warning against praying in court-dress : " Pray as your actual self, not as some fancied saint ". This we must try to do, whatever our way of prayer.[88]

[33] op. cit., p. 7. [34] Grou, pp. 60, 61, 90. [35] Kirk, p. 440. [36] Forsyth, pp. 28, 82, 84, 90f. [37] Grou, p. 64. [38] Heiler, p. 254. [39] op. cit. p. 86. [40] von Hugel : *The Life of Prayer*, p. 36.
[41] Chapman, p. 99. [42] op. cit., p. 39f. [43] op. cit., pp. 160, 43. [44] Forsyth, p. 20. [45] Heiler, p. 235. [46] W. Graham Scroggie : *Method in Prayer*, pp. 14, 17. [47] op. cit., p. 156. [48] op. cit., p. 114. [49] op. cit., p. 46. [50] op. cit., p. 177. [51] Deitrich Bonhoeffer : *Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 86, 91. [52] George F. Macleod : *Only One Way Left*, pp. 152, 155. [53] Quoted in Martin Jarrett-Kerr : *The Hope of Glory*, p. 47. [54] e.g. *The Way of Contemplative Meditation, Introduction to Contemplative Meditation, Stillness and Strength*, all by M. V. Dunlop. [55] See *A New Way to Prayer, or, The Prayer of Affirmation*, by W. Mauleverer (published by Arthur James). [56] See *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus*, by a Monk of the Eastern Church (published by The Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius). [57] op. cit., p. 109. [58] op. cit., pp. 64, 66.

Seventeenth-century Teaching on the Christian Life—II

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LOVE AND FAITH

WE start, again, from common ground. Our three teachers, Francis de Sales, Richard Baxter and John Owen, all agree that love to God is the supreme and ultimate Christian virtue, and all accept the traditional Christian view of its nature. They conceive of love, as such, as an active attitude of the whole rational nature, mind, will and affections together, responding to the attraction of apprehended good. That which is good is also delightful and desirable, and love is precisely delight in it, and desire for possession of it and union with it. Human love is thus correlative to manifested attractiveness. It expresses itself in approbation of its object, in the setting of affection upon it and adherence to it, and in benevolence towards it—i.e., desire for its well-being. All our love is a form of this fundamental attitude. Now, say our teachers, we are made and redeemed to love God. This love is our end and fulfilment ; it is both our duty and our happiness —" both work and wages " (Baxter, *Practical Works*, 1838 ed., III. 22). Christian life, at its heart, is a matter of loving God—delighting in Him, longing for Him, cleaving to Him, praising Him, obeying Him, giving Him glory. A few quotations will give evidence of our instructors' agreement on this. Francis opens his *Introduction* by defining " devotion " as " nothing else than the true love of God ", " the perfection of love," and, as such, " the queen of virtues " (I. i, ii) ; and in the Preface to the *Treatise* he tells us : " In the Church of God all is of love, in love, to love, and for love." It is " love to Himself," writes Owen, " which the eternal love of God aims at in us, and works us up unto " (*Works*, II. 24). Baxter in a striking

passage traces the stages of Christian progress through successive forms in the school of Christ, in order to show that growing in grace means just growing out of religious self-centredness and anxious preoccupation about one's own spiritual state into a deeper and more absorbed love for God. " In the lowest form, we are exercised with the fears of hell . . . and in the works of repentance " ; in the next " we are much enquiring how we may know . . . our interest in Christ " ; in the third form, " we are searching after further knowledge " ; in the fourth, all our concern is for holiness of life ; in the fifth, " we grow to be more public-spirited : to set our hearts on the church's welfare . . . to do all the good in the world that we are able . . . but especially to long and lay out ourselves for the conversion and salvation of sinners " ; but in the sixth, " we grow to study more the pure and wonderful love of God in Christ and to relish and admire that love . . . and to be kindling the flames of holy love to him that hath thus loved us ; and to keep our souls in the exercise of that love. . . . Those that are the highest in this form, do so walk with God, and burn in love . . . and are so conversant by faith in heaven, that their hearts ever dwell there, and there they long to be for ever " (III. 860). Puritan and Romanist thus agree that the love of God is the heart and height of Christian practice.

But there are important differences. In the first place, Francis holds that love to God is natural to every man, being elicited by the natural attractiveness of the Creator to His creatures. " Just as the great Creator has given fire the impulse to rise heavenwards . . . even so He has implanted in man's heart a special natural tendency to love, not merely that which is generically good, but specifically His own heavenly Goodness, the best of all good things." The Fall left this impulse unchanged (for, as we saw, the badness of fallen men is to Francis no more than a degree of moral paralysis) : " though our human nature has fallen . . . that holy inclination to love God above all things abides . . . and no man can think steadfastly upon God, even by his natural light, without feeling some drawings of love excited in his inmost heart by the hidden tendencies of nature " (*Treatise*, I. xvi). The root of love remains in nature ; though, of course, it can bring forth no perfect fruit without supernatural grace. In all this, Francis shows himself a true heir of Medieval natural theology. The Puritans, however, had grasped the meaning of Rom. i, and we find Owen denying flatly that there is any basis for love in fallen man's apprehension of his Maker. Sinners cannot truly apprehend God as other than wrathful. A Deity whom they can regard as lovable is an idol of their own devising ; for no man can love the God who justly condemns him to death. When those outside Christ think of God as what He is, a just Judge, hating sin, " it breeds in the soul a dread and aversation. Hence the flying and hiding of sinners in the Scriptures " (II. 24). The Creator becomes attractive to man only in His character as Redeemer. We love Him because, and only because, He first loved us, and chose and redeemed and called and justified us in Christ. And our love to Him is thus specifically love to God in Christ, for it is only in Christ that God shows love to us. We see loveliness in God only through the mirror of what Rutherford spoke

of as " the loveliness of Christ ". And no man has the least inclination to love God until his eyes have been opened by grace to discern the love of Christ and to receive Him by faith. Only where there is faith is there love. Both Owen and Baxter are clear on this.

Owen in particular dwells much on the loving fellowship that the saved sinner enjoys with his glorified Redeemer. To him, there is no genuine Christianity without it. So he writes : " They know nothing of the life and power of the gospel . . . whose hearts are not sensible of the love of Christ herein. Nor is he sensible of the love of Christ, whose affections are not thereon drawn out unto him. . . . Men . . . have no real acquaintance with Christianity, who imagine that the placing of the most intense affections of our souls on the person of Christ, the loving him with all our hearts because of his love, our being overcome thereby, until we are sick of love, the constant motions of our souls towards him with delight and adherence, are but fancies and imaginations " (I. 166 f.). This Christocentric passion, however, is feebler in Francis. His general view, as we should expect from what has been said, is that " the first . . . grandest, noblest and most powerful motive to love " (*Treatise*, XII. xi) is the essential goodness of the Creator, and the manifested mercy of the Redeemer only comes in as a secondary consideration. And the Christ to whom he does periodically turn is an oddly statuesque figure. On the whole theme of the Christian's personal intercourse with his Saviour, the Puritans would have found Francis wanting, and here again I think they would be right. For there is a second great biblical perspective that is missing from Francis' pages : namely, the conception of the Christian life as *the life of faith.*

Rome holds that God has equipped His Church to confer grace (in the sense of supernatural energy) through its ordinances, and so teaches salvation by sacraments. Reformed theology affirms that the Church's task is rather to witness to the grace of God (in the sense of His mighty saving love) by preaching the Gospel, and that salvation comes through personal faith in Christ. Faith to Rome is mere *fides*, believing what the Church teaches, whereas faith to Protestantism is essentially *fiducia*, personal trust in the Father through the Son. Faith to the Protestant is an activity of appropriation, an empty hand ever outstretched to receive, a constant confession of poverty and need and a continual dependence on Christ for righteousness and life ; and its object is a strong Shepherd who cares for His sheep and is present to help them when they cry.

Faith to the Roman, however, is merely a condition of Church membership, and at most a stepping-stone towards love. For there is no room in the Roman scheme for the appropriating exercise of faith at all. Spiritual supply is received via the sacraments, and only so ; and the faithful communicant's business in daily life is simply to stir up the gift that is in him, and exercise the grace which *ex hypothesi* he has already received, by acts of devotion and love. Accordingly, we find that, whereas the Puritans depict the Christian life as essentially one of faith, working by what Francis would recognize as love, Francis depicts it as essentially a life of love, divorced from anything that the Puritans could recognize as faith. This pin-points the defect

in Francis' attitude to Christ. Christ is to him a Saviour who loves, but does not personally intervene to save, having committed that necessary task to the official Church. Francis' Christ is an emblem of love, an affecting image and figurehead, a model for imitation, a beloved mascot—but not a living Saviour ; for He retains no executive function in saving.

The following pair of quotations brings out the difference between Francis and the Puritans here. Francis' advice to those attacked by temptation is this : " turn your heart towards Jesus Christ crucified, and by an act of love embrace in spirit His sacred feet. This is the best means to overcome the enemy " (*Introduction*, IV. ix). But Owen says : " Meet thy temptation with thoughts of faith concerning Christ. . . . This is called ' taking the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of Satan ' [Eph. vi. 16] ; faith doth it by laying hold on Christ crucified. . . . Fly to Christ . . . as he was tempted . . . ' In that he hath been tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted ' [Heb. ii. 11] . . . expect succour from him [Heb. iv. 15, 16] ; lie down at his feet, make thy complaint known to him, beg his assistance, and it will not be in vain " (VI. 136). How superficially alike ; yet how utterly different ! Draw on your own present resources, says Francis, and make an act of love ; call on Christ for present help in your present weakness, says Owen, by an exercise of your faith. Francis never calls for such an exercise of faith ; faith was not a means of reception in his theology, and so could not be such in his practical teaching. Indeed, he knows of nothing that faith might receive in time of temptation ; for Francis' Christ does no more than smile encouragement. But the Christ of the Puritans, and of the Bible, actually saves His people out of temptation, strengthening them according to the need of each moment as by faith they lay hold of His promises.

AUTHORITY AND PRAYER

By what authority is a doctrine of prayer established ? Church tradition, and the saints' experience ? Francis thought so, and drew heavily on the Medieval and sixteenth-century Spanish mystics, taking from the latter, among other things, the concept of contemplation. This he defines as " a mental attitude of loving, simple, persistent attention to holy things " (*Treatise*, VI. iii) ; an ineffable awareness of immediate confrontation with God in which the soul, itself passive, is caught up and held rapt in absorbed adoration of His glory. Francis regards contemplation as the highest form of prayer, the end of the road as far as the quest for union with God in this life is concerned. Owen, however, refuses to receive any doctrine, about prayer or anything else, without Scripture sanction ; and it is interesting to find that in the last chapter of *The Work of the Spirit in Prayer* (entitled : " Of mental prayer as pretended unto by some in the Church of Rome ") he measures this doctrine of contemplative prayer by the Bible and finds it wanting. " There is neither precept for it, nor direction about it, nor motive unto it, nor example of it," he declares, " in the whole Scripture " (IV. 337). Its devotees describe it as neither verbal nor rational, for it excludes all conceptual acts of the mind ; but, objects

Owen, prayer in Scripture is essentially a mental activity, and always finds conscious verbal expression. Moreover, "the silence concerning Christ, in the whole of what is ascribed unto this contemplative prayer, or rather the exclusion of him from any concernment in it as mediator" shows that there is nothing Christian about it at all; as further appears from the demonstrable fact that "it is borrowed from those contemplative philosophers" of the neo-Platonic revival—and Owen quotes Plotinus to prove his point (p. 329). Here, again, his criticism has force against Francis, who makes no attempt to derive this doctrine of contemplative prayer from Scripture, and expounds it without any reference to Christ's mediatorial work.

What, then, is the biblical concept of prayer? Owen offers a thorough analysis. Prayer is "the soul's access and approach unto God by Jesus Christ through the aids of the Holy Spirit, to make known its requests unto him with supplication and thanksgiving" (p. 336). It has four main parts: meditation, supplication, praise and thanksgiving. Its temper should be one of "earnestness, fervency, importunity, constancy, and perseverance" (*loc. cit.*). In a broad sense, prayer is the generic name for all our communion and dealings with God. It is the natural expression of supernatural life; "it consists in the especial exercise of faith, love, delight, fear, all the graces of the Spirit, as occasion doth require" (p. 337). It is a pouring out to God of what He has Himself put in our hearts. The instinct of the regenerate is to pray; and their prayer is a child's cry, expressing delight on the one hand and felt need on the other. Francis soft-pedals the petitionary side of prayer, as we should expect; but the Puritans accepted without hesitation the biblical view, that the attitude of dependence which is basic to the life of faith finds, and should find, its natural and proper expression in constant requests to God. This assumption underlies Owen's exposition of the words: "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities" (Rom. viii. 26). The Spirit prompts prayer, he tells us, by enabling us to see our needs; by showing us what is laid up for us in God's promises; by stirring up in us desire for the good things promised, and desire also that God may get Himself glory in giving them (an important qualification); and by leading us boldly and gladly to approach the throne of grace through Christ and open our hearts to God. The rule of prayer is the revealed will of God: the models for praise and thanksgiving are found in the Psalms, and the paradigm of petition is found in the Scripture promises: "what God hath promised, all that he hath promised, and nothing else, are we to pray for" (p. 275). Requests made in Christ's name on the basis of divine promises and with a view to God's glory should be presented with all boldness ("a full, plain-hearted, open liberty" [p. 294]); for we can be sure that God is pleased with them and accepts them. Such is the confidence that conscious subjection to God's word written creates.

Francis' account of prayer is narrower in range and weaker in content than Owen's, just because Owen understands the nature of faith and Francis does not. The aspect of the matter on which Francis is strongest is "mental prayer", i.e. meditation. He outlines his famous method of meditation in the *Introduction* (II. ii-viii). Half

an hour to an hour should be set apart at a time for making a meditation. The first step consists of a deliberate and solemn act of recollecting God's presence and praying for His help. Then should come " considerations ", whereby we open up to our view the meaning and message of our chosen subject—some spiritual truth, or biblical incident. Our aim in framing these considerations should be " to stir up our affections to God and heavenly things " (II. v). Meditations on the life and passion of Christ are particularly fruitful to this end. Having exercised our hearts in pious affections, we should go on to deduce from the truths we have reviewed some specific resolutions for the amendment and direction of our lives. Then we should close with thanksgiving, a prayer for strength to keep our resolutions, and the choosing of what Francis calls " a little nosegay of devotion "—a posy of " best thoughts " (to use a different jargon) to turn over in our minds during the day. The method sounds somewhat elaborate (though indeed it is nothing like as elaborate as that of Ignatius Loyola, on which it is based) ; but Francis assures us that we ought to treat it as a walking-stick rather than a strait-jacket, that we must not be in bondage to it, and should not be afraid to sit loose to the details of it if we can achieve its objects better in some other way. Altogether, Francis' teaching here is admirably sane, wise and helpful.

The Salesian method of meditation is well known ; but what is not so well known is that the Puritans, Baxter in particular, taught an essentially similar, if less formalized, method of meditation, and insisted no less strongly than did Francis that this daily discipline of " heart-work " (Baxter's term for it) is absolutely vital to the maintaining of a healthy Christian life. Owen deals with meditation in *The Grace and Duty of being Spiritually Minded* ; Baxter treats it most fully in *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, where he maintains, among other things, that heaven is the best topic for regular meditation. In one respect both are richer than Francis—namely, in their treatment of the acts of faith in prayer to which meditation should lead. Moreover, both insist (as Francis does not) that the subject-matter of meditation is not to be spun out of a pious imagination, working freely on biblical themes, but to be drawn from what Scripture actually says and controlled by Scripture throughout. Generally, there is a masculine vigour and a down-to-earth ring about their teaching, here as elsewhere, which contrasts very favourably with the shallow, womanish sentimentality that tinges so much of Francis' thought. Once again, we are left feeling that the Puritans knew both God and man at a much profounder level than did Francis. So we need not look to Rome for lessons in the art of meditation ; the Puritans can tell us all that Francis knew about it, and more.

CONCLUSION

In these pages, we have had a glimpse of Roman and Puritan teaching on the Christian life at their best. We are not likely to find more characteristic or competent advocates of either than the writers whom we have studied. We may now, therefore, safely essay a comparative valuation of the two traditions. We have already suggested that, generally speaking, Owen and Baxter, who sought more sustainedly to

subject their minds to the control and guidance of Scripture, saw deeper into its teaching and caught more of its spirit than Francis did. We now go on to ask two questions. First : what is in Francis that is not in Owen and Baxter? The answer is : only the doctrine of contemplative prayer, which seems not to be biblical, nor distinctively Christian. Second : what is in Owen and Baxter that is not in Francis? The answer is : the New Testament understanding of Christianity as a life of faith in Christ. Failure to grasp this vitiates Roman teaching on sanctification as radically as on justification. Without it, as we have seen, all the perspectives of the Christian life are more or less distorted : Francis' account of mortification, and love, and prayer, divorced from any exercise of faith, is a twisted shadow of New Testament teaching, and his picture of a now inactive Christ stands in direct contradiction to it. And it is here, in the Roman misconception of the office of the risen Lord, that the root of Francis' deficiency lies. The reason why there is no room for trust in Christ, in the New Testament sense, in Francis' practical teaching is simply that Christ is not an object of trust, in the New Testament sense, in the official theology of Francis' Church. According to Rome, it is actually the Church which saves, by its sacramental ministrations; and therefore it is the Church, rather than Christ, that the Christian should trust as his Saviour. Until the exalted Christ is given His rightful place in theology as the present and only Saviour of His people (which cannot happen till the doctrine of the saviour-Church has been abandoned), Francis' deficiencies cannot in principle be rectified. We observed earlier that some Protestants seem to suspect that Roman teaching on the Christian life is richer than that of their own tradition. But it now seems clear that Roman teaching is really far poorer, for, whatever other attractions it may have, it can never do justice to the Christian's fellowship of faith with his sovereign, all-sufficient Saviour; and this, surely, is the heart of the matter.

Book Reviews

A COMMENTARY ON MARK THIRTEEN.
By G. R. Beasley Murray. Macmillan. pp. 124. 18/-.

In many ways this is a model commentary. It is a welcome exception to the general warning, which seems so much needed to-day, that we require more spacious surveys of the biblical wood and fewer detailed investigations of its trees.

Here is a very detailed investigation of one chapter of the Bible, and nothing could be more salutary for anyone seeking to find a satisfactory basis for a true Christian eschatology than a prolonged devotional and critical appraisal of Mark xiii, as that is interpreted for us by Dr. Beasley Murray. The Greek text is set out, followed by a general exegetical exposition in larger type, and then come the critical notes in smaller print. The whole book is made infinitely easier to " read, mark, learn and inwardly digest " by the method of handling the chapter verse by verse, or at most taking two verses at a time—