinked; they could not see afar off (2 Peter 1: 5-9). "Thou art blind." The last adjective of our Lord strips them of every pretence—"NAKED." The baseness of their old sinful nature overcame and protruded through the veneer of their profession. They may have prided themselves on their black woollen garment, their expensive clothes, their universally applauded TRIMITA tunic, but they had forgotten to glory in His robe of righteousness, and in that measure were naked.

(iii) "THOU MAYEST be rich." "Thou sayest . . . Thou knowest not . . . Thou mayest be . . ." "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." v. 18. There we see profession, condemnation and restoration. If we only remembered that Christ is always examining our profession then we would not be subject to such shameful humiliation as was Laodicea. Our Lord is desirous in His graciousness that His church enter into His treasures of wisdom and knowledge. His purpose in humbling us is that He may help, not hinder us. The Laodiceans as children of His grace possess the currency with which to purchase blessing from Christ who has bought them with His blood, making them a kingdom of priests unto God.

"I counsel thee to buy of me . . ."

(a) GOLD. As there is nothing that gold cannot buy in this material world—a point the business acumen of the Laodiceans would quickly appreciate—so says Christ: "Only in ME can you find that currency acceptable to God which makes you prosperous in things eternal." But what is the price of such a loan? "The acknowledgment of utter spiritual bankruptcy before Me the Chief Examiner!" Oh to be rich in such faith and to treasure its preciousness! (James 1 v. 5; 1 Peter 1 v. 7). Are we using our credit in heaven through the Saviour?

(b) GARMENTS. The Saviour is anxious that their uncomeliness should not be manifested to the world at large as it is to Him. He therefore counsels them to put on the new man (Himself) as they had professed to put off the "old man" (Adam). "Clothe thyself." (R.V.). "Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering" (as in Col. 3: 10-11).

(c) GLASSES! The Great Optician has a remedy for their myopia. The famed eye-medicine of Laodicea may do much for physical sight, but only Christ can remedy defective spiritual vision. He possesses an infallible *Collysion* ointment. (*Collysion* was a famous eye ointment in the region). Nothing only the Divine prescription can remedy the short-sightedness of a backsliding people. With what earnestness we need to sing:

Open mine eyes that I may see
 Glimpses of truth thou hast for me,
 Place in my hand the golden key
 That shall unclasp and set me free;
 Silently now I wait for thee
 Ready, my God, thy will to see;
 Open mine eyes, illumine me
 Spirit Divine!

III.—HIS ASSURANCE OF OUR PARDON

“Be zealous” is a present imperative indicating continuous activity. The “therefore” further indicates that it is the spiritually logical thing to do in the light of the facts enumerated above. “And repent” is an aorist imperative emphasising the necessity for a clean break with the previous life in indifference, pride, and backsliding. It is a Dominical demand for a “repentance not to be repented of.” But it must not be forgotten that such a command is preceded by an assurance of His yearning love for His Body the Church. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” The tragedy of this church is regarded with the tenderness of the Son of Man who longs to see the travail of His soul fulfilled in them. Such a tenderness is evidenced in the words following: “Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” This assurance of corrective love is seen in—

(i) *His Person*. “Behold I stand at the door.” He did not delegate a celestial being to bring this message to Laodicea. He comes Himself. The bridegroom seeks His bride and all the communion that should spring from her union with Him. His words could almost be those of Song of Solomon 5 v. 2—words addressed to the bride who confessed, “I sleep but my heart waketh,” and who recognised the Bridegroom’s voice: “It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh saying ‘Open to me, my love . . .’” Such words are in keeping with the tenderness of the words “as many as I love . . .” Surely such condescension should evoke a response from His church and people. The restraint of His condescending love is seen also in—

(ii) *His Patience*. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." The goodness of God is designed to lead sinners to repentance. The long-suffering of the Saviour should effect in His blood-bought a sense of shame at the callousness of their coldness and a spirit of warm gratitude in their hearts for His persevering grace with them. The knocking of the Saviour has come to us in myriad ways. We are not without reminders of His patience.

(iii) *His Purpose*. "If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in and sup with him and he with me." The Church is His by right. The individuals within it are expected to respond to the crown rights of the Redeemer who condescends to be their Guest so that they may learn that He is their Host. He plans that His people partake of His *full* fellowship. Laodiceans hadn't that fellowship of the Ascended One in its fulness. Have we entered the mutual joys of Redeemer and redeemed?

(iv) *His Promise*. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." It is significant that the promise is given to those who are overcoming. "The overcoming one, him will I grant to sit with me . . ." Such "overcoming" Christians are those in fellowship with their Lord. If He sits at their table daily they will sit on His Throne eternally. (John 17:22, 24. 2 Tim. 2:12). He overcame the world for us (John 16:33) so that in Him we might overcome the world. Because He reigns we shall also reign with Him in glory. The Throne of the Father's Majesty is inaccessible—the unique relationship of Father and Son can never be fully shared by finite creatures fully redeemed but none can deny the identity of the Son of Man and every son of God as expressed in the words: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit WITH ME ON MY THRONE."

It is not for us to ask: "Did Laodicea hear what the Spirit said?" Our question must rather be "What is my Lord saying to me? Can I go on grieving the Spirit by continued compromise?" The Spirit spoke to this Church as to Sardis without attaching any blame to others within or without the Church as being causative of their state. Is it not time we stopped blaming others for our lukewarmth and heard the Spirit saying: "Thou art the man!?"

BOOK REVIEWS

A BODY OF DIVINITY, Thomas Watson. The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1965, XII, 316, 15/-.

In an age when Theological Truth and Biblical Doctrine is at a discount and when some preachers delight in being deep even to the point of "being muddy," it is encouraging to find a keen desire for the works of Thomas Watson. We welcome this new edition of "A Body of Divinity," based on the Shorter Catechism, with a brief memoir by Charles H. Spurgeon.

The new format and type face will certainly make it more attractive and should encourage more to read it and grapple with it. Those responsible for minor editing have done a good job although it might have been even more useful if a comprehensive index and footnotes had been provided. Very few would know who Tostatus or Pererious were. Perhaps it doesn't matter. The constant use of foreign phrases can also be a bit galling, though we are thankful that translations are given. There are a few typographical mistakes, as for example "be" for "he" (p. 68) and "woforst" (p. 94).

Watson, probably the most readable of the Puritans, abounds in pithy sayings just waiting to be quoted. So often they are relevant today. "For want of the bridle of family discipline youth runs wild." "A hypocrite has a squint eye, for he looks more to his own glory than to God's." "Adore then where you cannot fathom." "Counterfeiting friendship is worse than counterfeiting money." "The world is a dressing room to dress our souls in, not a place where we are to stay for ever." "Whatever defiles, disturbs." These samples may whet your appetite.

Your reviewer would query the facile assumption that the forbidden fruit was an apple, though he remembers being so taught in Sabbath School. This tradition derived from Latin Christianity may be occasioned by the association "malus" (bad) and "malum" (apple). There is no Biblical evidence to support it.

Sometimes the writer picks out the main points of the Catechism answer without quoting it all. On other occasions he expands it, as in his treatment of effectual calling which the Catechism restricts to a work of the Holy Spirit, which he clearly traces correctly to God the Father. When there is so much woolly thinking it is good to see such accuracy as is apparent here, for example when he points out that an error about justification is dangerous since it is a defect in the foundation, for justification is the very hinge of Christianity.

There is much in this book for everyone and we bespeak for it a wide circulation and a useful ministry. W. M. SMYTH.

THE MERCIES OF A COVENANT GOD, by John Warburton. Reiner Publications, pp. 285. Price, cloth 28/3, paperback 19/6. Obtainable from The Gospel Standard Publications, c/o J. S. Green, 63 Hampden Way, Southgate, N.14.

John Warburton's account of God's dealings with him, which has been out of print, has now been re-published by an American publisher—hence the rather steep price judged by English standards. In this new edition additional material has been added, notably brief biographical sketches and portraits of other evangelical preachers and writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Warburton's autobiography is introduced by a preface written by J. C. Philpot. In many ways the two men were very different. Philpot, the Oxford Don and one-time ordained clergyman of the Church of England, Warburton, a man who emerged from grinding poverty and semi-illiteracy to being a preacher of the gospel. No wonder that on their first meeting poor Warburton was rather terrified at the prospect of meeting the Oxford scholar—though in fact Philpot was just as nervous, such was the reputation of the preacher.

This is a remarkably frank account. We follow Warburton through both his spiritual experiences and his financial and family problems and nothing is held back. He was a man who was given to great fluctuations of feeling; at one time he is in a state of spiritual exaltation and at another he is in the depths of gloom and on the brink of despair. Certainly there is no light or glib claim to assurance for his confidence was wrought out through bitter testings. It was not the eternal security of the believer which characterised his life so much as the perseverance of the saints, for his life was one of persistence in face of testings, both from within and without.

The prayer "give us this day our daily bread" was for him no idle petition for he knew the meaning of deep poverty. In our comfortable and affluent age it is hard to picture a man so reduced that all he has to satisfy his hunger is a dry crust. But this was Warburton's condition not once but many times. A growing family and a constant lack of money drove him to God and again and again he was wonderfully provided for.

To many the idea of such a man contemplating the ministry as his calling would be absurd. He had none of the attainments men usually expect. Indeed he himself, when first he was stirred by the Spirit in this direction, castigated himself for being such a fool as

even to entertain such an impossible idea. But it was indeed the call of God and the faithfulness of his ministry at Trowbridge was abundant vindication of this. His account of his experiences comes as a powerful testimony to the faithfulness of the God whom he proved, not in some theoretical way but in the searing furnace of hardship, sorrow, and temptation.

H.M.C.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD'S JOURNALS. New edition 1965. 595 pages. Banner of Truth Trust. 25/-.

Here is a book that warms the heart. A young Church of England evangelist takes his own country and America by storm while still in his twenties. He joined the "methodists" in Oxford and learned much from them (especially from John Wesley), but arrived before them at a clear grasp of justification by faith, exchanging legalism for the liberty of the Gospel. Filled with the Holy Spirit by the imposition of a worthy Bishop's hands, he attracted huge crowds to hear the gospel. Thousands went away from churches from want of room (some enemies actually complained that the influx of people ruined the pews!) As he said himself, it was like Joshua going in triumph from one city to another. Nights of prayer were held when the power of the Holy Spirit descended on all present.

His frequent criticisms of the clergy led to the churches being closed to him and he took the momentous step of preaching to the Kingswood colliers in the open-air. Crowds of 10,000 were commonplace; on one memorable occasion nearly 80,000 were estimated to have heard the 24 year old preacher! From an upper window, standing on a table, a stone, or a pile of turf, he held his audiences spellbound for an hour at least. No doubt he was the greatest orator of the 18th century, but it was a spiritual power that was the real secret.

It is fascinating to meet in these Journals the other leaders of the work in Great Britain and America—John and Charles Wesley, Howell Harris, the Erskines, the Tennents, Jonathan Edwards and many others. People were eager for the milk of the word and went miles to hear. Persecution was rife. Whitefield was maligned, cudgelled, excluded from churches, written against, but all to no avail. The thing that really hurt him was the controversy with the Wesleys over election (his reply to John Wesley's Sermon on Free Grace is appended). He was an evangelist and Calvinist at the same time and saw no contradiction.

Unfortunately no Journal exists of his memorable visits to Scotland (the Cambuslang and Kilsyth revivals of 1742), but an

excellent chronological table helps to bridge the gap. The Journals may not have the same Pepysian quality as Wesley's, but they do reflect with startling clarity a work of God such as is greatly needed in the 20th century.

Misprints on p. 184 and 198 note Mr. Fox—hardly the famous Quaker, who died in 1690.

R. N. CASWELL.

THE RARE JEWEL OF CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT, Jeremiah Burroughs. Published by The Banner of Truth Trust. 228 pages, price 4/6d.

We live in an age of discontentment. It is true that man has always been restless and dissatisfied, but in recent years the signs of his pitiful inadequacy are alarming. Consider as two symptoms of this age of discontentment the thirst for "kicks" amongst young and old (and openly declared to be so) and the vast sums of money spent on "Bingo" and other forms of gambling. Both these symptoms give rise to anxiety within and without the Church. However, it is sadly observed that even among Christians there is this serious lack of contentment. Note that Jeremiah Burroughs, who wrote this book in 1648, refers to Christian contentment as a "rare jewel." As such a book was required then, how much more does it seem to be required today? What could be more timely in the absence of a modern treatment of the subject than to republish this excellent book by the godly and meek Burroughs?

In this edition the publishers have modernised both the style and language of the original. Chapter divisions have been simplified and the general layout of the book has been greatly improved. The result is a clearly set out and a most readable volume. The book begins with a description of Christian contentment. This first chapter is followed by three most excellent chapters on "The Mystery of Contentment"; the book is worth buying for these three chapters alone. Our Lord's teaching on the subject takes up a further two chapters which are followed by one chapter extolling the virtue of contentment and two chapters outlining the evils of the positive SIN of a murmuring spirit. The chapter which is both illuminating and which will expose the shallowness of many of us is the next one entitled "The Excuses of a Discontented Heart." The book ends with two chapters on "How to Attain Contentment." A most judicious treatment of a subject rarely dealt with in many churches and one which typifies the Puritan preachers' treatment of a subject—a lesson for preachers as well as for the layman!

It is the opinion of the reviewer that no Christian can read this book without being convicted, humbled, and at the same time, filled

with a desire to glorify God by living possessed of this "rare jewel." This is a book full of good things. In view of its spiritual worth and present relevance it is ridiculously cheap. We are indebted to the publishers not only for bringing this Puritan gem to light, but for making it available at this low price.

If the teaching of Brurroughs' book is taken seriously to heart, the lives of numerous Christians would be more glorifying to their Saviour, more attractive to the unbeliever and more dynamic in themselves. This book ought to be a "must" for all of us—for God's sake, for the Kingdom's sake and for our own sake.

J. GWYN-THOMAS.

Young People's Page

“THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING”

Converted when a farm-servant in 1812, under the ministry of Dr. Chalmers, Alexander Paterson remained in his lowly occupation for fourteen years. By his honest faithfulness in daily work, Paterson adorned the doctrine of his Saviour. Losing no opportunity for prayer and study of the Scriptures, he grew in grace, and could be found on the Sabbath-day teaching the children. In the scanty leisure of his week-days, he would sometimes hold prayer-meetings; and he was always ready to speak a word in season where he could.

Paterson had a great love and reverence for Dr. Chalmers. The minister returned his affection, and respected him so highly that in 1827 he recommended the farm-labourer for the post of missionary in the slums of Edinburgh.

Paterson, doubtful of his own powers, needed much persuasion before he was willing to accept the offer. But indeed he was the very man for the job! Quiet and serious in manner, he was always a kindly and sympathetic listener; he knew the trials of poverty and rough work, he knew the temptations common to man. Above all, he was “mighty in the Scriptures,” and filled with love to the Lord.

Paterson soon became at home in the Canongate, and well-known in the narrow streets and closes. Visiting from house to house, where crime and vice abounded, he showed courage and patience and perseverance which seemed to have no limits.

One day the missionary heard of the illness of a well-known unbeliever, a man who scoffed and jeered at religion. Paterson knocked at the house-door, asking the woman who opened it if he could see her sick husband. Without replying the woman rushed out of the house, slamming the door behind her, and ran in to a neighbour's door. The missionary found that he could open the door, so he turned the handle and walked in. There he found the man looking exceedingly ill, but reading a newspaper. “What do you want?” he growled. “I'm a missionary,” said Paterson; “I heard you were ill, so I came to see if I could do anything for you.” “I don't want you!” said the invalid. “But I want you,” said Paterson; “I want you to come to the Lord Jesus. It's a serious thing to be ill, perhaps to die.” “Oh, I've made up my mind about that; so now you can go,” and the man took up his newspaper again. “What have you made up your mind to?” asked the visitor “Why, to die, of course; there's

nothing for me but death." "And what about after death? can you face the judgment?" "Now that's enough! I tell you I don't want your talk—you can go!" "Well, will you let me pray for you?" said Paterson. "You can if you like; I don't care what you do. Paterson knelt down to pray; the invalid snatched up his paper, and seemed to be reading hard all through the prayer. "I'll come and see you again," said the missionary as he left the room.

Within the next few days Paterson paid two more visits, receiving the same reception. But his heart yearned over the man, and he went a fourth time. Without preliminaries, he just said, "I've come to pray for you once more." As soon as he began, the poor man picked up his newspaper. But before the prayer was over, the paper fell from his hand, and as he rose from his knees, Paterson saw that both the man and his wife were in tears! The invalid seized the missionary's hand, and faltered out a request that he would come again. Paterson promised, too much moved himself to say more; he went away, greatly wondering.

Next day the newspaper was gone, and the missionary found the invalid absorbed in studying the Bible! "I'm glad to see that Book in your hands," said Paterson gently; "what has made you put away the newspaper and turn to that?" "Oh, sir! it was your last prayer—I couldn't stand it—I can see now what an awful sinner I've been. Every word you said about me was true." "Well," said the missionary, "I've only said what that blessed Book says of myself and everybody still out of Christ. But the Lord Jesus Christ died for the worst of sinners; hear what the Book says," and he repeated the words, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Anxious and humbled, the poor sick man was eager to learn all that he could from Paterson's lips of the Saviour who came to seek the lost. The work of God was evident in the great and complete change which was shown in the invalid's attitude. His unbelief, his rebellion, his love of wickedness, were swept away by the mighty power of Holy Spirit; he became as a little child, putting all his trust in his Heavenly Father. The promises in the Bible to the child of God were to him filled with power and sweetness. He died a few weeks later, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Redeemer.

Many such stories could be told of Paterson's ministry; he laboured on until 1849, when an attack of cholera, caught during his visits, undermined his health. Recovering somewhat, the missionary did not give up the work that was so dear to him; but two years later, in visiting a poor soul dying of typhus fever, he was also

infected, and departed this life at the end of 1851, grievously mourned by hundreds of the people around him. DAMARIS.

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA No. 136

The whole: The fifth book of the Bible.

1. This sleep God caused to fall on Adam.
2. Jude exhorted us to contend in this way for the faith.
3. Job lived in this land.
4. Zacharias asked for a writing one.
5. Moses told the Lord that he was not this.
6. Jews in Berea received the Word with all this of mind.
7. Under Nehemiah, two chief Levites had the this of the outward business of the house of God.
8. The Jerusalem Council acknowledged the miracle done by Peter and John was this.
9. Athahiah's father.
10. Nicodemus brought a mixture of this and aloes for the Lord's burial.
11. Elisha was ploughing with twelve of these when Elijah passed by.

SOLUTION OF No. 135

The whole: Parmenas (Acts 6: 5).

1. Patmos (Rev. 1: 9).
2. Abel-meholah (1 Kings 19: 16).
3. Repay (Luke 10: 35).
4. Mule (2 Sam. 18: 9).
5. Embraced (Acts 20: 1).
6. Nails (1 Chron. 22: 3).
7. Admonish (Rom. 15: 14).
8. Safeguard (1 Sam. 22: 23).

From the Annual Meetings

THE TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY

The 134th Annual Meeting was held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Tuesday, 25th May, and the theme was "Food for hungry souls." Reporting on the distribution of the Holy Scriptures in eighty countries during the year, the Secretary said that the Lord had graciously provided the pure food of His Holy Word and entrusted to the Society the means for this food to be multiplied and distributed throughout the world.

"THE FOOD MUST BE PURE"

In the present era of increasing literacy false religious and political systems were not slow to seize the opportunities afforded for the propagation of their errors. For this reason it was more than ever important that those who engage in the translation and distribution of the Word of God should ensure that its purity is preserved now as it was in the days of the Apostles.

Bibles, New Testaments and Scripture portions containing the Word of God alone without note or comment were provided by the Society for distribution in many lands and brought the light of the Gospel to Jew and Moslem, Buddhist and Pagan, Roman Catholic and agnostic. Protestant versions of the Holy Scriptures reached the hands of many in Roman Catholic lands and there were seals of God's blessing upon His word, even in places where there was little or no evangelical testimony maintained.

THE AGED PILGRIMS

"Forward" was the keynote of the 158th Anniversary Meeting of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society held in the Bridewell Hall on May 29th. The Society was thankful for past mercies, but not satisfied with present achievements.

Mr. W. Mortimer (of the General Committee) in making an important financial statement at the evening meeting, said: "The Committee believe it is the Lord's will to move forward." Already a bed-sitting room block to make possible the accommodation of a further 23 aged pilgrims was being built at Evington, Leicester, and negotiations for the purchase of a 6-acre property near St. Leonards-on-Sea, on which a new Home would eventually be built, were nearing completion. Apart from the money already available in the Building Fund, over £50,000 was required to launch these projects, and much more to maintain them. Mr. Mortimer appealed to the Lord's people to give generously and so help the Society to meet the heavy demands being made upon it at this present time in its ministry to the Lord's aged and needy people.

JESUS, Thy Name be praised,
 Sweet Ebenezers raised,
 Blest be Thy Name,
 Who all our sorrows bore,
 Who lives for evermore,
 We would Thyself adore,
 Praised be Thy Name.

COME unto Me, poor sinner, come,
 And rest in My beloved Son,
 He shed His blood on Calvary's tree,
 And I, His Father, welcome thee.

Bring unto Him thy every care,
 He will protect from every snare,
 Thy griefs and sorrows to Him bring,
 And thou shalt of His mercy sing.

He bled and suffered on the Tree,
 He languished there, 'twas all for thee,
 And all that pain for thee He bore,
 Infinite love could do no more.

Come unto Me, and plead thy cause,
 Tell Me, what art thou waiting for?
 If thou wilt only plead my grace,
 Then thou shalt see thy Saviour's face.

No works of thine doth He require,
 No wealth of worlds could ere aspire,
 Salvation, by His precious Blood
 Is through and in a sovereign God.

Yes, gracious Father, I will come,
 And plead before Thy throne above,
 And when the floods of sorrow come,
 I'll shelter in Thy blessed Son.

Mrs. P. Hill.