

THE
Free Presbyterian Magazine
and Monthly Record

Vol. 98

NOVEMBER 1993

No. 11

Your Adversary, the Devil

In our day the very existence of the devil is denied by many, notwithstanding the warnings given in the Word of God of his ceaseless activity in the earth. Why should men doubt the existence of this malignant spirit when it is so evident in the lives of the fallen children of men that they are under the power of sin and Satan? As we come into this world we are under the power of spiritual death and are slaves of the devil, doing his will in the practice of all manner of sin and evil. From that slavery we cannot set ourselves free. We are yoked into his service and, if it is in Satan's power, he will see to it that we shall never go free from it. This is his aim. Having brought mankind under his power through deceiving our first parents, he intends to hold them as his bond slaves until they perish.

Satan has a mighty kingdom. It is very extensive, stretching to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Go where you will upon the face of the earth there you will find men and women, young and old, grinding in the prison house of the devil. As he himself is ever active in all manner of wickedness, so he keeps his votaries more and more active in his service. He has blinded the minds of sinners so that they are unaware as to whose service they are in. The unbelieving Jews had to say: "We were never in bondage to any man." But the Saviour, who knew their true condition, could declare to them: "Ye are of your father the devil, and his works ye do." Satan's kingdom is not the kingdom of light, but of darkness, and the darkness in which blinded sinners are held is but a forerunner of the blackness of darkness into which they will be plunged eternally, if they are not delivered from his service. Satan is the enemy of the souls of men, seeking their eternal destruction. Well were it for poor sinners if their eyes were opened to see it, though it is then that they would discover how tied they are to his service. It is when poor needy sinners struggle to set themselves free that they discover how secure are those bands which tie them to the service of sin and Satan. Well might they despair of ever getting free from

such bondage were it not for the revelation given in the Word of God of the One "who is stronger than the strong man armed." It requires omnipotent power, divine power, to rescue a soul, and bring that soul out of darkness into light, and from the power of sin and Satan to God.

As Satan's activity concerns the maintenance of his kingdom, he will do all in his power to prevent poor sinners from leaving his service. It is certain, therefore, that wherever the glorious gospel is preached, there we may expect Satan to be active. We are told in the Word of God that he, as the god of this world, blinds the minds of them which believe not, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them." So, too, is he ready, as the parable of the sower shows, to snatch away the Word of God from the heart, lest sinners should believe and be saved. When sinners are stirred up, by the grace of God, to seek an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is then that Satan will put every stumbling-block imaginable in their way. How he labours to assure them that, for them, the day of grace is passed. If this will not succeed he will represent to them that their sins are so great, or so many that they cannot be forgiven. He will strive to discourage them from earnestly seeking salvation, making out to them that there is no need for such earnestness on their part. If this is to no avail, he will tell them that their name is not in the book of life, therefore it is vain for them to think that they will ever find salvation. Yet all the stratagems of the devil will not succeed where the Lord has stirred up the soul of a sinner to seek after Him. Rather is the soul stirred up to cry all the more to the Lord for deliverance from the kingdom of darkness, and that cry the Lord will hear in His mercy and in His love and set the soul of the sinner free.

When the Lord delivers a soul by His mighty power from out of the hand of the terrible, is that then the end of Satan's activity so far as that soul is concerned? Does he say to himself: 'I have lost that soul from my kingdom and it is vain for me to trouble myself any more about it'? Far from it! The very fact that that soul has been ingrafted to Jesus Christ in his effectual calling and has been made a partaker of His grace, only draws out the enmity and hatred of this implacable foe. His hatred to Christ and to the ways of righteousness is such that he will do all in his power to tempt and try and assault the child of God. If he knows now that they are beyond his power to destroy, yet he knows that they are not beyond his power to harass and attack. The image of God in our first parents drew out the enmity of Satan at the beginning. So, too, the image of Christ in the people of God draws out the enmity of Satan towards them. In so far as the Lord permits it, he will show his utmost venom,

being the serpent he is, towards the children of God. They are ever to keep this in remembrance. If he had the audacity to tempt the Saviour while He was in this world, how much more His followers. The people of God are ever to remember that while they are in this world they are never secure from his attacks.

The Apostle Peter, in writing to the strangers scattered throughout the various provinces of Asia Minor, put them in remembrance of their danger from this malignant foe. Writing under divine inspiration he speaks of him in this way: "Your adversary, the devil" and goes on to tell them that "as a roaring lion he walks about seeking whom he may devour." How many strong ones he has cast down already, but that does not satisfy him for he seeks to cast down many more. If he cannot destroy them utterly, yet he will do his utmost to destroy their usefulness. He rejoices wherever, through his activity, a strong one falls, and reproach is thereby cast upon the Cause of Christ in the world. He knows he will do the most injury to Christ's Cause if he can make a standard-bearer fall and therefore we can be sure that he reserves his greatest assaults for them. What need there is then that they be upheld by the prayers of the people of God.

The message the Apostle has for those to whom he is writing is this: "Be sober, be vigilant." If they are to be prepared for this enemy they much be watchful, ever guarding against his approach. He is a subtle foe and knows how best, and when best, to attack the unwary. As the Lord's people are always to be alert, so are they walk in a way of sobriety, living a godly life, so that they will not give Satan an opportunity to have an advantage over them. Let them be careless and uneven in their life, giving way to carnality and sloth, and the enemy will come in to do his nefarious work. They need to take unto them the whole armour of God. They do not fight against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. Only in the strength of divine grace can they stand and overcome such a foe. They are to resist him steadfast in the faith, not giving way to unbelief but hold fast to the doctrines of God's Word because of the strength this gives in resisting the enemy.

What encouragement can believers find in the Word of God to sustain them in their conflicts? One of these is the knowledge that they are not alone in this but that the same afflictions are accomplished in their brethren which are in the world. Satan's enmity is not merely against one individual but against all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. But believers may also be sustained in the knowledge that their glorified Head, when He was here in this world, conflicted with this adversary and obtained the victory, and obtained that victory at the very time when Satan thought he had obtained

the victory, through stirring up the unbelieving Jews to secure the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory. They are to remember that through Christ they, too, are to obtain victory over this enemy, not only in particular conflicts, but also ultimate full victory at death. They are to remember that Satan is already a defeated foe. Christ has given him the death blow from which he shall never recover, and His people will yet see Satan a defeated foe on the field of battle. Let them not forget that the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly.

As the enmity of Satan to the people of God individually is not to result in him being victorious over them, so Satan's enmity to Christ's Church in the earth is also to fail to secure the Church's overthrow. The Zion of God is so securely established that all the ingenuity of the wicked one will never succeed in bringing about its destruction. Though in dark days it may appear as if Satan is to accomplish his will upon her, yet the Lord will see to it that this shall never be so. He is pledged to maintain His Cause. The gates of hell shall never prevail against her. Yet this will never make Satan cease from his attacks upon her. His inveterate hatred to her glorified Head in heaven makes certain that he will do all in his power to weaken her and mar her witness. What success he has had so far as many branches of the visible Church are concerned! By his deceit and cunning he has turned the Church of Rome into a synagogue of the devil. So far as other Churches are concerned he has so infiltrated them by his followers as to practically destroy their witness. What Satan hates is the truth of God's Word, and wherever that Word is found in a measure of purity, and the Word faithfully preached, there we may expect the assaults of the wicked one, either as a roaring lion, or, if it suits his purpose better, as an angel of light. Because the truth of God yet remains among us as a Church, we may expect the onslaughts of the wicked one again and again, just as his arrows have been aimed at us in the past in his attempts to blunt or destroy our witness. It is vain to think that we can preserve ourselves when these attacks come. We must look to the mighty God of Jacob, who gave deliverance in the past, and who will give deliverance in the future, if we look to Him.

Sermon

by Rev. John Colquhoun

(Preached in Glendale, Sabbath Evening, 11th January, 1948.)

"... Behold he prayeth." Acts 9: 11 (last part).

The chapter which has been read in your hearing begins by informing

us that "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest," desiring letters, giving him authority to go to the synagogues of Damascus, in order that he would bring the Christians there bound to Jerusalem. It was a day of fear and trembling to the Christians of Damascus, for they evidently knew of it, as we can gather from verse 14, but it became a never-to-be-forgotten day, both in the personal experience of Saul and in the history of the Church of Christ. Saul of Tarsus lived according to the strictest sect of the Pharisees, and the Pharisees were noted for their long prayers, and for performing them in the most public places to which they had access, but the Holy Ghost did not leave anything on record concerning these prayers of this Pharisee. Here we have him, blind, and after fasting for three days, all his religion gone with the four winds, reckoning himself the chief of sinners, and without anything of his own by which he could be justified, and the Lord says of him, "Behold he prayeth." In this we have a clear picture of what is true concerning all who undergo a saving change. With some the change may not be so sudden, or so perceptible to themselves or to others, but the words of our text are true concerning them all, "Behold, he prayeth".

In noticing these words as they are true in the experience of every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit, I shall endeavour to draw your attention to three things in particular:—

- I. From what does prayer arise.
 - II. To whom should prayer be directed.
 - III. What should our prayer consist of.
- I. From what does prayer arise.

It is very evident that the prayers of the natural man are not of such a nature as to merit that notice should be taken of them in Heaven, for if they were we would have some record of the prayers of such a zealous man as Saul of Tarsus, but the fact that the Holy Spirit passes over them in silence clearly proves that they are an abomination to the Lord. It is only when the Holy Spirit begins to work savingly in a poor sinner that he begins to pray, for it is then that he comes, through a sense of his sinfulness, to see his needs. Thus we see that it is when conviction of sin fastens upon a sinner that he begins to pray. He now realises that he is a sinner in the sight of God, and is under His wrath and curse.

Very often it is the case, in the work of conviction, that the Holy Spirit puts His finger on some particular sin of which the creature is guilty, so that that sin stands out in a particular manner as deserving the wrath and curse of God both in this life and in that which is to come. It is a flagrant

transgression of the Law of God, but still the creature, foolishly, imagines that by other works of his, he can atone for this great sin. This, in turn, brings all his works, words, and thoughts, to the touch-stone of God's Law, the character of which is that it is perfect. The Holy Spirit thus convinces him that he has nothing by which he can please the Lord for all his works, words, and thoughts, are polluted by sin. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Micah 6: 6,7.

From a sense of the utter worthlessness of his actions and how polluted they are, the Holy Spirit leads the sinner to view the corrupt fountain from which they all proceed, and that that corrupt fountain is in the heart of the sinner himself. Men of the world imagine that a man may be made better by bettering his lot and improving the environment in which he is placed. The fallacy of this is proved by the fact that there are many in the world whose lot and environment are all that can be desired, from a worldly point of view, and yet their lives are far below the standard found among men in more humble circumstances. The convinced sinner is led to see that the evil is within himself, and that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." He is brought to see that this natural corruption is the fruit of the Fall, so that he is constrained to confess with the Psalmist, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Nothing will do for him now but that the Lord would answer, in his case, the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Not only are sins of omission and commission brought to his view as his own particular sins, but there are also his sins in rejecting God's great and glorious Remedy. You are here before me who are guilty of this great sin oftener than you can count, for in a preached Gospel the Saviour of sinners has been "set forth, crucified among you," as He was among the Galatians. Preachers of the Gospel have exhorted and warned you from the days of your childhood, and you are able to read for yourselves concerning God's provision as that is set forth in the Scriptures, and yet, in the face of it all, you are still in your sins. This is what the awakened sinner is brought face to face with in the day of effectual calling, and this is the background upon which the words of our text, "Behold, he prayeth," is written so clearly. He is brought to see that he has despised the only remedy, and put himself among those for whom there is "no

more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

When a sinner is brought to this condition he is confronted with a sense of his need. He finds himself destitute of righteousness. Saul of Tarsus imagined at one time that he had a righteousness with which he could stand before the Lord, and that according to the righteousness which was of the law he was blameless, but when he came to Damascus on this memorable occasion he understood, as he never understood before, the words of Scripture, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” This is the case with every awakened sinner. The standard set before him by the divine law is so high that he cannot attain to it, for it is nothing short of perfection. To have a righteousness that would meet with the requirements of Justice, the sinner would need to bring to the Law holiness of nature, complete conformity to the Law in his life, and a perfect satisfaction for sin; but the Holy Spirit convinces him that he cannot do it, and that God will accept of nothing less.

Along with a sense of his need of righteousness, there is a sense of his need of grace. The man who before was so satisfied with his own prayers and his own attainments now comes to realise that he cannot pray or do anything aright without grace. How easy it was for the Pharisees to stand in the market places and at the corners of the streets and pray. They did not require any assistance beyond what they were able to supply themselves, and the longer the prayer the surer they were that it would be heard. This is the way with natural men and their prayers, but the convinced sinner feels his need of grace to pray, and his felt need in that direction, as well as in other directions, sends him to pray. Such will not pray in vain, for it is written, “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.”

Another need of those who pray is the need of being strengthened to resist temptation. The man or woman who begins to pray in real earnest encounters temptations, for he is exercised in a way that is troublesome to Satan. Satan cannot abide a praying sinner, and therefore, he must either be kept from praying, or his prayers must be spoiled by making him believe that they will not be answered, or when a prayer is not answered immediately, he must be made to entertain hard thoughts about God, or tempted to question His power or His very existence. Such need, that with the temptation, a way of escape might be made, and it is only through God assisting them that they overleap these walls and similar ones, and

thus proclaim with the Apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Prayer arises from the individual being harassed with perplexing thoughts. These perplexing thoughts often arise when a sinner is under the spirit of bondage. Through the knowledge which he gets of his own inward corruptions, he begins to question if one so polluted can get to Heaven, and the question, in this connection, that is often uppermost in his mind is, Was ever such a one as I saved? He then asks, Can God be just in saving such a filthy sinner as I am who not only led an ungodly life by transgressing the Law, but also crucified to myself afresh the Lord of Glory and put Him to an open shame? These are questions which, more or less, harass the awakened sinner before he gets, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, a Scriptural view of God's plan of salvation, yet this acts as a stimulus to prayer, for he has heard of other great sinners, and he reasons, in the language of Scripture, "Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him."

Again, prayer arises from the perplexing situation in which a man finds himself when God is silent. This experience is often found in connection with a man being under the spirit of bondage, but it is not confined to that period of the saved sinner's life, yea, it is an experience that follows the most, if not all, of God's children through life. These perplexing experiences are noticeable with the Psalmist when he says, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me." Not only does he expostulate with God in this psalm about these protracted periods of silence but he prays, "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." These experiences are very difficult to bear, but God causes His children to pass through them in order to fulfil the wise and gracious ends He has in view. While they are in the body His people are often ready to forget that they must be continually dependent upon Him. This exposes them to many snares, which, were it not for God's gracious care over them, would cause them many a time to have broken bones. Their assurance of His favour lies in His speaking to them through His Word, and when they miss that, they are constrained to draw near to Him in their distress, and to cry for a renewal of these heavenly communications which at other times they had from Him through His Word. Thus they are in the exercise of prayer, and a praying soul is a humbled soul, and a humbled soul is in an attitude where God is pleased to give grace, "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to

the humble.” From this we see that it is profitable for a child of God to be in darkness, even though the only fruit of it would be, that he would be constrained to pray in a manner that would be taken notice of in Heaven.

When wickedness abounds the real saint must be praying. He may view the world today and see it full of enmity to God. The nations are combined to plot against the Lord and His Anointed, and their desire and aim is to overthrow everything that has the stamp of holiness. Fallen nature appears in its worst colours; evil is called good, and good is called evil; those who are the Lord’s witnesses are made the objects of the scorn and contempt of the ungodly, and every effort is made to turn poor sinners from sobriety and seriousness to worship at the shrine of pleasure and intemperance. From the highest to the lowest, in Church and State, there is an almost universal disregard of the Word of God, which is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy Him and almost everyone does, as far as that Word is concerned, what is right in their own eyes. This may be considered a very gloomy picture of the times in which we live, but it is a real one, as every one knows, who is giving the least attention to conditions throughout the world. The statesmen of various nations may gather in order to devise remedies to heal the world’s ills, but so far they have utterly failed, and will fail, because they are relying on their own carnal wisdom. Full well the child of God knows that there is only one remedy for the world’s woes, and that is, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and equally well he knows that there is but one door at which men can apply for that remedy, and therefore the words of our text are applicable to him, “Behold, he prayeth”. This leads us to notice the second thing which I purposed to draw your attention to.

II. To whom should prayer be directed.

In the Bible we read of many prayers and some of these were never answered because those to whom they were directed could not hear, or could not answer the petitions put up to them. The worshippers of Baal on Mount Carmel never got an answer to their prayers for their god could not hear. Of the prayer of the rich man in Hell some one said that it had three defects. It was put up at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and to the wrong person, for Abraham could not grant an answer. The Christian, however has a prayer-hearing God whose ear is open to hear the confessions and petitions of sinners. “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.” He has heard the prayers of a countless number who are this evening

on Mount Zion above, and whose employment now is to sing the praises of redeeming love. They were made conscious of their needs through the saving work of the Holy Spirit, cast out of all refuges of lies, and brought, as self-ruined and hell-deserving sinners, to cry to Him who is Jehovah, speaking "in righteousness, mighty to save." They did not cry in vain, for their cry was the cry of the new birth, and the evidence of the beginning of a work which God has pledged himself in His Word to complete. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord; shall I cause to bring forth; and shut the womb? saith thy God."

When a sinner of our race approaches God in prayer, he cannot do so on the ground of his own righteousness, for he has none. It is only the proud Pharisee, whether he be Jew or Gentile, that has not learned that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Such imagine that by their own works they can approach God. They are blind to the depth, unbridgeable by man, which the Fall has put between them and God, and they ignore what is revealed of Him in the Scriptures, and that it is He "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting." Thus their brutish folly causes them to weary themselves in a way which will never lead them to God. The man who is truly praying has learned that there is only one way to God, and that, through Him who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In coming by that way he has his eye on the Atonement which was completed on Calvary, when the Son of God, as the Surety and the Substitute of His people kept that appointment which was made with the Justice of God from all eternity, and, by the shedding of His own precious blood, paid to the uttermost farthing the debt under which His people lay, thus opening a way by which the love and mercy of God could flow out to them in a manner that is perfectly consistent with the Holiness, Truth and Justice of God. In thus coming by prayer to God, Oh! what a comfort there is in the words, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here the poor sinner finds a sure and sufficient foundation upon which he can stand for eternity, and say with Samuel Rutherford, "I stand upon his merit, I know no other stand, not e'en where glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land."

When the Holy Spirit reveals this wonderful foundation to the poor sinner, he gets a ravishing view of the incomprehensible love of God and of the gracious purposes which are unfolding themselves to his view, in

connection with that matter with which he is now more immediately concerned, even his own eternal salvation. It baffles the powers of his mind to comprehend how such a pure and holy Being as he sees God to be, can take such delight in a sinful worm of the dust as he knows himself to be, as to bring into exercise all the revealed Attributes of the Godhead in order to be glorified in the salvation, rather than in the condemnation, of His enemies. Full well he knows now that this wonderful dealing of God with the soul cannot be traced to any merits in the creature, and can have but one source, even the incomprehensible love of God.

The sinner, awakened by the Holy Spirit, is in a different condition to the prophets of Baal. They prayed to a God who was not able to hear or do anything for them, but the awakened sinner prays to a prayer-hearing God, and prays as a sinner. I sometimes listen to men praying at funerals; the language is grand, the style is brilliant, the grammar is correct, the thoughts sublime and the diction faultless, but evidences of the broken heart and contrite spirit are conspicuous by their absence. This certainly is not the kind of prayer which the Apostle had in Damascus, and of which notice was taken in Heaven when it was recorded, "Behold, he prayeth".

The prayer of which God takes notice, very often, has not even words. Those who utter them are very often in the same condition as the Psalmist, when he said, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak." The prayers of such very often consist in sighs and groans, and, sometimes, sighs and groans over how much hypocrisy they find in their own sighs and groans, yet those very sighs and groans manifest the desire of their hearts. Though these sighs and groans are wrung from the soul through a consciousness of sin, yet those who have them are in an enviable condition, for this is the kind of prayer which the Lord hears, for "He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death." Let the groan or the sigh be ever so secret, a prayer-hearing God takes notice of it, and this is very comfortable when the broken-hearted sinner, in the exercise of faith, is enabled to say, "Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee."

To pray to God implies humility, for it is the humble who pray. They are in the dust and in the dung-hill, confessing that they have nothing but death and corruption; that they can never be dependent upon themselves or any other creature for salvation, and have been brought to realise that their greatest earthly privileges, their highest attainments, and their circumspect walk in the world are but an abomination. This is how the great

Apostle of the Gentiles found matters when he said, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

III. What should prayer consist of.

Our prayer, first of all, should have confession of sin. The prayer of the Pharisee in the parable made no mention of sin, and he has many companions in our day. Sin has gone out of the vocabulary of the great majority of professors of religion in our day. There is no word of the Fall of man or the miseries which that brought upon mankind, but where the Holy Spirit is at work sin cannot be hid from the eyes of those who are the subjects of that work. Their sin is ever before them and they have to confess, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." This confession is not a mere lip one; it is accompanied with deep penitence and godly sorrow, for "they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity."

In prayer there are, and must be, petitions for mercy. God has revealed Himself as merciful for the sake of Christ, and it is that revelation of Him in the Scriptures, conveyed to the understanding by the Holy Spirit, which constrains the awakened sinner to pray, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." This revelation is of such a nature that it encourages the vilest sinner out of Hell to petition for mercy, for there is enough for the chief of sinners, thus encouraging such a sinner to hope for mercy.

In prayer there should also be thankful acknowledgements of God's mercies. We have many reasons for thankfulness that God has not marked our iniquities as He did in the case of the angels that kept not their first estate causing them to be delivered unto "chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment". His treatment of us is in accordance with His mercy, and should cause us to acknowledge with thankfulness that "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." We should acknowledge with thankfulness in our prayers His daily mercies bestowed so liberally on us, both in providence and in grace, and, likewise, we should acknowledge with thankfulness what He has promised to do for such as wait on Him, for all that He has promised to do is as sure as if it was in actual possession, for all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Above all we should acknowledge with thankfulness the gift of His Son and the manifestation of His love which

is thereby made. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is in the name of that Son that all our petitions ought to be offered up.

Finally, our prayers ought to have respect unto the will of God. Many ask for things that are not agreeable to the will of God to give, and that is followed by dire consequences to themselves. The children of Israel present a fearful example of this, for we read that "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." There are many things which are lawful for us to ask, and God has revealed that it is in accordance with His will to grant them. In this connection we ought to remember that He has given many proofs that it is in accordance with His will to save sinners and, that, therefore, we ought to be praying for that salvation, and in praying for it, that we would be seeking to have an eye to His glory. When such a revelation has been made may we be found coming as sinners to a Throne of Grace with the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

May the Lord bless anything said that was consistent with the mind of the Spirit.

Decline in Spiritual Life

by Rev. John Newton

What are the most obvious Causes, Symptoms, and Effects of a Decline in the Spiritual Life?

Believers are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, even as others; but, by faith in the Son of God, they are made partakers of a new and endless life. They derive it from him; and he has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." But the life of this life, if I may so speak, its manifestation and exercise, is subject to great changes. A sick man is still alive, but he has lost the cheerfulness, activity, and vigour which he possessed while he was in health. There are many persons, who, if they be, as we would hope, really alive to God, are at least sick, languid, and in a declining state. May the great Physician restore them. It is sometimes said, that the knowlege of a disease amounts to half a remedy; which will hold thus far in the present case, that unless we are sensible of our disorder and our danger, we shall not be heartily solicitous for a recovery.

The causes and symptoms or effects of such a decline are very numerous, nor is it always easy to distinguish them, for they have reciprocal influence

to strengthen each other. What may be assigned as the cause, in many cases, is likewise a proof that the plague is already begun; and the effects may be considered as so many causes, which render the malady more confirmed, and more dangerous.

Among the many general causes, we may assign a principal place to error. I do not include every mistake or erroneous sentiment, which may be adopted or retained; but there are some errors which, for the suddenness and violence of their operation, may be compared to poison. Thus the Galatians, by listening to false teachers, were seduced from the simplicity of the gospel; the consequence was, that they quickly lost the blessedness they had once spoken of. Poison is seldom taken in the gross; but, if mingled with food, the mischief is not suspected until it is discovered by the effect. Thus they who are unhappily employed in poisoning souls, generally make use of some important and salutary truth, as a vehicle by which they convey their malignant drug into the minds of the unwary. Perhaps they speak well of the Person and atonement of Christ, or they exalt the riches and freedom of Divine grace, while, under the veil of these fair pretences, they insinuate prejudices against the nature or necessity of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Others speak strongly in general terms in favour of personal holiness, but their aim is to withdraw the heart from a dependence upon the Saviour's blood, and the influences of his Holy Spirit, without which the most studied exactness of conduct, differs no less from the holiness of the gospel, than a picture or a statue, or a dead carcass, differs from a living man. Whoever is thus prevailed upon, in the great and essential points of Scriptural doctrine, to separate, in his judgement and experience, those things which God has joined together, is already infected with a disease in its own nature mortal, and his religion, unless the Lord mercifully interposes, will degenerate into either licentiousness or formality. We live in a day when too many are tossed to and fro, like ships without helm or pilot, by various winds of doctrine; and therefore they who wish well to their own souls, cannot be too much upon their guard against that spirit of curiosity and adventure, which the apostle describes by the metaphor of having itching ears, a desire of hearing every novel and singular teacher, lest they imbibe errors before they are aware, and become a prey to the sleight and craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive.

Spiritual pride and self-complacence will likewise infallibly cause a declension in the divine life, though the mind may be preserved from the infection of doctrinal errors, and though the power of gospel truth may for a time have been really experienced. If our attainments in knowledge

and gifts, and even in grace, seduce us into a good opinion of ourselves, as if we were wise and good, we are already ensnared, in danger of falling every step we take, of mistaking the right path, and proceeding from bad to worse, without a power of correcting or even of discovering our deviations, unless and until the Lord mercifully interposes, by restoring us to a spirit of humility and dependence. For God, who giveth more grace to the humble, resisteth the proud; he beholds them with abhorrence, in proportion to the degree in which they admire themselves. It is the invariable law of his kingdom, that every one who exalteth himself shall be abased. True Christians, through the remaining evil of their hearts, and the subtle temptations of their enemy, are liable, not only to the workings of that pride which is common to our fallen nature, but to a certain kind of pride, which, though the most absurd and intolerable of any, can only be found among those who make profession of the gospel. We have nothing but what we have received, and therefore to be proud of titles, wealth, or any temporal advantages, by which the providence of God has distinguished us, is sinful; but for those who confess themselves to be sinners, and therefore deserving of nothing but misery and wrath, to be proud of those peculiar blessings which are derived from the gospel of his grace, is a wickedness of which even the fallen angels are not capable. The apostle Paul was so aware of his danger of being exalted above measure, through the abundant revelations and peculiar favours which the Lord had afforded him, that he says, “*There was given me a messenger of Satan to buffet me.*” He speaks of this sharp dispensation as an additional mercy, because he saw it was necessary, and designed to keep him humble and attentive to his own weakness. Ministers who are honoured with singular abilities and success, have great need of watchfulness and prayer on this account. The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Simple-hearted hearers are apt to admire their favourite preacher, and almost to consider him as something more than man in the pulpit, taking it for granted that he is deeply affected himself with the truths which, with so much apparent liberty and power, he proposes to them; while, perhaps, the poor worm is secretly indulging self-applause, and pleasing himself with the numbers and attention of those who hang upon his words. Perhaps such thoughts will occasionally rise in the minds of the best ministers; but if they are allowed, if they become habitual, and enter strongly into the idea he forms of his own character; and if, while he professes to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, he is preaching himself, and seeking his own glory, he is guilty of high treason against the majesty of Him in whose name he speaks. And sooner or later, the effects of his presumption will be visible and noticed. Errors in judgment,

gross misconduct, an abatement of zeal, of gifts, of influence, are evils always to be dreaded, when spiritual pride has gained an ascendancy, whether in public or in private life.

An inordinate desire and attachment to the things of the present world, may be assigned as a third prevailing cause of a religious declension. Unless this evil principle be mortified in its root, by the doctrine of the cross, it will in time prevail over the most splendid profession. That love of the world, which is inconsistent with the true love of God, manifests itself in two different ways, as men by temper and habit are differently disposed. The first is, covetousness or greediness of gain. This was the ruin of Judas, and probably the cause of the defection of Demas. By the honourable mention made of him in some of St. Paul's epistles, he seems to have had much of his confidence and esteem for a season. Yet at length his ruling passion prevailed, and the last account we have of him from the apostle, is, "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." Again, there are persons not chargeable with the love of money for its own sake, for they rather squander than hoard it, who are equally under the power of a worldly spirit, and equally discover it, by an expensive taste in the articles of dress, furniture, and feasting, often unsuitable to their circumstances, and always to their profession. It is not easy exactly to mark out the line of conduct in these respects, which becomes the different situations in which the providence of God has placed us: nor is it necessary, to those who are upright in heart. A simple desire of pleasing God, and adorning the gospel, will preclude many cases of minute casuistry, which occupy little and trifling minds. Inclination will always direct and regulate our voluntary expenses. They who love the Lord, and whose spirits are lively in his service, will avoid both parsimony and profusion; but they will rather lean to the frugal side in what concerns themselves, that they may be better able to promote his cause, and to relieve the necessitous for his sake. Others, who can be content with a name to live, with the form of religion, will lay up all they can save to gratify their avarice, or lay out all they can spare to gratify their vanity or their appetites. The miser laments that, in this declining day, many professors of the gospel can hardly be distinguished, either at home or abroad, from the people of the world. The luxurious professor is concerned to see some persons, who would be deemed Christians, so penurious that, though known to be rich, they live below their rank, and can scarcely allow themselves the decent conveniences of life. And so far they are both right; but it would be better for both if each could be sensible of his own mistake. It is not easy to determine which of these evils is the greatest. Perhaps

of the two, the miser is least accessible to conviction, and consequently the most difficult to be reclaimed; but a turn for parade and indulgence, if persisted in, will gradually lead to such compliances with the spirit and maxims of the world, as will certainly weaken, if not wholly suppress, the exercise of vital religion. In whatever degree the love of the world prevails, the health of the soul will proportionably decline.

Many other causes might be enumerated, but most of them may be reduced to the heads I have already mentioned. The practice of a single sin, or the omission of a single duty, if allowed against the light of conscience, and if habitual, will be sufficient to keep the soul weak, unfruitful, and uncomfortable, and lay it open to the impression of every surrounding temptation. Sometimes unfaithfulness to light already received, perverts the judgment, and then errors which seem to afford some countenance or plea for a sin which the heart will not give up, are readily embraced, to evade the remonstrances of conscience. At other times, errors, incautiously admitted, imperceptibly weaken the sense of duty, and by degrees spread their influences over the whole conduct. Faith and a good conscience are frequently mentioned together by the apostle, for they are inseparable; to part with one is to part with both. They who hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, shall be preserved in a thriving frame of spirit, they shall grow in grace, go on from strength to strength, shall walk honourably and comfortably. But so far as the doctrines or the rules of the gospel are neglected, a wasting sickness will prey upon the vitals of religion, a sickness, in its nature mortal, and from which none recover, but those on whom God mercifully bestows the grace of repentance unto life.

The symptoms of such a sickness are very numerous and diversified, as tempers and situations vary. A few of those which are more generally apparent, and sure indications of a decline in religion, are the following.

Bodily sickness is usually attended with loss of appetite, inactivity, and restlessness; so the sickness of the soul deprives it of rest and peace, causes a dullness and indolence in the service of God, and an indisposition to the means of grace, to secret waiting upon God, and to the public ordinances. These appointments, so necessary to preserve spiritual health, are either gradually neglected and given up, or the attendance upon them dwindles into a mere formal round, without relish and without benefit. To the healthy man, plain food is savoury, but the palate, when vitiated by sickness, becomes nice and fastidious, and hankers after varieties and delicacies; when the sincere milk of the gospel, plain truth delivered in plain words, is no longer pleasing, but a person requires curious specula-

tions, or the frothy eloquence of man's wisdom, to engage his attention, it is a bad sign. For these are suited to nourish, not the constitution, but the disease.

From slighting or trifling with those means which God has provided to satisfy the soul, the next step usually is, to seek relief from a compliance with the spirit, customs, and amusements of the world. And these compliances, when once allowed, will soon be defended; and they who cannot approve or imitate such conformity, will be represented as under the influence of a narrow, legal, or pharisaical spirit. The sick professor is in a delirium, which prevents him from feeling his disease, and he rather supposes the alteration in his conduct is owing to an increase of wisdom, light, and liberty. He considers the time when he was more strict and circumspect as a time of ignorance, will smile at the recollection of what he now deems his childish scruples, and congratulates himself that he has happily outgrown them, and now finds that the services of God and the world are not so incompatible as he once thought them to be.

Yet while he thus relaxes the rule of his own conduct, he is a critically severe observer of the behaviour of others. He sharply censures the miscarriages and even the mistakes of ministers and professors, if an occasion offers, and speaks of these things, not weeping as the apostle did, but with pleasure, and labours to persuade himself, that the strictness so much talked of, is either a cloak of hypocrisy, or the fruit of superstition, and that because some do deviate from this acknowledged rule of duty, therefore at the bottom, and if they could be detected, they would be found to be nearly all alike. True Christians seldom meet with more uncandid misconstruction, or undeserved reproach, than from those who having once been their companions, afterwards desert them.

When the disorder is at this height, it is truly dangerous, and indeed, as to any human help, desperate. But power belongeth to God. May it please him to remember in mercy those who are near unto death, to restore them to their right minds, and to recover them to himself. Otherwise, "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

We have right thoughts of God when we think that He knows us better than we know ourselves, and can see sin in us where and when we can see none in ourselves. — *Pilgrim's Progress*

Events leading up to 1893

by Rev. A. MacPherson

(The first part of a paper read at the Centenary Commemoration Meeting)

The purpose of this paper is to present an account of the happenings in the Free Church of Scotland during its first 50 years, which led to the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1893. Much happened between the Disruption in 1843 and the passing of the Declaratory Act 49 years later, and it would take a long time in the telling. This paper, therefore, has to be just a sketch of the course of deterioration which eventually made it necessary for the Rev. Donald MacFarlane to depart from the Free Church.

He did this knowing that he was acting for others also, and with the purpose that he and they would, God enabling them, set up the Free Church anew in accordance with its original constitution.

That constitution was thoroughly scriptural, and, generally speaking, the men who formed the Church were sound in doctrine and godly. Among them also were Christian scholars of a high calibre, well qualified to train the men who would enter the ministry. So that it was one of Satan's most wicked works to spoil a Church so well suited to set God's claims before the people of Scotland, and by God's blessing win souls.

As one surveys the history of that half-century, the progressive departure from important elements of the original position comes to light when these movements surfaced in the church courts. Therefore, within the confines of this paper, I shall try to say enough about the issues that came into the public view, to show that they were clear indications of the direction in which the Free Church was moving.

There is no question about the enthusiasm for the spiritual independence of Christ's Church in Scotland that brought about the Disruption. I am assuming that something is known of how a minority within the Church of Scotland had enlisted the aid of the law in order to impose ministers on congregations which did not want them. And how, in view of the House of Lords approving these interferences, there seemed to those who believed in the absolute Headship of Christ over his Church, to be no end to this hindering the decisions of the church courts. It appeared at last that the only remedy was to leave the National Church. On the 18th May, 1843, at the beginning of the General Assembly in Edinburgh, the Protest and separation were formally carried out, and 451 ministers along with representative elders left, and in another building constituted the Church

of Scotland free; free, that is, from state interference with its proper activities as a Church.

It could be asked, Were all these men who formed the Free Church, as united in other matters are they were on the need to leave a Church dominated by the civil courts? We are thinking back 150 years, so the question cannot be precisely answered. A pointer to the answer may, however, be seen from the fact that ere many years had passed, many of these men showed their carelessness about God's revealed will by wanting hymns to be used along with the Psalms in public worship.

Here also I would suggest that the events of the half-century under review could well be thought about in the light of words in the first chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The section gives ten reasons why the Bible should be regarded as the Word of God, then says, "yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." The truth stated there is that the only person who is sure that the Scriptures in all their wording is the very Word of God, is one who has been born again. In certain circumstances, a person could be unfaithful to this Spirit-wrought conviction, but it could also be true that approval of what was unscriptural was proof of a mind that had never been savingly enlightened. The Confession statement is worth keeping in mind.

The 1859 - 1861 Revival

An event which encouraged the demand for hymns in the Free Church was the American-type revival which went on in parts of Britain between 1859 and 1861. The initial revivalists were American, but they were then augmented by English and Scottish lay preachers. Denominational differences were ignored, and lay-preaching was the rule. The doctrine was a mix of Calvinism and Arminianism; there was hymn-singing, sometimes uproarious; there was a bench at the front for those wishing to be saved; women and children prayed, and sometimes the services were long-protracted. These activities created great enthusiasm in parts of the land. They were completely novel in Scotland, and a charitable view was taken of them in some parts of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. It was claimed that the revival had resulted in many conversions.

Sensationalism undoubtedly played a good part in the movement, and it is certain that the good effects claimed did nothing to stem in Scotland the beginning of departures from the Confession of Faith. Nor did it hinder the entrance of rationalistic biblical criticism, nor the ecumenism that was

making light of serious doctrinal differences between churches becoming interested in union. Strengthened desires for hymns were also fruits of revival, and, very importantly as far as the Free Church was concerned, was the influx of students for the ministry who professed to have been either converted during the revival or affected by it. These later were among the strongest advocates of the liberalising of the Church's doctrine.

Introduction of Hymns and Instrumental Music

From the Reformation, the churches in Scotland had adhered to what became known as the Regulative Principle, which was that the public worship should consist only of what God in his Word required. Praise, therefore, was to be made by the unaccompanied singing of the Psalms. One of the changes that the Victorian Era effected in Scotland was to create a wish for hymn-singing, just as was common in England. It would give a greater subject range to the praise, it was claimed. Other Scottish churches had adopted hymns, and in 1865 the subject was raised in the General Assembly of the Free Church. A committee decided in favour, and in the face of the Regulative Principle, and in spite of strong opposition, mainly from Highland congregations, the 1872 Assembly by a large majority accepted a collection of 25 hymns, and nine years later a book with 300.

Instrumental music seemed a greater innovation, so its supporters waited until 1882 to bring it forward. By that time, as we shall see, there were many in the church courts who had ceased to regard the Bible as entirely the Word of God, so that the Regulative Principle carried no weight with them. Principal Rainy and others pressed on to win by a three-fifths majority the freedom of congregations to have musical instruments if they wished. Organs were soon installed in many churches outside the Highlands.

Movement for Union With the United Presbyterian Church

Turning back again to the eighteen-sixties, what appears to have been the next evident step in the decline of the Free Church, and more or less coinciding with the wish for hymns, was the beginning of a movement for union with the United Presbyterian Church, the third largest of the Scottish Churches. The U.P. Church had come into being three years after the Disruption. In it there united many of those who had sprung from two 18th Century secessions from the Church of Scotland over the vexing matter of Patronage.

In 1863 the Free Church General Assembly appointed a committee to

examine the possibility of union with the United Presbyterians. Since the Disruption, there had been a hope that at some time there might be a gathering together of the various religious bodies who had felt forced to leave the Established Church. Many felt that this might be the time.

There was, however, another less worthy motive for desiring a union with other Scottish Churches, and that was the ambition to become a bigger, stronger body. In many ways the Free Church had prospered. The self-sacrificing spirit shown at the Disruption had been acknowledged by the Church's divine Head. But, as so often happens, prosperity had occasioned pride and self-satisfaction in some quarters, and from this sprang a wish to be larger still. There was also the fact that the Established Church had by no means lost its hold on the Scottish people, but had rather strengthened it, and there were those who thought that this annoyance might be lessened if a union could be achieved with the U.P. Church who, it was claimed, amounted to a fifth of the churchgoing population.

The large committee appointed in 1863 were united both as to the desirableness of such a union and the necessity for it being achieved without the sacrifice of any Free Church principles. It soon became clear though, that the United Presbyterians would not easily give up the Voluntary Principle which, put briefly, was that there should be no legal connection between the State and the Church, nor such a thing as an Established and state-endowed Church. This was contrary to the view of the Scottish Church since 1560, when the Scottish Parliament had established Protestantism as the religion of the country.

By 1867 it was becoming clear that many members of the Assembly had shifted away from an absolute hold of the Establishment Principle; and from now on the Church itself divided into two parties with opposite views of the possibility of union.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the Voluntary Principle was the only obstacle to union. Reports by the committee and remarks in Assembly debates contained the plural words, "difficulties" and "principles." The reason was that for years, the United Secession Church which was now part of the U.P. Church, had been loosening its attachment to the Westminster Confession. Within that Church there had been cases in which the Calvinistic doctrine of the Atonement had been challenged. The scriptural and Calvinistic doctrine is of a limited Atonement. God elected a certain number of the fallen race to be saved; Christ atoned for the sins of these; and they only are saved. This being thought to be too harsh a doctrine, dissatisfied parties preferred to think that Christ's death had potential advantage for all men, although it specially referred to the elect. This

was known as the Double Reference Theory of the Atonement.

As the years passed and the subject came up in successive Assemblies, the majority view that a union based on a measure of compromise would be acceptable, roused men like Doctors Begg, Wood and Nixon to strongly oppose the drift that was taking place. They warned that a union which breached what had formerly been accepted by all as essential principles would bring about another disruption.

Not surprisingly, those who were for union read the signs correctly, and at the 1871 Assembly, a motion of Dr Candlish's was passed which retreated for the time being from the compromising sort of union suggested by the committee. In this way the ten years conflict over union came to an end, and the threat of a disruption which had become very serious receded.

Effects of the Higher Criticism

The Union Committee's readiness to compromise not only on the Establishment Principle, but on other matters of doctrine, was an indication that under the surface of the Free Church's adherence to all it had represented at the Disruption, there was a current of opinion running against some of the Westminster Confession doctrines. It later became apparent that a main part of this current was sympathy towards rationalistic biblical criticism. Hostile criticism of the Old Testament had been gathering force in Germany, and from the eighteen-forties onwards had been steering the minds of some Scottish ministers and students away from the fundamental doctrine of verbal inspiration. Describing it briefly, Old Testament Higher Criticism concerned itself with the date, author, place, and circumstances of the composition of the books, as well as their purpose and nature. It was an approach which denied the absolute trustworthiness of the books, and felt free to question their statements. Once men had lost the belief that the Scriptures were entirely and in every detail the Word of God, it became easy to challenge any doctrine of the Bible that gave offence to what was now known as enlightened opinion.

In this connection it has to be remembered that few, if any, of the Disruption ministers had been affected by the Higher Criticism; but by the late eighteen-sixties, a number of notably faithful men had been taken away to their reward.

Another sign of deterioration both in doctrine and in discipline was the case concerning the Rev. Walter C. Smith which came by appeal to the 1867 General Assembly. In the previous year the Glasgow Presbytery had unanimously found Mr Smith guilty of heresy by preaching against the

binding obligation of the Moral Law, and the place of the Old Testament in the Christian era. The Assembly voted heavily for a motion by Dr Rainy which accepted the correctness of the Presbytery's findings, yet contrived to prevent Smith from being disciplined. This decision was the fore-runner of others in very serious cases which showed that more and more members of the courts of the Free Church were of what was euphemistically called a "liberal mind", but what was really an anti-confession attitude.

Dr Robert Rainy

Since Dr Robert Rainy has been mentioned, and as he was to be so closely connected with the 1892 Declaratory Act which so much concerned ourselves, it is, I think, necessary to say something about him. He was born to God-fearing parents in Glasgow in 1826, and became a communicant at the age of sixteen. P. Carnegie Simpson, Rainy's biographer, describes his conversion as, not a reaction from a state of sin, but a realisation consisting in "the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ becoming, and that perhaps not at any special time, but with the natural development of mind, and heart, and will, something personal and something vital." When considering whether it is possible to square this description with the normal definition of effectual calling, it has to be remembered that the youth whose entry into spiritual life is thus described, went on to a life in which doctrines he once professed to believe were quietly exchanged for others of an unscriptural sort. Not only so; he led the Free Church away from its original position into a union which led to the general adoption of doctrines very different from those of the Westminster Confession of Faith. The inevitable result of those modern doctrines can be seen throughout Scotland today.

In the enthusiasm of the Disruption year, Robert Rainy decided to become a minister. He proved a diligent student, and after a short ministry at Huntly was removed by an Assembly decision to the Free High Church in Edinburgh in 1862. In 1874, the year after Dr Candlish's death, the Assembly elected Dr Rainy to succeed Candlish as Principal of the New College. Again and again, Carnegie Simpson calls Rainy the "leader" of the Free Church after this point. He had a large following who accepted his views as correct, and went where he led. Thus it was Rainy and his party who shaped the Church's course for the next 20 years, with what we can only regard as disastrous consequences for the majority of Scotland's nominally Christian people.

(To be continued)

Notes and Comments

Papal Encyclical

The papal encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, has now been issued. An editorial in *The Times* regards it as a swing back to papal authoritarianism which may provoke a schism in the R.C. Church, especially in America. It asserts that the authority of the magisterium vested in the Vicar of Christ is extended to morality more explicitly than ever before. The encyclical attacks liberalism, permissiveness and secularisation. It seeks to maintain the R.C. distinction between venial and mortal sin. It renews its condemnation of homosexuality, abortion and artificial contraception. The fact that it omits mention of infallibility is taken as a concession to the liberal wing of the R.C. Church, though any real change in papal infallibility is unlikely. The document adheres rigidly to the rule of celibacy for priests. It also makes clear that the way to salvation is through obedience to the church, meaning the Roman Catholic Magisterium or teaching authority.

In our day it is often the voice of the R.C. Church which is heard advocating moral standards in the midst of a permissive age. However, she speaks with one voice but acts in a very different way. Within her borders there is more evil than can be imagined and this is the fruit of her own false teaching. Her teaching, far from bringing men and women to live lives of obedience to Christ, actually encourages the practice of many evils. In Britain the percentage of Roman Catholics in prison is out of all proportion to their number in the country. The Bible tells us: "By their fruits ye shall know them". The Pope will have to set his own house in order before he can have any hope of his voice being heard on matters of morality and religion.

Modern Versions of the Bible

The editor of the *Free Church Monthly Record* makes a strong plea for modern versions of the Bible on the grounds that the language of the Authorised Version is no longer the common language of today and so no longer measures up to the standard that our Reformed principles require. In reading the Authorised Version to those with little or no church background he feels embarrassed and even in breach of his ordination vows. He calls for toleration in the matter of modern versions and condescendingly says of the A.V. and its readers: "It was a good translation for its time. If folks feel that they have sufficiently mastered the English of the A.V., by all means let them use that version. We won't despise you for that."

The attempt to disparage the A.V. as an outdated version did not begin today. A hundred years ago an attempt was made to replace it by the production of the Revised Version. Since that time, and especially in more recent times, a spate of modern versions have been produced. Yet none of these has become universally accepted otherwise the continuing proliferation of versions would have ceased. Some of them have been produced in such up-to-date language that they will soon be out of date, owing to modern changes in language. However, the A.V., notwithstanding its archaisms — and these to our mind have been over-emphasised — is, for the most part, perfectly intelligible even to those with a limited knowledge of English. The reason that this version has held such a place in the minds of many Christians is that it is the most faithful version obtainable. The rejection of modern versions is on the ground of their unfaithfulness to the original.

Romish Practice

The widow of ex-President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines was sentenced to at least 18 years' jail for corruption. The sentence is to be appealed against. What is most revealing is that after being sentenced she was taken to a Roman Catholic Church where she crawled 40 yards on her knees to kiss a religious statue. It is reported that she prayed: "God of justice, fight my fight, declare me innocent, deliver me from lying and evil men". While hearing the verdict she had been fingering a rosary. Yes, Romanism is always the same. Poor deluded Roman Catholics! May the light of the gospel break in upon them.

Divorce

Easier divorce is planned to help couples be parted without large lawyer's fees. The waiting time to end a marriage will be halved from two years to 12 months. The report states that the Lord Chancellor is to set up a national network of advice centres to help couples sort out their affairs on amicable terms. The scheme is to be unveiled later this year. What need there is throughout the country among rulers and people of a return to the Bible and to its teachings, otherwise the nation must continue to sink lower and lower, as it rejects all Biblical moral standards.

Convent Life

"It was an enclosed convent in the middle of Ireland, full of children, from babies right the way up to 16-year-olds . . .

"We did all the domestic work of the convent. I didn't understand what

parents were, but I used to lie awake at night wondering where I had come from. The nuns had visits from their fathers and mothers at the weekends, so I thought parents must be like friends . . . The nuns were terribly cruel. There was always the threat that if you defied them you would be 'sent away'. Four girls disappeared while I was there. The cane was used regularly. When I was seven I was in charge of the babies. We were supposed to tell the nun in charge which ones had wet the bed. The guilty ones would line up and hold out their hand to be caned; two and three-year-olds holding their hands and screaming.

"I used to try and cover up for them by drying the sheets on the pipes. I was only caned once, and that was for refusing to eat my cabbage because there was a slug in it. The nun in charge attacked me with the cane in front of everyone, walloping me on my legs and arms till I was black and blue . . . From 10 years old we spent hours scrubbing and polishing floors. If the floor was not like glass we'd be made to do it again. When I was 14 I was sent to the convent laundry. You couldn't do it when you were younger. The steamy atmosphere was draining. Putting the nun's heavy habits in and out of those gigantic electric boilers was backbreaking. It was men's work."

Were it not for the reference to electric boilers, one might be excused for thinking that the foregoing quotation was culled from some book describing the misery of convent life in the Middle Ages. It was however, copied from no less a source than the "Daily Telegraph", dated 28th September, 1993! The person describing her heart-rending experiences was a Mary McCreanor. She is 49 years of age. The journalist who wrote the article from which the quotation is taken had this to say: "In 16 years, though housed in an institution whose gospel is love, she received neither a kiss, a cuddle nor a sign of affection. From her earliest childhood she remembers frequently thinking death must be better than such a life. If you thought such childhood suffering ceased when they closed the workhouses you are mistaken. Mary McCreanor grew up in Ireland in the Fifties and Sixties. The 'crime' that in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church justified a life of drudgery, harshness and privation was that she was illegitimate." It was after Mary McCreanor left this establishment and went to work in a Roman Catholic hospital in Dublin, where she had a greater measure of liberty, that she was able to discover her parents. She now lives in London and has, we are told, long ago forgiven her mother. She says that she cannot forgive the Church.

It is encouraging that "this dark side of Mother Church" is now, in the Lord's holy providence, being uncovered and we are told that "a new

generation of emancipated and self-confident Irish women" is appalled at what is being brought to light. We hope many will have read and pondered the significance of the "Daily Telegraph" article. **J. McL.**

"Beliefless Christianity"

In the early Sixties it was the Anglican Bishop of Woolwich who wrote a heretical book. Its title was "Honest to God" and its author maintained among other things that men having "come of age" now found the "whole scheme of a supernatural Being coming down from heaven to save mankind from sin" to be simply beyond belief. Now another Anglican cleric cast, it would seem, in the same mould and called Anthony Freeman, has written what might be called a companion volume. He, for some obscure reason — certainly not because he, himself, believes in the one living and true God — has entitled it "God with Us". According to the "Daily Telegraph" this poor, benighted man says that he felt a "glorious sense of freedom" when he plucked up the courage to reject what he called the Church's "supernatural teachings". "To believe in a supernatural, all-powerful interventionist God when the rest of the world has abandoned that belief is not the same thing as having believed in such a God when it was the generally accepted thing." Together with this we are told that he still believes in prayer and worship but as a way of "aligning one's will with one's highest values" rather than as a way of drawing nigh to a Divine being. Even although he does not believe in life after death he still wants to remain in the ordained ministry to preach what he calls "a new, bracing, beliefless Christianity". The publication of these views has led to this clergyman's dismissal from the ecclesiastical post which he occupied but it seems that that is as far as his superiors intend to go.

J. McL.

Free Church Professor and Church Divisions

Professor Donald MacLeod, writing in one of the local Highland newspapers, has, among other things, something to say on what he calls "our lamentable Presbyterian divisions". The most recent of these divisions, as he points out, was the departure of the Associated Presbyterian Churches. The Professor first opines that this division was an "in-house Highland affair" and then goes on to suggest that perhaps it was due more than anything else, to "the machinations of imported zealots reared in the separatist ethos in post-Puritan English puritanism." It was not entirely an "in-house" affair if we take into account the way in which he, for one, through the medium of the Free Church Monthly Record,

endeavoured, over the period leading up to the separation, to interfere in the internal affairs of the Free Presbyterian Church. It was he who, outside the house, incited and encouraged the "younger brethren" to break their ordination vows. They were, he maintained, "more open and tolerant and less inclined to regard their own denomination as the only true Church in Scotland." He thought that they should be more courageous. "They should rid themselves of the fear of the people and challenge the oligarchy which is leading their church further and further away from the theology of the Reformation." We wonder what our erstwhile "younger brethren", looking at their dwindling APC congregations, and fast running out of gimmicks, now think of that advice? They should learn from the past and not take any comfort from the fact that the Professor continues to condone their bizarre behaviour in 1989. They should carefully note that although he says that they were "absolutely right to remain with their congregations", even he does not presume to say that it was right of them to remain in churches and manses which did not belong to them. It does not surprise us that the Professor maligns our Barnoldswick brethren. His resentment is of long standing and appears to be deep-rooted. It was they who, quoting chapter and verse, first revealed to the wide world and to his own Church that his views on Presbyterian Church polity were far from orthodox. When the need arose, our brethren domiciled south of the border played their own noble part in the maintaining of our witness against Popery and Professor MacLeod's description of them is as untrue as it is contemptuous. It would be of interest to know if the Professor, after his trip to Belfast to attend the "Evangelical-Roman Catholic Theological Conference", is still prepared to make the accusation that the Free Presbyterian Church has departed from the theology of the Reformation?! His conduct must surely raise serious questions as to where the Free Church now stands as far as witnessing against Rome is concerned. Its claim to be the Disruption Free Church is now more than ever unconvincing.

J. McL.

Mission News

Owing to the severe drought last season Ingwenya Mission has been suffering from a shortage of water. The water level seems to have dropped, and it was a great concern to the staff as to whether they would have sufficient water available for the reopening of the Boarding School in September. However, the situation was relieved by the reopening of old

wells. The first well to be reopened was never a success. It constantly went dry just before the seasonal rains came. The workmen attached an engine to it but David Ndlovu said it must be used only in an emergency.

The old well near the Jigijane River outside the Mission was the next to be opened up. There were discussions with the Water Development Board as to the feasibility of drawing water from the Ngwenya River Dam which is over a mile from the Mission but this would entail the setting up of a Water Purification Plant. "Just five days before school opened," Miss Macaulay writes, "we were trying to find a solution to our problem as there was very little water left, when David Ndlovu sent a man to clean the well veins and since school opened, we should be thankful, there has been no problem. Sadly, since that time David has been ill and has been in hospital."

"Another major concern has been that two Mission Mail bags were stolen from the Post Office. They contained sixteen postal orders and some important official letters. Despite those anxieties we are now back to normal and preparing for the Final exams."

Miss Macaulay wishes to record the school staff's gratitude to two families of English friends, to the Mohan family from Eaglescliffe, Cleveland, for sending both Primary and Secondary story books, and Reference books also, and to Mr and Mrs Gudgeon who visited the Mission earlier in the year and have contributed towards the work. The Staff wishes to thank those friends most sincerely.

The Blind Student Department at the John Tallach School also benefited recently by the addition of two Tape Recorders and a Battery Recharger sent from friends in Scotland. Miss Macaulay writes, "If our blind pupils do well enough to advance to A Level studies, we donate a recorder to them to help them, as some of the other schools are short of equipment for disabled students. One of our former blind pupils, Pritchard, is doing well at University. Several of the blind students have done well at A Level Standard. Again we wish to thank the kind donors on behalf of our handicapped pupils."

They were looking forward to the end of September Communion at Ingwenya. In mid October Miss Marion Graham returns to Zimbabwe if all is well, and Miss Katie Macaulay will leave for home almost immediately. Miss Jessie Coote expects to leave for Kenya about the end of October to spend some time with our missionaries there. Dr Christine has recovered from her attack of malaria, but she would require a change of location to ensure a complete recovery.

All are delighted at Ingwenya to have Miss Norma MacLean with them.

After some delay she secured her Work Permit, and has adapted to the work in school as if she had been there for years. They are short of two teachers; one young teacher met with an accident and will be off school for a month, and a young male teacher has gone for further studies. So Miss MacLean's assistance is especially welcome. "The Lord of us has mindful been and He will bless us still." — J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Southern: At Glasgow on 9th November at 6 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 23rd November at 1 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 30th November at 6 p.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 25th January, 1994 at 2 p.m.

Day of Humiliation and Prayer

It was agreed by the Synod that Wednesday 1st December, 1993 be observed throughout the Church as a Day of Humiliation and Prayer to humble ourselves greatly on account of our own personal transgression and to plead for gracious and Divine intervention to halt the alarming floodtide of apostasy in religion and morality at home and abroad, and to pray for the downfall of Romanism and every other system and philosophy of life that is contrary to the Word of God.

Theological Conference

The Theological Conference will take place this year on the 7th and 8th December (D.V.) at Glasgow. Further details will appear in the December magazine.

— (Rev) D. J. MacDonald

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr R. A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Eastern Europe: A Perth Friend (per A.N.M.) £20; Anon., £400; Two Dingwall Friends £50; Surplus from Sale of Centenary Bibles, 1st instalment £640, all per Rev. N.M.R.

Foreign Mission: Mrs L.F.C. Can \$100; Anon., £140; Anon., £40.

Foreign Mission (Kenya): R. & M. B. £50.

Foreign Mission (Kenya Books): Mrs A.M. £600; Anon., (Tolsta) £10; Anon., £1.50; A. & R.P. £10.

Foreign Mission (Malawi): Anon., (North Tolsta) £20.

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

Bonar Bridge: Friend, Glasgow £10 for Bonar Comm. Exps.

Dingwall: Mrs M.C. £30 for Sust. Fd. and £10 for Eastern Europe; Friend, Dingwall £11 for Eastern Europe, all per Rev N.M.R.

Dumbarton: Mrs J. McL £10 (by post); J.C. Glasgow £25 (by post); M.McL., Glasgow £25 (in plate); Mrs McC. £5, all for Congr. Fd.

Glasgow (St. Jude's): Estate of the late Mrs S. Mackinnon £50 for Congr. Fd. per A.M.; G.S. £2000 for Building Repair Fund; Anon., £30 "where most needed"; M.M. £10; Anon., £10; Anon., £10 all for Bus Fd; Anon., £15; Anon., £20; N.H. £10 per Rev D.M., all for Sust. Fd; A.D.M. £500 "For the Cause in Foreign Fields"; Anon., £10 for Foreign Mission; Anon., £160 for Eastern Europe; Anon., £60 for T.B.S.; Anon., £20 for Centenary Commemoration.

Greenock: E.M. £20; Anon., £20; Friend, £25; M.G. £10; M. & E.N. £30, all for Congr. Purposes and all per Rev L.M.

Laide: Friends, Inverness £50; Isle View Nursing Home £5; Anon., Mbuma £20; Friends, Laide £500; Anon., London £500; D.K.C. £200; Friend, North Tolsta £100; M.R., Inverness £15; Anon., North Tolsta £10; Inverness post mark £40, all above for Eastern Europe and all per D.A.R. Stornoway Friend for Eastern Europe £10 per C.R.; Anon., in collection box for Eastern Europe £30; D.M., Aultbea for Sustentation Fund £15; Anon., for Tapes £10; Aultbea Friend for Church Funds £20; Friend, Gargrave for Church Funds £5; Friend, Dingwall for Cassettes £10, last four per D.A.R.

North Harris: Anon., £10 for Sust. Fd per Rev K.D.M.; Mrs A.M., Scadabay £10 for Door Coll (envelope in plate); R.M.L., Cluer £8 for Bus Fd per J.M.; Anon., £10 for Door Coll per Rev K.D.M.; Anon., £10 where most needed; Friend, Kyles £10 for Transport (envelope in plate).

North Uist: M.McL £50; I. McD £50, both for Car Fd.; A Friend, North Tolsta £10 per Rev A.M.

Portree: From the estate of the late Mrs Nora Matheson £310; Tolsta Friend £40 for Sust. Fd.; Friend £10 for Door Coll.; Friend £20 both where needed, last four per F.M.; J. M. MacL. £25 where needed; A.N. £2 for Bus. Fd., last two by envelope in plate; Friend £15 where needed; Friend £10 for Sust. Fd., both per S.Y.M.

Shieldaig: A.G., Stornoway £30 for Congr. Fd.

Stornoway: M., Blar Bhuidhe £2000 for Congr. Fd.; Miss K. A. Macleod, The Cottage, Callanish, £50 for Sust. Fd.; Friends, £2000; Friend, N.T. £5, both for Foreign Miss. Fd.; Miss K. A. Macleod, The Cottage, Callanish, £100 for Sust. Fd.; Friend, Glasgow £50 for Sust. Fd.; Friend £50; Friend, Raasay, £6, both for Congr. Fd.; Friend £10 for Comm. Exps; all per Rev J. MacLeod; Anon., £15 for Sust. Fd.; Friend of the Cause, Breasclete £10; Anon., £5, both for Comm. Exps, both per Church plate.