

# CHARGES 1893-1905

Diocese of Argyle and the Isles



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# A CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE CLERGY OF  
THE DIOCESE OF ARGYLL AND  
THE ISLES,

AT THE SYNOD HELD IN  
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, OBAN,  
*On Wednesday, August 17, 1898,*

BY  
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BISHOP OF ARGYLL AND THE ISLES



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## A C H A R G E.



MY REVEREND BRETHREN,—Another year has nearly passed away since last we met in Synod. During that period of time we have once more observed all the sacred seasons of the Christian Church. We have kept Advent, seeking to prepare for the coming of our Incarnate God and Saviour. We have rejoiced in His Holy Birth at Christmas, when He, Who is God and Lord of all, having condescended to take upon Him our nature, was born of a pure Virgin. In the season of the Epiphany we have united ourselves with those wise men, who, led by the star, came to worship that same Lord Jesus in His Holy Infancy. We have in Lent followed Him from His Baptism in the Jordan, to His Fasting and Temptation in the wilderness, and with, I trust, new and contrite hearts, to the garden of His Agony. And then we have seen Him lifted up upon the Cross as the Sacrifice of our sins, and we have mourned at His Sepulchre. But from Lent and Passiontide we have gone on to Easter. We have not only sorrowed with Christ in His sufferings and death, we have also rejoiced with Him in His Resurrection. Next, celebrating the festival of His Ascension into Heaven, we have sought in heart and mind to follow Him thither, and thus set our affections on things above, where, still clothed in our human nature, He sitteth at the Right Hand of God, in the glory of the Father.

And at Pentecost we have rejoiced in the fulfilment of that true promise which He made when He said to His disciples—"It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." Finally, through Him (that same Blessed Comforter by Whom we are enabled to call Jesus, Lord), we have, in the festival of Holy Trinity, worshipped our great Redeemer as one with the Father and Himself in the unity of the eternal and undivided Godhead.

Thus, we have kept the seasons of the Christian Church, and thus, doubtless, shall Christ's people ever keep them till their Lord shall come again with glory to judge the world in truth and righteousness, and to receive His people unto Himself, that where He is now, in His risen and ascended Body, there they may be also, raised up by Him from the dust of death to a glorious immortality of both soul and body in His eternal and everlasting kingdom.

And what, let us ask ourselves, should be the effect on our own souls of these holy commemorations? In putting this question, I trust, however, I shall not seem to be assuming that the chief end of the Christian Year is our own edification. God grant that ours may be a much higher aim—the glory of our Incarnate, crucified, risen, and ascended Lord and Saviour. To forget this would be grievously to fall short in our duty as the servants of our King, as the redeemed of the Lord, and as men who owe to Him a debt of unselfish devotion in return for all that He—true God and true man—has done and suffered on our behalf. And it is forgetful-

ness of this kind, surely, which leads some Christians (while thinking much of the day on which the Lord Jesus suffered for us on the Cross), to think but little of that other great day on which, ascending up on high, He was received into glory. No, my Reverend Brethren, we keep the Christian Year not primarily for our own edification, but chiefly and above all for Jesus' sake.

Yet, while seeking first His glory, we may well believe that it is His good pleasure that we should obtain something for our own souls, even a knowledge of Himself, and as a consequence of such knowledge, that sanctification of spirit, soul, and body which it is the gracious office of the Holy Ghost to impart through union with Him, Who is the Lord our Righteousness.

And so we may now rightly inquire with regard to ourselves, how far, through the keeping of this last Christian year, we have advanced in the knowledge and love of Christ, to obtain to which should be the highest aim of our spiritual life.

For religion does not merely imply salvation from sin and its consequences. It does not merely involve a life of Christian usefulness. It means love to the Lord Jesus Christ for His own sake, and a desire for Him, on account of those matchless perfections which He manifested here below by word and deed, which are His still in His ascended glory, and which shall be the joy of His people, when in heaven they shall see His face, even when it shall be granted unto them to see Him as He is.

In the first days of conversion it is natural to begin by finding the true answer to the question, What must I do to be saved? Then

there follows, or should follow, an earnest desire for the salvation of the souls of others. But this should not be the end. Beyond all and above all, there should be a desire after the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ for His own sake.

And if we would attain to this, there are, I am persuaded, few things more effectually helpful, than the constant and loving contemplation of His incarnate life both in its humiliation and exaltation, as we read it in the inspired Gospels, and as we commemorate it and follow it in the sacred seasons of His Holy Church.

Here then we have a powerful, even though it be a secondary, motive for keeping each Christian year with renewed fervour, and for giving our people every encouragement and opportunity to do the same.

#### DIOCESAN STATISTICS.

The Diocesan Returns to be laid before the Synod to-day are in most respects very satisfactory. I am thankful to note that there have been more baptisms, more children catechised, more confirmations (if we include, as we must, those confirmed at Campbeltown from the Training Ships), more Eucharists, more Communions made at Christmas, Easter, Ascension-tide and Pentecost, as well as throughout the whole year. In all these respects there has been increase. On the other hand it is surprising to find no increase, but on the contrary a small decrease, in the total number of communicants. Is this to be accounted for by some statistical error this year or last year? The latter solution suggests itself to me when the larger number of com-



munions made, is taken into account, as well as the apparent increase of the Church population of the diocese, since our last Synod. Will you allow me to make this a text for deprecating the use of round numbers in returns as to congregations and communicants. I know that under these headings it is sometimes difficult to be accurate. It is always possible to give the exact number of persons baptized or confirmed, but as to the number of resident Churchpeople and communicants in a district, the enumeration is not always quite simple. On the principle, however, that the greater includes the less, I think it is better to give the minimum rather than the maximum in statistics about which there is any uncertainty. A definite number (though below the mark) is better than a vague statement which may be in excess of the true figure.

Again, it is important to keep the returns as to "occasional residents" quite separate and distinct from those which relate to persons domiciled among us. In some former years, sudden and otherwise unaccountable increases and diminutions in the number of certain of our congregations may have arisen, through sometimes including and sometimes excluding, occasional visitors.

In this connection, I would also desire to remind you of a canonical requirement of great importance, which I hope is universally observed throughout the diocese. In Canon XLIV. it is provided that every clergyman in charge of a congregation shall keep and carefully preserve a record of the number of persons who have communicated publicly or privately. And I would add that the plan (adopted, I hope, in most of our congregations)

of making a mark against the names of each person on these Communion rolls, when he has received the Blessed Sacrament at Easter or any of the other great festivals, is one which has obvious advantages from a pastoral point of view.

Attention has lately been called to the importance of keeping our Registers (especially those which relate to baptisms) in fire-proof safes. As such can now be obtained at a moderate cost, one should be provided and be in use in every church.

From our returns I learn that the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist has been publicly offered throughout the diocese on 2308 occasions during the past year. Of these, over nineteen hundred took place at an early hour, and I am glad to find that on 1745 occasions the Scottish Liturgy was used.

The increase, year by year, in the number of Eucharists, amongst ourselves, and still more throughout our whole communion, should be to us a great cause for thankful hope. In the year 1882 we had, it appears, in Great Britain, less than 130 churches with daily Eucharists. Now the number of such churches exceeds six hundred. This blessed restoration to us of that which must always be the true centre of Christian worship is, I trust, an evidence of an ever increasing realisation of the infinite value, and of the abiding efficacy, of that full perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, which our Divine Redeemer offered once for all, when He died upon the Cross.

#### THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH.

Let me add a few words which suggest themselves in connection with our statistics.

Year by year we have usually had to record some growth—a growth not very rapid, perhaps—yet quite rapid enough under our present circumstances. If our numbers increased more rapidly than they do, there might, in spite of self-congratulation, be real cause for alarm. We might have reason to fear lest popularity were being courted at the expense of principle, and lest we were proving unfaithful to the trust committed to us for the sake of present advantages. Compromise, no doubt, has its reward. If we could bring ourselves, for example, to take our place as one among several other kindred “denominations,” to regard an apostolic ministry as desirable but not essential—to look to “Modern thought,” rather than to the Creeds of the Church and to Catholic tradition for guidance in the interpretation of Holy Scripture, then, doubtless, we might gain much in popular estimation. A far more rapid increase might be looked for. Attractive services freed from anything suggestive of sacerdotal claims, or exactness of dogma, might become still more attractive, and we might moreover be able at last to congratulate ourselves on having grown rich and increased with goods. But what then would have become of our witness? How then should we be fulfilling the great obligation which, together with our special privileges, we have inherited from those who have gone before us? How then should we be able to transmit to posterity unimpaired that faith which we have received, and wherein I trust we shall ever stand?

My reverend brethren, I believe that the great obligation laid upon us in this our country and in this age of the world, is not so much to make converts, or to recover lost

secular advantages, as to bear witness—to bear a humble yet unwavering testimony to the faith once delivered to the saints—and that in the face both of the uncatholic and unprimitive claims of the Roman Papacy, and also in the face of the still more uncatholic and unprimitive negations and corruptions of modern Protestantism. There is, for us, no room for compromise in either direction. As absolutely as the Church of Rome repudiates the Holy Orders and the authority which we have received by regular transmission from Christ and His apostles, so absolutely do we repudiate, as not only baseless, but as positively impious, the great distinctive dogma of the Church of Rome, that the Pope is in any peculiar and exclusive sense the successor of the Blessed Apostle St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ on earth.

On the other hand, however, on account of our insistence upon the necessity of an Apostolic ministry, and on account of our adherence to that appeal to Catholic antiquity, as well as to Holy Scripture, which was the fundamental principle of the Anglican Reformation, we can never, though loving every individual who loves our Lord Jesus Christ, cast in our lot with any of those systems which had their origin in the sixteenth century.

Such isolation, one which has been forced upon us, is in itself regrettable, especially as emphasising those divisions by which, through the malice of Satan, the Mystical Body of Christ has been rent. Nevertheless, it is an isolation that must be endured for His sake. And sorrowfully to recognise real causes of separation, rather than to hide them under the cover of fallacious compromise is the first step towards true unity.

Our position in Scotland, as the clergy and laity of a disestablished, disendowed, once proscribed and well nigh extirpated National Church, is doubtless one of peculiar difficulty. And the fact that much that we have suffered, that much that we have lost, is due to our own faults and failings in the past and at the present time, does not make our difficulties more easy to bear. Yet we must not despair. Our help is in the Name of the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth. He can protect and guide those who humbly trust in Him, and who seek faithfully and in love to bear witness to His truth.

And if ever, owing to failures and disappointments, we are at times tempted to despondency, there is, I would suggest, one very good remedy within our reach, namely to look back a little, and to compare the present with the past. Those of us who knew the condition of this extensive, though numerically very small diocese, thirty or more years ago, and those who know it now, surely have good ground for giving thanks, and for saying, I trust, in humble sincerity, This is the Lord's doing and wondrous in our eyes. And what is true of this diocese is perhaps even more true of the other dioceses of the Church in Scotland. Certainly it is so in respect to our whole Communion throughout the world. I refer not so much to numerical increase, to extended organisations, and to new churches erected, as to those more interior and personal manifestations of progress and devotion, which are conspicuous everywhere. What a happy contrast, for instance, is apparent between the past and the present with regard to public worship, especially with regard to the Eucharist, and that both as to frequency

of celebration and as to reverence. What changes we see in the interiors of our churches in the direction of beauty and decency. What a restoration there has been during the last twenty years of the proper ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof, at all times of their ministration. How many Houses of God throughout the land are now really Houses of Prayer, open daily for private as well as for public worship. How much more outward reverence there is now on the part of our congregations, how much more interest the laity take in the work and worship of the Church, than they did in past generations. And if from time to time, as recently in England, there are organised outbreaks of antagonism, even leading to profane and lawless outrages, such demonstrations may well be regarded as the expiring efforts of an opposition which has failed in stemming, by more ordinary methods, the advancing tide of Catholic progress. Thus looking back to the past, and surveying our present position, we may well thank God, and take courage.

Nevertheless, we must not rest in any merely external tokens of success. Neither increased numbers nor a more reverent ritual, nor multiplied Eucharists, will avail aught for the glory of God or for the real advancement of His kingdom apart from the gracious inward working amongst us of the Holy Ghost. Without Him we can never be an acceptable people. His gracious influences must have their perfect work within our hearts if there is to be any real edifying of the body of Christ—if there are to be true fruits of righteousness, to the glory of God the Father. Churches transformed from unseemly ugliness

and degradation to comely beauty, should be to us emblems of that which the Holy Spirit will do for those who pray for His help, and who yield themselves to His grace. For He is not only the Giver of spiritual life in regeneration, He is not only the Renewer of that life, but in the great work of conversion, in all its wondrous course, from awakening and conviction of sin, to complete sanctification through a perfected union with Christ, He destroys that inheritance of iniquity which we have brought with us into this world, and adorning and beautifying the souls of Christ's people with those virtues which are from their Lord, He makes them fitting temples for Himself, meet dwelling places for the presence of His Divine Majesty.

## OBAN.

Let us here turn for a few minutes to the consideration of matters mainly of local or diocesan interest.

From this Church of St. John the Divine, in which we are now assembled, and in which, thanks be to God, the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist is daily offered, a great deal of exterior work is being done throughout the surrounding districts. This is the case at Ardchattan on Loch Etive ; at Cullipool in the Island of Luing ; and at Lochbuie and Salen, in the Island of Mull. At Ardchattan and at Cullipool there are resident lay readers, and each of the four places is throughout the year visited by a priest about once a month, the two Mull charges and Ardchattan having, moreover, resident clergy during the summer season.

As I have said before, and as, I think,

experience proves, year by year, it is better as a general rule, that small missions should be provided for from stronger centres, than that they should be feebly carried on as independent charges. This principle seems to be working satisfactorily elsewhere also, as for example, at Dunoon, from which Innellan is provided for in the summer; at Inveraray, whence all the year round an important work is being carried out at Furnace; and in Skye, where from St. Columba's, Portree, well attended services are carried on at Dunvegan.

The financial condition of a congregation, especially the amount of its contributions towards external objects, is often a sure test of the earnestness of its members, and of the reality of their desire to show forth their thankfulness for spiritual blessings, and as obedient disciples, to remember the words of the Lord Jesus how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

I am, therefore, thankful to be able, in the case of Oban to point, not only to what has been done *for* the congregation, but also to what has been done *by* them. It is especially encouraging to hear that from a church in which there are daily opportunities for communion, and for attendance every morning and evening at the choir offices, there should come this year greatly increased contributions for Foreign Missions. I am glad also to learn that from the same charge there have been remitted to Edinburgh for the Central Clergy Fund, collections far in excess of those in any previous year since the church was built.

And here I must not fail to refer with pleasure to the resolution which was carried



at the last annual meeting of the congregation, to appoint a Finance Committee to collect funds for the erection of a new church. The present church is now found to be too small for the worshippers who have to be provided for during an important part of the year, and I learn that in consequence many who have desired to attend the Sunday services in summer have failed to gain admission. But there is another reason why a new church should be built. It is not right that the House of God in so important a town as Oban, the geographical centre of our work, and the place in which many strangers both from England and America gain their first impressions of our Scottish Church, should be less dignified in its proportions, or less beautiful in its design than some of our other churches, even in this poor diocese. The church at Oban should not only bear its witness as it does already, by the frequency of its Eucharists, and by its earnest and beautiful congregational services, it should also be, as far as we are able to make it, a building worthy of our Lord Jesus Christ and of that disciple whom He loved, in whose memory its pious founders originally set it apart for Divine worship. It may be a long time before we are able to build such a church as I hope may some day be seen in Oban. But as I have said, I am thankful that a commencement has been made, and I trust that many prayers may be offered up in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that this good work may be begun, continued, and ended to the glory of God and to the edification of His people.

Some good Temperance work has, I hope, been begun at Ardchattan and elsewhere

during the past year. And I am glad, in this connection, to record the revival of our diocesan temperance association, which was begun some years ago. One of the advantages of this organisation is that its pledge, though one of total abstinence, can be taken either for a longer or a shorter period of time—namely, for as long as the person who has signed the pledge card retains it, and does not return it to the Secretary.

I think experience has proved that even such temporary pledges are of great value especially at times of exceptional temptation, as for example during the New Year holidays. Besides, persons are sometimes willing to become total abstainers for a limited time, either for their own protection, or for the sake of others who would not see their way to binding themselves by an obligation of a more permanent kind.

#### IONA.

At Iona, in their House of Retreat, the Fathers of the Society of St. John the Evangelist are now frequently in residence. And we may, I hope, live to see the day when some of them will be always there. It seems to me a very great blessing thus to have more or less permanently amongst us men who are living in this nineteenth century that same religious life, though under very different circumstances, which was lived by St. Columba and his followers in the sixth century—a life which, separated from the world, its pleasures, its cares, and its distractions, has for its end and object Jesus Christ Himself, Whom to know, Whom to love, Whom to serve, Whom to attain to, is the

highest aim to which the soul of man can aspire.

I trust you and I, my reverend brethren, are not only penitent sinners praying for pardon through the merits of our Redeemer's Passion, but that we are also endeavouring, so far as this is within our reach, to be His disciples and His friends. Yet, living as we do, in the midst of our flocks, our neighbours, and our families, and having of necessity so many secular distractions, we cannot be as they are, who have devoted themselves to the service of our Lord, in what is technically called the Religious Life. Is it not then a great blessing to us in our lower sphere, to have brought nearer to us the inspiring example of a higher life than you or I are able to lead—the example of a life which, though we cannot imitate it in all its distinctive features, may yet serve to raise the standard of our lives, and stir us up to be less satisfied with that spiritual mediocrity which, perhaps, we have too often looked upon as sufficient? And surely there is no branch of the Christian Church in which, more than in ours, there is need for higher and truer ideals of faith, of penitence, of love towards our Lord, of self-denying service for His sake, of unselfish devotion to the duties of religion, of holy discipline, of obedience to rule, and of personal humility. And where can we hope to see such ideals so fully exemplified as among those who, having forsaken the world, have given themselves wholly to our Blessed Lord, in order to follow Him in the way of poverty, of chastity, and of obedience? Is it not, therefore, I would repeat, a happy thing for the diocese that we should have the Fathers of the Society of St. John amongst

us, and that they should be willing to receive into their House at Iona, when they are in residence, either priests or laymen, who desire to stay with them for short periods for the purposes of retreat, of study, or of rest?

PORTNACROIS AND GLENCRERAN.

During the past year, one of our number, the Rev. Peter Elwin Wrench, has, at the end of a long ministry, been taken from us by the hand of death. May he rest in peace, and may he, with all our brethren who have in past years, gone hence to that great account for which we must all prepare, find mercy in the day of the Lord. Washed in His blood and sanctified by that Holy Spirit Whom He has sent unto us from the Father, may they and we too be brought to a blessed resurrection and have some place, if it be but the lowest, in His heavenly kingdom. For you, my reverend brethren, and for myself, as year by year we add to the number of sins, and as year by year, I hope, we realise them more truly; and also for those who have passed away from us into the unseen world, our prayer to our most gracious Redeemer should ever be—

Mercy, good Lord, mercy we ask,  
 This is the total sum;  
 For mercy, Lord, is all our suit;  
 Lord, let Thy mercy come.

The vacant charges of Portnacrois and Glencreran have been filled by the appointment of the nephew of the late rector. He is no stranger among those to whom he now ministers, having been a frequent visitor to Glencreran during the life-time of his pre-

decessor. His official connection with the district has thus been a welcome event to both congregations.

That, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, he may be a faithful minister of the Word and Sacraments, should be the earnest prayer of those who realise the solemn responsibilities of the Pastoral office, even when exercised among small and scattered flocks.

#### DUNOON.

The Church of the Holy Trinity at Dunoon has been much improved by the erection of a tower with a peal of bells, and also by the addition of a side chapel. For week-day celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, at which a large attendance of worshippers cannot be expected, and for Sunday celebrations, when, as is often the case at an early hour, congregations are small, a side chapel is of great value. The aspect of a service with half a dozen people, or perhaps even fewer, scattered over the nave of an otherwise empty church, must always be somewhat dreary, and may perhaps create a sense of isolation among the worshippers themselves. Whereas even very small congregations do not, in a side chapel, seem so lost in the midst of the surrounding space. It is moreover desirable that the priest at the altar in order to be audible, which is most important, should not in celebrating always be obliged to raise his voice to a high pitch, or even to intone the most solemn parts of the service, a practice which to many, and I think with good reason, is a cause of offence, as savouring of irreverence. In a side chapel this need never be.

For the improvements in the church at

Dunoon to which I have referred, we are indebted to the late Mr. John Manifold, whom we must not fail to remember among our other benefactors, commending his soul to the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Much has also been done for the older parts of the fabric, which have been recently repaired and added to, mainly through the very generous help of two living members of the congregation.

#### NETHER LOCHABER.

To the rector of St. Bride's, Nether Lochaber, we owe much for great improvements in the internal arrangements of his church, carried out to a large extent with his own hands and at his own cost. The altar and sacrarium have been beautifully decorated, return stalls have been placed in the chancel, and a gallery has been erected at the west end of the church, for the organ, which formerly occupied space now made use of for a sacristy and a choir vestry. This last improvement is, I am persuaded, a step in the right direction.

In days not long gone by, our chancels were encumbered, and our altars were often well nigh hidden by pulpits and reading desks. But now many of our churches are almost equally disfigured by projecting organs, and by a superabundance of choir-stalls, all tending to detract from the peculiar dignity of the altar. To be convinced of this, one has but to visit many of our old churches, and even certain of the great Cathedrals of England. In some of these, owing to the placing in modern times of rows of benches in addition to the original choir stalls, the open spaces

before the altars, that once gave dignity both to them and to the choirs, have been sacrificed to a utility of a very doubtful kind. Thus many interiors, once stately and beautiful, have become commonplace if not actually unsightly. And what is true in this respect as to great churches is true also with regard to smaller ones such as we have to deal with.

In these, moreover, looking at the matter from a religious point of view, there is a further objection to chancels crowded with seats. For it is evident that the interposition between the congregation and the altar, of a mass of singing men and boys, not always models of reverence, is an arrangement which does not tend to encourage Eucharistic worship. On the contrary, the altar is thereby in danger of being robbed of that visible pre-eminence which it should have as the table of the Lord, and as the Throne of His Sacramental Presence.

#### CAMPBELTOWN.

Since our last Synod I have made three visits to Campbeltown, administering Confirmation on these occasions to a number of lads from Her Majesty's training ships, *Northampton*, *Caliope*, and *Curaçoa*, 186 in all. This makes the total number that I have confirmed from the three ships since Advent, 1895, between four and five hundred. These figures suggest to my mind two considerations. In the first place, I am thankful to see what exceptional religious advantages are afforded to boys who enter the Navy. In the second place, however, I cannot but regret that so many English boys—for most of

those of whom I speak are English—respectable in their antecedents, and born of at any-rate nominally Church parents, should go out into the world without having been Confirmed. As I have said on a former occasion, I am persuaded that children—especially boys—should be brought to Confirmation at a much earlier age than appears to be customary in the South—at the age, in fact, that seems to be suggested by the injunction addressed by the priest to the sponsors at every public infant Baptism :—“Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as he can say the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue, and be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose.”

It seems to me that these words obviously imply that Confirmation should be the recognised aim (so far as all unconfirmed children are concerned) both of the catechetical instruction (which according to the Rubric all curates-in-charge are bound to give each Sunday) and also of all our Sunday schools. And obviously these courses of instruction should be completed if possible at such an age as to admit of the children being fit for presentation to the Bishop, before they have grown old enough to go beyond the control or influence of their teachers. “Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not,” are words which need not be restricted to the approach of unconscious infants to Christ in Holy Baptism. They may, as we all realise, be used also with regard to young children who offer their infant prayers and praises to the Lord Jesus. So, too, I think they may be applied to boys and girls of tender age,



who, having been taught to know and to love their Saviour, are brought to Confirmation in order that, through the laying on of hands with prayer, they may receive from the Holy Spirit a fuller measure of His enlightening, converting, and protecting grace. For this we surely need not wait till the age of fourteen or fifteen. It is not likely, under ordinary circumstances, that children who in spite of Christian training seem unfit for Confirmation at the age of twelve, will be more fit two or three years later. The probabilities, on the contrary, are, that each year they grow older without the grace of Confirmation and Holy Communion, they will grow so much the less susceptible with regard to religious influences. Much has been said, and may be said, in favour of postponing the reception of Confirmation to a time of life, in which the character is more fully formed, and in which the young Christian, fully realising all that was implied by the vows of his Baptism, is able to make a more deliberate choice. All this sounds well in theory. But practically, in the great majority of cases, the postponement of Confirmation ends in the convenient season never coming. If children of the humbler ranks are not confirmed from Sunday school or from the catechetical class, experience seems to prove that in most cases they will never be confirmed at all.

The Church of St. Kieran, Campbeltown, now, thank God, free from debt, has at last been consecrated. This event took place on the Festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, last September. Thus, in spite of many difficulties and discouragements, the pastor of that charge, who about thirteen years ago found himself called upon to

minister to a scattered and disorganised flock, without a parsonage to live in, and with a church utterly unworthy to be used as a House of God, has now not only a well built and properly arranged church, but also a rectory, and both free from debt. This is something to have accomplished, something for which to be thankful.

#### STORNOWAY.

I am glad also to be able announce to you that the Church of St. Peter, Stornoway, has at last been legally conveyed to the Diocesan Trustees, and has been consecrated for ever for the worship of God. An inscription on its modest tower states that the building was erected nearly sixty years ago, during the episcopate of Bishop Low. But since then, owing to debt and other difficulties, it became private property. The congregation also seems to have dwindled, and for a long time there was no resident priest, and no Church services were held. A period of revival, however, commenced when in 1883 Canon Maclean visited the island. After that, services were provided from time to time, and later, Mr. Catcheside began what promised to be a useful career. His work, however, came to a sudden end owing to his lamentable death by drowning. Then Mr. Wedderburn was appointed priest-in-charge, and this post he has now held for nearly nine years. During that period much good has been done. The interior of the church has been entirely remodelled, great ritual improvements have been carried out, and through the encouragement of really congregational singing, the service at Stornoway has become one of

the heartiest and most devotional in the diocese.

But in addition to all this, St. Peter's has been for some years the centre of much diligent pastoral activity, the results of which can never be fully realised in this world. Owing to the fluctuating character of the congregation it always seems small, as regards the number of permanent residents. But it would be very large indeed, if all who at Stornoway come under the spiritual influence of the Church remained with us and worshipped in St. Peter's. We may be thankful, however, when we see reason for hoping that good seed sown in this diocese is likely to bring forth good fruit elsewhere.

The late Lady Matheson, who during her life time very generously helped our work, had intended to make over the fabric of the church to the Diocesan Trustees, in order that it might be consecrated. But this design had not been carried out at the time of her death, and at first there was some anxiety as to the future. This however soon came to an end through the kindness of the present proprietor, whose generosity deserves our most grateful recognition. For, as I have already told you, St. Peter's is now Church property and has been consecrated.

#### ISLAY.

After his temporary appointment to the Islay Mission, the Rev. James Cormack has been succeeded by the Rev. Alexander Macpherson, who as a former clergyman of this diocese, and as a Gaelic-speaking Highlander, I am glad to welcome back.

From what I have seen of the work since

his coming, I have reason to believe that good progress is being made, and I am specially glad to note that a number of poor and neglected children have been received by Holy Baptism into the fold of Christ's Church, within which, I trust, they will be led, by those whose duty it is to watch for their souls, in the way of faith and obedience, as true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION.

Since our last Synod there have been two Retreats for the Clergy in the diocese—one in Iona, at the House of the Fathers of St. John the Evangelist, and one at Cumbrae. Arrangements have also been made for another Retreat in Iona, to begin on the 6th of next month. As to the spiritual benefits that may be hoped for from short periods of time such as these, set apart for retirement from the world, for silence, meditation, and prayer, I have spoken to you on past occasions in general terms. But there is one other benefit which Retreats bring within our reach, of which I would to-day speak more particularly. I refer to the favourable opportunities they give us for making our confessions and for receiving absolution. Confession, in the sense in which I am now using the word, is not, as we well know, obligatory, either in or out of Retreat, and the precious benefit of sacramental absolution is not forced on anyone. Yet bear with me, my reverend brethren, while I say a few words on this important question. For I would speak to you as a sinner, who for the last thirty years has been called upon to hear the confessions of his fellow sinners, and

as one who, for a longer period, has habitually confessed his own frequent falls, in order to receive from the ministers of Christ that gracious message of Absolution which He has empowered them to pronounce in His name. For not in vain did our risen Lord say to His Apostles—"Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them." And not in vain are those same words repeated at the ordination of every priest. Neither is it without a grave purpose that we are explicitly taught in our Prayer Book that—"Our Lord Jesus Christ has left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him." Nor is it a light thing that the Church has enjoined upon us, when, in the exercise of our ministry, we are bidden to say to the believing and penitent seeker after forgiveness—"I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

I cannot, my brethren, speak for others, but I can say for myself, that I do not know what would have become of me had I not been led, before my ordination to the priesthood, to have recourse to this most blessed and comfortable means of grace—one which I trust may be continued to me till the day of my death. Nor can I express the debt of gratitude that I owe to the Bishop from whom I received Holy Orders for his teaching on this particular subject.

Do not listen, my reverend brethren, to those who in ignorance or through prejudice venture to disparage confession and absolution. Such persons almost invariably are without the least practical knowledge of that which they so rashly condemn.

Again I would say, do not confound

Absolution with what is commonly called "Direction." Direction may or may not be good. This altogether depends on the wisdom of the man from whom it comes. But Absolution is a totally different thing. It cannot gain or lose anything through the merits or the demerits of the minister by whom it is pronounced. It comes from the Lord Jesus to the penitent who has drawn near to Him in humble contrition and confession of sin—a free gift, yet purchased at a great price, even at the price of His own most precious Passion and Death.

To me, my reverend brethren, each Absolution thus bestowed and thus received, is like a new beginning in the way of righteousness and salvation. As one's life, through the power of inborn sin, and through temptations from without, is not only a long story of repeated omissions, but is also almost entirely made up of deviations, great and small, from the narrow way, and from the guiding footprints of the Good Shepherd, so each Absolution comes like a bringing back, by Him and to Him, in order that, cleansed again and again in His blood, fresh starts may be made, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, in trying to run the race that is set before us.

But there is even more to be said. As Absolution is to penitent believers, who have come to Christ in confession, a very real way of being cleansed by Him in that fountain for sin and for uncleanness, which He has opened in Zion—that is in His Church—so it is also a blessed means of enlightenment. For Christ our Lord, Who died and rose again and Whose Glory fills the skies, is the Sun of Righteousness. And sin is like a thick cloud, or like a grey mist, which hides from our

souls the light of His countenance, and envelops everything in gloom. But by those gracious Absolutions which, through His ministers, He Himself sends to His penitent disciples, the clouds which seemed to hide His face are driven away, and the bright beams of His light begin, once more, to enlighten and to gladden pardoned souls.

You will forgive me, my reverend brethren, if in these matters, I have ventured to intrude upon you my own experience. I would even hope that every one of you, having in this particular way often tasted and seen that our Lord is gracious, may be able to bear personal witness, as I can, to the strength and comfort bestowed by Him in the blessed ministry of Penitence, even through the exercise of that power which He has left to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him.

#### CONTROVERSIES AS TO RITUAL.

There has been of late, in England, a good deal of discussion, and even some noisy agitation, offensive to right-minded men of all schools of thought, with regard to the ritual of the Church. Though this controversy has not affected us in Scotland, to any appreciable extent, we can hardly have failed to watch its course with interest and concern. Several lessons, however, may be learnt from what has taken place and from what is still going on.

In the first place, we see that the questions involved move men's minds very deeply. We used often to be told that ritual and the externals of worship were merely matters of ecclesiastical fancy. Now we see that they

are much more. Men are not, as a rule, ready to persecute, or to suffer persecution about mere matters of taste, such as rival styles of architecture or decoration. And this suggests a serious consideration. Ought we to venture upon anything debatable in the way of ritual, unless we are sure that what we are doing is really for the glory of God, and for the edification of His Church? When in our churches we find things that are unseemly or mean, we are bound to make changes even at the risk of giving offence. So also irreverent methods in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist must be abandoned, even though such methods may have obtained a certain sanction from long and general usage. But ceremonial developments and the restoration of obsolete usages, of little or no religious importance, especially if based on merely antiquarian grounds, are very different matters. To run the risk of causing division and weakness, or of bringing discredit upon what is really important in ritual, for the sake of such things, is worse than bad policy—it is obviously wrong and contrary to charity.

Again, the attention that has lately been drawn to the question of ritual has made it very evident that the laity, as well as the clergy—sometimes much more than the clergy—are to be blamed or praised for the ceremonial developments or restorations which, during the last thirty years, have been so general throughout almost the whole Anglican Communion. Had not the laity, to a very large extent, desired those advances or restorations which the clergy have carried out, the movement, certainly, could not have commanded that enthusiastic lay



support, both moral and material, which has of late been so prominent a feature in the history of the Anglican Communion. If we go to many of those churches in our large towns, in which what is called an advanced ritual prevails, we see this strikingly illustrated. For such churches, to begin with, have mostly been built and are mainly supported by the free-will offerings of the laity.

And in a large number of them, notably in London, the question sometimes put, Why do *men* not attend public worship? would be singularly inappropriate. A glance at many a congregation in such churches, during the solemn Eucharistic service, on a Sunday morning, would supply the answer. We should learn that *men* do attend, and that they take, moreover, a devout and intelligent delight in the holiest rites of our religion.

But there is yet another lesson, a less pleasing one, to be learnt. Recent discussions have, alas, made it evident that there is, in matters of ceremonial a want of disciplined unity amongst us, which manifests itself sometimes in the way of excess and extravagance—though sometimes, and more often, it is to be feared, in the way of defect or irreverence.

Looking back to the recent history of the Anglican Communion, before the revival of the last sixty years, we see much to deplore with regard to ritual, or rather want of ritual. We see a period of time in which there was not only much spiritual deadness, but one during which the worship of God was reduced to the barest formalities of a lifeless and often slovenly routine.

Then came the reaction. Along with a reverent zeal for faith and devotion there

came, thank God, an earnest desire not only to restore the fabrics of the churches to their ancient beauty, but also to bring back those outward expressions of faith and reverence which are commonly classed together under the designation of ritual. And it became the especial aim of many of those who were foremost in the revival of Catholic teaching and devout living to have once more in general use those "ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof" to which such prominence is given in the famous rubric which stands to the very forefront of the Book of Common Prayer.

But then over and above all this pious zeal for the restoration of that which is lawful, there came in later a desire and a taste among some, for certain developments of ritual, more or less undesirable in themselves, and certainly without any satisfactory authority which could be pleaded on their behalf. And some of these developments were introduced not only without authority, but contrary to authority, to that authority—(I mean the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer)—to which as Anglicans we are bound to submit ourselves, unless every man is to be a law to himself.

It cannot be lawful, for instance, ever to set aside any of the provisions of our present Liturgy in favour of other directions gathered from the Roman Missal, or from any other source ancient or modern. It may of course be argued that some of the Roman rubrics are preferable to ours, as we now have them. Perhaps this may be the case. And, certainly, to follow the ancient Roman or Sarum rules in regard to matters, about which (as unfortunately is sometimes the case) our

own rubrics leave us in doubt, is quite reasonable, and much better than inventing ritual for ourselves. But if when our own book gives us detailed directions, we set these aside, we are clearly in the wrong. If, for example, when our rubric tells us to take the paten into our hands, we do not take it, but prefer to consecrate upon the corporal—if when we are bidden to break the bread, at a specified time, we do not then break it—if when we are bidden to lay our hands upon the bread and upon the chalice, we refrain from doing so, and only say the words of consecration over them—if when we are bidden to veil that which remains of the Blessed Sacrament after the priest's and people's communion, we do not do so, but, proceed at once to consume the Consecrated Gifts, then surely it must be confessed that our very desire to follow rules which have the support of antiquity, or which have been carefully thought out in later times, has had the somewhat opposite effect of causing us to be led by private judgment, and that in disregard of the authority to which, if to any, it is obvious that we owe obedience. For to refuse such obedience would be to take a line which, if persevered in, must open the door to all kinds of deviations from the rules of the Church in regard to the administration of the Sacraments, not only in a Roman but also in a Protestant direction.

In this connection I would venture to quote some words from Canon Newbolt's recent admirable lectures at St. Paul's Cathedral. Deprecating unfaithfulness or want of reverence for the authority of that part of the Catholic Church through which we have received our commission to minister the Word

and Sacraments, he says:—"There is no doubt that we are rapidly approaching a crisis, when much that we have gained will be lost if we do not fall into line and stop the petty larceny of private judgment. It is ironical that those who have laboured to uphold the Catholic ideal instead of the Protestant substitute which seemed to have usurped its place, should be actively promulgating the essential doctrine of the barest Protestantism, viz., private judgment, as opposed to authority."

Nevertheless, my reverend brethren, I am persuaded that there is much more ground for hope than for fear. The very fact that practices such as those of which I have given examples are so obviously wrong, should make their eventual discontinuance almost certain. On the other hand, the desirability of a reverent ritual is more and more recognised, and the lawfulness of such usages as those commonly included under the designation of "The Six Points," cannot long be disputed, with any chance of success. And I would add, adopting once more the words of Canon Newbolt from the same lecture from which I have already quoted—"It is wonderful, as we look back, to see what has been achieved. There is no limit to what we may achieve yet, if we go forward in order, and in submission to the principles which are absolutely bound up in the Catholic Faith."

#### THE DIOCESAN MISSION.

I must not conclude without a few words about the Mission, which, please God, is to be held in different parts of this diocese early in November. What, we may ask ourselves,

is the object of this mission? What aim should we set before us in trying to promote its success?

Our aims must be unworldly and spiritual. Were we to allow ourselves to look for success, in the ordinary sense of that word—were we to hope that at the end of the Mission we should be able to produce a tabulated statement of what might be called “results,” we should not only be probably doomed to disappointment, but we should be looking at the whole matter from a wrong standpoint. To begin with, it would be unreasonable in this scattered diocese, to expect results that could in anyway be compared with those which sometimes follow missions in great towns. And even had we a large population to deal with, we should be wrong in measuring either success or failure by the test of numbers. Our estimate of success must be a very different one. And should the result of all our endeavours only be that a few poor people are led by the grace of the Holy Spirit to draw near to their Saviour, and to know and love and serve Him better than they did before, we should have abundant cause for thankfulness. When, therefore, I say that our aims must be spiritual, and not according to the standard of the world, I mean that we must hope for results which, though great and real, may yet perhaps be mainly hidden from notice. And if we are tempted to think great efforts wasted, when in the end it appears that only a few souls reap any benefit, we should look to our Blessed Lord, and from Him learn a very different lesson. We should consider how He Who is God, and Lord of all, the Eternal Word of the Father, Who had come into the

World to be the Saviour of Mankind, did not refuse to bestow (if we may venture so to speak of Him Who is infinite in power and Glory) the fulness of His gracious energies in order to bring enlightenment, conversion, or comfort to single individuals, as, for example, to Nicodemus, the Samaritan Woman, and Mary Magdalene.

Then I have just this to say as to our preparation for the Mission. It should be two-fold—Godward and manward. Godward in the way of earnest prayer for the help of the Holy Spirit, manward in the way of leading our people as far as we can, to look forward to the Mission with that earnest desire after salvation and holiness, upon which our Lord Jesus pronounced His gracious benediction when He said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

Earnest prayers have been offered, I know, and are being offered both by the clergy and by the faithful laity of the diocese, for a blessing on the Mission. Such prayers have gone up to the Eternal Father from our altars and from our homes, in the name of our Lord Jesus, through Whom we have sought for the promised help and guidance of the Holy Ghost. And such prayers will assuredly be answered, not according to our deserts, but according to His merits Who is our Advocate within the veil and the Propitiation for our sins.

And as we have prayed in general terms for the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon the Mission, so we may also pray in particular for each missionary who shall come amongst us, that he may be filled with a holy zeal for the salvation of souls, through the merits of our

Divine Redeemer's passion and death. Here is the secret of power. For our Blessed Lord God has said, "I if I be lifted up from earth will draw all men unto Me." If souls are to be truly and effectually drawn to the Lord Jesus in penitence and faith and hope and love, this must be when, convinced of their sins through the power of the Holy Spirit, they are enabled by Him to see their Saviour lifted up upon the Cross with His pierced hands extended as if to invite them to come to Him as their only refuge.

The value of preaching does not depend so much upon its learning or eloquence as upon the faithfulness of its witness to Jesus Christ, not only as an Example of patient endurance, not only as a Teacher of Righteousness, but also and above all as the Divine Sacrifice for our sins—our crucified God and Saviour. In saying this I have in my mind three lines of verse, written I know not by whom, but conveying, I think, a volume of truth compressed into a very few words—

"A Christless cross no refuge were for me,  
A crossless Christ my Saviour might not be,  
But O, Christ crucified, I rest in Thee."

May this Mission be, to some souls at anyrate, the power of God unto salvation, and may it enable us all to cling with earnest purpose to our crucified Lord and Saviour. Each of us has a cross of some kind to bear—a very little cross, however, by comparison, yet one which we must carry, as we follow in our Master's footsteps. But there is another Cross which He alone could bear—the Cross of His Atonement. That Cross we cannot carry, but we must cling to it in life and in death.

And then there must not only be diligent preparation before the Mission. After it is over there must be an earnest effort on the part of the pastor of each congregation to foster, to the best of his ability, any good results which may seem to have been produced. And this he should do, not only through his preaching, but also and more especially by personal and individual instruction or exhortation. If, for example, after the Mission, outward signs of inward spiritual life, such as more frequent attendance at the House of God to hear the preaching of the Word, to receive Holy Communion, or to take part in the Holy Sacrifice, should manifest themselves in individuals, and then, if there should be, as time goes on, an appearance of growing slack again in regard to any of these duties, a word in season, or even an earnest expostulation, might be attempted, to encourage a steadfast continuance in well-doing, or to warn against the dangers of back-sliding.

It has to be remembered, however, as I think those who have had much to do with missions could tell us, that the good results of such efforts sometimes only begin to show themselves after the missionary has gone away. His work, perhaps, has mainly been that of a sower, and, as happens in the physical world, the good seed may have been hidden out of sight. But the time is to be looked for when first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear will be seen. When this begins then there will be a fresh cause for diligence on the part of those who have been sent to be labourers in the harvest of the Lord.

I would now commend you, my reverend



brethren, your people, and your work to the loving kindness of our Heavenly Father, to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the blessed protection of the Holy Spirit, by Whom may our eyes be opened, that we may see things in their true light, even in that light which comes from our Lord Jesus Christ. And, with our loins girded about and our lights burning, may we wait for His coming, believing in Him, trusting in Him, loving Him, seeking to be His disciples and servants here, and hoping to be numbered with His people in that kingdom which shall have no end.





