

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. 3 No. 1

January-February 2010

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Minister's Message: *Looking Forward*

Another year has arrived and in the Lord's goodness we have been spared to see its beginning. What this year will contain is known only to God. It is a solemn thought that there may be those who read these pages who will not see the end of 2010; it could be any of us.

Doubtless you have made certain plans for the weeks and months ahead, as we are all bound to. Sadly we have the tendency to do this in our own strength. In our pride we purpose to do many things and to accomplish our ambitions – but in our folly we do not take God into our reckoning!

The Bible addresses this sinful attitude. To those who say, "To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain," it says: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." We ought to say, "*If the Lord will*, we shall live, and do this, or that" (Jam.4:13-15). It is simply a fact that our times are in God's hand and what happens in our lives is subject to His providence.

As you look forward what are your great hopes for this new year? There may be some who have little hope. Their lives are full of trouble of one sort or another. Work is a drudge. Sickness is a worry. Family life is fraught. Time for relaxation is rarely found. If they have a hope it is that a better society might be created one day. In a year when a general election is due they may pin their hopes upon politicians. They do not consider that the problem that must first be dealt with is found within ourselves.

Most of us have rather better circumstances. We find our work fulfilling. We have a measure of health and strength. We enjoy the company of those who love us. We have abundant opportunities for leisure. Yet despite these good things, none of which we deserve, many are not content, especially in a time of recession. In a year when the economy is expected to recover their hope is that they will have an even greater abundance of possessions. They live in neglect of God, giving no thought to death and eternity.

There are those whose confidence is in their religion, whatever it might be. It carries them through the bad times and makes them thankful in the good times. Strangely *what* people believe does not seem to matter so much as *that* they believe: our religion may be anything so long as it gives us some peace and hope. In a year when a papal visit is expected the hope of many is that such a powerful figure will help put the world to rights.

If we think for a moment we will easily see the folly of these attitudes: ignoring the state of our own hearts, making light of our latter end and trusting in any sort of religion we please. Should we not be seeking to know the *truth* about ourselves, our futures and our God?

Scripture teaches us that it is *sin* that has brought sadness, frustration and confusion into our world. Our rebellion against God has robbed us of satisfaction of soul, a sense of purpose and true hope. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Saviour for the guilty and hell-deserving. He lay down His righteous life at Calvary to bear away the sins of many. Those who do not know Him are lost, “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph.2:12). But those who have trusted in Him, repenting of their sins, have “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2Thess.2:16). They have every reason to look forward. May you be among them! □

Helps to Devotion (Rev. James Smith)

WISDOM. *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”* (Ephesians 1:17)

This is a part of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians, in which he approaches the Most High as the God of Jesus and the glorious Father. How sweet it is to view God as our God because the God of Jesus!—realising that we are one in him, and sharing with him in all the privileges of the kingdom! God is the fountain of glory, as well as the fountain of grace; the God of Jesus, and our God in him. For the sake of Jesus, and in honour of his work, he gives the Holy Spirit, to reveal Christ to the hearts of his people, and make them wise unto salvation. And that blessed Spirit makes known Christ more fully to the saints; unfolding the glories of his person, the depth of his love, the riches of his grace, the vastness of his merit, the tenderness of his sympathy, the prevalence of his intercession, and his glorious coming and kingdom. O our God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, give unto us, we pray thee, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ! O for the Spirit to make us wise—wise to avoid sin, wise to detect error, wise to do thy will, wise to win souls, and wise to act so in life that we shall not be pained with regrets on our dying bed! O for the Spirit to reveal Christ to us more fully, more clearly, more powerfully; that we may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death! O to know Christ by the Spirit’s teaching as God’s Son, as my Saviour, as the Church’s Head, and as the Judge of all! Spirit of wisdom, reveal Jesus to me this day, and enable me to rejoice in him! □

Parables of Jesus: 13. The Net Cast into the Sea

(Please read Matthew 13:47-50)

We can imagine how this parable would have struck a chord with the disciples. Simon Peter and Andrew were fishing on the sea of Galilee when Jesus called, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt.4:19). Jesus called James and John while they were mending their nets (Matt.4:21). How is God’s kingdom like making a catch of fish?

Casting

A fisherman first prepares his net, checking that there are no loose knots or weak threads. Then he launches his boat and sails to where the shoals of fish are most likely to be found. He drops the net over the vessel’s side and waits patiently. There is no more he can do.

The gospel is truly good news from God and unlike any message which comes from man there are no faults in it. But men must hear it or it can do them no good. It is the work of ministers to cast the gospel net, preaching Christ crucified and inviting sinners to believe upon Him. This they must do, not simply where they think a catch might be made, but everywhere. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Gathering

In time fish are trapped in the net. Perhaps the fisherman hopes to catch plenty of one species which will fetch a good price. However it is not within his power to determine what type of fish will enter his net.

When a sermon is preached it is our heart’s desire and prayer to God that people will be saved under it (Rom.10:1). We look for the fruits of conversion and for professions of faith. If what ministers and elders see in a person is consistent with a true Christian character then that person will be given membership in Christ’s church on earth.

Sorting

After the net has been filled it is brought to shore. Now the catch is closely examined. Expert eyes divide up the mass of different shapes and sizes of fish into just two sorts: the valuable which are kept and the worthless which are thrown away.

A judgment of mankind is coming quickly. The Lord Jesus Christ will make the final separation. There will be no mistakes. Some who were

fine-looking may be rejected, being bad inside. On the other hand, some who looked poor, like fish with scales missing and fins tattered, will be accepted, for they were *sound* inside. Remember, “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom.9:6).

Weeping

The fish which are discarded are left to rot. They are destroyed and soon forgotten. There are many of them.

The holy angels will carry out the verdict of Christ. Friend, if you do not forsake your sin and seek God’s forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, then the angels will bear you away to the fires of hell to be punished forever. Oh, flee the place of awful weeping by trusting Christ! □

Sermon: To Know More of Christ (Rev. Jonathan R. Anderson)

(The author was a minister in Glasgow from 1834 until his death in 1859. This sermon was delivered to his congregation on 20th February 1853. Anderson also preached frequently in Caithness and Sutherland as the content of the final paragraph of the sermon indicates.)

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 3:12-14

The enemies of Christ are often made the unwitting instruments of advancing the cause which they seek to hinder, and of establishing that truth which they labour to subvert. The attempts of false teachers to seduce the believing brethren at Philippi gave the Apostle, writing under the Spirit of truth, an occasion for setting forth what at that time, and in all subsequent ages, was calculated not only to defeat their designs, but also eminently to further the cause of Christ. We find him setting forth, in very clear and glowing terms, what he knew in his own case *nature* is: what advantage it possesses, and what therefore it is able to do, and this is succeeded by an exceedingly animated description of the spirit of that religion that stands *opposed* to what is *natural*, and this is also illustrated

in his own case. The delineation of character which he thus gives, is so bright, and the colouring is so lovely and attractive, that, in the judgment of the Apostle, there was a possibility that some might think of him more highly than they ought to think: and accordingly, with his characteristic modesty, he is led to throw in some modification of what he had advanced.

Verse 12. The basis upon which, what the Apostle here sets forth, is made to rest, is the account given, in the immediately preceding verses, of his spirit and character and deportment as a believer in Christ. It will not be easy for us at a glance, to catch even the prominent features of the character, which the Apostle gives of himself. We have on two successive occasions, attempted to consider it in detail; and the result of our attempts, it is to be hoped, has been to make us feel that we know nothing as yet, as we ought to know it. If it be so difficult to enter into, and apprehend the description the Apostle gives of himself, when you are noticing it purposely, and in detail: it will be much more difficult to seize even upon the details of that description, and yet if we have not some apprehension of it, we shall be in no condition to apprehend what he here says. He looks back upon the state in which he was naturally, surveys all the accomplishments, with which he was adorned, takes into account all the advantages which the Jewish religion offered to him; and certainly of all the conditions which were then presented to natural men, none will compare with that at which Paul looked. And he freely avows that these things were entitled to be regarded, in certain points of view, as gain. He confesses, that at one period of his life, in his own estimation, they were of this nature: but *grace* had wrought a marvellous *change*, so marvellous that the things he was wont to count as gain, he now reckoned loss, and he did so, “for Christ.” He had been put to the proof whether this estimation he made was sincere, and to what extent it influenced his mind and his conduct. He stood the test nobly, and actually suffered the loss of all things still for Christ, “that he might win Him.”

Nor did he make this sacrifice blindly or rashly, nor was he like many who take up a position in religion and hold out a profession, but when they are questioned cannot give any satisfactory account of themselves. The Apostle follows up the account of the sacrifices he made, by telling us why it was he made these sacrifices. Verses 8 & 9: “For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” *That* you may take as an example of himself in general; but not satisfied with this general description of the line of conduct he pursued, and the sacrifices he had made, he plunges into the depths involved in this general account,

and referring to his desire to know Christ as his starting point, he goes on: the truth in his soul, like chariot wheels, becoming more rapid as he proceeds. Verses 10 & 11: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Now, such *is* the man, such is the *position* of the man, and such is the *character* and *professions* of the man that says, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." What then does he do?

"But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." We are not to understand him, as, in the least degree, calling back anything that he had previously advanced regarding himself, and his attainments. We are not to understand him as actuated by that false humility, which leads a person to deny what grace has wrought for him, when its evidence it distinctly before him, supported by that which alone upholds the soul that receives it,—the testimony of God made available by the power of His Spirit shining in the soul. We are to understand the Apostle simply as intimating that whatever he was, whatever he had preached, and whatever he had now, he was not to be understood as looking back upon it, for the purpose of making a Saviour of it, of resting his confidence in it, and of pleading it before God, as the foundation on which he was to be accepted of Him, and blessed by Him. And it is to be understood too as intimating that whatever it was, the Apostle looked rather to what he was not, than to what he was; rather to what he knew not, than to what he knew; rather to what he experienced not, than to what he experienced; rather to what he had not attained than to what he had attained, "I follow after," and then follows a remarkable "if"—a particle which the Apostle has more than once made use of in this passage. He counted all things but loss, if only he could win Christ. He now follows after: "If that I may apprehend." He here intimates who it was, that began the work of grace. It was not the Apostle, but Him from whom all good comes; and it began with Him from whom all good comes, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Mediator between God and man. Who having done the work of Mediator for sinners, is now in circumstances to do the work of Mediator in sinners,—the latter work being the fruit of that which preceded it. Now, as Mediator, Jesus Christ hath influence with the Father, in His intercession. "Him the Father heareth always." Jesus Christ hath the promise of the Holy Ghost for His people. The promise He pleads: and Jesus Christ sends the Holy Ghost in the name of Jesus Christ, and for the accomplishment in the soul of the great ends of His death. The Holy Ghost makes choice of the word of the truth of the gospel in carrying forward the work on which He is sent,

and on which He comes: and it is in, and by Him, that Jesus Christ is to be considered as having apprehended the Apostle. He laid hold of him far from God and far from righteousness, having no knowledge whatever of his condition, no right uptaking of its nature: and certainly the farthest possible from being ashamed of what he was, and what he had done. He had not come to himself until he was apprehended by Christ Jesus. It is not *until* this apprehension takes place, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that a sinner can be said properly to come to himself. He then discovers somewhat of his sinful estate, and he sees the misery to which he is exposed: his eye affects his heart, and affects his heart with shame, with grief, with self-loathing, and repentance is wrought in the soul. In the spirit of repentance he says, "I will arise and to unto my Father." The same mediation through which the Holy Ghost comes to apprehend the sinner, opens the way, by which the apprehended sinner finds his way back to the fountain of life. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. The sinner coming back in the way of repentance, and having faith granted in this way, must have communion with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ in this way. A penitent sinner can never rest, till he is in the bosom of the blessed God, folded in the arms of Jesus Christ. He there hears the Father say, "this, my son was lost, but is found." My beloved people, know ye what this is? This is *heaven upon earth*. Closely connected with this, and inseparable from it, is the soul's communion with His Son Jesus Christ. How can the Father open His arms to receive such a culprit? How can He embrace him, in His love: His warm, satisfying, refreshing love? The reason is, His eye is upon the Lamb that hath been slain. How can the poor sinner venture so near the Divine majesty? How can such a vile reptile, who feels that his proper place is the lowest hell, and that he has done all he could to provoke God to destroy him: how can he venture to look the Father in the face? By faith he sees the Lamb of God; there the eye of the Father and the eye of the soul meet in one and the same place. The Father rests in the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. The penitent soul coming back to the Father, rests in the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. *There* is reconciliation. "Bring forth the fairest robe? (Luke xv. 22 to 24). Oh ye angels in the presence of God, well may you long for a sinner to be brought to repentance. It is a new feast to you. They have there some fresh discoveries made of the glory of the blessed God. "There is joy amongst the angels in heaven over one sinner brought to repentance." Oh, that this feast were theirs this day, ere the sun went down from the earth, and that there were joy in heaven over one sinner brought to repentance! For what is a poor sinner thus apprehended by Jesus Christ? He is apprehended by Him

that, as we have seen, and in the way we have shortly explained, he may be brought back unto God: may be reconciled to Him, and enter into the enjoyment of His favour: may be sanctified for Him, by being renewed after His image, and made to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness: that he may be a witness for Him in the world as long as he is kept there—that He is God, the God of salvation: that he may have a title to the eternal enjoyment of God in the heavenly world; and that, in due time, he may be taken to the full enjoyment of that inheritance; “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

Now, the Apostle had before his mind, the purpose for which the Lord Jesus had met him in the way: the way of rebellion, the way of persecuting his followers, the way of death,—and had by the work of His Spirit on his soul, in and through the word of the truth of the gospel, laid hold of him, apprehended him: and Jesus Christ, when He once got hold of him, would not let him go. No man will be able to pluck His people out of His hand. The poor creature sometimes in his lusts, his wandering eye roaming on forbidden objects, through carnality and unbelief prevailing in his soul, is struggling to get out of Christ’s hands: and the poor creature when the old nature prevails, and seems to get the upper hand, struggles as if it were in a sort of bondage to get out: and the soul is sometimes wounded with a great horror lest it should be so. We see this in Bunyan. The enemy pressed him sore to let Christ go away: he struggled long; but the temptation at last seemed to prevail, and he allowed the thought to pass his will, “Let Him go if He will.” Forthwith the tempter turned the accuser of the brethren—Now you are done for. Then came the sea of trouble. Bunyan was like to sink altogether into despair, when the good “Spirit of all grace,” who had apprehended Bunyan, let him see this. You may say, “let Him go if He will;” but Christ will *not* go. Bunyan got into this, and was made more than a conqueror. He conquered when he was conquered: he rose when he fell: he was taken in, when he was shut out. This is a hard lesson to learn. It is not easy for faith to get at it. It required a good deal of brokenness of spirit, to meddle with it. One requires to be clothed with humility, if he would look at this faithfulness of Jesus Christ to His own work. John x. 28-29: “I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” It was *thus* that the Apostle was brought, through grace, to be of one mind with the Lord Jesus; and it is when the soul is brought to be of one mind with the Lord Jesus, that evidence shines out, that there is salvation. People speak in our day about gospel, about faith, about Christian experience. What is it? What

is the gospel? What is faith? What is Christian experience? It is when, as with the great Apostle to the Gentiles, the soul is led to follow after, if that it might apprehend that for which it was apprehended of Jesus Christ. There you see the gospel in a living form: there you see faith in its precious fruits: there you see Christian experience in its holy character. There were two things therefore that influenced the Apostle in this pursuit. An humble estimate of anything he had yet done, felt, or enjoyed, and a discovery of what stretched out before him, which he desired to reach. Observe what we noticed once before—He is content to do all this “if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Nothing will satisfy the present generation, but full assurance. They cannot be content with anything short of the highest degree of confidence: the shew of their countenance testifies against them. Some men’s sins follow after them, but the sins of the present generation are going before them: they are open to all men; and if ever the history of the present time be written by a man raised up, and qualified by grace for the task, it will be written as one of the most mournful pages in the history of the church, so delusive are the notions that generally prevail, as if it were a time of great prosperity.

Verse 13. The Apostle is very instant in impressing the Philippians, and all to whom his epistle might come, with the fact, that he did not count himself to have apprehended; and this certainly was not merely with the view of justifying himself in his own eyes, or in that of the church, for he was evidently guided by the spirit of truth, thus to write, that he might be an example to all who should come after him. For, if such a man as Paul, writing this, guided by the spirit of inspiration, with all his eminent attainments, was yet constrained to speak in these lowly and modest terms, ill does it become ordinary men, to speak in any other way. We may regard it as a very high attainment indeed. Some will hardly come the length of using that language, and no one can warrantably use it, who does not come by it in the way in which the Apostle did. In our day, men will have members of churches to take their position by a leap. They fly high enough now. They will creep low enough, by and by,—while those now weeping will fly like eagles, up to heaven. There are to be met with, those whose professions are so high, who claim to have such eminent attainments, and such assurance of safety that ordinary Christians cannot keep in sight of them: yet they assail those who do not sail with them, they bark and bite at them. These people cannot bear a religion that strikes its roots deep into the soul: that is more careful about the *foundation* than the superstructure. No! men are in haste to be rich in what is called a Christian profession: they have not time to wait for the growth of a root. It is all top work. A fit mark for the thunder of Jehovah’s

wrath: His lightning will blast it, and lay it low. Why should people be so careful about using such language? Because it has in it the claim to be indeed apprehended of Jesus Christ: and this, after all, is the main point, and it is so regarded by all who are taught of God. It is that at which they are kept from first to last. Are they indeed apprehended of Jesus Christ? For a man to regard this as a settled point; to lay it upon the shelf, and not to take it down and examine it, is exceedingly perilous, to say the least of it. It is far better to have it before you, and to be obtaining increase of evidence to it. You that have any reason to lay in the claim to be apprehended of Jesus Christ, keep this question ever before you. Seek to have fresh light thrown upon it, and to have it more and more firmly established.

“But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” Not literally, for we have found him reviewing them. Not absolutely, but in relation to certain uses that might be made of things behind. He forgot them, or left them out of account, or bid them away, turning his mind from them. He bade the things which were behind away, in the sense of not looking at them, so as to have complacency in them, and boast himself of them, so as to make them a pillow on which he might lay down his head and take his ease: like a traveller at some lovely refreshing spot, who is induced to suspend his journey, and there fall asleep. He did not look at them, so as to be admired for them, or to admire himself in them. People’s knowledge, gifts, and attainments are often made a looking glass, at which they may stand and gaze on themselves as reflected in it, until they swell with vanity, and in something of the spirit of the proud king of Babylon, say secretly in their hearts, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty.” Paul, as it respects these various views, forgot the things behind; he treated them as if they did not belong to him, as if they had no existence, and reached forth to those which were before. He did not think so much of the knowledge which through grace he had obtained of the mysteries of the gospel, as of his ignorance of the knowledge which still required to be sought after. He did not dwell too much, upon the faith that had been in lively and active exercise upon the mystery of the gospel, whereby the truth was sucked into the soul,—as he thought of the scope that still lay before him for the exercise of faith, and the need there was for new enlarged increased actings of it in liveliness and vigour. He did not think so much of the love by which his heart had been warmed, wherein he rested on all the objects in which his faith rested, because of the spiritual beauty with which they shone, as well as because of the interests he had in them: as he thought of the love of Christ, and its constraining influence, which yet

remained to be put forth, and the vast fields he saw stretching out before him, wherein this love might have free scope to exercise itself for the glory of God and be satisfied. He did not think so much of the humility with which he had hitherto been adorned; he forgot that: he thought more of the humility that still lay before him. He thought not of the zeal he had manifested in the cause of Christ, but sought to come near to the fountain that he might have his zeal fed afresh. He forgot his past labours, and looked upon the work which was yet to be performed. He forgot the things which were behind, and reached forth towards those which were before.

Verse 14. He had a mark before him, to which all his plans, labours and sacrifices pointed, and in which they were to terminate and converge. What that was, was the end of his course. He had his eye upon the goal where his race was to terminate, where the prize was to be awarded to the successful runner. What that goal is, I need hardly state to you: looking at it in various points of view, it has various aspects. As to Paul's state, the mark, the goal to which he looked, towards which he advanced, and at which he laboured to arrive—was a full and *unchangeable confirmation* in the state of grace: so that he might never be moved away from that, into which he had been called in Christ Jesus. Looking at it in relation to his character, then the mark was, that point where his character reached full perfection: where his knowledge would not be dimmed by ignorance: where the light would shine clearly without a cloud: where faith would no longer have to battle with unbelief: where all fears would be removed, and faith perfected. Where it would burst forth into meridian splendour, and give place to the eternal enjoyment of its objects. Where love would be pure and perfect, where his charity would have not uncharitable elements mixing itself with it. Where all the graces of the Spirit would blossom forth in their beauty, power and perfection. Looking at it as to his state, it is his not being occupied with mere pledges or foretastes, the grapes of Eshcol, but passing the Jordan: it is his entering upon the good land at large; seeing the King in His palace, being welcomed by Him.—“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” And according to this invitation entering into the joy of his Lord. It is his seeing Him, as He is; and knowing Him, as he is known. His being a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out: his being led unto living fountains of waters: his having God to wipe away all tears from his eyes. His having his character vindicated from all aspersions, his being raised from troubles and sorrows, brought to the possession of joy, the joy of joys, everlasting joy. The joy of the Father's love, the joy of the Son's grace, the joy of the Spirit's love, the joy of the Triune Jehovah, the joy of all His perfections, in as far as he was capable of receiving them. Psalm xvi. 11:

“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy: at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

This is called the “prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Some thinking the mark is the same as the prize, have proposed to render the former clause, I press along the mark, applying the expression to a racecourse. But if I may venture to speak from the little knowledge I pretend to, of the language in which the Scripture was originally written, I am inclined to prefer our own version,—understanding by the mark, the point at which the race terminates, and by the prize, the reward that follows. It is called the prize of the high calling of God. It is not of works but of grace. It is not a prize gained by themselves. It is not gained by Paul’s labours, or sorrows, or sufferings, or wrestlings. No. It is the prize of God’s high calling. God has called, and but for that call there would be no prize. God has called in order to introduce to the prize: else there would be no call to meetness for, and title to the prize, and God conducts on to the attainment of the prize, so that from the beginning to the end, it is the prize of God’s high calling. Psalm lxxv. 1: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake.” It is the high calling of God in Christ: He calls in Christ. He purposed to call in Christ,—they are chosen in Him. He provided for their effectual calling in Christ Jesus. He laid down His life, so that the call might be theirs. He calls in Christ Jesus by His Spirit at the instance of His intercession. Thus they get a title to and meetness for, and at last reach the prize. So when they get at the mark, there they find the Triune Jehovah ready to receive them; and they get the prize as that of God’s high calling in Christ.

IN CONCLUSION.

1. See how consistent it is, in a Christian, to own and declare what through grace he is. It was so with the Apostle.

2. Learn that deep humility is a prominent feature of those who have been favoured with high attainments, in the life of God. If ever there were high attainments, they were those of the great Apostle of the Gentiles; yet see his deep humility, his genuine modesty. It will always be so with His people, throughout their whole course. Take Paul ten years after this, if he lived so long, he would with tenfold more force, declare what he here says. We have another aged disciple in the north of Scotland, and she too is exhibiting this feature of character, the nearer she comes to the fulness of blessedness, into which I trust she is being prepared to enter, the humbler and poorer she becomes, so that perhaps at last she will be brought to the point of spiritual zero, then she will rise to heaven and her sun go no more down. □

Christian Doctrines Explained: 13. Man in the State of Sin

Q.17. *Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?*

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Q.18. *Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?*

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q.19. *What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?*

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.

Man was created in the state of innocence. He had no practical knowledge of evil, was pure in heart and had no fault whatsoever. This changed radically when our first parents fell by their disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit. As we have seen previously, through Adam's original sin *all mankind* became sinners. We must look more closely at what this state of sin involves and at what accompanies it.

Guilt

The first part of original sin is *guilt*. To be guilty is to have broken a law and to be liable to its penalty. In his original sin Adam transgressed God's commandment and his sin is charged to all his natural descendants. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom.5:19). It is a serious thing to break the law of the land and to be faced with a fine or even jail. How much more serious it is to disobey the law of God and to contract a debt we cannot possibly pay and be threatened with the eternal prison house of hell!

Unrighteousness

The second part of original sin is *unrighteousness*. When Adam sinned he lost the righteousness he had when created. The powers of his soul – his mind, will and affections – once conformed to God and His law, were turned against God and devoted to the service of sin. The same is true of Adam's posterity. "This only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecc.7:29). Jew or Gentile, "There is

none righteous, no, not one” (Rom.3:10). The result? We are “filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness” – and much more besides (Rom.1:29-31).

Corruption

The third part of original sin is *corruption*. A stream of water that is polluted throughout indicates a *source* that is contaminated. When we view the human race we see that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:23). This universal bias towards evil is present from infancy, for David in repenting of his adultery says, “I was shapen in iniquity” (Psa.51:5). A corrupt nature and wicked heart has been conveyed to us from Adam.

All our actual deeds of sin and wickedness spring from this fountain of guilt, unrighteousness and corruption – our original sin.

Misery

Inseparably joined to man’s sinfulness is his misery. However happy men appear to be with their lot the reality is that as sinners we are in a state of condemnation and wrath. “He that believeth not is condemned already...the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:18,36). Man cannot now fulfil the purpose for which he was created; having in the fall lost his likeness to God he has lost his fellowship with God. The creation is cursed to him and his brief life is but vanity and frustration. His prospect is death and a woeful eternity. □

The Reformation in Scotland: 13. Convention of the Estates

(The articles in this series are taken from “History of the Church of Scotland” by William M. Hetherington, first published in 1842.)

The accession of the Hamiltons to the Protestant party gave a new turn to affairs. The Queen-regent immediately put in practice all her diplomatic arts to detach the Hamiltons from the Congregation if possible, or to sow jealousy and cause dissension among them. Failing in these endeavours, she issued declarations to the public, in which she strove to fix the charge of rebellion upon the Congregation generally, and, in particular, accused Lord James Stewart and the Duke of Chatelherault of aiming severally at the crown. These insidious declarations were met by counter declarations, in which the accused parties vindicated themselves from these charges, and exposed the course of treachery and cruelty by which her conduct had been all along characterised. This war of diplomacy,

however, was not likely to lead to any satisfactory result; and the Protestant lords began to prepare for more decisive measures. They assembled in Edinburgh on the 21st of October 1559, in such numbers as to form a convention of the estates of the kingdom, and entered upon a formal deliberation what ought to be done to rescue the country from such a state of civil dissension, and especially from the lawless outrages committed by the French troops in the Queen-regent's army.

In this convention of estates both Knox and Willock were requested to state their sentiments respecting the duty of subjects to their rulers in cases of oppression. Willock held that the power of rulers was limited both by reason and by Scripture, and they might be deprived of it upon valid grounds; implying, that he thought the conduct of the Queen-regent had passed these limits, and given to her subjects these valid grounds. Knox assented to Willock's opinions, and added, that the assembly might, with safe consciences, act upon it, provided they attended to the three following points:—First, that they did not suffer the misconduct of the Queen-regent to alienate their affections from their due allegiance to their sovereigns, Francis and Mary; second, that they were not actuated in the measure by private hatred or envy of the Queen-dowager, but by regard to the safety of the commonwealth; and, third, that any sentence which they might at this time pronounce should not preclude her re-admission to office, if she afterwards discovered sorrow for her conduct, and a disposition to submit to the advice of the estates of the realm. After this, the whole assembly, having severally delivered their opinions, did, by a solemn deed, suspend the Queen-dowager from her authority as Regent of the kingdom, until the meeting of a free parliament; and, at the same time, elected a council for the management of public affairs during this interval.

The conduct of Knox and Willock, in giving their opinions on this very important matter, has been very often and very severely censured. But those who have done so have in general displayed either an anxious desire to avail themselves of any opportunity of blackening the character and aspersing the motives of the Scottish reformer, or so little acquaintance with the great principles of civil and religious liberty, as to render their opinion of very slight value. Genuine Christianity, instead of impairing the worth of man's natural and civil rights and privileges, gives to them an infinitely increased importance, as the rights and privileges of the freemen of the Lord; rendering it absolutely impossible for a true Christian either to enslave others or to submit to be himself enslaved. And let it be ever most gratefully remembered, that to the Reformation we owe that true civilization which not only strikes off the fetters from the body, but cultivates

also the mind,—which not only liberates men from civil, mental, and moral thralldom, but also, at the same time, elevating them in the scale of existence, renders them worthy to be free. The mind of Knox was too deeply imbued with these great principles, and his heart too fearless, for him to hesitate in giving a frank avowal of his sentiments, be the danger and the obloquy thereby to be encountered what they might; and yet, let it be observed, that while he vindicated the right of subjects to protect themselves against unlawful despotism, both in this and in other instances, he carefully guarded against the opposite extreme, of encouraging subjects wantonly to violate the allegiance due to their sovereigns. But instead of farther attempting to vindicate Knox from the aspersions cast upon him by writers of a servile character, let us direct the attention of the reader to a noble passage in M'Crie's *Life of Knox*, where the principles of civil and religious liberty are explained and defended with great eloquence of language and power of reasoning. [See Thomas M'Crie, *Life of Knox*, pp.183-192] □

Precious Psalms: 13. Not Forgotten

“How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?” (Psalm 13:1)

What feeble minds we have! They do not seem able to retain the information we would like them to. Facts and figures, people and places, these are easily forgotten. And men may even forget God. The children of Ephraim did this. They “forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them” (Psa.78:9-11). It is a comforting thing for the believer to know then that God *never* forgets.

Trouble

David's experience as recorded in this psalm is a common one. The child of God is in trouble of one sort or another. He may suffer tragic bereavement like Job (Job 1:18,19). He may know great discomfort, like Paul with his thorn in the flesh (2Cor.12:7). He may endure abject poverty like Lazarus (Luke 16:20,21). Sometimes friends misunderstand or even depart. Enemies begin to gloat. Day after day the affliction continues and there is no relief.

Silence

These burdens are heavy enough. But there is a greater burden that the

Christian may have to bear. A *silent God*. Though we call upon the Lord in our trouble it appears that we are not heard. The heaven over our head is brass (Deut.28:23); no drops of blessing fall upon our parched and barren souls. We turn inward and begin to pity ourselves. We come close to despair – and despair is the devil’s great weapon to destroy our usefulness in the cause of Christ.

Deliverance

Has our God forgotten us? Never! Though His back may be towards us for a time yet He sees us and knows our need of grace. We will see His face again. Our plight is never unique, for “the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1Pet.5:9). So cast your burden upon God and wait patiently for Him. He will not allow you to be tempted “above that ye are able” (1Cor.10:13). May we have the Psalmist’s faith and confidence: “I have trusted...I will sing” (vv.5,6). □

For Young People: *Plants of the Bible*

(These articles were first published in “The Explorer”, our denomination’s youth magazine)

2. *The Lily – Humiliation*

“I am...the lily of valley” (Song of Solomon 2:1)

In the Song of Solomon Christ is lovingly addressing his church. We have seen how he compares himself to the rose, a splendid bloom which speaks of his glory as the eternal Son of God. Now he compares himself to another plant: the lily. It presents a very different view of Christ to the rose but one which is just as necessary for us think about and to understand.

Lilies belong to a group of plants which includes tulips. There are over eighty species of lily, all found in the northern hemisphere, some in our own country and others as far away as China and Japan. The flowers grow from a bulb and may be trumpet-shaped or more spread out in their form, varying also in their colour. In the Bible we learn of lilies growing in a garden and lilies growing in the field but most importantly of the lily of the valley, which concerns our Lord Jesus Christ.

We all made our appearance in the world at some point in time, born to our fathers and mothers in the usual way. The Bible tells us of the

unique way in which Jesus came into this world. God had promised a Saviour ever since the fall of our first parents. For centuries the prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah, including those remarkable words in Isaiah, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). God would one day become man and dwell upon the earth!

This is just what took place. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4). God’s only begotten Son became the firstborn child of Mary, a young Jewish woman who knew no man. The very One who created and upholds the universe was born as a tiny babe. How the Son of God became man is a great mystery but what it meant for us is seen in the lily of the valley.

Jesus is like the lily in his *humility*. A valley is a *low* place. The Son of God was in the highest heaven, sharing the glory of the divine majesty. He was perfectly blessed in fellowship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. But he had a people in this world. They were sinners and he must save them! So the Son of God stooped down and entered our flesh, hiding his own glory and honour. This was the beginning of Christ’s humiliation.

Coming into this world Christ exposed himself to poverty and hunger, hatred and scorn. But he underwent much more besides. “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). The Lord bore the burden of his people’s sin from Bethlehem all the way to Calvary. There even his Father hid his face from him as he descended into the lowest place of all, into hell.

We see the humility of Jesus in so many aspects of his life. He learned a manual trade (Mark 6:3). He mixed with publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:10,11). He refused the honours of men (John 6:15). He washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:4,5). Above all he welcomed sinners to himself, saying, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:28,29).

Jesus is also like the lily in his *purity*. The best lilies are those which are white in colour. Christ is a lily for the whiteness or pureness of his character. He is spotless in holiness. Though living in a world of sin and subject to temptation Jesus “knew no sin” (2Cor. 5:21) and “did no sin” (1Pet. 2:22). He could say of his Father, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). Jesus kept the demands of God’s law perfectly. “In him is no sin” (1John 3:5).

What a contrast with ourselves! We are black through sin. When you look into your own heart what do you see? You see wrong thoughts and wicked desires. You see vain ambitions and arrogant pride. “The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live” (Ecc.9:3). When you look at your life you must say with Saul, “I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly” (1Sam.16:21). How we need God’s forgiveness!

Jesus is like the lily in his *beauty* too. While proud men despise and reject Christ souls that have been made aware of their sin see great beauty in him. God brings his people down from their mountains of pride and into the valley of repentance. There they meet with Christ the Saviour and he becomes to them a precious lily. There is nothing more beautiful in their eyes than their Lord and his love.

By his grace God richly blesses poor sinners who believe in Jesus. First he clothes them, putting upon them the perfect righteousness of Christ, a better garment than the finest robe king Solomon ever wore. Then he changes them within and makes them truly holy. So Jesus can say of his people, “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters” (Song 2:2). His beauty has become theirs. May it become yours too through trusting in him for salvation from sin. □

Gàidhlig: Is e Dia fein a’s buachail dhomh, cha bhi mi ann an dìth – Salm 23:1 (Seonaidh Mac’ill Eathainn)

Nach iomadh duine a bhios a’ toirt sùil orra fhein aig crìoch na bliadhna agus toiseach na h- ath-bhliadhna agus a’ tighinn chun a cho-dhùnadh gu feum iad atharraichean a’ chuir an gnìomh airson leasachadh a’ thoirt na beatha neo air sgàth adhbhar nach eil iad riarraichte leis a chumadh a tha orra. Tha seo cho fìor aig àm mar seo far am bheil daoine ag itheadh cus a bharrachd s’as abhaist dhaibh. Chan eil dìth bidhe ri fhaicinn neo ri chluinntinn n’ar measg aig uair sam bi. Anns a’ bhitheantas, tha e cho fìor gur ann an nithean mar bhiadh agus airgiod a bhitheas sinn a’ deanamh tomhas air dìth neo beartas. Tha na sgriobtairean ag innseadh dhuinn mòran eile mu thiomchioll dìth ann an caochladh shuidhichidhean nach bi daoine a’ toirt suim mhòr sam bi dha. Tha sinn cho aineolach mu thiomchioll ur dàimh ri ‘ur Tighearna agus nacheil sinn ri faicinn na h-amannan anns am bheil sinn a’ deanamh dìmeas air. Innsidh an Fhìrinn dhuinn gu bheil “dìth” a’ tighinn am bàrr n’as trice na bhios ri smaoinichadh. De do shuidheachadh fhein aig toiseach na bliadhna? Bheil thu toirt an aite sin don Tighearna agus am bheil an Fhìrinn ga do stiùradh bho latha gu latha?

Nach bu choir dhuinn uile sùil a' thoirt oirnn fhein agus an t-aite sin a' bheir do Dhia, buachail' ur n'anam, agus briathran 'ur ceann-teagaisg a' chleachdadh mar srian 'ur beatha. Tha e cho cudromach dhomhsa agus dhuitsa gum bi fear- Stiùir againn nuair a tha sinn ag imeachd air slighe a tha gu firinneach a'dol a' thighinn gu crìoch. Is e seo an t-am a tha an ìre dìth a tha oirnn a' dol a' chùinntais. Tha ur anam n'as cudromaiche na 'ur corp. Tha an salmaidh gar stiureadh gu glic anns an 34mh Salm aig an 10mh earrann: "Bithidh easbhuidh air na leòmhanaibh òga, agus ocras orra; ach orrasan a'dhiarras an Tighearna cha bhi maith air bith a dhìth." □

Congregational News

Congregational Fellowships

Our fellowships this year will be on the theme 'Our Bible and How we Got it'. The Bible is the most precious thing we own in this world and it is wonderful to consider what it is and the way in which it has come to us. The meetings are held in the manse after the Sabbath evening service as intimated and are open to all who are interested.

Commission of Assembly

As yet no date has been announced for the special meeting of the Commission of Assembly which is to consider the way forward following the judgment in the court case concerning the church property in Broadford. Please pray for the ministers and elders that they will know the Lord's guidance. "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face" (Psa.5:8).

Psalmody Class

The Psalmody Class which is held in Room 7 of Paible School on Thursday evenings is due to resume on 7th January at 7.30pm, God willing. The meetings last for an hour and aim to encourage the learning of some of the less familiar tunes. All are welcome.

Lord's Day Observance Society

The annual meeting of the North Uist Branch of the Lord's Day Observance Society is to take place in Paible School on Tuesday 12th January at 7.30pm, D.V. The speaker expected is the Rev. James Gracie, minister of Edinburgh St Columba's Free Church (Continuing). All are invited and a collection will be taken for the Society's work. □

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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

Sermons preached in the congregation are recorded and may be downloaded from the website. Alternatively they are available in CD or tape format. Please contact the minister for further details.

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