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The Divine Law

God has not left man without any direction as to how he is to order his life. It has pleased God to give man a law — a perfect rule by which he may be guided. The whole Word of God is a rule to direct man as to how he may glorify God and enjoy Him for ever, yet particularly we have the law of God in the ten Commandments. Here we have a law that is a transcript of the divine nature. It sets before us the moral perfection of God. No wonder then that the Apostle should say that the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good.

The claims of the divine law are very high and very extensive. It will be satisfied with nothing less than perfect and perpetual obedience from us. The law will never lessen its claims. Fallen man is unable to meet these claims. We have sinned against an infinitely holy God; we have violated the divine law. God is angry with the wicked every day. All transgressors have exposed themselves to the judgment of God, even to the wrath and curse of God throughout the endless ages of eternity. The claims of the law extend not only to the outward conduct but also to the thoughts and motives of men. The use of the law to sinful and fallen man is to point out his defects. When the Word of God begins to bear upon the conscience it brings in the soul as guilty before God. It drives away all thoughts of self-righteousness and shows man what he deserves.

Alongside the law of God we have the Gospel. The perfection of the gospel is not that it does away with the law but that it makes provision for the satisfying of the divine law and of justice. The scheme of redemption provides for the magnifying of the law of God and making it honourable. It provides for the satisfying of divine justice. In the salvation wrought out by Him at infinite cost, Christ has fully met all the claims of law and justice for His people. He fulfilled the law in the perfect obedience He gave to that law, and by His sacrificial death on Calvary, He has made a full recompense to divine justice for the sin of His people. God is now pleased for His righteousness sake to pardon sin, iniquity and transgression and

let the sinner go free. If the Son shall make you free, we are told, ye shall be free indeed. If Christ sets us free we are at liberty. If not, we are still in bondage.

The work of grace in the soul not only delivers the sinner from the guilt of sin but also from the power of sin. The sinner is set free, not to be in bondage again to sin, but to walk in wisdom's ways — "for wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The new creation in the soul ensures that the soul will love righteousness and hate iniquity. The living soul delights in the law of God after the inward man. The gracious soul seeks after holiness. O how love I thy law, is the expression of the living soul and it says, "In the keeping of God's commandments there is great delight."

Sermon

by Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale

"And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matth. 16:6.

In this chapter we have John the Baptist sending two of his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Some hold that at this time John the Baptist had an attack of unbelief, others, that he put the question rather for the benefit of his disciples. We find the latter view more agreeable to our mind, for we see that the disciples of John seemed jealous for the honour of their own master when they said to him, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom though barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." John 3:26. Part of John's work was to draw them from this jealousy, and therefore, he tells them concerning Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease." verse 30. If his object in this instance was to instruct them by directing them to put this question to Jesus, their attention was directed to what should have been ample evidence for them that this was the promised Messiah. He told them to tell John of the wonderful miracles which they saw and heard, and ended with the words to which I would seek to draw your attention at this time as enabled. "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in one."

From these words I would seek to draw your attention as enabled to two things in particular:—

I. Those who are not offended in Christ.

II. What is here said of them — they are blessed.

I. Those who are not offended in Christ. (1) They are not offended in

Him because of the condition in which He appeared in the world. The Jews generally, and especially their rulers, looked for a Messiah who was to appear in earthly splendour and glory, sitting upon the throne of David and setting up an earthly kingdom for Israel, and when He did not appear as they expected they were offended in Him and rejected Him. There were some, however, who were not offended in Him because of His humiliation. He appeared to some of them when engaged in their lawful calling, and had only to say, "Follow Me," and they left everything and followed Him, and His humble appearance did not prevent them from following Him. This is true of the Lord's people in every age of time. Christ may be despised and rejected by others, because of His humble appearance in the world, in His ordinances and in His members, but they will not be offended in Him.

Many are offended in Him because of His seeming weakness. Amply fulfilled in Him is the description of His weakness given by the Psalmist, "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Psalm 22:6. Naturally, we are given to admire strength but here the world sees nothing but weakness, but His own are not offended in Him because of His weakness, for they have learned that "though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God." II Cor. 13:4, and that His sinking in deep mire was the preparation for putting them on a sure foundation for eternity.

Those spoken of in our text are not offended in Him though He is spoken against everywhere. His people are a sect that is everywhere spoken against. They are looked upon as cursed, as we find the Pharisees taunting their own officers sent to apprehend him, by saying, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." John 7:47-49. In the face of this bitter taunting the Lord's true people are not offended in Him, for they realise that the world, whether or not it has a profession of religion is against Christ, and that learning does not put one in possession of true godliness. Yea, Christ Himself gives thanks to the Father in this chapter that He has seen fit to reveal much to the unlearned. "... I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Matth. 11: 25-26.

(2) They are not offended in Him because of His way of salvation. This salvation is a God-glorifying salvation. The most of people would like to go to Heaven at the end of life's journey, but they would like to go there in a way that self would be glorified. Men's ambition is to be honoured, and

that where honour belongs to God alone. The man or woman who is savingly changed will not be offended that all the glory of his salvation will be put on God Himself. They will join with the Psalmist in saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Psalm 115: 1. They readily acknowledge that the glory of their election in Christ belongs to God, that the glory of their redemption belongs to Him in sending His Son into the world, and that in the work of the Holy Spirit, the glory of their effectual calling, justification, adoption and sanctification belongs to God alone. From this point of view they are not offended in Christ with respect unto His way of salvation.

Further, they are not offended in Him with reference to His salvation for it is a Christ-exalting salvation. Christ came into this world to reveal to men the glorious attributes of God, and in this way, by His humiliation, sufferings and death, gave a wonderful manifestation of the holiness, justice, truth, love and mercy of God, and it is in the light of this wonderful manifestation that the redeemed child of God is enabled to say with the Psalmist, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Psalm 34:3. In this his spirit is brought into conformity with the Word of God where Christ is exalted "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31.

They are not offended in Him on account of the fact that His salvation abases man. A debtor, if he knows his own place, will not carry it proudly before the one whose debtor he is, and those who have tasted of God's salvation, realise that they are debtors to Christ for what they are and what they receive. This humbles them before Him and makes them wonder that He should deal so kindly with them when they are so unworthy. They are not, however, *constrained* to humility. They are willing to take a low place at the feet of Christ and to give Him all the glory. Thus they are not offended in Christ when being made partakers of His salvation requires them to be abased before Him.

(3) They are not offended in Him on account of His Person. This one is not an ordinary person; He is the eternal Son of God in human nature. Many see in Him nothing but a mere man, and will not acknowledge that He is God manifest in the flesh, but the Lord's people require a Saviour who is God, co-equal with the Father and Holy Spirit in all His attributes, and yet who has bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. In His deity and humanity He is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, and thus able to act as the Substitute of His people. In His human nature He suffered all that the justice of God required, but was continually

supported in His sufferings by His Divine nature until He accomplished the whole of that work of redemption which the Father gave Him to do, and cried on Calvary's accursed tree "It is finished" and gave up the ghost. Who then can be offended in Christ, with respect to His Person, except those who do not know Him as their own Saviour? His own can say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

In this Person there is an inexhaustible fulness for in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", Col. 2:3, and "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9. On this account those who realise their own needs cannot be offended in Him, for they saw themselves destitute of knowledge, righteousness and holiness, dead in trespasses and sins, heirs of eternal wrath, and utterly unable to help themselves, but they saw in Him a fulness to meet with all their wants, and in that personal transaction which took place between Christ and their souls in the day of justification they became perfectly satisfied with Him, and can never be offended in Him.

They are not offended in Him in His human nature. Men in a state of nature see no form or comeliness in Him. He is to them as a root out of a dry ground, and they refuse to trust to Him their souls for eternity. It is true that when He appeared in this world there was no outward beauty in Him to attract the eye. His afflictions and sorrows left such traces on His physical frame that the Jews took Him to be nearly twenty years older than He actually was. "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" John 8:57. This is in accordance with what was prophetically revealed concerning Him, "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." Isaiah 52:14. With His own this outward uncomeliness has more the effect of attracting than repelling, for through the teaching of the Holy Spirit they learned that, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5.

(4) In the fourth place, they are not offended in Him with respect unto His relationship in the days of His humiliation. He came in God's great name to save sinners, and, as the Saviour of sinners, He had full power to say, as He said to some, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matth. 1:2, which when some who were present heard, they were offended and said within themselves, "This man blasphemeth." The Apostle Paul, however, and all those who are taught by the same Spirit look to Him alone as the source of forgiveness. "In whom we have

redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. 1:7.

In His humiliation, He associated with those whom the scribes and Pharisees looked upon with contempt, and with whom any association on the part of anyone, was enough to stigmatise that person as on the same level as those with whom he associated. In the chapter from which our text is taken we find Christ Himself taking up how the man of that generation went to two extremes with John the Baptist and Himself. "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Matth. 11:18, 19. Thus they were offended in Him, but to the real child of God it is the most comforting of news that He is the "Friend of publicans and sinners" and that "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Luke 15:2. They are weary of themselves and of Satan's temptations, and feel the burden of sin unbearable, and so they cannot be offended in Him who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matth. 11:28.

(5) His own are not offended in Christ with respect to His teaching. The Pharisees were offended in Christ because of His teaching. They were, generally speaking, outwardly moral, and outwardly observing God's law. They were strict in their manner of life and zealous for the traditions of the elders, and in this way they thought they were sure of Heaven. What an offence it must have been to them when Christ taught that the non-observance of those rites which they valued so much did not defile a man, but that what defiled a man was to be found in his own heart? "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." Matth 15: 19, 20. He warns His own that, "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matth 5:20, and they, being under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, instead of being offended in Him for this, cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10.

True disciples are not offended in Him for His teaching, though would-be disciples are. When He taught that He Himself was the True Bread that came down from heaven, and the absolute necessity of partaking of this bread in order to have eternal life, many of His followers said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" John 6:60, and because it

offended them, "many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." John 6:66. His own, however, feed by faith on Him, and thus are spiritually nourished and growing in grace. They have of the Spirit of Christ what has made them willing to serve Him, so that their meat and drink is to do His will, as it was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him.

(6) They are not offended in the Cross of Christ. The Apostle Paul says, "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased." Gal. 5:11. The Cross was an offence to the Jews, so that the preaching of Christ crucified was to them a stumbling-block. They made choice of this form of death for the Lord Jesus, for, although it had been foreordained from all eternity that He should be crucified, when Pilate asked what should be done to the King of the Jews, they signified their choice of the manner of His death by saying, "Crucify him." It is easy to see how such men could do nothing else but be offended at the preaching of Christ and Him crucified. They dealt with Him as if He were the worst of malefactors, and, in their opinion, how could such a one save them.

To the Greeks the preaching of the cross was foolishness. They were wise men in their generation, and the fame of their wisdom has reached to our own day. Many of them spent their whole time speaking about Wisdom, and searching into its nature, but with all the knowledge which they acquired concerning Wisdom, they were ignorant of Christ, who is the Wisdom of God, and who was made of God to His people Wisdom. In them was exemplified the truth of what is written, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." II Cor. 4:4. Therefore they could see nothing but the opposite of wisdom in the preaching of Christ and Him crucified, and the enmity of the carnal mind working in them, taking advantage of this, made the cross of Christ an offence to them.

To those who believe, the preaching of the cross is the power and the wisdom of God. They see in it the fulfilment of the purposes of God, the finishing of the work of redemption, the bruising of the head of the Devil, the end of sin, the abolishing of death, the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness, the bringing to light of life and immortality, and the opening up of a new and living way unto God. In the light of this, instead of the Lord's people being offended in Christ because of the shameful and cursed death which He died, they are privileged with the Apostle Paul in saying "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto one, and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14.

(7) They are not offended in Him because of the persecution which they have to endure in following Him. If persecution could accomplish what persecutors desire, the Cause of Christ would have been out of existence long ago, but of God's martyred saints it is written that they had "trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Heb. 11:36-38. Pagan Rome and Papal Rome tortured and martyred hundreds of thousands of Christ's witnesses and in our own land let us not forget what the Episcopal Church, aided by a papistically inclined monarchy, did, but as they tortured and martyred, the number of those who were not offended in Christ grew, so that the Church became "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Song 6:10. Oh! friends, there is a mystery here which the world cannot understand, but, nevertheless, it has been so often demonstrated in the history of the Church that it cannot be denied. Men and women turned their backs on their worldly prospects, thought lightly of their social standing, suffered to be cast out of their homes, and deprived of the affections of relatives, and with Moses, chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season." Heb 11:25. The terrible hardships which in consequence they had to endure, instead of causing them to be offended in Christ, served rather to cause them to cleave closer to Him, for they experienced the fulfilment of Christ's promise, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or mothers, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Matth 19:29.

(To be continued)

Missionary Meeting at Utrecht

At 10.30 a.m. on 30th April 1982 in the Juliana Hall, Ds. C. Smits, Chairman of the Mbuma Missionary Society of Holland, gave out Ps. 87 to open this year's annual public meeting with some 7,500 people present from all parts of The Netherlands. Also, among those present were Miss

Jean Nicolson, my wife and myself who had travelled by way of car to Harwich, by ferry to the Hook of Holland, and thence by way of overnight stay in the hospitable home of Mr and Mrs H. van Vliet at Lekkerkerk. Likewise present as guest speaker this year was Rev Dr James Tallach who had shortly before arrived home in Scotland with his family on furlough from Mbumba, Zimbabwe.

Ds Smits introductory remarks included tributes to departed friends and, in particular, to Ds Dorsman, a member of Committee, and Mr Barth who had done so much in organising the sending of clothing parcels to the Mission. Zech. 13:1 was the subject of the Chairman's address. Dr Tallach followed with an address well-suited to the occasion from Mark 16:15. In the course of acknowledging this, Ds Smits recalled a visit to Scotland when he felt touched at heart by the petition on the Monday of a Communion of the late Rev D A MacFarlane — "grant us the spirit of the resurrection!" Also the Chairman thanked Miss Nicolson, Mrs Murray and myself for our presence in their midst and stated his appreciation that the "Secretary of the Scottish Committee" was with them from year to year. The first collection was then taken which we were afterwards to learn amounted to 64,000 guilders. An address by Ds de Jong on Jonah 3:4 concluded the morning's proceedings.

At 2 p.m. after singing and prayer Ds Kamp addressed the vast assembly from Matt. 12:20 and there followed the second collection which was to amount to 50,000 guilders. Added to this were the proceeds from collecting boxes of 82,000 guilders so that, along with donations from individual congregations — e.g. 18,000 from Staphorst — the final amount credited to mission funds came to the record sum of 196,300 guilders. This represents approximately one third of what our friends in Holland expect to forward to Zimbabwe in the course of the current year.

A further address by Mr Scholten on the opening verses of the Book of Daniel with an impassioned concluding address from Ds Mallen, vice-Chairman, on Ps 67:2 concluded this memorable meeting as we sang together Ps 67: 1, 2.

The thought had impressed itself upon me in the course of the meeting how that, in giving from their often humble daily toils to the work at Mbumba and elsewhere in Zimbabwe, these many friends from across the North Sea were all missionaries in a very real sense — "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God." (2 Cor. 9:12).

Alex Murray.

Missionary Address

by Rev Dr. J. Tallach M.B.ChB

Reverend Smits, members of the Mbumba Zending Committee, ladies and gentlemen: Thank you for asking me to speak to you here today. By your generosity and interest you are speaking to us every day on the Mission.

I should like, as enabled, to consider these words of our Lord Jesus in Mark 16:15 "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." These are among the last words of our Lord to His disciples, His final command to the Church before He ascended up to glory. In the parallel passage in Matthew 28:20 we find these words: ". . . and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Evidently this work was to be laid upon the Church to the end of the ages, until time was no more. It is the continuing nature of this command which I should like to bring before you today. What are the truths within this command referring to us today, which will continue, under the hand of the Spirit, to exert their blessed influence on the Church to the end of time?

Christ commands that this message be sent "unto all the world" and "to every creature". He includes all and excludes none. Who are those to whom this Gospel is to be sent? The human race is a fallen race; and in the time that the Lord Jesus was in the world this was made very evident: "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" John 3:19. This darkness will never be dispelled if men are left to themselves since all choose to stumble in the dark mountains and the chains of slavery will never be broken because the slave loves every link. The covenant with death will forever stand; he is joined to his sins and the wages is death.

This fallen state produces a nature at enmity with God. Jesus went about doing good; wearying Himself in the work of healing and teaching; showing Divine compassion in spite of their wilful rejection of God's messengers when He wept over Jerusalem. But they rejected Him, and thus was fulfilled what had been prophesied of Him, 'They hated Him without a cause'; 'His wounds were received in the house of His friends': 'He was despised and He was rejected'. When they told Pilate that they had a law and by that law Jesus should die they spoke more than they knew; the law within was the law of a fallen nature. "They that hate Me love death." They loved death; and hated Jesus.

If the Light of the World cast light on their state and nature, 'without

God and without hope in the world', He also shed light on their future state. "The rich man lifted up his eyes in hell being in torments" Luke 16:23. The returning lord was to come and destroy the rebellious husbandmen. Luke 20:16. In the words of one who had the mind of Christ, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God". Heb 10:31.

Has the world changed in this respect? Emphatically not! One of the most striking evidences of the truth of the witness of Jesus concerning fallen man is to be seen when moving from Britain to work in the African bush. Civilisation, skin colour, environment, language, culture differ widely; but in this they are one. We are all fallen sons of Adam. The world needs the Gospel. "And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom. 10:14. "Go . . . preach the Gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15.

What then of the message which may truly be called Good News to such a people? If man naturally is born, lives, and dies under the shadow of a broken covenant, an angry God and the curse of sin; then the Good News must speak of that covenant perfectly kept, God appeased and sin taken away. Such is the substance of the Gospel as spoken of by John the Baptist when he declared, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. The Lamb as the Divine One in His perfect exalting of the Law and making it honourable, fulfilled the covenant of works broken by Adam. He was the divine sacrifice to satisfy the offended justice of an Holy God; One upon whom the wrath of God would descend as He hung upon the tree. He was the lamb, as, by the sacrifice of Himself He would take away sin.

But now as the disciples fixed their eyes on Him, all this was past: the garden; the betrayal; the scourging; the crown of thorns; the mockery; the choice of Barabbas, not Jesus; the cross; the cry of dereliction; the tomb. His Father's business set forth in this figure of Jesus as the Lamb of God had been gloriously accomplished. The marks of that work were upon Him; He showed them His hands and His side but the mark of the approval of the Father whose justice was satisfied was upon Him also. The Father raised Him from the grave, a living Saviour to take away the sin of the world, "a man approved of God." When Christ turned the water into wine at Cana of Galilee, 'His disciples believed on Him'; now as their risen Redeemer, He had turned the shadow of death into the morning. The substance of the Good News was before them; its efficacy based upon the atonement made by His death. The Father was satisfied. Let

God-given faith in them believe and rejoice.

Here then was the ground upon which they went forth and here the substance of the Gospel, "We preach Christ crucified". But Christ was promising to be with them in this work, while at the same time bidding them farewell. He was ascending to a position of power and authority, the right hand of His Father. He was to be with them by His Spirit dwelling within them and blessing their witness to the Good News to such as should be saved. He had suffered and died for those whom the Father had given Him in the eternal covenant. In His own sovereign time and manner the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God and those that heard would live. The Lamb of God atoned for His people's sins; His people will be drawn irresistibly to faith in Him.

Has the passage of time between then and now taken away anything of the power of the Atonement? Has Christ ceased to sit at the right hand of His Father or ceased to work by His Word and Spirit? He is the same living Lord, still giving the same command. It is for us then, in obedience to this command, to press repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a duty upon all, leaving the outcome with Him who said, ". . . in due season ye shall reap if you faint not".

Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

Family Worship

This pastoral letter was issued by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which sat in Edinburgh in 1836. There is great need that the exhortation contained in it should be acted upon in our own day.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to our dearly beloved people: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

On your behalf, brethren, we thank God, whom we serve with our spirit in the Gospel of His Son; that your faith and devotion have long been spoken of throughout the world; and we are bound always to have remembrance of you in our prayers night and day, greatly desiring that, like your forefathers in times of clearest light you may continue steadfastly in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, abounding in the exercises of that unfeigned godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

In compliance with the solicitations of many who watch for your souls,

and are jealous over you with godly jealousy, we have resolved to issue this brotherly exhortation on the sacred and indispensable duty of Family Worship — not as if we had any recent ground for apprehending that it is likely to fall into more extensive neglect, but because we know too well that it is by no means universally practised, and because even the purest minds require to be stirred up, by way of remembrance, that, while they hold fast the profession of their own faith without wavering, they may consider one another to provoke and encourage, by good counsel and good example, to the love of truth and holiness, and to the habitual and serious observance of those offices of piety, whereby, as surely as the body is nourished and refreshed by its daily bread and its nightly rest, the soul of man, through the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is progressively matured in excellence and strength, till it is advanced to the perfection and glory of its immortal existence.

In calling your attention to this momentous topic, we think it superfluous to enlarge on the high obligations by which the duty is enforced — obligations which are involved in the very constitution of our frail and dependent being, and impressed on the understanding and the heart by the persuasive voice of scriptural authority, opening the ears of men, and sealing the instruction, by which God speaks, not once or twice, but at sundry times, and in diverse manners, adding line upon line, precept upon precept, promise upon promise, and threatening upon threatening, so as to bring perpetually to remembrance both the blessings which are multiplied to them that fear the Lord, and the fury which is poured out on the families which call not on His name. The appointment of the reasonable service of bowing down at the domestic altar before the Lord our Maker, that, in waiting for the promised effusion of the Spirit of grace and supplication we may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, has ever been regarded by all men of sound mind and Christian experience, not as the imposition of an irksome yoke, but as the conveyance of an inestimable privilege; for as often as we mark the tokens of God's power and presence in making the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice, must every enlightened and purified heart, lifting up its affections to the Father of spirits, acknowledge, with triumphant satisfaction, that it is a good thing to show forth His loving kindness in the morning, and His faithfulness every night.

To those only who have tasted and seen it, can we speak intelligibly of the tranquil delight which is awakened and sustained by such periodical acts of household worship, as are not a mere formal ceremony in which the members join with reluctant or cold compliance, but the fervent

utterance of lips, which, out of the abundance of the heart, in which the love of God is shed abroad, are, by the influence of that unquenchable affection, most pleasingly constrained to celebrate the mercies which are new every morning, and to offer up the spiritual incense of prayer with an unceasing regularity, as from the sanctuary of Israel the smoke of the evening sacrifice arose, or as the early dew of Hermon descended on the mountains of Sion, when there the Lord commanded the blessing — even life for evermore.

Without all controversy, the benefits produced by this hallowed exercise are ineffably precious. It is not enough to say that thus are devout and grateful emotions awakened — thus is faith in the superintending providence and holy promises of God confirmed — thus are the graces of humility, resignation, and patience, nourished and increased, while with the contemplation of the infinite excellent, the unwearied beneficence, and the everlasting strength of the Lord Jehovah, we contrast the instability, deceitfulness, and desperate wickedness of the heart of man. By the infallible testimony of Heaven, we are authorised to affirm constantly that there is an efficacy in the prayer of faith, which, though inexplicable by our feeble understanding, must, through all ages, continue to avail as much as it did in the days of those patriarchs, prophets, and righteous men, who, as princes, had power with God, when, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, they had grace to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. The Lord is ever nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit, when, taking with them the words which inspired wisdom has taught them to utter, they lift up their desires at His footstool, not seeking great things for themselves, or panting after the dust of the earth, or sighing for the vain delights of the sons of men, but thirsting and longing for the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and who, being justified by faith, has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have no encouragement to hope that, by taking thought for temporal satisfactions, we shall find grace in the sight of the Lord; but if we aspire after the best gifts which are the heritage of the faithful, seeking first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, we believe and are sure that His Divine power will give us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue. Though our Father in the heavens knoweth what things we have need of before we ask them, and though the purposes of His everlasting kindness are often fulfilled more substantially by withholding than by granting the desires which we naturally cherish, it is only to them

who worship Him in spirit and in truth, that He has promised to do exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think; and we have no more solid ground to expect that we shall receive without asking, or that we shall find without seeking, than the husbandman has to look for an abundant harvest springing up in the fields which he has neither planted nor watered, or than the merchant who has to calculate on receiving his own with usury for the talent which has been tied up in a napkin, or buried in the earth.

It is not for us to unfold the laws of the spiritual world, so as to demonstrate why and how it is that the communications of heavenly influence and favour are in any degree suspended on the frequency and fervency of our supplications. But this we know, that, as in old time, the father of the faithful commanded his children, and his household after him, to unite with him in the exercises of a holy life, that the Lord might bring upon Abraham that which He had spoken of him — even so, in all generations, may the willing and obedient hope, that, while seeking unto God, and committing their cause to Him who does great things and unsearchable, they place their confidence, not in their own importunity, or their own efforts, but in the exalted merit and prevalent intercession of the Mediator of the New Covenant, they cannot fail to be made partakers of that abundant grace which ought to be the chief object of all our prayers, and which is never denied to the humble. We know assuredly that our heavenly Father gives His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; and if, for the sake of his beloved Son, He is pleased to bestow this unspeakable gift in answer to the prayer of the believing soul, why should we hesitate to admit that it is of the Lord's mercies, that by the eternal ordination of divine wisdom, prayer has been rendered one of the sure and sufficient means of transmitting to the faithful every other good and perfect gift which cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning?

To the duties of social prayer and thanksgiving, accompanied with that instruction in righteousness which the reading of the Scriptures is calculated to impart, let the benefits thus conferred on your several domestic circles operate as a strong incitement. It is not, indeed, within the compass of human ability to infuse grace into the souls which are most tenderly beloved. But great will probably be the influence of a pious example on those who confide in your affection, and have cause to revere your worth. If your children and dependents perceive, that, while you are not slothful in the business of time, you are also fervent in spirit serving the Lord, and that, while you provide for your own the food and the

raiment which are obtained by the blessing of God on the hand of the diligent, you ask for them that bread of heaven which strengtheneth the heart, may you not hope that they will be stirred up both to pray and to labour for the meat which endureth to life everlasting, and that they will learn to regard the favour of God as a better portion than the abundance of corn and wine? May you not hope, that while your own minds are elevated by contemplating the works of creation, providence, and redemption, and by reflecting on the dignified and endearing relation to which you have been raised in having received the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry Abba, Father, they who look up to you for guidance and protection will take pleasure in approaching to God, and, through the experience of the peace of walking with the wise, will be taught to abhor the enticements of sinners, and to hold fast that which is good? And even in the case of those who, through perversity of heart, and the snares of an evil world, have forsaken the path of integrity and truth, may it not be hoped that the wise counsel's which they have for a season forgotten, and the devotional habits which they have long failed to imitate, will, like the bread cast upon the waters, be found after many days? Small must have been your experience of the discipline of providence, if you have never known so much as one who had wandered so far from the way of peace as to disappoint the earnest expectations of his father, and to turn the joy of her who bare him into bitterness, but who, after his own wickedness had corrected him, and his backslidings reproved him, has been awakened to new obedience, by recalling to his agonized mind, with reverential awe, the solemn image of the parental guide, in whose quiet habitation the daily exercises of prayer and praise hallowed every pursuit, lightened every case, soothed every sorrow, and seasoned every enjoyment, so as to render the voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacle of the righteous, a lively type of the blessed conversation of heaven, and a delicious foretaste of the fellowship of the saints in light. If ye know these things by your own experience, or by the incontrovertible testimony of them who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, happy are ye if ye do them. Nor can you have peace and safety if, knowing what is good, you leave it undone.

And while you present your supplications for yourselves and your families, forget not the eternal concerns of the families which call not on the name of God. If it be, as it ought to be, your heart's desire, that they may be brought to the obedience of the Gospel, brethren, pray for us, and for all the ministers of the truth, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you. Such an intercession as this

will assuredly prove efficacious towards the enlargement of the household of faith, if all of you, both small and great, not only in the congregations of the upright, who in heaviness of heart, sigh for the abounding iniquity and the failing of truth, but in your families apart, and in your unseen retirements, prostrate yourselves at the footstool of your Father in heaven, who seeth in secret, and pour out your desires before Him in that effectual fervent importunity which, like the long and patient waiting of the husbandman for the precious fruit of the earth, will, according to the sure word of promise, issue in plenteous showers of blessings, not confined to any favoured spots, or any privileged community, but dropping down fertility far and wide over fields co-extensive with the inhabited world, filled as it shall be in that evening-time of light with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea: and thus the God of the whole earth, in remembrance of His holy covenant, and in fulfilment of the good pleasure of His goodness, will arise and have mercy not only on the mountain of holiness in which He had His dwelling in time past, but on all in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord; so that, while He clothes His priests with salvation, and makes His people shout for joy, the ways of Zion, which have mourned because few came to the solemn feasts, shall be thronged with the multitudes who keep the holy day with thanksgiving in their hearts, and the high praises of God in their mouths — wisdom and knowledge, shall be the stability of those times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, when His works shall appear before the face of His servants and His glory to their children; and they that fear the Lord, being all replenished with the riches of grace, shall take that sweet counsel together which revives the inward part, and knits the brotherhood of Christians in the unity of the faith and the holy bond of perfectness. “Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.” “And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”

The two Testaments are the two lips by which God has spoken to us.

Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed . . . Let it not only inform you, but inflame you.

Thos. Watson

Augustine: The Burning Heart — 1

by Rev. Angus Morrison, M.A., Oban

The Lure of Rome

By about the age of twenty, Augustine had obtained a post teaching Rhetoric at the University of Carthage. He remained there for a number of years, but two factors eventually made him decide to leave. One was his increasing dissatisfaction with the indisciplined behaviour of the students. "At Carthage", he writes in words that have a curiously modern ring, "the students are beyond control and their behaviour is disgraceful. They come blustering into the lecture rooms like a troop of maniacs and upset the orderly arrangements which the master has made in the interests of his pupils. Their recklessness is unbelievable and they can often commit outrages which ought to be punished by law, were it not that custom protects them." At the same time he was hearing reports of the excellent prospects for academic and social advancement to be found at Rome and this, together with the news that "the young students at Rome were much quieter than here", led him in the year 383 to the decision to try his fortune in the Empire's capital city.

Monica was distracted with grief. She saw the move as a still further step in her son's downward course. On the day fixed for his departure, Augustine only managed to board the ship by deceiving his mother into believing that his purpose in going to the harbour was to take leave of a friend. He recalls:

"She, indeed, was in dreadful grief at my going and followed me right to the coast. Then she clung to me, passionately determined that I should either go back home with her or take her to Rome, but I deceived her with the pretence that I had a friend whom I did not want to leave until he had sailed off with a fair wind. Thus I lied to my mother — and such a mother! . . . She would not return home without me, but I managed with some difficulty to persuade her to spend the night in a place near the ship, where there was an oratory in memory of St. Cyprian. That night I stole away from her. She remained, praying and weeping . . . The wind blew and filled our sails and the shore dropped from our sight. She went home, and I to Rome."

As Augustine set sail across the darkened Mediterranean, neither he nor Monica could have anticipated the events which were, so soon, to bring matters to a crisis point.

On his arrival in Rome, Augustine, who was accompanied by his

mistress, fell seriously ill and almost died. "I very nearly went to hell bearing the weight of all the deadly sins which I had committed." It was an inauspicious beginning and the single year which Augustine spent in Rome proved to be a far from happy one. He continued for a time to associate with the Manichees but with less and less conviction of the validity of their doctrines. The more thought he gave to the great questions of human existence, the more disillusioned he became with the self-confident but superficial answers of Manichean theology. Still desperately longing for answers, however, Augustine joined a philosophical group in Rome known as the New Academy. They regarded themselves as heirs of the Academy of the Greek philosopher Plato. The main tenet of this school was, "Doubt everything and fluctuate between all opinions", and in this radical scepticism lay its strong appeal for an enquiring mind increasingly disenchanted by empty superficialities. In pretending to so much less knowledge, the Academics now appeared to Augustine so much wiser than the Manichees.

At the end of his first year in Rome, Augustine was rather unexpectedly offered an excellent and lucrative post at Milan as the city's Professor of Rhetoric. He had no hesitation in accepting it. Apart from other considerations, he was finding that the students at Rome, contrary to reputation, had their own brand of obnoxious conduct. They were not rowdy like his students at Carthage — they simply refused to pay their fees! It was, therefore, with some sense of relief that the impecunious tutor rode north from Rome on horseback through the beautiful Italian countryside to take up his new post at Milan. It was only later that he could see clearly the hand of God in this move, leading him to the place where he was shortly to find the One in whom all questions and answers meet.

The Net Closes In

At this time, the city of Milan had as its bishop the renowned and saintly Ambrose (340-397). "Known to the whole world as among the best of men", Ambrose gave his days and nights to the study of the Scriptures and of Christian theology. Crowds flocked to hear him preach, which he did frequently — at times daily. This man of God was to have a profound influence on the young Professor. "I was brought by God to him in order that I should be brought by him to God." At first, Augustine attended the preaching of Ambrose only to decide for himself whether or not his great fame as an orator was justified. But soon he forgot all about matters of style. The Scriptural content of Ambrose's sermons gripped him. Ten

long years had passed since his reading of Cicero's Hortensius had turned him for such a brief period to the Bible. He had scarcely glanced at it since then. Now, however, under Ambrose's powerful ministry he found himself driven, despite himself, to face the claims of Scripture and of Christ. He began to study the Bible privately and especially Paul's epistles. He had long assumed that they contained mere "childish trifles" and he was quickly brought up with a jolt!

There were many questions which Augustine would now have dearly liked to have put to Ambrose but he found it well-nigh impossible to get near the bishop.

"I could not," he writes, "ask him what I wanted as I would have liked to have done, for crowds of busy people in whose needs he was interested kept me from him. And when not occupied with them he devoted the scanty time left him to refreshing his body with needful food or his mind with reading. And even as he read his eyes followed the page and his mind pondered what it imbibed, but his tongue was silent. Often when he came — for none were forbidden to enter, nor was it customary to announce visitors — we would find him thus reading in silence. So we, too, would sit for long and watch him in silence — for who would have dared disturb a man so engaged? Then we would steal away, for we realised that during that brief space thus won for the refreshment of his mind he was taking holiday from preoccupation with other men's affairs, and had no desire to be called away to other things . . . perhaps, too, it was with a view to saving his voice — which in his case easily got weak — that he thus very wisely read in silence."

About this time the redoubtable Monica appears once more on the scene. She was not so easily shaken off and after a long and hazardous journey, rejoined her son in Milan. If Augustine had problems in gaining access to Ambrose, Monica at least was now seldom far from his side. She would accompany him to the services and they would then discuss the sermons together. Her influence on Augustine was probably never more telling than in these two years prior to his conversion in 386.

Two great barriers, however, still kept Augustine from embracing the Christian faith. The first was intellectual. While the sermons of Ambrose had finally exposed for him the absurdity of most of the Manichean doctrines, especially in relation to the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament, one fundamental difficulty remained. It may be difficult for us to understand this, but, under Manichean influence, Augustine even now found it impossible to conceive of God in other than material terms — as "one vast and bright body and he himself as part of that body." That

"God is a Spirit" was a truth he could not yet find intelligible far less believe. This difficulty was resolved for him in an unexpected way. He discovered the system of philosophy known as Neo-Platonism and was surprised by its many apparent similarities to Christian doctrine. These, he was soon to find, were superficial, but at this stage in his experience the Neo-Platonic doctrines helped to clear from his mind the tangled weeds of Manicheism and prepare it for more Scriptural plantings. He found help in three main areas.

First, with regard to the nature of God. The future great writer on the Trinity now began for the first time, in the words of Roy Battenhouse, "to understand how deity could be infinite and yet not diffused through finite or infinite space. God could be beyond all space and time and above all corporeal being as a transcendent source." In Augustine's own eloquent words, "And I said, Is truth therefore nothing because it is not diffused through space — neither finite nor infinite? And Thou didst cry to me from afar, 'I am that I am'."

Second, Augustine had been reading the Gospel of John and was surprised to discover how close the resemblance was between the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the Logos and that of the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel. He could not appreciate then how fragile that similarity was but he was helped to see that the soul of man, though bearing witness to the light, can never itself be *the* light, but that God, the Word, is that true light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

The third area in which he found intellectual help was that of sin. He came now to appreciate that, contrary to Manichean theology, sin does not originate in any eternal *substance* but from the perverseness of the will.

Augustine's intellectual ferment in these years was matched only by the moral turmoil of his life. Soon after his arrival in Milan in 384, he had decided to leave his mistress in the interests of further social advancement. She clearly had a deep love for Augustine and returned to North Africa vowing never to know another man. Augustine had to wait two further years in order to marry a young "society" lady but found himself unable to do so. He took another concubine. For a period, he tells us, only one thing kept him from complete abandonment to a life of sensual pleasure. "Epicurus would have carried off the palm if I had not believed what Epicurus would not believe; that after death there remains life for the soul and places of recompense."

But the prayers of Monica, the sermons of Ambrose and his own reading of Scripture were now, by God's blessing, about to bear fruit. The

brilliant prodigal was finding the far country an increasingly empty place. Augustine describes himself on the eve of his conversion as a man in sleep who, hearing the call to arise, is able to answer only with drowsy words, "Soon" and "Tomorrow". "Save me", he was saying, "but not yet." Almighty grace was what was needed and grace was at hand.

Homecomings

One afternoon in August, 386, Augustine was in conversation with a Christian friend, Alypius. As they spoke together, "God was turning me round towards myself, taking me from behind my back where I had placed me unwilling to look at myself, and setting me before my face". He experienced the most terrible conviction of sin. His whole past life seemed to spread out before him. Sins of heart and of body, of commission and omission, rose up as a great overhanging mountain which threatened to crush him to powder. He had to get away from Alypius. In agony of soul he hurried from the room and went into the garden of the house. He threw himself down under a fig tree, near to despair, not knowing what was to become of him. What happened next is best described in his own words:

"Lo, I heard a voice as if it had been some boy or girl from a house not far off, uttering and often repeating in a sing-song manner, 'Take up and read; take up and read.' And instantly, with changed countenance, I began to consider intently whether children in some game of theirs were used to sing any such words; yet could I not find that I had ever heard the like. Then, stemming the course of my tears, I rose up, conceiving that I was required from heaven to read that chapter which the first opening of the book should lead me to."

Augustine re-entered the house and took up a copy of Paul's epistles which he had earlier been reading. It lay open at Romans Chapter 13. The words he first read were those of the 13th and 14th verses: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but *put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ* and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."

"No further would I read," he recalls, "nor was there cause why I should; for instantly with the end of this sentence, as by a clear and constant light infused into my heart, the darkness of all former doubts was driven away."

The restless heart had found its true repose.

Quietly he told Alypius what had happened. Together they rejoiced.

"From thence we went in to my mother; we told her and she was filled with overflowing joy. And when we declared to her in order how it had all happened, she did exult and triumph and bless thee, O Lord, who art "able to do exceeding abundantly above that which we can either ask or think." Augustine's experience and feelings at this time are well captured in the following remarkable words:

"I have loved Thee late, Thou beauty, so old and so new; I have loved Thee late! And lo! Thou wast within, but I was without, and was seeking Thee there. And into Thy fair creation I plunged myself in my ugliness; for Thou wast with me and I was not with Thee! Those things kept me away from Thee, which had not been, except they had been in Thee! Thou didst call and didst cry aloud and break through my deafness. Thou didst glimmer, Thou didst shine, and didst drive away my blindness. Thou didst breathe and I drew breath, and breathed in Thee. I tasted Thee and I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me and I burn for Thy peace. If I, with all that is within me, may once live in Thee, then shall pain and trouble forsake me; entirely filled with Thee, all shall be life to me."

On April 25th, 387, Augustine, with his friend Alypius and son Adeodatus, was baptized at Milan by Ambrose. Later that year, he abandoned his promising career and left Milan to return with Monica and a few friends to North Africa. His ambition now was to devote the rest of his life directly to the service of his new-found Lord and Saviour. His mother Monica, however, was not to see her native land again.

The party reached Ostia, Rome's seaport, at the mouth of the Tiber. There they had to wait several days for suitable shipping. These were days of warm fellowship among the Christians in the group. The Lord was very near. In one of the most memorable passages in the Confessions, Augustine remembers how on a warm and sunny afternoon at Ostia, he and Monica stood together at a window overlooking the beautiful garden of their lodging-house. They were conversing about heaven.

"There did we confer alone with much dear tenderness of what kind should be that eternal life of saints in heaven which the eye hath not seen nor the ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man."

As they spoke together of "the region of riches unending where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth," they were transported with joy.

"If this were to continue," he writes, "and all other visions in order far inferior might be withdrawn and this alone might so transport and swallow up and wrap him who beheld it in those intrinsical joys, so that his life might be for all eternity such as was this moment of understanding;

would not this be that whereof it is written, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord' "?

He describes how, at that moment, the world with all its delights and attractions grew utterly contemptible. Monica turned to him and said, "My son, for my part I find no more pleasure in this life. What I am still to do or why I am still here in the world I do not know, for I have no more to hope for on this earth. One thing only there was for which I desired to stay in this life a little while — that was to see you a Christian before I died. God has granted me my wish and more besides, for I now see you as his servant, spurning such pleasures as the world can give."

Five days later, still at Ostia, Monica took ill. She knew the end was near. Augustine grieved at the thought of his mother being buried so far from home. This earned for him the rebuke, "Nothing, my son, is far from God and I have no fear that He will know at the end of the world from what place He is to raise me up." On the ninth day of her illness Monica died in triumph. The little group sang the 100th Psalm at her beside. For a time Augustine restrained his grief but at last he found some relief in tears. "I wept for my mother now dead and departed from my sight, who had wept so many years for me that I should live for ever in God's sight."

The death of Monica marks the end of the autobiographical chapters of the Confessions, and the conclusion of the first main part of Augustine's life. His purpose, as we saw, in tracing his experiences during these years was to magnify the love and power of God in drawing him out of such a "fearful pit". And this purpose is lost on us if we do not leave the Confessions with a fresh sense of wonder at that "amazing grace" which can lay hold on the most debauched and depraved and transform them into the most mighty and useful servants of the Lord. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Soon after, Augustine sailed for North Africa earnestly seeking the Lord's guidance as to a field of usefulness. He could scarcely have imagined the way in which his prayers were shortly to be answered.

(To be continued)

The Millenium

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." (Rev.20:1-2).

The American writer Hal Lindsey, in his book *The Late Great Planet Earth* makes the statement: "There used to be a group called

'postmillennialists'." Lindsey as a representative of the premillennial school of thought, evidently believes that the orthodox postmillennial outlook is a matter of the past. The orthodox view is that there will be a world-wide spiritual prosperity through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Jews and Gentiles, followed at last by the second coming of Christ and the judgment. Instead, Lindsey is an ardent advocate of premillennial views. He holds the dispensational view of the "any moment" personal coming of Christ to set up an earthly kingdom and to reign for a thousand years in Jerusalem. That he holds these dispensational interpretations of prophecy is not surprising, as he is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, Texas. Most of the Bible institutes in America are dispensational in their teaching and have been influential in popularizing premillennial views. When a revised edition of the Scofield Reference Bible was published in 1967, John F. Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, was a member of the revision committee. Mr Walvoord is listed amongst prominent dispensationalists.

While the premillennial interpretation of prophecy is not completely new, it can be said that it has mainly been popularized to the extent it is now held, during the last hundred years. In *The Puritan Hope* only a few names are listed of ministers in the 17th century who believed in a premillennial coming of Christ and their influence appears to have been only short-lived.

In the Netherlands, where the Reformation took a firm hold, the views of the Dutch divines were identical with the reformed views held in England, Scotland and America. These divines generally taught that through the preaching of the gospel, accompanied by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Jews would be converted, the Roman antichrist would be destroyed and that these glorious victories of Christ, reigning from heaven as Prince and Saviour, would be followed by a long period of spiritual prosperity. Amongst the Dutch divines and ministers teaching this may be listed Koelman, Witsius, Groenewegen, Hellenbroek, Ledeboer, à Mark, Vitringa, à Brakel, Voetsius, de Cock, Leydekker, Smijtegeld, van Lodensteijn and van der Groe.

One of the most prominent amongst these ministers, Ds Wilh. à Brakel wrote an extensive systematic theology and an exposition of the book of Revelation. In connection with the twentieth chapter of Revelation he writes: "May we expect during the last times of this world a glorious state of the church on earth? This is what very many excellent divines of all times believe and indeed most of them in our days and to me it is so clear from the word of God that I have no doubt about it. Notice in this chapter

that when the antichrist shall have been completely destroyed, and before Gog and Magog arise, the devil will be so bound, that he will not be able to raise a warring party against the church, vs 1-3. Then shall the saints reign with Christ as priests and kings, vs 4 and 6. Under the seventh trumpet the kingdoms of this world will believe in Christ and will submit to Christ in his service: Rev. 11:15 — 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ'. This indicates an extraordinary increase of all sorts of nations to Christ and his service, which can only make the church glorious."

Mr à Brakel's expectation is equally hopeful about the complete destruction of the Roman antichrist and the false prophet of Mohammedanism with their systems of darkness: "The antichrist, who has done so much harm to the church, will be and shall remain completely destroyed." "The Turk, the archenemy of the church, will be completely broken, to make way for the gathering in and conversion of the Jews, and through them, for the conversion of the eastern nations." The destruction of the Mohammedan religion he saw as introductory to and bound up with the conversion of the Jews: "The whole Jewish nation shall recognise our Lord Jesus to be the true and only and their promised Messiah; they shall turn to Him, they shall love Him much and honour and glorify Him."

These were the almost universal views of the reformed ministers and theologians during the golden age of the church in the 17th and 18th centuries in the Netherlands. Many now recognise that era of prosperity only by such names as Rembrandt, Steen, Vondel and Huygens, men of renown in their own fields of art, literature and science. But the names of the above-listed godly men who were mightily instrumental in promoting Christ's kingdom, indicates that there was much more afield than mere worldly prosperity. Nothing less than an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Reformation had gained a sure footing. The Reformed religion had become the only recognised religion which had the official support of the States-General. The views about the identity of the antichrist and his destruction, followed by a long worldwide period of spiritual prosperity, were and are Reformation views. They represent the insight the Church gained through the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit at that time.

The question may be asked why so little is heard about the millennium in the Netherlands now? This is no doubt the result of the decline which already commenced in the 18th century. Liberal views were increasingly tolerated; sects established themselves and the Jesuits were active in the vigorous programme of the counter-reformation. At last the French

revolution with its philosophy came to accelerate the decline. This decline was in no way stopped by the well-known statesman and theologian Dr. Abraham Kuyper. His influence was very extensive in the political and religious sphere towards the end of the 19th and into the 20th century. If the views of the Jesuit Ribera (A.D. 1580) about a future antichrist gained no acceptance in the 16th century, the situation changed when that opinion emerged through the voice and pen of Dr. Kuyper. The papacy, highly alarmed about the Reformers' identification of the Roman antichrist, had for hundreds of years endeavoured to inject the idea of a futuristic interpretation of the book of Revelation into religious world opinion. Rome finally succeeded through the sectarian dispensational movement of J.N. Darby and through the influence of the learned Dutch doctor. The Jesuits found a hearing on the one hand through Darby, the representative of a false, sectarian millennialism, as taught now by Hal Lindsey. On the other hand Rome found a channel of communication through the medium of Dr. Kuyper, a supposed representative of the Reformation. Little wonder that Dr. Kuyper also lost sight of the future prosperity of the Church, as prophesied in Isa. 11:9 "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Ds. Wilj à Brakel comments on this verse: "There shall be an exceptional peace and knowledge of divine mysteries." Not so Dr. Kuyper: contrary to reformation views, he held there will not be a millennium in the history of the Church in this world.

The interpretation that there will not be a millennium, i.e. Amillennialism, has been most fully developed by Drs. Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck and through them this interpretation of prophecy has become very widespread, probably just as widespread as the premillennial interpretation of J.N. Darby. Far apart as these men were in all aspects of their religious outlook, they held one thing in common — the view of a future non-Roman antichrist. Derived from the depths of Jesuitical plotting, to overthrow the Reformation, this idea was swallowed by them without hesitation.

The poison of this Jesuitical bait has continued to bedrug premillennialists and many amillennialists to the present time. As Dr. Kuyper's books have a wide circulation through various publishing companies, it is well to remember that his views of the antichrist and the millennium together with his view of presupposed regeneration, are far from reformed.

In the midst of the present world-wide darkness, it is perhaps not surprising that sectaries have concluded that postmillennialism is a dead

issue. However, when the spirit of grace and of supplications shall be poured upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zech. 12:10) and when their fulness shall be life from the dead to the Gentiles (Rom. 12:12&15), postmillennialism shall be seen to be very much alive. It will be just as much alive as it was during the best times of the Church during the 16th and 17th centuries. One of the greatest Dutch theologians, C. Vitranga, a contemporary of à Brakel, wrote: "We have had a remarkable foretaste of the coming of the Lord in the reformation of the Church in the 16th century. And our hope increases more and more that the Lord shall complete His work. For, He has verily done in the Reformation what He prophesied to do in His coming. The work that the Lord has begun in the 16th century is an example and prelude of a greater and more excellent work, which we expect with patience." It is interesting to note that in Scotland, tribute was paid to Vitranga by none less than the Rev. John Brown of Haddington who called him "the learned Vitranga."

Even now that glorious prelude of the Reformation that Vitranga speaks of has faded into history as the "man of sin" struts around the globe with all the pomp the papacy is capable of. However, in the assured hope and expectation of the "more excellent work" of the millennium, the prayer of the Church is "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?"; and "Thy kingdom come". When the prayer of faith at last is granted, it will be acknowledged by all, what the Church has always believed that the Lord Jesus Christ as King of Sion reigns and has "all might and power in heaven and in earth". Then "all the mighty kings on earth before him down shall fall; and all the nations of the world do service to him shall."

J.A.T. Van Dorp

Notes and Comments

Video Tapes

An article which appeared in the Daily Record a little time ago warned of the danger to our country from the increasing trade in video tapes of a most evil kind. It states that unsuspecting families should be made aware of appalling scenes in some rented movies. The producers of these videos have moved on from soft and hard pornography to violent horror in which scenes of bestiality are portrayed. There are at present 10,000 video outlets in our country so that the public need to be warned of this danger. How low Britain has fallen that such a vile trade should be permitted to flourish within her borders.

Prisoners on Parole

In the annual report of the Parole Board it appears that more prisoners under life sentence are going free out on parole. There was a substantial increase in the number of prisoners in this category recommended for release. Most of these prisoners were convicted murderers. The number of such recommended for parole was as high as 107.

While it may be reasonable to recommend for early release on the grounds of good behaviour prisoners who have been guilty of certain crimes, we cannot see that there is any warrant for releasing prisoners who have received life sentences for murder. We think that such action makes a nonsense of the sentencing of the Courts of the land and makes the nation guilty of further contempt of the law of God which requires the death penalty for deliberate premeditated murder. In the light of the increasing murder toll in the land it is also wholly unjustified.

Divorce

A bill introduced in the Commons in July will allow divorces to be dealt with in the Sheriff Court. The cost of divorces in this way will be drastically cut. It will bring Scotland into line with England and Wales.

It is a sad reflection on the moral state of Scotland that there are between 11,000 and 12,000 divorces a year in Scotland. What trials and sadness this must involve, particularly where children are involved. It is to be hoped that the new procedures, making the ending of marriages less costly, will not increase the number of divorces which at present is running at such a high rate. The removal of Gospel restraints has no doubt much to do with the present state of affairs. Only a day of the Gospel will remedy it.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 21st September at 2 p.m.

Western: At Kyle on 21st September at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 26th October at 11 a.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 28th January 1983 at 2.30 p.m.

Rev. D. MacLean's Operation

As most of our readers will know, Rev. D. MacLean, Glasgow underwent a successful operation for the replacement of a heart valve

early in August. At the time of writing this, Mr MacLean is making satisfactory progress and we hope and pray that, in the Lord's good providence, he will soon be restored to health and strength again.

Deputy to Australia and New Zealand

Rev. A.F. MacKay, Inverness was due to leave for Sydney, Australia on 31st August where he is to act as Church Deputy. Mr MacKay expects also to visit Grafton and afterwards to go to New Zealand. We trust and pray that he may be preserved in all his journeys and that his labours in those parts of the world may be blessed by the Lord.

Illness of Rev. E.A. Rayner, Grafton

In July Mr Rayner underwent tests in hospital in Sydney in connection with his kidney complaint. The doctors have advised an operation which was due to take place at the end of August. We hope and pray that the Lord will be pleased to restore him to health once more and to his labours in His vineyard.

Theological Conference 1982

The conference will be held in the Free Presbyterian Church, Inverness on Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th September (D.V.). The following papers will be read:

Tuesday

2.30 p.m. Communion with God — Rev. D. Nicolson, Glendale.

7.00 p.m. Divorce — the Conflict between Church and State — Rev. Alex Murray, Applecross and Mr D. Laing, Aberdeen.

Wednesday

10.00 a.m. Hugh Martin — Rev. A. MacKay, Tarbert.

2.30 p.m. The Charismatics — Mr R. Middleton, Barnoldswick.

7.00 p.m. Church Discipline — Rev. D.B. MacLeod, Dingwall.

As usual all office-bearers and male members are eligible to attend. The evening paper on Wednesday will be open to the public.

D.J. MacDonald, Convener, Training of Ministry Committee.

Committee Meetings (D.V.)

The following Committees will meet at Inverness Church.

Tuesday 5th October

10.00 a.m.—11.00 a.m. Church Magazines.

11.00 a.m.—12 noon Religious and Morals.

Sabbath Observance.

Welfare of Youth.

12 noon—1.00 p.m. Publications.

2.00 p.m.—4.00 p.m. Finance.

4.00 p.m.—5.00 p.m. Training of Ministry.

7.00 p.m.—9.00 p.m. Jewish and Foreign Missions.

Wednesday 6th October

10.00 a.m.—12 noon Church Interests.

2.30 p.m.—4.00 p.m. Dominions and Overseas.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Wm. D. Fraser, 20 Daleview Avenue, Glasgow G12, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:—

Sustentation Fund: Anon. M., £100.

Home Mission Fund: Anon. M., £40.

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon. M., £20; Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel, Luton, £50; "In memory of a beloved father", £100 for John Tallach Secondary School.

Aged & Infirm Ministers etc Fund: Anon. M. £20; A. Forgie, Redding, £25.

Organisation Fund: Anon. M., £20.

Dominions & Overseas Fund: Anon. M., £20.

General Building Fund: Anon. M., £20.

Home of Rest Fund: Anon. M., £20.

Trinitarian Bible Society: Gisborne Congregation, £130.

The Publications Treasurer, Mr R. W. M. Mackenzie CA, Hilton of Cadboll, Fearn, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Free Distribution Fund: A Friend £10.30; London Congr. £7.39; Anon per Rev. A. MacAskill £3.80.

Publications Fund: London Congr. £7.39.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Barnoldswick: Anon, Inverness Postmark £20 for building fund; Communion Expenses £10; Liverpool Friends £20; Anon £10; Anon £25; Anon £5 per St Jude's.

Dingwall: Urije Gereformeerde Gemeete, Urk, Holland £228.37 and 200 guilders, Urije Oud Gereformeerde Gemeente, Urk, Holland £336.60, both for Jews Mission Fund, Mrs C., Inverness £3 for Communion Expenses, all per Rev. D.B.M.

Fort William: Envelope in plate £1; Friend, Dingwall (Inverness postmark) £2 per Rev. J.A. Macdonald; Envelope in plate £1; Macleans, Tyndrum £10, last three for Sust. Fund; M. MacD., Caol £1 and £2 per Rev. J.A. Macdonald.

Lochcarron: In memory of a loved one £5 for communion door coll., £5 for Comm. Exps, £8 for June-July Sust Fund, £6 for Car Fund per Rev J.W.R.

Oban: Mr A. MacD, Blanefield £30 per A.M.P.; D.N.C., Inverness £15; A friend £20; Mrs T., Stirling £10, all for Congr. Funds, last two per Rev. A.M.

Raasay: J.N., Harris £5 for Sust Fd per J.M. Macleod; Friend, Raasay £1; Envelope in plate £5, both for Property Fund; Rachel & Sheila £10; Raasay Friend £2; Friend, Raasay £2, last three for Comm. Exps.

Shieldaig: Leny & Jannice Mol, Holland £50 for Shieldaig Sust. Fund per D. MacCuish, Kenmore.

South Harris: R. MacL., Glasgow £15; F. MacL., Kishorn £20; F. MacL., Inverness £20, all per J. MacKay; Friend, Uig, Skye £10 per M.M.L., all donations for Seilabost Mission House renovation.

Stirling: A.M., Edinburgh £3 for Stirling Coll. per Rev. D.J. MacDonald.

Strath: A Friend £2 for Strath Sust. Fund per D. MacKay.

Watnish: M.N. £20, (£10 for Sust. Fund and £10 for Property).

SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOKROOM

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARTIN LUTHER

by J.H. Merle D'Aubigne. Large print (p) £6.50

THE GOLDEN ALPHABET

by C.H. Spurgeon. A devotional commentary on Psalm 119 (p) £2.70

PEDEN THE PROPHET (PUIR AULD SANDY)

by Thomas Cameron M.A. A booklet £0.60

STORY OF THE COVENANT AND THE SERVICES OF THE COVENANTERS.

by the Rev. J.A. Wylie LL.D. A booklet £0.75

Anyone wishing to dispose of second-hand books, please contact the bookroom at 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE. Tel. 041 332 1760.