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LIFE *and* WORK

OF

REV. JOHN McMILLAN, D.D.

Pioneer

Preacher - Educator - Patriot

OF

Western Pennsylvania

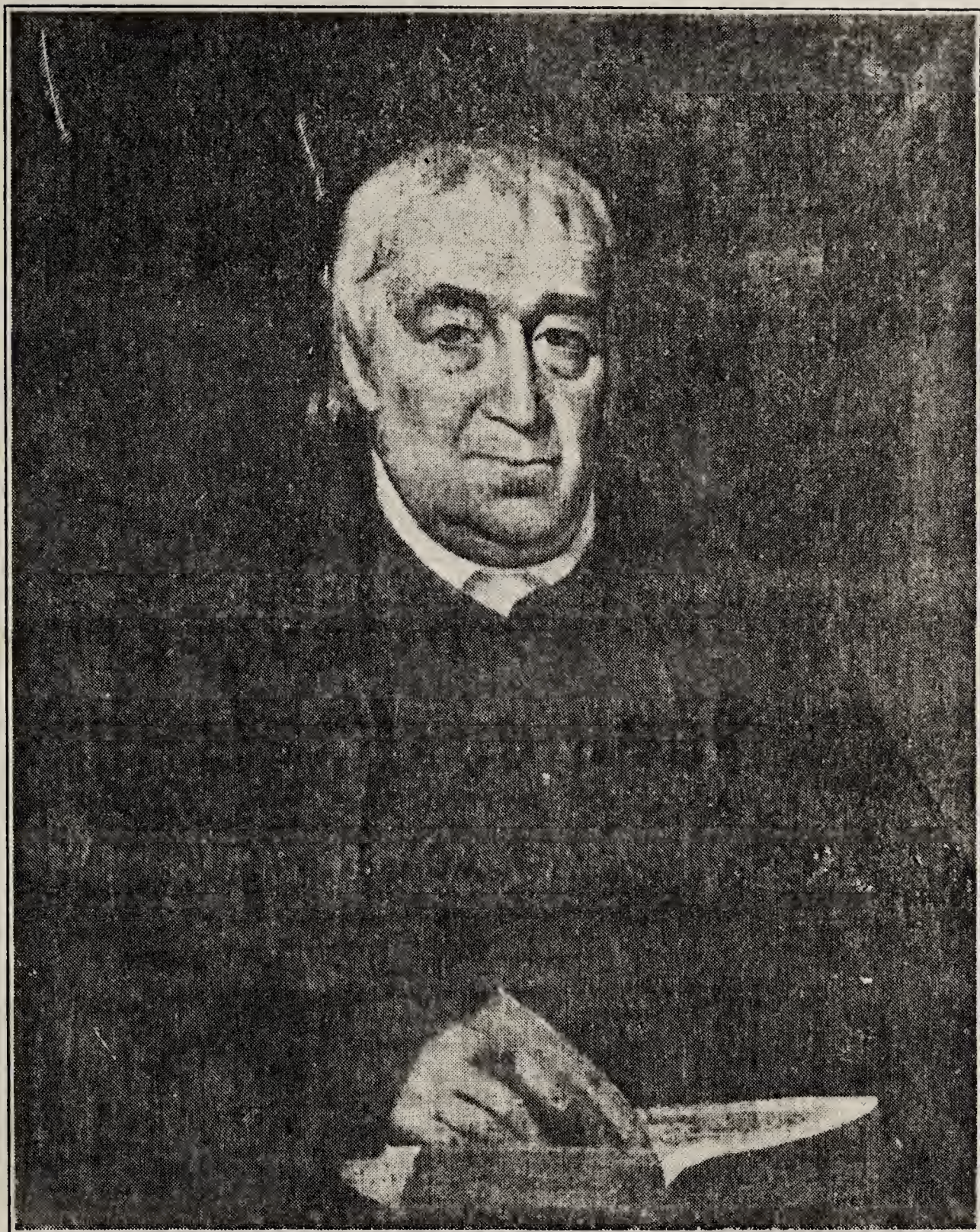
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REV. JOHN McMILLAN, M.A., D.D.

Born 1752

Died 1833

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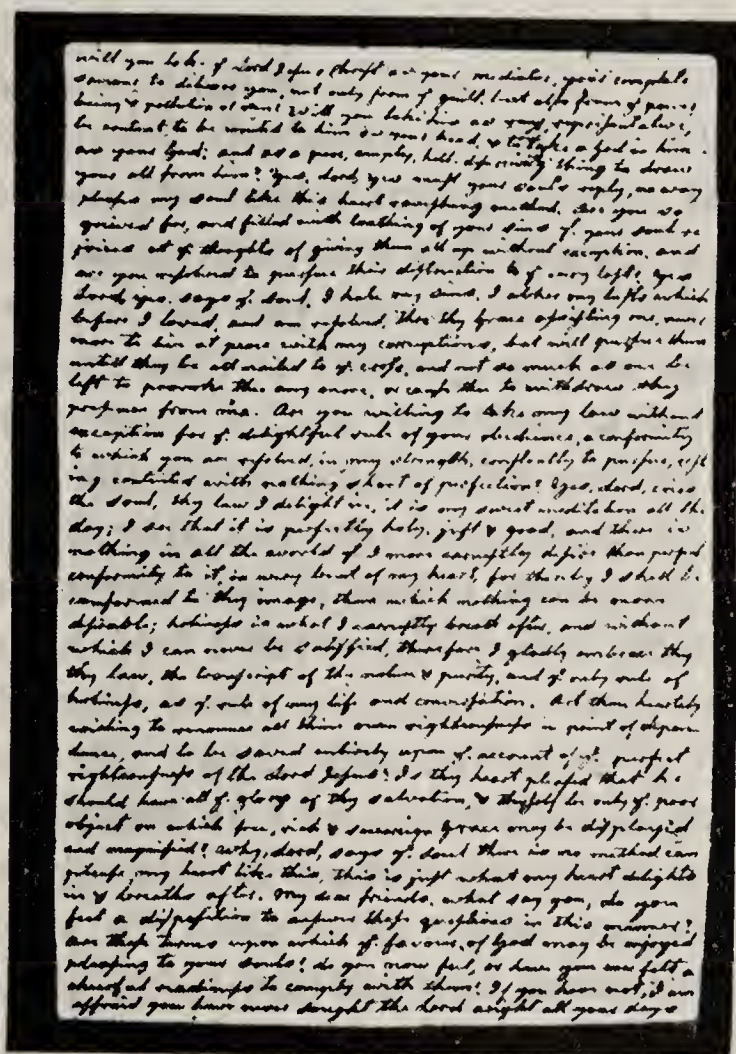
by

DANIEL M. BENNETT



A Sermon Preached by Rev. John McMillan, D.D. in 1780

Mr. Harper Allen, (a descendant), of Washington, Pa., has in his possession, a lot of material in the way of manuscript and old records, that had been prepared by the Doctor, and were found among his effects after his



A photostatic copy of some of
Dr. McMillan's Writing

death. Among them were a great many sermons that the Doctor had written out in full.

Rev. Lee E. Schaeffer, "Minister now in charge at old Chartiers (Hill) Church" secured one of these sermons, and at the Sabbath morning service, December 2, 1934, delivered or read the same sermon that the Doctor had delivered on almost the same spot, 154 years before. Rev. Schaeffer very kindly gave us a copy of this sermon for our records. By reading it, you have a good oppor-

tunity to compare the kind of preaching of the early days of the west with that of the present day divines.

2 Cor. 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the Faith."

The great duty here exhorted to is self examination, and that which we are to enquire into is, whether we be in the faith; whether that precious grace of faith has ever been implanted in our hearts, or whether ever we have been made partakers of that faith which unites to Christ, and interests the soul in all the blessings and benefits of the new Covenant and doubtless this is a matter of the greatest importance and ought to be attended to with the greatest care by every one of the human race. All mankind are by nature sinners, and so exposed to the everlasting vengeance of an incensed Jehovah, neither are they able, by anything which they can do to avert the storm of divine wrath, nor can they support under it.

Christ has borne the dreadful storm in the room of mankind, sinners, and offers safety and protection to all that will fly to and trust in Him as their hiding place, their covert and their rock; but as it is only by faith that we can receive Christ and be interested in that salvation which he wrought out, it highly concerns each of us to examine whether we have been made partakers of it or not. Some years ago I endeavored from these words to show you wherein the duty of self-examination consisted, the necessity of our being employed in it, and that it is a duty which requires great care and diligence in order to the due performance of it. All that I intend at present is to assist you in this important duty, by setting before you some of the characters of a living faith; and these I shall take from the character of the saints recorded in Scripture, as well because in them we have the most timely picture of the native operations and effects of saving faith.

1. If you be indeed in the faith, your faith has an influence upon all your religious duties, as Abel's who

offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, as having respect to the atoning sacrifice of Christ. You fall at Jehovah's feet, humble and self-emptied; as nothing and less than nothing before Him, who putteth not rust in His saints, and chargeth His angels with folly. Your only confidence in approaching a holy God, is the throne sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, and His gracious invitation to draw near to it for mercy and grace. Your only trust, for the acceptance of your services as well as your persons, is the righteousness of Christ, and in His strength alone you desire to attempt every duty. Sensible of your insufficiency for any spiritual exercise, and encouraged by the promise of His grace, you look up to Him for the gracious aids of His Holy Spirit. In duties performed from such a principle, petitions are offered up with desire, for the blessings requested, sins confessed with sorrow for them, and mercies acknowledged with thankful hearts. Very different from this is the sacrifice of ungodly worshippers. They pray without desire, confess without sorrow and offer praise on a thoughtless tongue. Nay, their hearts are opposed to the answer of their prayers, except it be for temporal favors, or merely to be saved from wrath. Augustine confesses that in the days of his unregeneracy, when he prayed to be made chaste, his heart said, "Not yet, Lord, not yet." O ye mockers of God, who expect favors for your corrupt services! Can such hypocritical suits succeed with Him? Will hypocrisy and lies secure His favor? Is it any wonder, if God cast the dung of your sacrifice in your face, saying, "Who hath required this at your hand?"

2. If you be in the faith, then, like Enoch's your faith will appear in a life of communion and holy walking with God. By believing, views of His amiable glories, shining in the face of Christ, your souls are drawn to Him in holy affections, correspondent to His divine perfections, in which the life of communion with God consists. And, impressed with a sense of His immediate presence and universal Providence, you walk before Him

to all well-pleasing, as always in His sight. Your conversation is in Heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour and your souls thirst for God, the living God. But graceless professors, alienated from the life of God, are strangers to those devout breathings of a pious heart.

3. If you be in the faith, like Noah's your faith will operate in a holy fear of God. This is frequently laid down in the word of God as a character of the faithful. Not the fear of a slave, who only dreads the whip; nor the sottish, soul-hardening despair of the fearful and unbelieving, who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, unless they speedily obtain repentance unto life: but such an awe of the majesty, righteousness and goodness of the Lord, as will make you tremble at His judgments, while you confide in His mercy, and betake yourselves to Christ for safety from the deluge of deserved wrath. The fear of the reprobate drives him from the Saviour, and torments his soul with horror and dread of God as an avenging Judge. This fear consists with the power and love of sin reigning in the heart. But the pious soul dreads sinning more than suffering, and says with faithful Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This fear, as in a dutiful child, operates as well in love and holy obedience to his God and father, as in religious caution lest he should give Him any offense in thought, in work, or in deed.

4. If you be in the faith, then, like Abraham's your faith will be productive of self-denial and a ready obedience to the divine commands, even those that are most difficult and cross to flesh and blood. Trusting the power, mercy and truth of a promising God, he left his own country and kindred at the call of heaven, and sojourned in a land of strangers and enemies. And, which was still more trying to nature, he attempted, at the command of God, to offer his beloved Isaac, the son of promise, the son of his old age, the only son of his well-beloved

Sarah; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure. If you belong to Christ, you have made many sacrifices for His name's sake: husbands, wives, parents, children, brothers, sisters, houses, lands; yea and you are determined to part with your own lives, rather than deny his name or religion. Not that piety gives a disrelish for lawful enjoyments or lessens our affections, or much less makes us bitter against our relatives, it rather sweetens them to us, by the lawful enjoyments of them; and excites our gratitude for them as the undeserved gifts of Heaven to us. I doubt not that Adam loved his Eve with a manifold purer and stronger flame, before, than ever he did after the fall. But grace will make your hearts say: "These are not my Gods." Giving Christ the throne in your hearts, it will dispose you to leave earth with all its enjoyments, or yield them up at His call. Yea, it will cause you to pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand for His sake, that is, not only to part with the allurements of the world, but with sins, as dear and pleasant to you as these members of the body. The language of every truly penitent believing heart is "What have I any more to do with idols?"

But the mere nominal or temporary believer is still wedded to his lusts and carnal pleasures, and by repeatedly turning a deaf ear to the calls and warnings of Heaven, is in danger of having the fearful, but just sentence, pronounced against him: "Ephraim is joined to Idols. Let him alone." Freely would he embrace houses, lands and carnal enjoyments as his only portion, did he not fear the wrath of God. Take these from him, and with Micah, his heart cries out "Ye have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?" But to the sincere believer, these are all tasteless without the Lord. Nay Heaven itself would be emptiness to him, should he not find his Saviour there. To be with Christ, which is far better, is a leading reason of his desire to be absent from the body. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and

there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee," is the native breathing of a gracious soul.

5. If you be in the faith, then, with Moses, you chose a lot with the despised, afflicted people of God, before any earthly pomp and riches. Heb. 11:24-26. "By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." All the power and wealth, the honors and pleasure of the world are empty bubbles and passing shadows in their esteem, compared to the unsearchable riches and honors of Christ. Communion with Him one day in His courts, is to them better than a thousand spent in all the tents of vanity and sin. They esteem the saints, of whatever condition or degree, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all their delight. This cause they set before any worldly or private interest: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Christ's people are their people, His interest their interest, and what gives a wound to it, touches the apple of their eyes. The stumbles and falls of professors and the unavoidable weaknesses and infirmities of the righteous, are their distress, because a wicked world takes occasion thence to reproach the cause of Christ, and make themselves easy in their sinning. But they rejoice in the prosperity of Zion. They long, they pray for the revival of religion in all the churches and the spread of the Gospel in power throughout the whole earth.

Widely different from this is the character of faithless professors, however sober some of them may appear before men. They choose religion when it is in fashion; but are unwilling to take up their cross and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes in good report and bad. A blast of persecution would soon blow multitudes of those

hypocrites off from Christ, and turn them to be bitter enemies to His cause. Give to some of them titles, honors, pleasures and riches, with an empty parade or plausible appearance in the pulpit, give to others of them, though it were but a beggarly portion of this world, with dull formality, flimsy dissertations, or dark, unintelligible and spurious novelties in the pulpit and they may continue to make some kind of a religious profession; but they will not interest themselves about the power of Godliness, except it be in opposition to it. True zeal for God they detest; spiritual and zealous Christians, especially ministers, are apt to become objects of their jealousy, their sneers, or their malignant reproaches, and the more so, the more eminent they are for piety, or success; unless convictions in their consciences and judgment be so strong as to suppress their visible opposition. Instead of being grieved, they watch, with an eagle eye, for the incidental slips, or unavoidable infirmities of pious people, and magnify their pimples into blotches, as a cover to their own offensive sores; not considering that their spots are not the spots of God's people; and if they cannot get visible blemishes to hold up, they will with diabolical malice and subtlety, twist and turn every word and action into every shape, in order to make some, like their predecessors of old, they clothe the saints in bear-skins, and then hunt with the dogs for them.

6. A steady perseverance and progress in the ways of Godliness, are among the best evidences of saving faith. The hearty friends of Christ go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion. Of the patriarchs, the Apostle says, "If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." A lively emblem of this, of the character of the Godly in all ages and places of the world, who, like Paul, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the mark for the

prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Their backslidings and returns again to God they will have; their winters and their summers; their nights as well as their days;" yet in general, "the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and the express testimony of Christ is, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." They may not always feel the same sensible affections, as at their first acquaintance with Christ; yet their views of divine objects will be more spiritual and distinct; their faith more steady; their love more solid; their humility, more deeply rooted; and their obedience, more uniform. Their life is a life of faith upon the Son of God; and by repeated acts of faith, "They grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

But they who stop their course or turn back, have never set their feet in the narrow way, which leadeth unto Life. And they who think they have religion enough, or can content themselves with just as much of it as they suppose, will barely take them to Heaven, or save them from Hell, have never yet tasted the pleasures of true religion, for there is every motive in faith's object and that experience of grace, to excite those who have obtained them, to press for a more full enjoyment of their comforts. Many, who have all the visible marks of believers in Christ, know no more of religious impressions upon their minds than those they felt many years ago. To them they are to recur back, in order to support their false hopes, or perhaps, to this end, they try to work up in their souls impressions similar to those they felt, when they first made an attempt to set out in religion, and there they rest though their impressions quickly die away, without leaving any lasting change upon their minds.

Thus have I endeavored to lay before you some of the characters of a living faith: do they correspond to your exercise? Are you possessed of this faith which

produces such effects, and leads to such an exercise? If you are then you may hence learn your advantages and obligations to make a due improvement of the talent God hath put into your hand. He that bestowed on you a holy principle, the exercise of which will produce a gradual assimilation to Himself; and meetness to Himself, and meetness for Heaven; and for those very purposes hath promised the influences of His Holy Spirit; you ought therefore earnestly to endeavor to have your faith strengthened. In order to do this be constant in the exercise of faith, for every habit grows by a repetition of acts. Be diligent in attending on all the means of grace for the cultivation of faith, for "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." Pray earnestly, as the Apostles did, "Lord, increase our faith." Get clear and distinct views of the nature and design of the plan of salvation, with the nature, extent and freedom of Gospel promises; as well as those made to Christ in your name, as those made to you for His sake.

For motives to excite you to those improving exercises, consider that a strong faith gives glory to God, and will enable you to live becoming your high calling. It will silence your unbelieving fears, and produce for you strength in weakness, light in darkness; comfort in sorrow, and relief in all your straits. It will make your journey to Zion easy, and smooth all the rugged steps of your way; open for you a comfortable passage through the valley of the shadow of death, and a joyful entrance into Eternal Life. It will enable you with humble boldness to approach the divine throne, for mercy and grace to help you in every time of need.

To plead for purchased mercies, upon the strength of a promise, is a most useful exercise of faith, for promoting the spiritual life, and obtaining all the precious fruits and comforts of it. Did time allow, I might point out the usefulness, and give directions for the exercise of faith, in every circumstance in which you can be placed, and to obtain every mercy you need, for time or eternity,

for yourselves or others, for individuals of the church in general. There is not a single case, with respect to which your prayers are required, but there is something in the promise suited to it, which you ought to hold up as a plea in prayer. To illustrate this in a few instances only. Do you want pardon for backsliding and the cure of a backsliding temper? Plead that gracious promise, "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely." Do you lament that your souls are as barren heath in the desert, which does not see good when it cometh? Plead this and such like works of grace, "Their souls shall be as a watered garden." Do you feel your need of strength for duty and warfare? Hold up to Christ His own precious word, "My Grace is sufficient for thee." Do you long to see the prosperity of Zion and rejoice in her joy? Plead the gracious promises of Zion's God, "To make her a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of God." "To be as the dew to Israel, to make him revive as the corn, grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." In this soul quickening exercise, faith looking to the mercy from which the promise originated, and the truth engaged for the performance of it, is strengthened to take hold of the Saviour; saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Such a wrestling Jacob will become a prevailing Israel.

Some of you perhaps are saying, "I fear I have no right to plead the promises. Had I tender spiritual affections, or assurance of my personal interest in Christ, I might venture to rest in Him, and plead the promises of His grace, but alas! my heart is so dark and cold and stupid I dare not, I cannot approach Him with confidence." Your fears indicate that your labor under mistakes, injurious to your comfort and progress in religion. You wish to know how good you are, and look for spiritual affections, or assurance of actual interest in Christ, as your warrant, at least in part, to apply to Him for pardon and grace. But he will let you know how bad you

are, and make you come self-emptied to the fountain of free grace for all your supplies. Your hesitation about your right to come, because of your want of powerful spiritual affections, is a dreg of that pride and unbelief which at first held you off from a closure with Christ, until you would be better prepared to apply to Him. You should come immediately to Him for those affections which you wish for as your encouragement or warrant to come. Here it will be useful for you to take notice of the distinction between an actual right in the blessings of the promise, and a right to come to Christ for them; between the grounds of trust and assurance of actual interest in him. Assurance of actual interest is found in part upon pious exercise of the heart as evidence of a gracious state, the agreement of which with the marks of true piety laid down in the word of God, is cleared and confirmed by the witness of the Spirit; but the sole ground of trust in Christ for pardon and grace is the full and free tender thereof in the offers and promises of the Gospel. If then you cannot ascertain your actual interest in these, yet you may be assured they give you a right or warrant to apply for the blessings contained in them. Therefore if you cannot come as a saint, come at the Gospel call as a sinner, as one of Adam's needy and ruined family. The judicious and spiritual Dr. Owen observes that "the grounds and essential acts of faith are always the same." In every succeeding act as well as in its first act, you must come to Christ for grace and salvation, as guilty, unworthy and helpless sinners, upon the encouragement of Gospel overtures only, without respect to any goodness in you, or done by you, as giving you a right to the blessings of the promise, or to apply for them. And as long as you attempt to come upon any other footing, so long will you be disappointed, so long will your perplexing doubts and fears remain. A present direct act of faith, upon the encouragement of the Gospel offer alone, is the way of safety, and the only way of relief from all your complaints. This will make what was

darkness before, shine with evidence as noon day; and without this, in vain will you look for spiritual affections, or assurance of personal interest in Christ and His salvation.

The Origin of the McMillan Family

Paper read by Rebecca (Mrs. D. M. Bennett at the reunion, August 25, 1932.)

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, fellow clansmen, I greet you as of the fifth generation of Dr. John McMillan. The sixth child of Dr. and Mrs. McMillan was named John. He was united in wedlock three times. His second marriage was to Sarah Weaver (who was a sister to Thomas Weaver), who had married Mary McMillan. John and Sarah's eldest child was called Rebecca (whose name I also bear), was married to William Caldwell, and their third child, John McMillan Caldwell, married to Margaret Lesnett, were my parents.

Now that I have proven my lineage, I am going to carry you back to the earliest records of the McMillan family we have been able to find.

The parents of Dr. McMillan were both born in the Paris of Carmony, in the County of Antrim, Ireland, therefore we are of Scotch-Irish descendants. William, the head of the family, was born in 1717. In 1738 he was united in marriage to Margaret Rea, and the same year they came to America, landing at New Castle, Delaware, where so many of his countrymen had disembarked. They moved on to Fagg's Manor, Chester County, where William bought a farm from the original patentee, whose name was Pinkerton, and to whom the patent was issued by William Penn's granddaughter; an old spring house still stands on the place; the framing and roofing timbers are all white oak, and for Chester County, would date it back before the Revolutionary War, it is still in a good state of preservation.

William was a tiller of the soil, and seems to have