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THE CHRISTIAN AND THE FUTURE

Our times are wholly in the Lord's hands: and the Christian in contemplating the future will have regard to this and other relevant statements in the Scriptures, such as, "We know not what a day may bring forth," and "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." Yet, while leaving themselves in the Lord's hands as to what future time and days are to be still allotted to them in the World, believers are to be exercised as to their life and conversation in relation to the Lord in view of the remainder of their days.

Counting the cost as to following Christ Jesus as their Saviour and Master must continue to be a needful and personal concern to Christians. At the beginning of their spiritual career the requirements of Christ, "If any man follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me," still require serious consideration in view of the future, however long or short the believer will still be left in the World. There may still be sufferings for Christ's sake and the gospel's awaiting the believer: there will always be duties and burdens to discharge and carry: calls to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ may well be ahead. And the divine Master is worthy to be followed and served whatever the cost; and thus the Christian needs to seek to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and to exercise a willing mind in serving Him, whatever the cost now or in the future. It appeared in the case of Ruth that whatever the future was to hold for her of trials and difficulties, as indicated by Naomi, she was resolved to cleave to and follow Naomi and Naomi's God. She counted the cost and the Lord dealt most favourably with her as one who had come to trust under the wings of the God of Israel.

A devoted and gracious interest in the spiritual welfare of generations yet to come, ought most assuredly to engage the heart of every true Christian. The Church of Christ to-day, at the outset of a New Year, must surely reflect on the past faithfulness

of God's servants and witnesses, who are now resting from their labours with their Redeemer in heaven. On account of their love to the Word of God and precious souls, they were instrumental in preserving that Word in their day and making it known to their children. And all those to-day, who enjoy the Word of God and the Gospel of salvation and possess a humble, living hope in Christ Jesus of eternal salvation, have laid upon them also the duty and privilege commanded the fathers referred to by Asaph in Psalm 78: "For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children." At this present time there are open, unashamed activities in the realm of the professing Christian Church in our Nation to undermine confidence in the Bible as God's inspired and unerring Word. The Reformed faith based clearly on the doctrines and teaching of the Word is being boldly disregarded and the claims of the law of God are being called in question. All this contributes to the great danger of error instead of divine truth being made known now and in the future to generations to come. Therefore every exercised Christian must hold fast to the Word and gospel of God that they may hand these to the rising generation, that 'they also might come to set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.'

Although the Lord may have kept a believer in his past experience until now, from conspicuous backsliding and with his garments unspotted from the World; yet this must not influence such to be unwatchful and unguarded for the future. The Scriptures give a pertinent warning: "Therefore let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall." For future "Keeping," the Christian requires to look again and again to the mercy and power of God in Christ. The prayer of the Psalmist, in this connection, was: "Lord Keep me, for I trust in thee: shamed let me never be." Here the Psalmist clearly is concerned not only with the present but with the future. If spared for a while beyond the present, there are unknown Worldly influences to be met, there are new temptations to be encountered and there may be difficult times of testing and trial for the Lord's people. And the end of the journey will have its own testimony as to where those who professed Christ stand in relation to Him. As Paul observes in writing to the Hebrews, viz., "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end," and thus bringing in the "beginning" and the "end" of the Christian's adherence to Christ by faith. We repeat as a guide and example to Christians for the future, the petition of the Psalmist: "Shamed let me never be."

Then there is the Christian's personal hope for the future, as to what death is to mean for him, as to where he is to stand at the Judgment seat of Christ and as to what his place in eternity is to be. Such have been "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." They are enjoined to rejoice in this hope which holds out for them in the future, a death without a sting, full and final acquittal at the day of Judgment, and that they shall be for ever with their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Much in their own evil hearts of an unholy character may well tend to weaken and discourage them in contemplation of the future; and they may tremble even at the thought of their own departure out of this World into Eternity. But they have the Throne of grace to turn to, where they may plead, in the name of the Lord Jesus, that their hope may abound by the power of the Holy Spirit. And when this hope abounds, it lifts the believer's heart and mind above every discouragement from within and without, and enables him to anticipate the fulfilment of the promises of God which are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, with comfort.

Although to-day, as in past times, the wicked appear to walk on every side, yet the Most High has His remnant according to the election of grace in the World. And the Christian in studying his Bible sees therein the purpose of God with regard to future times and all periods of the World's history. By the Spirit, the sweet Psalmist of Israel recorded long ago: "They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, througout all generations." And again David writes: "They shall come, and declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this." And the Christian can rejoice in these declarations which affect the Church and Kingdom of God in the World after his own day in it, right down until the last trumpet sounds. There is to be a people on the earth to remember the Lord's death till He come, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

And finally, a word to sinners in general. Jesus refers to Himself as the Light of the World. This He was and is. And Paul writes of Him: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save sinners." And Jesus Himself speaks thus: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light; lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth." And again Jesus says: "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ve may be the children of light." (John chap. xii, v. 35-36). The children of liøht are such for time and shall be so in a perfect measure in Eternity.

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN

A Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon

“ But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”—Matthew 15: 26, 27.

“ But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.”—Mark 7: 27, 28.

The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanitish woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the centre, where the husbandry had been more abundant. In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled His sheaf. Let those who reap after Him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become believers. Let us go even to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the land be under a curse, for even there we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer’s crown. Our Heavenly Father has children everywhere. The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement; and strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers, and doubly glorifies the grace of God. Such was this Canaanitish woman. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of Him in whom she believed, and perhaps had never seen His person at all until the day when she fell at His feet and said, “ Lord help me! ” Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire His eye caught its glitter; if there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns He failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus. He was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman’s faith, and watching it and delighting in it He resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might each one flash its brilliance and delight His soul. Therefore He tries her faith by His silence, and by His discouraging replies, that He might see its strength; but He was all the while delighting in it, and secretly sustaining it,

and when He had sufficiently tried it, He brought it forth as gold, and set His own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it even unto thee even as thou wilt."

I am hopeful that perhaps some poor soul under very discouraging circumstances may nevertheless be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith, and though as yet it enjoys no peace and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened this morning by the Canaanitish woman.

The mouth of faith can never be closed; for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter, and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter, because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases, and she meant to pray to Him until He yielded to her importunity. for she was confident that He could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ*. He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously; she came and threw herself at His feet. Her child's case was very urgent, her motherly heart was very tender, and her cries were very piercing, and yet He answered never a word. As if He were deaf and dumb, He passed her by; yet was she not staggered; she believed in Him, and even He himself could not make her doubt Him, let Him try silence if He would. It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker might believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save, and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt. Even if you should pray in vain by the mouth together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and His power to save cross your mind. What if you cannot grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you, what if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin, what if no gleams of joy should visit your spirit, yet believe you Him who cannot lie. "Though He slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in Him." That was splendid faith. It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though He smite me, yet will I trust in Him," but Job said, "Though He slay me." If He put on the garb of an executioner, and come out against me, yet will I believe Him to be full of love: He is good and gracious still, I cannot doubt it and therefore at His feet I will lie down and look up, expecting grace at His hands. Oh for such faith as this! Oh soul, if you have it you are a

saved man, as sure as you are alive. If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort, and salvation is yours.

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples*. They did not treat her well, but yet perhaps not altogether ill. They were not like their Master, but frequently repulsed those who would come to Him. Her noise annoyed them, she kept to them with boundless perseverance, and therefore they said, "Send her away for she crieth *after us*." Poor soul, she never cried after *them*, it was after their Master. Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes, and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the Gospel is caused by the people's eagerness to hear *them*, whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the Gospel message which they are charged to deliver. Give us any other theme, and the multitude would soon melt away. Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly towards her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the boon she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat everybody, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped. Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner, perhaps even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature; Andrew and Philip and the rest of them considered her very impertinent and presumptuous; but she thought of her little daughter at home, and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, so she pressed up to the Saviour's feet and said, "Lord help me." Cold, hard words and unkind, unsympathetic behaviour could not prevent her pleading with Him in whom she believed. Ah, poor sinner, perhaps you were saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such and such a good Christian man has dealt very bitterly with me, he has doubted my sincerity and questioned the reality of my repentance, and caused me the deepest sorrow; it seems as if he did not wish me to be saved." This is very trying, but if you have true faith in the Master, you will not mind us disciples, neither the gentlest of us, nor the most crooked of us, but just urge on your suit with your Lord until He deigns to give you an answer of peace.

Her mouth again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine, which appeared to confine the blessing to a favoured few: the Lord Jesus

Christ said, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman's heart like a talent of lead. "Alas," she might have thought, "then He is not sent to me; verily do I seek for that which He reserves for the Jews." Now, the doctrine of election which is assuredly taught in scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for, if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage; and yet often to the uninstructed ear the doctrine of the divine choice of a people from before the foundation of the world acts with very depressing effect. We have known poor seekers mournfully say, "Perhaps there is no mercy for me; I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed." They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life. Ah, dear soul, if you have the faith of God's elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God, but you will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of heaven. What though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel, yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the spirit, and therefore the Syro-phoenecian woman was included even where she thought she was shut out, and you may also be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you. At anyrate, say to yourself, "In the election of grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I?" Reasoning thus you will press forward; in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

The mouth of faith in this case was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness. Christ spoke of dogs: He meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs: she did not at all dispute it, but yielded the point by saying, "Truth, Lord." She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog. I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the boon she sought for on account of any merit of her own; she depended upon the goodness of Christ's heart; not on the goodness of her cause, and upon the excellence of His power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea; yet conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered; she cried, notwithstanding all, "Lord, help me." O sinner, if thou feelest thyself to be the worst sinner out of Hell, still pray, believingly pray for mercy. If thy sense of unworthiness be

enough to drive thee to self-destruction, yet I beseech thee, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God; for thy salvation rests in no measure or degree upon thyself, or upon anything that thou art or hast been or canst be. Thou needest to be saved from thyself, not by thyself. It is thine to be empty that Jesus may fill thee; thine to confess thy filthiness that He may wash thee; thine to be less than nothing that Jesus may be everything to thee.

There was beside this a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences*. "It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful, to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she did not quite see all that He might have meant, but what she did see was enough to pour cold water upon the flame of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched. It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill; for her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or did not mean, she would not cease to trust Him, and urge her suit with Him. There are a great many things in and around the Gospel which men see as in a haze, and being misunderstood they rather repel than attract seeking souls; but be they what they may, we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish I perish." Beside the great stumbling stone of election there are truths and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born again, about inbred sin, and all sorts of things; in fact, a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus, but he who gives Christ the faith which He deserves says, "I fear none of these things. Lord, help me, and I will still confide in Thee. I will approach Thee, I will press through obstacles to Thee, and throw myself at Thy dear feet, knowing that, 'Him that cometh to Thee thou wilt in no wise cast out.'"

Faith never disputes with the Lord. Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped Him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought Him." She cried, "Lord help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. Faith in God implies agreement with what God says, and consequently it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says whether discouraging or encouraging. She never has a "but" or an "if," or even a

"yet" to put in but she stands to it, "Thou hast said it, Lord, and therefore it is true: Thou hast ordained it, Lord, and therefore it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says*. She said, "Truth, Lord." What had He said? "You are comparable to a dog!" "Truth, Lord; so I am." "It would not be meet that the children should be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs." "Truth, Lord, it would not be fitting, and I would not have one of Thy children deprived of grace for me." "It is not your time yet," said Jesus, "the children must first be fed; children at the meal times and dogs after dinner; this is Israel's time, and the Gentile's may follow after. But not yet." She virtually replies, "I know it, Lord, and agree thereto."

She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord's dispensing His own grace according to His sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who cavil at divine sovereignty. It would have proved that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the Covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen: she never wished Israel to be robbed for her. Dog as she was she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the divine household shifted and changed for her. She assented to all the Lord's appointments. That is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God, even if it seems adverse to herself, which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible, and assents to God's word whether it be like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay. If the Word of God be true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it. It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God declares. In yielding lies safety. Say "Truth Lord," and you shall find salvation.

Note that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped Him in it*. "Truth," she said, "but yet Thou art my Lord. Thou callest me 'dog,' but Thou art my Lord for all that: Thou accountest me unworthy to receive Thy bounties but Thou art my Lord, and I still own Thee as such." She is of the mind of Job: "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" She is willing to take the evil and say, "Whether the Lord gives, or whether He refuses, blessed be His Name; He is my Lord still." Oh this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the disputatious spirit, and not only assents to the Lord's will, but worships Him in it.

And, you observe, when she said "Truth, Lord," *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her.* "Lord," she said, "Thou hast classed me among the dogs": she does not say, "Put me among the children," but she only asks to be treated as a dog is, "The dogs eat the crumbs," says she. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed: "Let it be as it is: if it be Thy will, Lord, it is my will"; only she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair. May we have such a faith as hers, and never enter into controversy with God.

Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that *FAITH ARGUES*, though it does not dispute. "Truth, Lord," said she, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs." This woman's argument was correct, and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord's own premises, and you know if you are reasoning with a man you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying, "I am no dog"; but she says, "Yes, I am a dog." She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem* such as was never excelled in this world.

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position*, "I am a dog," said she, "but Lord, Thou hast come all the way to Sidon; here Thou art close on the borders of my country, and therefore I am not like a dog out in the street; I am a dog under the table." Mark tells us that she said. "The dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." She as good as says, "Lord, Thou seest my position: I was a dog in the street, afar off from Thee, but now Thou hast come and preached and Thou art in this very house doing deeds of grace while I look on, and therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table; therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs." Do you see? You admit that you are a sinner, and a great sinner, but you say, "Lord, I am a sinner that is permitted to hear the Gospel, therefore bless it to me. I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such. When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of Thy people, I am there to hear it: whenever the saints gather together, and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up and wishing I were among them, but still Lord, since Thou hast had the grace to let me be a hearer of the Gospel, wilt Thou reject me now that I desire to be a receiver of it? To what end and purpose hast

Thou brought me so near, or rather come so near to me, if after all Thou wilt reject me? " To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman, and that she used it well.

Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship*. " Truth, Lord," she says, " I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their masters' table*." See the stress laid there by Matthew: " From *their masters' table*." " I cannot say that Thou art my Father, I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but Thou art my Master, and masters feed their dogs; they give at least the crumbs to those dogs which own them as their Lord." The plea is very like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, " Make me as one of thy hired servants ": only his faith was far weaker than hers. " Lord, if I do not stand in relation to Thee as a child, yet I am Thy creature: Thou hast made me, and I look up to Thee and beseech Thee not to let me perish. If I have no other hold upon Thee I have at least this, that I ought to have served Thee, and therefore I am Thy servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to Thee at least under the covenant of works if I do not under the covenant of grace, and oh, since I am Thy servant, do not utterly reject me. Thou hast some property in me by creation, at any rate; oh, look upon me, and bless me. The dogs eat what falls from their masters' table, let me do the same." She spies out a dog's relation to its master, and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children*. The woman appears to me to argue thus—" Thou hast called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs, but then the little dogs are under the children's table; they associate with the children, even as I have been with Thy disciples to-day. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them and would be glad to be among them." How heartily do I wish that some poor soul would catch at this and say, " Lord, I cannot claim to be one of Thy children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me, and speak kindly and comfortably to me, and pray for me, and desire my salvation; so, Lord, if I am not a child, yet Thou callest me a little dog; so I am, but give me a little dog's treatment, give me the crumb of mercy which I seek."

I think there was another point of force in her plea: it was this, *the abundance of the provision*. She had a great faith in Christ and believed big things of Him, and therefore she said, " Lord,

there is no great strength in Thine argument if Thou dost intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for Thou hast so much that even while the children are being fed the dogs may get the crumbs, and there will be enough for the children still." Where it is a poor man's table, and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed; but when it is a king's table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings—not the bread the master *casts* down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful. "No, Lord," said she, "I would not have Thee take away the bread from Thine own children, God forbid that such a deed should be done for me; but there is enough for Thy children in Thine overflowing love and mercy, and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a crumb compared with what Thou art daily bestowing upon others."

Now here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ's point of view.* "If, great Lord," said she, "Thou lookest at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take Thee at Thy word, and plead that if I be a dog, to Thee then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for Thy great power and goodness to bestow on me." She used a diminutive word too, and said, "A little crumb." The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children's table. What bold faith this was! She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price; she thought it worth ten thousand worlds to her, but yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is He in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing. If a man give a crumb to a dog he has a little the less, but if Jesus gives mercy to the greatest of sinners He has none the less, He is just as rich in condescension and mercy and power to forgive as He was before. The woman's argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest, and, best of all, she believed most marvellously.

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality, arguing according to the eternal purpose of God; of what was the Lord's grand design in giving the bread to the children, or in other words, sending a divine revelation to Israel? Why, it always was His purpose that through the children the dogs should get the bread; that through Israel the Gospel should be handed to the Gentiles. It had always been His plan to bless His own heritage that His way might be

known upon earth, His saving health among all nations; and this woman somehow or other, by a divine instinct, fell into the divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret, or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument. In other words, it ran thus—"It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed: Lord, I do not ask Thee to cease giving the children their bread; nor do I even ask Thee to hurry on the children's meal; let them be first fed, but even while they are eating let me have the crumbs which drop from their well filled hands, and I will be content." There is a brave argument for you, poor coming sinner. I leave it in your hands, and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it, and if you can turn it to good account you shall prevail with the Lord this day.

Our last and closing head is this: Faith wins her suit. This woman's faith first *won a commendation for itself*. Jesus said, "O, woman, great is thy faith." She had not heard of the prophecies concerning Jesus; she was not bred and born and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a believer, and yet did become a believer of the first class. It was marvellous that it should be so, but grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord before in her life, she was not like those who had associated with Him for many months: and yet, with but one view of Him, she gained this great faith. It was astonishing, but the grace of God is always astonishing. Perhaps she had never seen a miracle: all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come, and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was He, and on this she relied. With all our advantages, with the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ, and understanding the doctrines of the Gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament, with many years of observation and experience, our faith ought to be much stronger than it is. Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus himself commending her says, "O woman, great is thy faith."

But her faith prevailed further, that it won a commendation for the mode of its action, for, according to Mark, Jesus said, "Go thy way; for this saying the devil is gone out of thy daughter"; as if He rewarded the saying as well as the faith which suggested it. He was so delighted with the wise, and prudent, and humble yet courageous manner in which she turned His words against Himself. The Lord who commends faith afterwards commends the fruits and act of faith. The tree consecrates the fruit. No man's actions can be acceptable with God till He himself is

accepted, but the woman having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire*: "The devil is gone out of thy daughter," and he was gone at once. She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest, which she had not done since the demon had possessed her. Our Lord, when He gave her the desire of her heart gave it in a grand manner, He gave her a cort of *carte blanche*, and said, "Be it unto thee as thou wilt." It was as if the Lord of glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman's faith. The Lord grant to you and me in all times of our struggling to be able thus by faith still to conquer.

This woman is a lesson to all outsiders, to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the house of God, who perhaps have been negligent of all religion for almost all your lifetime. This poor woman is a Sidonian; she comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before, one of the accursed seed of Canaan, and yet for all that she became great in the Kingdom of Heaven because she believed, and there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the church of God should not be in the very centre of it, and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole. O you poor outcasts and far off ones, take heart and comfort, and come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in His hands. This woman is next of all an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavours after salvation. Have you been praying, and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord, and do you seem to be more unhappy than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment, and believed that you made them in the divine strength, and have they failed? Yet trust in Him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, Whose promise has not lost its truth, and Whose arm has not lost its power to save. Cling to the Cross. If the earth sink beneath thee, cling on; if storms should rage, and all the floods be out, and even God himself seem to be against thee, cling to the Cross. there is thy hope. Thou canst not perish there.

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for herself, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner do not do it in a cold-hearted manner; plead as for your own soul and your own life. That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own and with tears entreats an answer of peace.

Lastly, recollect that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter. Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. A mother's love makes her heroic for her child; and so when you are pleading with God plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you also, "O woman, great is thy faith; the devil is gone out of thy daughter; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake.

FRIENDLY VISITS

by Matthew Henry

(continued from page 244)

Suffer, I beseech you, a word of counsel, and direction, and let us all endeavour that our visits of our friends, and our inquiries into their state may be made to serve some good purpose; that they may not only be rectified, and made innocent, but sanctified, and made excellent; and may be so managed as to rescue that from being lost time, which we cannot but be sensible has been too much so, and to make it pass well in our account. Even acts of civility may be so improved as to become acts of piety; and the common salutation of a "How do you," may by a good intention be advanced to the rank of those good words, which they that fear the Lord speak often one to another, and which the Lord hearkens and hears, and of which He writes a book of remembrance, Mal. iii, 16. As the sincere sacred words of "God be with you," and "God bless you," when they are used carelessly and lightly, degenerate, and turn into the sin of taking the name of the Lord our God in vain, so this common word, "How do you do?" and "How does your family?" may be consecrated by a principle of Christian friendship, and we may even therein glorify God.

This, which I say concerning the personal visits of our friends, may also be much of it accommodated to paper visits, by letter. The keeping up of our friendly correspondences, which is the chief intention of most of the letters we write, who are not men of business in the world, ought to arise from a good principle, and to be managed by us as becomes Christians, that we may not have to answer for waste paper as well as lost time.

Let us then be governed in this matter by the following directions.

1. Let our friendly visits be the proofs and preservatives of brotherly love. Brotherly love is the law of Christ's kingdom, the livery of His family, the great lesson to be learned in His school;

nothing is more the beauty and strength of the Christian Church, nor a brighter ornament to that holy religion which we make profession of: it is maintained and kept up by reciprocal kindnesses, and particularly by mutual visits: this, therefore, we must intend, both in giving and receiving them, and manage them accordingly, to testify our affection to those whom we are obliged by nature, providence, or grace, in a particular manner to respect and so to show the proof of our love, as the Apostle speaks, (2 Cor. viii, 24) and thereby to confirm and improve that unity wherein brethren ought to dwell together. We must therefore visit one another, that we may the better love one another, with a pure heart and more fervently.

Mutual strangeness and affected distance is both the effect and the cause of the decay of love: it is an evidence that it is cooled, and it cools it yet more, and perhaps by degrees kills it, and gives satan room to sow his tares. When relations and neighbours, and those who are under some particular ties of friendship, yet are as shy one of another, and as much on the reserve, as if they never had seen one another before in this world, and never expected to see one another in a better world, it is easy to say, contrary to what was said of the primitive Christians. *See how little these people love one another*: but when they visit each other with mutual freeness and openness, embrace each other with a cordial endearedness, and concern themselves for each other with all possible tenderness, by this it will appear that they are taught of God to love one another; and hereby the holy fire is kept burning upon the altar.

Now since our lot is cast in those latter days wherein it is foretold, that iniquity should abound, and the love of many wax cold, (Mat. xxiv, 12) those perilous times in which men shall be lovers of their own selves only, (2 Tim. iii, 1, 2) it is a good service to the public by all means possible to cultivate true and hearty friendship, and bring it into reputation. Why should we be strange one to another, who hope to be together for ever with the Lord?

But if the diseases of selfishness and deceit should prove still obstinate to the methods of cure among most people; yet if we approve ourselves warm and cordial in our love, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty, and delivered our souls: and perhaps they who are more loving than others, will have the further comfort of being better beloved than others; for he who watereth shall be watered also himself.

2. Let our friendly visits be the helps and occasions of Christian sympathy. Christian sympathy is one branch of Christian love. As it is in the natural body, it ought to be in the mystical body,

If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it (I Cor. 12, 26.). What is love but a union of souls, and a twisting of interests? And where these are, there will be sympathy, according to that law of our religion, *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* (Rom. 12, 15).

We must therefore visit our friends, and *see how they do*, that we may rejoice with them in those things which are the matter of their rejoicing: that when we find them and their families in health and peace, their employments successful, their substance increased, their relations agreeable, the vine by the side of the house fruitful, and the olive plants round about the table green and flourishing, we may be comforted in their comfort, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. vii, 13, God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and so should we, Ps. xxxv, 27. And we should be the more studious to show ourselves pleased in the prosperity of our friends, because most seek their own, and few another's weal; and thence arise envy, and emulation, and mutual jealousies.

We must likewise desire to know the state of our friends, that we may mourn with them for their afflictions, and mingle our tears with theirs: that if the hand of the Lord be gone out against them, and breaches are made on them and their comforts, we may give them some relief, by putting a respect upon them in their sorrows, and assuring them of our continued friendship, when they are most apt to be discouraged, and to think themselves slighted: also by giving them an opportunity of making their complaints to such as will hear them, not only with patience, but with tenderness and compassion, and this is some ease to a burdened spirit. And perhaps we may then speak some word in season, which God may bless for the strengthening of the weak hands, and confirming the feeble knees.

On this errand Job's friends came to visit him, when they heard of all the evil that was come upon him, that they might *mourn with him*, and *comfort him* (Job ii: 11) and it is some comfort to the mourners to have their friends mourn with them. Thus Nehemiah inquired after the condition of his friends with a tender concern; as appears by his deep resentment of the evil tidings brought him: *He sat down and wept, and mourned certain days* (Neh. i: 3, 4). Let us learn in this manner to bear one another's burdens, by a compassionate sorrow for others' griefs; and this suffering at second-hand will either prevent our own afflictions, or prepare us for them.

3. Let our friendly visits furnish us with matter for prayer and praise. Besides the plain intimation which our Master has given us, in eaching us to address ourselves to God as *Our Father*, we

have an express command *Pray one for another* (Jam. v: 16) which supposes it our duty likewise to give thanks for one another: for whatever mercy we pray for, when it is given we ought to return thanks for it. We find St. Paul in most of his Epistles, both to churches and particular friends, speaking of the prayers and thanksgivings he offered up to God daily upon their account. And it could not but be an unspeakable comfort to them, to think of the interest they had in the prayers of so great an intercessor as he was. It is written also for our learning that we may in like manner give thanks to God for our friends, making mention of them always in our prayers; that thus we may testify our affection to them, and may be really serviceable to their comfort, when perhaps we are not in a capacity of being so any other way; and that we may thus keep up the communion of saints in faith, hope and love.

Now that we may do this the more particularly, and the more sensibly, it is of good use to visit our brethren, and to *see how they do*; that, whatever is the matter of their rejoicing, and our's with them, we may make the matter of our thanksgiving to God: and whatever just complaint they make to us, we may with them spread it before the Lord, and beg relief and comfort for them. When we visit our friends, we have an opportunity of praying with them; and I heartily wish it were more practised, especially by ministers: this would indeed sanctify our visits, and turn them to a very good account. When you are sick and in trouble, you desire us to pray with you; and why should you not desire us to pray with you when you are in health and peace? that your prosperity may be continued and sanctified; and that you may be kept from the snares and temptations of it. Help likewise in returning thanks, is as necessary as help in prayer: and they who know how to value aright the privilege of communion with God, will reckon this as good an entertainment as they can either give or receive.

But besides the opportunity it gives of praying together, it gives us much assistance in praying for one another when we are alone. When we have seen our friends, and talked with them, or heard from them, we can pray the more affectionately for them. And perhaps we shall find it a furtherance to us in this part of our work, if we would make it a rule to ourselves (not to *bind* conscience, but to *mind* it) that those friends whom in the day we have visited, or have visited us, whom we have written to, or heard from, we will at night in our closets particularly pray for, and give thanks for, as there is occasion. I know not why we may not as well spread the letter of a friend before the Lord,

as Hezekiah did the letter of an enemy. And some have observed that they have had most comfort in those relations and friends which they have prayed most for: or if herein we should be disappointed, as holy David was, and those we pray for should prove unkind to us, it will be our satisfaction, as it was his, that our prayers will return into our own bosom, and we ourselves shall have the comfort of them (Ps. xxxv: 13).

It is a pious request which serious Christians commonly make one to another, both by word and letter, "Pray, remember me in your prayers"; and it is good to use it, provided it do not degenerate into a formality, and that we request this kindness from a deep sense of our own wants and unworthiness, and a real value both for the duty of prayer in general, and for our friends, and their prayers in particular, whom we suppose to have an interest in Heaven. And being separated from each other in this scattering world, a world we cannot expect to be always together in, by those mutual requests for a share in each other's prayers, we make appointments of meeting often at the same throne of grace, in hopes of meeting shortly at the right hand of the throne of glory to part no more.

4. Let our friendly visits be improved as opportunities of doing good to the souls of our friends. Spiritual charity, though it must begin at home in teaching ourselves and our families, yet it must not end there; we must contribute what we can to the edification of others in knowledge, faith, holiness and joy. This is mutual duty to be studied and done, in giving and receiving visits; that *as iron sharpens iron*, so our pious affections and resolutions may be sharpened by conversation with one another (Prov. xxvii: 17). We are often commanded to exhort one another, admonish one another, comfort one another, and stir up one another to that which is good (Heb. iii: 13; x: 25. I Thes. v: 11). And when can this be better done than when we come together, for mutual society? Then we have a price put into our hands, if we have but a heart to it, that is—skill, and will, and courage to improve it (Prov. xvii: 16).

Much has been said, and much written to promote pious discourse among Christians, but I fear to little purpose. We have all reason to lament it, that so much corrupt communication proceeds out of our mouths, and so little of that which is good, and to the use of edifying; which might either manifest grace in him who speaks, or minister grace to them who hear. *And shall vain words never have an end?* (Job xvi: 3). *Shall we reason always with unprofitable talk, and with speeches wherewith we can do no good, but are in danger of doing hurt?* (Job xv: 3).

Shall we never learn the art of introducing and keeping up profitable discourse in our conversation with our friends, such as we may hear of with comfort in that day, when by our words we must be justified, and by our words we must be condemned? (Matt. xii: 37). A visit thus improved will be fruit abounding to a good account: *What knowest thou*, but that thou mayest thus *save a soul from death*, eternal death, or at least further a soul toward life, eternal life? Thus we must confess Christ before men, as those who are not ashamed of Him or of His words: reproach for it we must not fear, but say, *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*, nay, we need not fear it, for perhaps even of them whose reproach we fear, if we manage it with meekness and humility, and without affectation, we may be had in honour. Serious godliness is an awful thing, and will command respect.

We grant that our discourses with our friends cannot be turned entirely into this channel; allowance must be made for a great deal of common talk, yet even upon that there should appear an air of religion and godliness. Though a foreigner may speak English, yet ordinarily we can discern by his pronunciation that he is a foreigner, so, though a good Christian, who belongs to another world, while he is here cannot avoid speaking much of the things of this world, yet he ought to do it in such a manner that those he converses with may take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus (Acts iv: 13) and may say unto him, *Thou art a Christian, and thy speech betrays thee*.

If it appear that we make conscience of our words, and are afraid of offending with our lips: if in our tongue be the law of kindness: if we always speak of God and His Providence, with reverence and a holy awe, like the great Mr Boyle, who, in discourse was observed never to mention the name of God without a discerning pause, or stop, leaving room for a pious thought: if we speak of common things after a godly sort, as those who accustom themselves to the language of Canaan, and not the language of Ashdod; God will hereby be honoured, our profession will be beautified, those we converse with will be edified, and say that God is with us of a truth. Our speech, though it be not always of grace, should be always with grace, seasoned with it as with salt, which gives it its own relish and savour (Col. iv: 6).

5. Let our friendly visits be improved as opportunities of getting good to our own souls. By doing good, we do indeed get good; our own lamp will burn the brighter for its lighting others; but those who are not in a capacity of doing much good in conversation, and can say little to edify others, may yet hear that which will edify themselves. They who cannot be teachers, must be

glad to be learners: and should visit those who are knowing and gracious with this design, that they may improve themselves in knowledge and grace by conversation with them, and that by walking with wise men, they may be wise. When St. Paul designed a visit to his friends at Rome, he aimed both at their spiritual benefit, and at his own. (Rom. i: 11, 12) *I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, and, that I may be comforted together with you.*

What we hear from our friends we visit that is instructive, and what we see in them that is exemplary and praiseworthy, we should take notice of and treasure up, that it may be ready for our use when there is occasion. By conversing with those who are wise and good, we should strive to be made wiser and better. Some rules either of prudence, or piety, or both, we should gather up for our own use out of every visit, that in everything we may order our conversation aright. As vain people make visits chiefly to see fashions, so serious people should make visits chiefly to learn wisdom. *A wise man will thus hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will by this means attain to wise counsels* (Prov. i: 5).

(To be continued)

SEX AND MORALITY REPORT

The Religion and Morals Committee, taking into consideration the Report on Sex and Morality prepared by a Working Party set up by the British Council of Churches and presented to a meeting of that organisation held at Lambeth in October, 1966, and, having regard to the publicity given to the Report and to the objectionable nature of its contents, considered it right to warn our people regarding it and also indicate briefly what, in our view, are some of the worst features of it.

1. Our first objection concerns the general outlook of the Working Party itself, and especially of a minority section within it. The outlook of the Working Party as a whole can readily be understood from the fact that they did not think it possible, on the basis of the evidence available, either to endorse or contradict the view generally held among Christian people today, that in recent years moral standards have declined, particularly in the realm of sexual behaviour. The more extreme outlook of the minority within the Working Party is indicated by their unwillingness to accept the terms of reference laid down for them by the British Council of Churches because these terms implied that all pre-marital and extra-marital relations are wrong.

2. Our second objection is to the modernistic and unbiblical approach of the Working Party to the subject under discussion. This anti-biblical bias was so marked as to call forth the criticism that the Seventh Commandment was not even mentioned in the Report. The question of what the Bible teaches appeared to have little weight and the whole matter is weighed, not by the standard of the infallible Word of God, but by the standard of man's own natural understanding and judgment. The Report recognises the views current in the world today, the views of biologists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and educationalists, and credence is given to what authorities in these fields teach. How unfavourably does their attitude to Scripture contrast with this. In those few places where it is referred to, it is a thoroughly modernistic approach which is adopted as we can see, for example, in the statement "Biblical critics have quite properly warned us not to be too ready to assume that we have the exact records of the authentic sayings of Jesus."

3. Our third objection is to their rejection of the Moral Law as a proper basis for moral judgments. They aver at the outset of their Report that "underlying much of our modern confusion there is a real uncertainty about what is the proper basis for Christian moral judgment," and consequently they try to resolve this confusion by attempting to find an acceptable basis for morality. But this is not to be the Moral Law, for in asserting that "intelligent Christian opinion no longer regards the Bible, or even the New Testament, as a text-book from which one can extract authoritative rulings which automatically decide contemporary problems," they necessarily imply that the Moral Law is insufficient in itself to form an adequate basis for moral judgments.

4. Our fourth objection concerns the basis they establish for morality. The Report points out that the traditional Christian outlook regards moral rules as possessing permanent and absolute validity, so that the morality of a particular act is ultimately determined by whether or not it falls under the relevant rule, while motives are regarded as an important but secondary factor in the matter. In contrast to this position they reverse the order and make motive and character the primary subject of moral judgment. While not identifying moral goodness with adherence to a particular moral code they do recognise the value of sound moral rules as an indispensable framework within which good motives and dispositions will be encouraged. They avoid giving absolute value to moral rules but allow that in many cases they are the best guidance we have. "We have argued," they say,

“ that Christianity does not offer a closed system of moral rules embodying the divine will for man applicable to all times and places and perceived by men as a Natural Law. . . . The Christian faith is not so much concerned to tie men and women to a single fixed position on sexual morality, as to commend a characteristic attitude to persons. . . . For the Christian morality is to be worked out in the ambience of faith.” This outlook is, in our view, wholly unsatisfactory, and expresses an unchristian attitude to the question of moral requirements.

Taking all these foregoing considerations into account, together with much else which we find objectionable in the Report as, for instance, (1) its failure to take cognisance of the fact that the Moral Law finds its basis in the righteous and holy character of God (which clearly proves its adequacy as a basis for moral judgments), (2) its total neglect of the question of sin (a word, incidentally, which, so far as we are aware, is not mentioned in the Report), and (3) its failure to give clear and unambiguous direction in the field of morals and particularly in regard to the question of pre-marital and extra-marital relations, the Religion and Morals Committee finds itself bound to condemn the Report as a dangerous document and altogether unreliable in the matter of guidance in the realm of moral behaviour. It is hard to imagine how a group of professedly Christian men and women, or indeed even a group of nominal Christians, set up specifically to establish and defend the orthodox Christian view on sexual morality could produce such a Report. While we often find it necessary to be critical of the pronouncements of representatives of the Church of Scotland, particularly in the field of Religion and Morals, on this occasion we are glad to commend the Church of Scotland representatives at the Meeting at Lambeth for their action in pressing for the complete rejection of the Report, and only regret that this proposal was not carried.

We would warn the people of our Church against this or any similar attempt to undermine the authority and to discredit the testimony of the Moral Law of God. In opposition to this report we assert that the law of the Ten Commandments, as part of the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God, is of Divine authority and is binding on all men. Violation of any of its precepts is sin, and no motive, however worthy, excuses men or women from the breach of any of them. “ To obey,” we are told in Scripture, “ is better than sacrifice.” Believers, though delivered from the law as a covenant of works through Christ who has fulfilled it for them, yet recognise its claims upon them as a rule of life, for in their heart is the law of their God. “ Shall

we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ” the Apostle Paul asks in one of his epistles, and answers “ God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ”

Christ’s own teaching confirms all this. “ Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” His teaching is relevant for all ages and is perfectly consistent with the Moral Law. The thought of sin in the heart and the outward sinful action are alike reprehensible in the eyes of Him who loves righteousness and hates iniquity. His teaching leaves no ambiguity at all as to what is required, which no doubt forced the following admission in the Report —“ When all allowances are made it is hard to escape the conclusion that Christ laid down some positive and definite rulings for His followers and especially some which apply precisely to the relations between the sexes.”

Finally, in opposition to the Report which casts doubt on the requirements of Christian morality with respect to the Seventh Commandment, we reassert the emphatic teaching of that law which is:—“ Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and protest that this means, and can only mean, that pre-marital and extra-marital relations are forbidden and unequivocally condemned by the Divine Law as sinful and God-dishonouring conduct. Purity, holiness, chastity outside marriage, and fidelity within the marriage bond are basic to Christian moral teaching. We further assert that the Divine Law, unlike man-made law, needs no modification with the passage of time but remains valid, relevant and authoritative for all ages and conditions of men.

A LETTER BY THE LATE REV. NEIL CAMERON

The following letter was written to the late Rev. James S. Sinclair and is in possession of the Editor.—Editor.

12 Rose Street,
Garnethill,
Glasgow.

6th May, 1895.

My Dear Friend,

I got home late on Saturday evening from Tighnabruaich, had to speak three times yesterday and feel very tired to-day.

I have very warm recollections of my visit to Wick, though for the most of the time I was there I ought to have been in my bed as my health was not at all good. I was under a dark cloud

mentally and I am very much afraid that I cause the same darkness to come upon others.

I might well say, "My wounds do stink and are corrupt, my folly makes it so." But, O, what a blessing for those who, though they have wounds, are the sweet savour of Christ to perishing souls! I felt all the time there in much darkness and confusion, but rejoiced in the liberty granted to our beloved friend Mr Macfarlane. Truly he is a man more precious than fine gold.

What a dear woman Mrs Auld is! Humility joined with Christian dignity.

Your letter in the Ross-shire Journal refreshed me very much. I hope you will continue to reply as you are the very man to meet the onslaught of Mr MacCaskill. I wrote Mr MacKenzie to-day, asking him to publish the private letter he sent to him so that I could defend myself against their calumnies.

Give my regards to Capt. Ross, Mr Crowe, Mrs Sinclair, Northcote, Mrs Ross, Mr Campbell, and all as if mentioned by name.

Fond love to Mrs Sinclair and yourself.

I am,

Your devoted friend,

Neil Cameron.

COS-CHEUMAIBH IONGANTACH AR RÌGH

Leis an Urr. Domhnall Corbet, Ceann Loch Buirbhidh

(Air a leantuinn bho t.d. 249)

Caib. III

Cha'n eil fhios againn a nis ciod e cho fad 's a thug i air a turas sgitheil a chriochnachadh; ach chum an Tighearn, a bhà sireadh, a shùl bheannacichte oirre, aineolach 's mar a bha i fathasd Air. An deigh dhì dol thairis air Caol Reithe bha a slighe troimhe Gleann Eilg; agus an deigh dhith dol tarsuinn na mullaichean rinn i air Gleann Moireastan. Thuair i an sin i fhein aig taobh Loch Nis agus choisich i ri taobh an loch sin gus an d'ràinig i Inbhernis. Ràinig i nis an aon drochaid a bhà dol thairis air Abhainn Nis. Bu drochaid dhairich a bha ann, nì breoite, a bha air a giulainn air falbh leis an tuil bho cheann iomadh bliodhna air ais. B'e àm frithealadh sàcramaid Suipeir an Tighearn 's a bhaile a bh'ann. Labhair i 'n a doigh abhaisteach riu-san ris an do choinnich i, ach thuair i iomadh cronnachadh neonach. Mu dheireadh bha i air a treorachadh gu labhairt ri aon a nochd gu h-ealamh bàigh ris a chaileig chas-ruisgte, cheann-ruisgte, a labhair rithe mar a labhair i ri iomadh neach eile. Mhothaich Màiri Nic Bheathain neach aig an robh coltas agus giulain bean-uasal, a coiseachd air an drochaid, air rathad do'n

tigh aoraidh do'm bu ghnath leatha dhol, agus chàidh i far an robh i. Cha d'rinn i bhi air a cur dheth a ris agus a ris, ach a deanamh ni bu dhùrachdaich, agus mar sin ghlaodh i mach, " O bhean uasal, am bheil Dia 's a bhaile so? agus ma thà, càit am faigh mi E? " Sheall a bhean uasal an toiseach le mòr ioghnadh mar a rinn mòran air thoiseach oirre, do bhrìgh gu'm bheil ceisd cho cudthromach rithe so cho ainneamh air a cur, Stad i car tamuil mu'n do fhreagair i; agus an sin, air do Mhàiri a cheisd a chur a ris, leis an tuilleadh dùrachd, fhreagair i, " Tha Dia anns a bhaile so. Thig maille rium-sa, agus is dòcha gu'm faigh thu E." Ghabh i an sin a' nighean air laimh, choisich i leatha do'n eaglais, agus threoirich si i do'n t-suidheachan a bu leatha fein.

Thoisich seirbhisean an latha. Bha cluas Màiri Nic Bheathain gu math furachar, agus faodaidh sinn a smuainteachadh gu'n robh a ban-charaid chaomh gu math dìchiolach ann an cleachdadh na h-ùrnuigh air son slàinte anama a phàisde bho chd gun charaid a bha mar so gu freasdalach air a tilgeadh oirre air son dion. Tha e air a ràdh gur e a' ministeir a bha searmonachadh an latha ud, Maigheteir Seumas Calldair a Sgìr Chroidh, fìor dhuine Dhé, mar a bhà athair air thoiseach air, agus a thriuir mhac 'n a dheigh. Shaoileadh neach an latha ud gu'n robh e faotainn a bhi cur an ceill na firinn, 'n a ghnòthuch furasda, agus bha aon neach, co-dhiubh, 'n a eisdeachd a bha'g òl a h-uile focal a labhair e mu thimchioll Dhé, mu thimchioll a pheacaich, agus mu thimchioll an t-Slànuighear. Agus mar a dh'fhàs e na bu dùrachdaich, agus na bu shimplidh, agus na bu shoilleir, na eadhon na b'abhàist dhà, ann a bhi leudachadh a mach air na nithean air an robh e labhairt, bha Màiri Nic Bheathain air a deanamh comasach an fhìrinn a bha air a cur an ceill fhaicinn gu soilleir. Cha b'urrain i cumail oirre na b'fhaide; dh'eirich i suas agus bhuail i a làmhan, a' glaodhaich, " Thà mi ga fhaicinn a nis; tha mi g' thuigsinn uile a nis; thuair mi E nis. Thuair mi E. Thuair mi E."

Faodaidh cuid a bhi smuainteachadh gur e baothaireachd a th'ann an so. Tha tuilleadh 's a chòir de dh'iomradh air daoine bhi glaodhaich gu h-àrd gu'n d'thuair iad saorsa bho aineolas, teagamh, agus mì-chreidimh, agus a ris, a thug cothrom do luchd fanoid a bhi deanamh sgeig air a leithid sin de fhaireachidhean, mar mhealladh. Gidheadh, a thaobh Màiri Nic Bheathain, dhearbhan an t-àm ud anns an t-seann eaglais Ghàidhlig ann an Inbhernis, gu'm b'e àm a h-ath-bhreith spioradail e. B'urrain i nis a bhi dì-chuimhneachadh a turas sgìtheil bho chladach an iar an Eilein Sgitheanach, oir thuair i eolas air Aon air am b'urrain i a taic a leigeil le muinghinn air son ùine agus siorruidheachd. Thuair i maitheanas anns na chàidh seachad, agus bunait dòchais mhaith

air son na bhà air thoiseach. Dh'fhaodadh nach b'urrain i aig an àm ud freagairtean cho soilleir a thoirt do cheisdean a rachadh a chur rithe, 's a deaceanadh i an deigh sin; ach bha aice 'n a h-anam eolas de'n aon ghné agus an seorsa 's a bha aig Anna 'n uair a dh'aithnich i a' Mesiah ann an gairdeanan seann Simeon ann an cuirt an Teampuill aig Ierusalem. An deigh do'n cheud bhriseadh a mach air a faireachaidhean aoibhneach a dhol seachad, shuidh i gu stolda fad an t-searmoin a co-phàrtachadh anns an t-seirbhis leis a chuid eile de'n choithional. B'urrain Màiri a ràdh a nis, "Is e'n Dia so mo Dhia fein, Dia mo shlàinte," agus dh'fhaodadh i a taic gu h-iomlan a leigeil air a fhreasdal air son na bhuineadh dha maith anns a bheatha so. Eadhon ged a rachadh a h-uile neach 's an eaglais a mach gu'n suim air bith a ghabhail dhith, bha fhios aice gu'n deanadh Esan a ghleidh agus a dhion i fad na slighe, agus a dh' fhoillsich E fein an latha ud dhà h-anam, caraid a thogail suas gu bhi gabhail cùram dhith. Bha'n caraid sin aice a cheana, oir cha b'urrain a bhean uasal choibhneil a threoirich a stigh do'n eaglais i, dealachadh rithe a nis. Threoirich i mach i mar a threoirich i stigh i; thug si i dh'ionnsuidh a tighe fein, choinnich i ri h-uireasbhuidhean, agus rinn i faire thairis oirre le cùram màthar.

(R'a leantuinn)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Past Forms of Worship Criticised

At the last Assembly of the Baptist Union of Scotland, held in Edinburgh, the President, Rev. D. P. McCallum, stated as his opinion that the traditional forms of worship ought to be looked at, and, if necessary, altered. He offered some explanation of what he meant by saying, "We pray in the language of 400 years ago, and we praise with the sentiments of last century." These opinions may be thought to be original and up-to-date; but we consider that they express, even among Baptists, the modern trend in religious practice. As to the language used in prayer, we are contented to use the language of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and that of the psalmist David, and others, whose prayers are recorded in the Scriptures. The children of God whose spiritual exercise and experiences are similar to that of the saints of every age, more or less, thus find the language used in prayer by the Church of God as recorded in the Bible most suitable and helpful. This goes back somewhat further than 400 years. And if the Rev. D. P. McCallum finds the sentiments of last century in the Baptist hymns, which they use for praise, irksome and out of date in the 1960's, then we suggest that it is time to turn to the Psalms of David, the divinely inspired psalter, for the worship

of God. This manual of praise is enduring and applicable to every age and every nation; and expresses every form of praise desirable by those who truly know and love God. The supposed need for change which so many Church leaders speak of in these times, is change to conform with the world which has abandoned to a great extent the Christian religion and the organised Church. The irreligious and modern world of men, young and old, seem themselves to change rather rapidly in a variety of ways, and frequently, in this period of the 20th century. But what Churchmen, lacking in spiritual understanding and discernment, do not recognise is the fact that the children of men born in these times and growing up in this age are by nature sinners before God *exactly as men in all ages past*; and that all kinds and classes today need the same Saviour Jesus Christ. The changes which affect the present age which are certainly remarkable in many instances, have not in the least degree changed man's natural, sinful and corrupt nature and heart. He needs the same gospel, prayers and praises of David's day and of Apostolic times.

Secondary School Pupils and Drink

The press has recently reported cases of Secondary School pupils, in a certain town in Scotland, being served with drink under the age of 18 years. The police are of course concerned with those having licensed premises, thus contravening the law. But what of pupils at school in several parts of Scotland who have in recent times been known to indulge in strong drink? This may possibly begin at dances to which drink is carried in cars and on the person by adults who have no compunction in sharing it with younger persons. We note now and then, with dread and dismay, the publicity given to the building of new distilleries in different parts of Scotland. A Brewers' Society report states that more beer was drunk throughout the world last year than ever before. This was said to "reflect a rise in living standards in a great part of the world." Obviously the "living standards" mentioned are material, not moral. One main reason why we have returned repeatedly in these *Notes* to the drink trade and drinking, is the very serious increase in drinking among sections of all classes and the involvement of the young in this habit with all its potential dangers to health and character and ability for work.

R.C. and Anglican Unity Talks

The following announcement was issued from the Vatican two months ago: "Preliminary talks aimed at uniting the world's 550 million Roman Catholics and 45 million Anglicans will be held in Italy in January, the Vatican announced today. The talks

will be held by a joint preparatory commission charged with working out a programme for a dialogue between the two Churches. It will meet in Gazzada, Northern Italy, from January 9 to 13." Anyone not clear in their mind as to where Dr. Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been endeavouring to lead the Church of England—and the Church of Scotland—will find in the above announcement the truth regarding this matter. We, and others, have been pointing out this trend for years. However dark and foreboding the signs are, He who ruleth ever by His power may never permit the union envisaged by the Vatican and the Anglo-Catholics in England. Activities in Scotland have their own relevance to the above subject. One of the latest gestures by a Protestant leader to the Church of Rome is seen in the visit of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church Scotland to the Roman Catholic Abbey, Nunraw, in the South of Scotland. In addressing the monks there, the Moderator, Rev. Dr. Leonard Small, said: "Let us go on stressing the things that unite us as far as possible, and forget for the moment the things that divide us, while we try to understand these more deeply." The Moderator was in effect asking the monks to forget, albeit for the time being, the Pope, the Mass, worship of Mary, purgatory; and the Moderator must needs on his part forget the Reformation, the gospel of Christ and the Apostles, the Reformers such as Knox, the obvious Scriptural claim to attain to salvation outwith the Roman Catholic Church, and that the Bible as the Word of God is the only source of revelation for the Church. When men seek to forget what divides them as Roman Catholics and Protestants, we wonder what they have left to think or talk about.

The Wrong Reasons for Non-Attendance at Church

Recently in these Notes we referred to a city of Aberdeen minister who criticised the conduct of many of the members of his congregation for absenting themselves from church. Now it has been reported that Rev. D. Lister, of St. Andrew's Church, Inverurie, has published a similar complaint against many of his own parishioners. One reason he gives for their absence from church is that they are lazy; and another reason given is as follows:—"Many stay away from church because they see the church as a parade of the righteous or a respectability review and little else." Rev. D. Lister almost excuses (not quite) his parishioners. They may be lazy and they may not be so, if one would see their activities on the Lord's Day inside and outwith their homes. Again, some may see the church, in which after all they are members, as a parade of the righteous and make

this an excuse for non-attendance. But we believe this minister has all the wrong answers, or at least he has not arrived at the fundamental answers. The true reasons for any church member, or any professed adherent even, in any congregation, *in any denomination*, absenting himself or herself from the public worship of God, without a valid excuse, are, that they were never converted by the Spirit of God and that they have no love at all to the habitation of God's house and the place where His honour dwelleth. There is no point in making excuses for the deplorable behaviour of unbelievers who have a connection with any denomination. Without being censorious, the fact is, that in the Church of Scotland, men and women are accepted as Christians, who have not the least idea of what it means to be a true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. And again, the fact is, that the House of God is being forsaken in all parts of the nation, because spiritual death is reigning in the hearts of all classes. A great day of the power of the Spirit is needed.

CHURCH NOTES

Communions

January—Fifth Sabbath, Inverness, Auckland. *February*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; third, Stornoway; fourth, North Uist, Kyle of Lochalsh. *March*—First Sabbath, Ullapool; second, Ness, Portree and Tarbert; third, Finsbay, Lochinver; fourth, Kinlochbervie, London and North Tolsta. *April*—First Sabbath, Breasclete, Portnalong and Fort-William; second, Fearn, Gisborne, N.Z.; third, Greenock; fourth, Glasgow, Wick. *May*—First Sabbath, Kames and Oban; second, Scourie; third, Edinburgh and Broadford. *June*—First Sabbath, Applecross and Auckland; second, Shildaig; third, Lochcarron, Glendale, Helmsdale, Dornoch and Uig; fourth, Gairloch and Inverness. *July*—First Sabbath, Lairg, Raasay and Beaul; second, Staffin, Tomatin and Tain; third, Halkirk, Rogart, Flashadder and Daviot; fourth, Bracadale, North Uist and Plockton; fifth, Achmore. *August*—First Sabbath, Dingwall; second, Portree and Stratherrick; third, Bonar, Finsbay and Laide; fourth, Stornoway, Thurso and Vatten. *September*—First Sabbath, Ullapool, Breasclete; second, Strathy; third, Tarbert, Stoer and Vancouver (Canada); fourth, Applecross. *October*—First Sabbath, Tolsta, Lochcarron, Fort-William; second, Dumbarton, Gairloch and Ness; fourth, Gisborne, N.Z., Greenock, Lochinver; fifth, Wick. *November*—First Sabbath, Oban and Raasay; second, Glasgow and Halkirk; third, Edinburgh, Dornoch, Staffin and Uig. *December*—First Sabbath, London.

Congregational Record Books

Kirk Session and Deacons' Court minute books are now to be sent for examination to the respective Presbyteries.—Robert R. Sinclair, Clerk of Synod.

Congregational Financial Statements

Congregational Treasurers are now to forward a copy of their Financial Statements to their respective Presbyteries for examination. And Treasurers are reminded that by motions of last Synod they are to show the state of Reserve Funds where these exist;

and they are to send a copy of their annual Congregational Financial Statements to Mr William D. Fraser, Clerk to the Finance Committee, each year, the same time as another copy is sent to the Presbytery.—Robert R. Sinclair, Clerk of Synod.

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The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Kelvindale, Glasgow, W.2, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:—

Sustentation Fund.—Rod. McRae, Vernon, Canada, £8 4s 5d; Miss S. A. MacLeod, Inverness, £2; J. Graham, Muir of Ord, £5; W. Sutherland, Bettyhill, £3; Mrs C. Hopkins, Brighton, £2 10/-, per Mr J. G.

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