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The Father's Promise to the Son

"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Psalm 2: 8.

It is the promise of the Father to His Beloved Son that we have presented before us here. The Father invites the Son to ask of Him, and assures Him that He will not withhold from Him the request of His lips. We see here that there is no unwillingness on the part of the Father to bestow blessing and good upon the children of men in answer to the plea of Christ. Christ has only to ask and it will be given with the wholehearted acquiescence of the Father. How extensive the promise to Christ is by the Father when it extends to the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. With what amazement should our hearts be filled in the light of this revelation. What countless numbers of the fallen race of Adam are embraced in this promise, not only those that are near but also those that are afar off. Does it not embrace also millions that are yet unborn? Why should the great God of eternity look down on this sin-cursed world and behold the inhabitants in any other way than with divine anger and wrath? Why should the God of heaven look on any of the children of men with the very least complacency? Is not destruction, destruction everlasting, the due reward of their sin and rebellion against God? How then could they be deemed a reward and a worthy reward — for the Father would bestow nothing less upon the Son — when in themselves they are fallen, ruined and undone? Surely there must be more to this than at first meets the eye. "The gift must be of a value commensurate with the glory of the Giver and the Receiver. And so it is in this instance — a people redeemed with precious blood, a people having no intrinsic value in themselves, yet made glorious by being washed in the precious blood of Christ and clothed in Immanuel's righteousness. That they are precious in the eyes of the Lord of hosts is seen in His declaration: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels."

It is to Christ as the Divine Redeemer and as the King of Zion that the promise is given: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Before ever this people were given to Christ as a reward, they were given to Him in Covenant. He could say to the Father: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." They were given to Christ in eternity in the setting up of the Covenant of grace, for that Covenant embraced the heathen for Christ's inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. This Covenant was ordered in all things and sure, not like the Covenants of men which so often fail, but a firmly established and indissoluble Covenant. To make the Covenant sure for all those for whom the benefits contained in it were intended, it must be sealed and ratified by the blood of the Son of God. It is in virtue of that sealing and ratifying, and of all that is implied in the shedding of the precious blood of Christ, that the benefits of the Covenant are made over to all them that believe.

Who can enter into what the death of Christ meant? Who can enter into the dark hours of Calvary when the Saviour of men suffered? No eye could pierce through that dark veil but the eye of the Eternal Father. What have we at Calvary's Cross but the eternal Son of God suffering in our nature sufferings which were indescribably great, and bearing the wrath of God against the sins which were laid to His charge. The load of suffering He had to bear has been described as infinite upon infinite. The sins themselves were finite in number so far as each individual was concerned, but each sin was infinite in demerit and worthy of eternal punishment because against a God of infinite glory. Christ took the law place of the guilty. He went down into a valley deeper than any shall ever know to its full extent. How deep it was His cry on the Cross reveals: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." But who can measure the depths of soul agony which these words comprise? Yet this was the path of obedience which He was required to tread if He was ever to hear from the lips of the Father: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." He came out on the other side of the valley — which was the valley of His people's damnation — saying, "It is finished." His work was done, His people saved. But He must go to the dust of death and rise again on the third day as the first fruits of a glorious inheritance and as the First Begotten from the dead. Surely it can now be said: "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Surely we can now say that the reward is sure. But some dissenting voices

will say: "That is all very well, but the world as we see it is full of the enemies of Christ. Where can we see nations and peoples subject to Christ? Are there not millions of people under the blight of Romanism? Are not millions of our race under Mohammedanism, Hinduism, Confucism, Shintoism and other false religions? Are there not millions in China under the scourge of Communism? Are not many parts of the world subject to the cruelties of tyrannical rulers? How then can you speak of Christ receiving the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession? Surely, so far as outward appearances are concerned we were never further from the fulfilment of the promise?

How are we to answer such dissenting voices? It is the Lord that has said it, and not man. Has He said it, and shall He not do it? Have any of His promises failed? And why do you think that the time, if it is ever to come, must be far off? Has the Lord not said: "A nation shall be born in a day?" "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" Is our unbelief to prevent the Lord fulfilling His promises? What the Father has said to the Son remains as true today as it ever was. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Not only so, but the promise contains in it the sure outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal blessing to effect the fulfilment of the promise.

We are ready to say: How can it be done? The world was never more unlike the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon it. If that is so, may we not deduce from this that the world was never more in need of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon it, instead of deducing the opposite. Is Christianity to continue to decline? Is the spiritual state of Christian nations to remain at their present low state? Is the Christian Church to die out? If not how is all this to be prevented? Can man prevent it? Verily, no! How then is the change to come? The Lord leaves us in no doubt of this. "I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Beginning, as of old, at the city of Jerusalem and, spreading out to the nations of the earth, it will encompass the globe. "Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad: and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem." "Run speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein."

David prayed: "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory," and that prayer is recorded in the Scriptures of truth. Modern amillennialists would say: 'O David, you have gone wrong expecting a millennium on earth

through which the whole earth would be filled with the glory of the Lord. You have your prayer fulfilled now, David, in heaven, but it could never be fulfilled on earth.' With which sentiment does the Word of God agree — with David's or with that of the amillennialists. Let the Word of God answer that question: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." And again, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Such are the promises, and these shall certainly be fulfilled. And they shall be fulfilled when Christ shall ask of the Father the nations as His possession. In answer to that request the Father shall give Him the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, and "all nations shall call him blessed".

A Sermon

by Rev. John Love, D.D., Glasgow

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." — John 15: 12.

That solemn form of expression, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," may be applied with peculiar force to the consolatory speeches of the dying Saviour. Much sweetness is laid up here; but it is a sweetness sealed up from the unbelieving world. None can intermeddle with these consolations, but the broken-hearted disciples of Christ. Happy is that man, whose ears have been opened to catch the vital sound of the compassionate, holy voice of Jesus, in these discourses with which the text stands connected.

The springs of consolation, here opened to the disciples of Christ, are principally these three:— The prospect of being with Christ eternally, in the immediate presence of God: The superior excellence of Christ's presence, by the abundant influences of His Spirit, after His glorification, above whatever comfort could be derived from His bodily presence, in a humbled state: And the glorious victory of His cause, and enlargement of His spiritual kingdom, by the thorough conversion of many souls.

In subserviency to all these joyful prospects, we find the holy Redeemer, in the preceding chapter, insisting much on the importance of obedience to His commandments, as the genuine proof of sincere love to His Person. But, that the disciples might not hesitate, from consideration of the difficulty of the service of Christ; and might not take occasion, from these exhortations, to entertain high imaginations of their own strength, He turns His discourse into another channel; and, in the first seven verses of this chapter, gives them very clear and solemn instruction, as to the mysterious

way of their attaining to that pure obedience which He so much inculcates. Having done this, He returns to His former strain of pressing exhortations on this subject. And, that their humble endeavours might take a particular aim, He selects one particular precept, which, in the text, He impresses with all that dignity, authority, and force of persuasion, which the lips of such a Master, in such circumstances, could give it: "This is in my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." As though He had spoken thus: "My dear disciples and friends, I have dealt very familiarly with you. These years past, you have been admitted to intimate acquaintance with me. Much you have seen of what I am, and of what is my heart towards you. Now I am going to the cross to die, and to heaven to plead for you. I have been healing your sorrows, and showing you the consolations which shall flow from my departure. I have also warned you of the necessity of your aspiring after higher degrees of love to me, and obedience to my words, than hitherto you have attained. Are you not willing to comply with my counsels? Here, then, is one injunction, which it will be your wisdom specially to regard. I am leaving you behind me; and you are to be exalted to situations of high trust in my kingdom. This is my dying charge to you, my bereaved family, 'Love one another:' Be closely cemented together: Beware of divisions: Let the whole extent of my expanded kingdom be knit together in your persons: Let your union be of a superior nature to the combinations of worldly men: Love one another, not as the world loveth, but 'as I have loved you:' Transmit the example of love like mine, to all after generations of my people."

Such, my brethren, is the general sense of the passage. But, I hope, you are desirous to enter more minutely and fully into this subject. Come, then, and let us be at some pains about the following things:—

First — Let us inquire into the peculiar nature of that mutual love, which unites true Christians together.

Second — Let us consider how this love should be influenced by the authority and example of Jesus Himself.

Third — Let us endeavour to make a practical improvement of the truths which shall here present themselves to our view.

I. — Let us begin with an inquiry into the nature — the peculiar nature — of that mutual love which is the bond of union among sincere Christians.

Will it be accounted strange, if I say that there is a mystery here, — a mystery, into which the unbelieving world cannot penetrate? Yes, my friends, it is so: Those ligaments, those ties, which connect the members

of Christ's mystical body, are of a mysterious nature. But why should this seem strange, when we are baffled, if we attempt to explain how the various parts of the human body, in union with the same soul, are united with one another, so that they cannot be separated without exquisite pain?

"Are you going, then, to preach mysteries?" Yes; I cannot preach a word of the Gospel — I cannot preach of what some reckon the low, trite subject of brotherly love among Christians — without attempting to unfold a mystery which angels look into with wonder.

My brethren, our chief difficulty on this subject is at the very entry of it. Here is the difficulty, — to ascend to the Source and Spring of this Divine affection. Are you acquainted with God? Can you climb up into the secret of His presence, into the holiest of all? Then you will be enabled to understand the origin, the nature, the symptoms, and the properties of Christian love.

Let me borrow a similitude from a subject which has lately excited some public attention. We have heard a great deal about the source of the river Nile. I will compare Christian love to this glorious river. It was known long ago, that the source of that river lay far remote, in a country seldom visited — a country not to be explored without difficulty and danger. There, secreted from ordinary eyes, in a high-seated plain, burst forth the springs of the Nile. Gradually fed from the earth and skies, it pursues a long, winding, intricate, and sometimes dreadful course, through mountains, rocks, and valleys. At length, though guarded by many ridges of mountains, it finds a little gradually-extending plain, over which, as far as nature will permit it, at proper seasons, it diffuses its fertilising overflow of waters. Then, as if conscious of its beneficence, it rides on in calm triumph, till, by a number of magnificent mouths, it reaches its parent ocean. Like to this river, is that holy stream of Christian affection, of which we now speak. *It's* source is high and secret, in those regions of celestial truth, which are seldom really visited, and which the eye of the mere philosophical vulture never saw. Springing from this high source, the stream of Christian love holds on its course, through many intricacies of temptation; sometimes through dreadful cataracts, till it reaches the valley of deep humiliation. Then, the ridges of worldly lusts, which confined its course, gradually retire; and the Christian's benevolence, swelled by floods of heavenly influence, overflows, and enriches a neighbourhood, more or less extensive according to the disposal of the sovereign God. At last, having finished its beneficent course, with calm triumph, and with many acclamations of praise, it rests in the bosom of that God, who is the ocean of love.

But, let me speak in more plain language.

1. The love of true Christians, to each other, originates in their peculiar knowledge of God.

It originates in such a knowledge of the glorious God, and in such a faith towards Him, as at once delights, humbles, and purifies the heart. To this view of the subject, the following passages direct us: 1 John 4: 7. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God:" Verse 16, "and we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." 1 Peter 1: 22, 23. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren: see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again —." Col. 3: 12. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering."

The love of Christians rises in their breasts in a Godlike manner. Think a moment of the love of the blessed God. The primary idea of the Godhead is self-existence. What is next? The possession of an unbounded beauty, glory, and felicity within itself. Here is the fountain of that holy benevolence which belongs to God. God, being infinitely rich in spiritual glory, and full of just admiration of Himself and delight in His own beauty, is gloriously inclined to make an eternal display of His own excellence, to impart to other beings a likeness of His own purity and felicity, and to delight therein. This is the origin of all that love, which shines in the works of creation and redemption. The goodness of God is the rich overflowing of infinite perfection, and infinite happiness.

But, can the love of mean, dependent beings spring forth in so exalted a manner? Yes, my friends: according to the state, measure, and capacities of a creature, the benevolence of every true Christian is like that of God; for it springs up thus: — His mind is enlightened to look into the transcendent glories of the Divine Being; with these glories his heart is deeply enamoured: He seeks for a way of access to God; and he finds it in the Gospel: The love of God in Christ emboldens him to draw near: On the footing of the blood and righteousness of Jesus, he appropriates — what? The Godhead; the vast treasures, the all-sufficiency of Jehovah. God is now his. Can his heart remain any longer little and contracted? No, surely: His spirit now acquires a prince-like, or rather a God-like dignity. Do worldly objects appear great in his eyes? No; their lustre is gone, and with it all the mad lusts of the flesh and of the eye. But doth this exalted creature look big in its own eyes? No. "What am I?" "Whence is this to me?"

"I am a man of unclean lips;" "I am the chief of sinners: I, as a sinner, have no dignity to descend from, like that from whence God hath come down to me. But let the deepest humility show that I have known his majesty and his condescension: Let me meet with transport every shadow of his glory in my brethren around me."

Do you my friends, understand and believe these things? I hope you do: If so, you will not be surprised, that I ascribe to the love, whose origin I have marked out.

2. The following properties:— A peculiar delicacy, purity, sweetness, expansion, strength and permanency.

Let me explain a little these terms.

I say of Christian love, It hath a peculiar *delicacy*. It is not promiscuous fondness. There is in a Christian's heart, a good-will which takes a very wide range. But I now speak of the mutual affection of Christians to each other as Christians. And of this I say, it is delicate. There must be more in its object, than a mere saying, "Lord, Lord." There must be probable symptoms of real grace. "Grace," said Paul, "be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "When Barnabas came to Antioch, and had seen," says the historian, "the grace of God, he was glad."

This love hath in its nature a heavenly *purity*. Worldly men sometimes love one another. But their love is carnal, it is sordid, it grovels in the dust. They can wish others to be happy in no higher way than they make choice of for themselves. The worldly man, when in a good humour, wishes well to his neighbours; that is, he wishes them good health, riches, honours, pleasures of this life. But what is the breath of Christian love, in reference to its objects? Let the public benedictions of the Old and New Testament declare it. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." "Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you."

Is it saying too much of love like this, to say that it is *sweet*; that it hath a heavenly sweetness in its bosom, that it hath raptures and ecstasies? Yes, my dear brethren, this holy affection can produce sweeter ecstasies than the voluptuary ever felt. Did Paul feel no rapture, when he said, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are in our hearts, to die and live with you: great is my glorying of you. I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation?" Felt he no rapture when he thus addressed the Thessalonians: "What thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?" Felt he no rapture when he wrote thus to the

master of a fugitive slave: "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels?" I pity the man whose heart says: "How can these things be?"

The Christian's love is *capacious*. There is room in his heart for all the saints, and for millions more; yea, for as many worlds of holy beings, as the philosopher can imagine from inspecting the starry heavens, were God pleased to create and to sanctify so many.

The principle which I describe is *strong*; strong, to conquer discouragement, from much unkindness, from many blemishes; strong, to meet the frown of the proud world, and to cleave to God's people, amidst disgrace and danger. "This love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it."

The principle which I describe is *permanent*, "In summer and in winter shall it be." It shall out-last the course of day and night. It shall survive the ruins of nature. It shall rise in fresh lustre from the grave. It shall bloom in the Paradise of God, for ever and ever. Such is Christian love; such is its origin; such are its properties! Is it necessary to add,

3. That it is prolific of the noblest fruits?

He who carries about in his breast this sacred fire cannot loiter, he cannot trifle. It will rouse him to beneficent activity. He will not spare his sweat or his money, who is disposed to pour out his blood "for the brethren." Their sorrows and joys he makes his own. Such fruits will spring forth from this well cultivated principle; they will spring forth naturally, with abundant luxuriance, and with delicious fragrantcy. "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard; spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." Or, in the plainer, but not less fervid language of the Apostle, "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

II. — I have given a very imperfect, but, I hope, a true and just representation of the love, which genuine Christians cherish and express towards each other. And now, are you not sensible, my brethren, that it was worthy of the great Redeemer, even in those awful circumstances, to spend some of His precious moments and words on this subject, and to rouse

His disciples to the study of this holy affection, by His authority and His example?

What must be the power of the commanding voice of Jesus, and of His attracting pattern, on souls that know Him? For such I have already supposed those souls to be, in which this love of the brethren is seated. They have known the glories of his Person as the Incarnate God; they have felt the charms of His love; how then must they feel the weight and power of these words, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you?"

The school of Christ is the school of love.

But can love be taught; can love be influenced by authority? Is it not an unforced, spontaneous effusion of the heart?

I grant, there is a kind of lawless love, which depends on the wild motions of an ungovernable fancy, which often disdains all control. And miserable are those deformed souls, which are hurried forward by the caprices of love, or rather, lusts of that kind. But the love of Christians to each other is capable of law. And though it is at once an effect of Divine influences, and a spontaneous effusion of the heart, yet it is cherished and exercised suitably to the regular orders of the faculties of the soul. Therefore, this, as well as other graces, is not only promised and bestowed, but also enjoined and inculcated on the minds of Christians.

And, among the motives which impel believers to the study of this grace, those pointed out in the text hold a principal place. The law of love is justly denominated the "law of Christ". Never was such love to men exhibited by created beings, in heaven or earth, as was displayed by the man Christ Jesus.

A gracious sense of this authority and example will promote the exercise of love in Christian souls:

1. Because it will fire them with a generous ambition to excel and abound in this exercise. Who is the Judge, who is the pattern of excellence? He, who in the text requires Christians to love one another. To whom, O Christian, owest thou thine all? Who, what is it that hath saved thee? Jesus Christ and His love. Away, then, with thy coldness and languor: rest not in thy present attainments; look to this high standard; be ashamed of thyself, and press forward.

2. But, if thou groanest under the pressure of a corrupted nature, and feelest the sentence of death in thyself, in this, as in all other respects, consider the commandment and the example of Christ, as warranting and inviting thee to apply to His inexhaustible fulness of grace. Thy heart is cold, dead, barren, and perverse. But there is in Christ lief and fire enough

to transfuse His likeness into thy soul. His command is designed to press thee on, to make application to Himself, as the Author and Finisher of love.

3. But thou feelest not only a want, an indisposition, — thou labourest under the forcible opposition of contrary temptations. The low state of religion among the people of God, their obstinacy in courses of backsliding, perhaps their ingratitude, forwardness, and injurious behaviour towards thyself, together with the subtle influence of the accursed parent *hatred*, concur to damp thy affections, and alienate thy heart from many of thy Christian brethren. Is it so with thee? And wilt thou thus lie down, overcome of evil? Think of thy Redeemer's patience and free compassion; think of His authority; think of His power. Do violence to the remains of thy corrupted nature. Gain a fresh victory over these oppositions: and then I should be glad to be near thee, to feel the fragrance of that consolation and sweetness, with which Christ will soon perfume thy victorious soul.

4. And when, according to the measure of an imperfect state, thy love begins to be perfect, and to cast out servile dread, and to assure thy heart before Him; then, fear not to indulge a humble self-approbation. The command and example of thy Judge secures His approbation of every step thou advancest in this path. He, the Judge of worlds, the Prince of eternity, will say, "Well done, inasmuch as thou didst it to one of the least of these my brethren, thou didst it to me." Thou shalt receive a full reward, — a reward, in kind, suited to the nature of this holy affection. Thy love itself shall be made perfect in heaven. There, shalt thou feel a warm return of love from Christ Himself, and the assembly of the righteous. There shalt thou see, there shalt thou feel, throughout eternity, the happiness of those excellent ones of the earth, in whom was all thy delight.

III. And now, ye Christ-like lovers of the brethren, what Application shall we make of this subject?

I. Will it be improper to take a humbling view of the matter, and to open afresh the springs of godly sorrow? What was each one of us before grace arrested us? Were we not enemies of God, and enemies of His people? The tender heart of Paul was often dissolved in contrition, when he reflected on his cruel opposition to the children of God, whom he afterwards so much esteemed. How moving are those words of his? "Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." I doubt not but his cheeks did run down with tears, in the midst of his enemies, when he repeated these words.

But it may be, this thought is rising in some one's breast: "God be thanked, I never was an enemy to God's people." Sayest thou so? Then I must take up the fan of the sanctuary, and endeavour to make a separation between the precious and the vile.

2. Hear, then, the Word of the Lord. There is such a thing as a false, a feigned, a spurious love to the brethren. A man may think he loves the children of God, and yet may be deceiving himself. "Let us not," saith John, "love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." There is, then, a falsely pretended love to the saints. And this flows out very plentifully, while it costs nothing: it is less worth than money, even in the possessor's estimation. But there is a still more alarming view of the subject. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love:— Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love:— Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Yes, my friends, there may be not only much speculation, but there may be such liberality, and such heroism in the cause of religion, as these last expressions imply, where there is not the least spark of true Christian love. We have heard of a proud Roman holding his hand in the fire till it was burnt off, to impress a foreign king with high ideas of the Roman valour. We have heard of other Romans voluntarily devoting themselves to instant death, for what they called "the public good". And may not a carnal zeal in the cause of religion, operate as powerfully as in a cause merely worldly?

You will say then, "What shall we do? Is it possible, at this rate, to know sincerity from hypocrisy?" It is possible. It is possible for a Christian to be firmly assured of the sincerity of His love. But it is possible only in one way; in the way of a close and impartial self-examination, attended with earnest cries for the special light of the Spirit of grace. Let us, then, now bring the matter to a trial.

"We know," saith the apostle, "that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." If, then, thou art a true lover of the children of God, thou hast entered into this, as well as other graces, "by the strait gate." And it hath cost thee a sharp struggle to get into it. Say, then, didst thou ever feel in thyself an entire want of all good, and a fulness of all evil; and consequently, a real reigning oppositon of heart to God, and His people? Feeling thyself thus, didst thou ever groan as one utterly helpless, in extreme misery? Didst thou ever, with a trembling heart, condemn thyself, as one worthy to be cast forth into the lowest hell? Thus, self-condemned, and unable to move towards Christ, unable to spin faith,

like the spider, out of thine own bowels, hast thou waited on the sovereign God for a saving pull of His arm? And hast thou found a new, supernatural power opening thy heart, changing thy inmost powers, and drawing thee with a sweet violence to the glorious Saviour? Having come to Jesus, hast thou received from Him the spirit of love? Hast thou found that spirit kindling in thy breast a new celestial warmth of affection? Dost thou habitually esteem these Divine influences, and the holy affections thereby produced, far above gold and silver, and all the best things of this world? Is thy love to the saints kept alive, cherished, and revived, from time to time, by power not thine own? Dost thou bewail the imperfection of thy love, and humbly renounce all dependence thereon in the matter of justification? Deal faithfully with thyself: and if thou canst give a fair answer to those questions, I will undertake to prove by Scripture, that thou art no hypocrite, but one who doth sincerely love God and His children. For this purpose, I briefly rehearse the following Scripture expressions: "The Lord hath anointed me, — to proclaim liberty to the captives, — to appoint to them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, — that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they who mourn. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, — out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. The fruit of the Spirit is love. Ye are taught of God to love one another."

But if, after all, any person here present will deceive himself, "his blood be upon his own head." I hope the Lord will not require it at my hand.

On the contrary, if anyone now begins to fall under a well-founded conviction of hypocrisy, I entreat that person not to resist or stifle that conviction. Consider that you may yet be pulled up out of the horrible pit. The outlines of the way in which an unrenewed sinner may be brought into a gracious state have been marked out in the questions which I just now proposed.

But I return to those who are indeed the people of God. You have been with Jesus at His table. Let this be manifest in the fresh fervour, sweetness, and spirituality of your affections towards each other. You have seen the dying love of Christ. Are you not ravished with it? Are you not ashamed of your distance from perfect likeness to Him? Are you not longing for that period when you shall feel flames of love like to those which were in the heart of Jesus upon the cross — which are now in His heart in the midst of the throne? Hasten forward, my friends, to your own country.

Pity those who are strangers to these matters, and strive for their recovery.

That we may all meet hereafter in the kingdom of perfect light and love, and that, while sojourning on earth, we may exemplify the love of Christ, may God grant; and for this purpose may He bless what hath been now spoken. Amen!

Sacramental Discourses

by John Owen

DISCOURSE I.

JUNE 8, 1673

Faith is bounded, in every ordinance, by its objects and acts. The general object of saving faith respecting God, is the truth of his word and promises, Rom. 15: 8. The special object of our faith in this ordinance is the sufferings and death of Christ. Herein he is "evidently set forth crucified before our eyes." And we must act faith upon three things with respect to his death:—

First, The personal love of Christ to our persons, from whence it was that he died for us. So saith the apostle, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. 2: 20. Were we helped to raise up our hearts by faith to apprehend Christ's love to our persons, it would greatly help us in this ordinance. The Lord lift us up above our fears, and give us a view by faith, not only of the love of Christ in general, but that he personally loved us, even this whole church!

Secondly, The sufferings of Christ. In this ordinance we are to act faith upon his death, as therein undergoing the punishment due to our sins. It is (intended) to mind us that "he made his soul an offering for sin," that "he suffered for sin, the just for the unjust," "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," that we should not come into judgment.

Thirdly, The effects of Christ's death; which were, the making an atonement for all our sins, — the making peace between God and our souls, bringing in everlasting righteousness. Under the law we find that "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh," and that the people were thereby legally cleansed; "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Heb. 9: 13, 14.

The acts of faith in this ordinance are, first, *recognition*. That faith

which is exercised on the death of Christ, that is past, is to call it over, and make it present to the soul. It is to realise it and bring it before us. It is not a bare remembrance of it, but such a one as makes it present. And where there is faith, there is the same advantage to a believing soul in the participation of this ordinance as there would have been if we had stood by the cross.

Secondly, Faith works by reflecting *to humiliation*. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn" for all their unkindness and unthankfulness to their Saviour. And when we come to this work in this ordinance, self-abasement, self-abhorrence, and brokenness of heart, will be acted, and flow forth in abundance of love to Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, Another act of faith in this ordinance is, *thankfulness to God* for his wisdom and grace in contriving this way of our salvation; and *thankfulness to Christ*, in whom was this mind, that, "being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, he took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that he might save us from our sins. If the Lord be pleased to lead us to act faith in any of these things, in some signal and eminent manner, we shall find an advantage in this ordinance.

DISCOURSE II.

JULY 6, 1673

To help you in the exercise of faith in the administration of this ordinance, I would briefly show what it is to have a sacramental participation of Jesus Christ.

When the world had lost the understanding of this mystery, for want of spiritual light, they contrived a means to make it up, very easy on the part of them that partake of it, and very prodigious on the part of the priest; for he, by a few words, turns the bread into the body of Christ, and the people have no more to do but to receive it as such into their mouths! It was the loss of the understanding of this mystery that put them upon that invention.

There is, indeed, a figure or representation in this ordinance; but that is not all. When the bread is broken, it is a figure, a representation, that the body of Christ was broken for us; but there is also a real exhibition of Christ unto every believing soul. This is distinct from the tender of Christ in the promises of the gospel. In the promises, the person of the Father is particularly looked upon as proposing and tendering Christ to us. In this ordinance, as God exhibits him, so Christ makes an immediate tender

of himself, and calls our faith to have respect to his grace, to his love, and to his readiness to unite and spiritually incorporate with us. He tenders himself to us not in general, but under a special consideration, — namely, as having “made an end of sin,” and done all that was to be done between God and sinners, that they might be at peace.

Christ made a double presentation of himself, as the great mediator; — first, when he offered himself a sacrifice on the cross, for the accomplishing the work of man’s redemption; secondly, when he presented himself to God in heaven, there to do whatever remained to be done with God on our behalf by his intercession. The intercession of Christ is the presentation of himself to God upon his oblation and sacrifice. He presents himself to God, to do with him what remains to be done on our part, — to procure mercy and peace for us; and he presents himself to us in this ordinance (which answers to that intercession of Christ above, and is a counterpart of it) to do what remains to be done on the part of God, — to give in peace, and mercy, and the sealed covenant to us.

There is this special exhibition or tender of Jesus Christ; and this directs to a special exercise of faith, that we may know how to receive him in this ordinance. And, first, let us receive him as one that hath actually accomplished the great work of making peace with God for us, blotting out our sins, and bringing in everlasting righteousness; secondly, as one that hath done this work by his death. It is a relief when we have an apprehension that Christ *can* do all this for us: but he does not tender himself to us as one that can or will do it, upon such and such conditions as shall be presented, but as one that *hath done it*; and so we must receive him if we intend to glorify God in this ordinance, — namely, as having blotted out all our sins, and purchased for us eternal redemption.

Let us act faith on Jesus Christ, as one who brings along with him mercy and pardon, procured by his death, — all the mercy and grace that are in the heart of God and in the covenant. To have such a view of him, and so to receive him by faith, is the way to give glory to God, and to have peace and rest in our own bosoms.

DISCOURSE III.

AUGUST 10, 1673

To a due attendance on this ordinance it is requisite not only that we be in a spiritual frame, but that we endeavour to bring and fix our hearts to some special thoughts with respect to this special ordinance; wherein the principal act on the part of God, and the principal act on our part

with respect to Christ, are gloriously represented. The great act of God with reference to Christ is the exhibiting of him. God did two ways exhibit Christ:—

First, There was, as I may call it, on the part of God, a legal exhibition of Christ, mentioned by the apostle, Rom. 3: 25, 26, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” This I call God’s legal exhibition of Christ, when he set him forth to undergo the curse of the law that we might be blessed. This setting forth of Christ is here represented in this ordinance when the bread is broken. And this is that which you may exercise your faith on in this ordinance, that as the bread is here set forth to be broken, so God, to declare his own righteousness, hath set forth Christ to be bruised and broken, to undergo the sentence of the law. Thus we have a gracious sight of God’s holiness in this ordinance.

Secondly, He doth exhibit Jesus Christ in the promises of the gospel. And it might be with some respect to this ordinance that the gospel invitations, which have the nature of promises, were in the Old Testament set forth by eating and drinking: Isa. 55: 1, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” God having provided Jesus Christ to be the food of our souls, be doth propose and exhibit him in the gospel as such. And what a blessed representation is there hereof in this ordinance! Here God makes a visible tender of Christ, as exhibited in the promises of the gospel, for the life, food, and strength of our souls. To answer the promises, he here makes this tender unto us.

Thus you see the principal act of God in this ordinance is the exhibiting of Jesus Christ unto us. The great act on our part, with respect to Christ, which is also represented in this ordinance, is the reception of him by faith. It is not enough that God hath set forth Christ to declare his righteousness, and in the promises of the gospel: unless we receive Christ, we shall come short of all the design of grace and mercy therein. “As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,” John 1: 12. If there be any thing that is tendered to you, unless you receive it, there is nothing done; things are but in the same state wherein they were. Notwithstanding all the tenders that God makes of Jesus Christ, in both the ways mentioned, if there be not an act of faith in receiving him, we shall have no benefit by it. Now, can any thing be more lively represented to us than our receiving of the bread

in this sacrament? but if we act not faith therein, it will be but a bare representation. Therefore, if we believe that God is in good earnest with us in the tender that he makes of Christ, let us not be backward on our part, that the sacrament rites may not be empty signs to us.

Farewell Address

by Rev. Wm. Grant, Halkirk

(This farewell address was written by Mr Grant on 15th January 1946 as he was about to go south to Edinburgh for an operation. It is evident that he thought at the time he might not come through that operation, though, in the kindness of the Lord, he was to be spared for another 30 years in the Lord's service).

As I now to go Edinburgh (D.V.) for an operation and know not that I shall return, I leave the following directions. . . .

My nearly 20 years with my dear congregation in Halkirk and Helmsdale have been spent in harmony and my yearning desire is their eternal prosperity. May the seed sown bring forth fruit even while my voice is no longer heard by them. I have in weakness put life and death before them, and God will require it.

From the brink of eternity I say to the careless among them 'Consider your ways'.

To the Lord's children I say,
'Be of good courage, and he strength
unto your hearts shall send,
All ye whose hope and confidence
doth on the Lord depend.'

To all I say — Time is short, realities await you, and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved — but that of the glorious Redeemer — the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hold fast to the distinctive and very necessary testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Beware of any and every tendency to undermine it. "Buy the truth and sell it not."

To my brethren in the Northern Presbytery I express my deep gratitude for all they have been to me. We are a united and harmonious company of brethren. Together we have been through tribulation and the Lord was with us. Farewell brethren — the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Farewell my dear congregation — Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Farewall all my sisters, brothers, relatives and friends — meet me, if that be the sovereign will of God, where parting there is none.

'They shall be brought with gladness great,
and mirth on every side,
Into the palace of the King,
And there they shall abide.'

I recall with great pleasure the six months spent in Canada and U.S.A. Notwithstanding sins of omission and commission, the Lord was very gracious and, though much to cast down in matters left behind in the church at home, I was enabled to do what was laid to my hand. To many friends overseas I bid farewell. Be valiant for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Cause. May labourers arise in all places to serve the Lord.

London Congregation. You have a special place in my heart. You came into existence as a Mission in answer to prayer. You became the birthplace of souls. You have been carried through trials and dangers of two wars. Carry on prayerfully, watchfully and zealously.

I go hence a poor sinner with no hope but that of the merits of Christ's finished work.

"None perish that him trust."

Doubt in the Church

by Rev. K. D. MacLeod

What is the Church of God on earth? According to *The Larger Catechism* "the visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world profess the true religion, and of their children". And surely no more accurate description can be given than that.

Today, however, one looks around the professedly Christian Church and one sees all manner of degrees of loyalty — and disloyalty — to the true religion. It has been thus for many, many years now and, sadly, one gets all too used to this peculiar state of affairs, though it has been so disastrous for the spiritual well-being of the world. Still, it rather takes one's breath away to read a Church of Scotland minister proclaiming his sadness at how few of his colleagues are prepared to profess doubts about the existence of God. Rev. Johnston R. McKay was referring to a newspaper survey of members of the 1991 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in which over 97% claimed that they had no such doubts, a frightening statistic, he calls it. (Mr McKay's comments formed part of an essay in the collection. *ST ANDREWS ROCK The State of the Church in Scotland*, edited by Stewart Lamont, (London, 1992).)

To anyone with the least degree of respect for the revelation which God has given of Himself in Scripture it should be a cause of dismay that even

2% or 3% of the members of the Assembly should, to any degree whatever, question the existence of God. This is, after all, the supreme court of a body which presumably continues in existence only to bring men, women and children to know God. And, in the words of Christ Himself, "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (Jn 17: 3). It is such certainties that Mr McKay so much despises.

Why does Mr McKay come to this conclusion? Why does he find it so frightening that more ministers and elders do not doubt the existence of God? "Those who themselves have no doubts," he explains, "are unlikely to respond sympathetically to those who do." That, however, is only an assumption, and an assumption which does not stand up to inspection. It is surely much nearer the truth to say that most of those who have a real confidence in the absolute truth of genuine, Biblical Christianity will relate sympathetically to unbelievers in trying to show them the truth. But I rather think that the sympathy which is being called for is one which is intended to leave unbelievers — inside the Church and out — feeling secure in their unbelief. It is one thing to deal kindly with unbelievers; it is another thing altogether to strengthen them in assuming that unbelief is a valid option. The fact is that God has spoken, and it is sin to question the truth of the revelation which God has given.

It is doubtless true, to quote McKay again, that "for many, I would want to argue most, church members today, faith is something they are searching for, unsure about, questioning all the time and certainly hesitant about conveying to anyone else". Sad that this should be true, so degenerate has the professing Church become. But there is absolutely no justification for him to go on to declare, "In this I believe church members are being true to the nature of faith, which is always tentative, open to doubt and unlikely to be expressed in the sort of dogmatic propositions beloved of conservative evangelicals."

But what is faith? It is certainly not a vague religious attitude. Nor is it merely the acceptance, even the unswerving acceptance, of a set of religious truths. True faith is faith in a person — Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. There is nothing tentative or doubtful about it. There certainly was not in Thessalonica when Paul went there preaching the gospel. His testimony was, "Our gospel came unto you not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, *and in much assurance*" (1 Thess 1: 5). Yes, the Thessalonian believers followed Paul in a sincere and unswerving acceptance of the truths he proclaimed; they followed him in accepting without hesitation the fact of the existence of God; they

understood Him to have all the attributes ascribed to Him in the revelation of Scripture; they understood Jesus Christ to be the eternal Son of God in human nature, "that Holy Thing" who entered the world by a virgin birth — and they cast their immortal souls on this glorious Person who had come to lay down His life as the sinner's substitute and who had risen from the dead on the third day.

Those Thessalonian believers would have found it extremely difficult to recognise as part of the Christian Church a body where a leading teacher of students for the ministry has so little comprehension of what it means to profess the true religion as to say, "There will always be those who, in an age of increasing perplexity, seek refuge in voices in church or in society who demand a total commitment which refuses to leave any space for questioning or doubt. But there ought to be a place within the church for those who bring their questions with them into commitment and seek within the community of faith to pursue their search for meaning, and equally a place for those who are not sure that they know what commitment means." These are the words of Professor Robert Davidson, who teaches Hebrew in the University of Glasgow, and a recent moderator of the Church of Scotland.

"Wise words", Mr McKay calls them, and then goes on to claim that "the ministry of the Church of Scotland is increasingly unwilling to recognise that if it does not address precisely the people whom Professor Davidson describes, the Church of Scotland will die. And it will deserve to do so." In a sense — but only in a very limited sense — we agree. But the question remains. What is the place of such people within the Church of God? Their place is, quite simply, in the pew, with an open ear to the Word of God. Yet we must make a further proviso, for there is no point in sitting in the pew of a church, where the occupant of the pulpit does not accept the authority of the Word of God, for it is still as true as ever: "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is 8: 20). "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?" (Mt 6: 23).

When there is this degree of willingness to tolerate complete unbelief among its office-bearers, it is not surprising that the last General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was not willing to accept a motion affirming the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Saviour — a motion which, if accepted, would have meant the Assembly bearing witness to the fact that there is no salvation to be found in any form of false religion. It was a sad testimony to the fact that the King of kings receives no honour in a large part of His own house. Even the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have

no other gods before me'', is being thrown overboard by a large part of the professing Christian Church.

Organised religion in this country is weak. On that point all are agreed. Church attendance has tumbled dramatically, as has the number of church members, within the Church of Scotland, even since it was set up in its present form in 1929, and especially since the fifties. But more serious still is the unwillingness of too many of those who remain, those in particular who are teachers of others — from the pulpit or from the divinity chair — to give due acknowledgement to the uniqueness and authority of the great Prophet of the Church.

But if Christ is not accepted as the Son of God who was born of the *Virgin Mary*, He is not essentially different from the rest of mankind and He lacks that uniqueness and authority. Further, He could not escape original sin, and it could not therefore have been possible for Him to have been fit for the office of redeemer. If that were so, the faith of the whole Christian Church would without a doubt be vain, and the whole human race would still be in their sins. Obviously then the doctrine of the *Virgin Birth* is a vital part of Christian doctrine. And, what is more, it is clearly revealed in the Bible.

It was no surprise to find Bishop Jenkins of Durham airing, at the end of last year, his disbelief of the *Virgin Birth* of the Saviour. Not that he is much more radical in his unbelief than many other ministers; he is just more provocative, and more willing to court publicity for his scepticism. Disbelief of many doctrines, even central doctrines, of the Christian faith is widespread, though it is very much rarer to find ministers trumpeting their unbelief to all and sundry. The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has, however, trumpeted his unbelief by backing Bishop Jenkins in a sermon in, of all places, St Giles' Church, Edinburgh, once the church of John Knox, a preacher whose trumpet blew no uncertain sound.

Thankfully there has been a reaction to the Moderator's description of the *Virgin Birth* as only a symbol of the incarnation. Professor T. F. Torrance, whose own theology is less than perfectly orthodox (he is a Barthian), has called it "theologically misleading and linguistically inept". And among the many letters which appeared in the press was one signed by 111 ministers at an evangelical Church of Scotland gathering in Crieff, making plain their unreserved belief in the historicity of the *Virgin Birth*, which they "regard as integral to our faith in the incarnate Christ". Then they express their regret that the Moderator has used "the press to voice his personal scepticism rather than to promote the Church's unity and

faith''. Which raises a question, How can there be unity in a Church where there is so much divergence of opinion on such fundamental matters of the faith? Surely the personal scepticism of leading churchmen is dangerous whether it is expressed openly or kept as a matter of private belief.

And the fact that at least one of the signatories to the letter is a woman minister raises a further doubt about the commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture on the part of the evangelical wing of the Church of Scotland, for it is the clear testimony of Scripture that women are not to hold office in the Church. Yes, we are thankful for every testimony to the truth but, O, for trumpets which would blow a less uncertain sound!

Where does the Church go from here? One thing is sure: any branch of the Christian Church which does not find a place for Christ as the divine, sinless Saviour — in fact, an exclusive place — will eventually die. And it will deserve to do so. The Christian Church, however, will never die; indeed the prospects for the Church are excellent. But natural religion will get her nowhere; it cannot prevent her from sliding farther on towards extinction — especially where it is a religion without absolutes, a religion that is not based firmly and totally on a revelation from heaven. Today's religion lacks these essentials; it lacks even any conception of truth. For today's world, truth is what works for me — or for you — but this generation has no conception of truth as truth for all of us. That conception of truth is, sadly, thoroughly out-dated.

Without a doubt the Church needs a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit will not come without restoring to the Church, and to contemporary society, the concept of truth — absolute, unchangeable truth. Not truth worked out by man's fallible mind, but truth revealed by the God of heaven. For, when the Holy Spirit will return in power, it will be to apply the eternal truths of the Bible, beginning with the existence of the eternal God, the inflexibly holy God who hates sin but has provided salvation for sinners in His Son, Jesus Christ. Then there will be a revolution in the Church, a reformation comparable to that of the sixteenth century, resulting in a Church in and by which God will be glorified on earth. May the Lord hasten it in His time!

Popery Another Gospel

by Rev. John Willison, Dundee

(Continued from page 84)

IV. *Of Relic-worship.* The church of Rome not only worship saints and their images, but they also worship their relics, that is, the remainders

of their bodies, or such things as belonged to them when alive, as an arm, leg, bones, ashes, the chains or instruments by which they suffered. They pretend, that, by the religious veneration of such relics, many benefits are received, miracles wrought, diseases cured, devils cast out &c. Although many vile cheats and imposters have been discovered, touching the pretended virtues of Popish relics, yet they still maintain this idolatrous practice. Nothing have they in the Bible for it, but much against it. Because God knew the Israelites' proneness to idolatry, he buried the body of Moses in a place none knew of, Deut. 34: 6, to prevent their worshipping his relics. And when the devil would have showed the grave and body of Moses to the Israelites, for ensnaring them, Michael hindered it; which seems to be the contention spoken of, Jude ver. 9. When the Israelites abused the brazen serpent to idolatry, as being a relic of Moses, and a memorial of the miraculous cures God wrought upon their ancestors by it; good king Hezekiah brake it in pieces, calling it Nehushtan, a piece of brass, 2 Kings 18: 4. From which we see, that, though it were true what Papists say of miracles wrought by these relics, it would not be a good reason for the reverence and worship they give them; nay, that idolatrous worship is rather a good reason, according to Hezekiah's practice, for giving them a decent interment than for enshrining them.

"But," say Papists, "we read in scripture, that a dead man was raised to life by touching Elisha's bones; and from Paul's body were brought handkerchiefs and aprons for curing the sick," &c.

Ans. Though God thought fit to work miracles by Elisha's bones and Paul's handkerchiefs, that is no argument for worshipping them; but the worshipping them is a better argument for breaking them all to pieces. The primitive Christians worshipped no such relics.

V. Of Cross-worship. They also worship the material cross, or the figure of that on which Christ was crucified; they ascribe peculiar virtues to it, and pray that God would make the wood of the cross "the stability of faith, an increase of good works, the redemption of souls:" nay, they pray directly to it, to "increase grace in the godly, and blot out the sins of the guilty." Likewise, they give to the cross Latria the same worship they give to God: and since they own it is idolatry to give Latria to any but God, and yet give Latria to the material cross, they must, in this instance, be self-condemned as idolaters. But there is no end of the idolatry, superstition, and will-worship of the Romish church: some of their own writers have been so sensible of it, that they have acknowledged with regret, that Popish Rome is nothing inferior to Pagan Rome in this matter. Good reason then have all true Christians to avoid communion with her, and

keep separate from her; as we are plainly called and warned by God to do; 2 Cor. 6: 16, 17; Rev. 18: 4.

VI. *Of Pope-worship.* They likewise deify and adore their Pope. They exalt him into Christ's room, and give him divine titles and honours: they call him their Lord and God, *Dominus Deus noster papa, Deus alter in terra, idem est dominus Deus et papæ*, universal head of the church, &c. They give him power to make laws to bind the conscience and say that Christians are bound to give him implicit faith and blind obedience. They are not to examine his laws and prescriptions by the scriptures, as the Bereans did the apostles' doctrine; but all must implicitly obey his commands, though never so contrary to the commands of God; as when he commands the worshipping of images, prohibits the people to read the scriptures, or to take the sacramental cup, refuses marriage to priests, exempts them from the jurisdiction of magistrates, &c. They give the Pope power to dispense with God's laws at pleasure, to forgive sins committed against God, and to remit the punishment he might inflict for them, to open and shut both heaven and hell; and therefore he wears a bundle of keys at his girdle. Hence the Spirit of God calls him "the man of sin, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God;" and saith, "he is full of the names of blasphemy, and opens his mouth in blasphemy against God;" see 2 Thes. 2: 3,4; Rev. 17: 3; 13: 6.

Just grounds have we to separate from the church of Rome as a grossly idolatrous and blasphemous church, rejected and abandoned of God. Far worse is she than the ancient enemies of Christ, the Scribes and Pharisees; for they still held that principle, that none can forgive sin but God only. But the Romanists have given up that principle, and give this power to their Pope. O what daring usurpation must it be for a subject, and one that is a criminal himself, to presume to pardon crimes committed against his almighty sovereign, and to remit the punishment which belongs to him to inflict! How admirable is the patience and long-suffering of the King of heaven and earth, that can bear so long with such insolence and blasphemous indignities from a worm of the earth!

VII. *Of Bread-worship.* The church of Rome worship the bread in the sacrament, which they call the *Hostia*; though they have no precept nor example in scripture for this adoration, nor was there any such practice in the church for eight hundred years after Christ. It never began until the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation was brought in, which taught that Christ is corporally present in the bread; a doctrine against both scripture and reason. How absurd is it to teach, that a poor silly priest hath power when he pleases to make a God, by muttering a few words; and,

as soon as he makes it, the people must fall down and worship it; and, when that is done, they must presently eat and devour their god! And yet so violent are Papists for this idolatry, that they would burn and destroy those who will not bow to their breaden god. But though transubstantiation were possible, yet Romanists, according to their own principles are in continual hazard of idolatry, namely, by giving divine worship to a creature; for they can never be sure that the bread is changed into Christ's body, seeing they grant the change may be hindered by sundry defects; such as, if the bread be not wheat bread, if it be corrupted, if the wine be soured, if there be more water than wine, if the priest err in the words of consecration, of which the people cannot be sure, seeing he utters them with such a low voice that he cannot be heard; or again, if the priest's intention be not right in consecration; or if he be no priest, through some error in his ordination or baptism, or in the ordination or baptism of his authors, even back to the apostles' times. For in any of these cases, by their own doctrine which suspends the validity of all sacraments upon the intention of the priest, and other such things, the consecration of the bread is invalid, and no real change is made; and then the worshippers of it must be guilty of idolatry. Now, what an unsafe and unhappy religion must Popery be, that exposes the people so frequently to the danger of idolatry! a sin which God declares to be so abominable and hateful in his sight! Jer. 44: 4. And hence it is, that the Spirit of God, when he speaks of the idols of the nations, calls them by the name of abominations; as the abomination of the Moabites, the abomination of the Ammonites, the abomination of the Zidonians, &c. And indeed we have just ground to speak in the same style of the abomination of the Papists; for their idolatry is as abominable, as that of the Jews or Pagans of old.

We may hence see, that it was with good reason, and upon just grounds, that our ancestors about two hundred years ago separated from the church of Rome and her worship. Why? God abhors idolatry, and calls all his people to separate from idolaters, and come out from among them, because the temple of God can have no agreement with idols, 2 Cor. 6: 16, 17. And, in particular, God gives the loudest warnings and plainest calls to separate from Babylon, or idolatrous Rome, Rev. 18: 4, 5, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins are reached unto heaven. Now, what are the sins which bring on her plagues? They are the heaven-daring and God-affronting sins of blasphemy and idolatry mentioned before. And we see how particularly God points forth the gross idolatry of Babylon, and her ensnaring the nations into it with her, as the main sin which pro-

vokes the Lord at length to destroy her. Rev. 14: 8, "Babylon is fallen, because she made all nations drink of the wine of her fornication." Idolatry is called wine, because it is sweet and palatable to corrupt nature, and soon intoxicates men. And, frequently, in scripture, idolatry is called fornication, namely, in a spiritual sense, as it is going a-whoring from God, Hos. 9: 1. And it is often called adultery, upon the same account, Jer. 3: 8,9; Ezek. 23: 37; Jam. 4: 4. The Lord is a jealous God, and will not suffer his spouse to go a-whoring after other gods, but will have her as a chaste virgin presented to him, and preserved for him; otherwise the marriage-relation cannot subsist, Hosea 3: 3, "Thou shalt abide for me, thou shalt not play the harlot, so will I also be for thee." Idolatry breaks the marriage-covenant between Christ and his church, as adultery doth it amongst men; and for this sin he sends desolating judgments. It was idolatry that brought desolation upon Israel, and made their land spue them out. And to this day the Jews are so sensible of the God-provoking nature of this sin, that, when any great judgement or calamity befalls them, they say, There is an ounce of the golden calf, they made in the wilderness, given them in it. Likewise, it is for idolatry that Rome will in one hour be made desolate; see Rev. 18: 3, 19.

As idolatry is a land-desolating and church-destroying sin here, so it is a wrath-kindling and soul-damning sin hereafter. We see God expressly declares all idolaters to be in a damnable state, 1 Cor. 6: 9,10, "No idolater shall inherit the kingdom of God;" Rev. 21: 8, "Idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Surely then Romish idolaters have great cause to fear and tremble, because of their gross idolatry, as well as for their blasphemy, and the damnable errors in the grand article of our justification before God, which I handled in the preceding sermon. O that God might open their eyes to read and consider what the word of God saith concerning them in the text about cited, and particularly in Rev. 14: 9-11, "They who worship the beast, and receive his mark in their forehead and hand," that is, those who thoroughly and openly adhere to the antichristian profession, "they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever!" O what a sad religion Popery must be, that hath the everlasting wrath of God threatened against it, and those who profess it! Likewise, it is said, Rev. 17: 8. "They who wonder after the beast, their names are not written in the book of life." We have also a very awful confirmation of these threatenings against Papists, which would make them reflect with terror upon their errors and delusions, in

2 Thes. 2: 11, 12, where it is expressly asserted, that they who believe the delusions of the man of sin, are given up to be damned. Now, these being the words of the Spirit of God, we cannot alter them, nor take from them. But by them we are called to think seriously of the damnable nature of Popery, and to bless God for our deliverance from it; and also to commiserate their case who are carried away with Romish delusions, and pray earnestly for them, that God may open their eyes, as he was pleased in mercy to do to this land at the Reformation; and that he may still preserve us from the return of Romish idolatry and delusions, and from every thing that would open the door unto them. For since God gives it as the strong reason for his people's coming out and separating from the idolatrous church of Rome, because he was to destroy her for her idolatry, and because all who drink of the wine of her fornication, shall also drink of the wine of God's indignation, Rev. 14: 10, it is highly our wisdom and interest to shun and avoid, with the greatest care, the idolatry and delusions of Rome, and all the snares and methods of those who are concerned to promote her interest, and in their rebellion would appoint a captain to lead back these lands into Egyptian bondage, as in Neh. 9: 17. Still remember the caution of the apostle John, 1 John 5: 21, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols;" as if he had said, Shun all idolatrous communion, avoid fellowship with idol-worshippers, their society is infectious and dangerous: since ye have the knowledge of the true God, pay all your religious worship and honour to him, as the sole object of worship and adoration; let no creature partake with him in it. Adore not your God by statues and images, which would share with him in his worship; he forbids all these. Remember your God is an incomprehensible Spirit, and would reckon himself disgraced by such sordid representations. Hence it is, that he often puts that question to idolaters, Isa. 40: 18, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Intimating that he looks on it as an intolerable affront to liken the glorious invisible God to a poor despicable creature. May God preserve us from the abominable sin of idolatry! Amen.

Book Review

***Calvin's Wisdom: An Anthology Arranged Alphabetically by a Grateful Reader*, by J. Graham Miller. The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1992. 392 pp. £14.95.**

Graham Miller has spent a lifetime reading fifty-five volumes of Calvin's commentaries, as well as the Institutes of the Christian Religion, and in-

dexing them by theme and quotation! This is a labour of love, some of which is available to the readers of this volume. It is effectively an index to Calvin's thoughts on the subjects covered. There are over 220 subjects, many of them subdivided.

Here is an introduction to Calvin's thought (aptly named, *Calvin's Wisdom*) by the use of direct quotation. As each source reference is given, the reader can follow out further research in the appropriate place.

This volume is presumably selective. There must be much more in Miller's note-books. This volume consists only of quotations, but in his prologue Miller states that he has also indexed themes. It would be good to have the fruit of this labour in the public domain.

Most of the subjects are listed under one word or brief phrase, e.g. faith, repentance, justification by faith. However, one heading is expanded. It is "Roman Catholicism at the time of the Reformation". Although this is no doubt historically accurate, there is a hint here that the publishers, or the author, may feel that these quotations no longer apply to Roman Catholicism at the present time. We have little doubt that things have changed, for the worse, but is this what the publishers meant?

Donald M. Boyd

Notes and Comments

Age of Consent Vote

The House of Commons towards the end of February voted to reduce the age of consent for homosexuals from 21 to 18. An attempt to lower the age to 16 was defeated. This raised a fury of protest among the 'gay' community. It is sad to think that in a country nominally Christian that any place would be given to this obnoxious legislation and that it would find support even among the leaders of the nation. The fact that it was brought forward at all is a measure of how low Britain has fallen morally. The fruit of this legislation will be seen in the increased depravity of the nation.

Further Defections to Rome

As a result of the final decision of the Church of England to ordain women priests, seven bishops and more than 700 clergy have announced that they are to become Roman Catholics. They have agreed to accept the authority of the Pope as the Supreme Pastor of the universal church. The Environment Secretary, Mr John Gummer, has also gone over to the Church of Rome. He condemned the Church of England as a denominational sect. He claimed that there is no guarantee of orthodoxy except

in communion with the Church of Rome. No doubt most, if not all, of those who have defected to the Romish Church were high Anglicans and so had already embraced many of the heresies of the Church of Rome.

Priestly Celibacy in the Church of Rome

A report which appeared in the Herald indicated that the rule of celibacy for R.C. priests has become a major subject of controversy in Ireland. This has arisen through revelations which have come to light of the failure of priests to live up to their vows of celibacy. It is said that from 1985 until 1989, 73 priests, 132 nuns and 44 monks left their ministries in Ireland. It is also reported that worldwide some 100,000 priests have given up their office in recent years. It is long since Father Chiniquy exposed the truth about the supposed celibacy of R.C. priests in his book, "The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional". It is obvious from recent reports that matters have in no way improved since then but have rather grown worse. What a cesspool of iniquity is the Church of Rome, as Edith O'Gorman also showed in her book, "Convent of Life Unveiled"! If those who are now apostatising to the Church of Rome would read these books it would show them the true character of the Mother of Harlots.

The Death Penalty for Murderers

The House of Commons once again failed to support a proposal for the return of capital punishment for murder. On this occasion it was defeated by a majority of 244, a much greater majority than previously. It is not surprising in the present moral climate to find our legislators acting in this way. It is by expediency and not by the standards of divine law that our nation's rulers now legislate. As a result murders will continue at their present high level or increase even more as violent men realise that they will not forfeit their life even though they take the life of another. Yet the Word of God still stands: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Failure to act on this leaves the nation lying under the guilt of the innocent blood that has been shed in the land.

Mission News

This month we give an account of much activity on the Mission front, ministers and other members of the Mission travelling or planning to travel from one part of the world to another in hours, rather than in days or weeks.

Rev D. B. MacLeod has been in Kenya and in Malawi for some weeks. His visit is especially appreciated as Mr and Mrs MacDonald are in

Glasgow on leave. They are very happy to have a baby girl — tiny, but healthy, and making good progress.

Celia Renes and Truus Ringelberg, old friends from their nursing days in Nigeria, are at work in Sengera. Truus was formerly in Bulawayo working in Thembiso Children's Home but Celia has not as yet visited Zimbabwe. Miss Jessie Coote has applied and been accepted to work in Kenya, after many years of hard and much appreciated work in Mbumba Hospital, Zimbabwe.

Mr Dick Vermeulen who did so much useful work at Sengera and in Malawi has returned from New Zealand to the 'battle-front' in Kenya and Malawi for a period of three months. He is already well known to our people there.

Miss Louise Leiper of the Glasgow congregation has applied to work on the Mission in Africa in a year's time, if all is well, and has been accepted. Miss Norma MacLean, who had come home to Scotland for a brief period for medical treatment, has now returned to Zimbabwe in good health and is looking forward to resuming her work in the John Tallach Secondary School. Miss MacLean was formerly a lecturer in business subjects in Stornoway College.

The Lord in His Providence is making clear that the King's business requires haste when one contrasts the speed with which ministers and other Gospel messengers are enabled to travel to their sphere of work. This contrasts with the days and sometimes years spent by early missionaries in laborious travel in reaching their field of work. We know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth. — J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 12th April at 11 a.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 14th June at 2 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 21st June at 1 p.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 28th June at 2 p.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 21st October at 2.30 p.m.

Return of Deputy from Kenya and Malawi

The Editor returned to this country on 5th March after a four weeks' visit to Africa. He wishes to acknowledge the Lord's kindness to him during his visit to those countries and on his journeys to and from Africa. May the Lord's people continue to uphold the Lord's Cause in Kenya and

Malawi in remembering it at a Throne of grace and pleading that the Lord would provide labourers for that part of His vineyard.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr R.A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE wishes to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Eastern Europe: Anon., (Paisley postmark) £40; Anon., Canada \$100.

Foreign Mission: Mrs J. van N., California \$100; Miss M.M. per Miss N.B.M. £50.

Legacy Reserve: Estate of late Peggy Beaton, Dunvegan £1000.

Sustentation: Mrs M.T., Ayrshire £240; Anon., Canada \$121; Mr M.C., Corby £42.

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

Dingwall: Anon., £20 per Rev N.M.R.; Friend £170 (in coll. plate); Dingwall and Beaully Sabbath School £42.50, all for Eastern Europe.

Glasgow (St. Jude's): Anon., £10; J.C. £25, both for Comm. Exps.; In memory of a beloved brother and sister £100 for Congr. Fd.; M.M. £10 for Congr. Benevolent Fund; A.A. £10; Anon., £10, £100, £5, £5, £5, £20, £40 all for Bus. Fd.; Anon., £30 for Sust. Fd., Anon., £100 for Eastern Europe; Anon., £100 for Italian Mission Exps.

Portree: Friend £10 per F.M.; Friend £20; Friend £10, all for Sust. Fd.; Friend £15; Friend £13.60, both where needed, last four per S.Y.M.

Staffin: A Friend, Staffin, £50 for Door Coll. (envelope per P.M.D.)