

THE
Free Presbyterian Magazine
 AND
 MONTHLY RECORD

(Issued by a Committee of the Free Presbyterian Synod.)

"Thou has given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth."—Ps. lx. 4.

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Free Presbyterian Magazine
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The Fellowship Meetings.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH.

THE origin of the Fellowship, or "Men's," Meetings¹ held on the Friday of the Communion in the Highlands is involved in obscurity. The earliest traditions of "the Men"² gather round the name of John Munro ("Caird")³, a convert under the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Hog, Kiltearn, and from whom descended the Rev. John Munro, Halkirk, and the Rev. Christopher Munro, Strathy. According to Dr. Kennedy's testimony exercised believers used to meet in private houses and for their mutual edification discussed their religious experiences. In this way the Fellowship Meetings began and in order to have them under the control of the ministry it was ultimately decided that they should have a place in the religious exercises of the Church and especially on the Friday of the Communion when they would be presided over by a minister. Accepting this

¹For a description of what these Fellowship Meetings really are see Dr. Kennedy's *Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, p. 83, (4th Edit.).

²Dr. William Mackay, in his preface to the *Inverness and Dingwall Presbytery Records*, says: "It was long after the period to which these records refer, that 'the Men' who have for the last century and a half been so noted as catechists and expounders and men of prayer, first appeared within the bounds of our Presbyteries," p. xxv. In his *Urquhart and Glenmoriston*, in referring to 'the Men'—*na Daoine*, he writes: "There were none in our parish before Culloden" (p. 382, 2nd Edit.). I have carefully gone over all the extant pre-Revolution church registers (Synod, Presbytery and Kirk-Session) of Sutherland and Caithness but there is no reference to "the Men" in any of them. The first reference is as late as 1737. The fact, however, of non-mention in church records does not necessarily mean the non-existence of "the Men."

³*Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, p. 91 (4th Edit.). There is an interesting account of John Munro ("Caird") in *Memorials of Rev. C. Munro, Strathy*, p. 298.

testimony as to the origin of the Fellowship Meetings it is seen that Ross-shire can claim to be the early home of "the Men"⁴ and here, under a number of gifted and pious preachers the institution flourished, so that this part of the Highlands was privileged to possess some of the brightest and most shining lights of their class. In connection with the Fellowship Meetings' Controversy in Caithness and Sutherland in the 18th century, it is of some interest to remember that it was not the first controversy to rage round fellow-ship meetings. Baillie in his *Letters* in referring to the Aberdeen Assembly (1640) informs us that Mr. Henry (afterwards Bishop) Guthrie made no small stir about certain private fellowship meetings which had originated during the persecution in Ireland and were continued in Scotland by those who had fled to this country for refuge. Those especially held under the leadership of the Laird of Leckie, at Stirling, came under "Mr. Harry's" ban. The "Irish Novations,"⁵ as the objectionable points in connection with these meetings were termed, proved a troublesome affair for all concerned. Alexander Henderson was opposed to the meetings but Robert Blair, David Dickson and John Livingstone were favourable. No satisfactory solution was come to at this Assembly, but the year following a settlement was made. It was of short duration, however, for the Laird of Leckie gave in a bill of complaint to the Assembly against Mr. Harry Guthrie for slandering him at the Aberdeen Assembly. It ended more happily than most ecclesiastical controversies, for, according to Baillie, "the parties agreed, both in a writ, read to the Assembly, under their hands, declaring their good opinions each of other :

⁴There is a document extant, dated 17th September, 1788, setting forth the rules of the society of "the Men" in Ross-shire (Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VIII. 543).

⁵"Some Brownists," says Baillie, "insinuating themselves among them whileas their ministers were away, did move divers towards their conceits. The most of them good people flying over to us [from Ireland] were heartily embraced of us all. Their private meetings were overlooked. Some of their conceits though spreading, we let alone, till the Laird of Leckie, one who had suffered much by the bishops, was marked, using his Irish form of private exercises in Stirling." From these words it would appear that the "Irish novations" referred chiefly to Brownist ideas,

for Leekie truly witnessed, that he knew no blame to Mr. Harry, neither in doctrine nor life; and Mr. Harry testified, that he never had a thought that Leekie, or any of his family, was guilty of those slanders he complained of." Guthrie's contention found embodiment in the General Assembly Act of 1647, Section VII., which reads as follows:—"Whatsoever hath been the effects and fruits of meetings of persons of divers Families in the times of corruption or trouble (in which cases many things are commendable, which otherwise are not tolerable) yet when God hath blessed us with Peace and the purity of the Gospel, such meetings of persons of divers Families (except in the cases mentioned in these directions) are to be disapproved, as tending to the hindrance of the religious exercise of each Familie by itself, to the prejudice of the publike Ministry, to the renting of Families of particular Congregations, and (in progress of time) of the whole Kirk; besides many offences which may come thereby, to the hardening of the hearts of carnall men, and grief of the godly." Had this Act been carried out to the letter it would have made an end of Fellowship Meetings and if the Fellowship Meetings it condemns were similar to those which became such a well recognised institution in the Highlands it is more than probable the Act would have been quoted by the opponents to Fellowship Meetings in the Synod of Sutherland and Caithness.⁶ Still the fact that the evangelical ministers of

⁶For Instance, Rev. Murdo MacDonald, Durness, who took a part in the Fellowship Meeting Controversy, writes: "It was ordinary at such conventions to start questions, either frivolous or ill-stated, and to allow ignorant people to harangue on them at random, perhaps without touching at all, or very superficially, on the subject in debate, while the ministers present allowed them, without control, correction or direction to ramble on in their undigested stuff." In modern times, "the Men" have been severely criticised in "Investigator's" [Rev. Dr. K. Phin, Galashiels] *The Church and her Accuser in the Far North* (Glasgow: 1850) and *Fanaticism in the North* (Edinburgh: 1852). An article in the *Quarterly Review* (September, 1851) entitled "Puritanism in the Highlands—The Men," is founded on "Investigator's" pamphlets and written in the same spirit. *Imcheisd Eaglais na h-Alba* (Embarrassment of the Church of Scotland) by Rev. J. Macdonald, Alvie, is a bitter attack in verse on Peter Stewart. Rev. Gilbert MacMillan's *Reminiscences of the North* (Inverness: 1905) contains a description of "The Men" which is nothing better than a caricature.

the time were favourable to these private meetings and that Mr. Hog, who came to Kiltarn in 1654, would, in all likelihood, have associated with those of like sentiments, makes it probable that there may be some connection, even though distant, between the Fellowship Meetings of the first and those of the second controversy.⁷ But this is stated tentatively, for it must be acknowledged that the links in the chain are not such as would enable one to take up such a position with anything like certainty. The history of the Fellowship Meetings in later times while interesting cannot be dealt with here. They have been highly praised by some and severely criticised by others, but it will be generally admitted by all candid minds that, when rightly conducted, they are eminently conducive to the spiritual edification of those who attend them. Before leaving this subject it is necessary to point out that all "the Men" are not to be judged by the opinions held, and the attitude to the church and ministry assumed, by the Separatists. Both Dr. Kennedy, Dingwall, and Mr. Auld, Orlig, who have done so much to perpetuate the memory of "the Men," enter a strong caveat against classifying "the Men" generally with the Separatists.⁸ According to Sage, Peter Stewart, Strathmore, Caithness and afterwards Catechist of Duthil was the founder of the Separatists. Limits of space forbid any attempt in this paper to deal with the position

⁷For an account of the Caithness and Sutherland "Men's" Meetings see *Trans. of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* (Vol. xxix. 159-182).

⁸References to the Separatists will be found in Sage's *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 270 (1st Edit.); *Annals of the Disruption* pp. 676-682 (1884 Edit.); Rev. D. MacLean's *Duthil—Past and Present* pp. 28-42; Dr. Kennedy's *Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* pp. 79-81 (4th Edit.); Rev. Alexander Auld's *Ministers and Men of the Far North*, 2nd Edit. In passing verdict on the Separatists, it should be borne in mind that all the above are from the ministerial standpoint. Norman MacLeod (afterwards Rev. Norman MacLeod, Cape Breton, Canada), a leader of the Assynt Separatists, gave expression to his views in *The Present Church of Scotland and a Tint of Normanism*. The *Letters* of John Grant, Joseph Mackay and Alexander Gair were privately printed by Cameron MacKay, a number of years ago, and Peter Stewart's and Joseph MacKay's Gaelic poems will be found in *Dain Spioradail le ughdairibh Eug-samhail* (Forres; 1852). The fullest account of the Separatists will be found in Principal Macleod's *The North Country Separatists* (Inverness: 1930).

taken up by these men, except in the briefest form. Some of them were noted for piety and outstanding gifts, such as Peter Stewart, John Grant, Joseph Mackay, Sandy Gair⁹ and others.

From their outstanding piety, "The Men" were looked up to by the community and exercised a commanding influence in religious matters. Wherever there was a truly godly minister, they gave him every countenance and encouragement, but mere hirelings were regarded by them with abhorrence. It is an injustice to their memory to charge them with disrespect to the ministry. The Ministers of Christ never had truer friends or more sympathetic and intelligent hearers than they. Though their sympathies were entirely with the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland, they were not moved by the Secession movement under the Erskines; and even in later times, the Associate Synod had but the very slightest hold in the Highlands. At the time of the Disruption, "The Men"—with a few notable exceptions—cast in their lot with the Free Church, and were in this way not very highly appreciated by those ministers they left behind and whom they unsparingly denounced. In more recent times they showed their aversion to the progressive movements in the pre-Union Free Church. Deeply attached to Calvinism, they resolutely opposed the Free Church Declaratory Act of 1892, as in their opinion it showed certain Arminian tendencies; and when the Free Presbyterian Church was formed in the following year, a great number of them joined it. Being strong supporters of the doctrine of the National Recognition of Religion, they opposed Voluntarism in every form, and hence those who remained in the Free Church after 1893, offered a determined opposition to the Union of 1900—the great bulk of them refusing to join the United Free Church. Their conservatism is further seen in their insistence on the principle, that in the public praise of God the psalms alone should be used, and that instrumental music should be excluded from the worship of His house. As simple believers in God's Word, they jealously guard the

⁹For Prof. John Stuart Blackie's estimate of Sandy Gair's gifts see his *Altavona*.

doctrine of its integrity and infallibility, and anything that hints at its imperfection is rejected.

We have spoken of their piety; we might speak of their beautiful Christian character, and their marked ability. Dr. Mackintosh Mackay, in referring to one of them, the saintly William Calder, said: "If it please God to accept me in the great day as one of His own, redeemed by sovereign grace, I trust to carry the remembrance of what I now tell you into the Kingdom above. This memorable patriarch-like person, leaning upon his spade while he laboured in his harvest field—and (full of chastened dignity was that person in stature and expression wherever he appeared), in solemn accents and with loving looks of fatherly kindness, said: 'My son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts and all the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee, but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever.' A word spoken in season, how good it is." Then there is the famous Alexander Gair, a genius in his way, with a caustic wit that made his victims wince. "Don't you know," said a Romanist to him one day, "that the Pope is sitting in St. Peter's Chair?" Quick as lightning came the unexpected reply, "Yes! Peter had been in that chair *once*, that is when he denied his Master, and the Pope has been sitting in it ever since." Then there is the goodly cloud of witnesses in the counties of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Inverness and Argyll, who in their day and generation were living epistles known and read of all men.

The best qualification is to feel yourself ill-qualified.—*Elisha Coles.*

Zeal without knowledge is like wild fire in a fool's hand.—*John Trapp.*

Of all our troubles the troubles of a proud heart are the greatest.—*Sibbes.*

The Faith of the People, the Comfort of the Minister.

A sermon by the Rev. JOSEPH IRONS, Camberwell, London.

“Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith” (I. Thess. iii. 7).

(Continued from p. 171.)

II. *The Solace.* “In all our afflictions and distress,” put upon us whatever weight you will, let it be in addition to what I have noticed, let it be reproach, distress, persecution, want, sorrow, poverty loss, trial, affliction, bereavement—put all these together, yet there is something to solace us, and “in all our affliction and distress we are comforted.” And by what? Why, “by your faith.” “Why,” say you, “what have you to do with our faith?” You will recollect those words: “The communication of thy faith”—in spiritual fellowship one with another. God Almighty help you to carry this out.

But in addition to this, the sent servants of God get comfort or solace in the midst of their afflictions, from knowing that there is faith wrought in the heart of this man or of that woman, and that this or that sermon is owned of God to the working of faith in the soul. I mean saving faith; I mean living faith; I mean supernatural faith; I would not give a straw, I would not take the trouble to stand up to preach a sermon, merely for the purpose of bringing you to credit what I say—merely for the purpose of bringing you to subscribe to what I subscribe to; merely to bring you to credit the facts and statements of the Word of God, which I acknowledge. The devil does not deny it; infidels may, many of them, be brought to confess it, though they will not receive it. This is merely the natural man; this is merely changing the colour of old Adam; this is merely cultivating human intellect. There is nothing of spiritual life in this. The faith I want, is that which is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, through the preached word. Mark that text: ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’ Many people say, “Faith comes by hearing, and by

dint of study;" but the faith of God's people comes by hearing the gospel preached; it is put into their hearts in that way. Many people's faith is that which they have schooled themselves into very nicely by argument and process of natural reasoning, but it has no more to do with religion, than it has to do with creating a world; it has no more to do with religion, than it has to do with creating a soul anew. The faith I want is a faith wrought in the heart by a supernatural power; the grace of the Holy Spirit descending from above and taking possession of a soul for Jesus Christ, to assert His authority and His sovereignty there. Now this is our solace as ministers; when this faith is wrought through our preaching of the everlasting gospel. I mean, when hearers do not merely go away, and say, "Oh! that was a fine sermon; we liked that sermon very much, we liked the text and we liked the style and we liked the manner." What have your likes and dislikes to do with it? You may like it all very much, and go away without the least benefit. I pray you see, not whether you like the sermon, but whether it is fastened upon your conscience; whether the Holy Ghost has made use of it to work faith—for "faith cometh by hearing;" whether it has accomplished a spiritual transformation in you; and whether it has given a capacity, a principle, which lays hold on Christ and on eternal life in Him. It is when we are called to witness this, and we recognise the work of God thus going on, that we are "comforted in all our affliction and distress."

I will give you an instance now how we are sometimes comforted by this. I am looking back now only a few days. I have found my mind extremely harassed and distressed, by some of the most vexatious letters that perhaps could be penned on purpose to insult a man, and then again by some of the most trying visitors, that would weary the patience of Job to talk with them; and I have sat down and sighed: "Oh! who would be a minister?" That was just the feeling of my mind, fretting under the accumulation of troubles. Then comes a letter: what is it? some new plague to torment me? No! but to tell of some

poor sinner brought under the preached Word here out of captivity into glorious liberty, out of darkness into light, rejoicing in the salvation of Christ Jesus; and two or three similar cases on the back of it. And then, instead of crying out, "Oh! who would be a minister?" we cry, "Oh! who would *not*?" I name this, as an illustration how we are comforted: we are comforted when we witness that the work of God goes on through the instrumentality of a preached Word, and that we do not "labour in vain, nor spend our strength for nought."

Yet further: we are "comforted by your faith," when we witness that it has drawn you from the world, and made you what believers should be. We are comforted, when we witness the charity and love which always accompany saving faith; when we witness the purity that it always effects, for you will recollect it is written, that God "put no difference between Jews and Gentiles, purifying their hearts by faith." Mark that genuine property—*purifying*. I do not mind what they call their faith, whether they call it a human faith, a carnal-reason faith, or an accrediting faith, if it does not purify the heart, it is not worth having; if it does not make its possessor love holiness it will never give him a place in heaven; if it does not make its possessor hate sin, it is not the faith of God's elect; if it does not "work by love," it is a lazy faith, and good for nothing; if it does not "purify the heart," God will never take that heart as His habitation. You cannot prove that the Holy Ghost has made your heart His temple unless mighty grace—saving faith—has purified it; for when He comes into a temple, He always casts out idols, and buyers and sellers too; He comes there to purify it, and make it fit for God. Now, when we witness, as the Apostle did in these Thessalonians, that the faith of God has purified the hearts of our people, that they love purity, spirituality, and holiness, that they are in love with Christ, and hate everything contrary to His mind and will; that they are exemplary characters, separated from the world; that they have really been with Jesus, and imbibed His Spirit, then, as the Apostle was when he saw this, "we are comforted."

Again: when the Apostle says, "We are comforted by your faith," I cannot but believe that he had this in view: the growth of their faith: "Because your faith groweth." A growing faith must be a living faith. A growing faith: a grain of mustard seed that is cast into the earth, and groweth until it becomes a tree, large enough for the fowls of the air to lodge in the branches of it,—for that is our Lord's history of it. But do mark here, I beseech you, that even when it is as small as a grain of mustard seed, it is sufficient to overturn a mountain: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it *shall* remove." This is His simile; and fairly carried out, you see the child of God taking a grain of mustard seed, and rolling it against a mountain, and it casts the mountain down. It may be a mountain of unbelief, a mountain of sin, a mountain of difficulty; a grain of mustard seed overturns it all. Then, what a very little portion of faith you and I must have, to let the mountain stand! to be standing kicking at mountains, both in providence and in grace, instead of rolling the grain of mustard seed at them! "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," said our Lord (and He never spoke anything but the truth), "ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence, and it *shall* remove."

But now, what shall we say of its growth? I find some recorded in the Word of God, so strong in faith, that whenever they came to a promise, they seized upon it and called it their own. I find some of them so strong in faith, as to *know* there was a crown of righteousness laid up for them whenever they had done with the wilderness. I find some so strong in faith, as to come even "boldly" to the throne of grace in its exercise. I find some so strong in faith, as even to "stir up themselves to take hold of God." I find some so strong in faith that when have got hold, they will not let Him go: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." And I find old Abraham so strong in faith, as to take God at His word in the face of seeming impossibilities; for "he went out, not knowing whither

he went." A poor worldling's faith, you know, is only founded upon his knowledge; but the faith of Abraham was where knowledge did not exist: "He went out, *not* knowing whither he went." And did he know the result when he went to offer up his son Isaac? Nobody told him there would be a ram in the thicket; nobody told him that God would stay his hand, when it was uplifted with the knife to slay his son Isaac. Yet without any knowledge, or anything like it, merely at God's bare word, merely at the command of the Most High, he goes, and God appears at the proper time. It is faith's province to trust God; it is God's business to deliver. It is faith's business to walk in the dark; it is God's business to guide it. It is faith's business to wage war with ten thousand foes, quite apart from the question how they are to be conquered; that is God's business. It is faith's business to take God at His word; it is God's business to honour faith.

Now, the Apostle witnessed in these Thessalonians that their faith "grew"—"grew exceedingly." Oh! do let me look at your experience; do let me know how you are getting on in this very thing; whether your faith is growing, "growing exceedingly;" whether it has got at all beyond its infancy, its boyhood; whether it has reached the "young man" or "the father"; whether it is "the blade" or "the ear," or "the full corn in the ear." These are our Lord's similes.

But another thought here: a growing faith must be a living faith, and not a dead one. It must be one which has the life of God in it, and can never die. And this will lead on, by growth, to the full assurance of it. I do not like to find young Christians professing to be in possession of assurance in a very early experience, but I do like them to grow. I never knew a man to stand well that jumped into assurance; but I have known many stand well who have *grown* into it, and grown, too, with much discipline. There is a great deal to be done. The plants in our gardens must be watered, and we must "dig about them and dung them"; and depend upon it, if God means to make

faith strong, He will water it, and prune it, and lop it, and then refresh it by "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

There is one thing more: the Apostle's comfort was extended and increased by the stability of their faith, which evinced its reality. There was such tenacity, and firmness, and abiding steadfastness in these disciples at Thessalonica, that they were "not moved with afflictions." And I am very anxious that this should be the case with my hearers. There are so many moonshine pretensions in the present day which have no foundation whatever in the Word of God, but profess to spring from what they call an enlightened age. But verily this "enlightened age" is in the path towards darkness again; we are going down into the darkness of Popery at a most tremendous rate. And yet they call this an enlightened age; and there are some that are foolish enough to tell us: "Oh! people are too well educated now to be guilty of the persecutions of the barbarous age; they belong to times bygone." But, pray, who were the persecutors in times bygone? Were they not the well educated? Were they not the learned? Were they not men like those at Oxford? Nay, were they not the very men who heaped to themselves and monopolised all the learning of the day, that it should not become common? These were the very parties; and they will be the men again. This argument falls to the ground in a moment. But none of us are to be moved with these persecutions. If the law is to prevent our meeting together as now, if it is to prohibit our reading the Bible, if it is to silence the men who preach what I preach—the doctrines of God's eternal grace—you are not to be moved by these afflictions, and so to evidence your faith by its firmness. Let us see that you can stand in trying times and in the face of the bitterest foes; that the faith of God's elect is like God Himself, and standeth sure and firm and immovable, "having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His."

Much occurs to my mind here, but I must indulge only in a concluding thought: the apostle's comfort strengthened brotherly affection, and therefore in the language of my text he opens

with: "Therefore, *brethren*." When he first sent Timotheus to Thessalonica to make inquiries about the matter of their faith, I query much if he had not some suspicions whether he should be able to call them "*brethren*," whether they had not forfeited their claim to that blessed appellation, and whether they had not gone back from the faith to the world and become apostates. But when Timotheus came, and brings good tidings of their faith, he says, "*Brethren*." There is a strengthening and a refining of the relative affection which existed, so that he recognises them and knows them, as part of the same family, standing fast in the same faith, and looking to the same glorious end and goal. "Therefore, *brethren*, we were comforted in all our affliction and distress by your faith."

But I beseech you, *brethren*, be upon your guard against the abuse of this appellation; while you do not abandon its use, because it is abused. There are whimsical visionaries enough, with about as much religion as horses and dogs at heart, who are priding themselves upon the term and arrogating to themselves the term, *brethren*; and I believe they are infidels in heart. Do not be beguiled by them. But on the other hand, do not abandon the faith of God's elect. Love as *brethren*, live as *brethren*, walk as *brethren*, claim alliance and joint privileges as *brethren*. Let it be seen and known, that your relationship to each other, as real Christians, is of God; that Jesus is the Elder Brother, and that those who possess the spirit and mind of Jesus are all related to each other as a holy brotherhood. Then we shall say concerning you, as Paul did, "We are comforted in all our affliction and distress by your faith."

May the eternal God make your faith to "grow exceedingly," and keep it in lively exercise. And His Name shall have all the glory.

A proud heart and a lofty mountain are never fruitful.

—Gurnall.

A Soliloquy on the Art of Man-Fishing

By THOMAS BOSTON.

I.

AH! Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? This day seems to be a day of darkness and gloominess; the glory is departed even to the threshold of the temple. We may call ordinances *Ichabod*, and name the faithful preachers of Scotland no more *Naomi*, but *Marah*; for the Lord deals bitterly with them, in forsaking His ordinances so much at this day. The Lord hath forsaken them in a great measure, as to success attending their labours. They toil all the night; but little or nothing is caught; few or none can they find to come into the Gospel net. So that Jeremiah's exercise may be theirs—Chap. xiii. 17—"If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears."

And thou, O my soul, mayest make this thy exercise, if thou hadst a heart that could mourn either for thyself or others. Though indeed it is no great wonder that God does not countenance with much success the like of me, who (if I may or dare class myself among those that are faithful) am the meanest, the most unworthy of them all, not worthy to take His covenant in my mouth, who am a child in piety and the mystery of godliness, though not in years, who am a poor fool, having a weak heart and a shallow head; who might rather be learning of others than teaching them; who can but wade about the outer parts of that depth, into which others can enter far; who have so little love to Christ, and so little pure zeal for His glory; can say so little for the truth, and so little against error; who am altogether unworthy and insufficient for these things:—no wonder, I say, God does not countenance me, when others, that are as tall cedars in the Lord's vineyard, do so little good—even others that are great men in the Church for piety and learning. But yet, seeing I am called out to preach this everlasting gospel, it is my duty to endeavour, and it is my desire to be (Lord thou knowest) a

fisher of men. But, alas! I may come in with my complaints to my Lord, that I have toiled in some measure, but caught nothing, for any thing I know, as to the conversion of any one soul. I fear I may say, I have almost spent my strength in vain, and my labour for nought, for Israel is not gathered. O my soul, what may be the cause of this? why does my preaching so little good? No doubt, part of the blame lies on myself, and a great part of it too. But who can give help in this case but the Lord Himself? and how can I expect it from Him but by prayer, and faith in the promises, and by consulting His Word, where I may, by His Spirit shining on my heart, (shine, O Sun of righteousness) learn how to carry, and what to do, to the end the gospel preached by me may not be unsuccessful? Therefore did my heart cry out after Christ this day, and my soul was moved, when I read that sweet promise of Christ—Matth. iv. 19—*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*, directed to those that would follow Him! O how fain would my soul follow Him, as on other accounts, so on this, that I might be honoured to be a fisher of men! Therefore, my soul would fain know what sort of following of Christ this is, to which this sweet promise is annexed. I would know it, (Lord thou knowest) that I might do it, and so catch poor souls by the gospel, and that I might know whether I have a right to this promise or not. O let thy light and thy truth shine forth, that they may be guides to me in this matter; and let the meditations of my heart be according to thy mind, and directed by thy unerring Spirit. Grant light and life, O Lord my God!

Follow me, and I will make you fishers of Men. In these words there are two things to be considered:—1. There is a duty, *Follow me*. Wherein consider, (1.) The object, *me*, even the Lord Jesus Christ, the chief fisher of men, who was sent by the Father to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel; who was and is the infinitely wise God, and so know the best way to catch men, and can instruct men how to be fishers of others. (2.) The act, *Follow* (Gr. *come after*) *me*: Leave your employment, and come after me. Though no doubt there is a direction

here to all the ministers of the gospel, that they have left their other employments, and betaken themselves to the preaching of the Word, *viz.*, that if they would do good to souls, and gain them by their ministry, then they are to imitate Christ, in their carriage and preaching to make Him their pattern, to write after His copy, as a fit mean for gaining of souls. 2. There is a promise annexed to the duty. Wherein we may consider, (1.) The benefit promised; that is, to be *made fishers of men*; which I take to be not only an investing of them with authority, and a calling of them to the office, but also a promise of the success they should have, that fishing of men should be their employment, and they should not be employed in vain, but, following Christ, they should indeed catch men by the gospel. (2.) The fountain-cause of this, *I,—I will make you*; none other can make you fishers of men but me.

Thou mayest observe, 1, then, O my soul, *That it is the Lord Jesus Christ that makes men fishers of men*. Here I shall shew, I. How Christ makes men fishers of men. II. Why unconverted men are compared to fish in the water. III. That ministers are fishers by office.

I. How does Christ make men fishers of men? In answer to this question, consider spiritual fishing two ways. 1. As to the office and work itself: and 2. As to the success of it. *First*, He makes them fishers as to their office, by His call, which is twofold, outward and inward, by setting them apart to the office of the ministry; and it is thy business, O my soul, to know whether thou hast it or not. But of this more afterwards. *Secondly*, He makes them fishers as to success; that is, He makes them catch men to Himself by the power of His Spirit accompanying the Word they preach, and the discipline they administer; 1 Cor. i. 18, "The preaching of the cross—unto us which are saved, is the power of God." 1 Thess. i. 5—"Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." He it is that brings sinners into the net which ministers spread; and if He be not with them to drive the fish into the net, they may toil all the night and day too, and catch nothing.

1. O my soul, then, see that gifts will not do the business. A man may preach as an angel, and yet be useless. If Christ withdraw His presence, all will be to no purpose. If the Master of the house be away, the household will loath their food; though it be dropping down about their tent-doors. 2. Why shouldst thou then on the one hand, as sometimes thou art, be lifted up when thou preachest a good and solid discourse, wherein gifts do appear, and thou gettest the applause of men? Why, thou mayest do all this, and yet be no fisher of men. The fish may see the bait, and play about it as pleasant, but this is not enough to catch them. On the other hand, why shouldst thou be so much discouraged, (as many times is the case) because thy gifts are so small, and thou art but as a child in comparison of others? Why, if Christ will, He can make thee a fisher of men, as well as the most learned rabbi in the Church; Psal. viii. 2—*Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.* Has not God put this treasure in earthen vessels, that the power might be seen to be of Him? Lift up thyself then, O my soul; Christ can make thee a fisher of men, however weak thou art. Follow thou Him. My soul desires to follow hard after thee, O God. 3. Be concerned then, in the first place, O my soul, for the presence of God in ordinances, and for His power that will make a change among people, Psal. ex. 3. When thy discourse, though never so elaborate, shall be but as a lovely song, O set thyself most for this. When thou studieth, send up ejaculations to thy Lord for it. When thou writest a sermon, or ruminates on it, then say to God, Lord, this will be altogether weak without thy power accompanying it. O, power and life from God in ordinances is sweet! Seek it for thyself, and seek it for thy hearers. Acknowledge thine own weakness and uselessness without it, and so cry incessantly for it, that the Lord may drive the fish into the net, when thou are spreading it out. Have an eye to this power, when thou are preaching: and think not thou to convert men by the force of reason: If thou do, thou wilt be beguiled. 4. What an honourable thing is it to be fishers of men! How great an honour shouldst thou esteem it, to be a

catcher of souls! *We are workers together with God*, says the Apostle. If God has ever so honoured thee, O that thou knewest it, that thou mightest bless His holy name, that ever made such a poor fool as thee to be a co-worker with Him. God has owned thee to do good to those who were before caught. O my soul, bless thou the Lord. Lord, what am I, or what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me to this! 5. Then seest thou not here what is the reason thou toilest so long, and catchest nothing? The power comes not. Men are like Samuel, who, when God was calling him, thought it had been Eli. So when thou speakest many times, they do not discern God's voice, but thine; and therefore the Word goes out as it comes in. 6. Then, O my soul, despair not of the conversion of any, be they ever so profligate. For it is the power of the Spirit that drives any person into the net; and this cannot be resisted. Mockers of religion, yea blasphemers, may be brought into the net; and many times the wind of God's Spirit in the Word lays the tall cedars in sin down upon the ground, when they that seem to be as low shrubs in respect of them, stand fast upon their root. Publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before self-righteous Pharisees. 7. What thinkest thou, O my soul, of that doctrine that lays aside this power of the Spirit, and makes moral suasion all that is requisite to the fishing of men? That doctrine is hateful to thee. My soul loathes it, as attributing too much to the preacher, and too much to corrupt nature, in taking away its natural impotency to good, and as against the work of God's Spirit, contrary to experience; and is to me a sign of the rottenness of the heart that embraces it. Alas! that it should be owned by any among us, where so much of the Spirit's power has been felt.

II. But why are unconverted men compared to fish in the water? Among other reasons they are so. 1. Because, as the water is the natural element of fish, so sin is the proper and natural element of an unconverted soul. Take the fish out of the water, it cannot live; and take from a natural man his idols, he is ready to say with Micah, *Ye have taken away my gods*,

and what have I more? The young man in the gospel could not be persuaded to seek after treasure in heaven, and lay by the world. It is in sin that the only delight of natural men is; but in holiness they have no more delight than a fish upon the earth. Oh, the woful case of a natural man! Bless the Lord, O my soul, that when that was thy element as well as that of others, yet Christ took thee in his net, held thee, and would not let thee go, and put another principle in thee, so that now it is difficult for thee to wade, far more to swim in these waters. 2. The fish in a sunny day are seen to play themselves in the water. So the unregenerate, whatever grief they may seem to have upon their spirits, when a storm arises either without, by outward troubles, or within by conscience-gnawing convictions, yet when these are over, and they are in a prosperous state, they play themselves in the way of sin, and take their pleasure in it, not considering what it may cost them at the last. Oh! how does prosperity in the world ruin many a soul! The prosperity of fools shall destroy them. And, O how destructive would prosperity have been to thee, my soul, if God had given it to thee many times when thou wouldst have had it! Bless the Lord, that ever he was pleased to cross thee in a sinful course! 3. As the fish greedily look after and snatch at the bait, not minding the hook, even so natural men drink in sin greedily, as the ox drinketh in the water. They look on sin as a sweet morsel; and it is to them sweet in the mouth though bitter in the belly. They play with it, as the fish with the bait; but, oh, alas! when they take the serpent in their bosom, they mind not the sting, Prov. ix. 17, 18. The devil knows well how to dress his hooks; but, alas! men know not by nature how to discern them. Pity, then, O my soul, the wicked of the world, whom thou seest greedily satisfying their lusts. Alas! they are poor blinded souls; they see the bait, but not the hook; and therefore it is that they are even seen as it were dancing about the mouth of the pit; therefore rush they on to sin as a horse to the battle, not knowing the hazard. O, pity the poor drunkard, the swearer, the unclean person, &c. that is wallowing in his sin. Bless thou

the Lord also, O my soul, that when thou wast playing with the bait, and as little minding the hook as others, God opened thine eyes and let thee see thy madness and danger, that thou mightest flee from it. And, O be now careful that thou snatch at none of the devils baits, lest he catch thee with his hook; for though thou mayest be restored again by grace, yet it shall not be without a wound; as the fish sometimes slip the hook, but go away wounded; which wound may be sad to thee, and long a-healing;—and this thou hast experienced. 4. As fish in water love deep places and wells, and are most frequently found there, so wicked men have a great love to carnal security, and have no will to strive against the stream. Fish love deep places best, where there is least noise. O, how careful are natural men to keep all quiet, that there may be nothing to disturb them in their rest in sin! they love to be secure, which is their destruction. O my soul, beware of carnal security, of being secure, though plunged over head and ears in sin. 5. As fish are altogether unprofitable as long as they are in the water, so are wicked men in their natural estate—they can do nothing that is really good; they are unprofitable to themselves, and unprofitable to others, Rom. iii. 12. How far must they then be mistaken, who think the wicked of the world the most useful in the place where they live! They may indeed be useful for carrying on designs for Satan's interest, or their own vainglory; but really to lay out themselves for God, they cannot.

III. Ministers are fishers by office; they are catchers of the souls of men, sent "to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," Acts xxvi. 18. Preachers of the gospel are fishers; and their work, and that of fishers, agree in several things. 1. The design and work of fishers is to catch fish. This is the work that preachers of the gospel have taken in hand, even to endeavour to bring souls to Christ. Their design in their work should be the same. Tell me, O my soul, what is thy design in preaching? for what end dost thou lay the net in the water? is

it to shew thy gifts, and to gain the applause of men? Oh! no. Lord, thou knowest my gifts are very small; and had I not some other thing than them to lean to, I had never gone to a pulpit. I confess, that, for as small as they are, the devil and my corruptions do sometimes present them to me in a magnifying glass, and so would blow me up with wind. But, Lord, thou knowest it is my work to repel these motions. (But of this see afterwards). 2. Their work is hard work; they are exposed to much cold in the water. So is the minister's work. 3. A storm that will affright others, they will venture on, that they may not lose their fish. So should preachers of the gospel do. 4. Fishers catch fish with a net. So preachers have a net to catch souls with. This is the everlasting gospel, the word of peace and reconciliation, wherewith sinners are caught. It is compared to a net wherewith fishers catch fish.

(1.) Because it is spread out, ready to catch all that will come into it; Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." God excludes none from the benefits of the gospel, that will not exclude themselves; it is free to all. (2.) Because, as fish are taken unexpectedly by the net, so are sinners by the gospel. Zaccheus was little thinking on salvation from Christ, when he went up to the tree. Paul was not thinking on a sweet meeting with Christ, whom he persecuted, when he was going, post-haste, on the devil's errand; but the man is caught unexpectedly. Little wast thou thinking, O my soul, on Christ, heaven, or thyself, when thou went to the Newton of Whitsome,* to hear a preaching,

*Whitsome is a parish in the presbytery of Chirnside, at a place in which, called Newton, Rev. Henry Erskine, who, in August, 1662, had been ejected from Cornhill, in Northumberland, began to exercise his ministry in a meeting-house, upon the coming out of King James's toleration, in 1687, and where he continued till the Revolution, when he was settled at Chirnside. It was probably in the year 1687, that Mr. Boston, then a boy only ten years of age, went from Dunse, where his parents lived to hear Mr. Erskine, by whose ministry he was converted. He speaks of this worthy minister as his spiritual father, afterwards, in this Soliloquy. This Mr. Erskine was father of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, whose praise is in all the churches.

when Christ first dealt with thee; there thou got an unexpected cast. (3.) As fish sometimes come near and touch the net, and yet draw back, so many souls are somewhat affected at the hearing of the gospel, and yet remain in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. So Herod heard John the Baptist gladly; but yet the poor man was not caught. Wonder not then, O my soul, that thou seest some affected in the time of preaching, and yet when they are away again, all is worn off. (4.) Some fish that have not been taken fast hold enough by the net, struggle and get out again. So some souls have their convictions, and may seem to be caught; but yet, alas! they stifle all their convictions, stay in the place of the breaking forth; their goodness is like the morning cloud, and as the early dew, that soon passeth away. Wherefore, O my soul, if ever thou be taken up with exercised consciences, have a care that thou do not apply the cure before the wound be deep enough. Take all means to understand whether the souls be content to take Christ on His own terms or not. Alas! many this way, by having the wound scurfed over, are rather killed than cured. (5.) All that are taken in the net do make some struggle to get free. Even so every one whom the Lord deals with by His Word and Spirit, make some kind of resistance, before they are thoroughly caught. And this thou also knowest, O my soul, how thou wouldest have been content to have been out of the net. Oh, the wickedness of the heart of man by nature! opposite is it, and an enemy to all that may be for its eternal welfare. There is, indeed, a power in our will to resist, yea, and such a power as cannot but be exercised by the will of man, which can do nothing but resist, till the overcoming power of God, come and make the unwilling heart willing, Phil. ii. 13. (6.) Yet this struggling will not do with those which the net has fast enough. So neither will the resistance do that is made by an elect soul, whom God intends to catch; John, vi. 37, *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me.* Indeed, God does not convert men to himself against their will; He does not force the soul to receive Christ; but He conquers the will, and it becomes obedient. He that was unwilling before,

is then willing. O the power of grace! When God speaks, then men shall hear; then is it that the dead hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear do live. (7.) In a net are many meshes in which the fish are caught. Such are the invitations made to sinners in the gospel, the sweet promises made to them that will come to Christ; these are the meshes wherewith the soul is caught. This then is gospel-preaching, thus to spread out the net of the gospel, wherein are so many meshes of various invitations and promises, to which if the fish do come, they are caught. Bet yet, (8.) Lest the net be lifted up with the water, and so not fit for taking of fish, and the fish slight it, and pass under it; there are some pieces of lead put to it, to hold it right in the water, that it may be before them as they come. So lest invitations and promises of the gospel be slighted, there must be used some legal terrors and law-threatenings to drive the fish into the net. Thou seest then, that both law and gospel are to be preached; the law as a pèndicle of the gospel-net, which makes it effectual; the law being a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. (9.) The meshes must not be over-wide, lest the fish run through. So neither must thy doctrine be general, without particular application, lest thou be no fisher of men. Indeed, men may be the better pleased, when thou preachest doctrine so as wicked men may run out-through and in-through it, than when thou makest it so as to take hold of them; but be not a servant of men. (10.) Neither must they be too neat and fine, and curiously wrought, lest they hold out the fish. So have a care, O my soul, of striving to make by wit any fine and curious discourse, which thy hearers cannot understand. Of this more afterwards.

5. Fishers observe in what places they should cast their nets, and where they may expect fish. So do thou, O my soul, observe where thou mayest catch souls. There are two pools wherein the net should be set. (1.) In the public assemblies of the Lord's people. There it was that Lydia's heart was opened. The pool of ordinances sometimes is made healing water to souls pining away in their iniquity. (2.) In private conference. Many times the Lord is pleased to bless this for the good of souls. Some

have found it so. But more of these things afterwards, when I come to following of Christ. 6. Lastly, Fishers may toil long, and yet catch nothing; but they do not therefore lay aside their work. So many preachers preach long, and yet not catch any soul, Isa. xlix. 4, and liii. 1; but they are not to give over for all that. O my soul, here thou art checked for thy behaviour at some times under the absence of Christ from ordinances, when thou hast been ready to wish thou hadst never taken it in hand. This was my sin: the good Lord pardon it. It becomes me better to lie low under God's hand, and to inquire into the causes of His withdrawing His presence from me and from ordinances, and yet to hold on in duty till He be pleased to lay me by. Have a care of that, O my soul, and let not such thoughts and wishes possess thee again. Forget not how God made thee to read this thy sin in thy punishment. Hold on, O my soul, and give not way to these discouragements. Thou knowest not but Christ may come and teach thee to let down the net at the right side of the ship, and thou mayest yet be a fisher of men. Trust God thou shalt yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, as thou hast done, and perhaps for some souls that thou mayest be yet honoured to catch.

And thus I have briefly considered these things. But the main question that I would have resolved is—How I may come by this art? What way I shall take to be a fisher of men? How I may order and set the net, that it may bring in souls to God? This the great Master of Assemblies sets down in the first part of the verse. Whence, Observe, 2, O my soul, *That the way for me to a fisher of men is to follow Christ*. What it is to follow thee, O Lord, show me; and, Lord, help me do it.

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

It is not too much to say that the prosperity or decay of English Christianity depends on the maintenance of the Christian Sabbath.—*The late Bishop J. C. Ryle.*

Calvin and Servetus.

THERE are two distinct charges brought against Calvin in connection with Servetus, one being that it was Calvin that stirred up the Inquisition at Lyons to arrest him, by telling that Court where he was living, and so leading to his imprisonment and condemnation to death. The other is that when Servetus, fleeing from the power of Rome at Vienne, sought refuge in Geneva, Calvin stirred up the Magistrates there to secure his person, thus leading on to his condemnation and execution. Let us take these charges in their order. Calvin, it is said, informed the Inquisition at Lyons, as to the residence and assumed name of Servetus, and thus betrayed into their hands a man—religious and God-fearing according to his light—who was a talented physician and who was living far away from Geneva. The charge is a gross misrepresentation of the facts.

Servetus calling himself "Reformed," had been living for a number of years under the name of Villanova, in the house of the Archbishop of Vienne, as his private physician, and where he professed to be a Roman Catholic. While there, he wrote the book *Christianismi Restitutio*, and in 1546 or 1567, sent a manuscript copy of the same to Calvin. Calvin thus came to know where he was, and the name he had assumed. Living at Geneva at that time was a French refugee named De Trie, with whom Calvin was very intimate. De Trie's friends sought to bring him back to Rome, and remonstrated with him for living in a city so immoral, they said, as Geneva, and associating with men of such bad private characters as were the members of the Reformed community. De Trie replied, that the morality of the Reformed was worthy of all commendation, and that it did not become them to speak in that manner of other people, when they allowed a man to be living in the Archbishop's house, who laughed to scorn many of the doctrines of their Church. His friends at once challenged the statement, and insisted on knowing whom he meant. De Trie had received the information some time before from Calvin, in the course of casual conversation, and now found

himself in a difficulty. He must either make good his language, or withdraw his words and stand convicted of bearing false witness. He applied to Calvin for counsel and assistance. For some time Calvin refused to allow De Trie to see the manuscript, which was in the handwriting of Servetus, but after some hesitation did so; when De Trie informed his friends that it was to Servetus he referred, who was living in the house of the Archbishop. De Trie's friends lost no time in making the fact known to the Inquisition, which then proceeded to arrest Servetus, who was subsequently tried at Lyons and condemned to death. Before the sentence could be carried out, however, he escaped from prison when, in the absence of the real man, he was burnt in effigy in the court yard of the Archbishop's palace. Having escaped from Vienne, Servetus turned his steps to Geneva, the last place in the world he should have gone to.

Now, wherein was Calvin to blame in all this? That he had no communication with the Inquisition may be taken for granted. Calvin had not been exerting himself to discover the residence of Servetus. He was content to leave him alone, so long as he did not come to Geneva. Nor was this knowledge a recent acquisition. He had known it for a number of years, but remained silent, until in the familiarity of friendship he mentioned it to De Trie. De Trie resenting the accusations of his relations against the Reformed, thought to turn the tables on them, and in doing so, led to the arrest of Servetus by the Inquisition, with his subsequent escape and unhappy arrival at Geneva. The documentary evidence supporting the statements now given are to be found in the Eighth volume of Calvin's works and Correspondence, (p. 728), while not a scrap of paper is known to exist to support the accusation that Calvin had informed De Trie about Servetus, *for the purpose* of having him arrested by the Inquisition. It was the correspondence between De Trie and his friends, together with Calvin's loyalty to the reputation of the Reformed for speaking the truth, that led to the discovery by the Inquisition.

Calvin was also charged with having violated all the laws of humanity in setting the Genevan Magistrates to work in the

arresting of Servetus, professedly a refugee for his religious opinions, and in forcing these Magistrates to put him to death because of them. In reply we say: Let it be remembered that in 1550, heresy was a crime punishable throughout Europe with death—as with the Jews under the Law, idolatry was punishable with death. That it should have had such a law at that period, was no distinction for Geneva. From 1553 to 1558, the fires of persecution flamed in England and hundreds of men and women were burnt to death during that brief interval as “heretics”—that is, for holding religious opinions and beliefs that differed from those of the Established Church. A similar course prevailed in Spain, in France, and in many other countries. In Switzerland on the other hand, “Public Discussions” on the subject of religion were encouraged, for the better ascertaining of what opinions should be regarded as true. But even here the sword of judgment hung over the arena. He that sought to refute the heresy of an opponent did so at the risk of his life, if he failed; while if, in the judgment of the judges, he was successful, the opponent paid the penalty with his life. Under these circumstances, religious controversy was no child’s play, and every man knew the risk he ran. Previous to his fatal visit to Geneva, Servetus had sought to induce Calvin to enter the controversial lists with him; but Calvin had refrained from doing so, either because he was unwilling to expose Servetus to the condemnation for his opinions which was inevitable, or because he thought him unworthy of refutation, and the fact remains, he did nothing. He did not notice the challenge which Servetus sent him, when in 1546, he received from him, as we have mentioned, a copy of his book, though he retained in his possession what Servetus, who had tried to get it back, admitted to a friend, “would one day be the death of him.” Nor was he in error when he so spoke, for on the day on which Calvin acknowledged to Servetus the receipt of the book, he wrote to Farel saying, that if Servetus ever came to Geneva, and Calvin’s authority remained, he should never leave it alive, and *Servetus knew this.*

Servetus knew that this was Calvin's determination, carrying out the universal conclusion of the times as to heresy and heretics; yet it was to Geneva that Servetus went, as if courting death. There was no concealment about his movements. He arrived there on a Sabbath morning and went openly into the Church in which Calvin was preaching, as if he believed that he had so many friends in Geneva, that he could set Calvin and his supporters at defiance. For a man who acted in such a manner not to have been arrested, would have been a much stranger thing than that he should have been arrested, and at once put into prison. That he was fleeing from the Inquisition of Rome had nothing to do with his past writings. He was arrested not as a religious refugee, but as the writer of books daringly and intolerably blasphemous. He might have gone elsewhere, or even in Geneva could have hidden himself till he could quietly escape. But, knowing of Calvin's antagonism, knowing Calvin's strength in that city, knowing what Calvin had already said and threatened about himself, into that city he went in broad day-light, and there making himself visible to all, rushed—one might say, wilfully—into the very jaws of death.

But Calvin, it is said, did *nothing* to save him from the punishment of death, on account of a few opinions he held. His private life was not stained with such conduct as might be seen in others; but simply for *opinions*!—What intolerable, diabolical cruelty! Certainly not. The combat between himself and Servetus was “unto the death.” Calvin regarded himself as set for the defence of the truth of God, and believed that whosoever opposed that truth should die. Perversion or denial of the truth was in his judgment a crime against humanity, so that the glory of God demanded that the evil doer should be punished in accordance with the greatness of his crime. So far from denying having had any share in this trial, Calvin ever admitted that it was on his appeal, that the Magistrates had taken action and seized the person of Servetus. During the trial, he appeared as a witness against him, testifying to the nature of his

erroneous beliefs, and always said that it would have been dishonourable for him to have done otherwise. Only when the Magistrates condemned Servetus to be burnt did he interfere, and then simply to the extent of asking, that the punishment might rather be beheading than burning, but failed to obtain their consent. So far indeed was he from repenting or regretting what he had done, that during the following year, he published a little work entitled: "Declaration to uphold the true faith of all persons in the Trinity of Persons in the One God-head, in opposition to the detestable errors of Michael Servetus, Spaniard. In which it is also shown that it is lawful to punish heretics, and that it is of right, that that deceiver has been executed by law in the city of Geneva."

During the trial, the Genevan Council, unwilling to appear harsh, asked the advice of the Authorities in the Cantons of Berne, Basle, Schaffhausen, and Zurich. All these supported the action of Geneva, so that no fewer than five Swiss Cantons agreed in the punishing of heresy with death, thus sharing with Calvin the responsibility for the tragedy. These Cantons and their Churches had inherited this doctrinal position from Rome, where it is still regarded as morally right and a Christian duty, while now it is rejected by all the Reformed Churches of the world. Is it needful for Calvinists to be for ever defending Calvin for actions of which he was not ashamed? All that can be required of us is simply, to set forth a correct statement of the facts, taking care "not to extenuate or set down aught in malice," and then to leave to successive generations to pass what judgment they please upon them. We are no more called on as Christian men, to make ourselves responsible for every thing Calvin said or wrote, than were the Jews to do so for every thing Abraham, David, Solomon, or others of the Old Testament worthies may have said or done. When the enemies of Calvin concentrate all their efforts to destroy his moral and religious influence by this one incident in his life, they bear high testimony to his general excellence and uprightness, entitling us to say to his accusers, "Be ye followers of him as he was of Christ."—*Presbyterian Register*.

The Hidden Treasure.

THERE died recently, in the great city of Lyons, a poor widow, who had been so fortunate as to become possessed of a great treasure in her old age. Her parents were very poor, and her husband had nothing but his industry to depend on; as long, however, as he was able to work, they honestly gained their daily bread, though they were never able to put anything by for a rainy day. But when the old man died, leaving his poor widow childless and infirm, want entered her desolate dwelling as an armed man. She sold everything but what was indispensable, and removed to a miserable garret, to spend the remainder of her days. She was not entirely without some feeling of dependence upon the God of the fatherless and the widow; but she was a poor Romanist, and knew much more about saints and guardian angels than of Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

One day, as she was sitting alone in her comfortless half-empty room, it struck her that there was a singular outline on the beams of the wall. The walls had been whitewashed; but she thought it looked as if there had been a square opening in one of them, which had been carefully closed with a kind of door. She examined it more closely, and the thought occurred to her, "Perhaps there is some treasure hidden there," for she remembered as a child, the fearful days of the Revolution, when no property was safe from the men of "liberty and equality." Perhaps some rich man had concealed his treasure there for their rapacity, who had himself fallen a victim to the Revolution before he had time to remove it. And perhaps one of the saints, to whom she daily prayed, had preserved it there for her, to sweeten the evening of her days. She tapped it with her finger, and the boards returned a hollow sound. With beating heart she tried to remove the square door, and soon succeeded without much difficulty; but alas! instead of the gold and silver she hoped to see, she beheld a damp, dirty, mouldy old book; In her disappointment, she was ready to fix in the boards again,

and leave the book to mould and crumble away; but a secret impulse induced her to take it out, and see if there were any bank-notes or valuable papers in it; but no, it was nothing but a book, a mouldy book!

When she had recovered from her vexation, she began to wonder what book it could be that some one had hidden away so carefully. It must surely be something extraordinary. So she wiped it clean, and set herself to read. Her eyes fell upon the words, "Therefore, say I unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are ye not much better than they?" And the words which she read appeared to her so sweet and precious, that she read on and on during the whole day, and far into the night, almost forgetting to eat or sleep. The next morning she sat down again to the damp old book, the words of which made an ever-deepening impression on her soul. She began to see that she had indeed found a treasure, and an invaluable one. Her little chamber no longer looked so desolate; her food which had so often seemed to her as the bread of tears, now appeared to her more like bread from heaven; and her solitude was relieved by the presence of the great King, from whose book of gracious words streams of blessedness flowed.

She had the book cleaned and bound, and it was to her as meat and drink, by day and by night, until she was permitted to close her eyes and enter into the joy of her Lord. She related this history, in the latter days of her pilgrimage, to a beloved pastor in Lyons, in whose hands the blessed book is now. It is Amelotte's edition of the New Testament, of the time of the Huguenot persecution.—*Christian Treasury*, 1860.

God wills many changes but He never changes His will.

—Matthew Henry.

Affliction the Common Lot of the Saints.

WHEN I consider the conduct of Providence towards all His saints, I should rather be astonished that I am permitted to pass through the world not more chastised, than take it amiss that I am chastened every morning. And surely, were I free from afflictions, whereof all are partakers, I might infer, that I were a bastard, and not a son. Whatever be my affliction, the wisdom of Him that sends it should make me embrace and bear it without a grudge. Though it springs not out of the dust, nor comes at random, yet man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; and even some of His favourite ones have, for wise ends, had the severest afflictions. The wisdom of God, however, in afflicting His people, is folly to the world, who would compute love and hatred by common providences; and, therefore, they cry out, as the ignorant Jews of old to the Captain of our salvation, who Himself was made perfect through suffering, "Let Him deliver them, if He delighteth in them."

Again, as the infinite goodness of God shines in sending afflictions, though the scales on mine eyes hinder me from seeing all their beauty, insomuch that I often wonder why it fares so and so with me, and would fain essay to swallow up all in submission and faith, believing the veracity of the promise, that all things shall work together for good to them that are the called and chosen of God: I say, as His goodness appears in sending them, so the divine wisdom is conspicuous in their variety. Abraham, the friend of God, had a trial which would have startled the whole world of believers. Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise; Moses the man, and Aaron, the saint of God; Joshua and the Judges; Job, David, and his royal line; Samuel and the Prophets; yea, the Lamb and His Apostles, had afflictions of every kind, in substance and estate, in relations and connections, in name and character, in soul and body. Now, such has been the conduct of God these five thousand years with His Church and people; and had not this government of His house been both for His own glory, and the good of His people, such a wise Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is

named, would by this time have changed the manner of His procedure towards His own. But, who can doubt the wisdom and goodness of His conduct, who considers, that through this discipline many thousands have gone to glory, and are this day happy in their joyful harvest from their weeping seed-time?

How happy is it for me that the world often gives me the slip, that I may forsake the world, and look more out for the better country:—That men often prove false to me, that I may rely only on the God of truth:—That wants beset me on every side, that I by faith may set myself down at the gate of Heaven, and, in the promise, and in His fulness, find a rich supply:—That death now and then cuts off a relation, that I may more remember mine own end, the immortal world, and Him who is the resurrection and the life. Affliction renders the creature tasteless, the world barren, and dispels the intoxicating juice of carnal pleasures and sensual delights. It breaks the sleep of security, and awakes and rouses up to duties. Even the saints themselves are more frequent and fervent in their devotions under the rod of affliction; and many in trouble visit the throne of grace and pour out a prayer, when His chastening hand is upon them, who before were utter strangers both to the place and the employment. I verily believe the whole church of the first-born are children of the cross, and have drunk of the cup of affliction, sweetened by Christ's drinking so largely of it. Now, would I go another way to Heaven than the redeemed have trod in? Would I walk Zion-wards out of the King's high-way, out of the covenant? However much in the dark I may be about particular providences, and singular afflictions, till all things are cleared up above, yet, in general, I shall welcome whatever may loose me from this world, and bring me nearer God.—*Solitude Sweetened or Miscellaneous Meditations.*

I am tried about the beginning, middle and end of my religion. Tried about sin in myself and tried about sin in others.—*William Tiptaft.*

Cases of Conscience.

IN cases of conscience Dr. Duncan's advice was most valuable; and he could be very freely consulted, for he entered into the inquirer's position with singular quickness of apprehension. He had the tender unsophisticated conscience that is the best casuistry. Once, when the case was put whether one who had wronged another was bound not only to make restitution, but also to confess to the injured person, he said promptly, "He must confess. The mind is so constituted that without confession it cannot be at peace. It may in certain cases be right to withhold confession, when the interests of others are at stake, never when our own only is concerned. A man is not in a right state unless he is willing, at any hazard to himself, to confess the wrong. He can never be fully assured of his willingness to confess till he has made confession. Hence till the wrong has been confessed settled peace of mind is impossible."—Dr. Moody Stuart's *Recollections of Dr. Duncan* (pp. 107. 8).

King James VI. and Patrick Simson.

THREE hundred years ago there were men in Scotland who were courageous enough to speak their minds to kings. Among these was the Rev. Patrick Simson. On Tuesday, 8th February, 1572, Edinburgh was thrown into great excitement and sorrow, through the news that the Earl of Moray had been done to death by the Earl of Huntly, who went out from the company King James and set fire to Donibristle House. On coming forth from the burning house Moray was killed. The King went forth hunting that morning as if nothing had happened and saw the fire, which had not yet died out.

Aware of being suspected of having been privy to the deed, he sent for some of the ministers, and asked them to "cleare his part before the people." They replied, if he was innocent, he should arrest Huntly and try him for murder. A few days after the

murder, Mr. Patrick Simson preached before the King at Stirling. He took for his text: "The Lord said to Cain, where is Abel thy brother" (*Gen.* iv. 9). In the course of his sermon he turned to the King and bluntly addressed him with the words—"Sir, I assure you, in God's name, the Lord will ask you, 'Where is the Earl of Moray, thy brother?'" The King was startled and in his excitement said: "Mr. Patrick, my chalmers [chamber] door was never steiked [closed] upon you; ye might have told me anything ye thought in secret." Simson replied: "Sir, the scandal is public." After the service was over the King sent for him. He went up to the Castle with his Bible in his "ockster" saying that the Book would speak for him. What happened at the Castle is not recorded, but the fact that Simson preached six years after this before the King again shows that his outspokenness did not interfere with his influence over his King.

The late Miss MacConnachie, Oban.

THIS worthy woman departed this life at the age of 91 years.

I am asked to write a few lines concerning her, but in one way I knew, and could know, very little of her owing to her deafness. One could only ask her some questions as to her health and endeavour to engage in prayer and read the Word with her. I understand that she latterly became partially blind. She was a member of the Free Church Congregation in Oban before 1893, and at that crisis, when the Constitution of the Old Free Church was altered by the passing of the rationalistic Declaratory Act of 1892, she followed elders and others who stayed not in all the plain, but fled for their lives. She proved a consistent, God-fearing member of our congregation in Oban until the end. She was almost deaf when we met her first and that affliction gradually got worse. While regretting that we can tell little of her experience, we willingly write this line regarding her. "Surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him."—*D. A. MacF.*

Literary Notices.

THE FOUR CHAINED BOOKS : being the Story of the Four Books ordered to be set up in the Parish Churches of England by Henry J. Cowell. London : Protestant Truth Society, 31 Cannon Street, E.C.4. Price 6d.

This pamphlet contains a great deal of interesting information. THE FAME OF JESUS : A Sermon by the late Joseph Irons. London : C. J. Farncombe & Sons, Ltd., 30 Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, E.C.4. Price 3d.; Post free 3½d.

This is a fine sermon on a noble theme by that eminent preacher, the late Rev. Joseph Irons. Mr. Irons has treated the subject in an impressive way.

THROUGH BACA'S VALE OR, DAILY WORDS FOR ZION'S WAYFARERS : Selected from the Works of J. C. Philpot, by his Daughters. Oxford : J. C. Pembrey, 164 Walton Street. Price 6s.

Mr. J. C. Philpot's writings need no introduction from us. In this excellently printed volume his daughters have done their work well and the extracts judiciously culled from his sermons will be very helpful to Zion's Wayfarers. Those who have read the former volume of selections will find similar fare in this one. Mr. Philpot was a faithful servant in His Master's house in dividing the good from the vile and this characteristic runs throughout this volume and will be warmly appreciated in these days of laxity in dubious doctrine and no less dubious emotional experimental preaching. We like the clear ring of the teaching in this book and we are sure it will be highly appreciated by the most discerning of our readers.

Church Notes.

Communion.—*September*—First Sabbath, Ullapool and Breasclete; second, Strathy; third, Tarbert (Harris), and Stoer. *October*—First Sabbath, North Tolsta; second, Ness and Gairloch; fourth, Lochinver, Greenock; fifth, Wick. *November*—

First Sabbath, Oban; second, Glasgow; third, Edinburgh and Dornoch. South African Mission—The following are the dates of the Communion:—Last Sabbath of March, June, September, and December. *Note*.—Notice of any additions to, or alterations of, the above dates of Communion should be sent to the Editor.

Church Collections.—*Organisation Fund* to be taken up in June; *College Fund* in August; *General Building Fund* in September; *Home Mission Fund* (first collection) in October; *Foreign Mission Fund* (*by book*) in December; *Aged and infirm Ministers' Fund* in February (1939); *Home Mission Fund* (second collection, *by book*) in May (1939).

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Synod's Proceedings Publication.—The Clerk of Synod regrets that owing to certain circumstances there has been a delay in issuing the above publication.—M. Gillies, *Clerk of Synod pro tem*.

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