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A Short Day of Opportunity

We stood on the green grass sloping towards the deep-blue sea. Below us a burn meandered downwards until it became lost in the sand of the beach which skirts the ocean, while a huge bank of cloud dominated the horizon. It was a beautiful scene.

But death cannot be kept out of even a beautiful scene. As we stood in the spring sunshine in North Tolsta, a coffin was lowered into the grave prepared for it. Before long, the grave was filled in and the turf replaced on the top and stamped firmly down. Another of this mortal race had gone to his “long home”, and that last action seemed to confirm that his remains were not to be disturbed until Christ will come to this earth the second time. Then “all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28,29).

What a contrast between a resurrection of life and one of damnation! On the one hand, consider someone who became spiritually alive in time, whose body and soul have now been reunited, and who has before him all that can be expressed by the word *life*. For ever and ever, as a complete human being brought to absolute perfection, he will be able to fulfil, to the utmost of his capacity, his duty to glorify God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. On the other hand, how unspeakably awful is the position of someone who remained spiritually dead until the end of his time on earth, who refused all offers of salvation which may have come his way, and who now has before him an eternity of condemnation – in enduring endlessly the punishment of his sins.

We may always expect sadness to follow death. Bonds, more or less close, between the deceased and his friends and relations have been broken. Yet, when the godly are removed to eternity, those who mourn are not to sorrow “as others which have no hope”. The souls of the godly have gone to glory; even their bodies, though left to decay in the grave, are still united to Christ, which means that mourning friends and relatives may exercise a sure hope of a blessed resurrection for those who have left this world trusting in Christ.

Such was the position we were in at the funeral in North Tolsta.¹ To end one's course in this world, as our friend did, with the desire of Paul: to "be found in [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil 3:9), is surely convincing final evidence of being on the way to a blessed eternity.

A burial is an event with a loud voice; it always calls for deep, serious reflection. So Moses expressed his desire for Israel: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deut 32:29). Interment marks the finality of life; it reminds us of the irresistible power of death, tearing the soul away from the body – what will never be reversed until the resurrection. And death is "the wages of sin"; it is part of the penal consequences of sin imposed on mankind in the Garden of Eden. And, as "all have sinned" in Adam, so death has "passed upon all men". Accordingly, we should do nothing to suppress the loud voice of a burial, which cries out that, not only has death come for one of our fellow creatures, but that it will come for us before long. We ought to ponder seriously the implications of death for ourselves, particularly until we have good reason to believe that we, individually, are ready to die.

But how can a mere human being, in whom the seed of mortality has already been sown, face the irresistible power of death? The answer lies in the fact that Omnipotence took human nature; the Second Person of the Godhead became man. He took the place of an innumerable multitude of human beings; He bore their sins; He worked out eternal redemption for them. When He died, it was not a case of *death* breaking the bonds between His body and His soul. It happened exactly as He said, when He spoke of His life: "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18).

In His sufferings and death He satisfied, on behalf of each of His people, all the demands of divine justice. When they believe, they are justified; they are accepted before God as if they had always kept His law perfectly; they are delivered from all the punishment that was due to them because of their sins. Yet they are not delivered from death, for God will use death to bring them away out of this world, to separate body from soul. But for them death is not penal; indeed they cannot be punished, for Christ has borne all their punishment. Thus death becomes a door through which their souls enter the everlasting blessedness of heaven, and so for them the curse is turned into a blessing. They go to that place where "there shall be no more curse", where they will be totally removed from all the sin and trouble of this fallen

¹It was the funeral of Mr Donald Mackenzie, an elder, who died on April 15.

world. Yet what a loss to their communities and to the Church of God when praying men and praying women are taken away to a better world!

Every death and every open grave is a messenger sent to remind us that eternity is, at the longest, not far away from any of us. This means that we do not have long to prepare for eternity. How urgent then the call to the unconverted: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Is 55:6,7).

And if the Lord’s people do not have a great deal of time left in this world, they would do well to consider that fact in the light of the words of their Master: “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). There is a day – a short day – of opportunity to serve God, but soon it will be over; the night will come. Some believers may question if they can possibly be of any service to King Jesus. But, if nothing else, they have the opportunity to pray, not only for themselves, but for all around them and for the cause of Christ everywhere. This implies that, while they may have many duties to attend to in the world, they have no time to waste on worldliness. It was Samuel Rutherford who warned: “Build not your nest in the forest of this world, for God has sold the forest to death”. In other words, we must not treat this world as our home, for death will sweep us away from it before long.

The day of the resurrection will come at last, and from graveyards all over the world the godly will rise – perfect now, not only in soul, but also in body. From that graveyard in North Tolsta there will rise many who served the Lord in this world and who, in the spiritual body then restored to them, will in heaven sing the praises of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. No doubt they will see the beauty of land and sea when they rise, but their focus will surely be on the glory of the One whom, in time, they were made willing to choose as their Saviour.

When Ewen Cameron, a godly man who lived in the West Highland district of Morvern, was dying, he asked to be carried outside to take one last look at the beautiful scenery around the house. He spent some time admiring the mountains of the Isle of Mull, and the Sound of Mull beneath them. Then he asked, “Is not the world which God created beautiful?” And he added: “But what is good for me is that I have found Christ in it”. Yes, it is a beautiful world, though defiled in so many respects by the sin of man. But Ewen Cameron put his finger on what really matters: to find Christ on this side of death. Apart from that, we will be laid in the grave as lost sinners and continue so to all eternity. What reason to consider, seriously, our latter end!

The Ministry of the Apostle Paul (2)¹

A Sermon by A S Patterson

Ephesians 3:8,9. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God.*

2 Let us glance at **the functions which Paul was called to execute**: “that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.”

(1.) Paul was called to *preach*. The original word here rendered *preach* means to be the messenger of good tidings. It is a verb corresponding to the noun translated *gospel*. The Apostle then was to announce the gospel – a message to which the name of good tidings may be attached, both because of its essential character as a record of God’s pardoning and saving mercy, and because of its relative character as “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”.

O blessed and delightful view of the Apostle’s ministry! He had a gospel to declare. True, it was his to testify that “our God is a consuming fire”, and that “it is a fearful thing to fall into [His] hands”. “What seest thou?” said the angel to the prophet. “I see”, Zechariah answered, “a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.” “This”, said the angel in reply, “is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth”. Paul was placed, and so is the minister of Jesus still, in the very circumstances in which Zechariah stood. He saw, as it were, “a flying roll” which was very long and very broad; and behold “it was the curse which goeth forth over the face of the whole earth”. But side by side with the curse, he breathed – yea, thundered forth – the offer and the promise of eternal life, and from the broken covenant of works he pointed the sinner’s eye, he summoned the sinner’s soul, to the covenant of everlasting grace.

As the word here rendered *preach* simply means to be the messenger of good tidings, it is not to be restricted in its application to the public illustration and enforcement of Christian truth. Paul “taught publicly, and from house to house”, and so must his followers in the ministry of Christ. Bear the gospel, messengers of heaven, bear it to the house of God, and there announce, with willing lips and eloquent, its holy and consolatory truths. But bear it also to the habitation of the man who does not come to the house of prayer. Bear it

¹The first part of this sermon, preached at the ordination of a minister, appeared last month. It dealt with the first head: the Apostle’s character as described in the text.

to the once-happy home which sickness or bereavement has made desolate and dark. Bear it to the halls where the joys of earth have left no place for the care of eternity and heaven. Bear it to the school where the young heirs of immortality are reared. Bear it to the couch of the dying. Bear it, not as a spell to fix the fate of the departed, but as a lesson of comfort and admonition to the living. O bear it to the grave of the dead.

(2.) Paul was called to “preach the unsearchable riches of Christ”. The expression, “riches of Christ”, comprehensively denotes the personal excellence and mediatorial sufficiency of Jesus. These “riches” are called “unsearchable”, not because nothing is revealed concerning them, for they constitute one of the chief subjects of revelation, and not because they are no fit theme for human thought – for why then should they have been preached or revealed at all? But they are so called because they are too vast and glorious for a human mind, or an archangel’s intellect, fully to grasp. Yes, brethren, it is even so. Yet the Apostle did not evade the mighty subject. What his preaching was you may learn from what his epistles are. And how brightly emblazoned they all are with his great Master’s name! Verily, like an earlier messenger of heaven, “he came for a witness to bear witness of the light”. And whether it was the essential glory of the incarnate God, or the value of the Lord’s atoning sacrifice, that awoke his inspired pen to the loftier strains of eloquence, what curious critic can decide?

There are seven constituent elements in “the unsearchable riches of Christ” which, in the name and by the authority of God, the apostle preached:

[1] He preached the divine supremacy of Christ. Some indeed deem the doctrine of our Lord’s divinity a point of no great practical importance, and advise us to let it alone. But the Apostle did not let it alone – and a practical doctrine it obviously is. There is a principle involved in the very act of believing the explicit, albeit mysterious, declarations of celestial truth. The article of Christ’s divinity also affects the question of religious worship – for he who disbelieves or overlooks it withholds from Jesus the homage that is due to Him; he fails to worship Him “who is over all, God blessed for ever”. Besides, it bears an intimate relation to the doctrine of the atonement. A mere dependant creature could not be accepted as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of ten thousand times ten thousand souls. It is surely clear that the persuasion that Christ the mediator is really divine is fitted to encourage the hope, and to confirm the confidence, of the sinner who betakes himself for refuge to the atoning cross.

[2] Paul preached the excellence of Christ as Prophet. He was disclosing the depths of celestial wisdom which that infallible Instructor taught, both in person and by His commissioned messengers. And he

was making manifest that, in teaching thus, the Redeemer spake the words of God.

[3] He preached the perfection of the Lord's humanity, announcing Him as the spotless lamb of sacrifice for the vindication of the Father's righteousness, and the satisfaction of the sinner's soul. And he held Him up so that His glorious character might fire the heart and regulate the footsteps of His followers on the earth, as "holy, harmless, undefiled," a specimen of what human nature was in the days of Eden, and of what it yet shall be in heaven.

[4] He preached Christ's atoning sacrifice. Yes, brethren, and no marvel that "we preach Christ crucified" is a motto and a watchword still among the ministers of Jesus. The doctrine of the atonement is a most important part of the truth on which saving faith lays hold. It is one of the great means by which God arouses the careless and begets Christian feeling in the heart. And how greatly does it tend to keep the believer's mind at peace – to soothe him when a sense of sin disquiets him, to stir into a stronger flame his love to God, his gratitude to Christ and his zeal for souls, and to make him willing to depart!

[5] But if the Apostle preached Christ as the Saviour on the cross, he also preached him as the Saviour on the throne. And if from His office as the slain victim, so also from His office as the interceding priest, Paul drew sound arguments to show that "He is able . . . to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him".

[6] From heaven Paul, as it were, descended along with Him to earth amidst the thunders of the day of doom. O how solemn, how sublime the theme! How daring the task to preach the doctrine of the Lord the judge – to tell of the clouds in whose majestic chariot He shall come, and the "flaming fire" in which He shall be revealed from heaven, and the "mighty angels" who shall travel in His train, and the uplifted throne on which He shall sit down, and the scrutiny by which the secret things shall be made manifest, and the sentences by which He shall adjudge to their respective portions the millions of mankind!

[7] But the Apostle Paul set forth not only the personal qualifications which Christ possesses, but also the benefits which He has procured for men. These too are "unsearchable riches" – comprehending as they do, in their glorious treasury, pardon for innumerable sins, acceptance with heaven's holy Majesty, affectionate intercourse with God, freedom from the dominant influence of sin, guidance in difficulty, comfort in affliction, peace in death, rest in paradise, a glorious resurrection, and eternal happiness in heaven.

Such, brethren, is a glance at the "unsearchable riches of Christ". These our inspired Apostle preached, and God be praised if there are yet ministers who rejoice to magnify a Saviour so glorious and so good, and who long to

attract immortal souls to the salvation of the gospel, by the manifestation of His greatness and His grace.

(3.) Paul was called to preach these riches “among the Gentiles”. Converted Jews were indeed not excluded from the privileges of the gospel, nor unconverted Jews from its offers. That gospel was “the power of God unto salvation to every one that” believed; and this was its comprehensive call: “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”. But Paul had his individual sphere of labour, to a great degree, assigned him among the Gentiles. Besides, the reception of the Gentiles into the Church, and the efforts made to bring them to the enjoyment of its benefits, marked a fresh era in the history of the world and gave a characteristic and glorious peculiarity to the religion of the gospel.

(4.) The Apostle was commissioned “to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God”. What this mystery was appears from verses 3-6: “How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel”. From the statement that this mystery – the participation by the Gentiles in the privileges of the Church, and their fellow-heirship in this respect with the Jews, had “from the beginning of the world . . . been hid in God” – it is not to be supposed that no mention was made in the Old Testament Scriptures of the reception of the Gentiles into the Christian Church. But we are to understand that the doctrine, as there propounded, was comparatively dark, and by a large proportion of the Jews remained unnoticed and unknown.

The “fellowship” of this mystery is the fellowship to which the mystery referred, and a beautiful exposition of it is given by Paul himself in verses 11-18 of the second chapter: “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and

that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” What marvel if the Apostle delighted to “make all men see” a fellowship like this – a fellowship so finely characteristic of that religion which welcomes both Jews and Gentiles to its arms, and of that Church in which “there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free,” but all are one in Christ?

3. Let us very briefly notice **the source** to which Paul attributes his possession **of the ministerial office**: “unto me is this grace given”. Here Paul traces to the free and undeserved goodness of his God and Saviour the fact that it was his to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In like manner, he elsewhere says, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious”.

(1.) To his God and Saviour, the Apostle attributes his possession of the ministerial office, and well might he do so. From Him he received his commission to preach the gospel (Acts 9:15, 13:2). By Him he was animated with that love to God and gratitude to Christ which prompted him to engage in the labours and sufferings involved in the work. By Him he was furnished with those intellectual and moral gifts and miraculous powers which qualified him for the office. And finally, by Him he was enabled and encouraged to persevere until, in the retrospect of life and prospect of eternity, he said, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand”.

(2.) The Apostle’s words suggest that to hold the office of the ministry is a privilege. “A privilege!” some of you may be ready to exclaim, “is it not rather a responsible, painful and laborious charge?” “Who is sufficient for these things?” the Apostle asks. And when a man thinks on what the Christian ministry is – on the physical labour and the intellectual effort it involves, the difficulty of prevailing on men to receive the Saviour, the disappointments to which the minister is subject, and the frequency with which he is called to look down into the graves of those committed to his charge and weep, not so much over the cold remains, as over souls which, he may greatly fear, have gone unpardoned, unprepared into eternity – when a man thinks of these things, and at the same time remembers the solemn responsibility under which the Christian minister lies, what marvel if, for a moment at least, he shrinks from so dread a charge?

Yet, after all, the faithful minister of Jesus feels that, in holding the office of the ministry, he enjoys a privilege for which heartfelt gratitude is due. If that office has its pains, it also has its pleasures; if it has its cross, it also has

its crown. It brings the mind of him who bears it into contact with subjects of transcendent importance and glory. It furnishes him with a mighty stimulus to intellectual study and to Christian piety. If the faithful minister is successful in winning souls, he may take to himself the comfort of that wonderful promise: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever". And even if he seems to be unsuccessful, he has still that promise to resort to: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord".

But will you not be gathered? Mighty are the arguments by which we are called to urge you to receive the Saviour by practical and saving faith. And this day, by the authority of God, and by the love of Jesus, by the glories of eternal life, and by the horrors of "the second death", we pray you so to do. And doubt not that if, moved by these great arguments, you indeed, in accordance with the exhortations of your ministers, betake yourselves to Christ by faith, their hearts will rejoice, even theirs. The Christian minister may be accepted of his God and may speak of his office as a privilege, even though he should seem to have but little success among the people of his charge. And in the assurance of his own acceptance, his mind may be free from agitating care. But it is when he is eminently successful that he enters with heart and soul into the spirit of the expression, "Unto me is this grace given". And how can he be satisfied – how can he but have times of painful thought – so long as he has cause to fear that scarcely a single soul has been won by his instrumentality to Christ?

The glory of the gospel and the importance of the Christian ministry should admonish you as to how you ought to hear the one and to receive the other. Both unite to offer you, from the treasury of Christ's "unsearchable riches", acceptance with your offended God, pardon for all your sins, protection amidst all your dangers, guidance amidst all your difficulties, comfort in your times of trouble, peace in prospect of eternity, and everlasting glory for your lost and ruined natures. Will you not then accept the offer? Will you not obey the call? Will you not by faith receive the Saviour?

Finally, let us, the ministers of Christ, be stirred up to "live by the faith of the Son of God", and to labour in the noble cause of our heavenly King, strong in His strength and wise in His wisdom.

Heaven and earth, all the emperors, kings and princes of the world, could not raise a fit dwelling-place for God. Yet in a weak human soul that keeps His Word, He willingly resides. Isaiah calls heaven the Lord's seat, and earth His footstool; he does not call them His dwelling-place. When we seek after God, we shall find Him with them that keep His Word.

Martin Luther

*Letters of Samuel Rutherford*¹

A Review Article by *Rev Roderick MacLeod*

This is a compilation of 365 letters written by Samuel Rutherford in times of severe ecclesiastical trials in Scotland. They span a period from 1627 (possibly 1624) to 1661. This is the second reprint the Banner of Truth has produced of the 1891 edition, which was edited by Andrew Bonar. There are over 700 pages of letters, a glossary of terms, notes elucidating the text and other material of antiquarian interest, and useful indices – of persons and subjects. The book also contains a useful 30-page historical sketch of the author; several pages give a helpful summary of the letters. The book closes with the “Last Words”, A R Cousin’s extracts from the letters, turning into poetry some of Rutherford’s “most remarkable utterances”.

Apart from a few exceptions, these are private letters and they bear the marks of such. Many, if not all of them, bear a pastoral character – they are the utterances of a minister of Jesus Christ who is about the business of His high and honourable calling. In them we hear the spiritual heartbeat of a true and able minister of the New Testament, and it would be good if, in reading them, we would acquire a little proficiency in the divine art of drawing from the same fountain of “grace for grace” that he drew from. The recipients are various: men and women, ministers and elders, nobility and commoners. The letters embody the spirit of the words of Jude “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort [you] that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Having been asked to review Rutherford’s *Letters*, I have found it difficult to offer a critical appraisal of these most intimate expressions of the heart of this holy servant of Jesus Christ. I will therefore attempt to weigh this spiritual gold in the scales of another. When Dr John Kennedy, in *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, described the gospel work of ministers as (1) self-denied, (2) earnest, (3) faithful, (4) wise, (5) powerful and (6) discriminating, he was describing its character in every age. I think the reader of these letters will discover that Rutherford conducted his ministry with a heart motivated, to an unusual degree, by these same heavenly principles. We will refer in turn to Kennedy’s characteristics.

Self-denied. Samuel Rutherford’s theological abilities had already been recognised; he was later to become Professor of Theology in St Andrews University. Such a man might have been allowed to express himself in

¹Published by the Banner of Truth Trust, hardback, 764 pages, £18.50, available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

abstruse, technical terms, attracting much admiration from a certain class of people. However, like his Master, he chose to express eternal verities in pictures drawn by words, which the weakest intellect could not fail to understand. What Kennedy says of the preaching of others, we may say of the writing of Rutherford: "There are some who preach before the people, like actors on the stage, to display themselves and to please their audience. Not such were the self-denied ministers of Ross-shire." Not such also were the self-denied letters of Rutherford. It is true that self-denial manifests itself in different ways in different men and in different times, and some find fault with Rutherford's style. But it is to be feared that these critics thrive on the sap of a less noble vine and have learned little practical divinity in the school of self-denial. While there is a need for learned treatises (of which Rutherford wrote not a few), these letters are characterised by a pastor's delight to reach the poorest of Christ's afflicted ones.

Earnest. Men of a certain bent often tickle the ears of their hearers with fine questions, cleverly propounded and wonderfully resolved. They scratch the itching ears of a godless generation who suppose they have a specialised knowledge in high matters. It is no concern to them that Christ's wounded children languish without spiritual balm. Let us consult Kennedy again. He speaks of those "who preach over their people. Studying for the highest, instead of doing so for the lowest, in intelligence, they elaborate learned treatises, which float like the mist, when delivered, over the heads of their hearers. Not such were the earnest preachers of Ross-shire." Not such also were the letters of Rutherford. Eternity is stamped on them. The true way thither is carefully expounded. A searching description of those who are in that way is insisted on. The hypocritical heart is lamented and laid bare.

The solemn issue of the eternal state of immortal souls is a reality in these earnest letters of Rutherford. "Let [leave] feathers and shadows alone to children, and go seek your Well-beloved. Your only errand to the world is to woo Christ" (letter 127). The spirit of his Master is conspicuous in him, constraining him to bind up the broken-hearted; he comforts his persecuted friends with great tenderness. Consoling one who was drinking deep draughts of the cup of affliction, he wrote: "In the great work of redemption, your lovely, beautiful and glorious Friend and well-beloved Jesus was brought to tears and strong cries; so as His face was wet with tears and blood, arising from a holy fear and the weight of the curse. Take a drink of the Son of God's cup, and love it the better that He drank it before you. There is no poison in it" (letter 41).

Faithful. Kennedy said that some ministers "never take aim at the views and conduct of the individuals before them. They step carefully aside, lest

their hearers should be struck by their shaft, and aim them at phantoms beyond them. Not such were the faithful preachers of Ross-shire.” Not such also were the faithful letters of Rutherford. One example of his faithfulness is in letter 174. Lord Craighall, who was supportive of the prerogatives of the King of Zion in some issues, seemed to waver on other equally-important matters. Rutherford wrote to him: “Give me leave to be plain with you, as one who loveth both your honour and your soul. . . . Let me . . . most humbly beseech you by the mercies of God, by the consolations of His Spirit, by the dear blood and wounds of your lovely Redeemer, by the salvation of your soul, by your compearance before the awful face of a sin-avenging and dreadful Judge, not to set in comparison together your soul’s peace, Christ’s love, and His kingly honour now called in question, with your place, honour, house or ease, that an inch of time will make out of the way. I verily believe that Christ is now begging a testimony of you and is saying, ‘And will ye also leave Me?’”

Wise. Kennedy deplored those ministers who “serve out in a sermon the gossip of the week”, and seemed to be possessed with “the idea that the transgressor can be scolded out of the ways of iniquity. Not such were the wise ministers of Ross-shire.” Not such also were the wise letters of Rutherford. For an example of tender dealing with those still apparently in their sins see letter 164. A young parishioner’s sympathetic letter to her pastor in prison gave him the opportunity to write: “Loving friend . . . I entreat you now, in the morning of your life, to seek the Lord and His face. Beware of the follies of dangerous youth, a perilous time for your soul.”

These letters were written in a time when men suffered for standing against the encroachments of the state upon the liberties of the Church in Scotland. Because of this, many of them offer encouragement based, not on the strength derived from the arm of flesh, but from the arm of the Lord. To Alexander Gordon of Earlston he wrote: “I have heard of the mind and malice of your adversaries . . . I doubt not but Christ will count it His honour to back His weak servant.” Rutherford encouraged him to persevere in the face of sore trials and bereavement: “Ye see your Father is homely with you. Strokes of a father evidence kindness and care; take them so” (letter 59).

Powerful. Kennedy complained of those preachers “who aim well, but they are weak. Their eye is along the arrow towards the heart of their hearers, but their arm is too feeble for sending it on to the mark. Superficial in their experience and in their knowledge, they reach not the case of God’s people by their doctrine, and they strike with no vigour at the consciences of the ungodly.” Not such were the powerful preachers of Ross-shire. Not such also were the powerful letters of Rutherford. Their preservation through over 300 years testifies to their power, reaching the case of God’s people. Not only

had they power over those who received them and preserved them, but over the following generations, who continued to read them. Notice the forcefulness with which Rutherford addressed the conscience, in a letter we have already quoted from (174): “Will ye then go with them, and set your lip to the whore’s golden cup, and drink the wine of the wrath of God almighty with them? O poor hungry honour! O cursed pleasure! and O, damnable ease, bought with the loss of God.”

Who can question Rutherford’s knowledge and experience? The eminent Thomas Halyburton, on his deathbed, said that the few lines to a young man in letter 81 contained “more practical religion than a large volume”.

Discriminating. When Kennedy contrasts the false and the true ministers of Christ, he bemoans those preachers who do not discriminate between the precious and the vile. Not such were the letters of Rutherford, who clearly delineated the marks of those who are in Christ and those who are not (in, for example, letter 172). He did not fail to see the danger in his day from those within the pale of the visible Church who had no love to her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, nor to His kingly prerogatives. “The truth is, Christ’s crown, His sceptre, and the freedom of His kingdom, is that which is now called in question; because we will not allow that Christ should pay tribute and be a vassal to the shields [rulers] of the earth, therefore the sons of our mother are angry at us. But it becometh not Christ to hold any man’s stirrup” (letter 69).

In conclusion, this peerless volume is recommended first to ministers and students of divinity. God’s servants – in Galloway and in Ross-shire, in the seventeenth and the nineteenth century – drew sap from the same eternal Vine and bore the same spiritual fruit: some more, some less. May the Lord of the harvest send forth many such servants in the twenty-first century. I believe it is the desire of every believer, and so, in particular, of all Christ’s true servants, to bear fruit on the same Vine, nourished on the same sap. It is perhaps appropriate in this context to quote the words: “If you would be a deep divine, I recommend to you sanctification. Fear Him, and He will reveal His covenant to you” (letter 170, to Mr John Meine, who was possibly a divinity student).

It is further recommended to all who have an interest in the history of this period. Apart from the biographical sketch already mentioned, many of the prominent ministers, men and women of that period are among Rutherford’s correspondents. It is of interest that he identifies at least one of those who were to rise to great usefulness after his departure. “Remember my love to . . . Mr John Brown. I never could get my love off that man: I think Christ hath something to do with him” (letter 243). Brown became the minister of Wamphray in Dumfries-shire and was later banished from Scotland. Taking

up residence in Holland he wrote several volumes in defence of the Truth.

Lastly, it is recommended to all who love Zion and her illustrious King, especially in these troubled times, when it appears to human reason that the Church in Scotland is “old and grey-haired, near the grave, and no man taketh it to heart” (letter 7). This book will be relished by all who say of the ordinances of God’s worship:

“The habitation of Thine house, Lord, I have loved well;

Yea, in that place I do delight where doth Thine honour dwell” (Ps 26:7). Here you will see how important our Presbyterian foundation is. It is important because it is biblical. It is important because the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as Sovereign in His own Kingdom is bound up with it. Love cannot work in a void; it needs something to work on. In these letters, there is much matter to stir up spiritual love. Here you will find the King of Zion, His bride, and the Bethel where they ordinarily meet to banquet together.

The Dunnottar Covenanters of 1685¹

3. Brought Back to Leith

Rev D W B Somerset

The Covenanters were much hampered during the latter part of their struggle by the divisions resulting from the various “Declarations of Indulgence”, the first of which had been issued by Charles II in 1669. Further Declarations followed in 1672, 1679 and 1687, and their effect was to permit Covenanting ministers who had been ejected from their parishes in 1662 to return to the work of the ministry, provided they acquiesced in certain conditions. Many of the less resolute Covenanters accepted these conditions and became “indulged”, but the more consistent ministers refused them. The problem then arose as to how to treat the “indulged” ministers, and the differences among the Covenanters on this issue were so severe as to destroy their unity. Indeed this was one of the principal factors in the Covenanters’ defeat at Bothwell Bridge in 1679.

The majority of the Covenanters, including many of the well-known leaders and field-preachers such as John Welsh of Irongray, John Blackadder, Archibald Riddell, Gabriel Semple and Alexander Peden, while strongly disapproving of those ministers who accepted the Indulgence, were nevertheless

¹In the first article in this series we gave Wodrow’s account of the Covenanting prisoners being taken to Dunnottar Castle, and of some of their experiences during the summer of 1685. The present article describes their return to Leith. Wodrow’s account is more fragmentary here and we have supplemented it with other material.

prepared to have fellowship with them in certain circumstances. The more extreme Covenanters, however, such as Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron and James Renwick maintained that the “indulged” ministers, having betrayed the Covenants, should be entirely shunned, and that even those who heard them or who had received baptism from them for their children should be excluded from Covenanting fellowship.²

The followers of the more extreme view were known as the “Society People” or “Cameronians”, and after the Battle of Bothwell Bridge they kept themselves separate from the other Covenanters. The first general meeting of the “United Societies” was held on 15 December 1681. The majority of the Dunnottar prisoners would have belonged to the broader Covenanting party, but evidently a considerable number of them, such as Patrick Walker, were Cameronians,³ and one of the surviving letters written to the Dunnottar prisoners consists of advice to those of the Cameronian party on how to conduct themselves towards the other prisoners. It was written by Alexander Shields.

Shields (c 1660-1700) was born in the Merse, in the Borders, and graduated from Edinburgh University in 1675. He studied in Holland for a while and then returned to London, where he was licensed by Scottish Presbyterians about 1683. On Sabbath, 11 January 1685, he was apprehended preaching at a private meeting in Gutter Lane (between St Paul’s Cathedral and the Guildhall) and sent by yacht to Scotland with seven of his hearers, five of whom were imprisoned in Dunnottar Castle. Shields himself was sentenced to the Bass Rock on August 7 and taken there on August 14. He was at this time leaning strongly towards the Cameronians, and he eventually joined them after his escape from the Edinburgh Tolbooth in October 1686. His brother Michael had been the clerk to the United Societies since 1681.

In 1687 Shields published *A Hind Let Loose*, a vindication of the Cameronian position, but after the Revolution he left the Cameronians and entered

²John Brown of Wamphray and Robert M^cWard, who were exiled in Holland, tended to the more extreme view. So too at first did the Dutch minister Wilhelmus á Brakel, but he changed his mind when he had more information. The complications of the situation are brought out by the words of one of the field-preachers, Thomas Douglas: “I am not for a sinful union with the indulged, nor for a sinful union with those that are for a sinful union with the indulged, and because of this my ministry has been rejected in many places by many persons . . . neither am I for a sinful separation from them that are not for a sinful union with the indulged, and because of this my ministry has been rejected these two years past and more by some” (quoted in Maurice Grant, *No King But Christ*, Evangelical Press, 1988, p 254).

³In 1683, 7000 men belonged to the United Societies. See Matthew Hutchinson, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, Paisley, 1893, p 63. Together with their families, they might have represented about 30 000 people. The population of Scotland was probably less than a million at this time.

the Church of Scotland, being ordained in 1691. He was an exceptionally able man, but, according to John Howie, “somewhat fiery” and “full of zeal, whatever way he intended”.⁴ There is an anecdote of his giving the people of Aberdeen some much-needed advice in a sermon after the Revolution, telling them that “the only way to get a fast grip of Christ was to entertain him with three liquors of three sundry bickers [wooden cups]; you must have a pint of hope, three pints of faith, and nine pints of hot, hot, burning zeal”.⁵ In 1697 he was settled as one of the ministers of St Andrews, but in 1699 he accompanied the Scottish expedition to Darien as a chaplain, dying of fever in Jamaica. A few months before his departure for the New World he was instrumental in persuading the young Thomas Halyburton to enter on trials for licensing. He urged him, says Halyburton, “with that gravity and concern that had more weight on my spirit than all that had been spoken to me”.⁶

Shields’ letter to the Dunnottar prisoners was written in June 1685, when he was still in prison in Edinburgh. It was very lengthy; it ran to 32 pages when published in 1726.⁷ He argues calmly from biblical principles, but always comes down in favour of the separate position of the Society People. Much of the letter is taken up with general discussion – which ministers one might lawfully hear, which professing Christians one might lawfully join with, what persons one might admit to a fellowship meeting, and what a Christian might do in visiting a foreign country such as England, Ireland, France, Holland or Hungary. But at the end he addresses the problem at Dunnottar, where there was a forced “joining”, as “of men shut up in a prison, in one room with locked doors”. Even in this case, Shields believed, the distinct position of the Society People must be maintained:

“Only would there be some difference allowed in your carriage to these who desire to be admitted, and those who desire to admit you to their communion. The first require more tenderness and condescendency; the other more caution and peremptoriness. I mean, when you are the greater number in a room; when you are to give proposals to those that would join with you, and if they will not acquiesce, yet I think ye cannot hinder them from the privilege of public worship, amongst themselves at convenient turns, if they demand it; for that were altogether unbrotherly, and savouring too much of supremacy: but if you be the lesser number there, and cannot join with them, then I think you should plead for your privilege of keeping up public worship

⁴John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, ed J A Wylie, London, nd, p 698.

⁵“Jacob Curate”, *Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence*, London, 1692, p 107.

⁶Thomas Halyburton, *Memoirs*, Free Church edn, Edinburgh, nd, p 184.

⁷Alexander Shields, *The Due Boundaries of Christian Fellowship; specially, with whom 'tis lawful to join in divine worship, and from whom 'tis duty to withdraw*, 1726.

among yourselves; and as you would hear theirs without joining, yet in an inoffensive posture, and a place separate by yourselves . . . for this is not joining with them by turns, but a separate fellowship of your own, taking your own turns, and pleading your own privilege, whereby you may have the advantage of letting them hear your public begrate [weeping], and bemoanings of their offensive courses and disorders.”⁸

The Earl of Argyll, whose rebellion had been the occasion of the prisoners being sent to Dunnottar, was captured near Renfrew on June 18 and executed in Edinburgh on June 30. It was some time, however, before the Dunnottar prisoners were returned to the south. On July 9 the Privy Council considered a petition asking for permission to transport some of the prisoners to America, and decided to grant its crave: “Anent a petition presented by Sir Robert Gordon, younger of Gordonstoun, and Sir John Gordon, his brother, showing that where several prisoners and others that lie under outlawry are in the Castle of Dunnottar who are not yet disposed of to any of His Majesty’s plantations, and it being usual to the Council to grant a gift of several of such creatures, and the supplicants, having interest in the province of East New Jersey, did beg the Council would grant order for liberation of so many of the said prisoners as the supplicants should find caution to transport to the said province. . . . The Lords of His Majesty’s Privy Council, having heard and considered the foresaid petition, do hereby allow the petitioner to have some of these prisoners in Dunnottar Castle lately banished, to be by him transported to the abovementioned plantations.”⁹

Before the prisoners were banished, however, an attempt was made to shake their resolution with offers of freedom. Wodrow gives an account of this: “By the [Privy] Council Registers, I find, July 13, the Earls of Errol and Kintore, or any of them, are appointed to go to Dunnottar, and examine the prisoners, and notice who of them are content to take the Test, who will take the Allegiance with the Supremacy, or the Allegiance simply, or who will engage to live regularly, and keep their parish kirk, and appear when called.”¹⁰

⁸Quoted in D G Barron, *The Castle of Dunnottar and its History*, Edinburgh, 1925, p 105. Shields’ letter, not surprisingly, gave offence to the non-Cameronian prisoners. William Boyd, one of the successful escapees from Dunnottar, told John Erskine in September 1685 that he was “much concerned in the doing of these people that followed Mr Rannie [Renwick]”, *Journal of Hon John Erskine of Carnock 1683-7*, Edinburgh, 1893, p 153.

⁹*The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland 1685-6*, Third Series, vol 11, Edinburgh, 1929, pp 94-5.

¹⁰For the Oath of Allegiance and the Act anent Supremacy, see note 1 of the first article. The Test Act of 1681 required “all persons in public trust” to take yet another oath, which soon came to be imposed on many private people as well. The oath required an adherence to the Protestant religion as contained in the Scotch Confession of 1560, a renouncing of

Accordingly, about the middle of July, the Earls of Marischal and Kintore came to Dunnottar. This was their way now: after they hoped that poor people's patience was worn out, they came with new offers, and temptations to quit their principles.

"The questions proposed to the prisoners were, 'Whether they owned the king as their lawful sovereign, and would subject to his authority, and to all in authority under him; whether they would pray for the king; whether they disowned the Apologetical Declaration;¹¹ whether, upon oath, they were ready to assert, that it was unlawful, upon any pretext whatsoever, particularly that of the Covenant, to rise in arms against the king, or any employed by him'. A considerable number of them gave some reasonable satisfaction, in several of those questions; but all refused the Oath of Allegiance, as embodied with the Supremacy."¹² A list is preserved in the Sheriff Court records of Kincardineshire of the names of 37 of the prisoners, 30 men and seven women, who took some of the oaths at this time.¹³

One of the Dunnottar prisoners, John Fraser of Pitcalzean in the parish of Nigg, was a Highlander, and another, Andrew M'Queen from Drymen, may well have been a Gaelic speaker.¹⁴ A third prisoner, William Trumble (or Turnbull), was "from England".¹⁵ Otherwise all the prisoners, so far as is known, were from the south of Scotland – from Teviotdale, Dumfries-shire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Galloway, Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Alloa and several other places. They had been arrested, some individually and some in small groups, in many different circumstances; and these groupings become evident in the various lists of prisoners, with certain names always occurring together.¹⁶ Some of the groups were more resolute than others, and generally the whole of a group would act in the same way, either all agreeing or all refusing to take an oath. Most of those who yielded on this occasion belonged to groups which had been imprisoned in Glasgow.

the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, and an absolute subjection to the King. It was inherently self-contradictory in a number of respects, see Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, ed R Burns, Glasgow, 1830, vol 3, pp 296-7.

¹¹The "Apologetical Declaration" was a statement issued by the Cameronians in October 1684 warning that those who acted as informers against them for the Government stood in danger of reprisals, see Wodrow, vol 4, pp 148-9.

¹²Wodrow, vol 4, pp 325-6.

¹³James Anderson, *The Black Book of Kincardineshire*, Stonehaven, 1843, pp 28-9.

¹⁴A quarter of the parish of Drymen spoke Gaelic in 1705, C J Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981*, Edinburgh, 1984, p 59.

¹⁵*Register of the Privy Council*, p 290.

¹⁶For the arrest of one group of prisoners near Kippen, see Thomas M'Crie, *Memoirs of William Veitch and George Brysson*, Edinburgh, 1825, pp 446-7.

On July 24 it was decided to proceed with the banishing of those prisoners who would not conform. The Register of the Privy Council records: "The Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council, having considered a report made to them by the Earls of Marischal and Kintore, do hereby give full power, warrant, and commission to the Earls of Marischal, Errol, Kintore, Panmure, and the Lord President of the Session, or any two of them, to call and convene the prisoners in Dunnottar Castle before them, and to banish such of them as will not take the Oaths of Allegiance and Abjuration,¹⁷ whether they be men or women, and not already banished, and deliver them, and these already banished, to such persons as the Council shall grant warrant for transporting of them to his Majesty's plantations, with certification that if any of them shall return into this Kingdom, they shall incur the penalty of death."¹⁸

On July 30, "the Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council, having considered the report anent the prisoners in Dunnottar, and finding it fit that they should be brought from that place hither by sea with a sufficient guard, do ordain a ship, boat or barque to be hired from Leith for transporting the said prisoners to Leith, there to remain till further order; and to recommend to General Dalziel to appoint a company of fusiliers for going along to guard the said prisoners from Dunnottar to Leith, and to the Lord Livingston to speak to the General to this purpose; and that the ship, boat, or barque be in readiness once [sooner or later] on Saturday next to receive the said soldiers from Dunnottar and guarding the said prisoners hither. It is allwise [in all cases] hereby declared that the expenses of transporting these prisoners from the said Castle shall be paid by the persons who shall receive them respectively, and do hereby give order and warrant to the Earl of Marischal, Governor of the said Castle, or his deputy Governor, to deliver the said prisoners to the person commander of these who are to guard them to Leith, where they are to remain prisoners either in guard or Tolbooth till further order. The Lords of His Majesty's Privy Council resolved that the Council meet at Leith when the prisoners arrive there, to sentence them to the Plantations or liberate and detain them as they find cause."¹⁹

This arrangement evidently fell through, however, because on August 4 the Privy Council gave "order and warrant to the Earl of Marischal, Governor of the Castle of Dunnottar, or in his absence to his deputy there, to deliver to the

¹⁷The Oath of Abjuration required the renouncing of the Apologetical Declaration (see note 10 above), "in so far as it . . . asserts that it is lawful to kill such as serve his Majesty in church, state, army or country". The Cameronians refused to take this oath because they denied that the Apologetical Declaration asserted any such thing, see Wodrow, vol 4, pp 157,161.

¹⁸*Register of the Privy Council*, p 114.

¹⁹*Register of the Privy Council*, p 125.

commander of the party of His Majesty's forces herewith sent the hail [all the] prisoners in the said Castle who were by order of Council lately sent thither, in order to their being transported from thence to this place by land, and grants warrant to the commander of the said party to press horses on the way for the carrying of sick prisoners in case the same be refused, as also to press boats for transporting the said prisoners at the several ferries if need be."²⁰

For some reason there was a further delay, and it was not until August 13 that the prisoners finally left Dunnottar. Here we have Wodrow's account of their return journey: "Accordingly, after near three months' severe treatment at Dunnottar, they come to Leith; two of them were left behind as dying men, of which Quintin Dick, so frequently mentioned, was one, and in his remarks formerly cited, he hath some sweet observations upon providence timing his sickness at this juncture. He recovered in some time and was overlooked and got safe home to his own house and lived some years to reflect with pleasure and record the Lord's wonderful steps of kindness to him and His goodness under, and after, all those sore troubles he underwent.

"Not a few who were in the great vault were sick, and allowed horses upon their own charges. The Reverend Mr Fraser was very infirm and weak, and yet the captain by no means would permit him to have the lent of a hired horse, as several others had. The foot had 66 miles to travel, and their hands tied behind their back with small cords. From Dunnottar they were carried to Montrose Tolbooth the first night, from thence to Arbroath, from thence to Dundee, from thence, upon the Sabbath, to the Cowpar of Fife, from thence to Burntisland, and thence to Leith."

"The Council were pleased to come down to Leith, and sit in the Tolbooth there, and spent some time in the re-examination of the prisoners. It was but very few complied with their impositions, and they were dismissed. Others, who were very weakly, and had some friends to intercede, got off upon a bond of compearance when called, as Mr William M'Millan, who gave bond as above, under the penalty of five thousand merks.²¹ The most part of them refusing the oaths, and to satisfy in other particulars, were perpetually banished to America, and many of them were gifted to the laird of Pitlochrie, to be carried thither.

"William Hannah, formerly mentioned, in the parish of Tundergarth, when brought before the lords, and refusing the oath of allegiance with the supremacy, was threatened with banishment. He told them that he was now too old to work, or go to war, and he reckoned he would be useless there. Old General

²⁰*Register of the Privy Council*, p 132.

²¹M'Millan had been licensed to preach by Presbyterians in Ireland about 1673. An account of sufferings from 1660-1684 is given in Wodrow, vol 4, pp 122-4.

Dalziel took him up very bitterly, and replied, he was not too old then to be hanged, and he would hang well enough. That same day, as my information bears, August 22, the General died suddenly, and William's age and sickness prevented his being carried away with the rest.²² In a few weeks he fell very ill in prison, and appearing to be in a dying condition, he was liberate, and got home, after very hard sufferings for three years and more."²³

The Tears of God's People (2)¹

Concern for others in their waywardness will produce tears. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law" (Ps 119:136). Thomas Manton² writes on this verse: "It is the duty and property of a godly man to mourn bitterly, even for other men's sins. Here we have the instance of David, and it may be suited with the practice of all the saints. Jeremiah: 'But, if ye will not bear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and my eye shall weep sore and run down with tears' (Jer 13:17). There you have described the right temper of a good prophet, first to entreat earnestly for them, and in case of refusal to weep bitterly for their obstinacy. Mark, it was not an ordinary sorrow he speaks of there, but a bitter weeping: 'mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears'. Not a slight, vanishing sigh, not a counterfeited sorrow – soul and eyes were both engaged – and this in secret places, where the privacy contributeth much to the measure and sincerity of it. Now, this is a fit instance of a minister of the gospel. We cannot always prevail when we plead with you, and shall not be responsible for it. God never required it at the hands of any minister to work grace and to save souls, but to do their endeavours. . . .

"The next example I shall produce is that of Lot in Sodom, who was vexed from day to day, in seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds (2 Pet 2:7,8). Not with Sodom's injuries but with Sodom's sins. . . .

"My next instance shall be our Lord Himself . . . He was grieved to see men harden themselves to their own destruction. So when He came to Jerusalem, a city not very friendly to Him, yet it is said, 'When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now

²²According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, it was the following evening that General Dalzell died suddenly after suffering a stroke on Sabbath, August 23.

²³Wodrow, vol 4, p 331.

¹Compiled by Peter Best from the writings of eminent Christians. The previous article appeared in the March issue.

²Manton (1620-1677) was an English Puritan, ejected for non-conformity in 1662.

they are hid from thine eyes' (Luke 19:41,42). Our Lord Jesus was made up of compassion, He weepeth not only for His friends, but His enemies. . . . First He shed His tears and then His blood. O foolish, careless city that will not regard terms and offers of peace in this her day! He bewailed them that knew not why they should be bewailed; they rejoiced, and He mourned; Christ's eyes are wetter, because theirs were so dry. And now He is in heaven, how doth His free grace go a-mourning after sinners, in the entreaties of the gospel! . . .

"When we produce these instances and examples of the Word: David, Lot, Jeremiah and Christ, many think these are rare and extraordinary instances, elevated beyond the ordinary line and pitch of Christian practice and perfection. No, it is a matter of duty lying upon all Christians. When God goes to mark out His people for preservation, who are those who are marked? The mourners: 'Go through the midst of the city . . . and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof' (Ezek 9:4). None are marked out for mercy but the mourners. The great difference between men and men in the Word is: the mourners in Zion and the sinners in Zion; so that it lieth upon all if we would have God's mark upon us. And the Apostle reproveth the Corinthians for want of this mourning: 'Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned' (1 Cor 5:2). Possibly many of the converted Corinthians disliked the foulness of the fact, but they did not mourn and solemnly lay it to heart; therefore the Apostle layeth a charge upon them.

"In all the examples that have been produced, that of Jesus Christ only is extraordinary; and yet we are bound to have the same mind in us that was in Jesus. We must have the same mind, though we cannot have the same measure of affection. Christ had the Spirit without measure, but we must have our proportion. If David can speak of floods, certainly we should at least be able to speak of drops."

Charles Bridges writes on the same text: "Thus uniformly is the character of God's people represented – not merely as those that are free from, but as 'those that sigh and that cry for, all the abominations that be done in the midst' of the land. They – they alone – are marked out for mercy in the midst of impending, universal ruin (Ezek 9:4). The want of this spirit is ever a feature of hardness and pride – a painful blot upon the profession of the gospel (1 Cor 5:2). . . . The appalling spectacle of a world apostatised from God, of multitudes sporting with everlasting destruction – as if the God of heaven were 'a man that he should lie' (Num 23:19) – is surely enough to force rivers of waters from the hearts of those who are concerned for His honour. . . . What hypocrisy is it to pray for their conversion, while we are

making no effort to promote it! O let it be our daily supplication that this indifference concerning their everlasting state may give way to a spirit of weeping tenderness. . . . Happy mourner in Zion, whose tears over the guilt and wretchedness of a perishing world are the outward indications of thy secret pleadings with God, and the effusion of a heart solemnly dedicated to the salvation of thy fellow sinners!”

The tears of others will draw out tears of sympathy. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Rom 12:15). Robert Haldane³ comments on this text: “This precept has no doubt a special importance with respect to brethren, but it is applicable in general. We ought to sympathise with our fellow creatures in their happiness and afflictions. The meaning of the precept is quite obvious. The prosperity of others ought to affect us with joy. Their affliction ought to affect us with sorrow. Even the very semblance of this duty among the people of the world has a beneficial influence on society, heightening the joy of prosperity, and lessening the pain of adversity.” On the same verse Charles Hodge⁴ says: “How lovely is genuine sympathy. How much like Christ is the man who feels the sorrows and joys of others as though they were his own!”

There are also tears of gratitude and love. “A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment” (Luke 7:37,38). J C Ryle⁵ says of this woman: “Her many tears, her deep affection, her public reverence, her action in anointing His feet, were traceable to one cause. She had been much forgiven, and so she loved much. Her love was the effect of her forgiveness, not the cause; the consequence of her forgiveness, not the condition; the result of her forgiveness, not the reason; the fruit of her forgiveness not the root. Would the Pharisee know why this woman showed so much love? It was because she felt so much forgiven. Would he know why he himself had shown his guest so little love? It was because he felt under no obligation, had no consciousness of having obtained forgiveness, had no sense of debt to Christ.”

God does not forget the tears of His people. “Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book” (Ps 56:8). David Dickson⁶ wrote: “God hath so great compassion on His servants in

³Haldane (1764-1842) was a Scottish theologian and noted lecturer.

⁴Hodge (1797-1878), an American Presbyterian, was a professor in Princeton Seminary.

⁵Ryle (1816-1900) was an Evangelical preacher and first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool.

⁶Dickson (1583-1662) was a Scottish Presbyterian minister.

trouble that He reckoneth even the steps of their wanderings and pilgrimage, and numbereth all their tears, and keepeth the count thereof, as it were in a register; and therefore every troubled servant of God, when he looks upon his sufferings, should look upon God also taking as particular notice of his troubles as he himself can do.”

When tears will be gone for ever. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4). We turn yet again to Matthew Henry, who writes of heaven:

“1. All the effects of former trouble shall be done away. They have been often before in tears, by reason of sin, of affliction, of the calamities of the Church; but now all tears shall be wiped away; no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain, any further than to make their present felicity the greater. God Himself, as their tender Father, with His own kind hand, shall wipe away the tears of His children; and they would not have been without those tears when God shall come and wipe them away.

“2. All the causes of future sorrow shall be for ever removed: There shall be neither death nor pain; and therefore no sorrow nor crying; these are things incident to that state in which they were before, but now all former things have passed away.”

Obituary

Mr Robert M MacLeod

“**H**elp, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.” So the Psalmist prayed, and we ourselves have much need of pleading for such help when the number of the Lord’s people in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland is so sadly diminished. How great is the blank caused by the passing away of even one godly, faithful, zealous and prayerful supporter of the cause of Christ. Such a man was Robert MacKay MacLeod, who died on 28 November 2006 at the great age of 92.

Robert was born in Inshegra, Kinlochbervie, in July 1914, the second youngest of the eight children of William MacLeod and his wife Christina. From them he had the priceless privilege of a Christian upbringing. His father, who was regarded as a godly man, although he never became a communicant in the Church, was conscientious in performing his baptismal vows to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Like many of his generation Robert, or Boban, as he was affectionately known, had to leave school in his early teens to work the family croft. As a

tall and strong young man, he was also employed in roadmaking, including an early reconstruction of the Laxford to Kinlochbervie road.

On the outbreak of the Second World War, Robert joined the army. He was one of a group of soldiers for whom Rev William Grant of Halkirk prayed fervently as they were on their way to be enlisted. Mr Grant, having been an army officer in France during the First World War, knew the horrors of war and was very concerned about the welfare of the young recruits.

His biographer describes a Monday morning when Mr Grant was at Helmsdale station waiting for a train to take him home to Halkirk. A large number of territorial soldiers from west Sutherland “was assembled on the platform, waiting for the train to take them south. He felt deeply for these lads – he knew how they felt. Climbing a few steps of the railway stairs, he called them to attention. They did so willingly. They had said their goodbyes to those dear to them in the little farms and homesteads of west Sutherland – those brave farewells when one cannot say much because the heart is too full. Mr Grant gathered them around him and he prayed – prayed that God would bless them and the loved ones left behind, that He would be with them in whatever lay ahead in the unknown future, that some day He would bring them all back in safety if that was His will and, above all else, that they would entrust their souls to Jesus, the great Saviour, who died for those who will believe in Him.

“Over twenty years afterwards, when Mr Grant and his wife were going round bidding goodbye to their Helmsdale friends before their retiral to Dingwall, an elderly lady sitting on a window-sill nearby, called out: ‘Is Mrs Grant there?’ On going over to the old lady, Mrs Grant was told, ‘I was wishing to tell you, in case you did not know, that all the Scouts or Territorials who were at Helmsdale station waiting for a train to take them to join the forces, and for whom Mr Grant so earnestly prayed for their safety, all came back safely from the war’. This story was completely new to Mrs Grant. Sometimes in later days, when Mr Grant had retired to Dingwall, men would come to speak to him on the streets to tell him that they were there [on Helmsdale Station platform] that day. There are moments in life which always stay with one. To the Lord be the glory in answering prayer for Jesus’ sake.”

The next year, Robert, who was now in the Lovat Scouts regiment, was posted to the Faroe Islands. Before sailing to the Islands his platoon was billeted at Braal Castle in Halkirk, Caithness for a short time. Rev William

Grant heard of this and arranged with their commanding officer for a number of them to be taken to church in Halkirk. After each service he entertained them to a meal in his manse. It would appear that some impressions of a spiritual kind were made upon Robert, and he always cherished fond memories of Mr Grant.

After being garrisoned for two years in the Faroe Islands, Robert was for a short period at Balmoral Castle as a member of the royal guard to King George VI during his annual holiday there. Then, along with his comrades-in-arms, he was sent to Canada to undergo extremely arduous training, in winter conditions, in the skills and strategies of mountain warfare. The regiment was later sent to Italy and landed at Naples. It assisted the Eighth Army by operating in mountainous areas behind enemy lines. A history of the Lovat Scouts states that "their value to the Eighth Army was immense". It came as no surprise to those who knew Robert well that he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. He had several narrow escapes – once a shell exploded close to him – and it was ever a great wonder to him that his life was spared.

After the war he became gamekeeper on Gualin Estate, a few miles from Kinlochbervie, and then manager of its sporting interests. "Indeed," says an obituary in the national press, "he became an institution revered by colleagues, neighbours, friends, tenants, visitors and not least his employers." Those who visited the estate were much impressed by his warm, energetic personality and his considerable knowledge of nature and wildlife. Some were even more impressed by what one frequent visitor described as "his unimpeachable integrity". "His blameless life was an object lesson to us all," said the same visitor.

Robert was ever a regular worshipper in the Kinlochbervie and Scourie congregation. However, it was not until 1974, and at the age of 60, that he made a profession of faith in Christ, during a communion season in the Scourie part of the congregation. We have no knowledge of when the great change took place. He was not one to talk about the Lord's secret dealings with his soul, although he was a lively conversationalist who could enter into the experiences of believers in a knowledgeable and profitable manner. It would appear, however, that he was savingly changed long before he made a profession of faith, for he was heard to express his regret that he had not become a communicant sooner.

In 1975, he was ordained to the eldership in the congregation. His warm-hearted and zealous interest in the Kinlochbervie and Scourie congregation was very evident. Some people can also testify to his generous support of the congregation. Each Sabbath, in those early years when the congregation was larger, his vehicle would be seen going to various local places as he picked

up people to take them to church. It was always his heart's desire to do what he could to promote Christ's kingdom in his own area and beyond.

It was late in life that Robert married. In October 1977, he was united in marriage to Mary Ross, Ardmore, the sister of his fellow elder, Robert Ross. She was his like-minded helper to the end. Their home was a warm and welcoming one which was especially busy at communion seasons.

When Robert retired from Gualin in 1979 and settled in Rhuvolt, Kinlochbervie, he was able to devote even more time to the interests of the congregation. As a fluent Gaelic speaker and a gifted precentor with a strong, melodious voice, he regularly led the praise in God's house. He also had the duty, along with his brother elder, of conducting services in the congregation during the periods when it was pastorless.

He also conducted services in the Halkirk congregation, of which he was an assessor elder for many years. Year after year, and into his ninetieth year, he most willingly drove to Halkirk once a month for a weekend. How greatly he is missed there as well as in Kinlochbervie and Scourie!

He delighted to commend Christ to his hearers. While the physical deliverances he experienced in war were a wonder to him, there was nothing so wonderful in his view as God delivering a soul from sin by Jesus Christ. He delighted in the Scripture prophecy, "His name shall be called Wonderful", and often referred to the Saviour as "the wonderful One". In speaking at fellowship meetings, his illustrations, mostly drawn from his experience of shepherding, were not only graphic but also helpful in delineating the work of grace in the soul of a believer, and the spiritual experiences which characterise the flock of the Good Shepherd.

During the last year of his life he was prevented by failing health from attending public worship, but his heart was there. He was fully one with the Psalmist who, when prevented from worshipping God publicly, exclaimed with deep longing:

"How lovely is Thy dwelling-place,
O Lord of hosts, to me!
The tabernacles of Thy grace
how pleasant, Lord, they be!" (Ps 84:1 metrical).

Robert especially longed to attend a communion season once again. "Would it not be lovely," he asked his wife one day, "to go to a communion?" but that was not to be. He was now also beginning to long to be in God's house above. Towards the end of his days he was overheard praying, "O Lord, take us home".

The desire of his soul was granted, we assuredly believe, when he passed away peacefully a few days after being taken to hospital last November. As

a soldier for king and country he lived up to his old regiment's motto, *Je Suis Prest* (I am ready), but more importantly he had, by grace, the absolutely-necessary readiness for the call of the King of kings to leave the company of the Church militant to join the Church triumphant.

Robert Macleod was of a warm, cheerful disposition and possessed natural dignity and frankness, but he was, above everything, a spiritually-minded man who walked humbly with his God, exalted the Saviour and furthered His cause. He loved the brethren, frequented the throne of grace, and kept his garments unspotted from the world. We mourn his passing and pray that others will be raised up in his place to serve the Lord in their own day and generation. "A seed shall serve Him" (Ps 22:30).

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to his grieving widow in her painful bereavement. May she be upheld by the Lord and experience the fulfilment of His gracious word to His people in their losses and loneliness: "Thy Maker is thy husband" (Is 54:5).
(Rev) Neil M Ross

Protestant View

The Darkness of Superstition

For his first visit to Latin America as Pope, Benedict XVI chose Brazil, a nation with more Roman Catholics than any other. He has many concerns in a huge country where immorality is so rampant that, according to its President, almost a third of schoolgirls between 14 and 17 are absent because they are pregnant. Abortion is generally against the law but the World Health Organisation estimates that there were over a million illegal abortions last year.

Yet, talking to journalists on the flight to Brazil, the Pope caused surprise by declaring that his "biggest worry" in the region was the loss of millions of his flock to Protestant churches. Though much Brazilian Protestantism is Charismatic, and is therefore in danger of adding to the Word of God through what are claimed as fresh revelations, yet, at least in theory, Protestants believe in the fundamental authority of Scripture alone.

According to a recent study, about 64% of Brazilians are Roman Catholic, but this is down from 89% in 1980. The Pope's reaction was: "We need to find a convincing response". But where now is the self-confidence of Rome's past? Her one foundation has always been the unqualified authority of the Church; when that fails to convince those brought up as Roman Catholics, she has nowhere else to turn. A BBC correspondent makes the interesting comment: "To the converts, the evangelicals offer the chance of redemption now, rather than in the afterlife, as well as a social network and help with

problems like drink or drugs. In contrast, Catholic rituals can seem stuffy and out-of-touch with day-to-day reality for most Brazilians.”

The Pope also seemed to indicate to journalists that he was backing church officials in Mexico City on abortion – a subject also being debated in Brazil. These officials had said that politicians who supported a new law permitting abortion would be excommunicated, as would medical workers who performed abortions. However, it was later reported that “a Vatican spokesman later clarified the issue, saying the Pope did not intend to excommunicate anyone”, but that “legislative action in favour of abortion is incompatible with participation in the Eucharist” and therefore “politicians exclude themselves from communion”. This sounds much more like spin than clarification, but Rome is notoriously unwilling to excommunicate; even priests who have committed serious crimes against children have merely been shunted to another parish.

In Sao Paulo, to the cheers of up to a million of his followers, the Pope canonised for the first time a native-born Brazilian, Friar Antonio Galvao (1739-1822). He is remembered for producing Latin prayers to the Virgin Mary written on little bits of paper and rolled into tiny balls; when they were swallowed – so it is claimed – they cured a whole list of ailments. His “pills” are still being dispensed by 14 nuns, at a rate of 10 000 a day during the run-up to the canonisation. Such is the degree of superstition sanctioned by the Roman Catholic system.

The downturn in Roman Catholic influence in Brazil was confirmed at the Pope’s final mass, held near Sao Paulo; although about 200 000 people attended, this was less than half the number predicted by church officials. How we should long for a time when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bright light of the gospel will so shine everywhere that all such superstitious darkness and idolatry will disappear completely!

Notes and Comments

The Kirking of the Scottish Parliament

At the time of writing, the confused situation arising from the election for the Scottish Parliament has not been resolved. Whatever may be the political complexion of the new Scottish Executive, the Parliament has begun its life in a way that does not hold out much prospect of it following the directions of God’s Word or enjoying the blessing of the God of wisdom, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice (Prov 8:15). Before the Parliament was convened, a service was held in St Giles (the High Kirk of Edinburgh,

where John Knox once ministered) professedly to seek God's blessing. In addition to the involvement of the Roman Catholic Cardinal, the Scottish Episcopal Primus and the Church of Scotland Moderator (reported in that order), the service included prayers from a Muslim Imam and from the Director of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities. Prince Charles was in attendance, along with party leaders, newly elected MSPs and "representatives of the Scottish establishment".

How far removed is our situation today from that in which the first Reformation Parliament met in 1560. A great work was still to be done before the Reformation was firmly established in Scotland, and it was not done by might nor power but by God's Spirit (Zec 4:6). But throughout the sittings of the Parliament, many of the members joined the congregation which heard Knox preach through the Book of Haggai with pointed application to the current situation. Thomas Randolph wrote at this time from Edinburgh to William Cecil: "Sermons are daily, and great audience. Though divers of the nobles present are not resolved in religion, yet do they repair daily to the preachings, which giveth a good hope to many that God will bow their hearts" (David Laing, *The Works of John Knox*, vol 6, p 112).

God is still the same, and His purposes for His Church in Scotland will be accomplished in spite of the forces arrayed against it. But the resolute abandonment and even repudiation by many in authority of any regard for the Truth of God, and the lack of devotion to that Truth on the part of much of the professing Church, make us fear that the Lord has a controversy with the land which will not be resolved until, in undeserved mercy, He brings us low before Him in repentance. "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Thy name for ever? Why withdrawest Thou Thy hand, even Thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom. For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps 74:10-12). *HMC*

Murders in Turkey

Three Christians were brutally murdered in Malatya in Turkey on April 18. One was a German missionary and the other two were Turks, one a pastor. They were conducting a Bible study with some young Muslims who were pretending, as it turned out, to be interested in Christianity. After the reading of the Bible, and perhaps when they closed their eyes to pray, the young men drew knives and proceeded to torture and kill the older men.

Malatya is about 200 miles from Tarsus, where Paul was born, and about 300 miles from Antioch, where believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). We do not know the secrets of men's hearts but, as far as we can gather, the men were true believers. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps 116:15). *DWBS*

University's Unreasonable Demand

Last November the Christian Union (CU) at Edinburgh University was forbidden by the university authorities from using university premises for a course called "Pure", as it was based on the premise that sexual relationships outside marriage, and homosexual relationships in particular, are wrong.

However, the ban has recently been lifted. The CU may now run such courses on campus, provided it "acknowledges the other side of the debate" in its meetings, by displaying materials which outline other beliefs, including those which promote homosexuality. "We were told," said a CU spokesman, "that posters could be put up, for example, advertising the gay and lesbian students' group on campus." One report says that "the move is an attempt by Edinburgh University to guard against claims of discrimination".

This astonishing requirement is a glaring instance of what we might call reverse discrimination. While the university authorities are zealously trying to prevent discrimination against those whose beliefs and practices are contrary to God's law, they have no qualms in discriminating against a Christian body. Does the university require, for example, homosexual groups on campus to display at their meetings posters promoting Christianity? We think not.

This is not the first time that the University has acted in an unreasonable manner in such an area. Two years ago it forbade the placing of copies of the Bible in its halls of residence, following protests by the students' union. Such decisions not only indicate craven political correctness and support for immorality, but they also manifest antipathy to Christianity and strong aversion to biblical prohibitions of particular sins. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Is 5:20). *NMR*

Screening Embryos

It was reported at the beginning of May that fertility clinics in Britain have started screening embryos for "cosmetic abnormalities" such as squints. The methods which are used at fertility clinics produce a number of embryos, out of which some are chosen for implantation in the mother. In one instance a clinic in London screened embryos in order to eliminate those which might develop with squints. Meanwhile a clinic in Nottingham is applying for permission to screen for embryos with a particular gene which might cause a misshapen face and deafness.

We do not believe that the treatment followed at fertility clinics is morally justifiable in any case. The formation of human embryos in large numbers, of which very few can survive, shows a disregard for the sanctity of human life. The current development is a further step in the degradation of human beings.

George Whitefield, Angus of the Hills, and “Rabbi” Duncan had severe squints, as far as one can make out from pictures; while George Smeaton, Roderick Macleod, Snizort, and Archibald Johnston of Wariston (one of the authors of the National Covenant of 1638) had milder ones.

Human beings should be put to death only if they have committed a crime worthy of death. Unborn babies are “shapen in iniquity” and “conceived in sin” (Ps 51:5) but they do not deserve to die at the hands of their fellow men. At the Day of Judgement their blood will be found upon those who killed them, if they do not repent.

DWBS

Church Information

Meetings of Presbytery

Northern: At Dingwall, on Tuesday, June 19, at 2 pm.

Southern: At Glasgow, on Tuesday, June 12, at 2 pm.

Western: At Laide, on Tuesday, June 12, at 6 pm.

Skye: At Portree, on Tuesday, June 19, at 11 am.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway, on Tuesday, June 19, at 11 am.

Australia & New Zealand: At Gisborne, on Friday, October 19, at 2.30 pm.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo, on Tuesday, June 12, at 11 am.

College and Library Fund

By appointment of Synod, the first of two special collections for the College and Library Fund is due to be taken in congregations during June.

R A Campbell, General Treasurer

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library Fund: Friend, Newcastle, Is 30:18-21, £40; Friend, Newcastle, Is 54:17, £40.

Dominions & Overseas Fund: Anon, £1000.

Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund: Netherlands Friends, “for mosquito nets at Mbumba”, €500; Netherlands Friends, “for translation of *The Holy War*”, €4000; PEH, Bournemouth, “for work in Israel”, £100; Australian Free Church, Chadstone, Victoria, “for Africa”, £827; Well-wisher, Southern England, £60.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Fort William: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £80.

Gairloch: *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £250; Anon, £20 per Rev AEW.

Portree: *Congregational Funds:* DRM & AM, £75 per Rev FMD.

Raasay: *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £30 per Rev JRT. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, “for Zimbabwe Mission”, £120 per Rev JRT.

Staffin: *Congregational Funds:* Anon, North Uist, £25 per Rev WAW; D&WM, £25. *Door Collection:* Staffin House, £50. *Sustentation Fund:* Staffin House, £50.