

# Grace & Truth

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”

Magazine  
of  
North Uist & Grimsay  
Free Church of Scotland  
(Continuing)

Vol. 1 No. 1

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## Minister's Message: *Old and New*

The ending of one year and the beginning of another provides us with a natural opportunity to reflect upon our lives. It is always good to take stock. We look back to the old and we look forward to the new. If our recent experience has been difficult then perhaps the months ahead will bring us greater happiness. But we do not know our future here.

There are some things however which are very clear. There is the rapid passage of time. We may say with Job that our days are “swifter than a weaver’s shuttle” (Job 7:6). There is the nearness of death and eternity. Soon we will leave this world and go to our “long home” (Ecc.12:5). What of us then? What will our destiny be in the life to come?

The Bible alone is able to give us answers to such questions. It is the Word of God to man. It too would have us consider the old and the new.

Let us first look back to the ‘old’. The Bible tells us that God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a paradise. They were pure and holy and loved the Lord. God set Adam a test: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen.2:16,17). Sadly Adam disobeyed, sinning against God. As the head of our race Adam represented us. When he sinned we sinned too: “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom.5:19).

As sinners we are unrighteous in God’s sight. We are corrupt and guilty before Him. Having broken God’s law we are liable to its penalty. If it is a serious thing to break the law of the land it is a far more serious thing to disobey God’s law, contracting a debt we cannot pay and placing ourselves in danger of eternal punishment in hell!

Our sin leads to misery. However happy we may be with our lot the fact is that as sinners we are in a state of condemnation. “He that believeth not is condemned already...the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:18,36). By our sin we have lost our friendship with God. We are spiritually dead and heading rapidly to everlasting ruin.

Now let us look forward to the ‘new’. We cannot save ourselves from our plight but in love God sent His own eternal Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem sinners. To redeem is to buy back what is captive. We are in slavery to sin and the devil and a holy and just God requires a ransom for our deliverance. So Christ became man in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross at Calvary, shedding His own precious blood. God punished His Son *in the place of sinners*. He was “once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb.9:28). His sacrifice

was complete for “he rose again the third day” (1Cor.15:4). By His death Christ has satisfied God’s justice. He has removed the enmity between God and men and opened up the way for us to be restored to God.

How may we be saved? Jesus said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). Salvation is all of God’s grace! Confess your sin to God and ask His forgiveness, praying “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Put your trust in Christ for righteousness. You will be “a new creature” and all things will “become new” in your life (2Cor.5:17). You will have a sure hope of dwelling eternally in the “new Jerusalem” in heaven (Rev.21:2).

May we all know a new beginning with the Lord this New Year. □

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## Helps to Devotion (Rev. James Smith)

MERCY. *“God be merciful to me a sinner”* (Luke 18:13)

No Jew would ever ask for mercy or expect pardon but through an atonement; for they knew well that without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. Justice as well as mercy must shine forth if God pardon us. Whatever God does must be in accordance with the principles of eternal justice. Until, therefore, we see that justice is fully satisfied by the sacrifice of Jesus, we cannot with confidence ask and expect mercy from God. The sinner’s first prayer is for mercy; and such numerous and varied blessings are included in the word mercy, that the believer’s last prayer is for mercy. Indeed, every day this prayer suits us; and the more we lament the depravity of our hearts, and the more we compare our lives with God’s holy requirements, the more we feel our need of mercy. Let us, then, use this prayer today, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Honour the atonement made by thy Son, by pardoning all my sins; by accepting my person for his sake; by sanctifying my nature, and making it just like his. O God, be merciful to my unrighteousness, and place his obedience to my account; be merciful to my weakness, and give me his strength; be merciful to me in my sorrows and sufferings, and let me prove that his grace is sufficient for me. Be merciful unto me, O God. Glorify thy free and sovereign grace in me day by day. Give me thy Holy Spirit, to work in me both to will and to do of thine own good pleasure. O sympathise with me, and raise me above my fears, deliver me from unbelief, rescue me from Satan, and give me the victory over this evil world! Let mercy be honoured in my pardon, peace, and purity now, and my glorification after death. □

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## **Parables of Jesus: 1. The Candle under a Bushel**

*(A series looking at the main lessons of the parables taught by Christ.)*

*“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:15,16)*

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It was a favourite way in which the Lord Jesus Christ taught important truths about salvation to the people of His own day. In this parable we learn that the life of a Christian should be of such a good and upright quality that it serves as a witness for God in this dark world of sin.

### **Light**

If life of any sort is to exist then generally light is required. This is how it was in the very beginning. In preparing His creation for the wonderful variety of living things that He would make, God said first of all, “Let there be light” (Gen.1:3). We know from observation that plants and animals need sunlight if they are to thrive and grow.

For ourselves, we need light to work, study and travel by. God in His goodness has provided us with natural light from the heavens. We also have many forms of artificial light to help us and we are especially grateful for these when the long, dark, winter evenings are upon us.

### **Beneficial**

In the parable the “bushel” was a measure containing several gallons, used for dry goods such as grain. Uprturned it could be used to dim or even to snuff out the light from a candle. To “hide one’s light under a bushel” has come to mean in our language to be unduly modest. That is not the sense of Christ’s teaching in the parable though. The point of the illustration is that light is very useful and beneficial – but only when it is visible! Likewise a man who professes to be a Christian. He must show to others by his conduct that He is truly a child of God.

### **Light of Life**

A sinful world needs moral and spiritual light even more than it does physical light. Jesus said “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John

8:12). If our lives are to give true light to those around us and point them to God then we must come to know and love the Saviour who spoke these wonderful words.

In the Bible the church is compared to the moon. She is “fair as the moon” (Song 6:10). But the beauty and glory of the moon is not its own. It shines with a borrowed light, reflecting the rays of the sun. Similarly the church takes her beauty from her Lord, who is the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal.4:2).

### **Danger**

There are some who profess to follow Jesus but whose lives say little about Him. They love the world, live like the world and their lips are silent concerning Christ. Such are in danger. A candle starved of oxygen flickers and its flame eventually dies. It is in the wrong environment. May *our* light be bright and visible to all those who are “in the house” – our family, community, workplace – wherever indeed the Lord places us. □

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### **Sermon: *The New Birth* (Rev. John Macdonald)**

*(A sermon taken from “The Free Church Pulpit” published in 1927. The author was Free Church minister of Sleat, Isle of Skye, from 1906-1928.)*

*“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” – John 3:7*

**T**his is Christ’s answer to Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, and a master of Israel, but he seemed to be utterly ignorant of the things of God, as all are who are strangers to the saving work of the Holy Spirit in their souls. His own words betray his ignorance, and show his great need of being taught of Him, Who “can have compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way.”

The Master here explains to Nicodemus the nature of the new birth, or the gracious change that must come about, in the case of all who would eventually enter into the Kingdom of God. We shall consider, then, in the light of these words:–

#### **I. The Necessity of this Change – “Ye must be born again”**

The new heart comes through the new birth, which is necessary, not because of any arbitrary decree, but because of man’s natural state. He

is dead in trespasses and in sins. Paul, in writing to the believers at Ephesus, reminds them of their true character: “And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins.” Thus souls not quickened by the Spirit of God are spiritually dead, and therefore need to be born again – need to be radically changed. They are in a state of alienation from God. All God’s people are adopted into His family – brought near in Christ. But in their natural and sinful state they were far off. “You that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.” Peace and reconciliation would need to have been brought about in those bearing such a character. This change Nicodemus needed, and this the Lord explains to him.

The unsaved sinner is in a lost and ruined state. He is represented as on the broad way leading to destruction. He has, in his first covenant head, turned his back on God. He entered this world with his face towards the City of Destruction. In this course he continues to the end, unless he is arrested by God, on his downward career. In such a case a saving change is very necessary. Because of his incapacity for spiritual things, man, by nature, cannot understand or receive the things of the Spirit of God. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” He has no spiritual vision – he is blind to things of God. This blindness or ignorance was very evident in the case of Nicodemus, and in the case of the woman of Samaria, to whom the Lord said, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water.” But she was so spiritually blind that she did not know Him, or understand what He said to her, until He Himself opened her understanding. This blindness is common to all who are strangers to God. Then, man has no spiritual vitality. He cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, because he has no strength in him. Man, because of his own sin, is helpless in the work of his own salvation. He has destroyed himself, but save himself he cannot. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Then, again, we find that this change is necessary because the natural and spiritual cannot merge or blend the one into the other. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The flesh cannot by any form of evolution or transmutation be changed into spirit. Therefore such a change as the Lord explains to Nicodemus must take place in order that the soul be prepared for the Kingdom above.

And this change is necessary because without experiencing such a change the soul is debarred from ever entering the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is spiritual, and the natural man cannot enter – the dead do not inherit it. This the Master makes plain to Nicodemus – “Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

Lastly, we note that this change is necessary in the case of *all* men. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” “Ye,” says Christ here, “must be born again.” The Lord Himself was separate from sinners. Though He took upon Himself the sins of His people, yet He was Himself pure and holy, and free from sin. It was otherwise with men; they are guilty before God. All Adam’s race have been born into this world heirs of sin and of death, and they must be born again heirs of grace, and of eternal life. This can only be by the work of the Holy Spirit in their souls, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit quickens them into newness of life.

## II. The Nature of the Change – “Born again”

The Lord here speaks of the real nature of the change that takes place when the soul is brought into living union with Christ. It is an *inward* change. It must be wrought in them. God, by His Spirit, works in them both to will, and to do, of His good pleasure. Real conversion is not an outward reformation but an inward change. “Being confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” There, the Apostle speaks of it as a good work begun in them. Yes, they are inwardly changed, a new heart, and a new spirit put within them. Salvation is spoken of in Scripture as “Christ in” the soul “the hope of glory.”

It is a *spiritual* change. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” It would not, and it cannot, be brought about by man’s invention or man’s effort, but by the Spirit of the living God. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.” It is *of God*. He works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is through Christ. “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” It is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean....A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” It is a saving change. By it the soul is saved from sin and eternal death. It implies the gift of God, that is, eternal life through

Jesus Christ the Lord. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." It is a *complete* change – complete not in the sense that the subjects of it are in themselves perfect, but complete in the sense that if it takes place once it need not and never shall take place again. "Ye are complete in Him." Once in Christ for ever in Christ. "Old things are passed away, behold *all* things are become new." With Him, who is the Giver of every good gift, and every perfect gift, this work is not a half-finished work at all. No, He will perfect that which concerneth the soul. His work need not be added to and certainly must not be taken from. He doeth His own will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." In this change that is brought about in the souls of believers, they themselves had no hand, but they hold "it is the doing of the Lord, and marvellous in our eyes."

It is a *lasting* change. There are changes that are not lasting. There have been those who professed to have undergone a spiritual and a saving change, but it did not last, because it was not genuine. Their goodness was like the morning cloud, and, like the early dew, it passed away. There were those who followed the Saviour when He was on the earth, but they did not continue to follow Him when He told them the truth: they went back and walked no more with Him. But in the case of those in whom the Spirit of the Lord works, their change is a change that will last for ever. In these times it is very easy for some people to change their religion, simply because they have no real religion. But those who are truly religious people do not change, they cannot change, because "they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." They "are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of their souls." When men change often, they generally need to be changed in the most emphatic sense. One who himself experienced this lasting change in his own soul has well said – "Certain men glory in being weathercocks, they hold fast nothing, they have, in fact, nothing worth the holding. They believed yesterday, but not that which they believe to-day, nor that which they will believe to-morrow. These men may be as honest as they claim to be, but of what use are they? Like good trees oftentimes transplanted they may be of a noble nature, but they bring forth nothing; their strength goes out in rooting and re-rooting, they have no sap to spare for fruit." Is it otherwise with those who are born from above, who have been transplanted out of the kingdom of Satan unto the Kingdom of God's

Son. They are planted in the house of the Lord, and they take root downward and bear fruit upwards. “Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.”

Lastly, it is a glorious change – a change in which the Lord Himself will have all the glory. He is Himself the Author of it, and as He is the Author He shall also be the finisher of it. “He will bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, Grace, be unto it.”

### **III. The Means used in effecting this Change**

The Holy Spirit makes use of means in working this change in the souls of men. The chief means He uses in this work is the Word of the Lord. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” This Word the Holy Spirit makes use of in converting souls. It is said to be quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart. Yes, and it is the sword of the Spirit. The reading and meditation of the Word have often been blessed to souls in bringing them to Jesus Christ. The Most High will honour His own Word apart from men altogether in bringing souls to Himself. It was while reading these words, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,” that the eminent Dr Moody Stuart of Edinburgh was brought to light and liberty. He says, “I was lost and dead, yet was not in agony, was not praying, was not even anxious, but was sleeping sadly in death. Can this be the Bible? Can this be the book I have been reading from childhood? Having turned it over to make sure that it was my own very Bible, I rejoiced in the sight of the well-known volume, read again to make sure of the words, then closed the book in wonder, in peace, and joy. I had been in darkness, but now was light in the Lord; the darkness passed, and, the true light now shining, the saving righteousness of Christ now my own. From that hour I could say, ‘Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever for they are the rejoicing of my heart.’” Such had been the experience of this servant of the Lord, and it has been the experience of many besides. The Holy Spirit has made the Word effectual to their salvation.

The preaching of the Word has also been a means for this end. It was for this end that the Saviour commanded His disciples to go into all the

world and to preach the Gospel to every creature. The Gospel must be preached in order that sinners may repent, believe, and be saved. “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?” The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners. It was while Peter preached the Word that the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand souls were added to the Church. This was the means that the Apostle Paul used for bringing souls to Christ – the preaching of the Word. “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” His exhortation to Timothy was to preach the Word. Let those then who profess to be the servants of Christ in the world prayerfully and faithfully preach the Word to the people, and they shall find out in the end of the day that their labours have not been in vain in the Lord.

The public as well as the private means of grace have been used by the Lord for bringing souls to Himself. The church – the house of God, has proved to be the spiritual birth-place of many a soul, and the Sabbath day their spiritual birthday. It was a heaven-born soul who said, “I was born into this world on a Sabbath day. I was born again on a Sabbath day, and I hope I shall enter glory on a Sabbath day.” James Macdonald, the excellent Catechist of Reay, said, “I knew a young man standing in the doorway of the church at Halkirk, hearing the godly Mr Sutherland, and the Holy Ghost sent the sermon right over the people’s heads into the heart of the lad.” That lad was himself, and that day was a Sabbath day.

#### **IV. The Result of this Change**

It bears fruit in the life. Being born of the Spirit, believers are made partakers of, and possess, His spiritual nature, and this bears fruit in their lives. The new life in the soul cannot be hid. It must find an outlet, and it will exercise itself in a different way from that of the natural life. It will be a life of faith in, and a life of obedience to Jesus Christ. The spiritual change that does not result in bringing the subjects thereof into implicit obedience to Jesus Christ in all things is anything but spiritual. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” It has been well said, “A man’s life is always

more forcible than his speech: when men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as pounds and his words as pence. If his life and his doctrines disagree, the mass of lookers-on accept his practice, and reject his preaching. A man may know a good deal about the truth, and yet be a very damaging witness on its behalf because he is no credit to it." Those who are "born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth, and abideth for ever," follow Christ, and adhere to His Word, and those who do so must show their decision for the truth by the sacrifices they are prepared to make. This is undoubtedly the most efficient as well as the most trying method. But at the same time they should be ready to give up anything and everything for the sake of the principles which they have expressed, and be prepared, if need be, to offend their best supporters and alienate their warmest friends, sooner than belie their consciences. "Behold we have forsaken all and followed Thee."

The fruit of this change will be quite contrary to the works of the flesh. The works of the flesh are manifest, and the works of the Spirit of God in the soul ought to be as manifest. This change results in the soul being brought to live a new life, to walk in new ways, to make up with new associations, to frequent those places to which he was once an utter stranger – a Throne of Grace as well as all the means of grace, to engage in those exercises which once he simply hated, but in which he now takes the greatest delight. Wherever such marks as those appear, they are in our opinion the surest marks of the soul having undergone a saving change.

The fruit will be pleasing and profitable to believing souls themselves. As new-born babes they desire the sincere milk of the Word, and they delight therein and feed thereon. "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." As they have been made partakers of a new nature and a new life, so now, they seek not their pleasures where the wicked find them. No, they seek new fountains of pleasure, and they find them in God. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." "All my springs are in Thee." Such as speak thus give all the clearest evidence, that they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Lastly, the fruit will be God-glorifying. The heaven-born soul consecrates itself to the Lord forthwith, and then gives itself to the Church so that the Lord may be glorified. "And this they did not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the

will of God.” Souls born of the Spirit of God live not unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them, and rose again. To them to live is Christ, and the life they live in the flesh is a life that seeks to honour and glorify God. In all that they do, and say, they have this in view. And in seeking to glorify Him, they have the grace that enables them to say – “Not unto us, not unto us, but to Thy name be the glory.” □

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“The change which our Lord here declares needful to salvation is evidently no slight or superficial one. It is not merely reformation, or amendment, or moral change, or outward alteration of life. It is a thorough change of heart, will, and character. It is a resurrection. It is a new creation. It is a passing from death to life. It is the implanting in our dead hearts of a new principle from above. It is the calling into existence of a new creature, with a new nature, new habits of life, new tastes, new desires, new appetites, new judgments, new opinions, new hopes, and new fears. All this, and nothing less than this is implied, when our Lord declares that we all need a ‘new birth.’”

– J.C. Ryle

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## **Christian Doctrines Explained: 1. The Glory of God**

*(A series of articles based on the Shorter Catechism. The Catechism, which is familiar to so many of us, covers the whole range of the Bible’s teaching, dealing with God, Jesus Christ, man’s salvation and his duty. These articles endeavour to explain the key doctrines of the Christian faith in a brief and simple way.)*

Q.1. *What is the chief end of man?*

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

**H**ave you ever given any thought to the glory of God? If we are to truly understand anything about our existence then we must begin by reflecting upon this truth. It is very important. Anything to do with God is significant but the glory of God refers to the honour of His Name, to His great excellency and renown. God is all-glorious in His being and in all His works – in what He is and in what He does.

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## **Creation**

The creation in which we live and of which we are a part reveals the glory of God. When you gaze at the skies in the daytime or at night, what do you see? Of course you see the sun and the stars but you should see something more than that. King David in the Bible did. He exclaimed: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa.19:1). His thought was, How great and mighty God must be, that He made all these splendid things!

## **Providence**

Christians often speak of ‘providence’. By this they mean that God is intimately involved with His creation, sustaining it and directing all that occurs within it. Although the events of history are often mysterious and only dimly understood by us, they do in fact reveal God’s glory. In the end evil men do not triumph: the Lord punishes their sin. At length good men prosper: their righteousness is rewarded. In eternity all the books will be balanced.

## **Chief End**

The welfare of our soul and our true happiness is bound up with the truth of the glory of God. What we need to understand is that, just as it is God’s purpose to glorify Himself in all that He does, so it is our purpose to glorify God in all that we do. That is why man was made in the beginning. It was his chief end or goal to bring honour to his Maker. God made man upright and able and willing to do this.

Sin has made us self-centred and self-seeking. Its delights attract us but always leave us disappointed in the end. The more we try the less happy we are. We should remember that the pleasures of sin are only “for a season” (Heb.11:25). It is in worshipping, serving and glorifying God alone that we can find true enjoyment and contentment.

## **Redemption**

Nothing brings such glory to God as the salvation of sinners and the building of the church on the one sure foundation, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. In this work God’s mercy and grace are seen as well as His power and justice. No wonder that, after he was converted, Paul’s prayer was, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal.6:14). His joy was to preach and to live by “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Tim.1:11). May our desire be the same, and may we enjoy the blessing of God in serving Him, “to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom.11:36). □

## **The Reformation in Scotland: 1. The Beginning**

*(It is a true saying that if we forget our history then we will be in grave danger of repeating it. We can all profit from the study of how God dealt graciously with our nation in times past, especially at the time of the great Reformation under John Knox and other faithful men of God. The articles in this series are taken from "History of the Church of Scotland" by William M. Hetherington, first published in 1842.)*

The great schism which happened in the Church of Rome, through the contentions of rival popes, gave occasion, as is well known, to those who had secretly disapproved of papal corruption, of assailing Popery more openly than before, and more boldly demanding some measure of reformation. Wickliffe, the morning star of the Reformation, began then openly both to censure the abuses of the Church of Rome, and to proclaim those great doctrines of Christianity which it had been the policy of that corrupt Church to conceal. It might have been expected that his doctrines would find a ready reception among the adherents of the Culdees of Scotland, if any were still remaining; and accordingly we find, that John Resby, an Englishman, and a scholar of Wickcliffe's, was condemned for maintaining that the Pope was not the vicar of Christ, and that no man of a wicked life ought to be acknowledged Pope. For holding and teaching these opinions, with certain others deemed also heretical, he was burned to death in the year 1407. It would appear that this cruel deed had for a time prevented at least the open avowal of similar doctrines in Scotland; as the next victim to Popish tyranny was found at a distance of twenty-five years. This victim was Paul Craw, a Bohemian, and a follower of John Huss. It does not appear on what account he had come to Scotland; but having begun to disseminate the opinions of the Bohemian reformer, he was laid hold of by the instigation of Henry Wardlaw, bishop of St Andrews, convicted of denying the doctrines of substantiation, auricular confession, and praying to saints, then handed over to the secular powers, and by them committed to the flames, at St Andrews, in the year 1432. That he might not at the stake promulgate his opinions among the spectators by his last dying declaration, his destroyers adopted the barbarous policy of forcing a ball of brass into his mouth, then gazing, as they thought, in safety on the agonies of the voiceless sufferer.

The Popish clergy seem to have thought their triumph complete, and themselves at liberty to prosecute with even increased energy their

schemes of aggrandisement. One method in which this was prosecuted deserves to be particularly noticed, as intimately connected with a subject to which we shall have repeated occasion to refer in the course of this work, viz. the subject of patronage. It has not been exactly ascertained at what time the system of lay patronage was introduced into Scotland. The late Dr M'Crie, whose opinions on all matters of Church History are of the very highest authority, held that it could not have been introduced before the tenth century. The first mention of Scottish patronage and presentations with which we are acquainted occurs in the Book of Laws of Malcolm II., who ascended the throne in the year 1004; and although the critical acumen of Lord Hailes has succeeded in casting considerable doubt upon the genuine antiquity of these laws, this much may at least be said, that no claim more ancient can be pretended for the assumed right of patronage in Scotland, at the same time that by these laws the right of deciding respecting "the advocacion of kirks and the right of patronage," pertains to the jurisdiction of the Church. For a time, it would appear, the Scottish clergy followed the usual policy of the papal Church, holding every inducement to men to bequeath large sums for the erection and endowment of churches, monasteries, etc., as the best mode of securing their salvation; and allowing to such donors, and subsequently to their heirs, the right of presenting to the benefices thus bequeathed. But when they had obtained a very large proportion of the wealth of the kingdom into their own possession, the crafty churchmen became anxious to resume the patronages into their own hands; and putting the same machinery of superstition again to work, they prevailed on the lay patrons to resign the right of presentation to the Church, by annexing it, as it was called, to bishoprics, abbacies, priories, and other religious houses. The benefices thus annexed or appropriated were termed patrimonial, and were no longer subject to the patronage of laymen. The civil power became at length alarmed at the prospect of the lands and wealth of the kingdom being thus placed in the hands of a body of men, who were not only beyond the control of the civil law, but were in fact the subjects of a foreign power. An attempt was therefore made to check this practice of annexation, by a statute in the reign of James III., in the year 1471; but so effectual had the schemes of the clergy been, that at the period of the Reformation there were in Scotland only two hundred and sixty-two non-appropriated benefices out of the whole number, consisting of about nine hundred and forty. Even of these two hundred and sixty-two, a considerable number,

though not annexed, were in the hands of bishops, abbots, and the heads of other religious houses; so that the crafty and avaricious Popish clergy might deem themselves secure, being possessed of more than half the wealth of the kingdom, and that, too, placed beyond the power of any control, except that of an appeal to Rome,—a danger which they might well regard as not very formidable.

But while the priesthood were thus strenuously endeavouring to consolidate their power, and to increase their splendour, obtaining the erection of an archbishopric, first at St Andrews, and then at Glasgow, they did not seem to be aware that the spirit of religious reformation was diffusing itself silently but rapidly throughout the kingdom, especially in the western districts of Kyle, Carrick, and Cunningham. At length they began to take alarm, and, shaking off their golden dreams, they prepared to crush their hated antagonists. Robert Blacater, the first archbishop of Glasgow, prevailed on James IV. to summon before the great council about thirty persons, male and female, natives mostly of the above-named western districts; the chief of whom were George Campbell of Cessnock, Adam Reid of Barskimming, John Campbell of Newmills, Andrew Schaw of Polkemmet, and the Ladies of Stair and Polkellie. This memorable trial of the Lollards of Kyle, as they were opprobriously termed, took place in the year 1494. The articles which they were accused of holding have been recorded both by Knox and Spotswood with little variation, except that Knox's account is rather more full than the other. Their main tenor is chiefly in condemnation of the worship of the Virgin Mary, of saints, relics, images, and the mass; and also of the various arrogant pretensions and licentious abuses of the prelates and the priesthood, without any very clear statement of the leading doctrines of pure Christianity. It appears, indeed, exceedingly probable, that the Lollards of Kyle did little more than revive the old contest between the Culdees and the prelates; and that the designation given to them by their popish enemies was not in consequence of their having actually imbibed the tenets of Lollard the Waldensian, but that it was applied to them partly as a term of reproach, and partly with a view to prejudice their cause. For it has always been the policy of those who were engaged in persecuting religion, to slander, misrepresent, and affix to it a calumnious name, and then to assail it under this maliciously-imposed disguise. Few men have ever persecuted religion avowedly as such; but how often have they called religion fanaticism, and then persecuted its adherents under the calumnious designation of fanatics! □

## **Precious Psalms: 1. The Blessed Man**

(A series focussing on texts taken from each of the psalms in turn.)

*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”* (Psalm 1:1,2)

**W**hat great variety is to be found in our human race! The nations differ in their physical appearance and culture. Individuals display contrasting temperaments and habits. Lifestyles vary from the sober to the outrageous, with most of mankind fitting somewhere in between. We like to pass judgment upon people according to our scale of what is good or bad. We often look disapprovingly upon others, whilst always approving ourselves.

### **Two Sorts Only**

In God’s sight there are two sorts of people in this world and two *only*. Many different names are used in the Bible to describe them but the division is always clear. In this psalm they are spoken of as “the ungodly” and “the righteous”. The former are cursed by God and the latter are blessed. It is as stark and simple as that.

### **Difference**

There is a vast difference between being blessed and being cursed. These are *opposites*. It is the difference between happiness and misery, salvation and loss, heaven and hell. The ungodly shall not stand in the day of judgment; their way shall “perish” (vv.5,6). Surely a wise man does not wish to be under the curse of God? Yet that is where we are as a result of the fall and our failure to keep the ten commandments.

### **Word of God**

The special thing we learn here about the blessed man is his love for the Word of God (v.2). He is always reading it and thinking about it. More than that, he *walks* in it. He applies it to his own life, avoiding sin and pursuing holiness. He is fruitful in good works. The blessing of the Lord is upon him.

Do *you* love the Bible? It is the source of our knowledge about God and ourselves. Above all it shows us how we may escape the wrath of God against sin – through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. □

## **For Young People: *Birds of the Bible***

*(These articles were first published in "The Explorer", our denomination's youth magazine)*

### **1. *The Peacock – Bird of Creation***

*"Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks?" (Job 39:13)*

Are you interested in the world in which you live – the world which God made? The Bible has a lot to say about its landscapes, climates, plants and animals. In this series we shall look at some of the birds of the Bible and discover what important spiritual truths they teach us. There is so much we can learn.

There are 9,000 bird species in our world today. They are found everywhere from the icy waters and wastes of the polar regions to the burning deserts of the tropics. On open seas, high mountains and dusty plains, in dense forests and even in our towns and cities, you will be sure to find birds of one kind or another.

Birds range in size from tiny humming-birds which would fit inside a matchbox to great albatrosses with their huge wingspans. The ostrich is the largest of all the birds, much taller and heavier than we are. Though flightless it can run at speed even with a man upon its back!

The Bible tells us that God made birds on the fifth day of creation (Gen.1:20,21). The different sorts were kept alive in the ark at the time of the Flood (Gen.7:14,15) so that they could fill the earth again when the waters returned.

You have no doubt heard of the theory of evolution. This is the idea that everything, including living things, was not created by God but came about by chance, beginning with a 'big bang' billions of years ago. Simple forms of life developed slowly into complex ones. This idea says that birds evolved from the reptiles known as dinosaurs. The scales covering their bodies 'frayed out' and became feathers! A creature named *Archaeopteryx* is supposed to be a link between reptiles and birds, but the fossils show that it was simply a large, perching bird with feathers like those of modern species.

Feathers are a remarkable evidence of creation. Have you ever picked up a fallen wing feather and looked at it closely? It is so wonderfully suited to flying. You will notice the stem or quill. It is hollow and yet strong. Then you will see the branches or 'barbs' on

either side of the stem. If you had a magnifying glass you would see that there are even smaller branches or ‘barbules’ which ‘lock’ the barbs of the feather together. This makes a flat, light, flexible yet robust structure, ideal for flapping. When a bird ‘preens’ its feathers with its beak it is ‘relocking’ any barbs which have separated during flying.

Without such a perfect design feathers would be useless for flight. But think too of the amazing variety in the size, shape and colour of feathers. The plumage of some birds is spectacular and there is none more beautiful than the peacock.

Peacocks are a type of pheasant. They have always been highly valued. King Solomon's wealth included peacocks (1Kings 10:22). Alexander the Great passed a law that they must not be killed. Hindus sadly even worship them. The Romans introduced peacocks to our country and you will see them in parks and zoos. We should really call these birds ‘peafowl’, for it is only the male (peacock) which has feathers which display like a fan; the female (peahen) is dull and drab by comparison.

Charles Darwin, the man who made the theory of evolution popular, wrote something very interesting. He said: “The sight of a peacock’s tail, whenever I gaze at it, makes me sick!” You see, he could not explain it by his theory. Why should the peacock have such extraordinary feathers, when other birds survive very well without them? With their brilliant colours they are purely decorative, for the peacock rarely flies. The ‘eye’ patterns especially are astoundingly complex designs, which could never have happened by chance. There is only one explanation for the peacock – and every other creature: *God made them!* “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches” (Psa.104:24). □

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Let all the creatures praise the name  
of our almighty Lord:  
For he commanded, and they were  
created by his word.  
He also, for all times to come,  
hath them establish’d sure;  
He hath appointed them a law,  
which ever shall endure.

*Metrical Psalm 148:5,6 (First Version)*

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## Gàidhlig: *Suil air 'ais* (Seonaidh Mac 'ill Eathainn)

Nach biodh e iomchuidh aig toiseach bliadhna eile gum bitheamaid a toirt sùil air ais air maitheas an Tighearna na 'ur beatha agus a' cheisd a chuir rinn fhìn; dè am fianais a tha mise a cuir fa chomhair an t-sàoghail mun cuairt orm? Tha e cho cudromach gum biodh sluagh an Tighearna a' beachdachadh air a' chuspair seo agus a bhi cuir an cèill na nithean tha'n Tighearna air a chuir rinn de shaoibhreas a laimh rè na bliadhna a' chaidh. Thuirt an salmaidh aig aon àm: "Is lionmhor, a Thighearna mo Dhia, na nithean a'rinn thu! t-oibre iongantach agus do smuaintean d'ar taobh-ne, cha'n eil e an comas a' chuir sìos an òrdugh dhuit: nochdainn agus chuirinn an cèill iad, ach tha iad na's lìonmhoire na gun gabh iad àireamh." (Salm 40:5)

Nach sàoil thu fhèin a' charaid gur ann a bhiodh e fèumail dhuinn uile coimhead air ais air na beannachdan a shealbhaich sinn ann an iomadh dòigh. Gun cuimhnicheamaid air a thròcairean dha ur' taobh gach latha agus mar a' chùm e suas sinn le ghràs agus sin aig amannan agus ar' sùil air clàonadh bhuaithe. Bhiodh e ceart gum biodh an sàoghal mun cuairt oirnn ri faicinn gur ann leis sinn; gur sinn a chlànn agus gu bheil e airidh air a chlànn a bhi ga mholadh.

Seall a rithist mar a chunnaic an salmaidh fheum air a bhi moladh an Tighearna:

“O m’anam, beannaich thusa nis  
an Dia Iehòbhah mòr:

Moladh gach nì an taobh stigh dhìom  
ainm nàomha mar is còir.” (Salm 103:1)

Anns an t-sàoghal anns a bheil sinn, tha iomadh nì cho tarraingeach eadhon don Chrìosdaidh, ach feumaidh sinn a' thuigsinn gu bheil Dia na neart dhuinn agus gur annsan a dh'fhèumas sinne 'ur dòchas a chuir. Is è acair 'ur n'anam agus 'ur beatha agus nach math gu bheil an Tighearna Ìosa Crìosd ag radh: “Chan fhàg, agus cha trèig mi am feasd thu.” (Eabhruidhich 13:5)

Tha e còmhla rinn agus na 'ur cridhe. Air an aobhar sin fàodaidh sinn a' radh: “Gun urrainn mì na h-uile nithean a' dheanamh tre Chrìosd a' neartaicheas mì.” Carson, mar sin, nach eil sinn a' cumail 'ur sùil air cuspair ur gàoil agus a' deanamh moladh air, agus ga mheas fa chomhair an t-sàoghail mar chuspair 'ur gàoil. Gun rodh sinn ri sìor-tharruing dlùth ris an Tighearna agus ri foghlum bhuaithe, tre fhacal, gu bheil am milis agus an searbh air a' chuir na 'ur cupan agus gum biodh e iomchuidh do gach àon bhi strìochdte ri rùn an Tighearna na Fhreasdal dhuinn.

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Gun ro gach àon againn ri coimhead air adhart anns a' bhliadhna seo, agus 'ur n'amas air gum biodh 'ur 'n imeachd nas dlùithe ris an Tighearna. Gum biodh sinn a' cleachdadh barrachd ùine air slighe na h-ùrnaigh aig caithir gràis chum gu faiceamaid 'ur seasamh agus ur fiannuis is gum biodh sinn ag àireamh a' mhor-bheanachdann mar bu chòir dhuinn.

Cuimhnicheamaid mar a tha leabhar aighearr nan ceist ga chuir: "Ciod is crìoch àraidh do'n duine? Is I crìoch àraidh an duine, Dia a' ghlòrachadh, agus a' mhealtainn gu sìorraidh." □

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## **Congregational News**

**W**elcome to the first issue of our new magazine. God willing *Grace & Truth* will be published six times a year, for the first Sabbath in January, March, May, July, September and November. We hope that you will enjoy the magazine, whether your worship with us or elsewhere. If you do not attend church then we invite you to join with us.

### **Services**

The sermons preached at our services are recorded and are available. You can download them at our website or you can order them in CD or tape format. Please contact the minister for further details.

### **Fellowships**

We hold a fellowship in the manse after the evening service on the second Sabbath of each month, beginning at 8.00pm. Everyone is welcome. The subject for this year, the Lord willing, is 'The Worship of God'.

### **Website**

Our website provides information about our congregation, including our beliefs, form of worship and form of government. There are articles of interest for all ages and a page containing the metrical psalms and tunes for singing. The site is at: [www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk](http://www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk)

### **Prayer**

Please remember in prayer those connected with the congregation who are recovering from treatment in hospital, facing the prospect of surgery or confined to their own homes. May our gracious God bless us in all our afflictions, that we may learn His statutes (Psa.119:71). □

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*Services:*

Sabbath: 12.00noon; 6.00pm

Wednesday: 7.30pm

Communions: 2nd Sabbath in April and September

All services are held in the church at Bayhead.

*Website:* [www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk](http://www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk)

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