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The General Assemblies

The Church of Scotland

At the Church of Scotland Assembly, Lord MacLean of Duart and Morven was the Lord High Commissioner, representing the Queen, while the new Moderator was Rev. John Paterson.

One of the most controversial items before the Assembly this year was the question of licensing of two students, one of which had been a convicted murderer and the other a convicted embezzler. They both received the support of the General Assembly, the first, Mr James Nelson by 622 to 425 votes, and the second, Mr Iain MacDonald by an overwhelming majority. Prof. James Whyte, Professor of Practical Theology and Christian Ethics at St. Andrews, who had complained against the decision of the Presbytery of St. Andrews not to take Mr James Nelson on trials for licence, maintained that the decision was contrary to the Gospel. In the Presbytery it had been stated that a person convicted of serious crime should never have been taken on trials for licence. Rev. John Paterson, Clerk of St. Andrews Presbetry said they considered a grave error of judgment had been made in the original selection of Mr Nelson as a candidate. Mr Nelson, himself, declared that he was fully convinced that he was called to preach the Gospel. These two cases have deeply divided people within the Church of Scotland, and no doubt further difficulty will arise over their eventual settlement in charges. The wisdom of the Assembly's decision has been called in question by many and it is difficult to see how it will work out in practice. Where repentance for sin appears to be genuine the door is open for restoration to fellowship, yet in cases of sins of great heinousness, restoration to office or, as in this case, elevation to office, may not always be warrantable or advisable. In other cases affecting ministers in the Church, Rev. Peter Wright's pastoral tie with his congregation was severed. He claimed he was pursuing a new ministry believing in the catholicity as well as the

reformed character of the Church. Rev. Arthur Jones, Aberdeen, won his appeal against his dismissal. He claimed that one of his reasons behind his dismissal by Aberdeen Presbytery was his connection with the Orange Lodge, of which he is a chaplain.

The Convener of the Board of Stewardship suggested there were two main areas of concern — the need to halt the decline in membership and the action needed to encourage members to give worthily and proportionately. He claimed that there were a minority of congregations prepared to sit back and let others provide the support for the Church. The question of decline in membership he viewed as a matter of utmost priority for the Assembly.

Another matter that has created controversy in the Church of Scotland — and rightly so — is what is referred to as the Motherhood of God. This bizarre and blasphemous idea was raised at a previous Assembly and a report was submitted to this Assembly on the question. The Assembly refused to commend the report for study throughout the Church. Rev. Norman MacIver, Aberdeen, declared that the report was tampering with the Scriptures and with the teachings of Jesus.

The ecumenical experiment at Livingstone in which a team of six take part, two from the Church of Scotland, two from the Scottish Episcopal Church and one each from the Methodist and Congregational Churches, is to be continued for a further five years. It has already been in existence for 17 years. Ecumenism was further encouraged by the address of the Archbishop of York, Dr. Hapgood, to the Assembly. He hoped regular exchange visits between the Church of Scotland and Church of England would lead to a growth of mutual respect and understanding.

For the first time a representative of the Jewish community addressed the Assembly. He said that the common statement agreed in talks between Church of Scotland and Jewish representatives should be a pointer to significant advances in Christian-Jewish relationships. He brought a message from the Chief Rabbi. While the representative stressed the particular areas in which they were agreed, he made no reference to the main area of disagreement with the Christian Church — that is, the place given to Christ.

The Assembly's Ministry and Mission Committee put forward proposals for a national mission programme. It was based on five main points — the recovery of confidence, and joy, in the Gospel; the recovery of prayer as a central concern; a repentance of past failures; a new vision and understanding of the Church; and more effective ways of developing

congregational life. The Rev. G. M. Philips, Glasgow, said that the people of this bewildered generation were asking if there was a word from God — not for homilies on political or social affairs. While the Church of Scotland adopts many different schemes for reviving interest in religion yet it is to the content of the preaching that it would do well to give heed, as Mr Philips suggests. Had the Gospel been fully proclaimed we have no reason to think that the slide in the moral and spiritual state of the nation would have occurred.

A number of political matters were dealt with by the Assembly. The Assembly urged the Government not to proceed with the Trident missile system; the Prime Minister was criticised for delaying a nurses pay award; Government's policy on inflation was condemned as sinful, and a call was made for higher taxation to help the unemployed and to achieve a fairer distribution of wealth.

Free Church of Scotland

In the Free Church Assembly, Rev. Murdo MacLeod, Director of Christian Witness to Israel, was appointed Moderator. In his opening address on Christian Absolutes in a Multi-Faith Society, he dealt with two matters; the uniqueness of Christianity and the integral nature of all human thought and action. In his address he declared that Christianity was the one valid revelation of God. He also maintained that no sphere of life could be outside the authority of the Christian faith. The move towards the secular state was to be resisted and the threatened disestablishment of the Christian faith was ominous in its implications. In referring to the establishment principle, the Moderator referred to the fact that the establishment of religion in our land finds expression in the Church of Scotland, and went on to suggest that there ought to be some association with the Church of Scotland to express the Free Church's solidarity with them on this issue. The Church of Scotland Moderator made reference to this suggestion and expressed the hope that contact with the Free Church might soon be renewed again.

The right of a nation to possess and, if necessary, to use nuclear weapons was defended at the Assembly. Looking at the whole of Scripture, Rev. Gordon Muir said, we reject the pacifist position and reaffirm the right of defence with whatever weapons are at hand. Such a stance was in keeping with the Church's Confession of Faith. On the other hand, he said, we strenuously advocate multilateral disarmament.

In connection with the drift of Free Church people from the Free

Church, the Assembly accepted a motion that viewed with concern this drift and instructed the Public Questions Committee to continue their study of the problem and bring forward proposals to next year's Assembly that would have a remedy in view. The same question of loss of people from the Free Church was referred to in connection with the Welfare of Youth. The Convener of the Welfare of Youth and Publications Committee said that the loss of their young people was a reality staring them in the face and he enquired as to the reason for it. It would appear that the Free Church though expending great effort to retain the young through Youth Camps are not succeeding in retaining them. It was reported that this year they were holding 10 Youth Camps catering for a total of 377 youngsters.

Rev. Hugh Cartwright supported an overture from the Presbytery of Ross in connection with lay preaching. The preaching by ordinary members who had not signed any doctrinal commitment was questioned as well as other practices. The whole matter is to be investigated with a view to legislation.

The Study Panel reported that it had prepared a draft document on the subject of marriage and divorce and that a synopsis had been sent to Presbyteries for study and comment.

An overture on Purity of Worship — having respect mainly to the principle of exclusive psalmody — was brought before the Assembly from the Presbytery of Lewis. The Assembly was asked to re-affirm its commitment to the Purity of Worship principle. From a constitutional point of view no other worship had a right to exist, it was stated. This overture was not intended to disallow ministers from ministering to other churches. The question of music in public worship was referred to by Rev. A. M. MacLeod. He declared that there was no place for music in outreach evangelism as it had no biblical warrant. The matter is likely to be before the Assembly next year through an addendum moved in the Assembly and carried asking presbyteries through the Psalmody Committee, to present recommendations for strengthening the testimony of the Church in this matter. The fact that such an overture had to be presented to the Assembly shows the trends that are appearing within the Free Church. It is inconsistent too, that ministers of the Church are free to abandon their principle of purity of worship outside the bounds of the Free Church.

Notes of a Sermon

by Rev. Alex. MacAskill, Lochinver.

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” 1 Peter 2: 24.

Peter is here writing to the church, especially among the Jews, who were called upon to suffer for the Word of God. There is nothing so precious as the Word of God, and nothing stirs so much enmity as the Word, so that he writes to those who were scattered abroad. There is also instruction given to us as to how we are to behave and conduct ourselves. There is more danger from what is within than from what is without for those who are called by God, and one is in danger of forgetting that those who profess that they are called of God are called to suffer for righteousness sake. Instruction is given as to how they are to conduct themselves and an example of the highest way of suffering is viewed in the person of Christ. We may say that nothing gives so much encouragement in suffering as to behold the Lord in suffering.

In the context he exhorts them to do good. That cannot, be separated from the truth that “there is none good but One, that is God.” It is in serving Him that this good is. There is nothing done to the glory of God, apart from faith in him. It is impossible for the natural man to serve God, for he knows Him not. Paul says it is only those who are in the kingdom that cannot be moved that can do so, and he calls upon them to realise their need of grace to do well and to suffer for doing well. Grace can enable one to know that they are serving God. The Word gives guidance as to serving and doing well, and having to suffer for doing well and taking it patiently, for God receives them. I feel that nothing is so pleasing to grace as that God is pleased. It matters not what others say if we know that God is pleased with us.

We have here Christ as an example of well doing. The Father declared regarding Him that in Him He was well pleased — “Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” It is true that Jesus did well according to what was pleasing in the Father’s sight. He was reviled. There was never such a servant and never such a master who suffered as He did. Surely He was the highest example of patience and of doing well in all His sufferings. We should have our eye focused on endeavouring to please God. He calls all His people to work for Him, and it should be our exercise to please Him.

Jesus said: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" A cup is given to all His people, and they seek to serve Him by taking what is according to His will.

Christ is the highest example of suffering patiently, and not only in suffering, but in dying for His people in their room and stead in order that they might be His blood-bought ones. The Father gave them to His Son in their lostness — "Thine they were and thou gavest them me" — in order that He might bring them alive to God as children and living members of His body. The minds of some of us did not look beyond being effectually called, but for many years back we have come to see that being called effectually was to present the Church of God on High. The calling is part of the work, but He is not to leave them until He presents them back to the glory of the Triune God.

There are three matters I would like to draw your attention to:—

1. The One here brought before us as His own Servant.
2. In regard to the work of this Person — that "He bare our sins in His body on the tree."
3. The effect of His sufferings — "That we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness."

1. The work of this One is so great. There was no other person suitable for this work. I often think that if less than that would meet the need of sinners, why should the Father give His Son? Who could bear the glory that belonged to this work, but God Himself? None less than God, who created all things of nothing. All nations are as dust before Him. He it is that upholds all things by His mighty power and to whom the issues from death belong. He must take our nature. What creature could we find in heaven who could ever think of God becoming man? It is beyond the thought of the creature — God manifested in the flesh, but it was necessary that He would take the nature of His people. He had no sin and was born without sin. Although it is true that He revealed Himself in the Old Testament, yet He did not become man till a body was prepared for Him in the womb of the Virgin Mary and was united to His own Person. He was the Son of God in our nature, but no one could see it as He veiled Himself. As Paul says to the Galatians: "He was made of a woman," and the Church has all her hope and confidence placed in Him who was made of a woman.

Man was born under a broken covenant — and is there not the curse and death there? The sentence passed in Eden stood from Adam downwards — that "dying, thou shalt die" — meaning eternal death. Christ came under this curse. In connection with this He loved the law. "Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.” Here is One able and willing to obey the law. It was in His heart. Man was able to obey in innocence. Here is the second Adam. He loves the perfect law of God. The breach of the law does not affect Him as it does us. Man fell into an estate of sin and misery. Adam in his fallen state did not care for the glory of God. Nothing but devilishness was in his heart. Christ said to the Jews: “Ye are of your father, the devil.” The love of God was in Christ’s heart. He took our nature to serve God in the room and place of His people. And He knew what He was to suffer, and that was death all the way through, not only on the cross, but death given Him in the cup all the way through.

2. He bare our sins. He is a divine person who is bearing the sins of His people. Their guilt is transferred to Him and laid to His account, for He took our nature and had to suffer, for He alone is to bear the glory of their salvation. Although He was the Son of God and free from sin, yet He ever kept before His true followers that He was God and that He must die. He did not come to bring salvation apart from fulfilling the law, and He bare His people’s sins in our nature in the shameful death of the tree. That was not the greatest part of His suffering — the suffering of His body — but it was the agony of His soul as in Gethsemane, when the blood oozed out of His body. The sufferings of His soul were more than those of His body, and if you go to a lost eternity you will know that the sufferings of the body are nothing to the sufferings of the soul. He was not forced into it, but this arose out of love to glorify God and that in connection with the salvation of those who were elected. Bearing their sins, taking their sins away, He carried their sins to Calvary and there made an end of sin, as far as His people are concerned. He said, “I have glorified Thee on the earth,” and it is in His death and suffering that he has done this. He bowed His head and gave up the ghost, showing obedience to the Father. He died in full strength. He had power to lay down His life and power to raise it again. The effect was that He became our all in all unto salvation.

3. We are dead to sin. You may say you never felt more alive to sin, but there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, although sin did bring in condemnation. Having come under their sin, they are made free because He freed them from the curse of the law. If you take hold of this you will be in the kingdom of glory — if you believe that He is the end of the law for righteousness and that there is no other way you can be free from the law and the death of the law. He said, “I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord.” You will never get the carnal mind to that, but grace cries to be free from uncleanness, which is part of

the corruption of our nature before God. You wonder what you understand of what you see in the Word, but you know that sin has not the dominion over you as formerly. At one time who could make you believe that there was pleasure to be found apart from sin, but now you know that without holiness you will never see God. The Apostle Paul said, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," and there you have the beginning of the new life. When a person is brought into the family of God and is justified, the burden of guilt is taken away. It is written, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." Because you have been brought to the knowledge of Him you will say, "The Lord our righteousness." There you have a soul quickened and every faculty brought alive on the ground of the meritorious life of the Son of God. It is not surprising that they complain of their heart, but see that that will not prevent you coming to acknowledge Him. Paul had a clear experience and was near the promised land when he had to say, "O wretched man that I am!", but he had the victory.

"By whose stripes we are healed." You can remember the day when you were not conscious of this disease. There is a disease that is not unto death, but to the glory of God. — that we have a heart that He is able to cure. It is written,

"Who thy diseases all and pains
doth heal, and thee relieve."

This is because He suffered for them, and intercedes for them, and He has the ear of His Father.

The Danger of Backsliding

by Richard Sibbes D.D.

For Demas hath forsaken me, and embraced this present world.

— 2 Tim. 4: 10

Blessed St. Paul, being now an old man, and ready to sacrifice his dearest blood for the sealing of that truth which he had carefully taught, sets down in this chapter what diverse entertainment he found both from God and man in the preaching of the gospel. As for men, he found they dealt most unfaithfully with him, when he stood most in need of comfort from them. Demas, a man of great note, in the end forsook him. Alexander the coppersmith, — thus it pleaseth God to try his dearest ones

with base oppositions of worthless persons, — did him most mischief. Weaker Christians forsook him, &c. But mark the wisdom of God's Spirit in the blessed apostle in regard of his different carriage towards these persons. Demas, because his fault was greater, by reason of the eminency of his profession, him he brands to all posterity, for looking back to Sodom and to the world, after he had put his hand to the plough. Alexander's opposing, because it sprung from extremity of malice towards the profession of godliness, him he curseth: 'The Lord reward him according to his works.' Weaker Christians who failed him from want of some measure of spirit and courage, retaining still a hidden love to the cause of Christ, their names he conceals, with prayer that God would not lay their sin to their charge. But whilst Paul lived in this cold comfort on earth, see what large encouragement had he from heaven! Though all forsook me, yet, says he, 'God did not forsake me, but stood by me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.' ver. 17.

Obs. In the words we have, 1. This remarkable observation, *that it is the lot of God's dearest children to be oftentimes forsaken of those that have been most near unto them.* Thus it was with Christ himself. His disciples fled and left him, Mat. 26: 56. David complaineth that his friends forsook him, Ps 119: 87, and 27: 10. And Elias mourneth because he was 'left alone, and they sought his life also,' 1 Kings 19: 10.

Reason 1. And God suffers his dearest children to be thus forsaken, that they may be made conformable to their head Christ Jesus, who was left alone of his beloved disciples, and had none to comfort him.

Reason 2. Again, God suffers this to draw them to the fountain, that they might fly to Christ, in whom all true comfort lies, and see whether he is not better than ten sons, as Eli spake to Hannah, 1 Sam. 1: 8. The Lord oft embitters other comforts to men that Christ may be sweet to them. Our hearts naturally hang loose from God, and are soon ready to join with the creature. Therefore we should soar much aloft in our meditations, and see the excellencies of Christ, and adhere to him. This will soon take off the soul from resting upon other props. When David began to say, 'My hill is strong,' then presently 'his soul was troubled,' Ps. 30: 6, *seq.* Out of God there is nothing fit for the soul to stay itself upon; for all outward things are beneath the worth of the soul, and draw it lower than itself. Earthly things, such as are riches, honours, friends, &c., are not given us for stays to rest upon, but for comforts in our way to heaven. Whatever comfort is in the creature the soul will spend quickly,

and look still for more; whereas the comfort that we have in God, 'is undefiled, and fadeth not away,' 1 Peter 1: 4.

God hath therefore planted the grace of faith in us, that our souls thereby might be carried to himself, and not rely upon vain things, which only are so far good as we do not trust in them. Who would trust to that for comfort, which by very trusting proves uncomfortable to him? If we trust in friends, or estate, more than God, we make them idols.

There is still left in man's nature a desire of pleasure, profit, and whatever the creature presents as good; but the desire of gracious comforts, and heavenly delights is altogether lost, the soul being wholly infected with a contrary taste. Man hath a nature capable of excellency, and desirous of it, and the Spirit of God in and by the word discovers where true excellency is to be had; but corrupt nature leaving God, seeketh it elsewhere in carnal friendship and the like, and so crosseth its own desires, till the Spirit of God discovers where these things are to be had, and so nature is brought to its right frame again, by turning the stream into its right current. Grace and sinful nature have the same general object of comfort, only sinful nature seeks it in broken cisterns, and grace in the fountain. The beginnings of our true happiness is from the discovery of true and false objects; so as the soul may clearly see what is best and safest, and then stedfastly rely upon it. For the soul is as that which it relies upon; if on vanity, itself becomes vain; if upon God and Christ, it becomes a spiritual and heavenly soul. It is no small privilege then which the Lord vouchsafeth some, by knocking off their fingers, and crossing their greedy appetites after earthly comforts, that he may refresh them with pleasures of a higher nature. Alas! what is the delight that we have in friends, or children, and the like, to the joy of God's presence, and the pleasures at his right hand for evermore?

Obs. But to bring the text a little closer to ourselves, the thing that I would have you chiefly to observe is this, *that those that have gone far in religion may yet notwithstanding fall away, and become apostates.*

Reason 1. The reason is, 1. *Because they rest on their own strength, and there is no support in man to uphold himself.* Without Christ we can do nothing. We see how weak the apostles themselves were, till they were endued with strength from above. Peter was blasted with the speech of a damsel. Therefore in all our encounters and fear of falling, we should lift up our hearts to Christ, who hath Spirit enough for us all, and say with good Jehoshaphat, 'Lord, we know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee,' 2 Chron. 20: 12. The battle we fight is thine, and the strength whereby we fight must be thine. If thou goest not out with us,

we are sure to be foiled. Satan knows that nothing can prevail against Christ, or those that rely upon his power; therefore his study is, how to keep us in ourselves and in the creature; but we must carry this always in our minds, that that which is begun in self-confidence will end in shame.

Reason 2. Because Satan, that grand apostate, is fallen from the truth himself, and he labours to draw others to fall back with him; for being a cursed spirit, cast and tumbled down himself from heaven, where he is never to come again, he is full of malice, and labours all that he can to ruin and destroy others, that they may be in the same cursed condition with himself. By his envy and subtlety we were driven out of paradise at the first, and ever since he envies us the paradise of a good conscience. He cannot endure that a creature of meaner rank than himself should enjoy such happiness.

Use. I beseech you, therefore, let us learn that exhortation of the apostle, 'Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall.' A watchful Christian stands, when careless spirits have many a fall. It is no easy matter to keep our ground. We see tall cedars oftentimes to shake and fall. How many are like buds in a frosty morning, nipped suddenly. We have no more truth of grace than we hold out to the end.

Quest. But how shall we persevere in goodness?

Ans. 1. Labour for true grace. What is sincere, is constant. That is true grace which the Spirit of God doth work in us, and is not built on false grounds, as to have respect to this or that man, or by-ends of our own.

Now, that we may have true grace, let us labour to be thoroughly convinced of sin, after which conviction of our evil ways, grace will follow. To which end we should pray earnestly for the Spirit, which will 'convince us of all sin,' John 16: 9, and work this grace of constancy, and all other graces in us. For where the Spirit is, there is a savour and relish in all the ways of God. How sweet is the goodness of God in our redemption, justification, and preservation, to a spiritual heart! If there be a relish in the meat, and not in the man, all is nothing.

Ans. 2. Again, if we would hold out, *get a strong resolution against all oppositions*, for, know this, scandals will come, difficulties will arise, but firm resolution will carry us through all. Those that go forth to walk for pleasure, if a storm comes, they return in again presently; whereas he that is to go a journey, though he meets with never so many storms and tempests, yet he will go through all, because he hath so resolved beforehand. Things are either good or evil, as a man willeth them. The bent of the soul to God makes a man good.

Ans. 3. That thou mayest persevere to the end, labour, as for the obedience of faith, to believe the truth, so for the obedience of practice. Labour to know the truth, and to practice what thou knowest, that so thou mayest be built on the rock Christ Jesus. If thou fall, it is thy own fault for building on the sand. Therefore, often put this question to thy soul, Is this truth that I hold? would I die for it? If so, then hold it fast, otherwise suspect there is unsoundness.

Ans. 4. Above all things, get the love of God in thy heart. This will constrain us to obedience. If we look altogether upon our discouragements, alas! we shall soon flag and fall away. But if we eye our encouragements, it is impossible we should desert Christ, or his truth. Who would not hold out, having such a captain, and such a cause as we fight for. Where the truth is received in the love of it, there is constancy.

Ans. 5. Strive to grow daily in a denial of thyself. None can come to heaven, but he must first strip himself of himself. He must not own his own wit, will, or affections; he must be emptied of himself wholly. He must deny himself in all his aims after the world, in the pleasure, profit, or preferment of it. He must not respect anything if he will follow Christ. A respective religion is never a sound religion. A true Christian hath a single eye; he serves God for himself. A man that hath worldly aims hath a double eye as well as a double heart; such a one cannot but waver. Bring therefore single eyes, hearts, and aims to receive the word. It is the great fault of many; they bring false hearts with them to the ordinances of God. It is said of Israel that he brought Egypt into the wilderness, Num. 11: 18. So it is with most men, they think to have religion and their lusts together; but whatsoever doth begin in hypocrisy will end in apostasy. And know this, that he that hath religion needs not go out for aims or good company. He hath acquaintance with God and Christ, and he hath an eternal inheritance to aim at. There be encouragements enough in religion itself. We need not go out and look abroad for more. I speak this the rather, because false aims and ends is the ready means to undo men, when we have respect to such a man or such a thing in our practice of holiness. Joash was a good king all the while Jehoiada lived. This respect kept him in awe. The eye of a great person keeps some men in, and causeth them oft to blaze forth in a greater show, than many others less outwardly apparent, but more inwardly sincere.

Ans. 6. Labour, therefore, to have divine truths engrafted in thee; not to have them loose, for then they will never grow, but get them engrafted

in thy heart, that so they may spring forth in thy life, as that which is set in a stock turns the stock into the same nature with it. We should embrace truths inwardly. And indeed God's children will have truths as belonging to themselves. As a wife receiving a letter from her husband, saith, This is sent to me, it belongs to me, so we should say in every truth, this was penned for me, and directed to my soul in particular.

Ans. 7. Lastly, That thou mayest grow deeper in religion, *grow deeper and deeper in humiliation.* Then a man is humble when he accounteth sin his greatest evil and grace his chiefest good. Such a one will hold out in time of trial; and if temptations come on the right hand, of profit or preferment, Oh, saith he, Christ is better to me! And if sin comes on the left hand, to draw him aside, Oh, saith he, this is the vilest thing in the world; it is the worst of all evils, I may not yield to it.

Obs. But to go on, from Demas his forsaking of Paul, and embracing of the present world, we learn, *that the love of Christ and the world cannot lodge together in one heart.*

Reason 1. The reason is, 1, *They are two masters, ruling by contrary laws.* Christ was resolved to suffer, but the world saith, 'Spare thyself,' Mat. 16: 22. How can these agree? I deny not but a man may be truly religious, and abound with all outward blessings; but the *love* of the world, and love of religion, cannot harbour in one breast. When the love of the world entered into Judas, it is said the devil entered into him, John 13: 2. Now, Christ and Satan are contrary one to the other. Where religion is, it carries the soul upwards to heaven and heavenly things; but where the love of the world is, it brings the soul downward to the earth and things below.

Use. *This discovereth the gross hypocrisy of such men as labour to bring God and the world together,* which cannot be. Where the world hath got possession in the heart, it makes us false to God and false to man. It makes us unfaithful in our callings, and false to religion itself. Labour therefore to have the world in its own place, under thy feet; for if we love the world, we shall break with religion, with our friend, with the church, and with God himself. We see how it hindered the man in the Gospel from blessedness. When once Christ told him he must 'sell all that he had, and give to the poor,' he went away sorrowful, 'for he had great possessions,' Mat. 19: 22. Oh how do these things steal the good word out of our hearts, as the birds did the seed that was on the 'highway side,' Mat. 13: 4. It even chokes the word, as the tares did the corn when

it was sprung up, Mat. 13: 26. Where this worldly love is, there can be no true profession of Christ, let men delude themselves never so much.

Quest. But how shall I know I love the world?

Ans. That will be seen by observing the bent of our heart, how it is swayed towards God and his service, and how towards things below. When two masters are parted, their servants will be known whom they serve, by following their own master. Blessed be God, in these times we enjoy both religion and the world together; but if times of suffering should approach, then it would be known whose servants we are. Consider therefore beforehand what thou wouldst do. If trouble and persecution should arise, wouldst thou stand up for Christ, and set light by liberty, riches, credit, all in comparison of him?

Yet we must know it is not the world simply that draws our heart from God and goodness, but the love of the world. Worldly things are good in themselves, and given to sweeten our passage to heaven. They sweeten the profession of religion, therefore bring not a false report upon the world. It is thy falseness that makes it hurtful, in loving it so much. Use it as a servant all thy days, and not as a master, and thou mayest have comfort therein. It is not the world properly that hurts us, but our setting our hearts upon it; whenas God should be in our thoughts, our spirits are even drunk with the cares below. Thorns will not prick of themselves, but when they are grasped in a man's hand they prick deep. So this world and the things thereof are all good, and were all made of God for the benefit of his creature, did not our immoderate affection make them hurtful, which indeed embitters every sweet unto us. This is the root of all evil. When once a man's heart is set upon the world, how doth he set light by God, and the peace of his conscience, to attain his ends! How doth he break with God, his truth, religion, and all, to satisfy a lust! And indeed as we fasten our love, so we are either good or bad. We are not as we know, but as we love. If we set our love on earthly things, we ourselves become base and earthly; but if we love heavenly things, our conversations will be spiritual and divine. Our affections are those things which declare what we are. If we do not love religion, it is no matter what we know or talk of it.

He that loves the world, brings it into the church with him. It is chief in his thoughts, and therefore he carries it about with him in his heart wherever he goes. As it is said of Israel, they carried Egypt into the wilderness, so these bring the world to the ordinance of God, they come to the hearing of the word like drones, leaving their stings behind them.

Paul saith not here 'Demas did forsake him' for fear of persecution,

but 'for the love of the world.' Faults are in their aggravation as they are in deliberation. Peter denied his Master, but it was not with deliberation, whereas Demas did it in his cold blood. He loved the world, he set up the creature in his heart higher than the Creator.

Use. Labour therefore to know the world, that thou mayest detest it. In religion, the more we know the more we will love; but all the worldly things, the more we know the less we will affect them; as a picture afar off, it will shew well, but come near it and it is not so. Let us see, then, what the world is. Alas! it is but the 'present world,' which will vanish away suddenly. Poor Demas thought a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush, and therefore he would brave it out a while; but, alas! what is become of him now? A worldling oftentimes, in seeking these things, loseth himself and the world too; but a Christian never loseth that which he seeks after, God and Christ, and the things of a better life. The more we know the vanities of the world and the excellencies of grace, the more we will love the one and hate the other.

Labour, then, for faith, that you may overcome the world. It was an excellent speech of Christ when he sent forth his disciples, 'Did you lack anything?' and they said, 'Nothing at all,' Luke 22: 35. Labour therefore for faith to rely on the promise; for provision, protection, and all things needful. If God be our shepherd, we are sure to lack nothing.

And cherish a waking heart; lay hold of eternal life. The way to get this is not to be drunk of the world, but to be wise, redeeming your time; and balance these earthly things with heavenly. See what these fading comforts are to eternity. All the things we see here are temporal, but the things which are not seen, they are eternal, 2 Cor. 4: 18. Therefore we should let our affections run the right way, and have Abraham's eyes to see afar off, and feed our meditations with the things which we shall have hereafter, as Moses did.

I beseech you, let us prize the favour of God above all that the earth affords. What though we endure hardness here! Did Christ leave heaven to suffer for us, and shall not we suffer some straits for Him? Faith can see a greater good in Christ than in the creature. This is that that will set out the vanity of the world and the excellency of heaven, the certainty of the one and the perishing condition of the other. It will make things to come as present with us, and find out a sufficiency in the worst estate.

Spiritual Experience of John Stevenson (1655-1728)

(Continued from page 261)

Some time thereafter Satan stood at my right hand to resist me, and charged me with all my sins and the aggravations of them, as also my plagues of heart, and inquired by his strong suggestion whether or not, I myself being judge, could I think that such sins and grace could dwell together; to which I readily replied, I thought they could not, upon which I razed the very foundation, and in a moment destroyed what I had been many years a-building. My trouble, however, was so great, I was obliged to take my bed, being grieved at the melancholy thoughts of my having deceived myself; so rude was I, and as a beast before Him, that I could not in this dark hour live by faith; it was indeed the hour and power of darkness: grieved was I, and loath to call all that ever I met with a delusion. Yet so strong was the tentation, I could not read my evidences for or title to His favour; all this not only made me take my bed, but threw me in a fever for some days, and then the enemy did sorely assault me, and assured me he would either dwell for ever in my heart, or deprive me of the exercise of my reason. Upon which I told my wife what the adversary had threatened, and desired that she would go out and cry to God in my behalf, and I would in the meantime entreat His appearing for me in such a strait, and disappoint my malicious enemy. Accordingly, she went out to prayer, and I cried to God on my bed, out of the depths, and heartily requested that Satan might neither be permitted to dwell in my heart nor distract my head. Dear Lord, said I, gather not my soul with sinners, for I cannot think of such a hellish guest. O Lord, I am thine, save Thou me; enthrone Thyself in my heart, and let not the enemy have entrance there. I have renounced the devil, and will never "be led captive by him at his will;" he maintains that grace cannot dwell with my corruption, but Thou knowest my sin is my burden. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" Lord, I long for victory over it, and that through the Blood of the Lamb; therefore, dwell there in my heart by Thy Spirit of Grace, that Satan may have no room therein. And, dear Lord, let not the enemy deprive me of reason, lest Thy name be blasphemed among the wicked, lest the profane ridicule religion, and cry out, Take up the professor, he is now distracted, and all his religion has been only a notion in his brain. By many arguments I

begged of God He would rebuke Satan, and plead the cause that was His own; on which the Lord that chose Jerusalem seemed to say, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" and charge was given to take away my filthy garments, and clothe me with change of raiment, so the adversary was put to silence, and my wife came in smiling with the hopes of it, the Lord having enlarged her for me in prayer. I immediately was not only healed in spirit but in body, my fever was rebuked as well as the enemy, and I got up and put on my clothes, after I had lain some days in trouble both of body and mind, and thus got a new occasion of setting up my Ebenezer, owning that hitherto the Lord had helped.

Some time after this the enemy again pursued my soul, and charged me afresh with my sins, and maintained I was nothing but a hypocrite, and had best quit the way of religion, for the longer I continued my profession, I would increase my misery the more; this he much insisted on, but I being persuaded that in my spirit I allowed no guile, I assured the enemy I could not nor would not give up with the good way of God, for the Lord had all along shown me great kindness since ever I engaged in His way and service; I could not, therefore, so foolishly and ungratefully requite the Lord as now to turn my back upon Him, I had found His yoke easy, and His burden light, and none of His commandments were grievous to me. Besides, I was convinced that none was such a good master — to whom then should I go if I would turn my back on Him, "Who only had the words of eternal life?" Therefore "there was none in heaven or upon earth that I desired for a Lord and Master beside Him." Yea, I was sure that what advantage the enemy got over me now or at other times was because of my sins, and what might I yet expect would I so far transgress as wholly to quit God's way; therefore I assured the enemy that in God's way I would constantly go on in the strength of God the Lord, and would still make mention of His righteousness, and His only. A few days after I came to the sacrament at Kirkoswald. And on the Saturday as I came towards the tent, the adversary suggested that all my provocations and heart-plagues were written on my forehead, and that all the people were gazing at them; he so far prevailed as to make me sit down in haste and hide my face; however, the Lord set bounds to His rage against me till the solemnity was over; after which I had occasion to go to Galston on the Monday, and as I returned, the restless enemy made another assault; he averred that I had slain the great King's Son, and that I had stabbed Him to the heart in Adam, and since pierced Him by many actual transgressions, and therefore He would immediately hale me to prison; on which I told him "would fly to the city of refuge." He sug-

gested that he would pursue me even there, and drag me from the very horns of the altar, that I might die the death of the murderer, having slain the great King's Son. Upon which he seemed to bring me to the city of refuge, where the Judge was then sitting, and craved sentence against me. The enemy appealed to two witnesses that I was guilty, namely, the Judge who was privy to all that ever I did, and my own conscience. These awful witnesses readily owned I was guilty of the charge, on which the accuser craved a speedy sentence, that he might be allowed to drag the criminal to prison. This made my trembling soul, with tears gushing out, supplicate the great Judge that I might be allowed the benefit of that Act of Grace made long ago, and firmly ratified in the Council of Peace, namely Deut. 4: 42, "He that slays his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past, shall fly to the city of refuge and live." I pleaded that such was the equity of the Judge, that even in the cause of His own dear Son, He would not, could not, act contrary to His own standing law, but would magnify the law, and thus make it honourable, how unworthy soever the accused criminal was. I appealed to the great Judge and the other witness Conscience, if it was not unawares that I had slain the King's Son, when I stabbed Him in Adam, and that I hated Him not for times past, though I had frequently pierced Him, yet this was the grief of my soul, and was in bitterness for it more than for a first-born, yea, the two great witnesses knew, that the King's Son whom I have pierced is precious to my soul, and to His blood I flee for cleansing, and it speaks better things than the blood of Abel; and though I have sinned, I have an Advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for my sin; it is in the meritorious virtue of the blood and intercession of the Lamb slain that I confide, by the horns of this altar will I live and die. Therefore, O righteous Judge, before whom I stand, may I be justified freely from what the enemy had charged me with, and from what I charge myself with also. The Lord that chose Jerusalem rebuke Satan, send him to his place, and let him pursue me no more. On which the merciful Judge smiling on me in the face of His Anointed, pronounced my absolution, and said, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee"; which made me go from before His tribunal wondering at the mercy of the Judge, and tender bowels of the Eternal Son. Thus again the God of Peace bruised Satan for a time under my feet, and made me go on in my way rejoicing, my soul being filled with joy and peace in believing, because I had got the new name and the white stone, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it, for strangers intermeddle not with this joy.

Some time after this, our minister not being able to preach, I went to Girvan on the Sabbath to hear Mr. Stewart; and as he closed his forenoon sermon, Satan stood up at my right hand to resist me, and charged me with my filthy garments, setting all my sins and plagues of heart before me in a sinful view; upon which, between sermons I retired to the fields to think on a text of Scripture which came to my mind, and suited my case; the words were these, in the First Epistle of John, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" where I observed that it was most consistent with the faithfulness and justice of God to forgive His people their sins, and that He was by these His attributes engaged to do so. That it was agreeable to His faithfulness, was evident from His promise in the Proverbs, "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy;" as also in Jeremiah, which is mentioned also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" therefore faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it, for His is the word of a King, who abideth faithful, and cannot deny Himself. It is also evident, said I, that God's justice does also engage the Holy One to pardon the sins of His penitent people; for when man had destroyed himself, and could not help himself, it pleased the offended God to lay help on His dear Son, who was mighty to save; Him He appointed and accepted of as the elect's surety, and laid on Him the iniquities of them all; so that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him in the elect's room and stead; "He was wounded for their transgressions," and "laid down His life a ransom for many;" and therefore, seeing the debt was already paid by the surety, it was just with God to let the elect go free, and not exact double payment: so that justice itself did now cry out concerning the elect sinner, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for, behold I have found a ransom." Wherefore I concluded, that though I was verily guilty, yet God was just and faithful to forgive His people's sins. On which, the enemy strongly suggested, that He was faithful to forgive sin, but it was only the sins of His people; and desired me to find by Scripture marks that I was one of them. I owned it was true that He would only pardon the sins of His people, and endeavoured to read my evidences of grace; but, alas! the enemy took me at a catch, for the cloud I was under was so great, that I could not see to read my character; nevertheless, I told the enemy that I was sure of one mark, and would lay claim to it, namely, that I loved the brethren, even all who bore God's image. But here he suggested, that one swallow made not

summer, and one mark alone was no mark of a real Christian, which so confounded me, that the enemy rejoiced over me, and for three full weeks did trample on my faith and hope, and no doubt thought he would for ever separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. The enemy still pursued my soul, and made me dwell in darkness, as one that had been a long time dead; whereupon I resolved I would no longer keep the devil's secrets, but would open my case to some of God's messengers, if happily I might find an interpreter, one among a thousand, that could show unto man his uprightness. To my own minister I could not go, for he himself was in great trouble at the time. Therefore I went to Mr. Stewart, and opened my case to him, but comfort found I none, for the Comforter that should, and only could, relieve my soul, was yet far from me. Having taken my leave of Mr. Stewart, Satan attacked me just as I was coming away, and assured me that I was acting the basest hypocrisy, telling Mr. Stewart that I was in distress, when there was no such thing, and persuaded me that I had not lied to man only, but to the Holy Ghost, which new accusation greatly perplexed my soul. This being on Thursday, I was sorely buffeted till Sabbath thereafter, when, early in the morning, Scripture marks of my interest in the favour of God did throng into my mind with great sweetness and power from on high. Then I told the enemy that now I could read my evidences, and that I was in covenant with God, to which God himself was witness on Craigdowhill; yea, I told him that I had fled to the city of refuge, and got my absolution pronounced near Maybole, as I came from Galston to Kirkoswald. I added as a further mark, that I counted the people of God "the excellent ones in all the earth," and could say, Lord, do I not love those that love Thee, and am grieved with those that rise up against Thee? "yea, I love the habitation of His house, the place where His honour dwells;" yea, I am sensible of my body of sin and death, and count it my greatest burthen, and long exceedingly to be delivered from it, and can say, that whatever corruption be in me, I have no quarrel with His excellent law, but count it holy, just, and good, and can (also) say, "How love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day," and stays ever with me; yea, glorious Christ is precious to my soul, as He is to them that believe. After the enemy found me assisted to read my evidences, and that God by His Spirit had let me see the grace that was freely given me, Satan departed from me for a season, and God filled my soul for some time with joy and peace in believing.

Some time after this, as I was coming from the Bar, the adversary gave me a new onset, and told me I was a great fool to trouble myself about

religion, seeing there was no reality in religion; upon which I went to prayer, and begged of God He would direct me how to answer the adversary; after which, I proposed the following questions to the enemy; 1st, If there were no reality in religion, how comes it that graceless sinners, when they come to die, when people are for ordinary most serious, do so desire to be religious, and to die the death of the righteous? 2ndly, If there be no reality in religion, how comes it that some who were irreligious, have such a remarkable change wrought on them, that they not only turn religious, but continue so through a long life, notwithstanding of great affliction and persecution on the account of religion? 3rdly, If there be no reality in religion, how comes it that the religious get much advantage, both temporal and spiritual, by the same dispensation, by which the wicked get great prejudice? 4thly, If there be no reality in religion, how comes it to pass that the judgments threatened against the wicked in God's Word have so frequently such an exact accomplishment? 5thly, If there be no reality in religion, how comes it to pass that the religious are so encouraged by God, in the way of their religion, and meet with so many mercies from the God they serve, and many of them coming to them as the fruit of prayer? 6thly, If there be no reality in religion, how comes it that God works so many wonders for the credit and vindication of religion and religious persons? Having proposed these questions, the Lord rebuked Satan, and has never suffered him to molest me since in such a way; so that I may say, God has never suffered me to be tempted above measure, but has to this day always, with the temptation, given a way to escape; and has, in all my distress put underneath His everlasting arms, and has been a present help in straits, so that I will cheerfully own He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

“Come Out!”

by Bishop J.C. Ryle.

(Continued from page 256)

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” — 2 Cor. 6: 17

III. In the third place I shall try to show *what true separation from the world really is.*

I take up this branch of my subject with a very deep sense of its difficulty. That there is a certain line of conduct which all true Christians

ought to pursue with respect to "the world and the things of the world," is very evident. The texts already quoted make that plain. The key to the solution of that question lies in the word "separation." But in what separation consists it is not easy to show. On some points it is not hard to lay down particular rules; on others it is impossible to do more than state general principles and leave every one to apply them according to his position in life. This is what I shall now attempt to do.

(a) First and foremost, he that desires to "come out from the world, and be separate," *must steadily and habitually refuse to be guided by the world's standard of right and wrong.*

The rule of the bulk of mankind is to go with the stream, to do as others, to follow the fashion, to keep in with the common opinion, and to set your watch by the town clock. The true Christian will never be content with such a rule as that. He will simply ask, What saith the Scripture? What is written in the Word of God? He will maintain firmly that nothing can be right which God says is wrong, and that the custom and opinion of his neighbours can never make that to be a trifle which God calls serious, or that to be no sin which God calls sin. He will never think lightly of such sins as drinking, swearing, gambling, lying, cheating, swindling, or breach of the seventh commandment, because they are common, and many say, Where is the mighty harm? That miserable argument, — "Everybody thinks so, everybody says so, everybody does it, everybody will be there," — goes for nothing with him. Is it condemned or approved by the Bible? That is his only question. If he stands alone in the parish, or town, or congregation, he will not go against the Bible. If he has to come out from the crowd, and take a position by himself, he will not flinch from it rather than disobey the Bible. This is genuine Scriptural separation.

(b) He that desires to "come out from the world and be separate," *must be very careful how he spends his leisure time.*

This is a point which at first sight appears of little importance. But the longer I live the more I am persuaded that it deserves most serious attention. Honourable occupation and lawful business are a great safeguard to the soul, and the time that is spent upon them is comparatively the time of our least danger. The devil finds it hard to get a hearing from a busy man. But when the day's work is over, and the time of leisure arrives, then comes the hour of temptation.

I do not hesitate to warn every man who wants to live a Christian life, to be very careful how he spends his evenings. Evening is the time when

we are naturally disposed to unbend after the labours of the day; and evening is the time when the Christian is too often tempted to lay aside his armour, and consequently gets trouble on his soul. "Then cometh the devil," and with the devil the world. Evening is the time when the poor man is tempted to go to the public-house, and fall into sin. Evening is the time when the tradesman too often goes to the inn parlour, and sits for hours hearing and seeing things which do him no good. Evening is the time which the higher classes choose for dancing, card playing, and the like; and consequently never get to bed till late at night. If we love our souls, and would not become worldly, let us mind how we spend our evenings. Tell me how a man spends his evenings, and I can generally tell what his character is.

The true Christian will do well to make it a settled rule never to waste his evenings. Whatever others may do, let him resolve always to make time for quiet, calm thought, for Bible-reading and prayer. The rule will prove a hard one to keep. It may bring on him the charge of being unsocial and over-strict. Let him not mind this. Anything of this kind is better than habitual late hours in company, hurried prayers, slovenly Bible-reading, and a bad conscience. Even if he stands alone in his parish or town, let him not depart from his rule. He will find himself in a minority, and be thought a peculiar man. But this is genuine Scriptural separation.

(c) He that desires to "come out from the world and be separate," must *steadily and habitually determine not to be swallowed up and absorbed in the business of the world.*

A true Christian will strive to do his duty in whatever station or position he finds himself, and to do it well. Whether statesman, or merchant, or banker, or lawyer, or doctor, or tradesman, or farmer, he will try to do his work so that no one can find occasion for fault in him. But he will not allow it to get between him and Christ. If he finds his business beginning to eat up his Sabbaths, his Bible-reading, his private prayer, and to bring clouds between him and heaven, he will say, "Stand back! There is a limit. Hitherto thou mayest go, but no further. I cannot sell my soul for place, fame, or gold." Like Daniel, he will make time for his communion with God, whatever the cost may be. Like Havelock, he will deny himself anything rather than lose his Bible-reading and his prayers. In all this he will find he stands almost alone. Many will laugh at him, and tell him they get on well enough without being so strict and particular. He will heed it not. He will resolutely hold the world at arm's length, whatever present loss or sacrifice it may seem to entail. He will choose

rather to be less rich and prosperous in this world, than not to prosper about his soul. To stand alone in this way, to run counter to the ways of others, requires immense self-denial. But this is genuine Scriptural separation.

(d) He that desires to "come out from the world and be separate" must steadily *abstain from all amusements and recreations which are inseparably connected with sin.*

This is a hard subject to handle, and I approach it with pain. But I do not think I should be faithful to Christ, and faithful to my office as a minister, if I did not speak very plainly about it, in considering such a matter as separation from the world.

Let me, then, say honestly, that I cannot understand how any one who makes any pretence to real vital religion can allow himself to attend races and theatres. Conscience, no doubt, is a strange thing, and every man must judge for himself and use his liberty. One man sees no harm in things which another regards with abhorrence as evil. I can only give my opinion for what it is worth, and entreat my readers to consider seriously what I say.

That to look at horses running at full speed is in itself perfectly harmless, no sensible man will pretend to deny. That many plays, such as Shakespeare's, are among the finest productions of the human intellect, is equally undeniable. But all this is beside the question. The question is whether horse-racing and theatres in England are not inseparably bound up with things that are downright wicked. I assert without hesitation that they are so bound up. I assert that the breach of God's commandments so invariably accompanies the race and the play, that you cannot go to the amusement without helping sin.

I entreat all professing Christians to remember this, and to take heed what they do. I warn them plainly that they have no right to shut their eyes to facts which every intelligent person knows, for the mere pleasure of seeing a horse-race, or listening to good actors or actresses. I warn them that they must not talk of separation from the world, if they can lend their sanction to amusements which are invariably connected with gambling, betting, drunkenness, and fornication. These are the things which God will judge. The end of these things is death.

Hard words these, no doubt! But are they not true? It may seem to your relatives and friends very strait-laced, strict, and narrow, if you tell them you cannot go to the races or the theatre with them. But we must fall back on first principles. Is the world a danger to the soul or is it not?

Are we to come out from the world or are we not? These are questions which can only be answered in one way.

If we love our souls we must have nothing to do with amusements which are bound up with sin. Nothing short of this can be called genuine scriptural separation from the world.

(e) He that desires to "come out from the world, and be separate," must be *moderate in the use of lawful and innocent recreations*.

No sensible Christian will ever think of condemning all recreations. In a world of wear and tear like that we live in, occasional unbending and relaxation are good for all. Body and mind alike require seasons of lighter occupation, and opportunities of letting off high spirits, and especially when they are young. Exercise itself is a positive necessity for the preservation of mental and bodily health. I see no harm in cricket, rowing, running, and many other athletic recreations. I find no fault with those who play chess and such-like games of skill. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made. No wonder the poet says, —

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

Anything which strengthens nerves and brain, and digestion, and lungs, and muscles, and makes us more fit for Christ's work, so long as it is not in itself sinful, is a blessing, and ought to be thankfully used. Anything which will occasionally divert our thoughts from their usual grinding channel in a healthy manner, is a good and not an evil.

But it is the excess of these innocent things which a true Christian must watch against, if he wants to be separate from the world. He must not devote his whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and time to them, as many do, if he wishes to serve Christ. There are hundreds of lawful things which are good in moderation, but bad when taken in excess: healthful medicine in small quantities, — downright poison when swallowed down in huge doses. In nothing is this so true as it is in the matter of recreations. The use of them is one thing, and the abuse of them is another. The Christian who uses them must know when to stop, and how to say, Hold! enough! Do they interfere with his private religion? Do they take up too much of his thoughts and attention? Have they a secularizing effect on his soul? Have they a tendency to pull him down to earth? Then let him hold hard and take care. All this will require courage, self-denial, and firmness. It is a line of conduct which will often bring on us the ridicule and contempt of those who know not what moderation is, and who spend their lives in making trifles serious things

and serious things trifles. But if we mean to come out from the world we must not mind this. We must be "temperate" even in lawful things, whatever others may think of us. This is genuine Scriptural separation.

Missionary Meeting, Utrecht, Holland

Again this year on 30th April, the official birthday of the Queen of the Netherlands and a national holiday, the town of Utrecht was the venue of Mbuma-zending's "Mission-day." As last year the place of meeting was the Irenehal, and with some 7,000 persons assembled in the forenoon and around 200 more at the afternoon session numbers remain constant. As has been the trend over the years, the collection made for our mission work in Zimbabwe, — and exclusively for that work — showed an increase, and from 217,000 guilders in 1983 to 235,000 guilders in the present year.

Although now beyond the fourscore years, the indefatigable Chairman of Mbuma-zending, Ds. C. Smits presided and opened the proceedings with the singing of Psalm 89 v. 1. He then read from Ezekiel ch. 37 vv. 1-14 and, after prayer made, spoke on this subject with regard to Ezekiel's Prophecy of the dry bones in the valley and what God by His Spirit wrought in them. There followed my address and the experiment of translating into the Dutch sentence by sentence which was done so ably by Mr H van Vliet seemed to be a marked success. For myself, I felt that I was now actually preaching to that vast congregation of immortal souls. In thanking me for my address Ds Smits wished me strength for my work and with particular reference to health and family trials over past months. Also, the Chairman at this stage had a special word of welcome for Rev B B Dube and Mr James Mpofu and assured them that all that was being done was for the Mission in Zimbabwe. Mr A D Muilwijk, Divinity Student, a new member of Committee, and new to speaking on these occasions then addressed us at some length on the subject of Lydia (Acts 16: 11-14) and it was time to stop for lunch.

The afternoon meeting began with the singing of two verses of the National Anthem for which all stood as a mark of respect to the Queen. Ds de Jong then spoke and took for his theme, "The true conversion of men," from the Heidelberg Catechism 33 and with reference to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8: 26f. Mr Scholten's address which has, perhaps, a special interest for the many young people in the audience, dealt this year with the subject of "paradise" with which, as he noticed, the Bible begins and ends. Ds Mallan's concluding address on the subject of

Simeon in the Temple struck a chord with myself in his special reference to the words, "yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."

These annual gatherings of the friends in Holland in connection with our Zimbabwe Mission are truly moving occasions and as Mr Dube said so properly in his brief address of greeting (as appended) and delivered before Ds Mallan concluded, "may . . . the Lord bless the kind and loving people of Holland who are helping us." My special thanks this year to my young friends in Utrecht, Mr and Mrs K. Riutenberg with whom I stayed over the Sabbath and with whom I went to church by bicycle as I had done so very often in my youth.

Alex. Murray

Address by Rev B. B. Dube, Zenka Mission

On behalf of the Free Presbyterian Church in Zimbabwe, I hereby express the sincere gratitude of that Church to MBUMA-ZENDING, Holland. The Word of God in Philippians 4: 16 says: "Ye sent once and again unto my necessity." We have received many gifts of money and clothing over the past years. The poor are clothed and this encourages them to come to hear God's Word, in what they consider respectable clothing.

Holland is a country thousands of miles away from Zimbabwe, and yet through the power of the Lord, the Church in Zimbabwe is benefiting from the generosity of the kind and loving people of Holland. May we add, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." 2 Corinthians 9: 15, and may many people receive the Saviour Himself. May the Church in Zimbabwe, in turn, pray that the Lord bless the kind and loving people of Holland who are helping us. And may all have the promise of Abraham, "Fear not Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward."

The Free Presbyterian Zimbabwe Mission Field, especially the areas around Mbumba Mission Hospital and Zenka Mission, are badly affected by the activities of Dissidents against the Government. But the Word of God is still read and preached in all our preaching stations without much disturbance. We wonder at how the Lord and Saviour of sinners controls the enemy until Satan is brought under His feet.

The Church in Zimbabwe wishes to express her deep sympathy and condolence for the beloved friends of the Mission in Holland who have passed away to Eternity. But where Christ is, is the better place.

Notes and Comments

Surrogate Motherhood

The question of surrogate motherhood has come to the fore in recent times through the case of a couple in the Highlands who have been able to induce an unmarried mother to have a child for them. When we join this along with the present trends in genetic engineering, we appear to be a nation descending to a low level on the moral plane far less than on the spiritual plane. What need there is today for a return to the law of God. Man seeks to be wiser than God who has revealed His will in the moral law and in the Scriptures of truth. To depart from the way of uprightness and truth exposes individuals and nations to divine chastisements and calamities. The ultimate (in one sense) of divine chastisement appears to have overtaken us as a nation, that is, to be given over to our own ways. May the Lord in His mercy deliver us.

(Since the above was written — it was held over from last month's issue of the Magazine — it appears that the Government is expected to pass legislation to ban surrogate motherhood agencies. It would then be a criminal offence to recruit women for this purpose. The Warnock Committee recommended that agreements signed by surrogate mothers to hand over children should be made illegal. It is also expected that the Government will also eventually bring in legislation to control the whole field of genetic engineering).

Political Teachers

A warning was given by the General Secretary of the Association of Career Teachers of teachers who go into the classroom wearing political badges and who try to force their ideas upon pupils. She instanced the demands for pupil power and pupil rights as emanating in the first instance from these politically motivated teachers. Topics in which these teachers revel seem to be such subjects as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament or Greenham Common.

We welcome this warning as it has been apparent for some time that this has been going on even in the Highlands of Scotland. Many are of the view that such teachers have been deliberately planted in schools throughout the country to carry on their sinister work. It is our prayer that their evil designs may be exposed and the young delivered from their influence.

York Minster and Consecration of new Bishop

The consecration of the new Bishop of Durham, Prof. David Jenkins

by the Archbishop of York, Dr John Hapgood, was carried out on 6th July, notwithstanding protests against this because of Prof. Jenkins unorthodox views. A day or two later a bolt of lightning struck the Minster and fire caused damage to the south transept estimated at one million pounds. A Church of England vicar who led protests against the consecration of Prof. Jenkins said with regard to the fire, "I would not rule out divine intervention." The Archbishop of Canterbury, on the other hand, warned that individuals should be very cautious of claiming divine intervention. In this instance, however, whatever the Archbishop says, the close proximity of cause and effect is too patent to be overlooked. An act of unholy boldness was carried out by the Archbishop in consecrating one known to reject fundamental truths of Christianity and God has shown his displeasure. Let men beware of provoking the Most High lest the next stroke of this wrath be on their own persons.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 11th September at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 11th September at 6 p.m.

Western: At Shildaig on 18th September at 11 a.m.

Skye: At Portree on 25th September at 11 a.m.

Committee Meetings (D.V.)

The following Committees will meet at Inverness Church:

Tuesday 2nd October

9.00 a.m. — 10.15 a.m.	Church Interests
	Home of Rest
10.15 a.m. — 11.00 a.m.	Training of Ministry
11.00 a.m. — 12 noon	Church Magazines
12 noon — 1.00 p.m.	Publications
2.00 p.m. — 3.00 p.m.	Welfare of Youth
2.00 p.m. — 4.30 p.m.	Finance
3.00 p.m. — 4.00 p.m.	Sabbath Observance
4.30 p.m. — 5.30 p.m.	Dominions and Overseas
	Religion and Morals
7.00 p.m. — 9.00 p.m.	Jewish and Foreign Missions

Induction at Lairg

On Tuesday evening of 17th July last, the Northern Presbytery met in the Lairg church to induct Rev. Alexander Murray to the joint charge of

Dornoch & Rogart and Lairg & Bonar. The service was well attended, the church being full to the door. The regular procedure of Induction was followed. The Extract Minute appointing the meeting and the Edict as being served intimating the meeting were read; the proclamation was made thrice at the most patent door of the church, giving opportunity for dissent or objection. The Officer of Court reported that no objection was made. The Moderator, Rev. D.B. MacLeod, went to the pulpit and preached from the words in the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews 13: 7 and 8 — “Remember them who have the rule over you who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever.” The sermon dealt with the ministry and its work; the theme of the ministry; and the duty owed by the people to their ministers who have the rule over them and preach the Word of God to them — “whose faith follow.” The sermon was appropriate to the occasion and offered salutary counsel to both minister and people. The narrative was then read. The pastor-elect answered satisfactorily the stated questions and signed the formula. The Moderator then engaged in prayer and in the name of the Presbytery and by authority of the Great Head of the Church inducted the pastor-elect to the charge of the congregation. The right hand of fellowship was given.

Rev. R.R. Sinclair then addressed the newly inducted pastor, emphasising the duty of the Christian pastor to maintain a godly life, conversation and work, free of reproach from the world, the necessity of secret prayer and welcomed Mr Murray “into our midst as a Presbytery.” Rev. J. Tallach addressed the congregation, basing his remarks on the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch where first “the disciples were called Christians” — Acts 11: 26. Earlier in the afternoon the Presbytery met and in making arrangements for the evening induction decided that ministers from other Presbyteries of the Church in attendance be associated with the Court. Accordingly, Rev. Donald Ross, Laide (Western Presbytery), Rev. James Tallach, Raasay (Skye Presbytery) and Rev. Angus Morrison, Oban (Southern Presbytery) all spoke of their pleasure at being present and offered the good wishes and prayers of their respective presbyteries to the minister and people that the ministry now begun would be richly blessed. Messages of goodwill were read by the clerk from Rev. F. MacDonald, clerk of the Skye Presbytery who prayed for the Lord’s blessing upon Mr. Murray’s ministry in a “part of the vineyard that was once a relatively fruitful land,” also from absent members of Court, Rev. D.M. Boyd, travelling on the continent

and Mr. Hugh MacKenzie because of prior business engagement. The meeting was brought to a close with the singing of Psalm 76 and the Benediction. The Presbytery continued its meeting for further business.

In the narrative of the steps taken in the Call, the clerk recalled that the amalgamation into a joint charge of Dornoch & Rogart and Lairg & Bonar had been confirmed by the May Synod last year. Before then Dornoch & Rogart had enjoyed a long ministry of the late Rev. F. MacLeod who died in May 1956 of almost 30 years and Lairg & Bonar under the late Rev. D.J. Matheson who was transferred to St. Jude's Glasgow in Sept. 1946 of almost 20 years. Thereafter the former congregation enjoyed for some years the ministry of Rev. Alexander MacPherson, now minister of our London congregation and the latter congregation Rev. D. M. MacLeod who ended his ministerial course in Auckland, New Zealand and Rev. D. B. MacLeod, still spared at Dingwall. The good wishes of the Presbytery go with Rev. A Murray and may he be spared to exercise a long and fruitful ministry among the people of his new charge.

A.F.M.

Notes from Mbuma

"In the kind providence of the Most High we were enabled to resume duties at our hospital once more on 25th May. This was after a period of much prayerful concern, and we would seek to acknowledge the Lord's over-ruling hand in all our concerns. "And He doeth according to His will, in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

We are conscious of the prayers of the Lord's people following us from day to day, and we would once again crave your prayers on our behalf and for the work here, that a measure of peace would prevail, and that the everlasting Gospel would have free course and be glorified.

At present we have police protection at the hospital, as this still remains a sensitive area. When we travel any distance we require an armed escort. The hospital is getting busy, and also our Child Welfare and Ante-natal clinics. We are very pleased to have Miss Margaret MacAskill with us. Miss J. Coote is now home on a well earned furlough. We do look forward to new staff coming to join us. Again we would value your prayers for us and the work here. "Brethren, pray for us." 2nd Chronicles 20: 12.

N. M.

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Sustentation Fund: 'M' — £120.

Home Mission Fund: 'M' — £30.

Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., Canada — \$100 (twice) for famine relief; Gisborne Congregation — £381.46 for famine relief; 'M' — £20; Vrije Oud Gereformeerde Gemeente, Urk, Holland — £233.60; Vrije Gereformeerde Gemeente, Urk, Holland — £280.91, both for Mission to the Jews, per Rev. D. B. M.

Aged and Infirm etc. Fund: 'M' — £10.

College, Library and Bookroom Fund: 'M' — £20.

Organisation Fund: 'M' — £50.

General Building Fund: 'M' — £10.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: 'M' — £10.

The treasurers of the following congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Achmore: Envelopes in Church plate; Friend of the Cause — £20; Friend, Harris — £5, both for Comm. Exps.

Beaully: Legacy from estate of late Mrs Shaw — £250 for General Funds of Beaully Church per Anderson, Shaw and Gilbert (Solicitors).

Daviot: Anon — £50; Anon — £10.

Dingwall: Friend — £33 for Funds.

Dumbarton: Anon — £5 for Zimbabwe Mission (in plate).

Fort William: Caol Friend — £10 for Sust. Fd.; Misses MacD — £5; Friend, Caol — £10, all per Rev. J. A. MacDonald.

Greenock: Anon (envelope in plate) — £35; Friend — £5 for Church Door Coll., per Rev. L. MacLeod.

Inverness: Anon — £5 for Congr. Fds; Friend, Edinburgh — £2 for Church Purposes; Anon, Inverness — £100 for Ballifeary Home of Rest, all per Rev. A. F. Mackay; Anon — £10 for Sust. Fd. and £10 for For. Miss. Fd. (in plate).

Lochcarron: Mrs H. Mack. — £18 for Minister's Car; £5 for Manse Expenses at Communion; £5 for door collections at Communion, per J. W. R.; Mrs. M. Mack. (Laide) — £5 for Sust. Fd. per D. S.

Oban: Two Friends, Northern Ireland — £25; Anon — £15; An Ulster Friend — £20, all for Congr. Fund and per Rev. A. Morrison; A. MacD., Blane field — £30 for Sust. Fd. and £30 for Trinitarian Bible Society; Mrs T., Stirling — £10 for Comm. Exps., per Rev. A. Morrison; Envelope in plate — £6 for Organisation Fund.

Shieldaig: From the estate of the late Mrs MacDonald, Mary St., Shieldaig — £300; Anon — £20; Anon — £10 for Comm Exps; Mr and Mrs N. McC., Inverness — £5 per D. McCuish.

Stornoway: Uig Deacons' Court — £40 for Car Expenses per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Strath, Skye: Mrs M., Limepark — £5 for Sust. Fd; Mrs J. C., 10 Heaste — £10 for Comm. Exps. and £5 for Minister's Car Expenses, all per Rev. H. I. MacKinnon.

Uig: Anon — £10; Anon — £10; Anon — £10; L. M. — £5 all for Communion Exps and all in envelopes in plate; Friend of the Cause — £25 for Church Renovation (envelope in plate); Anon — £10 for Manse Expenses per M. M.