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Loyalty

A true Christian's first loyalty is to the Lord Jesus Christ. This stems from his being united to Christ by a living faith. Christ claims for Himself the first place and He will accept no other. To give Him this place is the Christian's reasonable service. He is their Lord and they are to serve Him with unswerving loyalty and fidelity at all times and in all circumstances. They are ever to remember that they are not their own but are bought with a price and therefore they are Christ's.

What discipleship involves is clearly seen from the Lord's declaration: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). The true Christian's loyalty to Christ will be tested in many ways. Peter could assert on one occasion: "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." He could declare also: "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise" (Mark 14:29 and 31). Yet in the trial of his loyalty to Christ he was overcome. So may Christians expect their loyalty to Christ to be tried. They need not hope to cleave to Christ through good report and evil report in their own strength but only by relying upon the help of divine grace.

Necessarily bound up with loyalty to Christ is loyalty to His Word. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:4). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10). Faithfulness to the Word of God is required of all who are the true people of God. His word must abide in us if we are to abide in His love. It is vain to plead that we are loyal to Christ if we are disloyal to his word. We must receive the word into our hearts for there can be no loyalty to the word apart from the word finding a place in our hearts. There are those who claim to be Christ's and yet are very selective about what parts of the Word of God

they will receive. Those who are truly the Lord's embrace the whole revelation of His grace; they receive the Word of God in its entirety as the very Word of God. The language of the true believer is: "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them" (Psalm 119:129). And again: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Loyalty to the truth will mean loyalty to the doctrines of the Bible. Acceptance of the revealed doctrines of God's Word is essential to living discipleship. Rejection of any of the cardinal doctrines of the truth must necessarily call in question our loyalty to Christ. If men reject such doctrines as the Fall of Man, the New Birth, the substitutionary death of Christ, the everlasting punishment of the wicked, etc., then what right have such to the name of Christians. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). The loyal disciple of Christ loves God's Word and the glorious doctrines contained in it. We read that the angels desire to look into these things and so does the true disciple. It is upon Christ revealed in the Scriptures of truth that the believer desires to feed. The unveiling of the glory of Christ in the gospel of God's grace is precious to all who believe. How glorious is the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour! How soul-satisfying is the revelation God has given of Himself in Jesus Christ. The doctrines of God's Word are all bound up with God's reconciling of sinners to Himself by Jesus Christ. Can the believer then reject what is bound up with his own eternal salvation? Surely not! Whoever, then, will deny the doctrines of God's Word, the living believer will not.

Loyalty to God's Word implies also loyalty to the worship which He has revealed. For the Old Testament saint to have discarded the ceremonial worship divinely given under the Old Testament dispensation would have meant disloyalty to the God of Israel. So, too, in New Testament times, the true believer is to be loyal to the worship of God divinely given for the more spiritual dispensation which Christ inaugurated. It is not now to the ritual of Old Testament forms and ceremonies, whether of the tabernacle or temple worship, that the Christian is to turn but to the pure spiritual worship laid down in the New Testament Scriptures. The other is done away in Christ, Christ Himself being the fulfilment of all that was set forth in those temporary forms and ceremonies. It is in the preaching of the Word, prayer and the singing of God's praises with heart and lips that the believer now delights. Having this more spiritual form of worship the living soul does not hanker after

the other. Rather does he desire, through the media which God has appointed, to taste and see that God is good — and he is not disappointed for God makes His Word and worship to be spirit and life to him.

Loyalty to God's Word also implies loyalty to the government and discipline of God's house. God is a God of order and it is in such a God that the believer has come to trust. It would be incongruous then for God, who is a God of order, to be neglectful of the order of His own sanctuary. Christ has established a government in His Church and to the officers in His Church has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven; so that whatever, in accordance with the Word of God, is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever, in accordance with the Word of God, is by them loosed on earth is loosed also in heaven. Though it is commonplace to relegate the question of Church government and discipline to a minor place, yet surely if Christ, the Head of the Church, has revealed an order which is to be observed in His own Church, then this cannot be neglected or subverted without disloyalty to Christ and to His Word. The importance of proper Church government and discipline to the well-being of the Church of God is too often overlooked, yet if it was not highly beneficial to the advancement of Christ's Cause the Lord would not have instituted it. That form of Church government which we hold to be the Scriptural one is the Presbyterian form. Therefore to that form we must hold if we are to be loyal to Christ and to His Word.

The real test, of course, of our loyalty to the government and discipline of the Church of God is when we are involved in discipline ourselves. It is comparatively easy to own Presbyterian government and discipline, and to concur in the disciplining of the erring brother, when it is another brother who is affected. It is not so easy when the brother to be corrected is ourself. We think it is a rare thing to see true Christian discipline exercised in the spirit of the Gospel in the Church of God today, and a still rarer thing to see that discipline accepted in a Gospel spirit. We have no reason to point the finger at any other. If we only look into our hearts and see the self-righteousness and rebellious spirit which lurks there we will have no grounds for boasting. When discipline then is wisely and lovingly administered and meekly, graciously and submissively accepted we ought to admire the rich grace of God which orders it so. In such a case it is of the Lord and will prove in the highest interest of the Church and of the individual believer. It is in this Scriptural order and discipline that the true believer delights and thereby shows loyalty to his Lord and Master.

The day has not yet come when the visible Church of God in the world

is accommodated within one body. All Christians have not the same measure of light and consequently we have a multiplicity of denominations within the Christian Church. So far as we ourselves are concerned, it has pleased the Lord to give us as a denomination a full-orbed testimony on the side of truth. We have no ground for boasting in this. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" It was to maintain inviolate the testimony of the Reformed Church of Scotland that those who formed the Free Presbyterian Church left the Disruption Free Church. Consequently if we hold that Separation to have been necessary and proper, then loyalty to Christ requires us to be loyal to that testimony and to the denomination maintaining it. The loyalty required is not a blind denominational loyalty such as the Roman Catholic Church requires of its adherents but a humble, gracious and enlightened loyalty — a loyalty that comes through testing the Scripturalness of the beliefs held and the practices adopted by the Church. So long as our Church maintains its witness on the side of truth, so long are we required by loyalty to Christ to be loyal to our Church. If our Church, on the other hand, were to forsake the truth as the Disruption Free Church did, we would then not only be justified in forsaking it but duty bound to forsake it, as the Fathers of our Church found themselves obliged to do with respect to the Disruption Free Church after the passing of the Declaratory Act. Do we not need to plead then, that our Church may be kept faithful to its testimony, and that we ourselves may be kept faithful to Christ, to His Word, and to His work.

Sermon

by Rev. Angus Mackay, Tarbert, Harris

"And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgement upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually."
— Exodus 28:29.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read many and wonderful things concerning the high priest and the priesthood. There we have many precious statements about Aaron, his holy office and his garments which were all ordained and instituted by God. The breastplate, with its precious stones on Aaron's heart was there according to the Divine commandment. Aaron in his office as high priest with his beautiful garments and breastplate was a type of Christ, the great High Priest of

our profession who is altogether lovely and who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way.

In considering briefly the words of our text let us notice:

- (1) Some things regarding Aaron as high priest.
- (2) The breastplate on his heart.
- (3) Aaron, with the breastplate of judgement upon his heart, as a memorial before the Lord continually.

(1) In Aaron we have a vivid type of Christ, the great High Priest who alone is suitable for us, "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens." Aaron was taken from among men, appointed for divine service and for the good of men to the glory of God, as we read in Hebrews, chapter 5, verse 1: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

No man, except he who was called by God could take this honour to himself as the inspired writer informs us in Hebrews 5:4, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Thus Aaron was called, anointed and consecrated for the holy office of the priesthood. This is also true of the Lord Jesus Christ; He was taken from among men, called by God the Father, but before that could be, of necessity He had to become man. The Eternal Son of God veiled His Divine glory when He became incarnate. In the glorious person of Christ we have (in the words of our Shorter Catechism): "God and man in two distinct natures and One Person forever." The inspired Word, in 1st Tim. 3:16, tells us that "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." This is indeed a glorious source of indescribable wonder and adoration — that God, in the Person of the Eternal Son, dwelt in the world among men.

As Aaron was ordained for men in things pertaining to God, so was the Lord Jesus as declared by Paul in writing to Timothy, First Epistle 1:5: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." The Eternal Son was also called to be an High Priest. Ah! Finite reason, especially when fallen, cannot fathom the infinite depths of this glorious mystery but the regenerate soul believes it — that "Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 5:5, 6).

The High Priest in Israel had to offer up both gifts and sacrifices for sins and on behalf of sinners to the glory of God. Therein the priest was

a type of Christ who was and is the great High Priest in the service of God for unworthy sinners. Of necessity the High Priest, suitable for sinners must be a divine person. An high priest other than this could not accomplish or execute the grand work of Redemption. Mere man, or indeed an angel from Heaven, could never be chosen and called for such work. The High Priest, indispensably necessary for sinners had to be both divine and human. Jesus, therefore, was and is God incarnate, as the angel Gabriel declared to the Virgin Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." This we believe with all our heart, and with the apostle, the regenerate soul can say: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

The high priest in Israel had to offer up the sacrifice strictly according to the command of God and the sacrifice must be according to the Divine Mind revealed. Christ's sacrifice also must be according to the Mind of God, so that sin might be forever expunged, as the apostle tells us in Hebrews, chapter 8: "For very high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." And just as the High Priest had to be a Divine Person, so also the Sacrifice; therefore the Lord Jesus Himself was to be the sacrifice. No other sacrifice was adequate to purge our sins and reconcile us to God. The inspired Word tells us, in Hebrews, chapter 7, that this High Priest "needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this He did once, when He offered up Himself." The dignity of this High Priest' Person stamps infinite merit upon the Sacrifice. Here we have the essence of the everlasting Gospel — Jesus Christ, the High Priest, offering up Himself a Sacrifice of sweet smelling savour to God. He offered up Himself in the obedience and sufferings of His life and death. When vile men scoffed and reviled Him saying: "If He be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the Cross and we will believe;" then in the awful sufferings and agonies of death, He was as the High Priest actively and lovingly engaged in offering up the Sacrifice in the holy service of God — the Sacrifice that completely and perfectly satisfied all the attributes of the Eternal God. Oh! That the Holy Spirit would breathe upon us that we might see with an enlightened understanding the glory of God wonderfully displayed in the death of Christ. No salvation for us poor sinners apart from a saving view by faith of

Christ and Him crucified. In Jesus as High Priest and Sacrifice, God the Father saw and sees this His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased.

As conclusive proof that He was fully satisfied with the Sacrifice in Christ's obedience unto death, the God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Oh! What eternal honour this was for our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Flock! This is the High Priest we need that we might be pardoned and reconciled to God whom we have offended by our sins. It is through faith in Him that we must find peace with God. He is the alone Priest to whom confession must be made and from whom pardon and absolution can be received.

(2) The breastplate was also fashioned according to the Divine order, tied on to the ephod of the high priest as God commanded. Aaron bore the breastplate upon his heart. In it there were twelve precious stones, set in gold in their inclosings, in four rows, three stones in each row.

These stones which typified God's people were chosen and taken from the earth — chosen because they were precious. The people of God were chosen by God. Although they were dead in trespasses and sins, the children of wrath even as other, and possessing no good thing in themselves to make them precious, yet in the sight of God they were precious as chosen in Christ from all eternity, as Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit writing to the Ephesians infallibly declares: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

As the stones were cleaned, chiselled, polished and shaped before they could be placed in the breastplate, so it is with the Lord's people on the heart of Christ. In the new birth they are cleansed by the Blood of Atonement and renewed by the Holy Spirit. This is clearly stated in Titus 3:5, 6: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Where the image of Satan and sin once reigned, now by Divine and Sovereign Grace the Image of God is wonderfully and mysteriously restored in their souls. In some respects the stones in Aaron's breastplate were different, and each one had a distinct identity. The diamond was different from the topaz; the topaz from the amethyst; the amethyst from the sardius; the sardius from the onyx and so on; but they had one thing in common: it was necessary that they should have all the same shape before they were situated in the breastplate. Thus the Lord's people are different in various respects; their

natural dispositions are invariably different. Many of them are different by nationality and race — the Scottish different from the Chinese, the English from the Africans and so on; yet they have the same shape spiritually. They are all by grace conformed to the image of Christ. Ah! Yes! Christ is formed within them the hope of glory and we read that in the eternal world there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.

As the precious stones in the high priest's breastplate were all bedded together in pure gold so with the people of God. Although invariably different in temperament, natural disposition, culture and race, the Lord's people are united spiritually on and in the heart of Christ. In the breastplate of Aaron we have a most beautiful and attractive display of plurality in unity; and so it is with regenerate believers. They all have received the Spirit of God's Son into their hearts whereby they cry Abba Father." As they are exhorted to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, they are also encouraged by divine information that all men shall know that they are Christ's disciples if they love one another.

The breastplate was tied on Aaron's heart with two wreathen chains of gold tied to two golden rings in the two upper corners of the breastplate and the other ends of the chains fastened to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. By a lace of blue fastened to two golden rings in the two lower corners of the breastplate and to two golden rings in the ephod, the breastplate was so fixed that "it be not loosed from the ephod." Thus it was kept in its designed place on the heart of the high priest. We venture to say that the wreathen chains of gold signified the power of God and the lace of blue, faith in the regenerate — that faith that worketh by love and purifieth the heart. The Word of God tells us that believers (born-again) are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." In this way they are kept in indissoluble union to their Lord and Saviour. They are on and in his heart continually — in times of desertion as in times of sweet communion. Ah, Yes! And He will bear them on His heart when they will be sweetly conscious of perfect holiness and joy unspeakable to all eternity. Oh! What great and wonderful love is here manifested! We hear the Church in the Song ecstatically exclaiming: "My beloved is fair and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" and again, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." His language of infinite love and superlative excellency to her is, "Behold thou art fair my love, behold thou art fair; there is no spot in thee; thou hast doves eyes within thy locks." This is mutual, reciprocal love of a heavenly nature to which a graceless world is altogether alien. Then we see:

(3) We see Aaron with the breastplate upon his heart as a memorial before the Lord continually. Inside the Holy Place Aaron typified the Lord Jesus in His glorious work of continual intercession. He was bearing the breastplate as a memorial before the Lord continually and so the Lord Jesus, as our High Priest, is incessantly presenting the merits of His Own Sacrifice in the presence of the Father. Christ in His mediatorial glory at the right hand of God the Father is the efficacious essence of the Intercession. Oh! the happiness and everlasting safety of those in the intercession of Christ! How wonderful that we can now exclaim with the Apostle in Hebrews 4:15, 16: "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." And again in Hebrews 6:19, 20: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." As well as being there in Heaven, in their very nature and for them, He is with His people in this world by His Spirit and Word, as He assures them in Matthew 28:20: "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

In prayerful meditation on all that He did and suffered for them, Christ is precious to His own people and He is also exceedingly precious to them in His glorious Intercession. Whether their thoughts are full of the world or whether their minds are exercised by grace, Jesus in the presence of the Father is interceding on their behalf — yes, even when they are in a state of backsliding the same Intercession is continued for them. This solemn fact should cause us to endeavour sincerely and wholeheartedly to live a life of obedience to the Will of God. Were it not for Christ's Intercession we would never be recovered and restored from our backslidings. When Peter was denying Him with oaths, even then he was in the Intercession and woe unto him if he were not. The blessed Lord had warned him: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." All His disciples were guilty of deserting Him; they all forsook Him and fled. We read: "I pray for them, I pray not for the world," and also "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Were it not for the Lord's intercession, Peter would never have repented; he would have perished eternally under the guilt of his aggravated and heinous sin. This also applies to all the people of God. Were it not for the intercession of Jesus, they should all die under the guilt of sin and should never find repentance. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." How wonderful that the Lord Jesus is making **continual** intercession for His people! They must have repentance for their sins since the day of regeneration as well as for their sins prior to the new birth; yes, even till they depart this life.

Oh; How we should love the Lord Jesus Christ as our adorable Intercessor! If an advocate in a civil court were successful in pleading our cause (albeit his pleas were not inspired by any real love for us, but solely by motives of self-honour or at best, the desire for safeguarding the law) we should esteem him for succouring us. But in the Lord Jesus, His people have an Advocate who intercedes for them (guilty and wretched as they are in themselves) in eternal love. He pleads for them in the presence of God the Father in Heaven and we are told for our comfort in the Inspired Truth: "Thou hast given Him His heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips. Selah;" and again "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

They have an infinitely able Intercessor — One in whom "dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily" — "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." When we know of any Christian friend that he or she, even occasionally, prays for us we cannot but love such. Ah! But here we have the God-man, our Lord, perpetually interceding for us. Oh! that we could love Him with our whole heart and mind! He is worthy of all praise and honour and glory.

Inside the holy place Aaron's garments were ornamented with bells and pomegranates alternately — "A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about." The sweet sound of the bells from within the holy place announced to the people without that the high priest as their representative was alive and engaged in his holy ministrations. The sound of the bells signified the melodious, precious sound of the everlasting Gospel. The Lord's people alone are able to recognise and appreciate this sound, as the Psalmist declares, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." Oh! How sweet the Truth — the reading but especially the preaching of the Word — to the soul when enjoying the liberty of the Spirit and communion with God.

The pomegranate is a fruit and it symbolises the fruit that follows the preaching and reading of God's Word, that is, the awakening and the convincing of sinners and the edification, correction and sanctification of believers, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Jesus will see souls saved — yes, in this dark day in which we have our lot. All that the Father gave Him in the Covenant of Grace will come to Him — all of free and sovereign grace. Boasting is excluded. If any man glory, let him glory in the Lord. Ah! Friends — Christ having loved His Own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

Dear fellow sinner, do you know the Lord? With all your head knowledge of doctrines about the Person and Work of Christ, is it true that you have no saving knowledge of the Beloved as your own personal Saviour? If such is your deplorable dangerous condition and state, we implore you to seek that the Holy Spirit will reveal Christ to your soul, for there is no salvation in any other and there is none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. It were better for you that you had never been born than to be found at last guilty of having spurned Christ in the free offer of the Gospel and consequently to go to a lost eternity. Christ invites sinners — yes, the chief of sinners — yes the vilest of the vile to Himself: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Christ is All

by Dean Henry Law

10. THE CHILD-BIRTH

"This is the law for her, that hath borne a male or female." Lev. xii. 7.

This chapter brings us to new fields of thought. The curtains of domestic life fall back. A mother and her new-born babe appear. Where is the mind, which can turn heedlessly away? Where is the heart, which will not pause and melt? In this event being begins, which never can have end. — Such is the fact, and it speaks solemnly.

The cradled infant is but a tiny rill. It scarcely seems to trickle. But it must onward flow, until its waters form an ocean without bottom — without shore. A tender blade just sprouts, but roots must deepen, and

boughs spread, through the expanse of an interminable age. Each birth is deathless increase to the world of spirits. A new eternity gains life.

Reader, these magnitudes are yoked to every mother's babe. What scales can weigh the value of each child? What can be brought to counterpoise its price? Pile suns on suns — bring all the treasures, which all nature holds — ransack all mines of choicest ore, their wealth — though large — is finite. But here is a new infinity. Offspring, which once breathes, runs far beyond all time, and outlives all the glory of all worlds.

Thus solemn is the scene. Next God's voice sounds beside the Jewish cradle. Solemnity becomes more solemn. What are its accents? Is its call to gratitude and joy alone? Is its design to kindle and praise for peril past, and dear addition to the family delights? Not so. It writes pollution on child-bearing.

It sentences the mother as unclean. It bars her from intercourse of social life and pious rites. It bows her head in shame. It dooms her, as though some leprous spot was seen, to solitude's retreat. Lev. xii. 2, 3, 4, 5.

Reader, reflect. What is the moral of this rule? Is it our wisdom to enquire. True, ceremonial stains have long since ceased. True, legal offerings no more can cleanse. The Gospel-rays scatter all twilight mists. But principles have undying root. The cause, which then existed, still survives. Mothers in every age are virtually addressed.

But why is shame the twin of every offspring born?

Behold the infant, and receive reply. What is its nature, character and taste? Let not fond feeling shrink from weighing it in scales of truth. Is it a little innocent — conceived in purity — and shaped in holy mould? Are its materials clean?

It is indeed a wondrous fabric. But what is the quarry, which supplies its parts? The tender frame contains the germ of countless passions — multitudinous desires and thoughts — as many as the ocean's sands. Are these the germs of godly life? Do they give promise of ripe fruit for God? If so, the birth is holy: and bearing mothers should not bear the brand of shame.

But facts show not this smiling face. The babe is sinful produce of a sinful race. Corruption's seal is fixed upon its brow.

Reader, trace back the cause. Return in thought to Eden's terrible offence. When our first parents fell into sin's mire, what a tremendous change changed their entire being! Innocence for ever died in man. Iniquity, as a conqueror, claimed the captive land. The fountain-head

received deep poison. No drop could henceforth issue, free from taint. The root of human life is rotten to the core. All sprouts have evil taste. Nature was spoiled of God's fair image. What nature no more has, it can no more bestow. Its properties are guilt: and guilt alone can be imparted by it. From Adam's fatal passage into Satan's realms, each child is Satan's bonds slave. Each birth now propagates corruption. Hence she, who bare, is warned to bend, as bullrush in the vale. She must sit solitary as unclean.

There is strong need to show the case, without deception's mask. Nature is prone to partial love. She sees her own with an admiring eye. She pictures infants, as fair purity's abode. But it is never gain — it rather is great loss — to trample upon truth. No flowers of profit can be plucked from error's barren branch. The wise man finds his happy seat at Scripture's feet. His only guidance is: "Thus saith the Lord."

Let then, no mother, while she clasps her babe, deck it in robes of visionary innocence. Her love makes it no lovely object in God's sight. Affection's estimate is not the estimate of heaven. A soul, indeed, is born to immortality. But let its birth state be distinctly seen. It brings no soul-life with it. Nature gives various senses — but no sense of God. The heart has neither eye to see, nor ear to hear, nor foot to seek, the upward path of life. Each feeling has a bias to transgression's ways. Leave but the child to the inbred desire, and evil — only evil — will be sought. When choice can choose, it will take Satan's yoke. When hands can handle, they will grasp his tools. When lips can speak, his language will be learned. When feet can run, they will rush headlong towards hell. So wisdom teaches. So experience finds.

Will then the mother say, alas! that such a life has birth from me? Faith speaks not thus. It knows, that there is remedy for all this ill. It looks to Christ, and fears recede before hope's dawn. Apart from Christ, the babe must enter on a voyage of woe, and pass through troublous billows to the whirlpool of despair. Apart from Christ, its course must be one flow of misery: its end one gulf of ruin. But if Christ looks on it with love: if He receive it to His arms of grace; then neither thought can think, nor words proclaim, how blessed is a birth on earth!

Think what Christ grants. There is a merit in His precious blood, which wipes out all sin's stains. There is a refuge in His wounded side, which screens from wrath and curse. There is a beauty in His glorious righteousness, which is fit mantle for the courts of heaven. He can send forth the Spirit's power, to breathe new life into the dead-born soul. He can remove the blindness from the eye:— the deafness from the ear:—

the torpor from the heart. He can convert the stone into the tender soil, in which all fruits of godliness shall spring. He can burst Satan's iron yoke. He can keep pure from all temptation's snares. He can make earth an upward flight to heaven. He can present the spirit blameless before God. Through His transforming might, that child of wrath may brightly shine a jewel in redemption's crown. Through His all-saving work, it may sing sweetly in the realms of light.

There is such hope in Christ. He is the treasury of full, rich, blessed, glorious grace. The second Adam more than repairs the damage of the first. He snatches from the lowest depths. He raises to the highest heights. He can exalt to all that heaven contains.

Prayer is the Christian mother's stronghold. It is a golden key to unlock God's treasury. Faith's importunities prevail. Mighty desires, which cannot sit down mute, spring from above, and will not fail. The Spirit pleads within such wrestling heart: and all His pleadings reflect the mind of God. The offspring of much prayer is loved in heaven, ere it is loved on earth. Scripture writes not in vain, how interceding parents ever gained their suit. They cry. Christ hears, and smiles and answers; — and His answers are, Satan despoiled, and saving grace bestowed. When nursing is one strong petition, the child is nestled in Salvation's arms.

Faith next draws comfort from the baptismal font. Christ gives a special ordinance, to which new-born may come. It is a token of His early care. It is a seal of His adopting grace. Herein we read a tender Saviour's tender heart. Is it His will, that infant offspring should be as outcasts in vile nature's waste? Sacramental provision slays such doubt. We see His arms out-stretched — we hear His urgent call, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." This rite abounds in hope. It is no mocking form. It is ordained, as means of grace. Cast out the thought, that infancy excludes the Spirit's breath. If wilful sin be no impervious bar: much less the fault of an inherited disease. Jeremiah's heart began to beat with sanctified pulse. The Baptist's second birth was scarcely younger than the first. The God, who blessed them, is always one. Mercy has trod this early path, and may tread it again.

Christian mother, proceed to educate your child for Christ. So soon as thoughts begin to flow, they must have channel. Why should that course be nature and not grace? What, though the tender mind be weak for argumental proof? The truths of Jesus are not arguments, but facts. The precious truths of life's high tree may fall down into childhood's lap. The tender Shepherd — seeking a lost lamb — and dying on the cross to buy it from a robber's hand — and washing it in streams from His own side

— and feeding it in verdant pastures — and bearing it in His strong arms — and loving it with constant love — and raising it to a bright home, are thoughts, which weakest minds can grasp. These, when once grasped in saving power, can never be completely lost. Let the first lesson be the love of God — the grace of Christ — the Spirit's present help. Let the young eye be early turned to Calvary's dying scene. Let memory's page take its first lines from Jesus's life. Let thought's soft tendrils be entwined around truth's stem. Then, through rich mercy, there is solid hope, that the child born on earth, is born an heir of heaven. Corruption's seed will not prevail. Satan's chains will fall. The unclean will be cleansed. The Child-birth thus adds citizens to heaven.

The infant in the Jewish lap reminds of other truth. If it be son, the days of the maternal shame are less. If it be daughter, the unclean period is double. Lev. xii. 2, 4, 5. We may not pass this difference unmarked. The cause seems hidden from a casual glance. But thought, which dives into the ocean of God's mind, is here soon carried back to Eden's guilt, and the first act of sin. It was the woman, who first listened to the serpent's wile. Her mind first went astray. Her will first lusted. Her hand first touched. Rebellion in the man was inexcusable offence: but woman's transgression beckoned to the snare. There is no difference in the sin. The guilt of each is infinite in dye. But there is slight difference in order of event: and a recording rite keeps this in memory's view. The stamp of lengthened degradation was fixed on each female birth. Sin's entrance was thus marked. Hence the foul misery is more abhorred. Hence the one remedy is more loved.

When the appointed days of shame are past, the excluding barrier is solemnly removed. Especial rites are ordered. Two victims are now slain. The one, as a burnt-sacrifice, blazes on the altar. The other is an offering for sin. Lev. xxi. 6.

The Gospel here speaks loudly. Defilement cannot cease, without blood shed. A dying Saviour must atone, before sin vanishes, and the sinner is brought back to God.

Reader, you are unclean. There is no act — no word — no thought of any day, which is not dark before God's eye. But Jesus is near, and able to make pure. Wash, and be clean. Wash, and be reconciled. Wash, and be welcomed to receiving arms. Wash, and look upward to a Father's smile. Wash, and look onward to a Saviour's throne.

A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing.

J. C. Ryle.

Letter

by James Henley Thornwell

South Carolina College, September 19, 1842

My Dear Aunt Ann,

I need not say that the sore and bitter bereavement which you have recently sustained has filled me with the profoundest sympathy. As I know that you are not a stranger to the throne of grace, nor to the pleasures which flow from communion with God, I cannot but hope, that this solemn visitation will be improved to increase your intimacy with that 'Friend who sticketh closer than a brother,' who alone can dry up the tears of sorrow, and give us 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' The gospel of God is particularly designed for the broken-hearted and afflicted; and if you mark the footsteps of the flock, you will find that they all lead through much tribulation to the kingdom of heaven. The house of mourning has been the familiar resort of all the saints. The great Redeemer Himself was a 'man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' and bedewed His path to glory with tears, and sweat, and blood. Think not, therefore, that some strange thing has happened to you; the like sufferings have been accomplished in all your brethren before you, and must be accomplished in all who would reign with Christ for ever.

Jacob wept for his beloved Rachel, and David mourned a rebellious son. How does your calamity compare with that of Aaron, who beheld his sons consumed with fire from the Lord, in the very act of audacious iniquity; and yet was forbidden to uncover his head, to rend his clothes, or give any visible sign of grief? 'Son of man,' says Jehovah to Ezekiel, 'behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down;' and at even his wife died, and he forebore to cry, and made no mourning for the dead. You are not alone, my sister, in the chamber of affliction. You are where Jesus was, where all His saints have been, where prophets, martyrs, and apostles have stood, and where, in the issue, you will find it a privilege to be. It is God that deals with you; stand still, and acknowledge His hand. He is your Father; and what He doeth, though you know not now, you shall know hereafter. Though clouds and darkness are around Him, His footsteps in the sea, and His paths in the great waters, righteousness and truth are the habitation of His throne, and He will finally speak peace to His children. He who reproved kings for their sakes will assuredly Himself do them no harm. Fear not,

therefore; the flame shall purify, but not hurt. Jesus can more than make up all your earthly losses. He can turn them into mercies; and, therefore, though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, yet, like the prophet, rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation. Only believe; and as He said to the weeping sisters of Lazarus, so He says to you, 'Thou shalt see the glory of the Lord.'

Perhaps, my sister, your greatest distress arises from uncertainty concerning the salvation of your beloved son. You feel that you could be comforted, if you knew that he was safe; but that you can never know. The destinies of men are in the hands of God; and it is enough for us to know, that He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. When your mind shall be more enlarged, and your heart expanded in love, you would not choose to alter a single arrangement of the Lord. If you could see the end from the beginning, you would say all is right. Oh! then, trust God in the dark. All opposition to His government is sin, and 'every wish to alter the appointments of His wisdom is folly.' Your business, therefore, in this and every other dispensation, is to put your hand upon your mouth, and keep silence before Him. 'Be still,' is His language, 'and know that I am God.' Others have encountered more trying afflictions than yours. You are only uncertain; but Eli had no ground to hope that his sons were saved, but every ground to believe that they were lost; and yet the good man submitted: 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.' Absalom was slain in the very act of atrocious rebellion; and Nadab and Abihu were consumed by the immediate vengeance of God. What ingredient of bitterness in your calamity can be found answerable to their's? And yet Eli, David and Aaron were the special friends of God. Take courage, then, and be not like Rachel, weeping for your children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not. Take courage, and do your duty to the living, and prepare to follow the dead. Trim your lamp, gird up your loins, and stand ready to welcome the midnight cry, Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Let the conviction of your own mortality settle upon your mind; look away from earth; look up to Heaven; deposit your treasures where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

Here we have no continuing city. 'All ranks and conditions of men are but so many troops of pilgrims, in different garbs, toiling through the same vale of tears, distinguished only by different degrees of wretchedness.' The patriarchs and prophets all confessed that they were strangers on earth; here they had no home; but they sought a better country; they looked by faith to that building of God, that house not made with hands,

eternal in the heavens, and there they expected to rest. Let us follow their faith and patience, and we shall receive the same glorious reward. 'But this, I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.' 'I am,' says David, 'a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.' Then, what our hands find to do, let us do it with our might; we shall soon go hence, never to return. A Christian is one who looks for the second coming of his Lord. He waits for it, and desires it, because then his sorrows shall be over, his days of mourning ended, and his soul at rest for ever. Then, my sister, be heavenly-minded; live for God, for immortality, for eternity; and your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

I would earnestly impress upon your mind, that the bitterest of all calamities is an *unsanctified* affliction. In His providences, God is teaching us; and it hardens the heart, and darkens the understanding, when His solemn instructions are unheeded. When, therefore, He lifts the rod, and takes away, with a stroke, the desire of our eyes, instead of dwelling upon the circumstances of our bereavement, and tearing open our wounds afresh, by calling to mind the endearing associations connected with the departed, we should at once look to the hand that smites, and inquire what lessons a merciful Father designs to convey. Our great anxiety should be *improvement*. God is speaking; and our chief business should be, to open our ears, and hear. You will find yourself greatly tempted to think of your son, as you have seen him in infancy, in boyhood, in youth; to call to mind his proofs of affection, his interesting sayings, his promising actions, and all the endearments which silently, secretly, irresistably bind a mother to her child; and every recollection will send a pang to your heart. These reminiscences, which we are so prone to cherish, are the cruel devices of a self-torturing heart. Turn away from them to God, and humbly ask your Father why He has smitten, and bow your head and worship. Receive His instructions with an humble spirit, and He will soon bind up your wounds, and send you away, though 'sorrowful, yet rejoicing.'

If you have been conscious of any neglect of duty towards the departed, repent; but with that Godly sorrow which flows from a full conviction that God will freely pardon. Repair the mistake by greater

diligence to the living; but let nothing keep you from the pure consolations of the gospel of Jesus. In your present situation, religion proposes to you her sweetest cordials. You can understand the gospel now. Affliction has revealed to you the vanity of man, the deceitfulness of life, the certainty of death, the instability of all sublunary good; and in striking contrast presents the unchanging state, and the glories which await the child of faith. You can now almost advance by strides towards the heavenly kingdom. And if earth is rendered less pleasant, Jesus more charming, and heaven more desirable, by the dark providences which has called you to mourning, you will bless God through all eternity for His chastising rod.

This melancholy event, let it be remembered, speaks not only to you, but to all your household. It says to each and every one of your family, whether bond or free, You, too, must die; prepare to meet your God! When you least expect it, when you are dreaming of many days, and pleasing your fancies with brilliant prospects, your hopes may at once be crushed, your sun go down at noon, and your golden visions wrapped in the funeral pall and shroud. Oh! that the warning may reach the hearts of the living. Oh! that they may be wise, understand this, and consider their latter end.

I have thus, my much valued friend, endeavoured to direct your mind, now softened by grief, and capable of receiving permanent impressions, to such meditations as I thought would be most conducive to your good. It will be my greatest joy, if God should give you grace to adorn the gospel, as you walk in deep waters of sorrow. It is only in affliction that the *real greatness* of Christianity is seen. It imparts then a moral grandeur to the character, which philosophy cannot compass, and which the world never can understand. It sustains, elevates, enobles the soul. It teaches it 'the heavenly science of gaining by losses, and rising by depressions.' The saints are a wonder in the earth, a wonder to angels, and a wonder to themselves. They are God's chosen portion, the lot of His inheritance; and this is enough to make them hold up their heads, though all their earthly comforts should be stripped from them. Their main portion — their Father in heaven, their glorious Redeemer — must remain for ever. Let this, my sister, be your consolation. Death has robbed you of nothing you shall want in eternity. Your real inheritance is safe. And now, that the God of all grace may sanctify you wholly, and do exceedingly abundantly for you above all that you are able to ask or think, is the sincere, fervent, and heartfelt prayer of

Your friend and fellow Christian,

J. H. Thornwell.

Common Grace

"Common grace" is the restraining and persuading influences of the Holy Spirit acting only through the Truth revealed in the gospel, or through the natural light of reason and of conscience, heightening the natural moral effect of such truth upon the understanding, conscience and heart. It involves no change of heart, but simply an enhancement of the natural powers of the truth, a restraint of the evil passions, and an increase of the natural emotions in view of sin, duty, and self-interest.

That God does so operate upon the hearts of the unregenerate is proved, 1st, from Scripture, Gen. 6:3; Acts 7:51; Heb. 10:29; 2nd, from universal experience and observation. (Outlines of Theology ch.28, Sec.13, by A. A. Hodge, DD).

The Effects of "Common Grace"

The effects produced by common grace, or this influence of the Spirit common to all men, are most important to the individual and to the world. What the external world would be if left to the blind operations of physical causes without the restraining and guiding influence of God's providential efficiency, that would the world of mind be, in all its moral and religious manifestations, without the restraints and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There are two ways in which we may learn what the effect would be of withholding the Spirit from the minds of men. The first is — the consideration of the effects of reprobation — the effects of reprobation are depicted in a fearful manner by the Apostle in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. But in the second place, the Scriptures reveal the effect of the entire withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the control of rational creatures, in the account which they give of the state of the lost, both men and angels. Heaven is a place and state in which the Spirit reigns with absolute control. Hell is a place and state in which the Spirit no longer restrains nor controls. The presence or absence of the Spirit makes all the difference between heaven and hell.

To the general influence of the Spirit or to common grace we owe — all the decorum, order, refinement and virtue existing among men — and also a conviction of the truths of religion. With this conviction of the truths of religion is connected an experience of their power. They produce to a greater or less degree an effect upon the feelings appropriate to their nature; a conviction of sin, the clear perception that what the Bible and the conscience teach of our guilt and pollution, produces self-condemnation, remorse and self-abhorrence. These are natural as

distinguished from gracious affections. They are experienced often by the unrenewed and the wicked.

It is also natural according to experience that the promise of the Gospel and the exhibition of the plan of salvation, contained in the Scriptures, which commend themselves to the enlightened conscience, should often appear not only as true but as suited to the condition of the awakened sinner. He believes with a faith founded on this moral evidence of the truth. This faith continues as long as the state of mind by which it is produced continues. When that changes, and the sinner relapses into his wonted state of insensibility, his faith disappears. To this class of persons our Saviour refers when He speaks of those who receive the Word in stony places or among thorns. Of such examples of temporary faith there are numerous instances given in the Scriptures and they are constantly occurring within our daily observation.

The state of mind induced by these common operations of the spirit, often leads to reformation, and to an externally religious life. The sense of the truth and importance of the doctrines of the Bible constrains men often to great strictness of conduct and to assiduous attention to religious duties.

Besides these common operations of the Spirit which in a greater or less degree are common to all men, the Scriptures teach that the covenant of redemption secures the Spirit's certainly efficacious influence for all those who have been given to the Son for His inheritance.

(Systematic Theology Vol. II, Part III, ch. XIV pp. 670-675 (summarised) by Charles Hodge, D.D.).

Calvin on Common Grace

I am aware it seems unaccountable to some how faith is attributed to the reprobate, seeing it is declared by Paul to be one of the fruits of election, and yet the difficulty is easily solved: for though none are enlightened unto faith but those who are preordained unto salvation, yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect, that even in their own judgment there is no difference between them. Hence it is not strange, that by the Apostle a taste of heavenly gifts, and by Christ Himself, a temporary faith is ascribed unto them. - - - As God regenerates the elect only for ever by incorruptible seed, as the seed of life once sown in their hearts never perishes, so He effectually seals in them the grace of His adoption, that it may be sure and steadfast. But in this there is nothing to prevent an inferior operation of the Spirit from taking its course in the reprobate. Meanwhile, believers are taught to examine themselves carefully and

humbly, lest carnal security creep in and take the place of assurance of faith.

We may add that the reprobate never have any other than a confused sense of grace, laying hold of the shadow rather than the substance, because the Spirit properly seals the forgiveness of sins in the elect only, applying it as special faith to their use. Still, it is correctly said, that the reprobate believe God to be propitious to them, inasmuch as they accept the gift of reconciliation, though confusedly and without due discernment; not that they are of the same faith or regeneration with the children of God; but because, under a covering of hypocrisy, they seem to have a principle of faith in common with them. - - -

Thus we dispose of the objection, that if God displays His grace, it must endure for ever. There is nothing inconsistent in this with the fact of His enlightening some with a present sense of grace, which afterwards proves evanescent. - - -

In short, as by the revolt of the first man, the image of God could be effaced from his mind and soul, so there is nothing strange in His shedding some rays of grace on the reprobate, and afterwards allowing them to be extinguished.

(*Institutes Book II ch. II sec. II, 12*)

Dr John Owen on Common Grace

There is an inferior, common work of the Holy Ghost, in the dispensation of the word, upon many to whom it is preached, causing in them a great alteration and change as to *light, knowledge, abilities, gifts, affections, life and conversation*, when the persons so wrought upon are not quickened, regenerate, nor made new creatures, nor united to Jesus Christ. I suppose there will not be need for me to insist on the proof of this proposition, the truth of it being notoriously known and confessed, as I suppose, amongst all that profess the name of Christ.

In persons thus wrought upon, there is or may be, such an *assent* upon light and conviction, to the truths proposed and preached to them as is *true in its kind*, not counterfeit, giving and affording them in whom it is wrought profession of the faith, and sometimes with constancy to death.

Persons in and upon whom this work is wrought cannot be said to be *hypocrites* in the most proper sense, that word - - - that is, such as counterfeit and pretend themselves to be that which they know they are not, - - - nor to have faith only in show and not in substance, as though they made a show and pretence only of an assent to the things they professed; their high gifts, knowledge, faith, change of affections and conversation, being in their own kind true (as the faith of devils is): and

yet, notwithstanding all this, they are in bondage, and at best seek for a righteousness as it were by the works of the law, and in the issue Christ proves to them of none effect.

Among these persons many are often times endued with excellent gifts, lovely parts, qualifications, and abilities, rendering them exceedingly useful, acceptable, and serviceable to the Church of God, becoming vessels in His house to hold and convey to others the precious liquor of the gospel, though their nature in themselves be not changed, they remaining wood and stone still.

(Owen's Works, Vol. XI, pp. 640, 641)

W.M.

Obituary

By Rev. John A. Macdonald

The late Murdo Matheson, Deacon, Fort William

The subject of this long overdue obituary was born in Strond, Harris in the year 1888, where his late father was a highly respected missionary. One of the meek of the earth, Murdo himself was a diligent business man, who had the welfare of the people at heart. He retired to Fort William seventeen years ago, and made his home with his only beloved daughter Mrs MacNicoll. The congregation there was numerically weak then. In the person of this worthy man they found a willing hand to carry some of their weighty burdens.

While yet young, God began a good work in Murdo's heart, like Abijah of old, in whose heart good was found toward the Lord God of Israel. This was very obvious from his modesty, exemplary life, and conduct. A truer replica of the late Kenneth Maclean, Breasclete, we cannot think of as far as this is concerned, that he would never speak evil or take up an ill report of anyone. Like the good man spoken of in Psalm 15, verse 3:—

“Who doth not slander with his tongue,
nor to his friend doth hurt;
Nor yet against his neighbour doth
take up an ill report.”

We often thought that his conversion must have been like that of Lydia whose heart the Holy Spirit opened thus drawing her secretly and lovingly to the blessed Saviour. Certainly, our friend had all the marks of her hospitality, and zealous attachment to Christ's cause and his people

in the world. All who knew him could verily say "Yes, indeed, the invitations addressed by godly Lydia to the Apostles were often his":—"If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, Come into my house, and abide there." (Acts 16:15.) Often people from far and near were entertained in his hospitable home in Stornoway, and the amazing thing is, there was always enough and to spare.

Not long after the writer came to the Fort William congregation dear Murdo made a public profession on the Lord's side for the first time, then in his eightieth year. In the midst of mutual tears he told the Kirk Session:—"I hope the Lord Jesus Christ betrothed my soul to Himself while I was yet very young." It was a moment of unspeakable joy when the Minister handed him his token. Murdo thanked him, and quoted this truth:—

"For this God is our God for ever
and ever: he will be our guide even
unto death." Psalm 48:14.

He then shook hands with all the elders, wiped his tears, and walked solemnly towards the door. We lived to see this truth fulfilled. He was ordained a Deacon in 1970, an office he carried with solemn dignity. If at all possible his place in the Deacon's seat was never vacant. In his declining years, it was beautiful and very touching, to watch him making his way slowly through the Church to his usual place.

Like his late brother Rev. D. J. Matheson, he was an out and out Free Presbyterian; or as the late eminent servant of the Lord, Rev. J. P. MacQueen would put it, "An hundred per cent Free Presbyterian."

The touching and solemn account as to how the Declaratory Act Free Church dealt with the eminent servants of the Lord, Revs. Donald MacDonald and Donald MacFarlane in putting them mercilessly out of their Churches and Manses, because of their faithfulness to the Truth in 1893, we often heard him relating with tears. When anything seemed to infringe on this noble and God-honouring stand, Murdo was on the defence, come what may. He always quoted that sweet truth, "If God be for us, who can be against us." How Mr MacDonald preached in the open field in Shieldaig, known as the Cos (the nest), as he found himself churchless as well as without a Manse, was particularly sweet and wonderful to Murdo and he would often say, "O what grace can do." The congregation often noticed Mr MacDonald endeavouring to shelter the Holy Bible by spreading both hands over it, thus preserving it from heavy snow showers on a cold Winter's morning; while with his lips he declared the pure and unadulterated gospel to poor perishing sinners.

Yet, notwithstanding such Arctic weather, we often heard it said, that no one ever suffered through being there. Yes, 'the Lord preserves the faithful' still. Psalm 31:23. Murdo ever admired them for their faithfulness. That our friend is with them in Glory, singing the praises of Him, who bestowed the grace of faithfulness so richly upon them, we have no doubt. Moreover, he had a firm grasp of the pure doctrine of God's Word; hence his apparent dread of the sophistry of ecumenicalism, in the face of logic, honesty and truth.

While on his death-bed, he asked the writer, "Are there such persons as lady missionaries in the World?" To which I replied, "As far as I know from the Word of God such a person or persons are not to be found under the canopy of heaven." "This is my conviction too," he said, 1st Timothy 2:12. One morning, as Flora, his daughter, attended him, he seemed so happy and composed in his mind. When he said, with that gracious smile on his face, "Isn't Sion beautiful. I am now seeing the streets which are paved with gold." He went on, "Flora dear, I have a promise from God for you all, 'there shall not an hair of your head perish' (Luke 21, 18)."

Six months or so, before the end came, he needed constant nursing. We believe the Lord shall abundantly reward his loving daughter Flora, Duncan her husband, and their daughter, Mary Ann for their unfailing attention to him day and night. At one time it seemed that hospitalisation would be necessary, but his dear ones persevered lovingly attending to all his necessities until his last breath. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is His saints death."

On the 5th day of May, 1974, his remains were taken to the land of his nativity. Along with his most dutiful son Murdo Ian, and other friends, we accompanied that which was mortal of this our faithful friend, until we laid him in the Rodel Cemetery, beside his late beloved spouse, who predeceased him twenty-seven years ago. As a further token of their deep respect, people gathered from all over Harris and Lewis for his funeral. The Finsbay church was almost packed for the family worship.

To all his dear ones, as if mentioned by name, we tenderly say, Be ye "followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Hebrews 6, 12.

The first step towards attaining a higher standard of holiness is to realise more fully the amazing sinfulness of sin.

J. C. Ryle.

Gathan Glòir na Diadhachd

(Air a leantuinn bho t.d. 151)

Nis tha eagal oirne agus tha sinn a seasamh fodh gheilt a thaobh Dhé, air a leithid de dhoigh agus nach dàna leinn peacachadh na aghaidh; tha sinn a seasamh fodh eagal roimh a làthaireachd; tha sinn a seasamh fodh eagal roimh a naomhachd; tha sinn a seasamh roimh a mhaitheas, tha sinn a seasamh fodh eagal roimh a chumhachd, agus mar sin air adhart. Seadh, tha sinn gu'n eagal agus gu'n suim dheth, gu dàna ann a bhi peacachadh 'n a aghaidh. Nis tha eagal roimh'n pheachadh mar a thà ifrinn air a faireachadh, seadh, thà ni's miosa, seadh, gabhaidh sinn 'n ar glacaibh e agus gabhaidh sinn tlachd ann. A ris, cia cho caochlaidheach 's a thà sinn 'n ar ruinntean naomh agus na nithean a chuireas sinn romhainn. Rùinichidh sinn imeachd mar so agus mar le Dia, agus gu'n cùm sinn a leithid so agus a leithid so a dh'fhaire thairis air ar spioradan agus air ar slighean; gu bhi ni's motha ann an co-chomunn ri Dia, gu bhi deanamh malairt ni's motha ri neamh, agus a bhi deanamh an tuilleadh cabhaig a dh'ionnsuidh an dùthaich is fearr, agus mar sin air adhart; ach mo thruaigh! cia mar a thà na nithean sin a seargadh, ag atharrachadh, agus a bàsachadh an taobh a stigh dhinn, cha'n eil aon de mhòran dhuibh a dearbhadh iad a bhi seasmhach agus eufachdach; seadh, gu bitheanta cho luath 's a thà na rùinntinn sin air an deanamh leinn, na n' aghaidh, agus a bhriseas sinn bho Dhia ni's motha na rinn sinn roimh sin; a cheud bhuaireadh a thig tiunndaidh e sinn bho ar rùn, agus theid sinn gu truagh air seacharan anns na dearbh nithean a bha sinn a rùnachadh mu thimchioll. Tha ar rùintean naomh air son a chuid is motha dhiubh gu'n toradh air bith. "Ach phill iad, agus ghluais iad gu fealltach, mar an aithrichean, chaidh iad a thaobh, mar bhogha fiar." (Mar a tha Dia a gearain a thaobh cuid) Salm lxxviii.: 'S e gearin duilich a leugh ann an aon dheth na h-Athraichean. Bitheanta (tha e'g ràidh) gheall mì agus rùinich mì ath-leasachadh ach cha d'rinn mì e, ach a ghnàth thiunndaidh mì air ais a chùm a pheacaidh agus a chùm m'aingidheachd a ghnàthachadh: chuir mir feadhan nuadh agus na bu mhiosa riubh. Cha d'rinn mì ath-leasachadh mar bu chòr dhomh. Agus na'r measg nach fhaod ann an tomhas mòr an dearbh ghearain a dheanamh?

Ach aon uair eile, Cia cho caochlaidheach 's a thà sinn ann ar slighibh agus ann ar n'imeachd? Cia cho neo-chòmhnhard agus neo-sheasmhach 'n ar gluasad? Tha cridhe againn a thà gràdhachadh a bhi dol air seacharan (mar a thà Dia a labhairt mun timchioll-san bho shean. Ier. xiv.10) Oh!

na tionndaidhean a thaobh, agus Oh! na pillidhean air ais dhà bheil sinn ciontach ann ar gluasad maille ri Dia! Oh na bearnaidhean, agus na stadan, agus na casgidhean a tha 'n ar n'ùmlachd! Bu chòr dhuinn a dhol air adhart ann an ùmhlachd naomh shuidhich-te; ach mo thruaigh! tha sinn a mach 's a steachd, air 's dheth bitheanta gach latha, seadh gach uair dhe'n latha; seadh iomadh uair dhe; seadh iomadh am dhe, tha atharrachaidhean obunn agus mòr air fhaotainn 'n ar spioradan agus 'n gluasadan a thaobh Dhé, agus sin air son a chuid is miosa. Bheir mì dhuibh aon seadh, agus cha toir ach aon, dhe so, ann an duine ainmichte naomh, seadh, a bu chòr na uile a chur air chrith, b'e sin Jeremiah. "Seinnibh-se do an Tighearna; molaibh-se an tighearna oir shaor e anam a laimh nan aingidh. Mallaichte gu robh an latha air an d'rugadh mise; an latha air d'rug mo mhàthair mì, nar robh e beannaichte. Mallaichte gu'n robh esan a thug fios a dh'ionnsuidh m'athar, ag ràdh, thà leanabh Mìc air a bhreith dhuìt, g'a dheanaibh ro aoibhneach." Ier xx. 13, 14, 15. Gabhaibh beachd, guidheam oirbh, ciod e'n t-atharrachadh Mòr a bha air a dheanamh ann an spiorad an duine mhaith so, agus sin gu h-obann; ann an rann 13 tha e'g amharc mar naomh a thainig a nuas bho neamh, a moladh Dhé air son a mhaitheas agus a shlàinte, agus a cur impidh air muinntir eile sin a dheanamh; ann an rann 14, 15, tha e'g amharch ni's motha mar neach air a bhriseadh fuasgailte a ifrinn, dha mhallachadh, agus cha mhòr gach neach eile mu thiomchull. Anns an aon tha e'g amharc ni's motha mar aingeal na ri naomh neo-iomlan; anns an aon eile tha e ni's coltach ri diabhal na ri duine leis cho mòr agus cho obann 's tha'n t-atharrachadh 'n a spiorad. 'Nuair a bha e ann an rann 13 a moladh Dhé, agus a bha (Mar gu'm b'eadh) air a thogail suas gu neamh, 's e 'n naigheachd a chluineas sibh air, gu'm bheil e làn mallachaidh agus gu fìrinneach mar so tha sinn uile caochlaidheach ann an so. Oh! cia cho obann air iomadh uair a dh'atharraicheas sinn agus a thuiteas sinn bho na suidhichidhean agus na giulleanan an làthair Dhé? Bho ghràdh gu fuath; bho chreidimh gu eas-creidimh; bho eagal naomh gu sochair fheolmhor; bho ùmhlachd gu ceannairc; bho thlac an Dia gu bhi deanamh dlmeas Air, agus gu bhi gabhail sgios dhe shlighibh agus dhe làthaireachd. Oh! biodh-maid air ar 'n ioraslachadh air son ar 'n atharrachadh baraichte agus ann an sin ar mì-choltas ri Dia ann na neo-chaochlaidheachd.

(R'a leanntuinn)

Sanctified civility is a great ornament to Christianity.

Matthew Henry.



Notes and Comments

The Common Market Referendum

The Common Market Referendum is due to be held on Thursday, 5th June 1975. This poll, to establish the views of the British people on continued membership of the European Economic Community, will be an historic one. Whether Parliament will accept the decision of the people is not yet clear. We trust that the British people, given the opportunity in this way to express their attitude to the Common Market, will vote conclusively for rejection of the Market, otherwise Britain's interests will be inextricably linked-up with those of Europe. Unless there was an outpouring of the Spirit upon the nations of Europe, such close ties with the Nine and control from Europe could only be to the religious and moral detriment of our nation.

The Fall of Vietnam and Cambodia

In Vietnam the war has ended in defeat for the Vietnamese by the Communist aggressor. The result for the Vietnamese is enslavement. How tragic an end this is to more than three decades of conflict. The Vietnamese, who are mostly Buddhist or Roman Catholic in religion, must now bear the Marxist yoke. The Christian Church, too, which has suffered so much during the years of guerilla warfare, is bound to suffer more deeply still under the Communists. Let us remember these Christians, the fruit of Protestant missionary work in that land, and also the people of Vietnam, and pray for the day when the whole world will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. The death of 140 Vietnamese orphans in an air crash shortly before the end of hostilities was a sad reminder of the perils to which young and old are exposed in a war situation.

In Cambodia also, the Communist Khmer Rouge forces were victorious when, after five years of civil war, Phnom Penh, the capital of the country, fell to them. It is estimated that a quarter of a million died in the war, while in Vietnam the toll of lives has been far higher.

The Rising Tide of Communism

Events are moving swiftly in different parts of the world. Free nations are being threatened by the rising tide of Communism; others have already fallen or are about to fall to Communist domination. At the end of the Second World War the whole of Eastern Europe became enslaved. Since then, North Korea and Tibet in the Far East came under Communist control as well as North Vietnam; while at present practically

the whole of Indo-china has succumbed to the Communist threat. In America the island of Cuba is under the Communists; while Chile only narrowly escaped this danger, as was true also of Indonesia in the Far East a little earlier. Nearer home, Portugal, so long under a dictatorship, has shaken herself free from that yoke only to come under the yoke of a Communist military regime. In our own Country, in Europe, in America and elsewhere the ceaseless activity of Marxists to undermine the fabric of ordered society to pave the way for a Communist takeover is well known. Clearly Communism is on the march.

The danger to our own nation from this source is real. The low spiritual and moral state of the nation renders us an easy prey to our adversaries. The undermining of the moral fabric of the nation so assiduously pursued for many years by the enemies of the state is bearing fruit. Communists have infiltrated the corridors of power in the nation and present a real threat to our freedom as a nation. What the result of a Communist takeover would mean for the true people of God in our land can be well realised by all who have knowledge of the Communists attitude to true religion in those lands where they already have power. Oppression and persecution for the kingdom of Christ's sake would be the lot of the people of God.

In what way then can we help to avert such a crisis and calamity? First we ought to recognise the danger and not think of it as something which cannot overtake us. If we are aware of our gross backslidings as a nation from the living and true God, we will have to own that we deserve to be given over into the hand of our enemies, just as Israel and Judah were. We ought then to take the threat seriously and humble ourselves in the sight of God on account of it.

Second, we ought to remember that the Lord is the hearer and answerer of prayer; and that He is to be entreated of by His people. Let us take the danger posed by the Communist threat to a Throne of grace, as Hezekiah did in his day the threat of Assyrian domination. Let there be no looking to man or to other nations for safety and deliverance but to the mighty God of Jacob. Let us plead there at His footstool not only for the protection of our own land from the Communist power but that the Lord would in infinite mercy turn back the rising tide of Communism which at present threatens to engulf the whole world.

Common Catechism

The first Common Catechism for use by Roman Catholics and Protestants was published recently. It is claimed to be the most comprehensive statement of the Christian faith available for Roman Catholics and Protestants. The editors were Prof. Johannes Feiner of Zurich and Dr

Lukas Vischer of Geneva and the catechism was compiled by a team of 19 Roman Catholic and 17 Protestant theologians. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Coggan, has described it as "an honest piece of theological work which will benefit all who are prepared to do some hard thinking," according to a report in the Daily Telegraph.

There is a great effort afoot to attempt to reconcile Protestant and Roman Catholic belief. The attempt however is vain for, whatever place the Roman Catholic Church may seem to give to certain orthodox doctrines, the two systems of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are irreconcilable. Only by the use of vaguely worded statements can Protestant and Roman Catholic belief be made to appear one. In the final analysis, Romanism requires submission to her dogmas and does not concede to Protestant belief its claim to orthodoxy.

Church Notes

Concerted Prayer

Let us remember at a Throne of grace the nations so recently brought under Communist control, that the cruelties usually practised by the Communists may be prevented and especially that the Christians in those lands may be upheld. Let us remember the countless millions on the face of the earth under Romanist, Communist or heathen domination who are denied to a large extent, if not wholly, the privileges we enjoy. Let us plead for the ingathering of the Jews and the reviving of the Gentile nations, particularly those like our own, which for a long period of time have had the Word of God and are now on the very point of turning away from it. Let us plead for every effort that is made according to the mind of the Spirit of God for the extension of Christ's Cause and kingdom throughout the whole world.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Southern — At Glasgow on 19th June at 6 p.m.

Northern — At Dingwall on 17th June at 6 p.m.

Outer Isles — At Stornoway on 24th June at 3.30 p.m.

Western — At Ullapool on 11th July at 6.30 p.m.

Skye — Portree on 24th June at 11 a.m.

Aberdeen New Church Opening

The new Church acquired recently by the Aberdeen congregation was due to be opened on Friday, 30th May. Rev. L. MacLeod, Greenock, was expected to preach. The Church is situated at the corner

of Skene Street and Esslemont Avenue. It is of more convenient size for the congregation than the former larger building on John Street. We trust that it will be of use to the congregation for many years to come and that the Gospel preached in it may be blessed to the souls of many. May the promise given of old be fulfilled in it: "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." Haggai 2:9.

Bound Volumes of the Magazine

The following bound volumes of the Magazine are for sale and may be obtained from the Free Presbyterian Church Bookroom, 137 Woodlands Road, Glasgow C.3.

F.P. Magazines Vol. 33 (1928) to Vol. 71 (1967), price £1 per copy post free.

Y.P. Magazines Vol. 14 (1949) to Vol. 30 (1966) price 50p per copy post free.

Synod Proceedings 1946-1965 5 copies bound together £1 post free.

Binding of Magazines

Persons wishing to have complete volumes of the Church Magazines bound are requested to send them to the Free Presbyterian Church Bookroom, 137 Woodlands Road, Glasgow C.3, marking their name and address clearly in pencil on the first page of each volume sent in. The cost of binding will not be known until the total number of Magazines to be bound is ascertained and a price negotiated accordingly.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, FCMA, 20 Daleview Avenue, Glasgow G12 0HE, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Sustentation Fund: Miss M. MacKay, £50; M.A. MacIver, £3.

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China Mission Fund: Friend, Lochinver, £10.

Home Mission Fund: Aged & Infirm Ministers' etc., Fund: Miss M. MacKay, £50; Miss M. Rickman, U.S.A., £42.32.

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Welfare of Youth Fund: Lover of Children, Raasay, £10.

Free Distribution Fund: Anon., Harris Postmark, £1; A Friend, Portree, £3.

The Treasurers of the following congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Applecross: Anon., £70, for Church Repairs; Anon., £10, for Sustentation Fund, both per C. Gillies.

Dornoch: Two Friends, £10, for Missionary's Car Expenses.

Dumbarton: Mrs A.W., Glasgow, £2; Anon. North Tolsta, £2; J.C., Glasgow, £5; Anon., Dunoon Postmark, £3; F.P. Friend, Ness, £2; Friend, Simshill £1; W. MacQ., £5, all per A.E. Alexander; E.M.D., Hitchen, Herts., £25; Friend, Blantyre, £5; Friend, Inverness, £5.

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Glendale: A True Friend, £5; A Friend, £1; A Friend, £1, all for Blythswood Tract Society; A True Friend, £5, for door collection (envelope in plate).

Kinlochbervie: Envelope in Church plate, £20, for Communion Expenses, per D.N.M.

Lairg: Friend, Harris, £5, for Congregational Funds, per Rev. D.B.M.

Lochinver: Envelope in plate at Communion, £20, from a Wellwisher.

North Harris: Friend, Stockinish, £1, for College and Library Fund; Friend, Stockinish, £1, for Sustentation Fund; Mrs A. MacL., Bayhead, Meavaig, £5, for Communion Expenses; Friend, Tarbert, Harris, £5, for Church Door Collection, all per A. Macleod; Friend, Stockinish, £5 (£2 for Communion Expenses, £2 for Ministers Car and £1 for Church and Manse Property); Friend, Leacklee, Stockinish, £10 (£5 for Ministers Car Expenses and £5 for Church and Manse property); Two Friends, Stockinish, £3, for Ministers Car Expenses; Friend, Stockinish, £5 (£3 for Church and Manse property and £2 for Ministers Car Expenses); Friend, Tarbert, Harris, £4 (£2 for Ministers Car Expenses and £2 for Church and Manse property); Friend, Tarbert, Harris, £2, for Sustentation Fund; Friend, Sheilebost, Harris, £5, for Ministers Car Expenses; Friend, Rodel, Harris, £5, for Ministers Car Expenses, last eight per Rev. A. MacKay.

Plockton/Kyle: Anon., Dunoon Postmark, £5, for Manse Purchase Fund, per Rev. D. Beattie.

Portree: Tolsta Friend, £1, for Church Renovation, per F.M.; Anon., £5, for Church Renovation; Anon., £2, for Congregational Property Maintenance Fund; Anon., £2, for March Church P.M. Fund, last three in Church Plate.

Raasay: Raasay Friend, £10; Raasay Friend, Watford, in memory of a loved wife, £10, both for Sustentation Fund and both per Rev. D. Nicolson; Psalm 143:10, Inverness Postmark, £3; M. MacL., Inverness, £1, both for Sustentation Fund per J.M. MacLeod; Anon., Inverness, £5; M. MacL., Inverness, £1; Friend, Raasay, £6; Friend, Inverarish, £2; Friend, Inverarish, £2, all for Manse Extension per J.M. MacLeod; Two Friends, £3 for Manse Extension per Treasurer.

Staffin: Envelope in plate £5; Miss J.M.D., Thornliebank, £5; A passer-by, £5, all for Sustentation Fund, last one per M.M.I.; Two Friends, Rom. 8:28, £15; R.MacD., Granton, £10, both for Congregational Purposes; A Friend, £1, for Car Park Fund, last three per Rev. J.MacD.; Miss A. MacPh., Portree, £1, for Church door collection.

Stirling, Perth and Dundee: Friend, Inverness, £30; Friend, Aberdeen, £7; Friend, Aberdeen, £50, all for Church Extension, and all per Rev. I.R.T.

Stornoway: Friend, Coulegrein, £20, for Sustentation Fund, and £5 for Minibus per Rev. J. Macleod; Anon., Inverness Postmark, £50, for Congregational Funds.

Tain and Fearn: Anon., £48.96, per R.W.M.; Anon., £10; Anon., £7.50, both for Manse Fund; Anon., £5, for Sustentation Fund, all per K.R.; M.G., £3; Anon., £10, both for Manse Fund, per Rev. J.N.; Anon., £7, for Manse Fund and Gen. Bldg. Fund, per K.R.; Visiting Friend for Manse Fund, £5; 1 John 3:23, £2.

Wick: Anon., Beauly, £10, for Congregational Funds; Anon., Wick, £5, for Foreign Mission Fund, both per Rev. R.R. Sinclair.