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The Invitations of the Gospel

The Word of God contains many precious invitations to sinners to come to the Lord Jesus Christ that in Him and through Him they might have life. The freeness of the Gospel invitations ought to be an encouragement to poor, needy sinners who are under the Gospel. All who have come to receive of the blessings of the Gospel have done so as poor, lost, ruined needy sinners — sinners ready to perish.

It is the preaching of the Gospel that God has ordained for the bringing of sinners to the knowledge of the truth and into a saving relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Preaching itself seems a very weak instrument for such a purpose, but when it is accompanied with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven then it is far otherwise. Its power then is irresistible. The Word comes at that time, not in word only but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. In it the sinner hears the voice of God. It is the voice of God to him or to her as an individual. Even when they are in the midst of a large congregation, the Word is applied to each one individually who hears the truth savingly.

What a mercy it is for a sinner when the Word of God takes to do with him or her, even when it comes to convince them of their sins. The soul must be brought to know itself a sinner if the Gospel is ever to be made meaningful to it. The degree of conviction or the measure of the alarms of conscience is one thing, but the soul must be brought to know itself a sinner in that measure which would make the Gospel meaningful to it. The Saviour has declared that He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. So that all who hear the call hear it as sinners, sinners lost and undone and in need of salvation.

What a glorious Gospel that must be which meets the needs of sinners

ready to perish! In that Gospel there is the revelation of the mercy and love of God in Christ Jesus. It makes known God's way of salvation through a crucified, risen and exalted Saviour. This alone will meet the sinner's need. Anything less would not do. It required the sacrificial death of the Lord of life and glory, suffering in our nature, to procure eternal redemption for His folk. He did that most gloriously in His atoning death. He made reconciliation for iniquity. He brought in an everlasting righteousness to cover the nakedness of His people. The garment of His unspotted righteousness is a perfect garment to clothe them. In it they will stand perfect and entire throughout the endless ages of eternity.

How wonderful then it is for the sinner who by faith closes in with Christ in the Gospel call to sinners! How suitable do they find the Gospel to be to their needs! Justice has been satisfied the law honoured, so that their eternal salvation is secured to them. They come to know in personal experience that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." There is infinite efficacy in that blood to meet all their needs. Under its shelter they will never perish.

They are made willing in a day of God's power to embrace Jesus Christ so freely offered to them in the Gospel. He becomes all and in all to them — all their salvation and all their desire. He is their hope for time and eternity. On Him they lay the whole weight of their soul's salvation. They have closed in with Him most freely and most willingly. As they are embraced in His love, so they embrace Him in the love of their hearts. "We love Him because He first loved us."

They are called by His grace and are to live a life of faith on the Son of God. The fulness of the blessings of the everlasting covenant are to be found in Him. They are to come to Him therefore that they might draw out of that fulness. Here there is an inexhaustible fulness — enough for time and for eternity so the well will never run dry. They are to go on in strength of God the Lord recording His righteousness and His only. They will have reason to praise God eternally that the free and full invitations of the Gospel ever fell on their ears.

The question arises for us as to what we know of the Word of God taking effect in our lives and bringing us out of a state of nature into a state of grace. If we know it not then let us ask the Lord to make His Word effectual in us so that we may be found at last among those who shall be Christ's in that day when He makes up His jewels.

Sermon

by C. H. Spurgeon

"The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."
— Proverbs 29: 25.

We have two ancient proverbs here; each of them is true as a separate proverb, and they are equally true when linked together. The independent proposition; that the fear of man bringeth a snare, is a truth which experience has taught to many. The other proposition, that he that trusteth in the Lord shall be saved, has been found most blessedly true by all those who have tested it. Then put the two propositions together — that the fear of man bringeth a snare, but trust in the Lord is the safe and certain way to avoid that snare — and this also is true.

I. We shall, first of all, consider for a little while the first of these two ancient proverbs: "The fear of man bringeth a snare." That is ONE OF THE GREAT EVILS THAT WE HAVE TO AVOID.

What a common evil the fear of man is — the fear of losing human approbation, the fear of incurring human wrath. There are thousands of men, who have no fear of God, who have great fear of man. They break the laws of God without any fear of the consequences that must ensue, yet they are afraid to break the laws of man because they dread the punishment that might possibly follow. They are not afraid of hell, yet they are afraid of an earthly prison. They dread not the arm of the Almighty, yet they are afraid of an arm of flesh.

The fear of man has been thought by some persons to be a very good and salutary thing. Instead of bringing a snare, they think that it is the means of preventing much sin among mankind. Now, I do not doubt that some are hindered by the fear of man from committing great crimes and open acts of wrong, but the utmost that the fear of man can do is to confer a very doubtful benefit. Try it in your own house among your own children. If your children are kept from wrong-doing only by the fear of you — if they only do that which they are bidden to do because they are afraid to do otherwise — you will have a very poor form of obedience; and you will have, at the same time, an abundant crop of deceit springing up; for, when your child has done wrong, his fear of punishment will drive him to a falsehood, and perhaps lead him from one falsehood to another, and falsehoods may become so common with him that, at last, it shall be as natural to him to tell a lie as to speak the truth; and I think every parent must know that all the faults a child can commit, if put into the scale together, are not equal in criminality and in injury to his spiritual

constitution to a lie. The power to tell a lie is one of the most hideous powers to which man can attain, and some children are kept in such a state of terror that they naturally learn to do it. It is supposed, too, that servants cannot be managed without being kept in a state of fear. Yet you all know what an eye-server is. If there is no right principle in servants, they are worth nothing. Those who will only work because the eye of the master or mistress is upon them are of very little value. You only teach them habits of deceit if they live in constant fear of you. This experiment has been tried on a large scale. Laws have been made with the severest penalties for their violation, yet men seemed as if they transgressed all the more. In prison, the sternest forms of discipline have been tried, yet the prisoner has come out determined to sin again; certainly, there has been no beneficial change produced in him by fear.

I will not deny that the fear of man has its uses, but I must assert again that it is always a very doubtful good which fear brings to the human mind and heart. Love, my brethren, is the grand cure for the evil of human hearts, especially the love that cometh from above; that pure and heavenly flame, which is kindled only by the Holy Ghost, burns up sin. But "fear hath torment," it doth little else save plague and vex the soul.

Having said this much about any possible good that may come of fear, I now remark that, according to the text, "the fear of man bringeth a snare." *It has led many men into very great sins.*

Look at Pilate. I mention him first because there was a peculiar atrocity about his sin. The pure and holy Jesus is brought before him, and after examining him, he declares, "I find no fault in this man." He sends him to Herod, and the result is that he says to Christ's accusers, "I have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him." Pilate's wife warns him that she has suffered much in a dream because of Christ, and she says, "have thou nothing to do with that just man." Pilate's own interviews with Christ impressed his mind, and therefore he wanted to set the Saviour free if he could; but though he was a Roman governor, and placed in a high position of power, he was a poor slave to the people. He was vacillating; he knew what was the right course, and he wanted to take it, but he feared the consequences. The Jews might appeal to Caesar, and say that he had spared the life of one who pretended to be a king, and then he might lose his post. So this poor, timid, contemptible creature takes water, and washes his hands, and says that he is innocent of the blood of this just person, and the next minute gives up the innocent victim to be nailed on a cross. It was the fear of man that caused Pilate's name to become infamous in

the history of the world and of the Church of God, and it will be infamous to all eternity. The fear of man led him to slay the Saviour; take care that it does not lead you to do something of the same kind.

Long before Pilate's day, there had been a king of Israel who lost his crown through the fear of man. God had chosen Saul to be head over his people, but when he was commanded by God to smite the Amalekites, and to destroy all that they had, he spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and oxen, and all that was good, because he "feared the people, and obeyed their voice." He was head and shoulders taller than his subjects, a man who, at other times, acted as a despot, and had his own way; yet, at this particular time, he feared the people, and so did that which God had commanded him not to do, and therefore his kingdom was rent from him, and given to one who was better than he.

"Yes," you say, "those two were bad men who fell into sin through fear of man." Yes, but I am sorry to say that I must also mention good men who did the same. Look at Aaron, the priest of the Lord, and companion of his brother Moses; Aaron, who had spoken with God, and was his representative to the people. Yet, when Moses was gone up into the mount, and the people came to Aaron, and said, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him;" Aaron bade them break off their golden earrings, and bring them to him; and he, the priest of God, desecrated his sacred hands by making for the people a molten calf before which they might bow in worship. Ah, Aaron! hadst thou had the courage of thy brother, thou wouldst not have fallen into that shameful sin.

Turning to the New Testament again, to give an example from it, remember bold Peter, and the words which he spoke so enthusiastically to his Lord, "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Yet see him, a little later, warming himself in the high priest's palace, and first one of the maid-servants, and then others that stood by, said to him, "Surely thou art one of them:" and "he began to curse and to swear," to prove that he was no disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, Peter, where is thy courage now? Truly, "the fear of man bringeth a snare," even to the best of men. God save us from it, and make us so brave that we shall never fear any man so as to do a wrong action!

Again, the fear of man brings a snare in this respect, *it keeps many persons from conversion*. Perhaps there are some such persons now present; let me see if I can pick them out. You scarcely dare to go to the

place where the gospel is preached in a way in which God blesses it, because, if you were to go there, and it were known, it would be a subject of jest in your family, and would provoke remarks that you would not like. There are many who dare not go to the house where God pours out the blessing; they are such cowards that they dare not come to listen to those who preach Christ's gospel with power; and others, who do come and hear it, are afraid to receive the truth to which they have listened again and again. The thought in such a person's mind is, "What would father and mother say if I were converted? Oh, what a time I should have of it! What would my fellow-workmen say? I should have to run the gauntlet of the whole lot if they once knew that I had become a Christian." Another says, "I don't know how I should endure the persecution I should receive; my life would become intolerable if I were to become a child of God." So they never come to Jesus because the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, keeps them still as the hopeless slaves of sin. But, young man, do you mean to be damned just to please somebody else? Do you mean to fling away your immortal soul in order to escape the laughter of fools? Remember, that they may laugh you into hell, but they cannot laugh you out again. Let not the fear of man be the ruin of your soul. If, for the sake of pleasing men, you choose to forfeit some small trifle, it does not much matter; but when it comes to the forfeiting of Christ, the forfeiting of your soul, and the forfeiting of heaven, I appeal to your own conscience to say it is worth while to be eternally ruined for the sake of pleasing men, whoever they may be. Is it not better that even father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and every friend you have in the world should be against you, and that God should be yours, than that you should have all these as your friends, and yet remain at enmity against the Most High?

I have no doubt that this same fear of man *keeps a large number of persons, who are converted, from making a public avowal of their faith*, and so it bringeth a snare to them. Nicodemus "at the first came to Jesus by night," and Joseph of Arimathaea was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews." I hope you will not try to shelter behind those two good men, for, remember that, as soon as Christ was put to death, when his cause was at the very worst, they came out boldly, and proved their love of him; and we do not read that they ever crept back, like snails into their shells. Having owned Christ as their Lord and Master, I have no doubt that they continued to follow him whatever the consequences may have been. So far as you are concerned, just now is the time to own Christ; now especially, because scepticism and superstition, the two monstrous evils which threaten to devour true religion, are so rampant; and it needs

some moral courage to declare yourself upon the side of the simple gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now is the hour for a Christian to play the man for Christ, his Lord and Master; yet there are many who are keeping in the background because "the fear of man bringeth a snare" upon them. Where are you, dear friend? I cannot come round to all those pews; otherwise, I should stop, here and there, before some of you whom I know, and before others whom I suspect, and whom I joyfully suspect, of loving my Master. I think you do, by the way you look when his name is extolled in your hearing; yet you have not said so in the way he wishes. I charge you, by the love which you bear to him, keep not back. Think that you see him now before your eyes, and that you hear him say to you as he hangs upon the cross, "I bore all this for thee, and yet art thou ashamed of me? If thou lovest me, own me in the midst of this wicked and perverse generation. Take up your cross, and follow me, whatever suffering or reproach it may involve."

The fear of man has brought a snare to some of the greatest believers who have ever lived; and any child of God, whenever he fears the face of man, loses some of the dignity which appertains to that relationship. What a grand man Abraham was! Whenever I read his life, I look up to him with astonishment, and wish I had such faith as would make me resemble him in that respect. He marches across the page of history with such quiet stately dignity that kings and princes are dwarfed beside his great figure. How nobly did he say to the king of Sodom, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich;" but oh, how small did he look when he said to Abimelech, concerning his wife, "She is my sister." She was his sister, in a sense; there was some truth in what he said, but she was more than his sister, so he was uttering a falsehood, for which he was rightly rebuked by the heathen prince.

You have, in David, another instance of how the fear of man can bring the mighty down. How brave he is as he goes out to slay Goliath, and how grandly he behaves when, twice, he spares the life of his sleeping enemy! Yet see him there at Gath, when the servants of Achish frightened him so that he "feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." The fear of man had brought down Israel's future monarch to drivel like a madman.

Equally sad is the case of Elijah, that grandest of men, as I may truly call him. You see him in his grandeur as he cries, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape;" and as he brings them down to the

brook Kishon, and slays them there, and then, as he goes to the top of Carmel, and prays till the rain descends upon the parched land. Yet, after the excitement is over, he is afraid of a woman, Jezebel, and the great Elias shrinks down into the puling frightened man, who runs away, and cries, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." So you see that "the fear of man bringeth a snare" even to the best of men; it drags them down from their high places, and hurls them into the dust. Therefore, may God preserve us from it!

The fear of man keeps some believers in very dubious positions. I have known some believers remain where they knew they were not doing right, and where every day they were dragging a heavy chain behind them because they had not the moral courage to come straight out for God. If any of you, young people, who love the Lord, want to go the easiest way to heaven — you know that all ways there are rough, but if you want to go the easiest way, take that which looks the hardest; namely, be an out-and-out, thorough-going Christian. "But that will cost me much," says one. It will at first, but it will be the more easy for you afterwards; whereas, if you begin by giving way to the world a little — trimming a little — you will have to give way and trim more and more. A Christian should be like a steamer that goes straight away to the port it is intended to reach; but many professors are like sailing vessels, the motive power that controls them is outside them, so they have to tack a good deal; and though they may ultimately get to their destination, there is a good deal of queer sailing to the right and to the left, and their voyage takes a very long while. I hope you, dear friends, will go straight to your mark. "Trust in God, and do the right;" and this will, after all, be the very smoothest path that you can follow.

Further, *the fear of man hampers the usefulness of a great many.* There are brethren who ought to be preaching, but who are not, because they are afraid of men; and some who ought to go and visit the poor, but they say that they cannot; the reason is, that they are afraid of men. Why, I have known some who were afraid even to give away a tract; they were as much alarmed as though they had to put their hand into a tiger's mouth. I have known some who were afraid to speak to their own children about their souls. Is it not strange that they can speak to other people's children about their souls better than they can to their own? It should not be so; in fact, there is nobody living, that any one of us, if he is a Christian, has any right to be afraid of. We shall never do good to people if we are afraid of them. What would have become of the Church of God if the apostles had been such timid, gentle Christians as some whom I know?

They would not have gone out to preach in the streets, and as there were no chapels and churches then, they would not have preached at all. As soon as Caesar promulgated an edict that they were not to meet on the first day of the week, they would have said, "Perhaps we had better not meet." When they heard that the crowds shouted in the amphitheatre, "Christians to the lions!" they would have said, "We must not expose ourselves to such a risk, and we must think of our wives and families;" and so they would have been cowards, and soon there would have been no Christianity left in the world. Just imagine what would have happened if the Reformers had acted thus. Suppose Martin Luther had said, "I shall do as that old monk advised me when I consulted him. He said, 'Martin, go back to thy cell, and live thou there near to thy God, and leave the Church and the world alone'." If Luther had followed that advice, where would the blessed Reformation have been, and what preaching of the gospel would there have been at this present moment!

I must not continue much longer upon this part of my subject, but I must say that *to a minister of Christ, the fear of man is one of the worst of snares*. Jonah tried to escape from going to Nineveh because he was afraid of man. The Galatians could not bear the full light of the gospel, and therefore certain teachers among them tried to shut off some of its beams; and if a minister of Christ once begins to be afraid of his hearers, his tendency will be to withhold some doctrine through fear of a wealthy subscriber, or to keep back some rebuke for fear that it should bear too hardly upon an influential person in his congregation. There is one sin which I believe I have never committed; I think that I have never been afraid of any of you, and I hope, by the grace of God, that I never shall be. If I dare not speak the truth upon all points, and dare not rebuke sin, what is the good of me to you? Yet I have heard sermons which seemed to me to have been made to the order of the congregation. But honest hearers want honest preaching; and if they find that the preacher's message comes home to them, they thank God that it is so. They say, "Is it not right that it should be so? If we err, should not the Word of God, which is quick and powerful, search us, and try us, and find out our errors?" And the preacher, if he really preaches the truth as it is in Jesus, must often deal out rebuke as well as encouragement. May God deliver all his ministers from the fear of man everywhere, and the whole Church of Christ too! At one time, the fear of man took this form — the geologists had discovered that Moses was mistaken, and that God did not know how he had made the world! Many seemed to think that something dreadful had happened, and they wondered how those objectors were to be

answered. Soon after that, somebody discovered that God was mistaken about having made Adam and Eve, for they gradually developed from oysters or some smaller creatures still! Then again there was a great outcry, "Who is to answer these eminent philosophers?" O, Church of God, is every drivelling fool to have any answer at all? Stand fast by the inspired Word, and be not ensnared by the fear of man. We have seen scores of systems of philosophy come and go, and we shall probably see as many more before we die. Our business is just to stand fast to the truth of revelation, and let the philosophies die as the frogs of Egypt died in the days of Moses; for die they will, and when fresh hordes come, they also will die, but the eternal truth of the ever-blessed God will never die, it will live on in its own glorious immortality.

II. Now, in the second place, I want to show you that THE GREAT CURE FOR THIS EVIL IS TRUST IN GOD: "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

I should have thought that Solomon would have said, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso *feareth the Lord* shall be safe." That would have read very well, and it would have been quite true; but it would not have expressed the special truth that Solomon then had in his mind. It is not fear, but faith, that is the cure for cowardice. Trust in the Lord, and you can then cry, "Whom shall I fear?" for you will feel that you have the strength of the Almighty at your back. Trusting in God, we feel that we are one with God, and so we are made strong. That strength breeds courage, and enables us boldly to ask, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" That courage leads us to count the cost of doing right, and after counting it, we feel that, in God's strength, we can endure that, and a thousand times as much if necessary; and therefore we say, "Come what may, we will serve the Lord;" and with the Holy Spirit resting upon us, we march boldly on to victory in his might. So that, trust in God, by giving us God's strength, and consequently courage and decision, lifts us up above the fear of man.

But the point of the text may be found in another direction, namely, that, trusting in God, *we become safe, not merely from fear, but from the consequences of defying fear*. "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." By trusting in the Lord, and doing that which is right, he may be a great sufferer, but he shall be safe. He will not be so great a sufferer as he would be if he followed the opposite course. Suppose that his enemies carry their opposition to extremes, they can only kill the body, and after that they have no more that they can do. But suppose he were to forfeit his faith, then his body and soul would be cast into hell, which

would be an infinitely greater and eternal loss. Never imagine that you can be a loser by trusting in God. Whatever risk there is in doing so, the risk of not trusting in him is far greater; and every sensible man will prefer the smaller risk. Besides, how often it happens that, if a man trusts God, and acts according to his conscience, he is not a loser at all. Many have been gainers thereby, though that ought not to be an inducement. Many have said, "If we do what we feel is right, we shall lose everything;" and yet, when they have dared to run that risk, they have lost nothing at all, for God has helped them in the emergency. But if they should lose by doing the right thing, let this assurance comfort them, "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." It is much better to be safe than to be wealthy, and infinitely better to be safe for time and for eternity than to have all the comforts of life about you, but to put your soul in jeopardy.

A Christian man need never be afraid of anybody. If you are doing right, you have no cause to fear the greatest man who is serving the devil. Look at Bernard Palissy, the Huguenot potter, who produced such wonderful works of art. One day, the king of France said to him, "Bernard, I am afraid I shall be compelled to give you up to the inquisitors to be burned if you will not change your religion." Bernard's reply was, "I pity your majesty." Only think of that, the potter pitied the king! So his majesty asked, "Why do you pity me, Bernard?" "Because," he answered, "you have said what your majesty and fifty thousand princes cannot make me say, *'I fear I shall be compelled!'*" Why, sirs, Palissy was the king, and the king was not worthy to be the potter. A truly royal dignity dwelt in that potter's soul. Are any of you young men going to allow anybody to make you say, "I fear I shall be compelled to cease worshipping with the Dissenters;" "I fear I shall be compelled to abstain from attending that little country Baptist chapel;" or, "I am afraid it might not be considered proper for me to make an open profession of religion in the town where I live?" If you talk like that, I can only say, "May the Lord have mercy on your little miserable soul, and give you enough manhood and common honesty to confess what Christ has done for you!" If you really have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and have had your sins forgiven, and have been made an heir of heaven, and are on your way to a glorious immortality, surely you cannot act the part of a sneak like that! What, are you, who are to dwell among the angels, you for whom there is a mansion in the skies, and a robe of righteousness and a crown of glory, are you going to play the coward like that? Why, if you act thus, you ought to be drummed out of the regiment of the Church militant, so how can you expect to be in the Church trium-

phant with such a miserable spirit as that? May the Lord help you to put your trust in him, that you may be saved from all fear of man!

Now to close. The last sentence of the text is true as an independent proposition. "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." I have not time to speak about this sentence, but I give it to you to put under your tongue as a sweet morsel as you go your way to your homes. It is not, "He that trusteth in himself;" not, "He that trusteth in a priest;" not, "He that performs good works, and trusts in them;" but, "whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." The man who is trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus may not always be happy, but he is safe; he may not always be singing, but he is safe; he may not always have the joy of full assurance, but he is safe. He may sometimes be distressed, but he is always safe; he may sometimes question his interest in Christ, but he is always safe.

I was astonished, the other day, to meet with an expression used by Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the greatest Jesuit controversialists. He closes a long argument about being saved by works with the following very remarkable sentences, which I will quote as accurately as I can:—"Nevertheless, although the way of acceptance with God is by our own works, there is a danger that men may so trust in their own works as to grow proud, which would quite spoil their works; and, therefore, *upon the whole*, it is safest for them to rely upon the blood and merits of Jesus Christ alone." Well done, Cardinal Bellarmine! "*Upon the whole*," I mean to do that as long as I live; and oh that everyone, who has ever been deluded by the doctrines of the Church of Rome, would listen to the Cardinal's confession that, *upon the whole*, it is safest to rest upon what Christ has done! *Upon the whole*, it is better to trust in the Saviour than to trust in ourselves! *Upon the whole*, it is better to be washed in his blood than to think that we can make ourselves clean! The cardinal did not say all the truth, but I thank him for what he did say, though the truth is better put by Solomon in my text, "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." He shall be safe if he is sick, if he is rich, if he is poor. He shall be safe when he dies, safe when he rises again, safe at the day of judgment, and safe throughout eternity. Oh, then, come all of you, and trust in the Lord, for "whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" for ever! Amen.

The Soul's Espousal to Christ

by Rev. Edward Pearse

"What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" so the daughters of Jerusalem spake unto the spouse, Cant. 5: 9. In like manner may some say unto me; Who, or what is this Christ, that you do so press us to an espousal with him? What is there in him to render him desirable to us? Who, or what is he? Truly I cannot tell, nor could I, had I the tongue of men and angels; and I am almost afraid to speak of him, lest I should darken his glory instead of displaying it. This I am sure of, he is, as one speaks of him, earth's wonder and heaven's wonder both; and has all that in him, and that in infinite eminency and perfection, which should render him grateful and desirable to souls in a conjugal relation. Look therefore upon him, and view him a little, and see if there be any thing you can desire in such a relation that is wanting in him. I will lay this more fully before you in these following particulars:-

I. Are you for dignity and greatness? This goes far among men, and makes many a match. For this none like Christ, none so great, so glorious, none so honourable as he. Pray view him a little; as to his descent, he came forth from God, namely, by eternal generation, and is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, John 16: 28. View him in his person, and there you will see nothing but greatness; for he is no other than God-man, and has all the excellences of both natures in one person; he is Emmanuel, God with us, God in our nature, Matt. 1: 23. He is God, Heb. 1: 8. The true God, 1 John 5: 20. The great God, Titus 2: 13. The mighty God, Isa. 9: 6. God over all, or the most high God, Rom. 9: 5. God equal with the Father, having the same divine essence and essential perfections in him, that the Father hath in him; he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express character of his person, Phil. 2: 6 one in whom the whole majesty, lustre and glory of the Father shines forth; one on whom the Father has engraven all his eternal excellences, Heb. 1: 3. Some small beams and rays of God's glory do shine forth in the saints and angels; but in Christ the fulness, lustre, and brightness of it appears. View him in his office and relation with the dignity that even here he is advanced unto: he is a King, a great King, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," Rev. 19: 16. King of saints, Rev. 15: 3. King of nations, Jer. 10: 7. King of glory, Psal. 24: 7. He is the head of all principalities and powers; and it is their glory that they have such a Head, Col. 2: 10. He is the fellow of the Lord of hosts, Zech. 13: 7. He is the first-born of God, "higher than the kings of the earth," Psal. 89: 27. He is set down at God's "own right hand in

heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and might and dominion," Eph. 1: 20. He is "made higher than the heavens," Heb. 7: 26. Among all persons, and in all things, whether in heaven or earth, he has the pre-eminence, Col. 1: 18. Such is his greatness, that the whole creation is bound to perform homage and worship to him, the angels themselves not excepted; "let all the angels of God worship him," says the Father, Heb. 1: 6. "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth," Phil. 2: 9,10, that is, angels as well as men must perform worship to him; and indeed a refusal so to do, would turn angels into devils. He is beloved, feared, believed on, obeyed, prayed unto, praised, admired, and delighted in by all. He is to have equal honour with the Father; "All must honour the Son as they honour the Father," John 5: 23. What shall I say? He has the sovereign lordship and disposal both of grace and glory in his hand; "The Son quickeneth whom he will," John 5: 21. He says unto one, Live, and he lives; and to another, Live, and he lives, and the rest of the dead live not; He has "the keys of death and hell," Rev. 1: 18. He has the government of the whole world in his hand; "His Kingdom ruleth over all," Psal. 103: 19. He is in full possession of a kingdom over the whole creation, all judgment being committed to him, John 5: 22. And oh how glorious is he in the whole of it! Glorious in his throne, which is at the right hand of God, Heb. 1: 3. Glorious in his commission, which is all power in heaven and earth, Matt. 28: 18. Glorious in his sceptre, which is a sceptre of righteousness, Psal. 45: 6. Glorious in his attendants, ten thousand times ten thousand of his holy ones, even thousands of angels, Dan. 7: 10. Glorious in his way of rule, full of grace and sweetness towards his people, full of terror and majesty towards his enemies, his arrows being sharp in their hearts, Psal. 45: 5. And as he governs all now, so he will judge all at last; and all must stand or fall, live or die, be saved or damned for ever, according to what sentence he shall pass upon them, Acts 17: 31, Rom. 14: 10. Oh how great is this Lord! and how worthy to be embraced by us! O sirs, will you deny so great, so glorious a person, when he makes love to you? Should you see some great prince wooing a beggar in rags upon the dunghill, you would wonder to see her slight him, and make him wait time after time upon her: why there is an infinitely greater Person than the greatest of kings that woos you and solicits you for your love; and will you yet make him wait? will you refuse him? then wonder at your own sordid ingratitude.

II. Are you for riches and treasures? This weighs with most; for this,

none like Christ. He has riches as well as greatness to recommend him to you; "Riches and honour are with me," Prov. 8: 18. Yea, and his riches are the best sort; his are spiritual riches, treasures in heaven, Matt. 6: 20. Riches of life and love, peace and pardon, grace and glory, righteousness and salvation; riches of glory, and riches in glory. And oh what poor things are the riches of this world to these! His are true riches, Luke 16: 11. The riches of this world are but painted riches, his are substantial riches. "I will cause them that love me to inherit substance," Prov. 8: 21. The riches of this world are vain, "they are not," Prov. 23: 5. But the riches of Christ have a reality in them; his are lasting and durable riches; "Riches and honour are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness." Prov. 8: 18. Worldly riches are perishing and uncertain things, 1 Tim. 6: 17. Now we enjoy them, but all of a sudden they are gone and disappear; but Christ's are eternal riches for an eternal soul. And as his riches are thus of the best sort, so he has great abundance of them; his riches are boundless and unsearchable; "To me," says Paul, "it is given to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. 3: 8. He is "heir of all things", Heb. 1: 2. All the treasures of heaven and earth are his: he has all fulness dwelling in him, Col. 1: 19, even all the fulness of the Godhead; whole God dwells in him; he has enough to supply all our wants, and to answer all our desires. Do we want grace? He is full of grace, John 1: 14. Do we want life? With him is the fountain of life, Psa. 36: 9. Do we want redemption, redemption from sin, from death, from hell, from wrath? With him is plenteous redemption, Psa. 130: 7. Do we want peace? he gives peace; "My peace I give unto you," John 14: 27. Do we want righteousness? He has fulfilled all righteousness, he is become "the Lord our righteousness," Jer. 23: 6. Now will you reject this rich Lord? you are poor, and miserable, and naked; and will you not embrace this Christ, tendering himself with all these riches to you? O how justly then will you perish for ever! O that there were some longing soul here this day, that would be taken with the riches of Christ!

III. Are you for bounty, for a noble and generous spirit? That is desirable in such a relation, and takes much with many. For this also, none like Christ, he is a bountiful Lord, of a noble and generous spirit, as well as rich. Many a man has riches enough, but has a base, narrow, covetous spirit; and so his wife has little of them; but Christ has a noble, generous, bountiful heart; he is not only rich, but he is also willing to lay out all his riches and treasures upon his spouse. All the treasures of his love and grace, all the treasures of his righteousness and consolation; he would have them abundantly filled, abundantly comforted, abundantly

enriched for ever. What a generous spirit towards them does he express! "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved," Cant. 5: 1. As if he should say, I have enough, infinitely enough for you, and I would have you to have enough; I would have you have your souls full of all good. He would have them to have full graces, full joys, full comforts, and full happiness for ever. "These things speak I unto you," says he, "that your joy may be full," John 15: 11. And again, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," John 16: 24. He wills them like happiness with himself, like love and embraces in the Father's bosom, John 17: 24, 26, like grace and holiness, John 17: 22. O what a noble, generous, bountiful heart has this sweet Lord towards his spouse! Soul, shall it not draw and allure thee to him? Nothing will satisfy him less than their participating with him in his own blessedness. Soul, if thou rejectest this bountiful Lord, know that he has treasures of wrath and vengeance also, which he will plentifully pour out upon thee for ever.

IV. Are you for wisdom and knowledge? Wisdom and knowledge render a person lovely and desirable; it is indeed one of a person's highest excellences and perfections. For this also none like Christ; he is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God," 1 Cor. 1: 24. The infinite wisdom of the eternal God does shine forth in him and through him: yea, in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. 2: 3. Which may be understood actively as well as passively, he knowing all, as well as having all that is worth knowing in him; He is the only wise God, Jude 25. There is no true wisdom but in him, and there is no true wisdom to be had but by him, and from him; he is often in scripture called wisdom to denote that infinite wisdom which is in him. He knows all persons and all things, he knows the Father, and that, as he is known of him, John 10: 15. He knows the mind and will of the Father; hence said to be in his bosom, which is the place of secrets as well as love, John 1: 18. He knows all his Father's counsels and decrees which have been of old touching man: hence we read of the Lamb's book of life, and names written therein, Rev. 13: 8. He knows all the works of God the Father; "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him whatsoever he doth," John 5: 20. He knows the attributes and perfections of God, and he only Matt. 11: 27, John 6: 46. He knows the whole word of God, being himself the Word, John 1: 1. It is observed by one, that the angels themselves do not know all the word of God, but Christ does. And as he thus knows God and the things of God, so also he knows man and the things of man. He knows all men, and what is in them, John 2: 24, 25. He knows the state, the frames, the thoughts, the ends, the counsels, the ways, the wants, the

burdens, the temptations of all. In a word, he is infinite in wisdom and counsel, and he knows perfectly, as how to promote his own glory, so how to defend, save, and comfort his spouses, and carry on their happiness in the best way. O, who would not have such a Husband! Soul, if thou reject him, know that his wisdom will fight against thee; and he knows how to damn and destroy for ever.

V. Are you for beauty? That takes with most, for this none like Christ. For beauty and comeliness, he infinitely surpasses both men and angels. We read of Moses, that he was exceeding fair; and of David, that he was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance; and Josephus reports of the one of them, that all that saw him were amazed at, and enamoured of his beauty. O, but what was their beauty to Christ's! were their beauty, and, with theirs, the beauty of men and angels put together, it would all be nothing to the beauty of Christ: not so much as the light of the least candle is to the light of the sun at noon-day. He is "beautiful and glorious," Isa. 4: 2. Was Moses fair? Christ is infinitely more fair; he is "fairer than the children of men," Psal. 45: 2. And had you an eye to behold his beauty, you could not but be amazed at it, and enamoured of it. Was David ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance? See what the spouse says of Christ "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand," Cant. 5: 10, which notes the perfection of his beauty; and therefore she concludes all with this, (having spoken of the beauty of his several parts). "He is altogether lovely," ver. 16, or he is all loveliness. As if she should say, What do I! There is no end of his beauty and amiableness; there is nothing in him but what is lovely: and there is nothing lovely but what is in him; neither is there any thing in the whole creation, that has beauty and amiableness enough in it to be a shadow and resemblance of his beauty and amiableness. "O fair sun," says Rutherford, "and fair moon, and fair stars, and fair flowers, and fair roses, and fair lilies; but O ten thousand thousand times fairer Lord Jesus! Alas, I have wronged him," says he, "in making comparison this way: O black sun and moon! but O fair Lord Jesus! O black flowers, black lilies and roses! but O fair, fair, even fair Lord Jesus! O black heaven, but O fair Christ! O black angels, but O surpassingly fair Lord Jesus!" In short, divines observe, that there is somewhat in Christ more amiable than salvation, and indeed there are those heart-endearing beauties, those soul-ravishing excellences in the person of this beloved, that are unspeakably beyond salvation itself. He is the brightness, the lustre, the shining forth of his Father's glory, Heb. 1: 3. Oh, who would not be enamoured with his beauty? a small sight and report thereof, set the daughters of Jerusalem a seeking after him,

Cant. 6: 1. And shall it have no influence upon you, to draw and allure you to him? Does one so fair and beautiful make love to such black and deformed creatures as you and I are, and shall we refuse him? Shall we reject this lovely Lord? O, that his beauty might enamour us!

VI. Are you for love as well as loveliness? for a sweet, kind, loving disposition? This is desirable to all: for this none like Christ: he is of a most sweet, loving, tender, affable disposition. He indeed is love itself: "God is love," 1 John 4: 16. His love to his spouses has all dimensions, heights, breadths, depths, lengths in it: yea, it passes knowledge, Eph. 3: 18, 19, which shows the immensity and unmeasurableness of his love. As if he should say of it, it is higher than heaven, and deeper than the sea; it is broader than the orb of the earth, and longer than all time, during throughout eternity; yea, it passes knowledge. There are two things which exceed our knowledge: our sins, and Christ's love; the one is almost, the other is altogether boundless and bottomless. Though a man has ever so many accomplishments to commend him; yet if he be of a rough, crabbed, sour disposition, this renders him unacceptable for such a relation: out to all his other perfections, Christ has this added, that he is infinitely loving as well as lovely, and of a most kind, tender disposition to his spouse. Hence we read in scripture of his love, his kindness, his meekness, his gentleness and the like; all noting the admirable sweetness and amiableness of his disposition. He wept over his enemies, even them that finally refused him, Luke 19: 41, 42. Yea, he had a kindness for his murderers, and prayed for them, and that whilst they were murdering him; yea, and his prayer carried many of them to heaven, Luke 23: 34. Oh what love, what kindness then must he have for his spouses? He that has love for enemies, and such love, what must he have for his friends! It is a sweet gloss which one of the ancients has upon the place last quoted; "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." "This," says he, "is a word becoming the eternal Word, he prays not only for his persecutors and reproachers, but even for his murderers, improving all his interest in his Father for them; saying in effect, Father, I entreat thee, by that fatherly love thou hast for me, and by which we are one, hear me for these my murderers; in forgiving them, own the love of thy Son, that thou mayest pardon his enemies." Oh what kindness does this argue! In a word, his love is as an ocean, which has neither brim nor bottom, neither can he but be kind to his. The law, indeed, of kindness; (as it is said of the good wife, Prov. 31: 26) is in his lips; yea, and in his heart and carriage too; all being full of love. O, that his love might draw you! Surely no love like his love, none so full, none so free, none so sweet, none so fruitful, none

so ravishing, none so lasting; his love, where he loves, never fails, nor can it ever be broken off; "Who shall separate us," says the apostle, "from the love of Christ?" that is, nothing can separate us from his love; "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth" nor any thing else can do it, Rom. 8: 35, 38, 39. And I think, says a holy man, his unchangeable love hath said unto me, I defy thee to break me or change me. O sirs, experienced souls will tell you how sweet, and good, and rich Christ's love is. They will tell you, one sight, one taste of it makes heaven in the soul, that it is better than wine, Cant. 1: 2. And will you reject him and his love too? Will you pour contempt upon so much kindness? O how justly then will you perish under his wrath! he has wrath in him as well as love; wrath for enemies, as well as love for his spouses; and his wrath is as hot and terrible, as his love is sweet and comfortable; yea, his love will, if rejected by you, turn into wrath, and no wrath like that which is the result of abused love: O, therefore close with Christ this day!

VII. Are you for a person of esteem, one that is much valued and beloved? An ingenuous soul would desire this; and for this none like Christ. As there is none so kind and loving as he, so there is none so much value and beloved as he. He is beloved by all whose love is worth having. He is highly valued and beloved by all the saints, both in heaven and earth. The saints in heaven admire and adore him; it is a part of their happiness to love him, and delight in him for ever; and the saints on earth love and value him above all others whatever; he is the dearly Beloved of their souls. How oft does the spouse call him her Beloved; and her well-beloved! and once and again, she declares herself sick of love to him; she is enamoured on him; he is indeed "the desire of all nations," Hag. 2: 7. That is to say, he whom all the faithful in all nations do love, desire, and delight in. Hence also that of the apostle, "To you that believe he is precious," 1 Pet. 2: 7. The saints love and value Christ above all their natural, or creature enjoyments, above father and mother, husband and wife, and children, houses and lands, and the like: so much is intimated, Matt. 10: 37 and 19: 29. They love and value him above all their spiritual attainments, accounting them but dung for Christ, Phil. 3: 8. They love and value him above their lives, being ready to die for him, Acts 21: 13. Rev. 12: 11. O how dear is Christ to saints? He is also highly valued and beloved by all the holy angels: he is the great object of their love and admiration: hence he is said to be seen of angels, that is, to be beloved and delighted in by angels, 1 Tim. 3: 16. The blessed angels do see that in Christ which fills them with love to him, and delight in him; yea, with perpetual ad-

mirings and adorings of him, Rev. 5: 12. Yea, which is more than all this, he is infinitely valued and beloved by God the Father also: the blessed God sees that in Christ, which renders him infinitely amiable and desirable in his eye, and to his soul: both as Son, and also as Mediator, he is even infinitely dear and precious to the Father. And as he is the Son of God, the Son of the Father, as the apostle's expression is, so is he the delight of the Father's soul, and was so from all eternity; so much he himself tells us, Prov. 8: 30. So is he the infinite and eternal favourite of the infinite and eternal Father; so is he one in essence with the Father, and accordingly must be infinitely dear to the Father. Hence he is said to be in the Father's bosom, and as his Son, was so from eternity, John 1: 18. Now the bosom is the seat of love; and this being in his Father's bosom, notes that strong, ardent, intimate love which the Father has for him: yea, even as Mediator the Father loves him, John 3: 35. Yea, he loves him with a choice, a single and an eminent love, with a love of the highest strain, the choicest excellency, the sweetest influence; a love with a stamp of special glory upon it: hence he is called the Beloved, Eph. 1: 6. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved;" that is, in Christ, who is most dear to God. Hence God calls him his beloved Son, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. 3: 17. Yea, he is called the Son of his love; "He hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;" the Greek is, the Son of his love, Col. 1: 13. Yea, the Father proclaims him to be the delight of his soul; "Behold," saith he, "my servant whom I have chosen; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. 42: 1. What shall I say? God loves himself infinitely, and next to himself he loves Christ, and delights in him. It is true, he loves all the works of his hand as such; especially rational creatures: and among them he has a peculiar love for his saints and the holy angels: but he loves Christ unspeakably more than all. He indeed is first beloved, and most beloved, and best beloved by him, of all others. God, as the schoolmen observes, does love the very flesh or human nature of Christ, more than all the angels. In a word, he loves him so, as that he is even ravished with him, and he cannot but love all that are in him, or related by covenant to him; and that though altogether unlovely in themselves. Now sirs, will you not love and embrace this beloved One, one that is thus valued and beloved by saints, by angels, and by God the Father? And let me say, one that is hated and despised by none but devils and devilish ones? Soul, if thou reject him, whom all the saints and angels love, admire, and adore, then never expect to live with them in the fruition of him, but reckon upon living with devils and damned spirits in hell for ever. If thou reject him whom the Father loves and

delights in, then expect to be rejected both by him and the Father for ever; but soul, rather be prevailed with to love him too.

VIII. Are you for immortality, for one that lives for ever? This added to the rest is desirable; and for this, none like Christ. Yea, none but Christ; he, and he alone is a never-dying Husband; the best husband here below is mortal, and may leave you in a moment; but Christ is immortal. He is the King immortal, eternal, 1 Tim. 1: 17, and he only hath immortality, 1 Tim. 6: 16. He and he only lives for evermore: "Behold, I live for evermore," says he, Rev. 1: 18. He will never leave you in the desolate state of widowhood; yea, not only does he live for ever himself, but moreover he makes all his spouses to live for ever too. So you find, John 11: 25, 26. "I am the resurrection and the life," says he, "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." O what a Husband is this! a Husband that lives for ever himself, and that makes his spouses live for ever too; he gives all his spouses such a life as never dies, an immortal life. In a word, close with him, and as he will live for ever as thy Husband, so thou shalt live for ever as his spouse. O who would not accept of such a person? Soul, if thou receivedst him, know, he lives for ever to love thee, to comfort thee, to delight thee, to make thee happy in and with himself; but if thou reject him, know, that he lives for ever to punish thee, to inflict wrath and vengeance upon thee, and to make thee completely miserable; but O reject him not!

Thus have I shown you a little what a husband Christ is to his spouses, and upon the whole I would say to you, as the spouse did to the daughters of Jerusalem, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend," Cant. 5: 16. This is he that offers himself to your love; surely he is no mean, no despicable person, but one infinitely desirable. Now, what do you say? Will you have him, or will you not? Possibly this is the last tender he will ever make of himself to you; possibly the union must be made now or never; therefore now close with him, accept him upon his terms, who surely is worthy of all acceptation.

The River and the City

After a long period of scorching heat, when rivers begin to flow, they overflow their banks. God's people after a long course of darkness and desertion, when they approach God's throne of grace, find the channel of prayers overflowing. Their deliverance becomes great and memorable, and their enjoyments rise to a very high degree. "My cup runneth over."

A river generally discharges clear waters, not filthy or muddy. The enjoyments of God's people are pure and real. When a river is discharging volumes of water, one volume follows another. So it is sometimes with the spiritual supplies that flow to gladden the hearts of God's people. In any case what they have enjoyed in the past will not now suffice. They must get refreshment for present need, and God is able to supply their wants at all times. "When the poor and the needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isaiah 41: 17). The waters of the river are very strong in their course. No power can stop their progress. It is also the case with the refreshing unction of the Spirit. No power can keep His blessings from God's people. Satan, the world and inward corruption have ever been at work to keep God's Spirit from renewing and comforting God's children but God is more powerful than all enemies combined.

What is the city of God that is gladdened? This may refer historically to Jerusalem in which His temple, people and laws were, where His worship was conducted, and His presence realised. God is with His people whether far from one another or assembled together. He dwells in the heart of "him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at His word" (Isaiah 66: 2). Such a heart is a living temple for God. He dwells there. God's city is in a spiritual sense His people in the visible Church.

Extract from a sermon by Rev. D. Macdonald of Shieldaig

Poem

"Be not weary," *toiling* Christians,
Good the Master thou dost serve;
Let no disappointment move thee,
From thy service never swerve,
Sow in hope, nor cease thy sowing,
Lack not patience, faith, or prayer
Seed-time passeth,— harvest hasteneth,—
Precious sheaves thou then shalt bear.

"Be not weary," *praying* Christians;
Open is Thy Father's ear
To the fervent supplication,
And the agonizing prayer.

Prayer the Holy Ghost begetteth,
Be it words, or groans, or tears,
Is the prayer that's always answered:
Banish then thy doubts and fears.

"Be not weary," *suffering* Christian;
Scourged is each adopted child
Else would grow, in sad profusion
Nature's fruit, perverse and wild:
Chastening's needful for the spirit,
Though 'tis painful for the flesh
God designs a blessing for thee;—
Let this thought thy soul refresh.

"Be not weary," *tempted* Christians,
Sin can only lure on earth;
Faith is tried by sore temptations,
'Tis the furnace proves its worth:
Bounds are set unto the tempter,
Which beyond he cannot go;
Battle on, on God relying,
Faith will overcome the foe.

"Be not weary," *weeping* Christian,
Tears endure but for the night;
Joy, deep joy, thy spirit greeting,
Will return with morning's light.
Every tear thou shedd'st is numbered
In the register above;
Heaven is tearless, sweet the prospect,—
Sighless, tearless land of love!

"Be not weary," *hoping* Christians;
Though the vision tarry long,
Hope will bring the blessing nearer,
Change thy sorrow into song;
Naught shall press thy spirit downwards
If thy hopes all brightly shine:
Hold thy hope, whate'er thou lovest,—
Living, precious hopes are thine!

"Be not weary," *troubled* Christian,
Rest remains for thee on high;
Dwell upon the untold glory
Of thy future home of joy:
There, nor sin, nor sorrow enters,—
There thy soul, attuned to praise,
Shall, in strains of heavenly fulness,
Songs of happy triumph raise.

"Be not weary," *loving* Christians,
In this heavenly grace abound;
Jesus, well thou knowest, loved *thee*,
Though in mad rebellion found:
Drink, drink deeply of His spirit,—
Jesus loves both great and small;
Nature loves but what is lovely,—
Grace embraceth one and all.

Christian, thus in grace unwearied
Pass thy sojourn here below,
Spurn lukewarmness, let thy bosom
Ever with true fervour glow!
Look to Christ, thy bright exemplar,
Copy Him in all His ways,
Let thy life and conversation
Tell to thy Redeemer's praise.

The Shorter Catechism

The "Shorter Catechism" has proved an invaluable gift to Scotland which seemed to have become the land of its adoption. Distinguished as it is by accuracy of definition, closeness of connection, comprehensiveness of doctrine, minuteness of detail, and strict evangelical character, it has laid in many a Scotch breast, a lasting foundation for the future work of conviction, conversion, and right understanding of the whole plan of salvation, and has ever proved a most honoured means of educating the souls of men into eternal life. How many a false ministry has been tried and rejected by the aid of this little Scriptural guide! and how many times has false doctrine been made manifest, and true doctrine been established by aid of the proofs contained in its collection of Scripture texts?

From Rev. John Macdonald of Calcutta's writings.

Popery, Resuscitated and Consummated Paganism

by the Rev. J. A. Wylie, LL.D., Edinburgh.

The following is one of the papers read at a National Convention of Protestants held in Glasgow in December, 1886. We are told that "all the deliberations were conducted in the most admirable spirit towards Roman Catholics. The distinction was carefully observed betwixt the system and those who professed it. The degraded votaries of Romish superstition and idolatry were spoken of in the most loving manner, and frequently fervently prayed for. Hatred of the fetters that bind is compatible with love for the bound; yea, pity for the bound deepens the hatred of the fetters and stirs to more zealous efforts to wrench the fetters off and let the oppressed go free." In the list of the members attending the Convention the name "J. S. Sinclair, Glasgow," appears. The Rev. J. S. Wylie, LL. D., the author of this paper, is of course well known as the author of "The History of Protestantism", "The Papacy is the Antichrist" and other books written in defence of the Faith and exposing the errors of Romanism.

The plan which Satan has followed from the beginning in opposing God has been to substitute the *counterfeit* for the *real*. He does not forbid man to worship; he gains his end just as well by teaching him to worship in a wrong way. He does not boldly and directly affirm that there is no God; he employs his art and cunning in seducing man to worship a false God. Satan did not set up a system of atheism among the ancient nations; on the contrary, he taught them to be very religious. There was no end to their gods, temples, and rites. But all the while he hid from their knowledge the one true God, the maker of the heavens and the earth. He pointed to the sun in the heavens, who year by year brings the world out of darkness and death, and by the power of his beams clothes it with the fertility, the growth and the glory of summer. He said to men, There is your god; it is this divine and glorious object to whom you are to pay your homage.

And coming yet a stage lower, Satan said to men, It is meet that you should have a representative on earth of this god in the sky: choose ye some renowned warrior, some mighty monarch whom you may appoint the vicegerent of the heavenly luminary, and through whom you may offer your worship to the Sun-God. Thus did Satan substitute the *counterfeit* for the *real*, and thus did he elaborate a system of worship for the early nations, which spread with their extension over the earth, and in due time became a world-wide idolatry. It travelled eastward into India and China:

it journeyed westward into Egypt and Greece: it went on to Rome, and overspread Europe. In the course of its peregrinations it multiplied its gods and its rites; it diversified their names, and the form of the worship paid them; it was mystical in India, utterly gross in Egypt, redolent of beauty in Greece; at Rome it surrounded itself with a halo of battles and victories; but in all lands it was the same idolatry — it was a counterfeit god, and a counterfeit worship, cunningly put in the room of the true God; and the longer men continued to worship, the deeper they sank in ignorance, in sensuality and vice.

When the Gospel came a new epoch opened on the world. It was now to be seen that as God had not yet developed His whole plan of grace, Satan had not yet produced his masterpiece of imposture. The deceiver at this crisis exhibited a craft and ingenuity which eclipsed by their success all his former efforts. On what plan did he work in rearing his new edifice, or rather, rebuilding the old, for it was a restoration, not a new building he set up, when he took the old stones of paganism, to reconstruct his new temple of Popery? His plan was the same he had pursued from the beginning. He once more palmed upon the world the counterfeit for the true. He now gave himself to the study of the Gospel — not that he might be a devout disciple or an able preacher, but that he might be a cunning perverter and a clever imitator. He carefully marked the order and arrangement of the Gospel Church; he searched out the sources of the Gospel's power, and noted the ends the Gospel sought to attain, and went his way and erected an ecclesiastical system as like the Gospel Church as it was possible to be; like it in appearance and form, but distinct and antagonistic in its essence and in its ends. Even Satan had never succeeded so well before. The imitation is perfect. As in those days when God had His theocracy among the Jews, Satan had his theocracy among the Gentiles, so was it now: God had set up His Gospel Church in the world, and Satan set up his church also.

The counterfeit church of Satan lacks nothing in appearance which the Church of God possesses. Let us run our eye over it, and mark how exactly the form has been copied, while the spirit is utterly extinguished, and the end completely inverted. First of all Satan's counterfeit church has its high priest. Not to speak of its Pontiff, who, like the great Druid of our ancestors, and the Pontifex Maximus of the Romans, stands at the top of the system, there is a body of men in the Church of Rome who profess to offer for the sins of the living and the dead, and to mediate between God and men in virtue of their powers as a priesthood. Second, this Church has its great sacrifice — the mass, to wit. The worshipper

is bidden look, not to the Sacrifice on Calvary, but to the sacrifice on the altar, for the pardon of his sin, and the salvation of his soul. Third, this Church has its Bible — the traditions of the Fathers, together with the Canon Law: the Canons of the Council of Trent occupy the place in the Church of Rome which the Scriptures do in the Church of Christ. They are her rule of faith, and are held by her to be an infallible revelation of the will of God, and an infallible director of the conscience. Thus Christ as the One Priest, His death as the one all-sufficient sacrifice, and the Bible as the one infallible guide, Popery throws aside, and puts counterfeits in their room.

For an Apostolic succession which consists in the doctrine of the Apostles, it substitutes a succession of matter; a succession of official men, who alone have the power of conveying grace; a chain which has not in it, from beginning to end, one broken link: while the fact is, if history is to be believed, that all the links are broken, and one whole link there is not in it all.

All the Persons in the Godhead Popery denies. It denies them after its usual manner of supplanting them, and adroitly substituting counterfeits for them. It denies God the Father by installing the Pope as the Divine Vicegerent of the world and infallible ruler of the conscience. It presents him sitting aloft, above magistrates and kings, with power to annul their laws, cast them down from their thrones, plant or pluck up nations, and abrogate even the precepts of the moral law. Popery writes on the Papal chair, This is the seat of God, the throne of the infallible and holy one. He who sits here can pardon or retain men's sins; in other words, save or destroy their souls.

Popery denies God the Son. It robs Christ of His priestly office by assuming the power of offering efficaciously for the sins of men. It is the priest's sacrifice, not Christ's, that saves the sinner. Popery robs Christ of His prophetic office, by presenting itself as the infallible teacher of the will of God, and the only authorised expositor of the true sense of Scripture, without whose guidance we are sure to err in interpreting the Bible. It robs Christ of His office as the one Mediator and Intercessor, by making Mary and the saints intercessors with God for men. It robs Christ of His Kingly office, by exalting the Pope to His royal seat as Head of the Church, and Head of the world for the Church. On his vesture and on his thigh the Pope has a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."

Popery denies God the Spirit. For the Spirit it substitutes the Sacrament, by giving to the Sacrament the power, by its own inherent efficacy,

to regenerate the soul, and to make men holy, and heirs of heaven. It robs the Spirit of His honour as the medium through which divine blessings are communicated to the soul, and by which at last it is made perfect in holiness, by making its priesthood the only channel of communication betwixt God and men, without whose agency all grace and blessing are utterly beyond the reach of men. Here, then, is what professes to be a church, a perfect and complete church; and yet is an out-and-out counterfeit. Every element of strength and every principle of evil that were found in the ancient idolatries live over again in the Papacy. That same Paganism whose cradle was rocked in Chaldea, whose youth was passed amid the olive groves and matchless temples of Greece, and whose manhood was reached amid the martial sounds and iron organisation of Rome, has returned anew in the Papacy, bringing with it the old rites, the old festivals, the flowers, the incensings, the lustral water, the vestments, the very gods — but with new names; everything, in short. And were an old Pagan to rise from the dead, he would find himself amid his old environments, and, without a moment's doubt, would conclude that the ancient Jove was still reigning, and was being worshipped by the same rites that were practised in his honour two thousand years ago. To conclude, Popery is an effacement of the Christian church by the substitution of a Pantheon of idols. Extinguishing the great lights of revelation, it rolls back the world, and places it once more amid the ideas, the deities and the rites of early and idolatrous ages.

Notes and Comments

The Vatican and Poland

According to a report in *The Times* diplomatic links have been resumed between the Vatican and the Communist Government of Poland. The Pope had insisted that before full diplomatic recognition would be given the Polish Government would have to legalise Solidarity, the R.C. trade union, and also recognise the legal status of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. The Vatican has never found it difficult to give recognition to governments of whatever complexion, if only they will give the R.C. Church a favoured place. It is not difficult to contemplate what the result would be of a union between Rome and Communism. It is certain it would bode ill for the Protestant Churches throughout the world. The thing that unites Romanism and Communism is that both are master-pieces of the devil, one in the religious sphere, the other in the secular.

The Vatican and Russia

For the first time since the Second World War the Vatican has appointed a R.C. bishop to one of the dioceses in one of the Soviet Republics. Approval for the appointment had been given by the Soviet authorities. It is clear that the R.C. Church is doing what it can to establish itself in Eastern Europe where it has many followers.

Aids Deaths

Notwithstanding all the efforts being made to combat the Aids disease, the epidemic is expected to grow worse in the next decade. It is thought that within a few years the deaths from this plague throughout the world will reach the figure of one million. Though it is known that the originating cause of the disease is sodomy yet Governments refuse to take action against this evil. As a consequence the plague must spread more and more throughout the nations, as the warnings of Scripture go unheeded.

The Lord Chancellor and the National Prayer Breakfast

A report in the Scottish "Catholic" Observer is headed, "MacKay has VIP's for breakfast!" The guests, the report states, who were there at the invitation of Lord MacKay of Clashfern, The Lord Chancellor and Lady MacKay, included Archbishop Keith O'Brien of St. Andrews and Edinburgh and Bishop Mario Conti of Aberdeen. After being piped in to the tune of "Amazing Graze", the opening prayer and Grace, the report further states, was given by Archbishop O'Brien. Other prayers were said for the Government, for Scotland and for the world. One of these was given by Chief Constable Hugh MacMillan of Inverness. Mr Alan Beith M.P. gave an address and after the closing hymn "Christ Be Beside Me," the final blessing was given by Church of Scotland Professor Robin Barbour. It is clear that Lord MacKay is moving in different circles from the time he was a mere elder in the Free Presbyterian Church, and is surely an indication that the Synod was not mistaken in the action which it took.

Rev. Ian Paisley on the Free Presbyterian Synod

This week, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland passed through a dark valley. After, that *real* Synod, that stood true to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and to its doctrinal and historical standing, had been attacked, had been misrepresented in the Press, Lord MacKay has been hailed as a tolerant, kindly, godly man, who has been misused by the Free Presbyterian Synod of his Church — I want to say something tonight, and it's this — in it all, there is no mention of the honour of Jesus Christ.

It doesn't matter about Jesus Christ! It doesn't matter whether He is blasphemed in a requiem mass, whether His finished work is insulted, whether His atoning death is derided, whether all that He accomplished is to be made a parody of, in the offering of a flour and water wafer. That is all forgotten, and the only thing we have is the honour of Lord MacKay. I want to say something very strong — Lord MacKay is the law officer of the crown, he is the Lord Chancellor of England. He is supposed to be the keeper of the Queen's conscience, but when he was ordained, he swore a solemn oath, that the mass was abominably injurious to Jesus Christ. If he had believed that, he would not have been at a requiem mass. He would have avoided the mass, and fled, as the Bible says, from all idolatry. It is a misrepresentation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, to dare to say that they disciplined him because he went to a Roman Catholic funeral. Not at all! Because he went to **the Mass**, not the funeral. I have been at Roman Catholic funerals, but I have never, thank God, been to the mass. I am glad that gallant, little church, said to Lord MacKay, "We will not have it. You may be Lord Chancellor, but you won't go to the mass with our blessing." Well done, the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland!

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Outer Isles: At Miavaig, Uig on 13th September at 7.30 p.m. for the Induction of Rev. D. J. MacDonald, M.A.

Southern: At Glasgow on 19th September at 6 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 10th October at 2 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 17th October at 11 a.m.

Australia and New Zealand: At Gisborne on 20th October at 2 p.m.

Fort William and Oban Communion

The Kirk Session intimates that the Fort William and Oban Communion will not be held this year.

Committee Meetings (D.V.)

The following Committees will meet at Inverness Church:

Tuesday 3rd October

9.00 a.m. - 10.00 a.m. Church Centenary Committee.

10.00 a.m. - 11.00 a.m. Training of Ministry.

- 11.00 a.m. - 12 noon. Church Magazines.
- 12 noon — 1.00 p.m. Publications
- 2.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m. Welfare of Youth.
- 2.00 p.m. - 4.30 p.m. Finance.
- 3.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. Sabbath Observance.
- 4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m. Dominions and Overseas.
- 4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m. Religion and Morals.
- 7.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m. Foreign Mission.

Message to the Clerk of Synod from the Clerk of the Zimbabwean Presbytery

“Dear Mr MacLean,

I have been asked by the Zimbabwean Presbytery to send to the Free Presbyterian Synod a letter of re-assurance of the support of the whole Church in Africa in the stand you have taken against any encumbrance of error in the Church. It is the prayer of the Free Presbyterians in Africa that the principles which this Church has stood for over the years should be maintained. The Lord said to the Jews who believed in Him, ‘If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed: and ye shall know the Truth and the truth shall make you free.’

After returning safely to Zimbabwe, we are pursuing our work with the utmost vigour, we hope from the Lord.”

Yours sincerely,
(Rev.) Aaron Ndebele.

Christian Witness to Israel

Rev. D. Maclean
13 Kingsborough Gardens
Glasgow
G12 9NH

Dear Mr MacLean,

May I express our thanks to you and to the Synod for the generous contribution which you have sent for the work of the Gospel among the Jews. In a worldwide constituency, support for this ministry to which we are unambiguously committed by the Scriptures is always an encouragement. However, there are contributions which, by their source and by the confidence we have in the prayers that accompany them, are especially heartening. It is such with your gift. We are confident that the ingathering of Israel is constantly remembered before God throughout our congregations.

I would be grateful if you would convey to the Synod, at an appropriate time, our appreciation.

With kindest regards.

Yours sincerely,

Murdo A. MacLeod,

Director.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Room 7, Seafield House, Seafield Road, Inverness, IV1 1SJ, acknowledges the following donations with sincere thanks:-

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., £100 for famine relief; Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel, Luton £55. **Ingwenya Mission etc.: February to December, 1988.** Miss J. G., special Cassette Recorder for the blind; Toronto Congregation, 3 Braille Machines; Lakenheath Sabbath School, £60; Glasgow Sabbath School, £500; Inverness Sabbath School, £250; Mrs. T., £12; Anon., Inverness, £45; Miss S. £100; Miss L., £10; Edinburgh, £50; Mrs H. C., £50; Mr A. L., £50; Miss R. M., £50; Anon., Wick, £100; Mrs Scott, £100; Toronto Ladies, \$131, \$137, \$93, \$65; Mrs Mackay (Kamativi, Zimbabwe), £350; Legacy, Mrs J. S., Wick, £1000. **Gifts for School and the Blind received by M.M.G., when in U.K.** Dumbarton, Lochcarron, Raasay and Wick Congregations, £476.50; From Friends in Scotland, £796 and various useful pieces of equipment. **January — June, 1989.** Glasgow Sabbath School, £1000; Inverness Sabbath School, £275; Toronto Ladies, \$137, \$112, \$112; Stornoway Ladies Meeting, £76; Friend, Stornoway, £70; A.M.G., Tarbert, £25; Mr & Mrs B., Aberdeen, £50; P. v. d. R., Holland, £50; Friend, Breasclate, £40; last six per C. M. M.

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

Bracadale: Legacy of the late Miss MacKinnon, £100 for Struan Church and £100 for T.B.S. **Edinburgh:** Anon., £10; Anon., Glasgow, £20; both for Congr. Fund.

Glasgow: Mrs MacK. £7 for Congr. Fund; Anon., £5, £5, £10, £20; I.C. £30, all for Bus. Fund; also Matth. 6: 3 (three donations) £30; Anon., £20 for T.B.S.; Anon., £20 for African Famine; Anon., £10 for Bibles for East Europe; Anon., £100; Anon., £40; Anon., £7, all for Sustentation Fund; Anon., £400 (Laide, Fort William, Oban and Dumbarton Congs. — £100 each).

Inverness: From the estate of the late Mrs Jessie Mary MacDonald, Inverness, per Munro & Noble, Solicitors, £2000 for the general purposes of the congregation.

Kinlochbervie: Miss K. A. MacD., Vancouver, B.C., £52 for Scourie Church.

Laide: Mrs E. S. for Church Door Coll.; A Friend, £20 per Miss K. MacK., Coast, for Bibles for Eastern Block; From St. Jude's F.P. Church £100; Dutch Friend £5 for Sust. Fund; Anon., St. Jude's £100.

Larne: Anon., Glasgow £10 for Comm. Exps.; Anon., Scotland £20 per G.G.H., where most needed.

Raasay: Friend, Raasay £100 (£40 for Kenya, £40 for Malawi and £20 for Bibles for Russia); M. D. MacL., Inverarish £20 for Congr. Fund.

Stirling: Friend, North Tolsta, £10 per Mrs J. M.

Stornoway: Miss K. A. MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish, £40, for Sust. Fund per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Uig, Lewis: C.M. £20; L.M. £10; Anon., £20; Anon., £10; Anon., £10, all for Comm. Exps.; C.M. £20 where most needed; Anon., £10 for Church Fund, all by envelope in plate.