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The New Year

One year draws to a close and another year opens. Much has taken place during the year that is now gone. The year is gone, never to return. It is true, however, that it will meet us in eternity. Our actions during a past year will be weighed in the day of judgment. How solemn will that account be which we will have to render before the Judge of all the earth.

What concerns the gracious soul in connection with the passing of another year is how his soul has prospered in that year and how the kingdom of Christ has prospered in the world. For the exercised soul it is not a question of looking only on the bright side and keeping his eyes shut to the more sombre side. With regard to his own soul he has to confess his many sins and backslidings. With the Psalmist he has to say, Iniquities prevail against me, and adds with the Psalmist again, As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away. The cry of his soul is also, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death, and has to add with the Apostle, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The living soul mourns over past imperfections and defections and seeks the sprinkling of the blood of the everlasting covenant which alone can cleanse from all sin. He also desires to acknowledge past mercies and owns the Lord's longsuffering and forbearance in His dealings with him. He has to say with the Psalmist, He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

The truly gracious soul is deeply exercised with regard to the prosperity of the Cause of Christ. He desires the prosperity of Christ's kingdom. Therefore how that Cause prospered is of great concern to him. If there were signs of prosperity then he rejoices. The Psalmist was saying, That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. When the Cause of Christ

languishes and declines then the gracious soul laments. It desires the fulfilment of the promise concerning Zion, the city of our solemnites, "thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken".

To the year that lies ahead the exercised soul cannot look ahead with any self-confident boasting. To launch out upon it confidently in his own strength would be presumptuous boldness. What lies ahead he does not know. What snares and pitfalls Satan is laying for his feet he does not know. This confidence, however, he has that the Lord knows the way that he takes. He knows, too, that the Lord has promised to keep the feet of His saints. Knowing all the dangers to which the gracious soul is exposed in this world, yet renouncing his own strength and resting upon the arm of the Almighty, he can say:

But I with expectation
will hope continually;
And yet with praises more and more
I will Thee magnify.

Thy justice and salvation
my mouth abroad shall show,
Ev'n all the day; for I thereof
the numbers do not know.

And I will constantly go on
in strength of God the Lord;
And Thine own righteousness, ev'n Thine
alone, I will record.

Metrical Ps 71:14-16

Ordination Sermon

By Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale

*Preached in Portree Church at the Ordination of Rev. Donald MacLean,
on 22nd December, 1948*

"... Or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf." (II Cor. viii. 23, 24).

As we have very solemn and important matters before us here tonight, I shall not take up time by saying anything by way of an introduction, but we shall notice briefly two things from the words read as the basis of a few remarks. I. The two-fold character of the brethren. II. The duty which ought to be performed towards them.

I. The two fold character of the brethren. 1. They are the messengers of the churches. 2. They are the glory of Christ.

1. As my ministerial brethren know, the word that is here translated "messengers" is in the original Greek "apostles", so that they are here spoken of as "the apostles of the churches". Let it be noted that they are not referred to as the apostles of our Lord, but as the apostles of the churches. The word "apostle" is used in various connections in the New Testament. It is applied once to the Lord Himself. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." (Hebrews iii. 1). It is the name commonly given to those sent forth by the Lord Jesus to preach the Gospel and to organise His Church, and here, and in Phillippians ii. 25, it refers to the ordinary ministers of the gospel church. Those who were sent by the Lord and are designated "Apostles" were given for a special purpose in view of the extraordinary circumstances in which the Church of the New Testament was placed at the beginning, in order, as has been stated, to organise the Church, and they were given power to work miracles and to speak with other tongues so that their teaching would be more convincing, for these gifts were for the confirming of their doctrines. These Apostles had no successors in office, for none were necessary, and there seems, in our text, to be a contrast drawn between them and the rest of the ministers of Christ in all ages, for the latter are referred to as "the apostles of the churches." Although there is a contrast, there are also certain things in which there is an analogy between them.

(1) The word "apostle" is used of persons sent. The ministers of the gospel are received by the churches, and judged as to their qualifications. When the church is satisfied as to these qualifications, in the men offering themselves for the ministry, and as to their call to that work, they are, after suitable and necessary preparation, sent forth to do that work for which the Church exists in the world, that is, to declare the glorious message of the Cross to a perishing world. We often see men who profess to be apostles of the churches and they seem to be at home in doing everything but to declare that message, and thus they have reversed the determination of the Apostle Paul. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (I. Cor. ii. 2).

(2) The Apostles of our Lord were commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature, so are the apostles of the churches for their commission also and the promise of His abiding presence is, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). The manner in which they are to execute their commission is brought before us in the Scriptures in the advice of Paul to Timothy. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II. Tim. ii. 15), and also when he says, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." (II. Tim. iv. 2). In order to find the exact terms of their commission they must go to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and they have no authority to go elsewhere. It may truly be said that all the declensions that ever plagued the visible church in this world are the direct result of the neglect of the Scriptures, and of men taking counsel with their own wicked hearts. As Caesar's wife must be above suspicion, so must the true apostles of the churches be above consulting with flesh and blood, or pandering to the world and its ways.

(3) The apostles of the churches must continue in the Apostles' doctrine. We read that those, on the day of Pentecost, who believed, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship," and, as the apostles of the churches are guides in spiritual matters to those who form the church, they must give no other doctrine but that which was taught by the Apostles. It was for adhering to the doctrine of the Apostles as they, probably, learned it from those who were the apostles of the churches, that the Apostle Paul commends the Romans when he says, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." (Rom. vi. 17). The same Apostle is very explicit on this point when he says to Timothy, an apostle of the churches, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." (I. Tim. iv. 13).

Their continuance in the Apostles' doctrine must be proved by the matter of their preaching. Due emphasis must be laid on man's condition as fallen in Adam. The Scriptures clearly reveal to us what the Apostles' doctrine was on this point, and so it must be set forth, with no uncertain sound, that sin entered into the world through our first parents yielding to the temptation of Satan, and that their Fall plunged themselves and their

whole posterity into an estate of sin and misery. "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one". (Rom. iii. 9-12). In connection with that it must be shown clearly that all the miseries of this life, all the tokens of God's wrath which are seen in this world, death and hell, are all the fruits of sin, for "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23). Where such views of man's condition are declared it must be clearly set forth that, through the Fall, man came into possession of a corrupt nature; that in his heart there is a corrupt fountain which is like the troubled sea, continually casting up mire and dirt, and that this corruption has permeated all the faculties of the soul and all the members of the body, so that the whole human race is as an unclean thing, and all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

If the apostles of the churches had nothing to declare but man's lost and ruined condition it would beget despair, but in the Apostle's doctrine, in which they are to continue, there is also set before us a remedy — a rich, great and glorious remedy, expressly provided to meet with the lost and ruined condition of man. They must, therefore, set Christ before their hearers as an all-suitable and all-sufficient Saviour. Their preaching must be largely taken up with the doctrine of the Person of Christ, His offices and His Atoning Work, and what more glorious news could an ambassador of the Cross have for ruined and perishing sinners than, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (II. Cor. v. 21). Christ must be thus set before sinners. I remember shortly after I was ordained as a minister getting a letter from the late Pastor J.K. Popham, Brighton, whose personal friendship I value as one of the most precious privileges I enjoyed. At the time he was very advanced in years, and after referring to my ordination, he said, "Your ministry is beginning, mine is ending, and I will say to you what my minister said to me when I began to preach first: 'Make much of Christ!' All true apostles of the churches will 'make much of Christ' as God's only remedy to meet with the lost and ruined condition of sinners".

In doing so they must bear in mind that they have to do with dead sinners, and no matter how they proclaim to them God's glorious provision in Christ, they cannot stretch forth a hand to receive it. Thus they are bound to set before their hearers the work of the Holy Spirit. I wish to lay special emphasis on this, for the reason that the work of the Holy Spirit is very much ignored in our day, so much so, that many

congregations can say with the disciples who met Paul at Ephesus, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." The work of the Holy Spirit had a large place in the preaching of the Saviour Himself, and especially in His wonderful discourses to His disciples. The particular nature of that work is brought before us in connection with the promise that He would send them another comforter, and His statement as to what that Comforter was to do. According to the doctrine of the Apostles it is the Holy Spirit that reveals the "deep things of God"; it is through the Spirit that the Lord's people mortify the deeds of the body, and it is the Spirit that helps their infirmities and makes intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. It is only by the Holy Spirit that any can say that Jesus is Lord; it is by the Holy Spirit that the Lord's people are renewed, and it is by the self-same Spirit that they are sealed after they believe. Therefore, not to give prominence to the Holy Spirit in the work of applying to sinners the salvation wrought out by Christ is to neglect a part of the doctrine of the Apostles, and a sure way of grieving the Holy Spirit away.

(4) They must also continue in the Apostles' fellowship. In the passage quoted already from Acts ii. 42, to continue in the Apostles' fellowship seems to be of equal importance with continuing in their doctrine. This is one reason why the Apostle John declared those things which he had seen and heard, to those to whom he was writing; "that ye also may have fellowship with us." (I. John i. 3.).

To continue in the Apostles' fellowship, that must be done in one's walk in the world. Paul lays special emphasis on this when he says "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (Phil. iii. 17); And again, in writing to the Thessalonians, he mentions his independance in not eating "any man's bread," but "wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you." He gives his reason for this by saying "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." (II. Thess. iii. 9). Truly the example of the Apostles, in their walk and conversation, was worthy of being followed, and, as it was so, Paul was not ashamed to recommend the followers of Christ, whether they were the "apostles of the churches" or those who occupied a less public position in the Church, to follow it in their walk. "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved, ourselves among you that believe." (I. Thess. ii. 10).

As they must continue in the Apostles' fellowship they must, in doing so, countenance no other doctrine but that which the Apostles taught. We

have seen already what that doctrine is, and as it was in the days of the Apostles so it is in our day, that the doctrine which they taught is denied. The Fall of man, the electing love of God, the substitutionary work of the Redeemer, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the doctrine of everlasting punishment are all denied, but those who are the apostles of the churches have no right to deny these doctrines for they find them in the Scriptures, and must treat those who deny these doctrines as emissaries of Satan and open enemies of the Cross of Christ.

It is also necessary in continuing in the Apostles' fellowship, they should continue in the Apostles' Church. To do so is given in Scripture as a mark by which those who are approved are known. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." My mind was recently led very much to the two marks which John Calvin gives of the true Church, that is, there must be the preaching of the gospel in its purity, and along with it, the Sacraments as they were instituted by Christ Himself. I may point out, in connection with this, that the reason why we, as a Church, stand separate from other churches is, that a day came upon the Church in Scotland when one of these marks was lost, that is, the preaching of the gospel in its purity. Men brought into the Creed and Constitution of the once-glorious Free Church of Scotland some things that were the very antithesis of the letter and spirit of the gospel, and in order to have a Church which had these two distinctive marks our fathers had to separate, and for their doing so we have no reason to hang our heads. We have a church with a testimony, and a testimony of which we have no reason to be ashamed, and we have no right to unite with any church in Scotland until they return to that which they forsook, and express profound regret for having forsaken the truth. We have, as a Church, these two marks today as we had when a separate position was taken up and, woe betide, the man or woman who will depart from such a church as that. They lay themselves open to the charge of gross and uncalled-for schism.

Those who are the apostles of the churches must also have the same end in view as the Apostles of our Lord, that is, the glory of God and the good of souls. They must be at one with Paul when he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. In all things Christ must have the pre-eminence. As the Cross of Christ alone affords a reason for glorying to every saved sinner, so the ambassadors of the Cross must be diligent in setting forth, before perishing sinners, the glorious news that because of Christ's death on the Cross, reconciliation is preached to

them. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (II. Cor. v. 20).

2. The second part of the two-fold character that is given to the brethren is, that they are "the glory of Christ."

(1) They are the glory of Christ as they testify to His power. They are privileged to set forth before a perishing world a Saviour who is able "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." In doing so they can fall back on many Scripture instances, such as the notable ones of Manasseh, who made the streets of Jerusalem run red with the blood of the saints, the thief on the cross, who reviled his Saviour even after the pangs of death had already laid hold on him, and of Saul of Tarsus who felt the arresting power of his Saviour on that never-to-be forgotten day when he was on his way to Damascus and "exceedingly mad" against those who followed Christ. In doing so they testify, to His glory, His exceeding great power in coming over all obstacles in order to procure the liberty of His people; yea, vanquishing death itself, overcoming the power of the grave and spoiling principalities and powers and making a show of them openly. They are the glory of Christ when they testify to His power, by saying with His heritage, "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belongs the issues from death." (Ps. lxxviii. 20).

(2) They are the glory of Christ when they testify to His grace in themselves. They are called freely by His grace, justified freely by His grace. His grace is sufficient for them, they have forgiveness according to the riches of His grace, and they have a good hope through grace. Paul showed forth the glory of Christ when, from the dust of self-abasement, he wrote, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Ephes. iii. 8). Thus we see him seeking, through that grace, to show forth the glory of Christ, "that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

(3) Their life, their dependence on Him, their zeal and their faithfulness all redound to the glory of Christ, as we see again in Paul, for he could truly say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." It is this humble spirit, so characteristic of all true apostles of the churches, which makes them the glory of Christ. They have a low estimation of their own abilities and attainments, and count anything they

have done themselves as nothing. This forcibly reminds me of a visit I paid to the late Miss Morton, Glasgow, whom some here tonight knew very well. On this particular occasion she was after coming back from the North, and, in course of conversation she mentioned that she was present one evening in the manse in Dingwall at family worship. It was the last summer that the late Rev. D. MacFarlane was in this world, and in his concluding prayer she noted the following petition, "Lord, wilt Thou not give us to do something for Thy Cause before Thou wilt take us away." When one remembers what Mr MacFarlane was privileged to do, directly and indirectly, not only in Scotland, but wherever the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church has been raised, one is struck with his conformity to our Lord's advice, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." (Luke xvii. 10). Truly, in his very humility in these matters, where he showed the greatest consistency, dependence on God, zeal and faithfulness, he was the glory of Christ, and reminds one of the exclamation of the Holy Spirit, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." (Rom. x. 15).

II. I come now, in the second place, to notice the duty which ought to be performed towards them. Those addressed are, first of all, to show to these apostles of the churches the proof of their love.

(1) This is to be done by treating them as the servants of Christ. It is true that the world at all times gave but poor entertainment to Christ and to His servants, but something different is expected of a people who are giving a Call to a minister, for they entreat him to come and take charge of their souls. This implies a profession of a sense of the needs of their souls and a willingness to receive a minister "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." (Gal. iv. 14). Nothing less than this is expected of those who profess to have a love to Christ and such a concern for their own souls that none but Christ can save them. The duty of the servant is to commend Christ and to exalt Him before the people, and in the measure in which he does this, he ought to have respect from the people and to be loved by them.

(2) They are to be treated as messengers of the churches. To the Church in this world is given by Christ the power of the keys, that is, the key of doctrine and key of discipline. The messengers of the churches use the key of doctrine when they declare the whole counsel of God to men and women, and they use the key of discipline when they admit to, or shut out

from, sealing ordinances in accordance with the word of God. They are the officers which Christ has appointed in the Church, and as the Church's messengers they must, in her courts, exercise the power which Christ has delegated to the Church. It is, therefore the duty of all who profess to love Christ to show the proof of their love to the Church's messengers before the churches.

The apostles of the churches are ambassadors of peace to proclaim peace on earth and goodwill towards men. Viewing their position in the world from that aspect, theirs is an honourable employment, and they ought to be esteemed "very highly for their work's sake." (I. Thess. v. 13). It would be as well for each of us to take the lowest room as poor perishing sinners who are aliens and enemies to God, and when God has commissioned men to come to us with a message of peace, if we value their message, we should have love towards the messengers. And truly it can be said that they have the most wonderful message that ever fell on the ears of mortals when they proclaim God's message, saying, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Is. lv. 3).

(4) It is the proof of your love to them that you are to show, and not a mere profession of love.

One proof of that love is to take heed to that doctrine which they proclaim. Some, while they do not absent themselves from the public means of grace, show clearly that they are not at home there. It is possible that there are some before me tonight and they count it too long to sit for an hour and a half in the house of God, while they would never feel weary though they would be sitting in the Hall on the other side of the street for three or four hours, listening to the vanities of the world. The pictures, the dance and the vain song are more in keeping with their desires than what would be beneficial to their immortal souls. Methinks I hear someone saying, what is wrong with the pictures, the dance and the vain song? Well, friend, let me ask you one question. Can you classify these things as works of faith? I do not think that there are any in this closely packed church tonight who are so bold as to say that the things mentioned are works of faith. If not, let the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures be the judge and we read there, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv. 23). The doctrine which a faithful minister of the gospel will preach must condemn these sinful frivolities and, therefore, show the proof of your love to such by taking heed to their doctrine.

There is another proof of your love that should be shown, and that is, to

pray for them. I fully believe that where an individual is in the habit of remembering his minister at the Throne of Grace, he will not turn against that minister because of some slight provocation, nor will he easily be made to turn his back on the Cause of Christ through the evil designs of others. It is only the Great Day that will reveal the blessing that a praying people are in a congregation, and the support they are to a godly minister. I remember reading of a minister in America whose labours were at first abundantly blessed in his congregation, but after a time a season of barrenness set in. A deputation waited on the minister to inquire as to the reason. The reason given by the minister was, "I have lost my prayer book." One of the deputation said, in surprise, "We did not know that you used one." "Yes," he replied, "the godly people of my congregation were my prayer book, but for some time they have slackened very much in their duty of remembering me at a Throne of Grace." The hint was taken and the breath of prayer which had begun to be dangerously faint, began to rise with renewed strength, and soon they were visited with times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

(5) This proof of your love is to be shown "before the churches." I have already referred to the cause why we occupy a separate position as a Church, and to the testimony raised by us. The eyes of the churches in Scotland are upon us, small and despised though we may be, and let us in this congregation, and let all our congregations, faithfully adhere to our distinctive testimony as a Church. It is a noble testimony, worth adhering to while we live, and worth dying for. It is the testimony for which many eminent martyrs and confessors bled and died, and let us not forsake it while God enables us, by His grace, to adhere to it.

Again, let us show the proof of our love before the churches by showing a spirit of self-denial. Self-denial is a necessary qualification of a true disciple of Christ, as the Saviour Himself says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. xvi. 24). This spirit, can be shown, among other ways, by a readiness to sink our own petty quarrels. Each of us meet, in our several spheres of labour, many things which vex us, and on account of particular matters attending them, are magnified in our eyes out of all due proportion. We are so ready to forget that they are but as a small drop out of the bucket in comparison with the restless ocean of trouble which incessantly tumbles round this world of ours, and, therefore, let us be ready to sink them for the good of the Cause of Christ. Further, this spirit of self-denial should be shown by accepting, in a Christian manner, rebuke when we go wrong. It is very evident that this is contrary to the

spirit of the age in which we live, but it is not contrary to the spirit of the true Christian. The Psalmist would say, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head; for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities." (Ps. cxli. 5).

The second thing in connection with the duty required is to show the proof "of our boasting on your behalf." We are here tonight for a very solemn reason. As a Court of Christ's Church, we have put a Call from you, as a congregation, in the hands of the man whom you have elected to be your minister. By doing so we have, in a manner, boasted of your unanimity, of your sense of your need that he would take charge of your souls, of your appreciation of faithful and plain preaching, and of your faithfulness to perform the solemn promises which you made, in signing this Call, that you would show all dutiful respect, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. This has been our boasting on your behalf to the minister-elect, and now when we are about to ordain him, and induct him to the pastoral charge of this congregation, it is for you, as a congregation, to show the proof "of our boasting on your behalf."

May the Lord bless anything said which was consistent with His Word.

New Year Thoughts

By Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala

(These thoughts are extracted from his diary)

Jan 1, 1779. Another year is for ever gone, to be seen no more! but not so all its actions. A day is coming when they must all be reviewed. Another year have I been kept by the power of God. He hath not left me. His grace has been at all times sufficient for me. I have hitherto obtained mercy, and found grace to help in time of need. Why then should I suspect God's faithfulness, and the sufficiency of His grace for the future? Is He not for ever the same God? Many have been my offences during the last year, against a Being of infinite compassion and love; but His boundless mercy has pardoned them *all*. Praise the Lord, O my soul. May I ever walk humbly with God in the bitterness of my soul. I most cheerfully and sincerely surrender myself, and all thou hast bestowed upon me, (for I have nothing else that is good), to Thee and Thy servants, this new year and for evermore. Behold, I am Thy servant: help me to serve and glorify Thee. I am Thine; keep me. I am Thine; never leave me. May I never be permitted to dishonour Thy dear name. Amen.

Jan 1, 1780. I found last year the following promise remarkably fulfilled to me — “Fear not, I am with Thee, be not dismayed, I am Thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” If Thou hadst not been with me, I must have fallen and perished: but, blessed be the Lord, the everlasting arms were underneath me. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Gratitude for Thy numerous and undeserved mercies, both temporal and spiritual, bestowed on me last year, cannot but powerfully influence my mind to devote myself most solemnly and deliberately to Thy service for the time to come. O God, give me the privilege and happiness of living to Thee. I trust that I have been one of Thy family these seven years; *nor would I change my Master for ten thousand worlds.* His service is perfect freedom, and *the only happiness in the universe.* Astonishing was the grace that first called me from the world: but more amazing, if anything can be so, is the grace, mercy and patience, which has since borne with me, and pardoned my sins, and is still compassionating my daily infirmities. O Lord, continue Thy strengthening grace and Thy refreshing presence to me this year also.

Jan. 1, 1781. Another year is past! How faithful is God to His promises! He is abundant in goodness and truth. He hath preserved me one year more, like the three young men in the fiery furnace. Lord, what shall I render to Thee for all Thy benefits. What progress have I made, during the last year, in the divine life? Any at all? Are my corruptions weaker, and the graces of the Spirit grown stronger within me? I hope I can say, that in general the power of my corruptions is in some degree weakened; though at particular seasons the enemy makes most terrible inroads, and threatens my utter destruction. This calls for continual watchfulness and prayer. I am never safe, but when I live near to God, and depend by faith on Him alone for safety.

Am I pleased and satisfied with my Master and His service? I can truly answer, I am: nor would I change either the one or the other for millions of worlds. I see nothing here worth living for, but the service of God. My heart, unless it deceives me, desires supremely and continually no other glory, honour, or happiness, than what is to be found in God’s service. He is a good Master. I love His service. Lord, nail mine ear to the door of Thine house for ever. O that I could love Thee more, and serve Thee better! I am slothful. I am negligent. But the Lord hath hitherto borne with me. Give me the honour and privilege of serving Thee, and living

with Thee for ever. Enable me this year to double my diligence, and to press more earnestly after holiness; and to live more wholly to Thy glory! Amen.

Jan. 1, 1782. How fast do fleeting years carry me towards eternity! Lord, help me to live with the awful prospect continually in view. When eternity draws near, the world, with all its pomp and vanity, sinks into nothing. It stamps madness and folly on all my plans and schemes for futurity, and throws contempt on those things which my fond imagination was before enamoured and delighted with. Did I live with eternity in view, how would it sober my mind, cure the natural madness of my heart, and elevate my soul above all mean and earthly pursuits. It would diminish into nothing all my troubles and all my joys, this side the grave, and render it insignificant and indifferent whether I grieve or rejoice during this short span of time. This awful sight changes the appearance of all sublunary things. It puts the rich and poor, the miserable and the happy, on a level. Every thing is utterly insignificant but that which is eternal. Why should I sink under troubles and trials? They will soon be at an end. Why should I rejoice in any earthly felicity? For this also is vanity, and will soon be ended. May my joys and sorrows for the future be excited by nothing but by what is *eternal*! Why does my mind shrink back at the near approach of eternity? Is it not my home? Is it not the end of my weary pilgrimage? True: but still there is something awfully solemn in the thoughts of eternity. With God, eternity, and our sins in view, what can support the soul but the infinite merits of the Son of God! Lord, strengthen my faith, and eternity will lose its terrors. I must converse more familiarly every day with the other world, have my thoughts and heart more there continually, think of it often as a weary traveller of his home, and the labourer of his rest at night, and by degrees we shall become more familiarly acquainted. But only faith can support the soul.

When I reflect on God's goodness and my ingratitude, during the past year, I am ashamed and confounded before Him. I can no otherwise live but as a guilty sinner, on the Son of God. When I look forward, (which I have no business to do), God's faithfulness to His promises is my only support. Greater, says John, is He that is in you, than he that is in the world — greater in *every* view — *greater* in wisdom, — greater in strength etc. And this greater One is not at *any* time absent from us, but *in us*, always present to counteract the spirit that is in the world. Calvin says, "Greater, that is, stronger is He that is in you than he who is in the world. Such indeed is our infirmity, that it behoves us to yield before we join battle with the enemy. For we are wrapt up in ignorance, and therefore

open to all kinds of fallacies: and Satan is a wonderfully cunning contriver in the work of deception. If we should hold out for one day, yet a doubt as to what will be tomorrow would creep over our minds. Thus we should be perpetually in a state of anxiety. Therefore the Apostle reminds us, that we are made strong not by our own power, but by that of God. Hence, he concludes, that we can no more be overcome than God Himself, who has furnished us with His own power till the end of time. And with respect to the whole of our spiritual warfare, this thought should rest on our hearts — that we should instantly lose the day if we had to fight in our own strength; but that victory is certain, for while we are resting still, God repels the enemies.”

With my heart well established in this reviving truth, help me, O Lord, to buckle on my armour, and press forward, notwithstanding oppositions and dangers.

“Not Growing Old”

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” (2 Cor. 4: 16-18).

They say that I am growing old;
I've heard them tell it times untold,
In language plain and bold —
But I'm *not* growing old.

This frail old shell in which I dwell
Is growing old, I know full well
But I am not the shell.

What if my hair is turning grey?
Grey hairs are honourable, they say.
What if my eyesight's growing dim?
I still can see to follow Him
Who sacrificed His life for me
Upon the cross of Calvary.

What should I care if Time's old plough
Has left its furrows on my brow?
Another house, not made with hands
Awaits me in the Glory Land.

What though I falter in my walk?
What though my tongue refuse to talk?
I still can tread the narrow way
I still can watch, and praise and pray.

My hearing may not be as keen
As in the past it may have been,
Still, I can hear my Saviour say,
In whispers soft, "This is the way."

The outward man, do what I can
To lengthen out this life's short span,
Shall perish, and return to dust,
As everything in nature must.

The inward man, the Scriptures say,
Is growing stronger every day.
Then how can I be growing old
When safe within my Saviour's fold?

Ere long my soul shall fly away
And leave this tenement of clay;
This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the "everlasting prize."
I'll meet you on the streets of gold,
And prove that I'm not growing old.

John E. Roberts

Every Christian in his own Sphere a Missionary

by the Rev. James Begg, DD, Newington

It is the imperative duty of all Christians, to promote the eternal salvation of men. Strictly speaking, no man can provide for his brother's eternal peace. But, in the very same sense, no man can provide for the present comfort of any human being. Without the immediate providence of God the builder builds, and the watchman watches, the husbandman sows, the merchant traffics in vain. The bread which perisheth and that which endures unto everlasting life, both come equally down from

heaven. The eternal God, or His great liberality, not merely makes the harvests come round in their abundance, and sends corn, and wine, and oil, that man in the midst of his sinfulness may be filled with joy, but has, from all eternity, provided for the eternal happiness of those who shall be saved. Both these treasures have been put into earthen vessels, and strictly speaking, it is not the providing of them, but the distribution, which is left to man. And what ought to be impressed upon our minds is, that the duty of spreading these eternal benefits abroad, is binding not merely upon the ministers of the everlasting Gospel, or upon kings and rulers, although, in this work, they should stand forth prominents, but upon all Christians as such. The whole members of the Christian Church should be constantly at work, like the little leaven hid amidst the mighty mass until the whole is leavened.

The instant a man becomes a Christian, he devotes himself to the service of Christ in all that he is, and has, and hopes to possess. He is, in the strong language of Scripture, a living sacrifice, and whether he thinks of the eternal God coming down from heaven, and, in human nature, enduring such agonies, that he might be raised to glory — or reflects that Christ is now in heaven again, waiting till many souls be brought to glory, till all His enemies be made His footstool — or looks upon the countenances of the men that pass along the streets, and remembers that they must all live throughout a long eternity, and that for that eternity few of them are prepared — or upon the changeless glories of heaven — or the dread solemnities of a judgment day — the endless torments of the regions of woe — upon waiting expecting angels — upon the zeal of his fellow-Christians — upon the cold indifference of others — upon all the objects of the spiritual world around him, and all the hurrying objects of a quickly coming eternity — he sees a thousand inducements to be up and doing while it is day; and his zeal will not expend itself in feeble efforts within his own little circle, but he will rejoice in every institution whose object it is to bring perishing men to see the King in His beauty and the land that is afar off; — he will love as his own soul the men by whom such institutions are promoted, he will regard all who oppose them as his own enemies.

This is no exaggerated description of genuine Christianity in its practical exhibitions, and if we have never been conscious of any such feelings, we have in the strongest possible way, before angels and men, denied the faith. God has positively commanded us all to do good and to communicate — to save the souls of our brethren from death, that thus we may cover a multitude of sins, — to walk in the steps of our great

Redeemer, who was always pointing the views of men towards heaven. This is not left to our volition, but has all the authority of a positive command, and to refuse obedience to it, is to turn our backs upon Christianity, and to break away from the authority of God. It is as much to disobey the Almighty, in whom we profess to trust, as if we violated the second, or third, or any other of the commandments — as if we set up an idol in our dwelling-places to worship — or appropriated to ourselves our neighbour's wealth, or violated the Sabbath day. To be convinced of the truth of these statements, let us only conceive how we ourselves would regard such conduct in one of the high intelligences of heaven. If, when a mandate went forth from the eternal throne of God, commanding Gabriel to fly to the uttermost ends of the earth on some mysterious and lofty enterprise, instead of being off with the speed of lightning, he turned sullenly away and attempted to find his own pleasure among his companion spirits. This would be at once an open revolt against God, and it would be vain for such an angel to say, that he believed the right which God had to utter such a command — his conduct would condemn him, and would be a breaking up at once of all the harmonies of heaven. And if the earth is only a nursery for that glorious place above, and if Christians are to be trained here to the same implicit and rejoicing obedience which angels display, it is plain, that if they turn away from obeying a commandment, as plainly revealed in Scripture, as if a voice from the eternal Sanctuary had proclaimed it in their hearing, their conduct is exactly that of the rebellious spirits of God. And how can they hope to be suffered to mingle with angels, when they die, or how can they dare to go down on their knees when none but the eternal God is a witness, and pray that the Almighty's will may be done on earth as the angels in heaven perform it? How can they dare to do this when that Omniscient Being knows, and their own consciences tell them, that they are the very persons who stand in the way of the fulfilment of their prayer, and that they do what they can by their neglect to frustrate the great and holy purposes of Jehovah? They are worse than infidels who are in such a case — for they are traitors within the camp — they profess to acknowledge their obligations to a Saviour, only to show how they can treat them with contempt — to realise a great eternity only to prove to all men that they can despise its amazing vastness, — to believe in the existence and authority of a God, only that they may prove with what daring hardihood they can trample that authority under their feet.

Upon whatever object a man's heart is fixed, that will he desire above all things to promote; and if we have faith at all in the great realities of an

eternal world, and are, in any way, distinguished from hypocrites and unbelievers, we can never rest satisfied so long as men are perishing around us for lack of knowledge. And yet there is no delusion more common; maintained not merely in the market-place, but in the very house of God — in the seat of Moses, and by some of the professed ministers of truth, and alas! very frequently exemplified than that of supposing that Christianity is a thing of calmness and contemplation, which does not obtrude itself upon the notice of the world, or unsettle the strongholds of iniquity, but steals into heaven in secret. Our position, on the other hand, is, that if Christianity is not open and determined, it has no existence, and that such feeble time-serving Christians are worse than infidels. If the salvation of man were an object of small importance, then would we imagine that we might be indifferent respecting it, but if it be an object, compared with which the whole world sinks into insignificance, then the man who is loudest in warning others of their danger — the man who is first in activity — he who casts himself into the breach and beats back the enemy, — is the chosen of God, baptized with fire and sealed to the day of redemption: and that fire passes by sympathy from heart to heart, — opposition gives way before it, — it is strong as death, and many waters cannot quench it. Is it possible that men should be zealous in accomplishing every object, however base, and that there should, in those who are really His servants, be no zeal in the cause of God who created all? Where shall we look for the true temper of Christianity? Shall we look towards our Saviour Himself? The theory of which we have spoken receives no countenance from His example. How many cities did He visit, how many heavenly discourses deliver, how many gracious miracles perform, how many Scribes and Pharisees rebuke, how many fervent prayers utter during the short period of His ministry? His zeal burnt like a flame, iniquity was ashamed and hid itself before Him, perishing sinners clustered round Him as their great deliverer; the zeal of heaven seemed, for a season, to have come down to earth; it was as His meat and drink to do the will of God, and to finish His work. Or, shall we look to the great Apostle of the Gentiles; shall we see him in Jerusalem, preaching so powerfully, that the very murderers of our Lord fly for refuge to the cross which they had impiously lifted up; shall we see him at Athens, and Galatia, and Corinth, and Ephesus, making men pull down their temples of idolatry, and cast the gods which they had worshipped to the moles and to the bats, bring out their books of sorcery and burn them in the presence of all the people? What a mighty stir is here! and how does this undaunted man, with the love of the eternal Saviour in his heart,

and the book of salvation in his hand, fly from sea to sea, and from city to city, heedless of his own safety, for he is in perils often by land and by sea, in the wilderness and in the crowded city, and among false brethren; but he has formed the noble resolution, not to go down to his grave till he has proclaimed to his perishing brethren the means of their eternal safety. His zeal was only kindled by opposition, and with the fire of a seraph he carried on his high designs. Was this Christianity? Or, shall we take, in our own land, those men of vehement spirit, who shook "the idols of Rome out of their niches, and swept them forth from our isle", changing a wilderness of darkness and degrading superstition into a smiling garden, which the Lord hath blessed, emancipating a whole nation from the most degrading of all captivities, and handing down to us the most unspeakable blessings? Were these Christian men? And can we possibly belong to the same family with them, if when the same degradation is beginning to oppress our countrymen again, — when the same darkness and ignorance is beginning to gather its fearful gloom around us, — when the same world is still lying in wickedness, we pass heedlessly on, without putting forth one wish, or making one effort to accomplish the same glorious objects. Does it never strike you that instead of measuring Christianity by the standard of your own doings you should measure your own doings by the standard of Christianity? and that if you are the men we have at present described, you are those very lukewarm professors of Christianity who have practically, and in the strongest way, denied the faith, and are an abomination in the sight of God? What an awful statement is that made by our exalted Saviour, "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; so then, because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

"Curse ye Meroz said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

The Value of the Bible

by the late Rev. Henry Duncan D.D., Ruthwell

That knowledge is good, will readily be granted by every liberal and enlightened Christian; but that a *partial* knowledge is frequently more distressing in its consequences than ignorance itself, fatal experience has rendered too manifest to be contradicted. Now, it is under this partial knowledge that the present age is deeply suffering. Men have burst

through the darkness in which they were so long bound by superstition and priestcraft, and have impetuously and rashly rushed into a light too dazzling for their unprepared eyes. The revealed Word of God, which, under Romish domination, was abused as the instrument of their slavery, they have either cast altogether away from them, or regarded with indifference or distrust; and instead of opening with reverence and eager desire that holy book, on which an apostate Church in its conscious corruption and worldly minded jealousy, had set its impious seal, they have slighted the best gift which their Protestant profession has conferred on them, choosing rather to seek for instruction and learning from every other source, than from the fountain of all sacred truth. It is not a love of *truth*, but a love of this partial and unsanctified knowledge, which gives so fearful an aspect to the character of the age in which we live. A real believer cannot but regard the Bible as that one book with which it is his duty and his high privilege to begin and carry on, and end all his studies — which he must make his meditation by day and by night — from which he must derive all his most cherished principles — and by which he must mould all his information.

And what is the Bible that it should be thus studied, thus revered, and thus obeyed? It might suffice to answer in one word, that it contains the revealed will of God; for the truths, whatever they may be, which the Creator has broken the silence of nature to disclose, must be of paramount importance for His creatures to know, and to believe; and the duties which His own mouth has commanded, they are bound at all hazards to fulfil. But look at the nature of that revelation, and it will at once approve itself to your minds, as, in its own nature, worthy of God to give, and unspeakably valuable for man to receive. We live in a world of moral darkness, where weakness, and folly, and wickedness, infect and pollute the most exalted of the Creator's works, where sorrow and suffering prevail, and where disease and death are the common lot of all that breathe. How are these appalling facts to be reconciled to a belief of the infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness of the Eternal? Reason finds it impossible; but when we turn to the inspired Word the difficulty is solved. We are there referred to an awful and mysterious transaction, by which man, created upright, happy and immortal, cast from him the image of God, and with his own guilty hands brought woe and death into a blessed world. Such is the scriptural account of the origin of evil. But Scripture does not stop here. From the same divine source we learn that the fall of man is only part of a stupendous scheme, by which temporary evil is converted into eternal good; that when man sinned he was not

abandoned by his Creator; that, on the contrary, his very degradation is overruled by an unseen but Almighty hand, for purposes connected with his future dignity; that he is to rise more vigorous and noble from his fall and through sin and sorrow, pain and death, is to be divinely led, till he work his arduous way to a higher and more happy station among living beings. This is the revealed promise to all who will accept of it; and the means are also revealed by which that astonishing promise is accomplished, by which God is made just while He is the justifier of the ungodly. The sacred volume assures us that the Eternal Son of God came into the world to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that He lived, suffered, and died, to accomplish the salvation of the guilty, and to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; that He rose again from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep; and that He now reigns in heaven, our elder brother, our intercessor, and our judge.

What a sublime and wonderful view is this of the character of God, of the office of the Saviour, and of the nature and destiny of man! If it be indeed true, and who but a professed infidel can deny it, of what infinite importance is it that it should be known! But were it not for the oracles of revealed truth, what would become of all this amazing history of divine grace? Deprive us of the Bible, and whether we contemplate our Creator or ourselves, all is darkness, and doubt, and dismay. Without the discoveries of the Gospel, we would dwindle into the insignificant and helpless creatures of a day; and all our high motives and aspirations would come to an end; and our most rational employment would be to crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered, — to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and hope would be a shadow, and happiness a name, and life itself an empty pageant, for man would be without a Saviour, and the world without a God!

To prefer any kind of instruction, therefore, to the instruction contained in the Sacred Scripture, is an act of impiety; and should this be the spirit and tendency of the age in which we live, it is an impious age. It is one of the most fearful charges brought against the Romish hierarchy, that they withhold the Bible from their deluded votaries; and, on the other hand, it is the peculiar glory of Protestants to have snatched this inestimable treasure from the interested grasp of that apostate Church, and to have nobly vindicated their unalienable right to search the sacred record for themselves. But what avails it that our forefathers burst the double fetters imposed on their souls by superstition and priestcraft, and, sustained by faith, bore their undaunted testimony before princes and councils, in the pulpit, in the closet, and at the criminal bar, — what avails

it that they resisted, even to death, in the battle-field, on the rack, on the scaffold, and at the stake, and, through fire and blood, carried off the hallowed prize, that it might become a lamp to their own path, and might be transmitted as their best legacy to their children and their children's children — what, I say, avails this to us, if, after all, we neglect or carelessly peruse this Book of Books, so faithfully contended for, so bravely won, so piously cherished? Was it to adorn a shelf or a table that our fathers bestowed on us the volume of inspiration, translated into our own language, unshackled by human authority, and uncontaminated by human glosses and traditions? Was it to be spoken of and gloried in merely — to be an object of pride and a shibboleth of party — that this sacred deposit was placed in our hands? Who will venture to avow it in words, though so many practically reveal that no higher motive lurks at the bottom of their hearts?

If there be any worth in our Protestant profession, it is that it unseals the inspired record, and places it freely and liberally in our hands — a record of infinite value — but only valuable to us when we peruse it assiduously and devoutly, receiving its doctrines with faith and love, and laying its precepts up in our hearts, that we may practise them in our lives. When it lies in your chamber a silent and unheeded monitor, the unimproved talent becomes a curse to you instead of a blessing, and when, neglecting this fountain of all-important knowledge, you seek for the cultivation of your minds only from other sources, then a judicial blindness falls upon you, and the light that is in you is converted into darkness. Such, I grieve to think, is the prevailing iniquity of the present day; and most earnestly do I pray that you may be preserved at once from this awful defection, and from its inevitable consequences.

The truth of all this will be still more apparent, when it is remembered that if instruction in human knowledge be unaccompanied with the higher and more important teaching derived from revelation, a most unhappy effect is produced on the young and pliant mind. A child is naturally prone to take his views from the things and the persons around him. What daily presents itself to his eyes and ears is that which forms his character; and thus it is that, without direct religious instruction, all the information he acquires, ample though in other respects it may be, profits him nothing for eternity, but only binds him closer to the things of earth; he grows up a mere flutterer in the passing sunshine, or a sordid worldly drudge, whose thoughts and affections, whose schemes and prospects, are all connected with his present condition, who looks not beyond the grave, who practically knows nothing of a Saviour, and who, in the general tenor of

his conduct, scarcely acknowledges the hand of an overruling Providence, or even the very existence of God.

There cannot, surely, be a more delightful spectacle, than that of a young Christian eager to increase his knowledge, that, by the cultivation of his mind, he may better learn the purposes for which he was sent into this world, and more faithfully pursue them; nor does learning ever appear in so useful and exalted a light, as when it is employed in preparation for eternity. To the Christian scholar every new instruction he acquires, furnishes a new opportunity, of which he does not fail to avail himself, of perceiving and acknowledging the perfection of the great Creator. When he reads the history of man, he there observes at once the most appalling proofs of the depravity of his species, and the most wonderful and cheering displays of an over-ruling Providence, so holy and righteous, yet so full of grace and long-suffering mercy; when he inquires into the appearances of nature, whether he looks at the structure of the world in which he lives, or examines the thousand forms of trees, and plants and flowers, which deck its surface, or the not less various and amazing properties of the living creatures, for whose use the things without life were made, — it is the hand of God that he sees and adores in them all; when he extends his view beyond the narrow span of this lower world, and casts his bewildered glance on the immensity of the universe, compared with which the earth he treads upon is but an atom, and he himself as nothing, — whether he attempts to comprehend the simple but stupendous laws by which all things are sustained and regulated, or to trace the effects of these laws in actual operation among innumerable worlds, — wherever he turns, it is still the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Eternal, with which, in his gifted eye, all nature appears bright, and to which he pays the tribute of an amazed but overflowing heart. When, from the height of these speculations, he descends to the comparatively insignificant concerns of the contracted sphere in which he moves and converses, or regards the little world within himself, God is there also; and the same Almighty hand which “wheels the rolling spheres”, he sees equally employed in regulating the petty affairs of a kingdom, a parish, and a family, — the same Infinite Mind which surveys and governs innumerable worlds, his faith discovers equally in the lowly cottage, shedding peace on the heart of the awakened sinner, — smoothing the pillow of sickness, — nay, counting the beating of an infant’s heart, and numbering the hairs of its head.

The enlargement of mind which education gives when thus directed to its proper object, is a source of the purest pleasure, and of the most

exalted devotion. But amid all the advantages arising from a religious education founded on the Bible, where now is that regard for the inspired volume, which caused our forefathers to carry it in their bosoms, and defend it with their lives? Where is that sacred feeling which the sun witnessed every evening as he went down — when the whole land was vocal with the praises of the Most High — and when the solemn anthem of the palace was echoed back, in not less hallowed strains, from every lowly cottage? Where is that reverence for the Christian Sabbath, which spread a holy stillness over our houses, our streets, and our highways; which was felt wherever Christian influence extended; which not only caused the beasts of burden to partake in the hallowed rest, but rendered the very wild animals of the forest more tame and more secure? Is there not on every side an ominous listlessness and indifference with regard to divine things? Does not the labourer ply his spade, and the farmer his plough, and the tradesman his shuttle or his plane, without once suffering a thought of God to break in on the worldliness of his schemes, or to exalt the lowness of his labours? What proof is to be found that the higher walks of life are dignified with purer sentiments, or adorned with more Christian conduct? From the evening fireside, alike of the wealthy and the poor, the edification of pious conversation has long been banished. How few now are the family altars, round which parent and child, master and servant, assemble to mingle their hearts in gratitude for common blessings, or in humble supplication for the supply of common wants! How seldom is now heard a father's voice tenderly instructing his beloved children in divine things; or a lisping tongue reverently whispering the Saviour's name, and conning the history of redeeming love! How rarely are seen a mother's tears of affection and thankfulness, as the minds of her children open to clearer views of God and duty, and give stronger evidence of heaven-ward desires! We have still, indeed, the admirable institution of parochial schools, which the wisdom and piety of our ancestors were careful to endow, that the very poorest of our people might early learn to peruse the Word of God; but in how many instances have these seminaries of religion been converted into mere places of instruction in human learning, where the Bible and Catechism have been either entirely discarded, or treated as matters of inferior importance; and, even in instances where the original object and spirit of our schools have been preserved, and where other schools of religious instruction are open on the Sabbath, how much of their efficiency, as a great instrument for imbuing the minds of our youth with Christian principles, has been lost by the utter neglect of parents at home! It is at the family hearth that

piety and duty are best taught; and if the children find not such instructions there, the mere exercises of memory and judgment in matters of religion, to which public education is chiefly confined, can scarcely be expected to avail them much. If, instead of such instructions, they are accustomed under their parents' roof to hear and see little but what tends to fill their minds with worldly views, or, it may even be, with positive wickedness, it cannot be matter of surprise, that they should grow up, amidst the abundance of Christian institutions, as fatal experience teaches us they but too generally do, ignorant, regardless, and profligate.

Ordination Vows

by Rev. Donald MacLean, Glasgow

Most, if not all, of the readers of the *Magazine* will have been present at the ordination and/or induction of a minister of the gospel. While the occasion has its pleasant aspect in a congregation having a minister set over them, it also has a most solemn aspect. A minister is being set over souls and his conduct of his ministry among them will have its effects on the eternal condition of his people. He will have to account for the discharge of his vows to the great Head of the Church, in Whose name he enters the work, and Whose glory he professes to seek.

In view of this, the ordination vows taken by the minister forms one of the most solemn features of this service and dead indeed must be the conscience of any minister who does not feel the binding obligation of these vows. It is very necessary that the minister keeps vividly before his mind these most solemn vows as he continues the ministry thus begun, and that their solemn nature should have a weighty effect upon him as he goes about the duties of his holy calling. Just as it is the duty of men and women to recall their baptismal vows when present at a baptism, so every exercised minister of the gospel feels anew the vows, which he took freely upon himself, when at the service at which these vows are put on a fellow labourer.

In view of the wide-spread attacks made on the principles of government and discipline in the Free Presbyterian Church, it will be to the benefit of all to indicate how these principles are embodied in the ordination vows, cast in the form of questions, which lie upon the conscience of every minister in the Church.

"4. Are you persuaded that the Presbyterian government and discipline of this Church are founded upon the Word of God and agreeable thereto; and do you promise *to submit to the said government and discipline, and to*

concur with the same, and not to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof, but to the utmost of your power, in your station, to maintain, support, and defend the said discipline and Presbyterian government by Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies?

5. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of the Church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of Church Officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to, civil government, *and that the Civil Magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's Church:* and do you approve of the general principles embodied in the Claim, Declaration and Protest, adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, and in the Protest of Ministers and elders, Commissioners from Presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in the presence of the Royal Commissioner on 18th May, 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the Word of God and the standards of this Church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the Church of Christ, and her subjection to Him as her only Head and to His Word as her only standard?

7. Do you promise to submit yourself willingly and humbly in the spirit of meekness, unto the admonitions of the brethren of this Presbytery, and to be subject to them, and all other Presbyteries and superior judicatories of this Church, where God in His providence shall cast your lot; and that, according to your power, you shall maintain the unity and peace of this Church against error and schism, notwithstanding of whatsoever trouble or persecution may arise, and *that you shall follow no divisive courses from the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this Church?*

Men, deceived by their own evil hearts and Satan, may find many excuses for evading these most solemn obligations, undertaken in the presence of God and their fellow-men, but these excuses are but vanity before the eyes of the Divine Head of the Church. To go to eternity with broken ordination vows of the conscience should make even the most careless tremble.

In the Church, be careful to serve God;
for thou art in His eyes, and not in man's

John Bunyan

Book Review

Five English Reformers by J.C. Ryle. Banner of Truth Paperback. 156pp. Price £1.50.

The Banner of Truth have issued a further reprint of this volume which gives the lives of Hooper, Taylor, Latimer, Bradford and Ridley, five noted Reformation martyrs. An introductory chapter answers the question: Why were our Reformers burned? This further reprint is most timely in view of the proposed visit of the Pope to this country. From it we will learn how the Roman Catholic Church dealt with those who differed from her in the past, and how she would deal with those she calls heretics if power were ever given to her again. We warmly commend these sketches of the Reformers to our readers.

D.B.M.

Notes and Comments

The Government and Northern Ireland

In November, at a meeting between Mrs Thatcher, the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, it was agreed to establish an inter-governmental council of ministers and officials to improve Anglo-Irish co-operation. As a result of this meeting Mrs Thatcher has succeeded in uniting Protestant opinion in Ulster against her. The proposed Council has come under very bitter attack from Protestant leaders.

The Irish situation has proved a very difficult matter for successive British Governments to deal with. This present Government is finding it no less so. It would be good to think that Mrs Thatcher has discovered that it is an Eire problem she has on her hands and not a Northern Ireland one, and that she was attempting to get Eire to accept the existence of its Northern neighbour and to refuse to harbour within her borders those who seek its destruction. With this accomplished the next task for the Government would be to get the Roman Catholic Church to persuade its followers that the only hope of a peaceful future is for them to live at peace with their Protestant neighbours.

From the public press one would be ready to conclude that the harassed Protestant majority are the evil ones and the Roman Catholic minority and the terrorists whom they support the good ones. Protestant

retaliation to murderous attacks by the I.R.A. raises a greater cry of indignation than those murderous attacks themselves. The day is coming when right and truth will prevail and then men will see who have been the real culprits in the Irish situation.

Drug Addiction and Other Evils

The increase in drug addiction and also in glue sniffing among the young is causing serious concern. A Glasgow University Report highlighted a massive rise in heroin use. The craze for glue sniffing amongst youngsters has also been the subject of a report, this time by the Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Education Department. It suggests ways of tackling this particular evil. It is to be hoped that action can be taken to reduce these evils and it is good to know that those in authority are alive to the dangers to which the young are exposed.

The evil of promiscuity is seen in recent provisional statistics issued by the Registrar General which show that illegitimate births reached 7678 in Scotland for 1980, the highest figure for more than a hundred years. It is clear that sex education introduced into schools in recent times is spreading promiscuity — not preventing it.

The outbreak of all these sins is an indication of the low spiritual and moral state of the nation — a situation which cannot be remedied but by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from on High, through which the nation would be brought to repentance.

Lord Chancellor and the Pope

According to a press report, the Lord Chancellor visited the Pope when in Rome in November. The visit was a private one but it is reported that the Pope's visit to Britain was discussed. It is thought that this may be the first time that a British Lord Chancellor visited the Pope.

We deplore this visit and regret that this is the trend among diplomats in our day. Blind to the real nature of the papal claims and aims, Government leaders betray the Protestant heritage of our land for which we have paid so dearly and which has brought us so many blessings.

No sin against God can be little, because it is against the great God of heaven and earth; but if the sinner can find out a *little* God, it may be easy to find out little sins.

John Bunyan

Church Notes

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 26th January 1982 at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 29th January 1982 at 2.30 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 9th February 1982 at 11 a.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 16th February 1982 at 2 p.m.

Free Presbyterian Magazine Reprint

The response to the questionnaire that was included in the June 1980 Magazine was insufficient to go ahead with the proposed reprint. New price quotations for a smaller quantity have been secured from a major printing company for binding three years magazines into one volume, and issuing now just four volumes covering 12 years from 1896-1907.

It is intended (D.V.) that leaflets on the reprint will be sent to all the congregations in the next month, and those that did not fill in the previous questionnaire, if they wish to obtain the reprinted magazines should fill in the form on the leaflet.

At least 200 further subscribers are required for the project to go ahead.

It should be emphasised, the intention is not to sell the volumes in Christian bookshops, but to send them only to those who subscribed for them beforehand.

Those who responded to the first questionnaire need not fill in the new form, as it will be assumed they still want the volumes they previously specified.

A Unique Incident

As readers are aware from the statements made by Revs. Brentnall and Radcliff in the public press, a case is in process against them at the bar of the Southern Presbytery. A libel has been served on them accusing them of conducting public worship while under suspension *sine die* of their ministerial functions. As this case is *sub judice*, no comment can be made here.

When the presbytery met on 1st December, 1981, to proceed with the case, they were served with an interim interdict by two Sheriff Officers

from the Sheriff Court. This required that they would not proceed with the case until the hearing of the Court on 8th December. At this hearing before the Sheriff, the interdict was withdrawn and the case took its course.

The action on the part of these ministers in applying for such an interdict was a direct violation of one of the fundamental principles of the constitution of the Free Presbyterian Church, which holds that the Civil Magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the affairs of Christ's Church in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical. The conservation of this principle of Christian liberty necessitated the Disruption of 1843 and the formation of the then Free Church of Scotland. Indeed, in the Protest of 1843 it is specifically stated as a reason of separation from the then Church of Scotland, "That the said Civil Courts have power to stay processes of discipline pending before Courts of the Church by law established, and *to interdict such Courts from proceedings therein.*"

As an heir of the Disruption Free Church, the Free Presbyterian Church fully supports this aspect of the spirituality and freedom of the Christian Church and her subjection to Christ as her only Head.

No man can become a minister in the Free Presbyterian Church without having laid upon him the most solemn vows, freely agreed to by him in the presence of God and man. One of these vows is, "Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of the Church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of Church Officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to, civil government, and that the Civil Magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoratative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's Church."

All members of Church Courts, ministers and elders, including Revs. Brentnall and Radcliff, are under this vow and have it upon their consciences. Any interference by Civil Courts with ecclesiastical sentences passed by Church Courts with reference to Church offices or privileges would raise questions of a very grave nature in the light of the binding obligation of ordination vows.

The friends of Revs. Brentnall and Radcliff in the public press have not reported the incident regarding the interim interdict, possibly because of the lack of success in getting the whole process interdicted, but it is better for the people of our Church to have the facts and to understand the real implications.

Rev Donald MacLean,
Clerk of Synod.

Acknowledgement of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: Anon, Ontario, \$20.00.

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Home of Rest Fund: Anon, Resident, £20; Friend, Skye, £10; Inverness Friends, £10 for petrol; Visitor, £1.

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Stornoway: Mrs S. £10 for Car Fd per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Strath: Kyle Friends £10; Anon £10; Anon £2 all for Communion Expenses.

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