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A Sermon.

*Sermon preached by the late REV. D. BEATON, Oban, at
Dingwall Communion, on Monday, 3rd February, 1936.**

Ezekiel ch. 1, v. 26:—"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it."

The Apostle in writing to Timothy tells him that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. I dare say that the most of us think that we accept these words and that in our own thoughts, at any rate, we never act contrary to them. But I think if we examine what goes on in our minds and in our heart we do not really believe that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction or instruction in righteousness, for we are ready to pass over certain chapters in the Bible. For instance, when we read in the Book of Chronicles the long list of Hebrew names which are so strange to us, we are so ready to skip over these chapters as if they had no meaning. But I will tell you one thing we would miss by doing so—we would miss the wonderful prayer of Jabez. It is there enshrined, as it were, among these unfamiliar names.

And then again we have the same feeling about the Book of Revelation—so difficult to understand. It is because it is difficult to understand that we are so ready to say, "Well, there may be a meaning in it but it is too difficult to understand." And we will not read this Book as we read other books. The result is that we lose a great deal by acting in that way, because there is a special promise to him that readeth this Book. The Holy Ghost has foreseen what was to take place in the ages to come, and has given a special promise to those who would read the Book.

* Sent in by Mr. Malcolm MacLeod, Arnish, Raasay.—Editor.

I daresay, when you heard me reading this chapter some of you would be saying, "I wonder what he can say on that chapter, and why it is he is reading that chapter on the Monday of a Communion." Well, perhaps, friends, although we may not be able to see very much in it, it is one of the most wonderful chapters in the Word of God and I hope to be able to touch upon a few things contained in this chapter that will be useful to us and give us a view of the divine purpose that will be for our edification and for our comfort.

You notice in connection with this mysterious vision given to the Prophet Ezekiel when he was by the River Chebar that it is expressly said that it was when the heavens opened that he saw the visions of God. It is a very remarkable thing that almost the same expression is used in the Book of Revelation that when the heavens were opened it was then that John saw the wonderful throne in heaven. And it is when the heavens are opened that any of the children of man will ever see the throne that is in heaven. Now, we are too ready to forget that in the midst of the things that may be happening, the affairs of this world and the affairs of the Church of Christ are under the control of a throne that is in heaven and if the windows of heaven were opened to us we would get a view of the greatness of that throne, and a sight of Him that is sitting upon it. Then the things that are happening would appear very different to us, and we would be saying whatever difficulties there may be in understanding the administration of Heaven that yet there is no doubt there is infinite power on that throne and infinite wisdom, too. Over that particular throne you notice that the rainbow was seen. These things that were happening were happening that God might accomplish His purpose of mercy and bring to pass all that He has ordained in connection with all that He intended to show to His people who were at that time in captivity.

The vision, you will notice, opens in a very strange and mysterious way. The prophet says: "And I looked and behold a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud and a fire infolding itself." Now there are three points to which I would seek to direct your attention. The prophet here has to do a great work to make known the purpose of God to the people to whom he was sent. There are things to happen to that people that are fitted in every way to discourage them, mysterious happenings they cannot understand, which they are ready to disconnect altogether with the throne that is in Heaven and with the rainbow over it.

They are very ready to come to wrong conclusions in connection with the whirlwind, the cloud, and the fire that is infolding itself. Out of that place where the whirlwind, the cloud, and the fire are, there came living creatures, very mysterious creatures,

too, and then he sees alongside these living creatures mysterious wheels. One wheel is so high that it is stretching right up to heaven and there is another wheel transversely in this great wheel. And you will notice that the living creatures and the wheels are never going backwards, always forward, and that there is a very intimate connection between the very beginning, the whirlwind, the cloud and fire out of which the living creatures came, they are all bound up together with the view that the prophet gets of the throne and the Person sitting on the throne who has the appearance of a man.

Now, first of all, let us notice with regard to the Divine purposes of God concerning His people and His cause in the world, that many a time they appear to them just as the whirlwind, many a time they appear to them just as a great cloud that is hiding from their view all that is going on, and many a time they appear to them as a burning fire that is kindled and they have no power to put it out, however much they would desire to do so. You would think of God's purposes that all was confusion, that there was no intelligence behind it all, no guiding hand, and that the greatest confusion exists there. It is wonderful that even the works of men seem to have the greatest confusion in them.

I remember when they were extending the harbour at Wick, and as the work was going on the people of the town used to look at the men working there. You would see one man with a pick digging in one part, another man wheeling away some earth or stones, one doing something here and another doing something there, and everything seemed to be in the greatest confusion. If you had not the knowledge that the mind of the engineer was behind all that work that was going on, you would come to the conclusion that there was no intelligence there at all. Every man was working as he pleased, there was no connection between the man with the pick and the man wheeling the barrow, no connection between the man digging the earth and the man completing excavations in another corner, but by and by you will notice that there is some order now beginning to appear. Although you may have no knowledge of engineering at all you come to the conclusion that there has been an intelligence, a plan in all this.

Now you will sometimes hear people say, "Why can this thing not be stopped?" Well, I wouldn't like to be the person who would try to stop a whirlwind. I know what would happen. I remember passing through the city of Regina a few weeks after it was smitten by a tornado which had made a track right through the city and left not one house standing. He would be a very foolish man when there were signs of the tornado coming who would go out and try to stop it. No, it had its work to do. There

was no man in Regina who could stop it. It came sweeping over the prairies and struck the city making a pathway for itself right through the city.

Remember God has his purposes in the whirlwind as well as in the calm. Did you ever notice that there are times in nature when everything is going so quietly and smoothly that if a person would tell you there would soon be a great storm you would say there was not much appearance of it. But when the storm comes, who is able to stop it? It sweeps over; it has a work to do and it will do it. It is a very remarkable thing that when there are some kind of pestilences the whirlwind is needed to clear them away and God in nature has many a time used the storms in order that these pestilences might be cleared. It is necessary that the air should be cleared, and in Grace, too, God is acting in this way. Now there is not one of us who likes to be out in the storm and if we had the power we would naturally say, "It's peace I'm after, I don't like these storms." Yet they are necessary in nature and God will see to it that they will do the work He intended them to do, whether we can understand the purpose of it or not. Sometimes when there has been a long time of peace it is very necessary that the whirlwind should sweep along and there is no use people saying, "Oh, they should stop it." It has its own work to do.

The next thing to notice is that the prophet saw there was a great cloud. He was not seeing what was going on behind. It was difficult to see behind the cloud and many a time the cloud has this effect that it produces a kind of feeling of fear just as it did with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. When they entered into the cloud they did not know what was to happen; and it is often the case with the unfolding of the Divine purposes, but they are well known and very plain to Him from all Eternity, they are very dark to us and we are only seeing them at a certain part and are misreading them, just as Jacob misread God's purpose for him when he said: "All these things are against me"—yet there was never a time in his life when they were working so much for him. Oh, how blind we are! The cloud is there as well as the whirlwind and there is also the fire infolding itself. That is a very remarkable expression, but what it means is this:—You may notice how, when a fire has been kindled, the little flames are like hands stretching out to draw material into them. The fire is getting wider and drawing in other material; it has a certain work to do and it has a connection with the throne. Remember all those things are connected and so in this way the fire is burning, but who can put that fire out? One man may light a fire that will set a whole mountain side in a blaze, but a hundred men cannot put it out. It is easy enough to kindle a fire—it is another thing to put it out. And sometimes these fires have a useful purpose. They are burning up that which is decayed and as it were are making

way for a new growth. They are very useful just as it is with the whirlwind. You will notice this after a storm. I was travelling recently from Oban to Glasgow and I observed that the wind had been sweeping through some of the forests, and some of the trees which had a very slight grip of the earth were lying flat on the ground. Then there was a great number of decayed trees and branches. They did not stand the storm very long—down they came, but there were some healthy trees there with only branches broken in the fury of the storm. What impressed me most of all was that the rotten, decaying trees had no chance before the storm, and the trees that had only a shallow grip of earth also went down before its fury.

What is true in connection with the storm is also true in connection with the fire. The fire can burn up a great deal of rubbish that is gathering and causing corruption. The fire is kindling and burning and it is Heaven that has kindled it and is controlling it. I remember when we were boys we used to delight in going out with the shepherds when they were burning the heather. It was not very difficult to set the whole countryside ablaze and the gamekeepers, owing to the interest they had in birds nesting, would only allow the fires to go a certain length and would beat it out with birch brooms. We mischievous boys would not care if all the forests in the place went on fire. It would have been great fun and you will find there are a great many mischievous people in the world who just delight in seeing a great fire. It seems to please them. But it is good for us to know that the burning is not left to the control of man.

God will allow the fire to go on to a certain point and when it has done its work He will stay it then. Everything must have been very dark and mysterious to Ezekiel as he went forward, the commissioned Servant of Heaven, to make known the will of God to the captives by the River Chebar that God had a divine purpose in all that he was permitting to happen to them with the fierce Chaldean armies coming from the north to sweep over them. But He had a purpose in doing it whether the prophet could see it there through the cloud or not. The mysterious thing of the vision was that out of all this confusion he saw the living creatures come forth.

How could living creatures come out of a place where the whirlwind was and the fire was burning fiercely. You would think there would be no life there at all, yet out of this we are told that the living creatures came forth, and they were very mysterious creatures. Each of them had four faces. There was the face of a man, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle. Very mysterious creatures, indeed, but living creatures, and they were all going forward, never going back. Now these faces symbolise certain aspects of the Divine purpose of Heaven.

The man's face was looking forward and the eagle's behind. The faces of the ox and lion were on the right and left. All these had a significance. The face of man is symbolic of reason. He has been endowed with reason, and there is reason behind the purposes of God. Yet, although we may never understand the reason, be assured of this, that the divine intelligence of Heaven is behind all the purposes in His Grace and Providence. Do not let us run away with the idea that these are mere incidental happenings. No! He is controlling them all. Then there is the living creature with the face of a lion. The lion is considered to be one of the most courageous beasts of the forest, strong, powerful and courageous, symbolic of strength and courage. Did you ever think that God's purposes are of such a nature that there is so much power that everything else has to stand out of the way in order that His purposes may be accomplished.

Remember this, dear friend, of the One Who is sitting on the throne, it is no weak hand that is holding the sceptre. There is never a time when He is taken unawares. It is unnecessary for Him to revise His plans and His purposes because of any new situation arising. He has seen them from Eternity and He knows the full force of the opposition, knows the method that will be adopted by those who oppose Him, and His plans will go forward.

And there is the face of the ox. What does it symbolise? In our part of the country it is not often we see oxen in the plough, but in some places you will see them. They are not like the horses. Quite a number of horses in the plough are full of fire and zest to get on with the work, but there is no hurry with the oxen, slow plodding to the end of the day and it is wonderful the amount of work done by them. Now God's purposes may be very slow-moving in our estimation. They may not be moving as fast as we would like them to move or as we think they should move. There is no such thing as standing still. You may think that the oxen are going very slowly but they are moving steadily forward. They are there symbolising the patience with which God is carrying out His divine purposes. To Him a thousand years are as one day and a day as a thousand years. We cannot understand that because we measure time in a different way altogether. But God's purposes are going on to accomplish all He intends to be accomplished.

Then there is the face that was like that of an eagle. It was behind, we are told. Now, wouldn't men give a lot to see behind them, especially in these days of motor cars. It is all very fine to have mirrors, but if you could actually see behind you as you see before you, it would be a great help to you many a time, but man does not possess that power: God has not given it to him. The eagle with its keenness of vision is symbolising that before and

behind everything is known to God. That which has already passed, that which is coming—all this is well known to God, and His purposes embrace it all.

In connection with these mysterious living creatures we are told there were the mysterious wheels, that there was a wheel within a wheel, that it was transversely in the outer wheel. The wheels were moving forward and there were eyes in them seeing all that was going on. There are eyes there and intelligence and everything is going on straight forward. What a mysterious thing it is; and you would think men have such great power in our day, are intoxicated with the sense of power they now possess. They point to the Forth Bridge and great triumphs of engineering and science. They look at the Queen Mary and say, "What a wonderful piece of work she is," and so she is a wonderful piece of work indeed, one of the greatest wonders of naval architecture that has ever been seen on the Clyde. But, after all, when the Queen Mary goes out on the great Atlantic she is very, very small. You may think when you see the vessel, "Oh, what a wonderful ship it is!" but what is she in comparison with the mighty Atlantic Ocean, the waters of which God has measured in the hollow of His hand. And the Atlantic is only one of the oceans in the world. Some of us have been across to get some sense of the immensity of God's creation, but what a small part of the oceans of the world after all the Atlantic is, and so, too, is man's work, however great it may be, when compared with the work of Heaven.

What is the significance of the wheels? Just that there is no break in the purposes of Heaven. We speak about His decrees in Christ and in Providence. But in one sense there is only one decree which embraces everything. There is no break in the purposes of God—you could go round the wheels and not find a break anywhere and the mysterious thing was that one of them reached right up to Heaven. If you and I through Grace given to us could just get a sight of the purposes of God being connected with the throne in Heaven it would give us a very different view of God's administration of His Kingdom. We would see things in a very different light. But we are blind. We see just very little of it. We are seeing only the lower part of the wheel and not thinking at all that it is connected with the throne in Heaven. God's purposes never stand, they are going on from age to age eternally accomplishing all He intended to bring to pass. You see men making laws and people doing this and that. They don't know at all what purpose God had in view and they find this going wrong, and the other thing going wrong. Mussolini might not be able to conquer Abyssinia for all we know, and the Soviet Government may not be getting on so well with its Five Year Plan. What if there be a divine purpose that Abyssinia will not be conquered—will Mussolini conquer Abyssinia then? Never! We

know not God's purpose although I am speaking in this way. We do not know His purpose in regard to Hitler. But one thing we are certain of, that if God's purpose is that these mighty powers will be brought down, down they shall come and there is no wisdom in any of their heads that will avert the disaster God has intended to be theirs.

And then there was the wonderful throne the prophet saw. Oh, if our eyes were opened! Then, like Ezekiel, we could look up and see Him sitting on the throne. Don't you think it would give us a very different view of all that is happening in the world? We would say: "There is no fear of this." I think it was the Prime Minister who said that when King George was very weak he called his private secretary and asked how it was going with the Empire. "It is well with the Empire," said the private secretary, and the king once more relapsed into unconsciousness.

Now, dear friends, one thing which is certain of His Kingdom is, that there is no unconsciousness and surely He will see to it that it will stand there in spite of all that wicked men can do, in spite of all that devils can do—and they can do a great deal far more than at one time in our life we believed they were able to do. Indeed, the Devil can do almost anything unless he is restrained by God Himself. With our eyes fixed upon the throne and upon Him Who is set upon it, we would go forth and our song would be that His name shall endure for ever, that it shall last as long as the sun. We would rejoice in thinking that He is to sit on that throne until all the divine purposes are accomplished in their own experience, if not in this world, in the world that is to come. And it will be a great day when they lift their eyes to Him Who is sitting upon the throne and say: "The One Who is sitting there is my friend and He is my Saviour and my Lord and Master."

May we know something about these things.

Sermon I.

By ROBERT TRAILL.

"For it is impossible that those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good work of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."—Heb. VI. 4, 5, 6.

Because the depth of the purposes in these words requires somewhat more than ordinary explication, and application also, I

thought it fit to insist on them in this exercise also,* and not to satisfy myself with our brief exposition. Many truths may be deduced from them, as we hinted in expounding; but it is the scope we shall attend unto mainly, and that, as it is relating to us, rather than to such a kind of apostacy of which none of us can possibly be guilty.

On all hands it is granted that an account of the sin against the Holy Ghost, and its punishment, is here held forth unto us, as is most plain; and that there is such a sin, which man through his corruptions and Satan's temptations may arrive unto, as shall render his salvation desperate. It is called from Matthew xii. 31, 32, a "sin unto death" (I John v. 16), for the pardon whereof in another we are not to pray. And here, and in Hebrews x. 29, it is spoken of as certainly damnable. All sin, indeed, is damnable in its nature; all sins may be damning in effect, without repentance and pardon; but this is always certainly damning.

The handling of the purpose here to your edification, labours under singular disadvantages, as—the difficulty that there is in finding out the nature of this great sin. The Lord hath left it so dark in the word that many of his servants have had their different apprehensions about it, whereof I might give you a large list, though in these times wherein light shineth more clearly about many other gospel truths, there is a greater agreement about it. It is the deepest apostacy after the highest common operations of the Spirit. It is some disadvantage also, that Satan is so ready to assault many of the godly with temptations about this; and where they prevail they are the worst of all his darts. Yet have I adventured to handle this subject on these accounts. (1) To use it as a reason against security and arrogancy in godliness, and as a preventive of the same deadly evil. (2) To encourage the truly godly, and arm them against Satan's temptations to this evil, or persuading them that they are guilty of it. (3) Because it comes in very seasonably upon the preceding purpose of men's standing out against Christ; which is so deep a subject that it requires a strict and exact handling. And (4) to prevent or remove the scandal to the gospel by men's apostacy.

Our method in our discourse is this: (1) To remove any mistakes that this portion of the word not rightly understood may occasion. And the main end is that, that they that have saving and true grace may fall away; and, therefore, we shall prove how it is not of such but merely of *professors* that the apostle speaks. And for clearing our path in this, we must compare these verses with verses 7 and 8, and especially 9, 10, 11 and 12, where he is

* This and the following sermon form the first part of a series in the original MS consisting of four discourses of which the last two are merely notes, and, therefore, unfit for publication.

speaking certainly to the truly godly amongst them. And so we have these comparisons: (1) Here are "gifts" and "tastings," that is, faith working by love. (2) How few are the men called and counted amongst Christians that are sensible souls fleeing for refuge to Christ. (3) Here are things glorious indeed, but not accompanying salvation; but in some going before it, in others without it. (4) Here the apostle supposeth a possibility of falling away, of those who are persuaded to the contrary. So that it is evident that the danger hinted in these words concerns bare professors only and not them that are true converts; yea, it is remarkable that in this same chapter the apostle saith as much for the certainty of the faith and perseverance and salvation of true believers as anywhere in the word. "God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (verses 17, 18, 19).

Our next work shall be to premise some truth from the words themselves that may clear our way: (1) That these attainments the apostle speaks of are, in themselves, excellent things and greatly to be valued; being great tokens of a more special favour of God to them to whom they are given than to them from whom they are withheld. (2) The having of them, as it is a mercy, so the truly godly have them all, and more. (3) The apostle doth not threaten any that have these things, save such as do not duly use them to an increase and obtaining of what is better still.

Our discourse now shall be on these heads, (1) What great attainments a mere professor may have. (2) How deeply he may fall from them, and notwithstanding of them. (3) What is the danger of such an apostacy.

(1) Such as shall be damned eternally may attain unto great things in religion. The truth of this is so plain and so well known in the word (see Matthew vii. 21, and xiii. 20, 21), that we need not stand to prove it further than by confirming the particulars; and we shall content ourselves with what is here. In handling this truth we shall (1) Show what these attainments are. (2) Why the Lord gives them to such characters. (3) What is wanting of that which would preserve them from apostacy.

First, what these attainments are. We shall insist on the five steps which the apostle names here:—

(1) He may be "enlightened"—natural darkness and blindness in the things of God are removed. This saith that he may have the means—and the worst of men have had the best of these,

as the Jews who had Christ's ministry, and that of his apostles—and these means may have a good effect on him, in enlightening his mind in the knowledge of truth. And this effect that is here named may extend so far that he may have a literal knowledge of the word and the truth thereof: of this there is no question. He may have a supernatural knowledge of many profound things in the word, by a special gift of knowledge or illumination so that he may in this be above many of the truly godly as to that sort of knowledge. It is likely that Judas knew more than the thief when he became penitent. And, indeed, there is nothing that a believer knoweth but this apostate may know, though not in the same manner; and thus the righteous, who are ignorant, may be far inferior to those who come short of heaven. The measure of his knowledge may be great; even that of all things concerning God, his own heart, and the doctrines that are contained in the word. And the fruits of that illumination may be great. He may see such an excellency in Christ's church as to join with it; and such danger in gross sin that he may leave it; and attach such blamelessness to his walk that no man can discern his rottenness.

(2) He may "taste of the heavenly gift"—he may have a sort of faith whereby Christ and His grace and mercy may be tasted by him. This is a mighty attainment whereof we spoke in the explication: but that we may draw the line the more accurately we must now further handle the nature of this faith whereby he tastes. We say then, that he hath an historical faith believing the truth of gospel tidings: this is a little tasting of justifying faith, for it is like it. He may meditate and contemplate on this truth; and this cannot be without some savour of it and its goodness. And he may apply these things to himself as his portion, and far more must this be savoury to him. "He heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while": for a *while* only he believeth.

(3) Such believers are "partakers" of the more special (not *most* special) workings "of the Holy Ghost." There may be alarming convictions; but Felix, Herod, and Judas wanted not these: to be awakened with a fright of hell is no token of a godly man. Or there may be debasing discoveries of self, so that they have not been ashamed to confess their sin to God's glory and their own shame: even Judas had this. Or external reformation flowing from fear of wrath, and that sensibly working on the heart, as in the case of Ahab. There may be within them a secret restraint on corruption by the hand of God, not only by his providence (Genes. xx.), but by motions on the heart. There may be a spirit of zeal for a good cause when it is afoot in a particular season, as that of the Jewish multitudes when they cried "Hosannah!" They may have great gifts, such as that of prayer, whereby they are able to

speak to God in pertinent petitions as to words, with good appearance of tender affections and great fervency; and also as of understanding the things of God, so of expressing them to the edification of others, in preaching and in conference. And they have some exercise of conscience in the discharge of these, not only as reflecting on the right season of doing, and of influence stirring them up to do them, but in looking on them when done; yea, and in finding difference as to assistance therein at one time and another: even Saul knew and lamented when God had departed from him.

(4) And "taste the good word of God"—that is, they find its relish and sweetness. When they find it touching their condition, yea, when some of its discoveries of duty are made, they may relish them, as Herod, who heard John gladly, and did many things. Also, not only its suitableness, but its power may be felt to the stirring up of delight and wonder, as in the case of many of Christ's hearers; and turning them to good resolutions and purposes. Its mysteries may delight them (and what wonder?) so that the feet of its ministers may be "beautiful upon the mountains"; and its promises of pardon, and peace, and acceptance being thought to be theirs may by them also be tasted and relished.

(5) They may taste of the "powers of the world to come." Besides what is said of this in the explication, these may be added: he may fancy heaven and that blessedness to be his, and venture and lose much for them; he may in some good measure undervalue the earth in comparison of them. By the "powers of the world to come," we may understand its virtues and properties, both of which this man may taste. And of its virtues and effects, such as the making a man solicitous and careful about knowing how to get it (Luke xviii. 18), and painfulness in the means of obtaining it. This is one of its powers also. There is also joy in the thought of its being his, and the endurance of suffering, rather than forfeit this right, though not much nor long; and he may have a lower esteem of this world than he formerly had and, like Balaam, think little and joyfully of death as a passage to heaven. And he may taste of its properties: its vast greatness may puzzle his understanding and make him cry out with David, "Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou has wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Psalm xxxi. 19). Its goodness and excellency may draw forth his affection of love and delight, and its being to come, his expectation and looking for it. So much of the first thing as to what great attainments a hypocrite may win to in godliness; not that every one attains so much, but the Lord gives them to some.

Second. Why doth the Lord grant so great things unto them that get no more?—a deep question that might safely enough be

answered with silence, or with the words of the householder, "May not I do what I will with mine own?" Yet may we offer at some wise reasons of this depth of Providence.

(1) It is to declare His willingness to save, and to make it the more evident that men's ruin is of themselves: for in this case is all done, that can be done, in the way of means; and more than is done to many, and more than he is bound to do for any. He brings them on a great way, to leave this on their consciences, and on the consciences of others, that he delights not in the death of sinners.

(2) The Lord doth this to make his grace the more conspicuous—his special saving grace; conspicuous in its freedom, and in its power also. When two are carried an equal length in the preparation to a saving interest in God, the one is taken and the other left.

(3) That his own people may not stay and sit down on any measure of attainments, but still may press on; so is he pleased, for this end, to communicate so much of his common grace to them that may backslide, that all may press forward for more.

Third. But you may say, "What is wanting to saving grace in all these things? They seem to be greater attainments than many of the people of God win to." This leads to the question, "What is wanting of that which would preserve from apostacy?" I answer, Everything here in the text hath somewhat wanting. As:

(1) Their illumination. It wants still these; they never see themselves quite undone and empty of all good so as to loathe themselves and be quite diffident of themselves and to go out of themselves. Always there is somewhat that the unsound sinks into and hath a good opinion of. And they never saw Christ, as the only enriching treasure for the man himself. Fine notions of Christ's accomplishments they may have in the general; but of his being all in all, and that he is suited fully to them, this they see not.

(2) As to their faith, it is called temporary because it lasts not; but this is not visible until defection, therefore we must search it farther out. Whatever faith a man may have of divine truth, and whatever application may be made of Christ to himself, he wants these things of a sound faith: (1) He wants the bottom and groundwork of saving faith, and that is denial of self and all self-sufficiency. The guilt of sin on his conscience may stir him up to employ Christ in some way; but utter emptiness of all good in himself, as well as of safety from himself, never can, nor doth move him. (2) And, therefore, he fails in the very act of faith which is a receiving of Christ wholly and resting in him as he is made of God to us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, and offered to us (I Cor. i. 30). God hath exalted

him to be a Prince and Saviour (Acts v. 31), and as such he is to be received. (3) And, lastly, he is a stranger unto the life of faith, or abiding in Christ, and drawing virtue from him (John xv.; Gal. ii. 20). These are mysteries impracticable unto the man of highest common attainments. No, all these three are knit together, and follow one on another. As to this, their shortcoming flows from their mistakes: they imagine they need Christ as a Saviour, and a giver of grace, and then, when they have got that which they think to be grace, they look on it as somewhat sufficient of itself with their careful improvement of it, to advance the work of their salvation. Whereas the true believer seeth as much necessity of taking up his abode in the city of refuge, as of fleeing to it; and knows that, as his first new life flowed from his engrafting into Christ, the true stock, so his fruitfulness depends on the daily communication of his virtue.

(3) As to their partaking of the Holy Ghost, here is a vast difference; they know nothing of the regenerating sanctifying virtue of the Holy Ghost, which is the main benefit sinners receive by him. They want still the change of the heart and nature; they are still bad ground (verse 8), still "dogs" (II Pet. ii. 22).

Object. But how shall I know that there is such a change by the Holy Ghost on me, but by such things as you have ascribed to the common operations? I answer: Better marks than any of these may every godly man find out of himself. As (1) A single regard unto God's glory, which can never affect an unsanctified soul. To make it the man's chief aim, the attaining of it his chief joy; His dishonour his chief sorrow, are nowhere to be found but in a sanctified soul. (2) And as to external reformation, those indications that are in the sound man are in the heart, and from thence in the life while the other man is still in an evil condition; and, therefore, that reformation of the former is more sound and even and universal. And it hath an aim also towards perfection; perfect holiness is lovely to a holy, sincere man. (3) As to gifts, the godly man, whatever share he hath or wants of these, hath what is far better than they are, and never wants such a measure of them as is simply needful. In prayer, for instance, though it may be he talks not so much nor so well as to words as one of greater gifts, yet he still talks better—for his heart is more at the work, his aim is more honest, his reflection more spiritual, and his attainments more gracious and sanctifying.

(4) Their tasting of the good word of God, whatever it hath in it, it wants much that the sound man hath. They taste not all in the word of God, for some things in it they are strangers unto; as its enlivening power quickening them by it, and according to it, which David (Psalm cxix.) so often prays for. See also I Peter i. 23, where it is described as a living seed cast into their heart,

raising them up unto a new life: this they know not. Its promises may quicken them to joy, but it never removes their natural death. Its feeding fructifying power also they know not of. They taste it only for trial, but do not feed on it. But a godly man finds this his bread, whereby his soul lives and grows, and brings forth fruit unto God. It is the children's bread that children's nature only hath an appetite after. Some things of the word also they taste that they do not relish and savour, as its convincing power: when it comes close to them, and that daily, to make new discoveries of their distemper, this they have no relish of. David takes it as a commendation of the word, that it warns him (Psalm xix. 11, 12). The unsound man can take its conviction now and then in good part; but when it is full at the work of discovering sin, and comes close upon his practices, he cannot endure it. And the unspotted holiness and strictness of God's work is no relishing thing to him, but he is ready inwardly to blame it as being too strict; whereby the godly man will, like Paul (Rom. vii. 12), call the law good, even when he cannot fulfil it.

(5) Though he may taste of the powers of the world to come, he wants what a godly man may have. For he wants the experience of the due meetness for it that every godly man in some measure possesses. He is ready, that is, willing, but not meet and prepared to receive it; and, therefore, you will find that he may pray for it and not make ready for it. It hath no such power on him, as to induce him to prefer it, as a spiritual happiness, above all things in the world; but still there are some things he loves better—somewhat which he is more afraid of losing, than of this blessedness, as trials do discover: the cares of the world, or the persecution of it, draws him away. And the spiritual and true earnest of it is still unknown to him; and though it may, in some measure, be also unknown to a godly man, yet seeing the apostle speaks of such an attainment of the hypocrite that the sincere themselves do not always obtain, we may well lay this against that as a proof of its wanting that which it seems to have. The earnest of glory is all one with that of the Spirit. "In whom (Christ) also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory." "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." "Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (Ephes. i. 13, 14; II Cor. i. 22 and v. 5). These expressions may help us to guess at the thing. The earnest being of the nature with the principal sum, as well as a securing of it, and the Holy Ghost being its author, we may know that it must have these things to make it up—some near degree of fellowship with God; some sensible advance in conformity to him; and a holy delight and

satisfaction resulting therefrom. Something like this, but a counterfeit, may the ungodly hypocrite have; but it is attained this way—he looks on heaven as a state of excellent happiness by his historical faith; his false spirit tells him it is his; and his heart rejoices in the hopes of it, though he still remains a stranger unto holy, sanctifying fellowship with God. The unsound man, for all his tasting of its powers, is yet unacquainted with these virtues that the meanest of the godly partake of; its main powers are not yet tasted. It takes not off his eye from sensible things, unto invisibles (II Cor. iv. 18). It put not a bitterness into all his contentments, in comparison of it. A godly man is a stranger, and all his desirable mercies are but pilgrim's fare to him that is often seasoned and hath the bitter sauce of the remembrance where he is and how far from home. It makes not all sufferings light and tolerable and small in regard of it. (See Rom. viii. 18; II Cor. iv. 17); then joyful (Matt. v. 12; Heb. x. 34). An unsound man may suffer for heaven, but he looks on this suffering as a great disadvantage, and is sorry that the way is not more easy; and, therefore, when sufferings come to a height he falls off. It makes the godly man count all the pains in labouring for it to be but small and unworthy of it; but the unsound man thinks he may take pains enough, and possibly too much; and, therefore, he becomes a censurer of them that go beyond him in diligence, that they may make more ado than there is need.

USE I. Since it is thus that bare professors, in whom the root of the matter is not found, may go so far, then this speaks terror unto those that are short of them; and they are many: it says, "If you come short of them that have not true grace, you must be far more behind than they." For the enforcing and clearing of this subject, know that many of those who go to hell are not by much so near heaven as others who yet shall be there also: many sail to hell by the coast of heaven, still expecting to land safely, till the storm come and drown them in perdition; and that all these things in some measure all the godly have had, and many remarkably, ere the gracious change was felt or came on them. And, therefore, though the having them will not prove you godly, yet the want of them will prove you to be ungodly.

Now, a slender reflection might suffice for conviction that many want what is here. As for illumination—are there not many grossly ignorant, and who know not the letter of divine truth; and many who have that have no more? A hypocrite may have great discoveries of the things of God, as we have already said. For faith there are many that give an ignorant implicit assent unto divine truth and the gospel that never came unto a tasting of the sweetness of the gospel; they have never felt any relish of a Saviour. For the partaking of the Holy Ghost—many have no knowledge

that there is a Holy Ghost, by any experience of his workings in awakening and convincing them. As for the taste of the word—many feel nothing in it of goodness and savour, nor of its pertinency to them, nor of its bitterness in reproving them. And as little power hath the world to come on them. If they can get thither when they die they care not for any of its virtues. How terrible should this be to you who are short of the attainments of those that yet may be in the gall of bitterness! The security of the age we live in, and the arrogance of professors, call aloud to ministers to proclaim to them their hazard.

USE 2. Be exhorted to take the warning in the scope of the apostle: go still forward in godliness until you come the length that no hypocrite can attain; and this will be a work for you all your life long. For though the sincere, though weak, believer be quite above the reach of a bare profession, yet every sincere man hath these things that will make his endeavours in advancing constant: He is humble, and thinks little of his attainments, though never so great; he is illuminated, and seeth both how small his attainments are, and how much is yet before him: hence, holy fear and jealousy of himself and his treacherous heart, and so is he the more diligent—and he hath a love to progress—both from his single regard to God's commandment and the love which the new creature within him hath toward further holiness.

If this fruit be reached in you, it is the design of the Holy Ghost in writing this, and mine in handling it: if not, I shall witness for God that you were warned of the greatest danger that can befall you, and that you slighted it; so that when it overtakes you, you may justify God and condemn yourselves. Oh! consider what a dreadful thought it will be in hell to think, "A little more advancing would have removed me out of the way of this danger." Certainly none fall deeper into hell than they that fall from the top of heaven's walls. He that hath given you what you have is as ready to give you what you want, and more. A misery wilfully contracted must yours then be.

Brief Memoir of Robert Traill.

The family of the Trails is one of considerable antiquity, and was at an early period possessed of the estate of Blebo, in Fife-shire. The first historical notice we find of them is in Keith's Catalogue of Scottish Bishops, wherein it is stated that Walter Traill, who was raised to the metropolitan see of St. Andrew's by King Robert III about the year 1385, was a son of the Laird of Blebo. Andrew Traill, the great-grandfather of the writer of these sermons, was a younger brother of the then proprietor: he

embraced the profession of arms, and served with distinction as a colonel in the wars of the Netherlands against Spain, and afterwards under the young King of Navarre, better known as Henry IV of France.

Robert Traill, the grandson of the preceding, and father of the subject of our memoir, is well known in the history of those who, during the 17th century, were sufferers for the truth in Scotland. He was minister of Elie in Fife, and afterwards of the Greyfriars' Church in Edinburgh—a situation that connected him with the public events, and involved him in the disastrous calamities of that stirring period. After witnessing the miseries inflicted by the Marquis of Montrose upon his country, he was one of the ministers who attended that noble to the scaffold. On the invasion of Cromwell, and the approach of the English army to Edinburgh, he took refuge in the Castle with those who refused to submit to the victorious general and, in the siege that followed, he was severely wounded. At the Restoration, and when the whole land was maddened with a blind fit of loyalty, his deepest thought was for the safety of the Church of Scotland; and with other nine ministers he drew up a declaration to the king in which, after congratulating His Majesty's return and professing their loyalty and submissiveness, they ventured modestly to remind him of his promises and engagements on behalf of the national church when he was crowned at Scoon. But for this, Traill was imprisoned with his brethren in the Castle for the space of seven months. Even when liberated he was narrowly watched by the prelates; and having ventured to expound the scriptures to a few friends in the house where he dwelt, he was accused of holding a conventicle and summoned before the Council. His sentence was banishment for life; and in 1663, when more than sixty years old, he was obliged to bid a mournful farewell to his home and family, and retire to Holland. Such is but a brief outline of his labours and sufferings. It does not appear that he published any work; but his two letters written to his wife and children during his exile, and which have been repeatedly printed, have been always deservedly admired by the Christian public for their apostolic simplicity, their tenderness and piety.

Robert Traill, his son, and the subject of this brief notice, was born at Elie in May, 1642. After he had passed through the usual preparatory studies, he was sent to the College of Edinburgh, where he distinguished himself in the several classes, and was much commended by the professors for his industry and acquirements. As he had devoted his life to the work of the ministry, he applied himself for several sessions to the study of theology; and his heartiness to the cause of the church of his fathers, which he ever afterwards so nobly defended, was shown by his fearless attendance upon Mr. James Guthrie of Stirling to the scaffold.

But his own personal troubles soon followed. His father's banishment had so straitened the circumstances of the family that they were often without a home; and in 1666, in consequence of some copies of the Apologetic Relation, a work which the prelates hated, and the Privy Council had condemned to the flames, having been found in their dwelling, he was obliged, with his mother and brother, to hurry into concealment. The oppressions of the prelatists produced their natural results: a portion of the people prematurely rose in arms and, after great suffering, were routed at Pentland Hills by the king's forces. Robert Traill, it was asserted, had been in arms with the insurgents; and in consequence of this report, whether true or unfounded, he was obliged to fly to Holland to his father in 1667. In this shelter of persecuted Presbyterianism, he continued his studies in theology and assisted Nethenus, Professor of Divinity at Utrecht, in publishing Rutherford's Examination of Arminianism. But his stay in Holland could not have been long, for we find him in London preaching in April 22, 1669, upon the Thursday previous to the administration of the Lord's Supper. It is probable that in the earlier part of the same year he had come to London and been ordained to the work of the ministry by the Presbyterian clergymen in the metropolis. From the notices in his manuscript sermons it also appears that, after preaching some time in London without any settled charge, he was permanently stationed at Cranbrook, a small town in Kent.

In the year 1677 Traill was in Edinburgh, probably upon a temporary visit to his native country and friends; and, as he was a faithful workman in his sacred calling, both in season and out of season, he privately preached in the Scottish capital, notwithstanding the very stringent laws in force against such religious meetings. He was soon apprehended and arraigned before the Privy Council as a holder of house-conventicles. He acknowledged this part of the charge. He was asked if he had also preached at field-conventicles, but this question he very properly refused to answer. It would have been to confess a capital offence, and pronounce his own death-sentence. He was ordered by the judges to purge himself by oath of having either preached or attended at such meetings, but with this he also refused to comply. All that he would acknowledge amounted to this, that he had received Presbyterian ordination in London, and that he had conversed with Mr. John Welch on the English Border. Upon these slender grounds he was sentenced to imprisonment in the Bass; and in this loathsome dungeon he found Frazer of Brea, Alexander Peden, and other distinguished captives, who were suffering in the same good cause for which he was sent thither. His confinement, however, lasted only three months, at the end of which he was released by an order from Government. On being liberated he returned

to his little flock at Cranbrook and, after some time, removed to London, where he officiated to the close of his life as pastor of a Presbyterian congregation. After outliving the persecution of the Stuarts, and witnessing their downfall and the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty on the British throne, he died in May, 1716, at the age of seventy-four. (Extracted from Notes in a book of his sermons.)

The late Mr. John MacDonald, Elder, Oban.

The year 1957 has seen the removal by death of a number of outstanding men in our church. Among them was our beloved elder, Mr. John MacDonald. We deeply mourn his loss. As Dr. "Rabbi" Duncan says in one of his sermons, so we may say in this connection: "We mourn—and it is lawful, it is dutiful, it is fitting, it is human, it is godly." We mourn for the dead that die in the Lord. "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." We mourn not for them but for our own loss, which yet the Lord can compensate. We mourn, but when godly men are taken away Christ's prayer is fulfilled—"Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

John MacDonald was born at Portmore, in the Parish of Tobermory, Mull, August 16th, 1880. His father, Allan MacDonald, a seaman, afterwards set up home in Oban, where he was one of the first to leave the Free Church at the formation of the Free Presbyterian Congregation there, when the noble stand was made for God's Word by the late Rev. Donald MacFarlane and others in 1893. Afterwards a deacon in the Free Presbyterian Congregation at Oban, Allan died when his son John was 21 years of age. John followed the grocery trade after leaving school till he joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, serving on Home Defence throughout the First World War.

He married in Inverness in 1915, and after demobilisation, set up home in Glasgow, having been previously in Edinburgh for a short time.

In 1920 he set up home in Oban, where he was foreman in the goods department at Oban Railway Station for many years.

From his early days he was, in the main, diligent in his attendance on the means of grace under the preaching of the Rev. D. MacFarlane, the Rev. Neil Cameron and other ministers; and lay-men, such as Messrs. Duncan Crawford and Andrew Cameron, Oban. We are unable, however, to say when the Lord revealed Himself savingly to him. The change was gradual, but at length quite evident. In his soul the Word of God by the blessing of the Holy Spirit was as the "leaven which a woman

took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." The Lord gave him a deep sense of his sinnership and this was increasingly manifested the longer he lived. Christ and Him crucified was his only hope.

He was received as a member in full communion at Oban in November, 1929; ordained deacon in 1931; elder in 1935, and was appointed Clerk of Kirk Session in 1938. In 1943 he was appointed Representative Elder for Oban, and often acted in that capacity till his death.

For our Fort-William Congregation of which he was assessor elder for many years, he had a warm regard. He often supplied that congregation, sometimes under great difficulties, but he used to say that some of his happiest hours on earth were spent there.

As part-time missionary for Lochgilphead, he preached there often. It was there he attended his last church service three days before his departure.

We understand that he was called upon to lead the singing at Oban at least as early as 1912, and also to pray before he made a public profession. For about 36 years he acted as regular precentor in the Oban Church. Being possessed of a fine tenor voice he was most acceptable as a leader of public praise. His being bilingual also added greatly to his usefulness in our church, which he loved and faithfully served. The late Rev. D. MacFarlane's ability to meet the backsliding professors of the Old Free Church was always a subject of great interest to him. He would say of that worthy man and of the late Rev. Neil Cameron: "They were far-seeing men, they were far-seeing men." Events have proved how far-seeing they were. John MacDonald had great trials, losing his young son Allan in Crete during the Second World War, but his greatest trials were spiritual. He hid his trials from the world, taking them to the throne of grace to Him who hears the cry of the needy. He was an uncompromising witness for the Lord, who fearlessly rebuked evil. Yet he constantly lamented his own barrenness and insufficiency. His main labours were in Oban, where he was called upon to take the services on innumerable occasions and sometimes for long periods single-handed. Our Oban congregation owe a debt of gratitude to the Lord for such a servant in His vineyard, a servant who spared nothing to advance the Kingdom of Christ. His favourite portions were the 17th chapter of Jeremiah and the 14th chapter of the Gospel according to John. He could say with the Psalmist, "This Word of Thine my comfort is in my affliction; for in my straits I am revived by this Thy Word alone" (Psalm 119, v. 50).

Although his outward man was noticeably failing for some time latterly, yet he was active to the end.

He died very suddenly on Sabbath, 25th August, 1957, while on his way to the morning service. On August 28th his mortal remains were interred in Pennyfuir Cemetery, Oban, there to await a glorious resurrection. The day before he died he remarked to his wife, "It is a precious thing, Jessie, to have a good hope." To his widow, and each member of his family we tender our heartfelt sympathy. May the Most High comfort them in their sorrow and great loss. May they be enabled to say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1, 21).—M. M. S.

Searmonan.

Leis an Urr. Tearlach C. Mac an Tòisich, D.D.

Searmon xiii.

"... An creidimh luachmhor ceudne ruinne." II Pead. i. 1.

Tha dà fhìrinn air an cur an ceill anns na briathran so, a dh'feuchas mi, le comhnadh Dhé, a shoilleireachadh dhuibh; luachmhorachd a chreidimh, agus mar a tha e dhe'n aon nàdur anns na creidmheach uile.

1. A thaobh a luachmhorachd, bheachdaichinn an toiseach air Ughdar. 'S e àithne Dhé dhuinne "gu'n creideadh-mid ann an ainm a Mhic Iosa Crìosd"; 'S e ar dleasdanas sòlaimte gu'n toireadh-mid ùmhlachd do'n àithne so; agus 's e creidimh ar gnìomh-ne, cleachdadh ar 'n inntinnibh agus ar cridheachaibh. Ach 's ann a tha comas a bhi toirt cleachdadh dhoibh mar so bho Dhia. 'S e th'anns an t-soillseachadh spioradail agus an togradh naomh a tha air a ghabhail a stigh le creidimh toradh oibreachadh gràsmhor an Spioraid Naoimh air an inntinn agus air a chridhe. Thugaibh fa'n ear gu h-àraidh na briathran sin, "Oir thiodhlaiceadh dhuibhse air son Chrìosd, cha'n e mhàin creidsinn ann, ach mar an ceudna fulung air a shon," ann an co-cheangal ris na briathran a tha dol air toiseach agus a leantuinn ar ceann-teagaisg; "dhoibh-san a thuair an creidimh luachmhor ceudna ruinne, tre fhìreantachd ar Dé agus ar Slànuighear Iosa Crìosd." 'S e sin, is e creidimh tiodhlac Dhé, agus 's ann air sgàth Chrìosd a tha e air a thoirt seachad. 'S e th'ann a bhi'g àicheadh na fìrinn so, gu foilleasach 'n a ann an suspainn, ach a bhi'g àicheadh obair an Spioraid Naoimh, agus a bhi tilgeadh bun os ceann soisgeul Chrìosd. Tha mhuinntir a tha teagasg dhaoine gur urrain iad creidsinn uatha fein, na creidsinn 'n uair a thogras iad fein, ga'n treorachadh air an t-slighe gu sgrios. Cha'n urrain sin a bhi tuilleadh 'us amhrusach mu'n teagasg a tha fàgail a mach feum air cumhachd an Spioraid Naoimh gu bhi'g oibreachadh creidimh anns a chridhe, na a dh'fhagas a mach an fhìrinn sin, gu'm bheil gach

uile bheannachd spioradail—creidimh, cho cìnnteach ri maitheanas—nan nithean a bha air an cosnadh le fuil no fireantachd Dhé ar Slànuighear, agus air an deanamh thairis leis an Athair 'n a ghràs àrd-uachdaranail. Mar eil ni'n còr ann an creidimh ach a bhi toirt cleachdadh do'n a reusan bochd truailte, air firinn Dhé, an sin tha e da-rìreadh gun luach air bith, bho'n talamh, talmhaidh. Ach ma's e solus neamhaidh e, air a lasadh 's an taobh a stigh le Athair na soillse, ma's e obair shònraichte Dhé e, toradh an dearbh ghràs sin a ghluais E gu Aon Ghin Mhic a chur gu bhi 'n a Shlànuighear an t-saoghail, agus toradh a bhi cur a mach ro-mheud a mhòr chumhachd do ar taobh-ne a tha creidsinn, an sin tha e luachmhor os ceann na ghabhas cùntas. Ann a bhi'g oidheirpeachadh a bhi cluinntinn guth Mhic Dhé, agus a bhi tighinn da ionnsuidh air son beatha, mur eil, ann a bhi mothachail air an eallach is truime de na h-uile eallach, agus a phlàigh is motha de gach plàigh leis am bheil mi air mo shàrachadh, cridhe eas-creidmheach, misneach air bith agam gu bhi'g amharc Ris air son saorsa bho'n eallach so, agus mo tharruig ga ionnsuidh Fein, an sin cha'n eil soisgeul na dòchas air mo shon. Ach ma tha barantas agam a ràdh, “Cuidich le mo mhi-chreidimh, saor mi bho'n aon so is motha agus is marbhtaich dhe mo pheacaidhean, meudaich mo chreidimh, saor mi bho'n a h-uile a th'anns a pheacadh,” an sin is e so an soisgeul a tha mi cur feum air, agus anns am bheil beothachadh, cumail suas, agus cumhachd tarruig.

2. Tha *bhunait* a nochdadh cho luachmhor 's a tha e. Direach a reir meudachd na'n nithean a tha air an gabhail a stigh le bhi creidsinn an t-soisgeil, a reir sin tha e riatanach gu'm bitheadh bunait chìnnteach aig ar muinghin nach e “faoin-sgeulachd a dhealbhadh gu h-innleachdach” a th'ann. Nis, is e bunait a chreidimh gur e h-anns an t-soisgeul fianuis Dhé. Anns an t-seadh is fhaide mach faodaidh, da-rìreadh, e bhi air a ràdh gur e bunait creidimh iomlanachdaibh ghlòrmhor agus neo-chaochluidheachd an Dé Mhòr; tha creidimh, uime sin, a taiceachadh air Ughdar gach bith—bunait na firinn, na h-oirdeirceis, agus a chumhachd. Ach 's e a dhlùth-bhunait fianuis Dhé. Cha'n eil e taiceachadh air fianuis duine, air aon duine naomh, na buidhean air bith do dhaoine matha a tha buailteach do thuiteam. Cha'n eil mi creidsinn a chionn gu'm bheil an Eaglais a creidsinn. Cha bhitheadh an sin ach bunait bhochd chaochluidheach gu bhi taiceachadh dòchas neach oirre air son na siorruidheachd. Ni motha tha mo chreidimh a taiceachadh air an dearbh-shoilleireachd air an d'r'thàinig mi an deigh a bhi rannsachadh fianuisean a chreidimh Chrìosdail, gur ann bho Dhia a tha e; ged a tha'n dearbh-shoilleireachd so, 'n a àite fein, na ni robh mhòr, agus a tha do ghnàth a leantuinn rannsachadh onarach agus suidhichte na'm fianuisean sin. Cha'n eil e taiceachadh air gu'n d'r'thàinig mi co-dhùnadh a tha ga'm a shàsachadh gu'm bheil na teagasgan

a th'anns a Bhiobull airidh air Dia, mar nach eil teagasgan air bith eile; ged a tha'n co-dhùnadh so na ni ro mhòr, agus a deanamh cuideachadh mar an ceudna. Cha'n eil mi creidsinn do bhrìgh gu'n d'thug mo bhreithneachadh binn gu'n robh mi riaraichte le teagasgan an t-soisgeil. Ni motha tha creidimh a taiceachadh air faireachaidhean agus cleachdaidh 's an taobh a stigh. Cha'n eil mi a faicinn na a faireachadh, agus uime sin, tha mi a creidsinn. Cha'n eil mi a faotainn cridhe maith 's an taobh a stigh air bonn am bitheadh sùil agam ri tròcair. Cha'n eil mi ga'm fhaotain fein ullaichte air son Chrìosd, agus air a bhonn so, ann an co-cheangal ris na rinn Chrìosd tha mi'g amharc air son slàinte. Cha'n eil mi faotainn cridhe maith 's an taobh a stigh ga'm a mhisneachadh gu teachd dlùth do Dhia. Cha'n eil faireachadh roimh laimh agam air a thròcair gu dānachd a thoirt dhomh gu earbsa ann; ach fòdh thròm-chudthrom ciont agus truaigh, tha mi teachd dlùth do Dhia air barantas lòm Fhocail Fein.

Tha creidimh a taiceachadh air fianuis Dhé, “Mar so deir an Tighearna.” Tha creidimh a faotainn cleachdadh, 'n uair a tha Dia air aithneachadh mar a labhairt 'n a Fhocal Fein. Uaithe sin tha ri fhaicinn luachmhorachd bharraichte na firinn gu'm bheil na Sgrìobturan Naomh air an deacadh. Tha daoine a tha labhairt mu'n timchioll fein mar luchd-teagaisg Chrìosdail, a saothrachadh 'n ar latha-ne, ann an tomhas ni's motha na ni's lugha, gu foilleasach, anns an obair anns an robh, ann an ginealaichibh roimhe so, luchd-àicheadh gu foilleasach a caitheamh an neart, 's e sin, a bhi cladhach fòdh chreidimh na h-eaglais a thaobh firinn nan Sgrìobturan Naomh mar fhoillseachadh sgrìobhta Dhé air a thoil a chùm ar slàinte. Mar e'm Biobull leabhar Dhé Fein, air a sgrìobhadh le daoine naomh mar a bha iad air an gluasad leis an Spìord Naomh, an sin cha'n eil bunait neo-thuiteamach ann air son a chreidimh. Mar a h-e gu firinneach Focal firinneach agus cìnnteach Dhé e air son ar slàinte, air chor agus gu'm faod sinn agus gu'm bu chòr dhuinn sinn fein a thoirt thairis gu neo-chealgach dha threorachadh a chùm agus gu'm bithidh-mid air ar soillseachadh, air ar comhfhurtachadh agus air ar deilbh leis, an sin tha bunaitean ar dòchais air an toirt air falbh. Do bhrìgh gu'm bheil earrannan ann a tha daoine a connsachadh mu'n timchioll, agus eadar-dhealachadh leughaidh air cuid de earrannan, agus do bhrìgh gu'm bheil nithean eile air am fagail gu bhi ga'r dearbhadh, tha daoine a tha toirt fuath do theagasgan ioraslachaidh a chruinn-cheusaidh a tòiseachadh an t-seann obair a bhi cathachadh an aghaidh Focal Dhé. Ach Esan a rinn faire thairis air cho iongantach agus a ghleidh e Dha Eaglais anns na ginealachaidh a chaidh seachad ni E faire thairis air fhathasd; agus, gun bhuaidh bhi air a thoirt orra le leithid sin de chonnsachaidhean agus de mhilleadh cliu, thig anamaibh air am bheil tart air son slàinte, fathasd a chùm uisgeachabh beo-san, a dh'òl. Bheir Dia air a ghuth cumhachdach

agus drùigheach a bhi air a chluinntinn 'n a Fhocal Fein. Bheir E air a pheacach mhi-chùramach a chluinntinn 'n a leithid so de chainnt, "Is mallaichte gach neach nach buanaich anns na h-uile nithean a tha sgiobhta ann an leabhar an lagha chùm an deanamh." "Is e tuarasdal a pheacaidh am bàs;" "marbh ann am peacaidhean agus ann an eu-ceartan:" agus mar sin beothaichidh E a choguis, ceannsaichidh E calmachd a chridhe, agus fàisgidh E bh'uaith e an glaoth, "Ciod a ni mi chùm gu'm bi mi air mo thearnadh?" Agus bheir E do'n a pheacach iomagaineach a ghuth a chluinntinn 'n a leithid de chainnt iongantaich ri so, "Mar is beo mise, deir an Tighearna Dia, cha'n eil tlachd air bith agam ann am bàs an aingidh; ach gu'm pilleadh an t-aingidh bho shlighe, agus gu'm bitheadh e beo; pillibh, pillibh, bho ur droch shlighean; oir car son a bhàsaicheadh sibh, O thigh Israel?" "Is ann mar sin a ghràdhaich Dia an saoghal gu'n d' thug e Aon-ghin Mhic Fein chùm 'us ge b'e neach a chreideas ann nach sgriosair e ach gu'm bi a bheatha shiorruidh aig;" "Glanaidh fuil Iosa Crìosd a Mhic sinn bho gach uile pheacadh;" "An tì a thig ga'm ionnsuidh-sa cha tilg mi air chor air bith a mach e;" agus tre a leithid sin de bhriathran oibrichidh E dòchas 'n a thròcair, agus bheir E gu bith creidimh luachmhor.

Nis, tha creidimh, anns an t-seadh so, mar a taiceachadh air fianuis Dhé, luachmhor; oir tha e cur urram air Dia le bhi creidsinn Fhocal a dh'aindeoin gach mi-choltas ann am breithneachadh, sealladh, agus faireachadh, agus mar sin a seulachadh ciont agus aimeadeas air an eas-creidimh sin leis an d'fhalbh an duine bho Dhia an toiseach. B'e cainnt a Bhuaireadair, "Cha'n fhaigh sibh gu cinnteach bàs." Chreid ar ceud sinnsear e, agus rinn iad breugaire do Dhia am feadh a bha iad air an cuartachadh leis na fianuisean agus air an liondh le fein-fhiosrachadh air a ghlòir agus oirdheirceas, agus fhìrinn, agus a mhaitheas. Air an laimh eile, ri aghaidh coguis chiontaich, agus a dh'aindeoin cion eolas air tròcair Dhé, gabhaidh creidimh ri Focal Dhé agus bheir e glòir Dha mar an Dia dha nach comasach breug a dheanamh. Am bheil thu mothacail air t-fheum air tròcair, air sìth, air glanadh; agus gidheadh tha thu cumail air ais bho Dhia gus am faigh thu ni-èigin annad fein a bheir misneach dhuit gu tighinn am fagus Dha? Faodaidh tu amharc an taobh a stigh dhiot fein; ach ma tha Dia a nochdadh dhuit do chridhe agus do bheatha ann an solus na fìrinn, cha'n fhaigh thu ni an sin ach truailidheachd. Ach thig air bonn fianuis Iehobhah. "Thigibh a nis agus tagradh-mid ri cheile, deir an Tighearna; ged robh 'ur peacaidhean mar sgàrlaid, bithidh iad geal mar shneachd; ged robh iad dearg mar chorcuir, bithidh iad mar olainn." "Mise, mise fein, esan a dhubhas t-eu-ceartan as air mo sgath fein, agus do lochdan cha chùm mi air chuimhne." "Is beannaichte iadsan nach fhac agus a chreid."

Tha creidimh luachmhor, uime sin, do bhrìgh e bhi taiceachadh air bunait a tha nì's daingean na'n a neamhan, cha'n urrain e bhi air a chur gu nàire. Faodaidh gach dòchas eile seargadh; ach gus am fàilnich Dia, gus an sguir Crìosd a bhi comasach agus toileach air a gheallaidh-ean uile a choimhlionadh do'n a pheacach a tha creidsinn, gus an sguir a leithid de nì agus firinn a bhi 's a chruinne-cé, cha chuirear air cùl dòchasan a chreidimh. Am bheil thu toileach Dia a ghabhail air fhocal? Uime sin, na bitheadh eagal ort; na leig le meudachd nan nithean mòr a tha air a ghealtuinn, air an cur taobh ri taobh ri do neo-airidheachd, toirt ortsa focal gràis Dhé a chur ann an amhrus. Is iongantach, da-rìreadh gu'm bitheadh na briathran sin, "Is e tuarasdal a pheacaidh am bàs," air an leantuinn leis na briathran, "Is e saor-thiodhlc Dhé a bheatha mhaireannach tre Iosa Crìosd ar Tighearna;" ach cha'n e slighean Dhé slighean an duine. An robh thu feuchainn ri bhi toirt dhachaidh ga'd ionnsuidh fein a leithid sin de bhriathran mor? Am bheil thu faotainn cruaidh so a dheanamh? Gidheadh an aghaidh dòchais, creid ann an dòchas. Esan a "bheothaicheas na mairbh, agus a ghairmeas na nithean nach eil ann mar gu'm bitheadh iad ann," is urrain E ann an am ionchuidh t-anam a thoirt a dh'ionnsuidh ionad saobhir, agus do dheanamh comasach air aoibhneas a dheanamh ann an dòchas glòir Dhé.

3. Tha *Cuspair* a chreidimh luachmhor. Air do chreidimh a bhi aige mar bhunait focal na fianuis Dhé, tha e dol a mach gu dearbh a dh'ionnsuidh uile rùn fhoillsichte Dhé, ach nì's sònraichte a dh'ionnsuidh na firinn co-cheangailte ri suidheachadh caillte an duine agus slighe na slàinte tre Iosa Crìosd, ach gu sònraicht' a dh'ionnsuidh Chrìosd E Fein. Cha'n e tròcair Dhé dealaichte ri Crìosd, na eadhon fireantachd Chrìosd dealaichte ri Crìosd, ach Crìosd E Fein. Cha'n e, uime sin, cuspair a chreidimh an fhìrinn lòm, dh'aindeoin cho luachmhor 's a dh'fhaodas an fhìrinn sin a bhi, ach, 'n a phrìomh chleachdadh sònraicht, 's e am Focal do-sheachaint', an Fhìrinn bheo, Crìosd E Fein, Cuspair a chreidimh. Is e nàdur a chreidimh, no mar is fearr a chur, dòigh Dhé ann an deilgeadh gu slàinteil ri peacach, a bhi ga threorachadh a mach bh'uaihte fein a dh'ionnsuidh Chrìosd anns an t-soisgeul. An taobh a stigh cha'n eil e faotainn ach ciont, dorchadas, truaigh; ach, air a threorachadh le fianuis Dhé, tha e dol a mach a dh'ionnsuidh Chrìosd. Tha Dia ag ràdh, "Is e so mo Mhac gràdhach anns am bheil no mhòr thlachd;" "Feuch Uan Dhé, a tha toirt air falbh peacadh an t-saoghail;" "Fosgail do bheul agus lionaidh mise e;" "Tha m'Athair a toirt dhuibh an arain fhìor 'o neamh." 'S e tha'm peacach, air fhalbhadh dheth fein ag iarraidh ach na choinnicheas ri uile fheuman a spioraid neo-bhàsmhor, luchdaichte le peacadh, fodh chomhair siorruidheachd—na choinnicheas ri chiont, ri fhadachd as bho Dhia, a lomnochduidh spioradail, agus a thruaillidheachd, agus a bhochdainn. An taobh so do Chrìosd

iarruidh e so gu diomhain. Ach, air a threorachadh le focal agus Spiorad Dhé, tha e faicinn Iosa—tha Grian na Fireantachd a briseadh a mach air oidhche de bhròn agus de dhorchadas. Tha e faicinn Aon a tha 'g aonadh glòir na Diadhachd agus maise na daonnachd 'n a Phearsa iongantach; Aon a tha air a chur air leth gu bhi 'n a Fhear-saoraidh anamaibh caillte, air a nochdadh anns an t-saoghal agus ag oibreachadh a mach saorsa; neo-chrìochnach an glòir, an toillteanas, an tròcair, ann an cumhachd gu tearnadh; gu h-iomlan freagarach dha fheuman uile agus dha mhiannaibh; agus a dh'aindeoin gach peacadh a chaidh seachad agus gach truailleidheachd agus neo-airidheachd a tha lathair, ga chuireadh gu gabhail Ris mar a Shlànuighear. Agus le uile chridhe tha e gabhail Chrìosd, agus a gabhail Ris mar a chiud fein.

(R'a leantuinn.)

Notes and Comments.

Church of Scotland Building for Roman Catholics.

The Kirkcaldy Presbytery of the Church of Scotland approved, in May, the sale of Logan-Martin Church, Leslie, and its hall to the Roman Catholic authorities for £1,400. After stating that there was no other offer received, ex-Provost Forrester said, "I think the feeling is that it is more desirable to have the church continued as a place of worship rather than see it converted for some other purpose."

Provost Forrester did not seem to understand or appreciate that the Church in Roman Catholic hands would perpetuate the blasphemy of the Mass and other R.C. idolatrous practices in this land of the Reformation through John Knox and others. So-called Protestants and Presbyterians are, as such, asleep in many cases.

Girls and Crime in Croydon.

Croydon Probation Officer, in her annual report in April last, states that three times more girls have been brought before Croydon Juvenile Court in the previous 12 months than in the former year. "In many cases the girls have been closely associating with youths and men in groups where a general lack of conformity to law or to decent standards of living is approved," she reports. Here we have the case of a district in moral decay as far as a percentage of the young is concerned. Such a state of matters, no doubt, obtains in many other parts of the nation. To us the underlying reasons are no Bible, no religion, no Sabbath, no parental control in the home. This state of affairs began with a departure from Scriptural religion and morals on the part of many parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, right throughout the nation. Truly our backslidings are many and the fruits thereof grievous.

Dancing Show in Cathedral Cancelled.

Bishop C. Bardsley, of Coventry, made plans in April for a ballet show to be performed in the ruins of the bombed Coventry Cathedral to gather money. As readers have seen in the press, the Lord's Day Observance Society opposed this worldly and carnal breach of the law of the Sabbath, as set forth in the moral law and this nation's legislation. The Bishop for several reasons had to cancel the whole unseemly business. But the deplorable fact is that the Bishop, a professed leader of the people in Christian principles, is recorded as being as full of animus and bitterness against the Lord's Day Observance Society as irreligious, materialistic business men of the world who are opposed to all restrictions by laws relative to the Lord's Day. The Bishop said, among other things, "I hope the secretary of the Society has not heard the last of the protest of the great mass of ordinary people throughout the country who dislike the present outworn legislation and who will seek to change it." In other words, the Bishop is out to support the cry today among the backsliding masses of Britain to break down all barriers against transgression of the Fourth Commandment. Then likely he and his clergy will have the audacity to join with serious minded people in deploring the abandonment of the Church and religious worship by the great mass of the people, when this question may be raised, as it is from time to time. Let the Bishop learn: No Christian Sabbath, no Christianity. People in other places other than Coventry, if imbibing the Bishop's teaching, can go to ballet shows in London, etc., on the Lord's Day, and believe it to be an act of worship, and ignore services in Churches where the Word and Gospel of God are reputed to be heard. Here we have another case of "Blind leaders of the blind." In a leading article in *The Scotsman*, the action of the Bishop and Cathedral authorities was supported and the point of view of those who desire the conservation of the Sabbath criticised. The article argued that the action of the Lord's Day Observance Society was wrong. The secular art of ballet in obtaining money for cathedral furnishings, performed in cathedral ground on the Sabbath, was referred to as follows: "Money given in this way could fairly be looked on as a sacrifice towards the rebuilding." And again: "If the Arts, properly used, properly regarded, are not fit for the Sabbath, have they a rightful place in human life at all?" Without our favouring such as ballet at all, should everything lawful on week-days be thus right and proper on the Lord's Day? Surely not by the elementary standards of Scripture. *The Scotsman* leader writer seems to have had no regard for divine revelation and standards. And yet, Scotland was once famed for observance of the Sabbath, and it is a pity *The Scotsman* did not take the side of the Christian and Scottish Sabbath in this Cathedral business.

Causes for Cruelty to Children.

The Earl of Mansfield said at Perth on the 10th of April that the increase in cases of cruelty to children, in the midst of the Welfare State, shows that it is not material causes, but spiritual ones we have to face. He also said: "Unfortunately, there is no sign of the spiritual revival we need." How true and seasonable his words are!

Church of Scotland Congregation Purges Communion Roll.

The minister and kirk session of St. Mary's Church of Scotland, Kirkintilloch, decided recently to remove from their communion roll members who had absented themselves from communion for three years without good reason, or had otherwise shown their indifference. This is only a delayed step in the way obviously unconverted and worldly members should be dealt with. If most of the members in the Church of Scotland were dealt with according to Scriptural discipline, a large majority would lose their membership. Unconverted and spiritually ignorant professors of religion bring added guilt upon themselves and assist in ruining the visible Church of Christ in our land.

Literary Notices.

Book Commended, by Rev. J. P. MacQueen.

A new important publication entitled, "But The Bible Does Not Say So," by the Rev. Roberto Nisbet, Vice-Moderator of the Waldensian Church, and competently translated from the Italian by the gifted linguist, Mrs. Hilda Nott, has just been issued from the Press at the modest price of 2/6, postage 4d. extra. There is a foreword by Professor Sir Douglas Savory, retired Member of Parliament for Queen's University College, Belfast, in which he says: "I do not know of any work which sets forward so clearly the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church and refutes them so clearly and incisively. It could very well be set as a text book for all teachers in training colleges," and candidates for the sacred office of the ministry would find it quite indispensable. Though Rev. Roberto Nisbet is an Italian Waldensian, his unmistakable Scottish descent is revealed in his famous Covenanting surname. All the usual stock-in-trade sophistry and casuistry of the Jesuit controversialist is here met and exposed by the most cogent of all logical arguments—the perfect infallible authority of the Word of God. How many Protestants, for instance, know that the Roman Catholic perverted version of the Fourth Commandment is "Remember the feast days to keep them holy." This book is to be had from: The Secretary, Church Book Room Press, 7 Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4, and should be in every Protestant home, or rather, in every home, Protestant or otherwise.

Thirty Years a Watch Tower Slave by William J. Schnell.

This book is a most devastating exposure of Jehovah's Witnesses by one who for years was one of their leading exponents in close and intimate co-operation with Judge Rutherford. "It was in the year 1954," the foreword reads, "that William J. Schnell wrestled with God in prayer for an entire agony-filled night. As morning broke he arose with peace in his soul and a song in his heart. For the first time in thirty years Schnell was a free man. For three decades he had been enslaved in one of the worst totalitarian systems of the twentieth century. That morning he stood up with the firm determination that, with God's help, he would reveal to the world the inner workings of the Watch Tower Society. "This book is a powerful warning to all who may be approached by the mis-named Jehovah's Witnesses. It is likewise Mr. Schnell's appeal to his former brethren to throw off their shackles and to return to the liberty which is in Christ Jesus." Price 12/6 net. Obtainable from Messrs. Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1-5 Portpool Lane, Holborn, London, E.C.1.

REV. WM. MACLEAN.

Church Notes.

Communions.

January—Fourth Sabbath, Inverness. *February*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; third, Stornoway; fourth, North Uist. *March*—First Sabbath, Ullapool; second, Ness and Portree; third, Finsbay and Lochinver; fourth, Kinlochbervie; fifth, North Tolsta. *April*—First Sabbath, Achmore, Portualong, Fort William, Stoer and London; third, Greenock; fourth, Glasgow and Wick. *May*—First Sabbath, Kames and Oban; second, Scourie; third, Edinburgh. *June*—First Sabbath, Tarbert, Applecross, Coigach; second, Shildaig; third, Lochcarron, Glendale, Helmsdale, Dornoch and Uig; fourth, Gairloch and Broadford; fifth, Inverness. *July*—First Sabbath, Lairg, Raasay and Beaul; second, Staffin, Tomatin and Tain; third, Halkirk, Rogart, Flashadder and Daviot; fourth, Achmore, Bracadale, North Uist and Plockton. *August*—First Sabbath, Dingwall and Vancouver (Canada); second, Portree and Stratherrick; third, Bonar, Finsbay and Laide; fourth, Vatten; fifth, Stornoway and Thurso. *September*—First Sabbath, Ullapool and Breasclete; second, Strathy; third, Tarbert and Stoer; fourth, Applecross. *October*—First Sabbath, Tolsta and Lochcarron; second, Gairloch and Ness; fourth, Greenock, Lochinver and Wick. *November*—First Sabbath, Oban and Raasay; second, Glasgow and Halkirk; third, Edinburgh, Dornoch and Uig. *December*—First Sabbath, London.

SPECIAL NOTICE: All changes in above Communion dates to be notified to Editor, for 1958 (D.V.).

Edinburgh Congregation Appeal—Repairs to Church Building.

The Edinburgh congregation have been advised that repairs to cost upwards of £2,000 are urgently necessary to the church building. Since the congregation have only recently paid off a debt on the manse, this prospect lays a heavy financial burden upon them. The Edinburgh church is one which our people from many other congregations visit, and the Deacons' Court would like to invite the assistance of the Church as a whole to help them to meet this commitment. Donations will be thankfully received by the Congregational Treasurer, Mr. Duncan MacLeod, 16 Bruntsfield Avenue, Edinburgh.

This appeal is heartily endorsed by the Southern Presbytery.

(Signed) DONALD CAMPBELL, *Moderator*.

MALCOLM MACSWEEN, *Clerk, pro tem*.

Acknowledgment of Donations.

Mr. J. Grant, 4 Millburn Road, Inverness, General Treasurer, acknowledges with grateful thanks the following:—

Sustentation Fund.—M. McC., Uig Postmark, £5; Mr. and Mrs. McK., Chapelton (under Deed of Covenant), £10.

Dominions and Colonial Missions.—Mrs. Batcheldor, Shirley Street, Rotorua, N.Z., £20.

Home of Rest Fund.—Friends, U.S.A., Matthew xii. 13, 14, £35 14/3; Anon, Glasgow, per Rev. W. Grant, £7.

Mission to the Jews.—Mrs. J. A. Reid, Sheerness, Alta, Canada, £7 1/8.

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