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THE PARALYSIS OF PROTESTANTISM IN ULSTER Why there is a failure to see, never mind stop, the sell-out

A sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church
by the minister, Rev. Ivan Foster

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help, Hosea 13:9.

The words of our text may justly be applied to Ulster Protestantism in this hour of crisis. It is God's diagnosis of the ailment that has beset His people in this Province and the cause of their present infirmity. It is a verdict that none among God's flock, no matter who they may be, will disagree with. Ulster Protestants have known for many years that the religious spirit of the age is wrong and that the direction it was taking us in would lead to disaster. But few have acted upon that knowledge.

Evidence of this consciousness was forthcoming in the resolutions that the members of the loyalist orders passed at their annual parades. Ecumenism was annually denounced and the Reformed Faith annually professed. There were numerous other faint echoes of those Protestant sentiments once held sincerely and almost universally in Ulster.

Yet despite being conscious, at least to some measure, of the folly of the course that Protestantism was on, Ulster's Protestants continued following that course. Evidence after evidence that Rome was unchanging, whatever changes may be seen in Protestantism, did not deter the continued march down the road to ruin that the majority of them, when spoken to individually, readily acknowledged would come. The Irish Presbyterian Church when it stepped out of the World Council of Churches did not cease its ecumenical involvement with Rome. It was like someone falling out of the ranks of a march, hesitating on the roadside while a few ranks went by, and then plunging back into the ranks again. A little further back, yes, not occupying the same position in the march, yes, but still marching on to the same ruin.

Nothing can be clearer than that the spirit of Romanism is unchanged.

Firstly , Cardinal Cahal Daly spoke, and once more out of his mouth came the proof of Rome's sympathy with and patronage of IRA terrorism. He stated that IRA gunmen must be at the negotiating table when the talks start. God excludes unrepentant murderers from heaven, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death," Revelation 21:8. They will not sit at God's table. But Cardinal Daly would have unrepentant murderers preside over Ulster. It may well be argued that because the IRA has declared a ceasefire it has given up violence. No smoker, who holds on to his cigarettes, can be said to have stopped smoking. We cannot view a terrorist who holds on to his weapons of terror as a repentant murderer.

Secondly , John Hume, leader of the Social Democrat and Labour Party, has called on Protestants to have confidence and not to fear. We must stop ploughing over the past he says. Yet that is precisely what his whole thesis is. There is not one modern notion or view in John Hume's forward looking policies. His peace and agreement is utterly based upon



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Protestants surrendering their British citizenship and acquiescing in a united Ireland. It is a matter of turning back the clock 400 years to pre-reformation Ireland and Ulster Protestants forgetting their heritage and history. It is, what John Hume himself declared a few years ago, a united Ireland or nothing that we have to accept. Both he and Gerry Adams have indicated that a changed political climate could break the political, constitutional and military stalemate and create the potential to eradicate the underlying causes of conflict. The phrase, underlying causes of conflict, has been rightly translated by an editorial in the News Letter of August 31st, as meaning, and I quote, ". . . the British government, its security forces, the unionist ethos and the constitutional position of this Province." Our refusal to accept such a scheme is called intransigence while Hume's advancing of such a view is forward looking. Rome never changes. She is all-virtuous while all opposed to her are vice personified!

Full details of the concessions made to the IRA were detailed in The Cork Examiner before the first IRA ceasefire was announced. The newspaper article claims that the British government had been consulted on the details of the IRA statement and had been unhappy with the absence of the word *permanent*. The subsequent dispute over the absence of that word lends credibility to the other claims in the article. Since the ceasefire was announced, Gerry Adams has demonstrated that nothing has changed. He has demanded, among other things, the removal of all crown forces from nationalist areas. The threat of continued violence has been replaced by the threat of renewed violence. The psychology of the IRA move is very clever. Ulster had become almost immune to continued violence and this had therefore lost its effectiveness to some degree. On the other hand, once given a taste of 'peace', the average citizen will be ready to cut off his right arm to avoid it ceasing! The spectre of violence will grow all the more fearsome as peace continues, making it much more dreadful than the reality of the terrorism Ulster has endured for the last 25 years. Thus, without any of the risks that terrorism required of the IRA and with the status of a peace-maker bestowed upon him, Gerry Adams has made a very clever and advantageous role-swap.

But Rome was successfully combated in the past by our fathers. Why have we failed so miserably to resist this onslaught? We must come back to the word of God which heads this article.

I. WE MUST IDENTIFY THE DESTROYER.

As the defeat of Samson lay, not in the Philistines becoming stronger, but in him losing his strength, so therein lies the answer to our question. Protestantism in Ulster has destroyed itself! Samuel's words to David may be applied to ourselves, "Thou art the man". We stand condemned for the destruction of our own land. This does not mean that God absolves the terrorists and lying politicians for their wicked contribution to the misery of the last 26 years. No! It means that our sins and the sins of others have brought the destructions inflicted upon us by terrorists and traitors upon our heads.

1 Ulster has been determined to walk in the path that led to destruction. For the last 25 years, Ulster has refused to heed the warnings of God's word. We have followed the false preacher and turned from the Bible until there is hardly even the memory of God's truth in some places in our land. Protestants hardly know what Protestantism means. Thus we have become guilty of our own destruction. The earth in Noah's day was devoted or



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consecrated to violence for that is what the word filled, in Genesis 6:11, means. Here is what has happened in Ulster. We are a land devoted to corruption. This corruption is what has brought destruction. Indeed so closely linked are corruption and destruction, God uses just one Hebrew word (*shachath*) for both. *All flesh had corrupted (shachath) his way upon the earth*, Gen 6:12. *I will destroy (shachath) them with the earth*, Gen 6:13.

2. Ulster will not use the means God has prescribed for escape. As the folly of our way became clear, Ulster would not heed directions for escape. Ulster tried to say 'No' to Dublin while continuing to say 'Yes' to Rome. Having drunk the poison, now we will not drink the antidote!

3. It seems that everything that happens to us is made use of to ensure destruction. Such disasters as the Remembrance Day massacre are turned to our destruction. Ecumenism was strengthened by it, rejection of the Bible encouraged by it, idolatry advanced by it. Professing Bible believers are now to be seen attending the Romish mass because the ice was broken during the hysterical euphoria following the IRA atrocity at Enniskillen. Nothing was a lesson. Rather, every tragedy was used by ecumenists to promote rebellion against God.

II. WE MUST SEE THE EXTENT OF THE DESTRUCTION

Let us take a look at God's use of this word *shachath* and we shall see in the following verses the exact extent of what our sins have done to Ulster.

Exodus 8:24. Here *shachath* is translated by the word *corrupted*. Our sins have become as a swarm of flies like that which corrupted Egypt. A fly is a tiny insect, insignificant in itself yet combined with a myriad and it presents a major disaster. The sins of Ulster's Protestants have been multiplying until they are a swarm, separating us from God, Isaiah 59:1. Nothing spreads disease like the fly. So there has been a spreading and a multiplying of the sins of Ulster. Every law of God, every standard of decency is trampled underfoot in Ulster. Lewdness and fornication are everywhere. It is as if a swarm of flies had descended and carpeted Ulster with their filthiness.

Exodus 21:26. Here the word *shachath* is translated *perish*. There has been a perishing of the light in Ulster. There is a great blindness to God's truth. This is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to instil some knowledge of what is happening in our Province. There is a blindness upon the people. Their eyes have perished or been destroyed. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, Isaiah 56:10. How tragic for a land when the watchmen, those with the duty of watching out for the people's spiritual wellbeing, are dumb and silent because they are blind. Some have not yet seen the danger or the threat in Ulster.

Exodus 32:7. Here the word is linked with *idolatry*. The increasing links between Romanism and Protestantism invariably mean an increase in idolatry. Links with Rome will most certainly mean a destroying of ourselves with idolatry.

Proverbs 18:9. It is linked with a spirit of *slothfulness*. Gone are the days of the Protestant work ethic. Today, the guiding motive of so many is what they can get for nothing. Grants, allowances, subsistences and hand-outs are to be sought by every means, fair or foul. *I have a right to it* is the slogan of one and all. Such a spirit is evidence of the destructive force at work in our midst.

II Kings 17:20. Here we find our word translated by the English word *spoilers*. Have we not seen spoilers at work in Ulster? Lives, homes, marriages, businesses, towns, villages, districts--all have fallen prey to the spirit of spoiling. We have watched our land corrupt



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and rot away before our eyes and it is because of the destruction wrought by our sins.

III. WE MUST RECOGNISE THE ONLY HOPE WE HAVE OF DELIVERANCE

"But in me is thine help." There must be a turning again to the Lord and God's people must be the first to act. This indication that there is help in the Lord is also an invitation to apply for that help. How is that done? you ask. The very next verse says, *I will be thy king*. Help is found by those who make Christ their King.

1. It calls for a ceasing of rebellion. No more self rule. Not the conditional cease-fire of the IRA, but an utter surrender to Christ. A forsaking of all sin. A yielding up of control and sovereignty to Christ alone. Paul said to Christ, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts 9:6. That is surrender. Here is an ending of rebellion.

2. There must be an obeying of His law. Many believe in a Christianity that has little relationship to the Bible. Such is a false religion. The Bible is the Christian's chart and compass. It is our sole rule of faith and duty. The Book of God must become our meat and drink, our daily counsellor.

3. There must be a public honouring of Christ. *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?* Mal 1:6. The distinctiveness of a God-honouring life is absent from the church of Christ today.

Where there is such a turning to Christ then there shall be a knowing His help. Such help our fathers testified of. *Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us*, I Samuel 7:12. He stands ready to help all who call upon Him in sincerity. *And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee*, II Chronicles 14:11.

Each one needs help in the face of eternity. The constitutional crisis that has overtaken us is but symptomatic of the greater crisis that is fast overtaking all who are out of Christ. As in the affairs of an nation, so in the affairs of men. There is an hour when the consequences of living in defiance of Christ will catch up with men. Who will help you, sinner, in the hour of your departure from this world to face the eternal consequences of your sins? Having defied Him you must now face Him as He comes to judge the rebel. As Ulster could have avoided the crisis that now stares her in the face, had she lived in obedience, rather than in defiance, of God's word, so you may be saved from the certain doom which follows sin. Who can save you? None can but the Lord Jesus Christ. Flee to Him now. Under the covering of His blood there is that perfect and lasting help that sinners need. There is pardon for all crimes. There is redemption from sin's power and dominion. *Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*, I Cor 15:3. Seek the shelter of the blood that He shed for the remission of sins upon the cross without further delay.

*There is life for a look at the crucified One, there is life at this moment for thee.
Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved. Unto Him Who did die on the tree.*