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Donald Mac Kinnon

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CLAIMS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UPON YOUNG MEN FOR MISSIONARY WORK AT HOME AND ABROAD.

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."—1 Jn. ii. 14.

BEHOLD that sickly old man in the great chair by the fire. His feeble limbs no longer carry him abroad to look upon the earth and sky, or to bestow a blessing upon his fellow-men. His life is a burden to him; yet he clings to it, for he is afraid to die. He has amassed wealth, but if he had ten thousand worlds, he would give them all to be young again. Behold another. The snows of age are on his brow; martyrdom is before him; yet he says, "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory."

Young man, if you live to be aged, which of these should you wish to resemble?

Youth is bright as spring tide or morning. It possesses an exulting sense of power; a consciousness of ability for labour and enjoyment. The young man rejoices in his strength, and responds not to the dogma of eastern sages, that perfect rest, absorption, or personal unconsciousness, is the highest blessedness of man. His enjoyment he finds in the forth putting of all his powers, the healthful exercise of all his faculties. Activity, however, will not long be a source of enjoyment unless it be exerted upon objects suited to the powers and capacities of man, and to the fulfilment of the purpose for which he was created.

If a machine were applied to some purpose opposite to that for which it was made, it would be violently deranged and broken. Its nice wheels, which moved harmoniously when working for its proper end, would be but a mass of confusion and danger, if set in motion for another. Let the young man, with his joyous consciousness of life and power, ask why these glorious gifts were bestowed, and if, in his exercise of them, he is seeking his true end;—the end wherefore he was so fearfully and wonderfully made, that the most complete and beautiful mechanism of an earthly artist sinks into insignificance beside his mortal frame, not to speak of its mysterious guest, his rational and immortal spirit.

Holy angels constantly act in accordance with the design of their creation, therefore there is no jar in the wheels of their existence; they are perfectly, intensely happy. But man does not so; and misery and destruction are the consequences of his folly. Often the spirit that once was all buoyant and active, wearied at length, and dissatisfied, longs for a dreamless sleep, or would gladly shrink out of being. He has not sought his true end; the machine has acted nothing but confusion.

I knew a sufferer, weeping over departed friends, buried hopes, and cheerless prospects—although surrounded with many materials of enjoyment. The question was mentally asked, "Why am I thus unhappy—why has so much of my life been desolate—why does nothing afford me pleasure now?" The solemn and fearful answer was returned by conscience,—“Because I have

sought happiness not in God's way, and in God's work, but in perishing, unsatisfying creatures. Oh! if my aim had simply been the glory of God, I had not thus missed the object of my life!"

It is impossible, then, that man can be happy without knowing wherefore he was created, and without answering the end of his existence. Without this he must be involved in misery; pursuing what he shall never reach, striving after what he shall never accomplish, rushing headlong into irretrievable destruction.

Young man, it was for the glory of God that you were created.

Does your heart revolt against this declaration? Does it account such a pursuit to be foreign to all your views of pleasure—to be a hard exaction of a hard taskmaster, a shadow which would overspread your life with gloom? Is it the world that enchants you with its dance and song, its fame or fleeting glory, its golden treasures, or its shining laurels? If such be your feelings, then is your moral machinery deranged, and no skilful hand has re-adjusted it. Your business is, not to set to work with your broken wheels, but to go to the Divine artist to have them renewed; to go to God that you may be *born again*; created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works; have the spring of holy desire supplied, and be set in motion for holy purposes, ere the whole machinery, being irretrievably ruined and totally useless, shall be condemned to the flames.

But there are not a few who will gladly respond to the sentiment, who *know* it to be true, from the Word of God, and who *feel* it to be true, from the longings of their regenerated hearts. Let them arise, and gird themselves for their work, the noblest, the most joyous, that man or angel can be called to.

To live to the glory of God—what intensity of blessedness is contained in the idea! To labour for him whom they love supremely; to do his blessed will; to proclaim their sense of unutterable obligation to the most glorious benefactors! To be "fellow-workers together with God," and thus to hold communion with him! What is man that such joy should be bestowed upon him?

But this joy must not evaporate in mere sentiment. It must lead to exercise, to diligent, habitual work; and in this work, congenial as it is to the renewed heart, there are difficulties which need to be energetically and prayerfully overcome; there are corrupt tendencies within, which must be carefully corrected; and there is a great adversary who must be steadfastly resisted. Therefore, young men, be strong; let the Word of God abide in you; overcome the wicked one.

Delightful as the prospect now seems to your bounding heart, yet, because you are fallen creatures, imperfectly restored to holiness, your spirits will sometimes flag; your desires will grow feeble; the world will come in between you and your joy. Therefore, think often why you ought to engage and go forward in the Lord's work, and what shall be the results of your perseverance in it. Not that your own reflections are enough to uphold you; you will need at every step the aid of the Good Spirit; but, as he works in the heart by motives, let your motives be distinctly defined.

First, as I have already stated, the glory of God is the end of your existence, the very reason why you were called into being at all. You cannot frustrate that end; but there are two different ways in which God may be glorified by you. He may be glorified by your active, willing, affectionate service, consequent upon your full and free salvation; or he will be glorified by your fearful destruction, your remediless perdition. But I forget, I am no

Addressing those who have chosen the Lord as *their* Lord, and the Lord's service as their joy; who glorify him not by constraint, but willingly.

Secondly, you are not your own, but are bought with a price, therefore bound to consecrate yourselves to him; all you have, and all you are, being as by right of purchase.

Thirdly, gratitude calls upon you to be devoted to him who hath loved you with an everlasting love, and hath done for you what man or angel could never do; even bearing your sins in his own body on the tree, dying that you might live.

Fourthly, your fellow-men are dying around you, sinking by millions into eternal, unutterable anguish; and even spending their short earthly existence in dissatisfaction or positive misery.

Fifthly, God's instrument for promoting his own glory on earth, and for saving souls, is the gospel, which must be carried to men, or they will not seek it for themselves.

Lastly, the dissemination of the gospel is committed to the church, and of the church young men are the strength; therefore, they ought to be up and doing, lest the work of God should languish.

The church has its hoary heads encircled by a halo of glory, but they are slipping into the tomb. The young must fill their places. They have toiled and laboured; the young must enter into their labours. They are laying down their arms; the young must take them up. Christ must have a seed to give him, while sun and moon endure.—The church has its men in their prime. They have learned wisdom, the young must act upon their wisdom. They are the leading officers of the army; the young are the active soldiers.

Again, happy results are sure to flow from earnest engagement in the service of God.

First, to young men themselves. Early devotedness and decision will save them from much temptation to sin. Taking their stand at once for God and his cause, they will be brought into the company of the pious more than that of the wicked; at least, the wicked will not choose them as their most desirable companions, nor will they assail them with temptations to sin, so freely as they assail the undecided. Vice will not show herself so openly in their presence, as in that of those who stand on neutral ground. The ungodly will understand that they do not belong to them, and the godly will gladly hail them as friends, so that the exhilarating and strengthening privilege of Christian communion will be readily accorded to them.

Again, the work in which they are engaged, if pursued seriously and prayerfully, will bring them into continual contact with eternal realities, and will tend greatly to strengthen and mature their personal holiness and growth in grace. While the very difficulties of that work, by leading them constantly to the throne of grace, and to habitual reliance on the aid of the blessed Spirit, will deepen and elevate their personal piety. And Christ will, one day, bestow on his faithful servants a glorious reward; although it be not of debt, but of grace. They that are wise shall shine as the sun; and they that turn away to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.

Secondly, happy results will flow to the church and the world from devoted engagement in the service of God.

"My Word shall not return unto me void." No earnest endeavour for the salvation of souls, and for the glory of God, shall fail of its effect, though that

effect may be somewhat different from what the worker anticipated. The Lord has his hidden ones in the earth; his good soil prepared to receive the good seed. Blessed hand that shall scatter that seed; it shall reap a holy and joyful harvest! "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea." "All nations shall bow down to Christ; all people shall call him blessed. The sorrows and groans of creation shall terminate, the days of millennial glory shall certainly come; and happy, happy they whose labours and prayers shall have assisted in their accomplishment. He that soweth, and he that reapeth shall rejoice together. Pray then, young men, not merely that the Lord would send forth more labourers into his harvest, but that you may be among those honoured labourers.

This work is presented to every one. There is not a young man in Britain who may not be a missionary, either at home or abroad. I do not even except the pining invalid. He may be to all around him a preacher of Christ, by his meek and holy deportment, and by his gracious words. He may do much, if his heart is set upon working for his Master.

But it is to those who have health and strength that I especially address myself; to those of bounding spirit and active limb, of strong heart and skilful hand; to those who, even if there were no *useful* outlet to their energies, would seek some laborious pastime, rather than be still. It is such young men, particular, that Christ calls to go and work in his vineyard; yea, to *come and work with himself*. Let this be your ambition and your aim, and you may look down with pity upon the eager combatants for the riches and the pleasure of this vanishing life.

But it is not enough that your hearts be set upon this great work, you must ascertain how you individually may best promote it. Spasmodic and desultory efforts, though you should spend your lives in them, will do little. Many well-meaning persons fail miserably for want of a fixed plan. Now their hearts are set on Missionary work abroad, now at home. For a little while the whole attention is devoted to the instruction of the young; and again, the state of the heathen, in our large cities, absorbs them. At one time, they rush into the contest against Popery; at another, into that against infidelity. Thus they are ever doing, and effect almost nothing.

Consider carefully for what you are fitted by natural endowment, by acquired accomplishment, or by position in society. Settle your plan, by mature consideration, and perseveringly follow it. If called by the grace and the providence of God to the work of the holy ministry, at home or abroad, it be your sole aim to fit yourself for the discharge of its sacred duties. Study, pray, strive that you may be workmen needing not to be ashamed. Strong enemies will be around you, you will need strong armour. You will have to deal not merely with the ordinary corruptions of the human *heart*, but with the extraordinary corruptions of the human *intellect*, which are afflicting the times. Romanism, Germanism, here-y of every shape and every hue, all forms of evil will come bristling to the onset. Therefore, let the Word of God abide in you. You must go down into Egypt to imbibe its learning; beware of its magicians. Ever wield that rod which shall swallow up the serpent. Be careful of your health. A puny soldier may faint at his work, or leave it half done. Christ needs warriors now, "strong," physically as well as mentally.

Abound in prayer, seek large supplies of the Blessed Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit. Ever depend on him for strength, and wisdom, and success.

entirely devoted to your work. Have no occupation which does not bear upon it. You were never your own; but you are now doubly the Lord's—you are the Lord's by redemption and by *self-dedication*.

And you, young men, Christ's servants, who are not in the work of the ministry, but in some lawful temporal calling, "Be diligent in business," but be also " fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord." Innumerable channels of usefulness are open to you. Sabbath schools; district visiting; tract distribution; encouragement of missions; visiting the sick; relieving the poor; promoting of education; strengthening the hands of ministers; carefully performing the duties of home, and setting an example of honour and integrity in business. If you are "in your place," your duties may be performed to Christ quite as certainly as those of a minister of the gospel. He says to you as to him, "Son, go work in my vineyard." Darkness still covers the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the prince of darkness feels that his throne is tottering, that the Sun of Righteousness will ere long break forth, and terminate his reign.

Ancient superstitions are shaken. The very chains of caste, so long deemed immoveable, are breaking from off the fettered Hindoo. The science and literature of Britain have poured confusion over the mysteries of his sacred books. His dark-eyed girls throng to the school of the Christian; and brave the obloquy of receiving knowledge. And even, embracing the glorious gospel, here and there an ardent youth casts away his sacred string, sits down to eat with the European, and goes forth to preach Christ to his wondering or blaspheming countrymen. The wall of China is no longer an invincible bulwark against the gospel; and Buddha and Confucius are losing their worshippers and their votaries. The Negro casts away his fetish, and kneels in his chains to the God of heaven. In some portions of the frozen North, incantation has given way to prayer. And even among the wandering Indians, there are souls that have imbibed the truth concerning the Great Spirit; while the islander of the vast Pacific has hushed his war song, has thrown by his poisoned arrow and his assegai, and sits at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. Here and there also a Jew has ceased his blasphemy, looks upon Him whom he has pierced, mourns, and is in bitterness for him; and adores the Messiah, no longer *expected*, but *come* to redeem. And lastly, the Man of Sin totters on his throne; his children conspire against him; his very priests abuse their idol; whole families and villages cast off his yoke; and, impotently raging, he feels his end draw on apace; though he exalts himself, and claims the sovereignty of the earth.

All these are encouragements to Christ's messengers to go forth; to redouble their efforts, assured that their labours shall not be in vain in the Lord, and hoping that long as others have wrought only in faith, they may be indulged with something of sight.

There is work for *all*; O! for ten thousand times all who are willing to engage in it. The trembling of the god of this world is not his defeat; the shaking of his ramparts is not their overthrow. He is striving in one place to rivet the chains of superstition; in another, to replace superstition with infidelity. Lunds long since emancipated from the Man of Sin, seem almost ready to become his captives again. With dark and stealthy pace, he has glided into the high places of Britain, disguised at first, in the habit of deep piety and devoted unworldliness, which sought but to express itself in appropriate symbols and impressive forms. By little and little he thus brought back the subtle elements of the Papacy, until they pervaded, with their palatable poison, clergy and aristocracy, earnest men and sentimental women. *Protestant sisters of mercy, Popish friars and nuns, Jesuit domestics and serge-*

clad priests, seducers of the young, and confessorial tyrants of the aged, swarm again in Britain; and, to crown the whole, the Pope has openly declared our land his own; to parcel out, to govern, and to prey upon; to forbid instruction, and to command to mass; and the rulers of this once free country succumb before the impudent bravado.

The city of Rome, which so lately spurned her tyrant, and opened her gates to a glorious flood of gospel light, is fast bound up again in chains of darkness; and Austria, and Tuscany, and Spain, have drawn around them, tighter and tighter, the black pall of the deadly monster.

And the giant fabric of Indian superstition, though shaken, is not destroyed. The brahmin still exercises his mysterious sway; the blood of infants still flows in the remote temple, and Gunga, and Juggernaut, and Siva, are still fed with human life. The dark structure of Buddhism still rears its gigantic form against the truth; and the savage rites of lower and less intellectual idolatry are even yet performed by millions of our race. The false prophet rears his crescent still, though dimmed and soiled; and the wandering Arab of the desert, the pearl laden merchant of the caravan, the rich oriental artificer, and the eastern prince, in his gold and silken array, prostrate themselves at the hour of unmeaning prayer, and subscribe to the dogma—"There is no God but God; and Mahomet is his prophet."

Elsewhere, infidelity reigns. Educated in halls and colleges of the British government, many an Indian youth leaves his false philosophy and his false religion, only to doubt of all things, to toss upon a troubled sea of cheerless atheism. Multitudes of the Jews are scoffing infidels. Revolting from the absurd demands upon a blind credulity, the slave of antichrist often seeks freedom in having no faith at all. The sages of Germany propound the most ludicrous absurdities in place of religion; professing themselves wise, they have emphatically become fools; while excitable and bewildered students bow entranced before their shallow mysticism, and term their drivelling, "philosophy." Imported into other lands, this scepticism assumes various hues, according to the genius of those who hold it; but, whether as an ethereal silvery cloud, it floats over the intellects of the refined and "spiritual," or as a black and murky vapour settles upon the minds of the vulgar and sensual, it hides the clear sunshine of the gospel alike from the one and from the other, and, as an inevitable consequence, it obscures the road to morality and happiness.

In Britain—"Christian" and "Protestant" Britain—how many thousands know nothing of the Word of eternal life; sit in the sunshine with souls in darkness; wallow in the mire of unbelief and sensuality, or pine out a haggard existence in squalid hovels, having scarcely sufficient to support existence of the bread that perisheth, and nothing, absolutely nothing, of that which endureth unto everlasting life. Living like the beasts that perish, they die without hope. On their benighted souls no ray of heavenly light has ever shone. Rioting in intemperance, or pining in famine, there arises from their squalid habitations the frenzied shout of the drunkard, or the low wail of the dying. Along dim and crowded lanes, up narrow staircases, and down into subterranean dens, want and pestilence stalk, and carry off their victims to untimely graves; while the foot of the merciful, or the voice of the messenger of glad tidings, seldom, if ever, reaches their desolate abodes; and their cry, as they go down into the still deeper wretchedness of the place of everlasting woe, scarcely startles the gay and the luxurious, though it enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and asks for judgment upon a selfish and soul-neglecting nation.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only cure for the temporal, as well as for

the spiritual misery of man; therefore, the truest philanthropy is to spread its blessings; and he who devotes himself to this work, is the best benefactor of his race.

Look at the change wrought in heathen lands, when they embrace the gospel. Smiling habitations and fruitful fields rise instead of mud huts, and swamps, and forests. The naked savage warrior is clothed and gentle, and learns the arts of civilization: the degraded female becomes the modest and instructed woman; and law and order are established. And the conversion of a nation from Popery to true Protestantism, is just a conversion from sordid ignorance, oppression, and misrule, to knowledge, good government, and liberty. Sin is the destruction of any people, and the more sin in a land, the more misery. What meaneth this cry for bread in the cities? What mean these groans of the oppress; these shouts of warfare; this smouldering of a fire which seems ready to burst out, and consume all governments on the face of the earth? What meaneth this fearful cry from thousands who are dropping into the jaws of the destroyer? What has brought to the labouring earth all these throes of misery—what but sin?

Holiness will be the cure.

It is when Christ's kingdom shall come, that the desert shall become a fruitful field; that there shall be enough and to spare for all the families on the face of the earth; that restless France shall find a settled government; that starving and tumultuous Ireland shall have bread and rest; that the blood of India shall cease to flow, and the wild tribes of Africa shall mingle in liberty and peace with the white races; that the chains of Italian bondage shall be broken; that infatuated England shall cease to rush into the arms of the popish or the infidel destroyer; that the iron rod of the despot shall be broken, and the wild shout of the insurrectionist be stilled.

The millennial glory which shall terminate, as with a flood of celestial radiance, the dark period of earth's rebellion and misery, shall be ushered in, and maintained by the "knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea;"—the knowledge of the Lord, and the Lord's law carried home with power to the hearts of men, by a plenteous effusion of the Holy Spirit. Men shall then live as God directs, and, universally obedient to the King of Righteousness and Peace, the fruits of righteousness and of peace shall make the moral desert blossom as the rose. The leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the lion shall eat straw with the ox; and the farthest shores of the renovated earth shall echo with the sounds of gladness and thanksgiving. "How beautiful," then, "upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good tidings, who publish peace, who say to the cities of Judah, Behold your King! Young men, do not your hearts burn within you to be partakers of this joy; to be fellow-workers together with God, in bringing about millennial blessedness—the jubilee of earth! And if the religion of Jesus Christ alone can render earth and time happy, how much more deeply momentous is its relation to another world—to eternity!

What is the most fearful misery which the darkest corners of earth display, when compared with the wretchedness of the abodes of lost souls—the torments, the despair that are eternal! All the woes of earth are *endurable*, they shall *have an end*, in a little while they shall be as if they had never been. But the fiery lake, the despair of hell, what soul can endure; who shall dwell with everlasting burnings? The wrath of the Almighty, the Omnipresent Jehovah—who can conceive it? But it must be experienced for ever by every soul that knows not the gospel. Born under the curse of a broken law, growing up with a polluted heart, living in sin, that abominable thing which the Lord abhors, every human being who has not believed in Jesus, is ripening for the

flames. And "how shall they believe without a preacher?" "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" O! young man, reply, "Here am I, send me! By engaging in the Lord's work, you may be the instrument of saving numerous souls, of which you shall never hear till the day shall declare it. There may be gathered into heaven before you those of whom the Saviour himself may tell you with a smile of love, that you were His instrument in bringing them thither. You may stand with them in white before the throne, and as you join their enraptured song, and witness the full gush of their celestial blessedness, how will you adore Him who drew you to Himself, and sent you forth to gather these jewels for his crown, from the mines of earth, where, perchance, you toiled with tears, and in weariness—tears and weariness now all forgotten in the exceeding joy which fills you, as by His grace you shine in the celestial firmament like a star for ever and ever!

(From *Dunbartonshire*.)

Stirling, December, 1851.

P. DRUMMOND.

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