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Revival¹

This attractive and readable little volume gives the mature thoughts of a president of Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts on the revivals which began in New England in 1798 and continued for several years. The letters which make up the book originally were addressed to the students of the Seminary who formed the Committee of the Revival Association there in 1832. These letters were then published in a contemporary periodical and later issued in book form. They are full of scriptural wisdom, and their republication is to be warmly welcomed.

In a time of intense spiritual darkness we should be very conscious of our need of a genuine outpouring of the Spirit to turn multitudes of sinners “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God”. But even in his time, Porter had to refer to “sections of our country where scarcely one in 50 exhibits any evidence, or makes any profession, of piety”. And he pointed to “the flood of ungodliness which has been aiming to sweep away her Sabbaths and blot out her memorial from under heaven”. Apart from revival, Porter believed, “the Church could scarcely hold her own” even during the half-century before he wrote – “comparatively a favoured period”.

What sermons were being preached during the time of revival which Porter describes and analyses? “They were decidedly evangelical, Christ crucified being kept prominent in every pulpit where this spirit of revivals prevailed.” Besides, they were organised, biblical, plain, easily-understood, earnest and instructive. Porter quotes the comments of another pastor: “No preaching seems so effectual to drive [awakened sinners] from their hiding-places as to tell them plainly that they are eternally undone if the unpromised mercy of God is not displayed in their favour, that they have not the least claim on God and, if He does not have mercy, they are gone for ever”. This, as Porter reminds us, was the experience also of Jonathan Edwards.

The author is anxious to distinguish between impressions and convictions. “The former were often produced by sympathy, by solemn appeals to the

¹A review article on *Letters on Revival* by Ebenezer Porter, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 144 pages, £4.95, available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

passions, by alarming providences, or by dread of punishment. . . . Under their influence, sinners sometimes exhibited very hopeful appearances, seemed to be very anxious, ‘resolved to lead a new life’. . . . But soon they were as careless as ever. These were mere impressions, sometimes serious indeed, or even distressing, for the time, but more commonly slight and evanescent. Conviction of sin, on the other hand, has a deeper origin. It is a vivid sense on the sinner’s conscience, not of his danger chiefly, but of his guilt as a transgressor against God. Conscience arrays this before him in the light of the divine law, shows him its curse, righteous and dreadful as it is, falling upon his own head, and no escape or remedy but through Christ. Now ministers who were skilful as guides to inquiring sinners deemed it of vital importance to keep the above distinction prominent in all their instructions and encouragements; whereas men of impetuous temper and little experience often treated anxiety in different sinners as amounting to just the same thing as conviction of guilt.”

“No sinner”, he emphasises, “was brought thoroughly to feel his guilty and lost condition, and his need of salvation by grace, except by being clearly instructed in the primary doctrines of the Bible.” Those who were under genuine convictions realised “that an amiable temper and a moral life are of no account if the heart is supremely in love with sin. They saw that they were justly condemned by the divine law, which they had continually broken in thought, word and deed; that they were utterly without excuse, as transgressors of that law; that, though repentance is their indispensable and immediate duty, they never should repent if left to themselves, without special, divine influence; and that, if they should ever be saved, it must be through the merits of Christ, applied to them by the Holy Spirit, through the grace of that God who has mercy on whom He will have mercy.”

As an example of one brought under deep conviction of sin, Porter describes a middle-aged man who, during a sermon, “said at once to himself, ‘The salvation of my soul is of immediate and infinite importance; I now resolve that I will delay it no longer, but will immediately reform and lead a new life’. In this resolution he considered himself as immovably fixed. But in walking home alone, two difficulties came upon him. He had made this resolution in mere reliance on himself, and only a part of himself had consented to it. His understanding and conscience were for it; his fears and hopes were for it; his ‘vile, ungodly, obstinate heart’ was against it. His decision, and the comfort derived from it, were dashed to atoms when he came to look into himself.

“The whole of the following night he spent in horror, without a moment’s sleep. The next day was a day of anguish in view of his own guilt, and

exposure to everlasting ruin. He tried to labour, but could not; he heard another sermon, but found no relief. Instead of having his heart melted and mended, it became more obdurate still, for he had been relying on his own selfish resolutions and on the means of salvation, and not on the God of salvation. A second sleepless night and a second day of anguish ensued. The third night, being exhausted, he had a little broken sleep, but awoke to keener sufferings. About the dawn of day a new train of thoughts engrossed his mind concerning the absolute perfection of God and His administration, and the duty of unreserved submission to His will. All was right on the part of God and the gospel. The fearful agony was over; and the conflict was followed by a serenity which, he afterwards hoped, was the peace of God, passing all understanding." But instances of such a degree of mental distress were relatively rare.

Charles Backus, "one of the most judicious and able ministers of this period" is quoted on the general pattern of conversions: "The first alarm was followed with a more full discovery of their moral pollution. In general they said that, when divine truth first appeared in a new and pleasing light, they scarcely thought of their own safety, or whether they were, or were not, converted. They were abundant in acknowledging that, if gospel grace were not free and sovereign, there could be no hope for such great sinners as they were, who had not made any advances of themselves towards submission to the will of God. None manifested high confidence of their conversion."

Another minister expanded on this last point: "When God had taken off their distressful burden, they at first had no suspicion of their hearts being renewed, but were rather alarmed with the apprehension that the Spirit of God had forsaken them and that they were becoming more hardened than ever. In this situation, longing for the return of their anxiety, they, if asked, 'How does the character of God appear to you?' readily answered, 'Great, excellent, glorious. I wish for no other God to govern the world, no other Saviour but Christ, no other way of salvation but the gospel.' They wondered what had become of their burden. In time, however, experience taught them that their load was taken off in consequence of their hearts being brought to love that very religion which they had been opposing." It was, in the words of a third minister, "increasing light and a comparison of their exercises with the gospel [that] have led them all on to a comfortable hope of their good estate".

Porter emphasises that part of the experience of the converts was the realisation that "the salvation of a sinner is wholly of God; so that, aside from the influence of sovereign mercy, he never would have done anything towards submitting to the terms of the gospel". Preachers, of course, must have the same view, as they seek the good of their hearers. Asahel Hooker,

one of the “most eminent” ministers of the time, told the author: “I never fully understood the Apostle’s comparison of ministers to ‘earthen vessels’ till I saw, in a revival, the utter inefficacy of my own preaching to save a single soul without divine influence”. Another, whose preaching one assumes was also blessed, commented: “I desire to be thankful to [God] that He has allowed me to stand and behold His glorious work, though I must confess that I never felt so useless since I entered on the ministry. God hath wrought, and to His name be all the glory!”

It is not surprising then that the author objects strongly to tendencies towards Arminianism. He explains: “I regard all speculations which tend to exalt human instrumentality and diminish a humble reliance on God as fundamentally erroneous and fatal to the spirit of genuine revivals”. And again: “When it is said, ‘It is as easy for a sinner to repent as to remain impenitent’ . . . the language is not proper for the pulpit. There is no difficulty for a man to choose that to which his whole heart is inclined; but is it as easy for him to counteract all the moral habits, affections and inclinations of his heart as to comply with them? . . . Gabriel is a free agent, but who would think it proper to illustrate his free agency by affirming that ‘it is as easy for him to blaspheme God as to praise Him’? As to the expression which represents conversion as consisting in ‘the sinner’s making up his mind to serve God’ . . . the effect is that of a colloquial caricature of a sacred scriptural truth. I mean that such is the effect when this and other forms of expression are so employed as virtually to leave out of view the Holy Spirit, and reduce the sinner’s moral renovation to the familiar level of an ordinary transaction.”

Porter accordingly raises strong objections to the practice of calling on converts to separate from others in the congregation. “What I object to in these proceedings”, he explains, “is that sinners are encouraged to entertain premature hopes; that they are encouraged to proclaim these hopes; and that these hopes, true or false, are confirmed by the influence of ministers and churches.” He agrees that “the work may be done in a moment, and God may see it to be done effectually; but the proof to ourselves and to other men that it is done is not the work of a moment nor of a day. . . . No voice from heaven has announced the fact; if it is a fact, omniscience only can know it; for the ordinary principles of evidence cannot reach the case. . . . This requires opportunity for calm thought, reading, and examination into his own heart and the evidences of grace. He may be truly born again, and yet be ignorant as a child respecting the proper evidences of this change.” In any case, who will respond to such a call? “It requires but little acquaintance with revivals and with men to know that the confident, the ignorant and the sanguine will be first in responding to the call; while the judicious, the

modest and the heart-broken will stand back from so sudden and public an exhibition of themselves.”

As one would expect, Porter could speak of “a manifest increase in the religious observance of the Sabbath and the duties of a family religion” as effects of the revival. In a Connecticut community previously, “public worship was greatly neglected by many whole families, but now we see them flocking to hear the Word of God on the Sabbath and at other seasons. . . . While there were formerly but very few who called upon the name of the Lord in family prayer, now almost whole neighbourhoods have engaged in this duty, so that if one were to pass among them at certain seasons he would be constrained to say, Surely God is in this place; parents devoting themselves, their little ones, and all that they have, to the Lord.”

It is encouraging to know that very few of those who professed conversion went back to the world. Porter attributes this to “the ample instructions given by ministers as to the evidences of grace, and the incessant warnings on the dangers of self-deception”. Clearly this is a matter which always needs attention from the pulpit, not only when multitudes are flocking into the Church of God. Of the *hopeful* converts – these men’s terminology was cautious – Asahel Hooker said, “They have generally conducted [themselves] hitherto as well as could reasonably be expected. It is hoped that their religion will not be as the early cloud and the morning dew, that passes away. But it is greatly to be feared that all will not persevere, that some will be found with a lamp of profession, but no oil in their lamp.”

As we look at the ungodliness of the present, and look on with concern to a future influenced by that ungodliness, we should be all the more earnest before God in pleading for fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Scripture is full of suitable petitions, among them those of Isaiah: “Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence!” (Is 64:1). We cannot doubt that these petitions will yet be answered on a scale that the world has never before seen. But if we are spared to see that answer in this generation, we are likely, humanly speaking, to be handicapped by our lack of experience of times of revival. In such a situation the supreme help must, of course, come from above, but the wisdom which comes from years of experience and has been distilled into such volumes as this is highly valuable. And this little work should also encourage us to plead with greater earnestness that God would indeed “come down” in His infinite mercy and bless us, however much we as a generation deserve to be visited by Him in judgement.

Jerusalem's Watchmen (2)¹

A Sermon by *Matthew Newcomen*

Isaiah 62:6,7. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

I might fill up a large portion of the time remaining in telling you how all the Lord's remembrancers in all the ages of the Church, under the law and under the gospel, have exemplified this truth. Thus under the law, before the captivity: Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah. Which of the Lord's prophets have not made the establishing and beautifying of Jerusalem the burden of their prayers? During the captivity, though they had lost their urim and thummin and the fire of the sanctuary that came from heaven, yet they did not lose this holy, heavenly disposition of praying for Jerusalem. See abundant evidence of it in Ezekiel, Daniel and Mordecai; and after the captivity in Ezra and Nehemiah. And now, in the times of the gospel, the same spirit still animates God's children and inclines their hearts still to seek the good of Jerusalem. How do the apostles in several Epistles testify to this disposition in them? Paul says to the Church in Rome: "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (Rom 1:9). So also: "Making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you . . ." (Eph 1:16-17).

Yea, so much religion have the saints of God before us placed in this duty of praying for Jerusalem that they have protested against the neglect of this as a most abominable sin: "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against you, in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam 12:23). Nay, they have called for a curse upon themselves, if ever they should be so wretched: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Ps 137:5-6). To be silenced is one of the greatest judgements that can befall a prophet. Witness Zacharias, whose unbelief God punished with this as a pre-eminent judgement. Witness those amongst ourselves who had their mouths stopped by the violent hand of man; they know what it is to have the Word of God as a fire in their bones and have no vent for it. Yet even to this does the prophet here curse himself: If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,

¹This sermon was preached at Westminster Abbey before both Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Assembly, on 7 July 1643, a fast day. Newcomen was a minister at Dedham in Essex. In this second part he makes application of his doctrine: "It is in a special manner the duty of God's ministers to pray earnestly and incessantly to God that He would establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." It has been edited.

if I do not remember to mourn for thee, to pray for thee, let me never pray more; let me never speak more if I forget to speak for thee; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. The good Lord be merciful to every one of us and pardon all our forgetfulness of Jerusalem, whom we have as much reason to remember as ever anyone had.

For is Jerusalem not the city of God, the house of God, the delight of God, the crown of glory, the royal diadem in the hand of God? Is it not the love, the dove, the spouse, the sister, the body, the fullness, the glory of Jesus Christ? And in all these respects doth it not deserve our prayers?

And are earth and hell not up in arms against Jerusalem? Are men and devils not in league together to confound and destroy Jerusalem? "They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation: that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Ps 83:3-4) – Gebal and Ammon and Amalek etc. And doth not Jerusalem in this respect now need our prayers?

And hath the Lord not made promises unto Jerusalem of these things we are to pray for? "I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of *peace and truth*" (Jer 33:6). And "it shall be to Me a name of joy, a *praise* and an honour before all the nations of the earth" (Jer 33:9). Is the Lord not able to accomplish these promises notwithstanding all the counter-machinations of His enemies? "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Is 46:10). Yet it is the Lord's pleasure only to accomplish these things unto His Church by His people's prayers: "Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not" (Jer 33:3); "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them" (Ezek 36:37).

In the next place, this truth might serve for reproof. O with what vehemence might a man, in the name and by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, thunder indignation and wrath from hence upon the heads of those who, though they have usurped the place of such as should be the Lord's remembrancers, yet instead of performing the duty of this text have practised the clean contrary. Instead of praying that God would establish His Church in truth, they have endeavoured only to undermine, subvert and adulterate the truth. Their folly, as the Apostle speaks, is manifest unto all men (2 Tim 3:9). God hath unmasked them, and all that will see may see that their design was to let in such an inundation of Popery and Socinianism as should have drowned the truth of God for ever. Instead of praying that God would establish His Church in peace, they have acted the part of those unclean spirits, the frogs spoken of in Revelation 16:14, stirring up the kings of the earth to battle

against the Church of God, first in Scotland, and since that in England.

Did the wars of both kingdoms not have the same fuel and fomenters? And who are they but the Jesuitizing clergy of England, who, like the unclean spirit we read of in Mark 9, fearing they shall now be cast out of their long possession, rend and tear the kingdom and lay it wallowing in its blood? What shall I speak of such clergy? Instead of praying that God would make His Church a praise, they have endeavoured nothing more than to rob the Church of all that might make it praiseworthy. Instead of desiring that the Church might enjoy fullness of ordinances, they have endeavoured to strip the Church of them all, to abolish Sabbaths – to bring the delight of days, the queen of days, under the curse of Job’s birthday, “Let it not be joined to the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months”; they have endeavoured to cast preaching and praying out of the Church, to turn the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper into a sacrifice of the altar. Instead of praying that all ordinances and offices might be administered according to Christ’s rule, they would have all things in God’s house and worship done according to their own fancy.

What shall we say of such a clergy? Aristotle speaks of a little worm that is pestilently destructive to beehives; no less destructive have the greatest part of them been to the true Church of God amongst us. Against them, the Church of God may pour out such sad complaints to her Lord Jesus Christ: “The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me” (Song 5:7). Let such read their doom: their “judgement now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Pet 2:3).

I had not turned aside to this reproof (for I look for none of this generation here this day) had it not been to provoke myself and you to a more serious and deep humiliation for those abominations of the late times. Though many of us have seen and observed even then, and some of us have felt and smarted under the violence thereof, yet few I fear amongst us have had our hearts so humbled for their iniquity as they should have been. The Lord help us so to take to heart this day our own and other men’s sins, that He may forgive our iniquities and heal our land.

The only boldness I shall assume, brethren and fathers, is but to do as much as Naaman’s servant did unto his lord, to exhort you to do what you know God would have you do: pray for Jerusalem. I am confident I might spare even this; it is your work daily. But, God having called me this day to speak unto you, for Zion’s sake I cannot hold my peace. Is it the duty of ministers in a special manner to pray incessantly that God would establish Jerusalem and make it a praise in the earth? Then let every one of us by

solemn engagements to God and to His Church bind ourselves to the performance of this duty. And surely, brethren, if ever there were times that called for this duty, if ever there were men called to this duty, this is the time; we are the men.

First, for the *time*. If ever there were a time that did command the most importunate and incessant prayers of all God's ministers and people, that they should cry mightily to the Lord night and day on behalf of Jerusalem – to keep no silence and give Him no rest till He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth – now is the time. Had I art or grace enough to present before you at this time the lively, or rather the ghastly, face of Jerusalem – the Churches of Christ Jesus – I know it would command tears and prayers from the most flinty heart in this congregation. Would that I could let you see Jerusalem like the man in the parable (Luke 10:30-35) that went down from Jerusalem, fell among thieves and was stripped by them and wounded and left half dead, while many, too many, pass by with the priest and Levite on the other side of the way, and will not see the Church's miseries – though they cannot but see them. “Amongst all her lovers there is none to comfort her” (Lam 1:2); “Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her” (Lam 1:17). Zion spreadeth forth her hands from sea to sea, from one nation to another people, and there is none to comfort her, “there is none to guide her amongst all the sons whom she hath brought forth, neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up” (Is 51:18).

O were I able to express this to the life unto you, you would say, If ever there were a time for you to bestow, as the good Samaritan, your wine, your oil, your money – nay your tears, your prayers, your blood – for the healing of the Church's wounds, now is the time. Or could I let you see the Church, Jerusalem, as John saw her in Revelation 12, in the same condition though not in the same clothing – a woman clothed not, as there, with the sun but with a cloud, having not the moon under her feet but a globe of flames, a field of blood. Ever since the beginning of this Parliament, the Church has been now almost these three years in this pained condition, in travail, crying and pained to be delivered. And all this while, as there, the great red dragon stands before the woman to devour the child as soon as it is born. The sight of the Church in such a sad condition might force a tear from a stone, a prayer from a heartless man. But from ministers, from those that are the Lord's remembrancers, methinks it might draw tears enough to rinse the earth from blood and prayers enough to offer violence to heaven.

But to speak plainly, I say again, if ever there were a time that did command the most importunate and incessant prayers of all God's ministers and

people, now is the time. Was there ever a time wherein the Church of God was more shaken, more in danger to have both her pillars of truth and peace broken, reduced to nothing, than at this time? The enemies of the Church have long sought to undermine the truth, but now they set an open battery against the truth. And where is our peace? It has taken to itself the wings of a dove and, forsaking earth, is fled to heaven, frightened hence with the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war and the cries of blood. We may write of our age what the Prophet Azariah said of some ages of Israel: "In those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity" (2 Chr 15:5-6).

Never was this poor Church and people in a more broken, distressed condition in regard of civil peace, nor scarce ever worse in regard of ecclesiastical peace. Now when there are so many swords in England and in Ireland drawn against the Protestants, why should we be at daggers drawn against one another? For the divisions of Reuben there are great searchings of heart. Holy Ridley and Hooper could never agree about black and white in times of the peace and liberty of the gospel but had many wrathful bickerings, yet in time of persecution for the gospel they could, as their own expression is, agree in red. When God came to put them together in tears and sufferings and blood, they could forget all differences of judgement then and love and live and die together as brethren.²

Do those know what spirit they are of, at such a time as this that, when all the true-hearted Protestants in England are put in one calamitous, suffering, bleeding condition, they are yet quarrelling about their own opinions, weakening the Protestant party by sub-divisions, which if united is scarce enough to withstand the common adversary. Should this be if we had not lost our peace with God? As the Holy Ghost speaks of the calamities of the Church in Judah (2 Kings 24:3), so may we say of the calamities of the Church of England: Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon England. The Lord grant that the following words be not verified in our time to remove England out of His sight. But we may take up the Church's lamentation: "Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace" (Lam 3:17); yes, and as far from praise.

"The crown is fallen from our head" (Lam 5:16); we are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn, a derision, a byword, a shaking of the head. Those few of us that adhere to the Protestant religion and cause, are represented to

²Newcomen is not, of course, arguing for compromise in doctrine or practice but, as he makes clear later on, for unity *in the truth*.

the world at home and abroad as sectaries and rebels, so that if ever there was a time for us to cry to God to scatter those clouds of blood, confusion and contempt that cover the face of the Church, to bring forth our judgement as the light and our righteousness as the morning, now is the time. Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep no silence and give Him no rest, till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

And if ever men were called to this work, we are called to it. As ministers it belongs unto us to be the Lord's remembrancers: to put the Lord in mind of Jerusalem. You know what order the Lord took so that the priests, the ministers of the Lord under the law, might continually remember Israel, the Church of God, unto the Lord. The high priest was to bear the names of the 12 tribes upon his shoulders, engraved in two stones – and upon his breast, engraved upon 12 stones – that he might bear them upon his heart for a memorial before the Lord continually. These stones were to be the priest's remembrancers so that he might be the Lord's remembrancer by praying for Israel. This type is properly applicable to Christ, who is the only High Priest of His Church; yet this may, at least by way of allusion, be applied unto ministers, for there ought to be in them the same disposition.

As Christ wept over Jerusalem, so should they; as He remembered Jerusalem, so should they; as He prayed for Jerusalem, so should they – He by way of meritorious intercession, they by way of ministerial intercession, to bear Jerusalem upon their shoulders and upon their hearts continually whenever they address themselves into God's presence. Jerusalem is engraved upon the hand of God, and therefore it should be engraved upon the hearts of His ministers. And it is, if God has laid His hand upon their hearts. "Behold I have graven thee", saith God to Jerusalem, "upon the palms of My hands" (Is 49:16). Look how many ministers and others there are upon whose hearts God has laid His hand. I doubt not that, as God Himself cannot forget Jerusalem because it is engraved upon the palms of His hands, so they cannot but remember Jerusalem because it is engraved upon their hearts. All you that are the Lord's remembrancers, you that have Jerusalem written in your hearts, keep no silence and give Him no rest till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. If ever men were called to this work, ministers are.

And if ever ministers were called to this work, the more especially are you whom it hath pleased God by the authority of the honourable Houses of Parliament to call together to debate and advise of such things as may be necessary, or conducive, to the establishment of truth and peace and beauty in the Churches of Christ Jesus. Does it not then especially lie upon you to keep no silence and give the Lord no rest till He establish Jerusalem? For

except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord reform the Church, it is to no purpose to go about to reform it; except the Lord set up the pillars of peace and truth in His Church, and put the crown of glory upon His Church, it is labour lost to endeavour it. You that are called to this great work – you of all men – ought to keep no silence and give the Lord no rest, till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

I need not tell you how many eyes and expectations there are upon this Assembly from all the parts of the kingdom, from all the parts of the Christian world. I speak it not as a matter of boasting but as a matter of lying low before the Lord this day. The eyes of all the people of God are upon you; foreign Churches have their eyes towards you, waiting to see what you will advise for the more utter extinction of Popery, and effecting of a nearer union between us and the rest of the Reformed Churches. Methinks I hear from all the corners of the land coming up to this Assembly a voice like that of the poor woman to the king upon the wall: Help, help; for the Lord's sake help; help us to better ministers, help us to better ordinances, help us to purer worship, help us to better discipline, help us to remove those things that deter us from the Lord's table, help our tender consciences to more liberty. And may you not answer as he did there: Except the Lord help thee, whence should I help thee?

There is such corruption and confusion in doctrine, discipline and worship that it will never prosper unless the great God set His hand to this great work – the God who is able to remove the iniquity of the land in one day (*Zec 3:9*), and to cause the prophet and unclean spirit to pass out of the land (*Zec 13:2*). Yet if it should not prosper, the sin would be laid at your door and you would bear the reproach of it to all memory. Therefore there is great need to plead with God to come down and own His work: “O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” Ye among all the rest of the Lord's remembrancers, keep no silence and give Him no rest till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

And one thing more. Put in practice what I know you have all taught others: pursue your prayers with your endeavours. What ye pray for, contend for. As ye pray that God would establish His Church in truth, so labour with united endeavours to raise up and establish the decayed truth among us, vindicating the truths of the Protestant religion from all Popish, Arminian, Socinian, Anabaptist, Antinomian and all other errors whatsoever. And as ye pray that God would establish His Church in peace, so labour to work out the Church's peace with God by endeavouring a removal of whatever pol-

lution or profaneness have turned God into an enemy to us. And then labour for the Church's peace with its own members, which ye shall certainly establish if, denying yourselves and laying aside all pre-engagements to your own opinions, desires and ways, you shall consent to what upon pious debate shall be found the truth of God. I doubt not but that through His grace ye shall all do this. In your union will be laid a happy foundation of union through the whole kingdom. And then we need take no thought for the third thing, peace with our enemies: God will either subdue them under us, or make them be at peace with us. Only let neither the desire of peace with them, nor of peace amongst ourselves, bribe us to tolerate anything in the Church of God that might make Him to be at war with us.

And lastly, as ye pray that God would make the Church a praise, so endeavour also that the Church of Christ may enjoy all those liberties and ordinances that are purchased for her by the blood, and bequeathed to her in the testament, of her Lord Jesus; that all her ways may be ordered according to the rule of God's Word; that the gospel may run and be glorified; that those two great illuminating ordinances of preaching and catechising, which are as the greater and lesser lights of heaven, may have such liberty, encouragement, maintenance, that all the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. This do, and prosper. And that you may do so, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christian Experience¹

5. Some Lessons

Archibald Alexander

1 We may learn from what has been said that the end to be accomplished by the various dispensations of God to His people is to humble their pride, to divest them of self-righteousness and self-confidence, to lead them to appreciate the grace and faithfulness of the Saviour, and to give exercise to the several virtues of the Christian life, and thus to prepare the soul for its heavenly state.

¹This is the final extract, slightly-edited, from one of Alexander's *Practical Sermons*, on Isaiah 42:16: "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them". Last month's article dealt with backsliding and recovery.

2. Believers, by being led in this way, are instructed in the knowledge of the deep depravity of their nature, the deceitfulness of the heart, the evil of sin in its various forms and aspects, and the malice and subtlety of the grand adversary. They are consequently instructed in the knowledge of the riches of divine grace, the wonderful wisdom of the plan of redemption, the tender sympathy, as well as the faithful care, of the Mediator, and the desirableness of a better rest than this world can afford. Our estimation of heavenly joys will have some relation to our conflicts and afflictions upon earth. No doubt the gratitude of the redeemed on Mount Zion is increased exceedingly by the consideration that they “have come out of great tribulation”.

3. Let us learn then to trust implicitly in the providence and in the promises of a covenant-keeping God. His providence extends to the hairs of our head, and His promises are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and are “exceeding great and precious”. We should learn to live upon the promises, by the exercise of a lively faith and hope, trusting all our interests into the hands of a faithful Redeemer – confidently believing that He will certainly perform whatever He has promised. Has He begun a good work and will He not accomplish it? None who trust in Him shall ever be disappointed and, the more confidently we rely upon His word of promise, the more is He honoured and the more acceptable we are in His sight.

4. It should not be inferred from what has been said, that God leads all His people in precisely the same paths, for while there is generally a similarity, there is a particular diversity. The case of every Christian has probably something peculiar in it, both as it relates to the work of grace within him and to the dispensations of providence from without. There are some individuals who are led in a way remarkably different from the common paths of the flock. They are conducted through the world in a gentle, peaceful course, exposed but little to the fierce blasts of adversity with which others are assailed and almost overwhelmed. They seem to be preserved from those terrific conflicts and satanic temptations which others are called to endure, while to others the path is hedged up and full of difficulties throughout.

But often, while the first stages of the pilgrimage are smooth, the latter may be rough and painful, or the reverse. During a long season of prosperity and peace, the cup of afflictions is filling up ready to be poured forth at a future day. Indeed, according to the order of natural events, it must be so. If all the members of a large family are spared for many years, there are only so many more marks for the arrows of future adversity, for all these are subject to various misfortunes, and all these must die, sooner or later, as well as others. Those therefore who seem for a while to be exempt from adversity

will in due season have their full share, unless in mercy they are “taken away from the evil to come”.

5. Finally, the people of God are often conducted through the “valley and shadow of death” in an unexpected manner. We learn that anciently there were some whom Christ came to deliver “who were all their lives subject to bondage, through fear of death”. Well, many sincere but timid Christians still experience that bondage of fear, and they have many anxious thoughts in relation to this awful but inevitable event. Yet, when the trying moment arrives, when death appears near and the evident symptoms of approaching dissolution are experienced, they find themselves supported and comforted far beyond their highest expectation. And, as this last enemy comes nearer, he appears less formidable; his sting is extracted and sometimes he seems to assume the face of an angel of light, so that the dying Christian can often say, “O death, where is thy sting?” “For me to die is gain.”

This peaceful end is not reserved for those alone who, in life, appeared to possess a strong faith, but doubting, desponding believers are often thus raised above their gloomy fears and are enabled to triumph in a dying hour. The faithful Shepherd of Israel is always present to guide the sheep of His purchase through this gloomy valley. Although they are blind and know not the way, yet He will both guide and protect them with His rod and His staff. Happy are they who have God for their guide!

Rev Donald Macdonald, Shieldaig

5. Separation

Rev J L Goldby

On 12 April 1892 the Presbytery of Lochcarron considered the overture sent down by the General Assembly, under the Barrier Act, entitled “Declaratory Act anent Confession of Faith”. Their decision simply was that the “Presbytery disapprove of this overture”. The Presbytery then unanimously adopted the following overture to the General Assembly: “Whereas the Declaratory Act sent down by the last Assembly to the Presbyteries for their opinion professes to remove difficulties and scruples, while these difficulties and scruples are not mentioned; whereas its terms are indefinite and undefined while the terms of the Confession which it professes to explain are distinct and definite so as not to be misunderstood; whereas the Act, instead of removing, suggests difficulties and scruples for which there are no grounds in the Confession; and whereas the Act contains doctrinal statements which are

contrary to Scripture and the Confession, is in its general tenor subversive of the constitution of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and so equivocal in its phraseology as to admit in many places of a doubtful and contradictory meaning; it is humbly overtured by the Free Presbytery of Lochcarron to the venerable General Assembly not to pass the said Act into a law of the Church”.

The Northern Chronicle of 25 May 1892 reported on a large meeting held in Diabaig on May 17, shortly after the Declaratory Act was passed. Boatloads of people came from Shieldaig, Ardheslaig and Annat, and the schoolhouse was filled to capacity. Rev Donald Macdonald explained how the Declaratory Act would remove the binding obligation to believe, teach and maintain the doctrine of the Westminster Confession and would allow the advance party in the Church to bring in other teachings. He asked the people to give their opinion on these changes. Finlay Macdonald, an elder, said that since his youth he remembered controversy in the Free Church, and now the controversy over the Confession of Faith was the most serious of all. “The Declaratory Act”, he said, “proposes to do away with the cardinal doctrines of the Bible.” He laid the blame not so much on the students coming into the ministry as on the older men in the Assembly. Mr Galbraith, a teacher, spoke in support, and motions were passed deploring the action of the General Assembly in asking them to hold loosely to the Confession instead of the advice of former times, which was to hold it fast. They also protested about the hasty manner in which the Declaratory Act was introduced.

On 20 July 1892 the Presbytery met in Kinlochewe and recorded: (1) their protest against the Declaratory Act as contrary to the Confession of Faith and subversive of the principles of the Reformation Church of Scotland; (2) their determination to adopt all lawful measures for the repeal of the Act; (3) their firm resolution to continue, in humble dependence on divine grace, to discharge their solemn duties in accordance with the doctrines, principles, constitution and standards of the Free Church. When the Presbytery met in April 1893, they unanimously adopted the following overture: “Whereas the Declaratory Act passed by the last Assembly is not only contrary to, but subversive of, the standards of the Church; and whereas instead of restoring peace and unity into the Church, as its framers and promoters fondly expected, it has increased discord and confusion, and causes great alarm and anxiety in the minds of many of the Church’s office-bearers and adherents; and whereas not a few for this reason have ceased connection with this Church and many more are hesitating as to the duty of remaining in the Church; it is humbly overtured by this Presbytery to the venerable General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland to rescind the said Act”. There were no dissents; the Presbytery, it seemed, was of one mind.

On 3 May 1893 the Presbytery met again. This was the last time Mr Macdonald was to take his seat in the Free Presbytery of Lochcarron. The ministers present were Revs William Sinclair, Plockton; Donald Forbes, Lochcarron; Kenneth Macdonald, Applecross; Angus Mackay, Glenshiel; Angus Galbraith, Lochalsh; Ronald Dingwall, Poolewe; John MacMillan, Lochbroom; Donald Macdonald, Shieldaig; Finlay Graham, Kinlochewe; Donald Macleod, Coigach; and Angus Watson, Glenelg; 11 ministers in all. When office-bearers signed the formula they made a public, solemn vow before God that they would preach and teach the Biblical doctrines of the Confession, which had been held fast since the Reformation in Scotland. The Declaratory Act would allow them to preach and teach another gospel (Gal 1:8,9). Under this Act office-bearers could not be held accountable for failing to adhere to the Confession of Faith. Despite the high-sounding phrases of the Presbytery's protest, Rev Donald Macdonald was the only minister who would refuse to serve under the terms of the Declaratory Act, because of his faithfulness and love to Christ's cause and the souls of men.

The Presbytery of Skye had also sent up a protest against the Declaratory Act and it was supported by the Synod of Glenelg. But four ministers of the Synod of Glenelg dissented and appealed to the General Assembly, which subsequently decided in their favour against the majority.

When the Presbytery of Lochcarron met on July 5 an extract minute of the 1893 Assembly was read, reversing the judgement of the Synod of Glenelg and ordering deletion of the protests and declarations against the Declaratory Act from the records of the Presbyteries of Skye and Lochcarron. The Presbytery's response was weak: "Out of respect to the authority of the supreme court of the Church, the Presbytery agreed to record the above deliverance. At the same time they adhere substantially to the views expressed in various decisions and overtures by this Presbytery and they rejoice to hear that the last Assembly leaves all at liberty to act as if the Declaratory Act had no existence." The Declaratory Act had replaced the Westminster Confession of Faith as the creed of the Free Church of Scotland, yet the office-bearers of the Church were told they could regard the Act as non-existent!

The Presbytery now turned their attention "to reports current to the effect that Mr Macdonald, Shieldaig, forms one of a party who has seceded, or who intends to secede, from this Church. The Presbytery are under the painful necessity of instructing the Clerk to write to Mr Macdonald to enquire if these reports are true, and whether he continues, according to his ordination vows, to acknowledge the jurisdiction of this Presbytery: and to request his appearance at the next meeting." The Presbytery met again at Gairloch on July 18, when it was reported that there had been no reply from Mr Macdonald. The

Declaratory Act Free Church had broken its contract with its office bearers, and he no longer acknowledged its jurisdiction. The Presbytery cited him for the third and last time on September 6, intimating that he would be “declared no longer a minister or member of this Church” if he did not appear. He was also called upon to produce his collecting book for the Annat Church. At the Presbytery meeting on October 3 the Clerk read a letter from Mr Macdonald of the Free Church Presbytery of Scotland,¹ stating that the Annat people had signed the Bond of Union and were unanimous in adhering to his ministry. The Clerk was instructed to send his letter to the Law Agents.

In November a letter from Rev Kenneth Macdonald, Applecross, stated that “he had gone to Shieldaig to declare the charge vacant but was refused access to the church and had to discharge his duty in the open air outside the gate that leads to the church and manse; and that John Cameron, elder, Strathpeffer,² at present agitating in the interest of the secession movement, stood at the gate at the head of a crowd of people who shouted and prevented him entrance, and from being heard”. In December the Special Committee in Edinburgh issued summonses against Mr Macdonald, “late minister of the Free Church at Shieldaig to eject him from church and manse”. Members of Presbytery, with others, were named as prosecutors. The Presbytery recorded its disapproval of the steps taken by the seceding brethren but at the same time declared “that they are as strongly opposed as the Seceders can possibly be to those declensions in the Church which have led to the present deplorable state of things!” The latter statement is rather hollow given that most of the ministers in the Presbytery in 1893 went on to embrace the “deplorable” declensions they had just denounced, when they subsequently entered the United Free Church of 1900.

In April 1894 the Law Agents wrote to say that they had received from Mr Macdonald the £244 he had previously collected for building a church in Annat and that they had obtained a legal decision that the church and manse belonged to the Free Church and that Mr Macdonald was to hand over the keys. The Presbytery authorised Rev Kenneth Macdonald to take possession of the keys and “rejoiced” that the Torridon section of the congregation, who had broken away from Shieldaig a few years before, were supporting the Presbytery. But they could hardly have rejoiced that the bulk of the people had gone with their minister. The April 1894 Presbytery record indicates that the Shieldaig contribution to the Sustentation Fund had plummeted to less than £8. The exercised Christian people of Shieldaig were far better informed of the real issues at stake than the great men such as Principal Robert Rainy.

¹This was the name originally given to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

²His obituary is reprinted in *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church*, p 39ff.

Rainy had been seeking to exert influence by building a party in the Shildaig locality. He was keen to divide Highland opposition by using the Highland Committee, of which he became convener in 1883. He was the leader of the movement that brought in the Declaratory Act of 1892, which led to the Declaratory Act Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church uniting as the United Free Church. This union was achieved at the expense of the truth of the Bible and was ruinous for the gospel in Scotland. The *Memoir* of Rev Neil Cameron clearly exposes Rainy's subtlety in undermining the Westminster Confession of Faith. Many were led to believe that this movement would advance the cause of Christ, whereas the very reverse was true. As a Divinity student in the late 1880s, Neil Cameron attended meetings in Edinburgh where Rainy was advocating his views. "These debates convinced me", he said, "that there was a fixed determination in the mind of the innovating party to break down the scriptural creed and constitution of the Free Church."³

Meanwhile Mr Macdonald had taken up his stand beside Mr Macfarlane in defence of the gospel in Scotland, with all the practical hardships that he and his people must now face, excluded as they were from the use of their buildings and driven back to the bare hillside to worship.

Adoption (1)¹

Thomas Boston

All who are effectually called are adopted into the family of God. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor 6:17,18). Adoption, in the general, is a legal act, whereby one doth, to all intents and purposes in law, become wholly the child of another than him whose child he was by nature.

Adoption then is not a change of our nature but of our state. Neither is it a work carried on by degrees, but an act perfected in an instant: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God . . ." (1 John 3:2). But the full enjoyment of the

³*Memoir of Rev Neil Cameron*, p 36.

¹Based on answer 34 of the Shorter Catechism: "Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God". It is reprinted from *A Brief Explication of the First Part of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, in Boston's *Works*, vol 7. Boston (1676-1732) spent his entire ministry in the Scottish Borders. His books, particularly *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (available from the F P Bookroom at £14.25) are regarded as classics of Scottish religious writing.

benefits thereby coming unto us will not be till the last day: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23). We are adopted into the family of God in that instant wherein, believing in Christ, we are justified and reconciled to God: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:4,5). "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. . . . Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph 2:16,19).

Our natural father, out of whose family we come, is the devil: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44). "The tares are the children of the wicked one" (13:38). "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (Matt 23:15). The devil's family is the world lying in wickedness: "And we know that the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19, compared with 2 Cor 6:17,18). "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Ps 45:10).

The father who adopts us into his family is God Himself (2 Cor 6:18). The person of the glorious Trinity, whose act in a peculiar manner our adoption is, is the first person, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:3-5); "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph 3:14,15). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). His act of adopting us into His family is an act of free grace (1 John 3:1).

It is an act of free grace in that there is nothing in us moving Him thereto: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:5,6). But it is consistent with the honour of God to adopt into His family us who are by nature children of the devil, in that He adopts us in Christ, as being

in Him (Eph 1:5,6). “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal 3:26,27). “For both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11). It is consistent with His justice, in that He adopts us for Christ, as redeemed by Him (Gal 4:4,5).

We are dignified by adoption, in that we are thereby received into the number of the sons of God: “But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the host of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call Me my Father, and shalt not turn away from Me” (Jer 3:19; and John 1:12). The dignity then which it advances us to is sonship to God (Eph 1:5; and 2 Cor 6:18).

Evangelical or Reformed (1)¹

Rev H M Cartwright

In what is known as the Reformed world, some have modified their position so that they no longer urge the necessity of the Church being Calvinistic and Presbyterian, as they may once have done. Instead Evangelical, rather than Calvinistic or Reformed, has become their touchstone, and the form of Church government has become a matter of comparatively little consequence. If we here look critically at others, it is to learn from them to take heed to ourselves.

Evangelical and *Reformed* cannot be used without qualification. This is also true of several familiar terms. “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26) – a name we feel honoured to bear in its original significance, but what does it mean to the majority in Scotland today if not further defined? *Protestant* had a very definite connotation when it was first used and we are glad to identify ourselves as those who continue to protest against the pretensions of Romanism, and for the truth of the gospel, but what does it mean to people today without further explanation? *Bible-believing* is another term we gladly take to ourselves which might seem to indicate a person’s good credentials. But the fact that many heretical claims shelter under that umbrella and that our Confession of Faith takes ten paragraphs to outline its doctrine of Scripture suggests that even *Bible-believing* requires detailed explanation before it can be meaningful. Similarly, we claim to be Evangelical and Reformed in the proper meaning of these terms,

¹This is the first section of a shortened and adapted version of a paper given at the 2003 Theological Conference in Inverness.

but these terms also need to be qualified if the position to which we are committed is to be understood. This is not merely because people are ignorant but also because the terms have become devalued.

Let us look at some definitions of the traditional *Evangelical*. Historically the term may have been used in a limited way in Reformation times to identify those who adhered to the gospel, or evangel, as opposed to the teachings of the Church. William Tyndale (1494-1536) used the term, as did Sir Thomas More, in 1531 to describe advocates of the Reformation. But it seems to have come into common use in Britain only in the eighteenth century. It was not by then the equivalent of Protestant but descriptive of a group within Protestantism, particularly those influential in, or influenced by, the revivals of that century, many of whom departed from the more robust Calvinism of the seventeenth century.

It may be useful to note how some commonly regarded as Evangelicals understand the term. D A Carson admits that “giving definition to *Evangelicalism* is not only difficult, but is growing even more difficult as a wider and wider group of people apply the label to themselves. It may be, as some have suggested, that the term will eventually so lack definition as to be theologically useless – much like the term *Christian* today, which, in Western countries, may mean no more than that someone is not a Muslim or a Hindu or the like, and not an atheist.”² J I Packer describes Evangelicalism as “the oldest version of Christianity . . . just apostolic Christianity itself . . . fidelity to the doctrinal content of the gospel”.³

Iain Murray, claims that “the use of the term *Evangelical* is simply another way of describing a person or denomination that believes the gospel” and that “a characteristic of an Evangelical was that he put his Evangelical commitment before denominational allegiance and, while he was happy to work in evangelism and conventions with Evangelicals of other denominations, he avoided corporate witness and activity with those who were not of like faith”.⁴ The need for more precise definition appears, for example, from the fact that the liberal English churchman, David L Edwards, in *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*, co-authored with John Stott in 1988, could write: “But in common with many ‘liberal’ and ‘Catholic’ Christians, I should also like to be treated as an Evangelical, if by ‘Evangelical’ is meant one who believes the gospel revealed in the Bible”.⁵

Various attempts have been made to supply this more precise definition.

²*The Gagging of God*, p 444.

³*Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, pp 21,38.

⁴*The Unresolved Controversy*.

⁵P 6.

David Bebbington uses the word as descriptive of those “dedicated to spreading the gospel”. He acknowledges that Evangelicalism has changed greatly over time but claims that “there are common features that have lasted from the first half of the eighteenth century to the second half of the twentieth. It is this continuing set of characteristics that reveals the existence of an Evangelical tradition. . . . There are the four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism”⁶

John Brencher, in *Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism*, states that “evangelical identity is not monolithic. Among post-Keele Anglicans [that is, since 1967], for example, Evangelicals have become more diverse and exploratory, and among non-Anglican Evangelicals some have been content to defend the old battle-lines while others are more liberal and yielding. So there is a variety and development within Evangelicalism which raises a problem of definition.”⁷ Brencher concentrates his study on the “form of Evangelicalism” defined in “the Doctrinal Basis of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) as expressed in *Evangelical Belief*. . . . Its main features emphasise the core of evangelicalism: the infallibility and authority of Scripture, the universal sinfulness of man, and redemption through personal faith in Christ”.

B B Warfield claimed that “when we say Evangelicalism we say sin and salvation. Evangelicalism is a soteriological conception, it implies sin, and salvation from sin. . . . It means utter dependence on God for salvation.”⁸ Iain Murray considers that what identifies an Evangelical is the Biblical nature of his answer to the question, What is a Christian?⁹ Common to the definitions given of the traditional Evangelical is the idea that, as D M Lloyd-Jones put it, he “starts with the Bible” and is “entirely subservient to the Bible”,¹⁰ and that he focuses on the sinner’s need of salvation and on God’s gracious provision of salvation through the death of His Son and the work of His Spirit.

Looking at **Evangelicalism as it has developed to the present day**, we note that it has become comprehensive of elements which earlier Evangelicals

⁶*Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 1,2f.

⁷P 3.

⁸*Calvin and Augustine*, p 499.

⁹*Evangelicalism Divided*, eg pp 149,294,299.

¹⁰*Knowing the Times*, pp 317,322.

would have repudiated. Men and denominations are regarded as Evangelical even although they have *entered into co-operation with liberals in an academic approach to Scripture and the acceptance of higher critical views of Scripture*. A T B McGowan acknowledges in a recent article¹¹ that “it is no longer even possible to take it for granted that those who call themselves ‘Evangelical’ or ‘Reformed’ will hold to the same position on Scripture that was held by those who were described in this way even 40 years ago and this should give us real cause for concern”.

Iain Murray in *Evangelicalism Divided* suggests that “Evangelicals noticed how the neo-orthodox Karl Barth gained credit by recognising the full ‘humanity’ of Scripture and they believed that they could do the same without any compromise. Belief in the full inspiration of the Bible requires no weakening of the fact that God spoke through men. There need be no contradiction between the supernatural element and the human authorship. So evangelical scholars believed that they could compete with colleagues in researching the language, the motivation, the education and the cultural background of the biblical writers, without conceding the presuppositions which lay behind liberal scholarship. . . . Applying this to the academic level, Evangelicals would work with liberals on the human aspects, using the same critical tools, while retaining their own overall position. The immense cleavage of opinion could be by-passed, yet with the ultimate intention of making the other side sit up and rethink the credibility of the conservative position.”¹²

Mr Murray quotes Carl R Trueman, then of Aberdeen University, writing in *Evangelicals Now* in February 1998: “One need only look at many of the works emerging from contemporary evangelical scholars to find that the notion of scriptural authority as understood in any of its classical, orthodox ways has in general been replaced either by the concepts of neo-orthodoxy or simply by silence on the most prickly issues”(p. 187). Alister McGrath, whom many regard as a foremost Evangelical writer, is quoted as saying “that when the teachers of old Princeton Seminary thought they were upholding an inerrant Bible they were in reality falling into rationalism”.¹³ Mr Murray cites three prominent Evangelical spokesmen, Noll, Bebbington and McGrath, commending “the greater academic or ecumenical freedom which is permissible where there is no insistence on verbal inspiration”.¹⁴

Twenty years ago, in *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, Francis Schaeffer

¹¹*Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, vol 21, no 2, p 199.

¹²Pp 179,180.

¹³*Evangelicalism Divided*, pp 195,196.

¹⁴P 198.

put at the head of his strictures on the Evangelical church's failure "to stand for truth as truth": "There has been accommodation on Scripture, so that many who call themselves Evangelicals hold a weakened view of the Bible and no longer affirm the truth of all the Bible teaches – truth not only in religious matters but in the areas of science and history and morality. As part of this, many Evangelicals are now accepting the higher critical methods in the study of the Bible. . . . Within Evangelicalism there are a growing number who are modifying their views on the inerrancy of the Bible so that the full authority of Scripture is completely undercut." These names are mentioned not to endorse all that they write but because they are among some of the more prominent whom Evangelicals recognised as Evangelical.

This modification of views on Scripture has been closely connected with the proliferation of versions of the Bible which are characterised by faulty views of the original text and faulty principles of translation. It remains to be seen whether the trend will be halted, reversed or unwittingly promoted by Dr McGowan's recently-published proposals for "Reconstructing the Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture" by "recasting some vocabulary" – by replacing "inspiration" with "divine spiration", "inerrancy" with "veracity", and "illumination" with "recognition" and "comprehension".

What we have seen in recent decades is but a repetition of the process which destroyed the nineteenth-century Free Church of Scotland and resulted in the wholesale degeneracy of Scottish Presbyterianism throughout the twentieth century. This point will be resumed in the next article.

Book Review

A Treatise of Christian Love, by Hugh Binning, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 106 pages, £3.75, available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

Binning begins by showing how sin has substituted self-love for "the law of love, the principal fundamental law of our creation – love to God, founded on our essential dependence on God and subordination to Him; and love to man, grounded upon that communion and interest in one image of God". Jesus Christ by His redemptive work has restored and made more glorious what sin destroyed. "The bond of creation was great, but the tie of redemption is greater," so that what was an old commandment is really new.

He sees the excellence of Christian love in that God is its pattern, and Christ its rare example for our imitation. He writes of the motive we have for love, the command of our Lord that we love and the way that love "is the sweet result of the united force of all graces" and "should be the moderator

of all our actions toward men". He then provides a brief but telling exposition of Paul's commendation of charity in 1 Corinthians 13.

After further discussion of the motives to Christian love – the love of God in Christ, our own unworthiness of being loved and yet desire for it, the objects to be loved considered in their relation to God, and the excellent nature of this grace – Binning turns his attention to Christian love in practice. He particularly illustrates the truth that "in relation to comfortable fellowship one with another in this world, this is above all, and the crown or cream of other graces". In closing, he develops the theme that "humility is the root of charity, and meekness the fruit of both," in the course of which he exposes the evil nature and consequences of pride and discusses how it may be humbled.

The publishers have appended three sermons on Romans 8:14,15, taken from Binning's *The Sinner's Sanctuary*. These concentrate on the privilege of adoption and the related privilege of fervent, reverent and confident prayer, of which the Spirit of adoption is "the chief principle". His concern is to help the Lord's people to enter into greater enjoyment of the fact that "the life of Christianity, taken in itself, is the most pleasant and joyful life that can be, exempted from those fears and cares, those sorrows and anxieties, that all other lives are subject to". He wishes to "vindicate Christianity itself, and not impute these things to it which are the infirmities and faults of its followers, who do not make the use of it that they should, and of which it is itself capable". Many will find this last section at least as helpful as the first.

Hugh Binning was an Ayrshire man who went through deep spiritual exercises in boyhood, graduated at 19 and died of consumption at 26 in 1653. He was briefly Professor of Philosophy in Glasgow and almost equally briefly minister of Govan. There were giants in the pulpits of his day, such as Blair, Dickson, Durham and Rutherford.

Binning was a scholar of the first rank whose preaching was warmly evangelical. He adopted a simpler form of preaching than was then common and Durham said that there was no speaking after him. James Hamilton says that he "laid his fine philosophy and precocious scholarship and classic taste at the feet of Jesus". On the conservative side in the Church disputes of the day, he took seriously the blessedness of the peacemakers, as this little volume illustrates. He greatly impressed Cromwell in debate with the Independents, so that he confessed that his only answer was his sword. On his deathbed he said that "to a dying man one line of the Bible is worth more than all human learning". A memorial stone, inscribed with words of Patrick Gillespie, included the statement that, when Binning died, "he changed his country but

not his company, because when on earth he walked with God". We welcome this introduction to Binning and would like to see more by and about him in print.

(Rev) H M Cartwright

Protestant View

President Bush's Audience with the Pope

One would think that recent events would have caused President Bush to think twice before visiting the Pope. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Roman Catholic priests in America have been exposed as sodomites and paedophiles, and this has led, in turn, to the resignation of a prominent Cardinal. The Pope is the head of the very system which bred such iniquitous men and gave them scope to live for so long in the practice of these unnatural and abominable sins. But not only did the President visit him, he bestowed on him the Presidential Medal of Freedom! This honour was conferred on the Pope, we are told, for "years of fighting for freedom and for his important moral voice."

In the light of the history of the so-called "Holy See", we find these words hollow and totally inappropriate, but they resonate with the President's own obsequious remarks when presenting the medal. Strong indeed is the delusion when such deference is paid to "the man of sin and son of perdition" by the head of the most powerful state on earth! Papal words and actions clearly indicate that the "Holy See" regards itself as being even more powerful. The Pope still claims to be Christ's vicar on earth, and this embraces – even if it is not proclaimed in banner headlines – absolute sovereignty and the right to exercise temporal, as well as spiritual, authority over all nations. We get more than a whiff of this when the Pope refers to "the continuing situation of grave unrest in the Middle East" and informs the President: "You are very familiar with the unequivocal position of the Holy See in this regard, expressed in numerous documents, through direct and indirect contacts, and in the many diplomatic efforts which have been made since you visited me. . . . It is the evident desire of everyone that this situation now be normalised as quickly as possible with the active participation of the international community and, in particular, the United Nations Organisation, in order to ensure a speedy return of Iraq's sovereignty."

Is it merely coincidental that the United Nations has now unanimously adopted a resolution which seems to meet the Pope's demands? This is what the head of the Vatican state, 104 acres in area – a mere dot on the map of

the Italian peninsula – said to the President of the United States of America: “Our thoughts also turn today to the 20 years in which the Holy See and the United States have enjoyed formal diplomatic relations, established in 1984 under President Reagan. These relations have promoted mutual understanding on great issues of common interest and practical co-operation in different areas. I send my regards to President Reagan.” In the Lord’s inscrutable providence, President Reagan was summoned to the eternal world while President Bush was still in Europe and the papal regards were never to reach him while still in time.

Why, we ask, do politicians feel it so important to curry the favour of the Pope? The answer is obvious. It has to do with votes. President Bush has an election looming, and his opponent is a professing Roman Catholic, while he – outwardly at least – is not. It is reported that President Bush was so eager for a meeting with Pope John Paul II that he flew overnight to Rome to cram in a visit before the pontiff – who said he couldn’t rearrange his schedule – left town the next day. Bush did this although it was anticipated that he would be greeted by “thousands of angry anti-war protesters and maybe get his knuckles rapped by the Pope over the war in Iraq”. That indeed was, more or less, the outcome.

The same report continues: “[Roman] Catholics are the key’, says Deal Hudson, editor of *Crisis* magazine and a Bush campaign adviser. ‘If we lose any of the Catholic vote, we’ll lose the election.’ And to an unprecedented degree, the White House and a network of conservative Catholics have been working hard to get several million American Catholics to vote Republican.”

The Pope is reported to have uttered the words, ‘God bless America’, when he received the Presidential Medal of Honour. It remains to be seen what the consequences of this will be for the United States, but we know from the Bible and from numerous historical sources that the “blessing” of this usurper of Christ’s kingly prerogatives cannot possibly profit the individual or state upon which it is bestowed. The mind of the Lord is clearly revealed: “Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.” JM

Notes and Comments

Going Beyond Abortion?

A Government adviser on genetics has pointed in the direction of extending current abortion practice by suggesting it might be acceptable to destroy children with “defects” soon after they are born. Professor John Harris, who

holds a chair in bioethics at Manchester University and is a member of the Human Genetics Commission, has said that he does not see any distinction between aborting a fully-grown unborn baby at 40 weeks and killing a child after it had been born. He was reported also to have said that he did not believe that killing a child was always inexcusable. He would not, however, explain which defects or problems might be grounds for ending a baby's life, or how old a child might and yet be destroyed.

The views of Professor Harris are appalling, yet he is right in failing to see a moral distinction between killing an unborn child and one who has begun an independent existence. The fact is that abortion is wrong, except in the relatively few cases where the life of the mother is at risk. Sadly, most people have no objection to taking away the life of an unborn child. It is tragic that the medical profession is so heavily involved in this barbaric practice. One moment doctors may be performing heroics to save the life of a vulnerable child who is wanted by its parents, which is altogether admirable, and the next moment they may be taking away the life of an unborn child who, sadly, is unwanted.

To kill a baby, however young, is wrong; it is murder. Thankfully, one imagines that most people would agree, even in this generation which is drifting so rapidly away from God's standard for human behaviour. And most people will accept that to kill a baby, however handicapped, is murder. But it should be equally obvious that to kill an *unborn* child also is murder. What a difference it would make to society in Britain and elsewhere if there was a proper regard to the authority of God's law!

Buddhism

A recent addition to the representatives of false religion invited to address the Scottish Parliament was the Dalai Lama – leader of the Tibetan brand of Buddhism and winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. Buddhism is often presented popularly as a way to reduce stress by the practice of “meditation”. Some are attracted to it by the notion that it does not require commitment to a code of beliefs and is a way of making people good to themselves and to others, thus promoting peace internally and in human relations. During the past 25 years or so, the number of registered Buddhists in Scotland has risen to over 6500.

Buddhism emerged from Brahminism, the highest of the Hindu castes, in the sixth century BC. Its aim is to escape from suffering by eliminating desire, which is seen as the cause of suffering, and eventually to escape from individual existence and secure “Nirvana” – non-identity, or incorporation in “the universal life” or “ultimate principle” as “the dewdrop slips into the

shining sea”. One is repeatedly reincarnated until one is granted this outcome through meditation and endeavours to conform to the ethical demands of Buddha. The Buddhism of Tibet developed an extensive monastic and ritualistic organisation, with the Dalai Lama at its head, a supposed reincarnation of the Buddha. It also incorporated elements of animism, denying that any object is lifeless. Classical Buddhism is atheistic but frequently the images and relics of Buddha and others significant in Buddhist mythology are worshipped, as one would expect from Romans 1:18ff.

Buddhism is no harmless eccentricity. It is one of the most pervasive expressions of the state of mind described in Psalm 14:1: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”. It cannot be countenanced without repudiating in its entirety the revelation which God has given in His Word. It is based on the denial of the truth concerning such fundamental matters as God, human personality and accountability, sin as transgression of God’s law, salvation through the atonement wrought by Christ and the regenerating grace of God the Holy Spirit, and eternal self-conscious existence in either heaven or hell. It is not a solution to the problems of humanity but a means of closing minds to the true nature of the human predicament and to the remedy provided in the gospel.

It is sad beyond words that such delusions should take hold of so many in this land which was once so enlightened and, in particular, that they should have bases in those Border areas where people once lived and suffered and died to preserve the pure gospel of the grace of God. The reception of a Buddhist leader to lead the Scottish Parliament in reflecting upon religious matters is yet further evidence of how utterly given over our parliamentarians are to spiritual darkness, having practically cut themselves adrift from the Biblical basis of true religion and morality and government. We can only look to the Lord: “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Is 60:2,3). *HMC*

“Man Is Good”

On a wall surrounding the memorial at the burial place of the late President Reagan some words of his are inscribed: “I have in my heart that man is good. That what is right will always eventually triumph. And there’s purpose and worth in each and every life.”

It is a fundamental tenet of multitudes who profess the Christian faith that man is basically good, although it flies in the face of the facts and deprives the Christian revelation of its meaning. God’s dealings with His people – and

their dealings with Him – proceed on the basis that “there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10-12). The fact that man is not good accounts for the existence of the magistracy, of which Mr Reagan was the chief representative in the USA (Rom 13). More significantly, it is this alone that gives meaning to grace, redemption and regeneration, the great distinctives without which Christianity degenerates into a moral code which cannot change man’s character or rectify his relation with God. As long as man thinks that he is good he will have no appreciation of the meaning of Christianity and no sense of his real need of Christ.

The sad fact is that sin has deprived human life of the purpose which gives it genuine worth, “for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever” (*Shorter Catechism*, answer 1), and only grace can restore him to this purpose. But we do believe, with Mr Reagan, that what is right will always eventually triumph – though in many cases wrongs will be put right only at the judgement seat of Christ, and many will learn there for the first time what is right.

HMC

Ecumenism in Edinburgh

In view of the fact that the Associated Presbyterian Churches claim to be the true Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland under another name, we think it in order to point out just how absurd this claim is. In Edinburgh, for instance, the following intimations appear on the APC notice board:

“Catch the Wave International Night in the Usher Hall on 12th June with the Doulos Crew and the Exile Band.”

“Joint Morning Service with Viewforth Church of Scotland on the 13th June. We then join them and Barclay Church of Scotland for a BBQ after the service at Vogrie Country Park. (That means that there will *not* be a Morning service in the APC congregation.) We hope to have an evening service at the usual time.”

Does anyone seriously believe that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland would engage in such ecumenical services and activities on any day of the week, far less on the Lord’s Day? Sadly, the APC minister, who seems to think that these activities are honouring to God and will further the cause of Christ, continues to occupy the Edinburgh manse without permission, and in spite of the fact that the title deeds plainly show that the property belongs to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. How he, or the Church to which he belongs, can justify this is quite simply beyond our understanding. JM

Church Information

Synod Resolution

The Southern Presbytery, at their meeting on 9 June 2004, licensed Mr J Bruce Jardine to preach the gospel within the bounds of the Presbytery and wherever his lot may be cast in the course of God's providence. Mr Jardine is therefore available for a call. The Presbytery wish the newly-licensed probationer God's blessing and guidance.

(Rev) H M Cartwright, Presbytery Clerk

Synod Resolution

The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland met in Glasgow on Wednesday, 19 May 2004, would like to draw the attention of its people to the grave danger to the life and morals, particularly of our young people, which the present character of the internet poses. It is possible for any person using the internet to access degrading and dangerous material. Though the internet has many benefits, the Synod resolves to urge its people to be aware of the serious risks it poses.

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library Fund: Anon, USA, \$700; Anon, USA, \$110.

Eastern Europe Fund: Anon, for Ukraine congregation, £250.

Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund: Anon, USA, for Kenya Mission, \$190; Anon, USA, for Kenya Mission, \$190.

Legacy Reserve Fund: The estate of the late Miss Annie MacAskill, Clydebank & Aultbea, £9000 per Messrs Middleton, Ross & Arnott, Solicitors.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Barnoldswick: *Sustentation Fund:* A Friend, £5.

Bracadale: *Congregational Funds:* Mrs L MacKinnon, Broadford, £40 per Rev JRT.

Glasgow: *Broadstairs:* Anon, £30; Anon, £60. *Bus Fund:* Anon, £30; Mrs Kennethina MacLennan's executry, £500. *Eastern Europe Fund:* £30, £40, £20, £20, £20, £30, £30, £20, £20, £15, £20, all anon. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, for African Mission Relief, £20; Anon, for Kenya & Zimbabwe Missions, £100; Anon, for Kenya Mission, £20.

Greenock: *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, for Zimbabwe Mission, £40. *TBS:* Anon, £40; Anon, £40.

Inverness: *Door Collection:* £30. *Sustentation Fund:* £5, £5, £60, £5, £5, all anon.

London: *Broadstairs Property Fund:* Harris Friend, £10.

Ness: *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £10 per MF.

North Harris: *Congregational Funds:* The estate of the late Mrs K MacDonald, Glasgow, per Drummond Miller Solicitors, £500 for Stockinish church, £500 for Tarbert church.

North Tolsta: *Communion Expenses:* Friend of the Cause, Stornoway, £20; Anon, for manse & communion expenses, £200. *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £50 per DMK; Anon, North Uist, £20 per Rev DC; Anon, "In memory of beloved parents", £20; Anon, "Where most needed", £100; Ian & Peggy MacPherson, Oban, £50 per DMK. *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £20; Anon, £20; Anon, £20.

Stornoway: *Broadstairs:* Anon, £10. *Congregational Funds:* The estate of the late Mrs Peggy Masters, £2000. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £10. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, for Kenya Poor Relief, £10; Anon, £100. *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £240.