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The Legacy of the Sixties

British prime minister Tony Blair has announced the end of what he is calling “the 1960s liberal consensus” on law and order. No wonder! Crime figures are still rising, up by 1% over the past year in England and Wales according to police figures, while violent crimes soared by 12% – although the results of the British Crime Survey show a drop of 5% for general crime. At the same time, the fear of crime has become a big political issue. Yet Mr Blair’s rejection of the legacy of the sixties seems to be strictly limited. There is no evidence that he wishes to turn the clock back on issues such as abortion, which was legalised during that decade. (Indeed the most recent Government guidelines confirm that parents need not be told when under-16s request an abortion.) It was a time when, perhaps more than at any other in this country’s history, our Christian heritage was determinedly jettisoned. Yes, there have been major departures since then, but the departures of the sixties laid the foundation for those that followed.

Now Mr Blair and his ministerial team have at last recognised that the more liberal attitude to crime fostered during the sixties – with its emphasis on offenders’ rights and preventing miscarriages of justice – has not worked. Yet the focus is on crime as public nuisance; there is no concern about crime as sin, no concern about crimes as offences *against God*. In fact, life since the sixties can be seen as one prolonged experiment in trying to exist without God. No contemporary politicians in the UK, with the exception of a few from Northern Ireland, could conceivably allow themselves to be seen taking the Bible as their authority in reacting to proposed legislation. God is ignored, and people wonder at the consequences when God leaves us to reap what we have sown – in the area of crime as much as in any other.

The American writer Ravi Zacharias has noted: “Of the 21 civilisations that [twentieth-century historian Arnold] Toynbee mentioned in his history, ours is the first that does not enjoin a moral law or educate our young in moral instruction”.¹ This statement arises particularly out of the situation on the other side of the Atlantic, but it is almost equally relevant in Britain.

¹*A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism*, p 49.

Here politicians get worked up about increasing rates of teenage pregnancy and the burgeoning incidence of sexually transmitted diseases; they turn to education as the remedy; but what is to be taught? The Seventh Commandment? That would be to transgress the sixties morality, which has been summarised as “personal freedom and self-fulfilment – doing one’s own thing”. It is a generation when the philosophy of doing what is right in one’s own eyes has acquired almost universal legitimacy. And the result? The problem of teenage promiscuity gets worse and worse – although concern is only expressed about the *consequences* of that promiscuity. In any case, one need not be surprised that the Seventh Commandment is neglected in today’s schools when many who should be teaching morals are themselves guilty of immorality and could not be comfortable putting forward a code of conduct which they do not themselves keep to.

Mr Blair reasonably enough criticises “a society of different lifestyles [which has] spawned a group of young people who were brought up without parental discipline, without proper role models and without any sense of responsibility to or for others”. But why is this so? No doubt, the economic and social changes of the sixties, which the Prime Minister points to, had a great deal of influence; yet behind it all lies the fact that during the sixties – as well as in the decades before then, and since – people generally have been losing their sense of the authority of God. Our responsibility to and for others will only be exercised in a consistent way if we have a strong sense that we are ultimately responsible to God in all that we do. And there is a further factor: we must all, including those who have unthinkingly accepted the legacy of the sixties, appear at last before the judgement seat of Christ to receive, unless we repent, the consequences of our sins. And those are particularly guilty who were foremost in promoting the liberal, God-rejecting attitudes of the sixties.

“Here, now, today, people have had enough of this part of the 1960s consensus,” adds the Prime Minister. But it is irresponsible for him to try to isolate this one aspect of the 1960s consensus and try to hold on to the larger part of it. If only he and other government ministers would see that Britain’s problems today are due to the fact that the nation is adrift on a sea of godlessness and irreligion, the situation would be more hopeful. Some years ago, he promoted his party with the slogan: “Tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime”. And what is the ultimate cause of crime? The fact of the fall of the whole human race in Adam. Obviously, not every fallen human being leads a life of crime. And we should acknowledge God’s restraining grace in preventing sinners from being worse than they are. But it is out of the heart, as the Saviour made plain, that every sin comes – including crime of

every kind. And, ultimately, it is only by curing the individual's fallen heart that criminality can be cured.

Clearly no government can be expected to cure human corruption. And no one would wish to belittle the government's plans to ameliorate the situation, plans which include a clampdown on anti-social behaviour and the use of satellite technology to track the country's most persistent criminals. Yet government ministers should set an example to the nation by acknowledging God in all that they do, especially by moulding their legislation by the teaching of Scripture.

But there is a remedy which they, and the vast majority of opinion-formers in the country, are unanimous in ignoring: the power of Scripture truth, when applied by the Holy Spirit, to change the human heart. And where there is a change of heart, there is a turning away from outward sin. What cured Zacchaeus' tendency to take money "by false accusation"? It was the saving power that went along with Christ's call to him. So also, when the Lord brought His truth to bear on the heart of Manasseh in Babylon, there was no longer any danger of the streets of Jerusalem running red with the blood of the saints. The heart of that perpetrator of monstrous wickedness was changed, and the lion was at once changed into a lamb. That same saving power, which accompanies the call of Christ in the gospel, has the same effect today. And when, in times of revival, many hearts have been changed, the crime rate has dwindled away to almost zero. So it is clearly in the interest of governments everywhere to encourage the preaching of the pure gospel, for that gospel is, as Paul expressed it, "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth".

Britain once prized a different legacy from that of the sixties, one that flowed from the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Had this country – and the Protestant churches in particular – continued to prize our Reformation legacy, those who promoted the ideas of the 1960s would never have acquired any influence. What this nation needs is not a return to, say, the standards of the 1950s, although it would certainly lead to reduced crime levels; what we need is a return to the Bible and to the standards of the Bible. This country – and it is just as true of other nations – needs the pure gospel to be preached everywhere. But how can that be unless the great God of heaven will grant us preachers taught and called by Himself? And how can their preaching be profitable unless He will pour out His Spirit in abundant measure? How necessary then, although such wonderful blessings are completely undeserved, for the people of God to pray for them! "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13).

Is the Spirit Straitened? (1)¹

A Sermon by A L R Foote

Micah 2:7. *O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?*

Considerable obscurity hangs over the original application of this passage, yet the general application is quite obvious. We are to consider God as expostulating with His Church as to why she is in a low and languishing state. He is vindicating Himself from all share of blame in the matter. He is showing them that the blame lies with His professing people themselves, in *their want of faith and prayer*. It is their unbelief that mars all; this is the radical evil. It keeps them away from the free and full provision of spiritual blessings in the new covenant, which are urged upon their acceptance. This straitens, shuts up, imprisons their spirits, so that their desires do not flow forth with any enlargement after communion with God.

It is not the Spirit of the Lord that is straitened, as they may hastily conclude, for men are ever ready to find excuses for their sin, even at the expense of God's character. There *is* a straitening, but it is all on their part. And they must be brought to feel this so that they may acknowledge both their sin in not having adequately valued the Spirit, and His justice in not having visited them with so large a share of His influence. They are also to be stirred up to the exercise of that faith and prayer in answer to which alone we may look for the fulfilment of any of the promises.

1. The question in the text, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" implies that *He is not straitened in the sense which our unbelief would suggest*.

(1.) The Spirit is not straitened in *His own inherent sufficiency*. All grace, wisdom, might and faithfulness are in Him. He is an infinite Spirit. He cannot therefore be straitened, limited, confined as the creature is. The creature – every creature, however high and noble – is finite; that is, has bounds set to it. The creature is limited, in respect of the *space* he occupies, but the Spirit is omnipresent. We cannot go where He is not. "Whither", asks the Psalmist, "shall I go from Thy Spirit?" The creature is limited as to *duration*. All things had a beginning, but the Spirit had none. He is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting. Says Paul to the Hebrews: Christ, "through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God". The creature is limited as to *knowledge*, but the "Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God". The creature is limited as to *power*; not so the Spirit. The word of creation is attributed to Him, and He who made all things must be omnipotent.

¹Reprinted, with slight editing, from *The Free Church Pulpit*, vol 1. Foote (1805-1878) was for over 30 years minister in Brechin, latterly in the Free West Church.

“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” “By His Spirit He garnished the heavens.” “Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the earth.” The creature is limited as to *moral excellence*, but the Spirit is distinctively and supereminently the “Spirit of holiness”, having all holiness in Himself and being the author of all holiness in those beings who are in any degree characterised by it.

(2.) The Spirit is not straitened as to *the Saviour’s purchase of Him for the Church*. As the Head of His Church, Christ is its source of spiritual influence. In Him, for the use of His Church, the Spirit dwells in immeasurable degree. For the Father “giveth not the Spirit by measure unto” His Son. It has thus pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell. And the conclusion is clear: Out of His fulness we may all receive, even grace upon grace. It was no scanty supply of the Spirit that Christ ensured for His Church. There is no risk of soon draining this fountain dry. Believe it, it is inexhaustible. Hither you may come and drink of the water of life as largely as your finite capacities will admit of and yet leave it undiminished.

Mark well, for it is important, the encouragement afforded us by the death of Christ to expect free and full communications of the Holy Spirit. Had Christ not died, the Spirit could in no degree – not even the smallest – have been sent forth to enlighten and sanctify and save, for the justice of God, unpropitiated and unappeased, would have stood immovably in the way of this. But now that Christ has died and justice is satisfied and every obstacle on God’s part has been removed, what now hinders the Spirit from being shed forth through Christ, not grudgingly and sparingly but cheerfully and abundantly? It is now not merely consistent with God’s character that the Spirit may be obtained; the glory of His character requires that what Christ died for be accomplished – that what He purchased be bestowed. To imagine that Christ has obtained by His death only a small measure of spiritual influence for the Church is virtually to detract from the merit and efficacy of His death. To go to God with doubting, confused, straitened desires for the Spirit is virtually to deny that the Spirit is the purchase of Christ for His Church, and to insinuate that something yet remains to be done to entitle us to receive Him, at least so fully as we need.

(3.) The Spirit is not straitened in respect of *the offer of Christ in the gospel*. [1.] He is offered *universally*. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39). There is no

individual – however far gone he may be in sin, however long he may have resisted, vexed and grieved the Spirit – to whom He is not offered, who is not pressed in all earnestness and sincerity to accept Him, who is not as welcome to this gift of God as he is to the common gifts of His bounty, of which he is daily availing himself (Prov 1:20-23). Let no one then say, I need entertain no hope of receiving the Spirit, for the offer of Him is no longer addressed to me, because I have sinned beyond the reach of its application. Do you not perceive that even scorners – they who are justly considered to have reached the highest point of impiety – are included in this gracious invitation and promise: “Turn you at My reproof; behold I will pour My Spirit upon you”?

[2.] The Spirit is offered *freely*. Hear His own voice: “The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). No high price – no price at all – is set upon Him. The only question is: Will you take Him? He is offered as the dearly-won purchase of the Saviour’s death, and you have only to ask Him as a child asks bread of His parent. You have only to pray for Him and He will be given you. You have only, in a word, to believe the promise – the free, faithful promise – and it will be fulfilled in your experience (Acts 2:38,39).

[3.] The Spirit is offered *largely*. Point out, if you can, a single passage of Scripture where the believer is limited, is stinted, in his application to a throne of grace. You cannot do it. On the contrary, the authority, the warrant given him, is unlimited: “If ye ask *any thing* in My name, I will do it”. “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask *what ye will*, and it shall be done unto you.” And when the Spirit is spoken of as being given, it is in such language as leads us to *expect much*; for it is a principle in God’s administration, never departed from, that it shall be unto us according to *our* faith: “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground”. God promises, you observe, to pour forth the Spirit upon His Church like a flowing, fertilizing stream – like a mighty rolling flood. He is promised, not in drops few and far between, but in showers of abundance: “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth”. You see then that the risk is not of exceeding – of going too far – in our requests and expectations, but of falling far short of what Scripture warrants, and indeed requires of us.

2. The question, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” implies that *He is often straitened or diminished in His actual communications to the Church*. Though the Spirit is not, and cannot be, straitened or diminished as to what He is in Himself – though the supply of spiritual influence in Christ, our living and

life-giving Head, is always the same; though the language of Scripture never ceases to hold out the same encouragement to come at all times and partake abundantly of it – still it is a matter of fact that the presence and power of the Spirit are not enjoyed by the Church at some periods so much as at others. How this is to be explained, we shall show by and by. In the meantime, let us dwell a little upon the fact. We say it is a *fact* – it is a matter of observation. We have only to examine the history of the Church to discover a fact that stands out most prominently: that it has not always been characterized by the same degree of vital spiritual religion. And let us attend to some of the characteristics of a church from which the Spirit has withdrawn much of His presence and power.

(1.) In such a church, the truth will not generally be preached with evangelical purity, faithfulness, unction and power. In the pulpit, those doctrines will be denied or darkened and kept out of view which, in the experience of all true Christians, contain the lifeblood of the gospel, and in their room will be taught a cold, heartless system of moral duties and of natural religion which has no power to benefit or to interest either those who preach it or those who hear it.

(2.) In such a church there will be a general departure from the simple and scriptural principles of government and discipline on which it is founded, and for which, in earlier and better days, many of its ministers and people contended even to the death.

(3.) In such a church there will be a sad lack of zeal in propagating religion and extending the means of grace, so as either to meet the growing necessities of those at home or to convert and christianise the heathen abroad. The missionary spirit – the true test of piety among a people, the true test of Christian faith and love and zeal – will be all but extinct.

(4.) In such a church there will be few conversions. The vast mass of the people will live without God – some of them in mere formality, others in open and gross iniquity.

(5.) In such a church, even the people of God will not have so high a tone of spirituality as they ought. For when “iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”.

In such a church, in short, there will be little personal piety and family prayer but, on the contrary, much worldliness, much ungodliness, much hostility to anything like zealous Christianity. Such will be the condition of a church from which the Spirit has withdrawn much of His presence and power. In the same proportion as He departs, spirituality will decay and carnality increase. How can it be otherwise? Where the cause is missing, how can we look for the effect? We know that when the sun leaves our part of the

globe, cold and darkness succeed; and we conclude that the sun has set when we no longer see and feel its enlightening and warming rays. It is even thus with the Spirit, the life and light of the Church.

And what should we learn from this but our entire dependence upon this blessed agent? Never let us forget that He is the author of all religion, of all spiritual life in the soul. Never let us forget, that a church can be no true church of Christ without Him. In all our attempts to revive and reform a church, let us feel our dependence upon Him. It is possible to conceive of a church perfectly scriptural, rigidly and minutely apostolical in its whole framework, and yet something more than even this is necessary to ensure its purity and efficiency as an instrument in advancing the cause of Christ and the salvation of men's souls. There must be the breath of the divine Spirit in the framework. The machinery may be good in itself, but what of that if it is not set in motion and kept in motion by a higher hand. The Spirit of the Lord must dwell in it and put life into it and give it effect, else it will be, as to all the purposes for which a church is designed, a dead, inert mass.

From all this, we repeat, let us learn our dependence – our entire dependence – upon the Holy Spirit. We see that He departs more or less from churches at different periods, and then they fall into sad decays. A downward progress commences, which all human efforts are unable to arrest. All the barriers which were placed in defence of the truth are then utterly disregarded. The flood of error and irreligion sweeps over them. Any little life remaining among them is altogether owing to their not being as yet abandoned – utterly abandoned – by the Spirit of the Lord. And this remaining leaven is a reasonable proof that they will be revived when God's set time to visit them has come. The little leaven not only keeps them from universal corruption but will yet leaven the whole lump. "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten; as a teil tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

The saints themselves have their wounds; yea, wounds many times that stink and are corrupt. Indeed they are apt to get fresh wounds every day – wounds in their grace and wounds in their peace, wounds in their comforts and wounds in their consciences, wounds that smart sorely and which, many times, bleed as if they should bleed to death of them. Well, but Christ heals all their wounds; and do but close with Him in a marriage covenant and He will heal all yours too, whoever you are.

Says Christ, "The world is your enemy, but it is a conquered enemy. It will molest and oppose you, but it shall not be able to hurt you, for I have conquered it for you." And, as He has conquered it for us, He will enable us, closing with Him by faith, to conquer it.

Edward Pearce

The Great Deceiver¹

Gardiner Spring

There is a great deceiver who is not only permitted to have the power of seduction, but is long practised in its arts. We are not “ignorant of his devices”. He knows where and when the people of God are most vulnerable. There is no dark chamber in the understanding, no unguarded outpost in the conscience, no defective spot in the heart, which he does not have his eye upon and to which he is not fertile in expedients to find access.

He sports with the understanding and would fain tempt to the belief that there is no religion revealed from heaven, no hereafter, no God. He sports with the conscience and would fain tempt to the belief that sin is a little matter, that the threatenings of God are unduly severe, that nothing is jeopardised by a single deviation from duty, that others have sinned and found mercy, and that there can be no great peril in sinning if such transgressors as Noah and Lot, David and Solomon, Peter and the thief on the cross were pardoned offenders. He sports with the imagination, painting in gaudy colours the delights of the ambitious in the hope of elevation, of the avaricious in their anticipations of wealth, of the unclean in the revellings of their impurity. He sports with the heart, adapting his seductions to every age, every constitutional infirmity, every condition and need, every employment and relation in life, every hope and fear, every opinion and prejudice, every exposure, every season of rashness, and every former sin. There is no form of sinning which he fails to exhibit in its most alluring attractions: “It is fruit greatly to be desired and pleasant to the eye; the deed is soon forgotten, and never detected; it is the best, if not the only, means of making expectations into realities to which years of otherwise fruitless toil have been devoted”.

There are three things, among others, which strongly mark the temptations of this crafty adversary. One is the untiring patience by which he would persuade men to hearken to his suggestions, the indomitable perseverance by which he employs himself with their thoughts by day and by night, pursuing and worrying, hunting and dogging his victims year after year until he has planted his barbed arrow so deep that they despair of escaping his fury. The second, inconsistent as it may be, is the suddenness of his assaults, the unexpected fury of his onsets, giving his victims no time to deliberate, entering into no discussions with them, but summoning all his artifice and energy to carry them by surprise. And the third is to keep himself out of sight, to hide

¹An extract, slightly edited, from *The Mercy Seat, thoughts suggested by the Lord's prayer*. This volume is available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom for £16.95. Spring (1785-1872) was for over 60 years minister of a Presbyterian church in New York.

himself from observation, from suspicion even, until the “bird is taken in the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life”.

Such are some of the more ordinary exposures to sin contemplated by the request, “Lead us not into temptation”. The world, the flesh and the devil, these three mighty kingdoms, in all the strength and subtlety of their unhallowed alliance, are ever and anon directing their assaults against the men of prayer, against all men, and with an unweariedness and success that are surpassed only by Him whose eyes never slumber and who is stronger than the strong man in his armour.

Here then we may discover what a Christian prays for when he says, “Lead us not into temptation”. He would be delivered from the severity of this conflict; and, if he may not be free from it, he asks that he may be supported. “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice”, said Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “that it might depart from me; and He said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee!’” This petition more especially contemplates as great an exemption from this exposure as is consistent with the designs and will of God. In the wide range between sinless perfection and absolute apostasy, some degree of exposure is unavoidable; nor does the Christian know how much may be needful for the trial of his faith, for the proof of his integrity, for his usefulness in the world, for the conquests of divine grace and for ultimately securing his everlasting crown. It is well that the history of the people of God in this particular is an unknown history, and that it never will be fully known till the day when the promise is made good: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne” (Rev 3:21).

John, in the vision of the Apocalypse, heard the voice: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?” It was the inquirer himself who rejoined, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). They had laboured and suffered for the gospel. They had stood firm in a persecuting and degenerate age. They had not fallen or fainted in the “hour of temptation” that came upon all the earth, but sealed their testimony with their blood.

God has thus tempted thousands of His people, to whom He has given grace to be faithful unto death, and to whom He has awarded a crown of life. He tempted Abraham by a command filled with all the emphasis of terror. He tempted Job and He tempted Paul. “Beloved,” said the Apostle Peter to the dispersed people of God, “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” It is no new thing that temptations should beset them; nor is it in any way remarkable that

the temptations should be turned to good account in the divine government. "There hath no temptation overtaken you," said Paul to the Corinthians, "but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I have known those who, from a sinful confidence in their own powers of endurance, and from a self-righteous desire to express their own meekness and submission under trials, actually desired this conflict with the powers of darkness; and I have seen them most bitterly bewail their presumption. Though good men may come unscathed from temptations, they are not to be sought. It is time enough to glory in tribulation when it comes. If God brings it, He will deliver. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience," and that it is no loss when patience has "her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing". Nor is it any strange thing that piety, when thus unavoidably exposed, should be the gainer by every seduction successfully resisted, every trial patiently endured. There is honey even in the carcase of the lion; "out of the eater [comes] forth meat, and out of the strong [comes] forth sweetness".

Thus tempted, the child of God has many a promise to sustain and comfort him. He who came from the bosom of the Father to destroy the works of the devil was Himself exposed to the impudent assaults of this spirit of all evil. If He did not escape the assault, much less may we. Like a brave prince, He not only commands His followers, but places Himself at the head of His embattled hosts, and Himself breasts the first onset of the enemy. It is not infrequently with them, after sore temptation, as it was with Him, when "the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him".

While the petition, "Lead us not into temptation", therefore does not contemplate entire exemption from temptation, it contemplates as great exemption as is consistent with the will of our Father who is in heaven. In such a world as this, and with such a heart as dwells in man, who does not feel the strong propriety, the urgent need, of such a request? Nothing is more helpless than a Christian unprotected by the providence of His heavenly Father and unsupported by His grace. He is as a sickly plant under the withering tempest. He is like the lost sheep, bleating in the lone and dense forest, or trembling on the cragged rock, pursued by savage beasts and savage men, and never secure save when He who gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom, makes him to "lie down in green pastures" and leads him "beside the still waters". It is not so much in resisting temptation that his safety lies, as in not being led into it.

Let this then be the reader's prayer: "Lead me not into temptation". Tread not too closely on the borders of evil when there is a "highway of holiness". Make no treaty with the foe. Beware of scenes and objects, of places, employments and men, of feelings and fancies, which ensnare. If a man is doubtful of the moral rectitude of any course of conduct, let him bring it to the test by asking the question: Is it ensnaring? Of this one thing he may be assured: it is more than doubtful, if he cannot enter upon it with the petition on his lips: Lead me not into temptation.

Listen to the counsels of heavenly wisdom when they say, "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Be vigilant, because your foes are subtle and aim their most envenomed arrows in the dark. Be sober, because levity and folly tempt the tempter. These days of temptation will soon be over; therefore "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might". It is not against flesh and blood alone that you are wrestling; wherefore "put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day".

Evangelical or Reformed (2)¹

Rev H M Cartwright

In tracing how the modern Evangelical comprehensiveness of an unbiblical view of Scripture, previously repudiated, mirrors that of the nineteenth-century Free Church, we note that the Free Church in its early post-1843 days held a high view of the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of Scripture. The Declaratory Act of 1892 had no article specifically modifying the Church's professed commitment to the doctrine of Scripture, largely because Robert Rainy, the ecclesiastical politician, resisted moves to introduce a paragraph on the inspiration of Scripture. But in 1891 he had introduced a separate document with no real status. It was intended by its ambiguity to secure unanimity in professed commitment to something described as "the infallibility of Scripture" both by those who held the Confessional view that "it pleased the Lord . . . to reveal Himself . . . and . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing" and by those like James Denney who at the 1891 Assembly asserted his rejection of literal infallibility in his statement that "the infallibility of the Scriptures was not a mere verbal inerrancy, an historical accuracy, but an infallibility of power to save. . . . This was the only kind of infallibility he believed in. For mere verbal inerrancy he cared not one straw."

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

Denney frankly described Rainy's document as neither candid nor wise, in that all could agree with it only by taking it in totally different senses. A B Davidson, John Duncan's assistant and successor, maintained that "the books of Scripture, so far as interpretation and general formal criticism are concerned, must be handled very much as other books are handled", yet that the facts in the history of redemption are untouched by the most advanced critical theories. Davidson and men such as William Robertson Smith, A B Bruce and Marcus Dods became increasingly bold in propagating Higher Critical views of the Bible. In half a century the Free Church declined from affirming that the Bible is divine revelation inscripturated by divine inspiration, which secured its inerrancy and authority, to tolerating the view expressed by A B Bruce that "revelation is one thing, Scripture another though closely related thing – being in truth its record, interpretation and reflection". It became committed only to something vaguely described as the Word of God contained in Scripture.

These New Evangelists, as Kenneth Ross² describes the liberal element in the nineteenth-century Free Church, concurred "in a willingness to engage with modern thought in an open and concessive spirit and a conviction that true Christianity would be vindicated if it were but delivered from certain traditional accompaniments which were unnecessary, and indeed corrosive. The New Evangelists believed that their historic task was to disengage the essence of the faith from some regrettable accretions. Accordingly, they set about distinguishing the kernel from the husk, the substance from the form, the personal from the propositional, the moral from the metaphysical, the ethical from the ritual and the spiritual from the dogmatic." A principal aspect of this was "a new view of the Bible". In a "Biographical Introduction" to John and Donald Baillie, Professor A C Cheyne uses the terms *Liberal Evangelicalism* and *the new orthodoxy* to describe the teaching of their professors in New College in the early 1900s and says that it was "marked by three outstanding characteristics: commitment to the use of historical and literary criticism in the study of the Bible, wariness of what seemed to be undue emphasis on credal and confessional statements, and respect for the methods of natural science".³

Marcus Dods is an individual example of the way in which critical views of the Bible led to an abandonment of its content. In his inaugural lecture as successor to George Smeaton in 1889, he described the doctrine of verbal inspiration as a theory "which has made the Bible an offence to many honest men, which is dishonouring to God, and which has turned inquirers into

²*Church and Creed in Scotland*, p 156.

³*Studies in Scottish Church History*, pp 209,210.

sceptics by the thousand – a theory which should be branded as heretical in every Christian Church”. He suggested that belief in the historicity of the resurrection was a matter of indifference, that belief in substitutionary atonement or even in Christ’s divinity was not essential to Christians, and that there was defective morality in the Old Testament. The death of Christ, he claimed, was not propitiatory but a manifestation that there were no bounds to the love of God which He came to express. The Church-wide inevitability of this trend from criticism of the Bible to contradiction of its doctrines was confirmed by the adoption of the Free Church Declaratory Act of 1892. This process has been replicated in the more recent history of Evangelicalism. There is even a parallel in the relationship between the Moody and Sankey missions and nineteenth-century decline and the Billy Graham campaigns and twentieth-century decline.

Noting evidences that Evangelicalism, as it has developed to the present day, has become comprehensive of elements which earlier evangelicals would have repudiated, we see that men and denominations are regarded as Christian even although they *tolerate and even profess doctrines inconsistent with what was formerly regarded as an Evangelical interpretation of Scripture*. Iain Murray documents the readiness of Anglican Evangelicals, after their Congress in Keele in 1967, to regard as brothers in Christ those who held unevangelical doctrine, and he comments that “what Keele left unexplained was how Evangelicals could hold to the uniqueness of their gospel message and yet profess brotherhood with those whose teaching subverts that gospel”.⁴ John Stott, who himself believes in the virgin birth of Jesus, assured David Edwards: “There have been and are Christians (yourself among them) who firmly believe in the incarnation, while doubting or denying the virgin birth”.⁵

Men and denominations are regarded as Evangelical even although they have *adopted an open attitude to Roman Catholicism*. In 1977 the Evangelical Anglicans’ Nottingham Congress issued the following statement: “Seeing ourselves and Roman Catholics as fellow Christians, we repent of attitudes that have seemed to deny it. . . . We shall all work towards full communion between our two churches. We believe that the visible unity of all professing Christians should be our goal”.⁶ Dr Packer, who used to be such a persuasive advocate of the Reformed and Puritan faith, sadly exemplifies this change. Once he wrote: “The wall is cracked because it is not all built on the same foundation. The more one probes the differences between Roman and Protestant, Liberal and Evangelical, the deeper they prove to be; beneath the

⁴*Evangelicalism Divided*, pp 117,118.

⁵*Essentials*, p 230.

⁶*Evangelicalism Divided*, p 216.

cracks on the surface lie fissures which run down to the very foundations, broadening as they go.”⁷ But now he can describe Pope John Paul II as “a wonderful man who has done a wonderful job as a world Christian ambassador” and express the assurance that there are many Christians in the Roman system because “what brings salvation, after all, is not any theory about faith in Christ, justification, and the Church, but faith in Christ Himself.”⁸

Men and denominations are regarded as Evangelical even although they have either *embraced, or accepted the Biblical validity of, the modern charismatic movement*. The charismatic movement has become so embedded in Evangelicalism that much of the claimed expansion of Evangelicalism is attributed to the growth of charismatic groups. In addition to direct Biblical arguments against the charismatic movement, it is observable that, with its emphasis on experiences and its doctrinal vagueness, it has done as much as anything to foster a new relationship between professed Evangelicals and Roman Catholics.

Men and denominations are regarded as Evangelical even although they have *endorsed the culture of the world around them*. “Surveys show that the moral behaviour of self-confessed ‘Evangelicals’ is heading in the same direction as that in the broader culture: we simply lag a little behind. . . . Study after study has shown that pursuing relevance may achieve a certain instant ‘success’, but is frequently the advance warning to bitter declension.”⁹ “The Evangelical accommodation to the world of our age represents the removal of the last barrier against the breakdown of our culture.”¹⁰ “Evangelicals, while commonly retaining the same set of beliefs, have been tempted to seek success in ways which the New Testament identifies as ‘worldliness’ . . . the interests and priorities of contemporary culture have come to be mirrored in the churches. The antipathy to authority and to discipline; the cry for entertainment by the visual image rather than by the words of Scripture; the appeal of the spectacular; the rise of feminism; the readiness to identify power with numbers; the unwillingness to make ‘beliefs’ a matter of controversy – all these features so evident in the world’s agenda are now also to be found in the Christian scene. Instead of the churches revolutionising the culture, the reverse has happened. Churches have been converted to the world.”¹¹

It is no wonder that Evangelicalism has developed in these ways because *Evangelicalism has also been regarded as a movement comprehending*

⁷*Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, p 45.

⁸*Evangelicalism Divided*, pp 241,229.

⁹*The Gagging of God*, pp 475,476.

¹⁰*The Great Evangelical Disaster*, p 401.

¹¹*Evangelicalism Divided*, pp 254-256.

Arminianism. Indeed this is its original and fundamental flaw. By countenancing Arminianism, even when not universally embracing it, the wider Evangelical movement admitted the principle of requiring something less than full commitment to the entire revelation of God and opened the door to further deviations. R B Kuiper, answering the question, “Is Arminianism Harmless?”, stated as part of his answer: “Arminianism teaches that God has made salvation possible for all but has left it to each individual to make it actual in his case. Now that compromising position of Arminianism explains in large measure one of the saddest chapters in American church history. It is the rapid descent of much of New England Calvinism all the way to Unitarianism . . . the decline began with a compromise with Arminianism.” Although he was himself identified with the promotion of Calvinism, Dr Lloyd-Jones advocated the view “that Evangelicals should not separate over the question of Calvinism and Arminianism”¹². That view is held by some in Evangelical and Reformed circles today.

This differs from the attitude expressed in an article in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* of June 1937: “When it is borne in mind the horror with which our forefathers regarded Arminianism, the modern attitude to it indicates how far the professing Church has drifted from the position of the theologians of those days”. There is a quotation in the article from William Cunningham: Arminianism “is a scheme for dividing or partitioning the salvation of sinners between God and sinners themselves, instead of ascribing it wholly, as the Bible does, to the sovereign grace of God, the perfect and all-sufficient work of Christ, and the efficacious and omnipotent operation of the Spirit”.¹³ And it is noted that Professor Watts of Belfast, with whom some of the early Free Presbyterian ministers studied, “used to say to his students that Arminianism fought none of the battles of the Reformation and, when it appeared on the stage, it was as the sower of discord and disunion that it made its presence felt”. This was the view expressed in the first issue of *The Banner of Truth* magazine in 1955: “The twin principles of Arminianism are that the grace of God is universal – extending to all, and that the efficacy of that grace depends finally upon the free-will of man Arminianism strikes at the very foundation of the gospel.” A readiness to compromise with recognised error in a matter so closely connected with the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners, has in many cases facilitated compromise with other doctrinal and practical errors.

The commonly accepted definitions of Evangelicalism at its best do not

¹²J Brencher, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism*, p 232.

¹³*Historical Theology*, vol 2, p 377.

describe adequately the Biblical faith to which we are committed. The comprehensiveness of modern Evangelicalism makes the term as used today insufficient, and unsuitable, as a description of what we regard as essential to contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. David Bebbington quotes Lord Shaftesbury, who died in 1885, as saying in his later years: "I know what constituted an Evangelical in former times; I have no clear notion of what constitutes one now".¹⁴ What would he say today? Evangelicalism as historically understood over the past two or three centuries, embracing as it does the Arminian perversion of the gospel, is a defection from the Reformed Faith. The term *Evangelical* as applied today is altogether too indefinite and comprehensive to be an adequate description of the position to which we are committed.

Now Light in the Lord¹

A Moody Stuart

After a good deal of thought I decided for the ministry, but not without a struggle. I took the step with a clear conscience, having a steadfast religious persuasion for myself and a conscientious desire for the salvation of others. After serious self-examination I had become a communicant and firmly believed in the necessity of conversion, which I trusted to have passed through by a gradual transformation. In this state I entered the Divinity Hall and, after giving my name to be enrolled, my mind was lifted up with a buoyancy and joy of a kind never known before. The fact of having engaged myself to be "a servant of the God of heaven" I felt to be so high a privilege and honour that I could hardly restrain myself and took a back lane on my way to college to give free scope to my exultation by running along it; it could not be called "the joy of the hypocrite"; it lasted for 10 days. Yet I was a stranger to the covenant of promise and to the new birth by the Holy Spirit, had never known forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb, and had not the spirit of adoption to be "as a son that serveth" his heavenly Father.

After two years in the Hall at Glasgow I went to Edinburgh to study under Dr Chalmers. My eldest sister, whom we looked up to as the most religious in the family, had recently come under deep convictions and warned us faith-

¹⁴*Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp 1,2.

¹An extract, written in 1888, from Moody Stuart's *Memoir*, by his son. By far the best part of this volume is the first, largely autobiographical, section. Moody Stuart (1809-1898), was minister of Free St Luke's, Edinburgh; his writings include *The Three Marys* and *The Life of John Duncan*, both republished by the Banner of Truth Trust. These and the books mentioned in the next two footnotes are available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

fully that she had never undergone a saving change. And although we thought it too severe a judgement on herself, we knew that if this were true of her, our case must be still worse. For myself, I was constrained to conclude that any apparent tokens of grace might be accounted for by moral training and religious teaching, combined with the dictates of natural conscience, without any saving work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. But these doubts were quieted by evading the question.

One night I had a deeply solemn dream. The dream took the form of thinking that I was dead, but not yet buried; that my life was past and irrevocable, but my eternal state not yet begun. I sat down on my bed beside my coffin to examine myself and to ask if my soul was lost or saved, and I knelt down to cry for mercy although the time for prayer was for ever past. Surprised at my folly in making the attempt, I rose from my knees and sat down to force myself to examine the question: Lost or saved? The effort was in vain, and I knelt again to cry for mercy, only to rise again and renew the hopeless inquest. When I awoke in the morning, this frightful dream had gone from my memory; but whilst sitting in my room in the course of the day, I dreamed it all over again with the waking consciousness that it was a dream, yet only to recall it as a stern reality. Of course there was no thought of any revelation in this vision of the night; yet “in a dream, in a vision of the night, in slumberings upon the bed, He openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction”. The sealed instruction was to consider my state for eternity and to ask if my soul were lost or saved. Accordingly I made the attempt, but with the very same result as in my dream. The great question I asked but could not answer. My judgement was against myself, but I feared to pronounce it, and still hoped that I was not utterly without “part or lot in this matter”.

At this time I sat under an esteemed minister in the New Town [of Edinburgh] whose preaching I admired and valued, but when awakened to my own want of spiritual life I longed to hear some truth not yet learned, or of some path in the soul’s history not yet trodden. At the close of the sermon, the familiar words would recur to my memory: “All these things have I kept from my youth; what lack I yet?” And I would have been grateful to be told my lack, but it was not disclosed to me. One day on going over to the Old Town to hear Dr Gordon,² he told, to an unwilling ear, of conversion as a process, not of building up, such as I had earnestly desired, but of breaking down, by one stroke after another, till the whole gave way. The preacher’s meaning was very clear, and it was equally clear that I had never known

²Robert Gordon, whose four-volume set, *Christ in the Old Testament*, has been republished by Free Presbyterian Publications.

what he described, and was most averse to receive it. His words, however, by the grace of God, reached my heart as no words had ever done before; and I resolved not to forget them. Dark as they were, it was a new light in the soul's path for which I have ever thanked the Lord.

About this time I took up Marshall on *Sanctification*,³ which I had put into my trunk on leaving home, but had never read. And to this book, under the Spirit's teaching, I owed my instruction in the doctrines of grace. The two great lessons I learned from it were: the entire sinfulness of fallen man, the utter worthlessness of all that he can do, and over against this the infinitely perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ given for all and to all who believe on Him "without even a peppercorn of acknowledgment" from anything of ours. More than all this, this provision of a complete righteousness in the Lord Jesus Christ for us by His work and by His sacrifice convinced me of my own worthlessness and nakedness in the sight of God. I now thoroughly understood and believed these truths, although the conviction of guilt was not in the definite and agonising sense of sin as often since, but in a profound sense of the absolute want of all good and of the guilt of unbelief.

These discoveries cast me to an infinite and helpless distance from God and from Christ. I was lost and dead, without any power either to pray or to believe; there was free salvation in Jesus Christ for the chief of sinners in believing on Him, but in Him I never had believed, and could not now believe. Standing stripped and ashamed, with no power to put on the clothing of the Lord Jesus Christ, I could do nothing, and made no attempt. Morning and night the Bible was read and the knee bowed as before, but only as a duty, and not supposing that I could read or pray to any saving effect, for I was dead. I looked out from my window to the lofty and distant sky, and by such a distance felt myself to be "a great way off" from God, from Christ, from heaven.

It was the time of the Spring Communion in Edinburgh in 1829, and on the Fast Day, my cousin, along with whom I then lodged, in receiving a token for himself, asked one also for me. It was taken without my knowledge and vexed me when put in my hand, but I had no thought of using it because I had no part in Christ. Next day found me downcast and sad, but with a fixed resolution to care for nothing till I should find salvation, although it might not be for years. As I sat musing sorrowfully, my Bible caught my eye, and I wondered if there could be anything in it for me. Taking it up listlessly, I held it in my hand and it was a dark sight, for I thought I had known it, but now it was a sealed book from beginning to end. It was all one to me where

³*The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, by the Puritan writer Walter Marshall; it has been reprinted by Reformation Heritage Books.

to read, for all was equally dark, and I opened it without looking where; but as I read I came to these words in Ephesians 5:14: "Awake, *thou that sleepest*, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light". They came to me like a flash of lightning in the sudden awakening, but with infinite sweetness of light in Christ; they were spoken to *me*, of whom I supposed no one could be thinking. They were addressed to the *sleeper*, and if any one in the whole world was sleeping, it was myself.

I was lost and dead, yet was not in agony, was not praying, was not even anxious, but was sleeping sadly in death. Can this be the Bible? Can this be the book I have been reading from childhood? Having turned it over to make sure that it was my own very Bible, I rejoiced in the sight of the well-known volume, read again to make sure of the words, then closed the book in wonder and peace and joy. I had been darkness, but now was light in the Lord, the darkness past and the true light now shining, the saving righteousness of Christ now my own. From that hour I could say, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart". His word had quickened me, and I trust that He has never taken it "utterly out of my mouth".

By God's own gift the word must have been "mixed with faith" in reading, but it awoke and enlightened me with resistless power, as if previous to any consent on my part. The token received with sorrow was now used with joy, and for the first time I sat down at the Lord's table with faith, truly partaking of those signs and seals of the Lord's dying love, for which I often ardently long, since I have been laid aside. This day I have entered upon my eightieth year; it is 59 years since the Lord spoke to me in saving grace and power. And of His gift on that day He has now been saying: "Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown".

Eastern Europe Mission Report

Rev Neil M Ross

Most Ukrainians are in thrall to the idolatry and superstition of the Orthodox Church. Only the gospel will bring them to experience the fulfilment of the Saviour's words: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8.32). In continuing our work in Odessa, we desire that the Lord would so bless our limited efforts that many would be brought to a saving knowledge of the glorious Liberator Himself. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8.36).

In pursuing this objective we continue our visits to Ukraine. After our last

Synod meetings, I visited our Odessa congregation accompanied by elders Mr Kenneth MacLeod and Mr Edward Ross. Our good friends Mr Igor Zadorozhniy and Mr Dmitriy Levitskiy met us at the airport and took us to our respective lodgings – Mr MacLeod and Mr Ross to Mr and Mrs Zadorozhniy's home, and me to Mr and Mrs Levitskiy's flat. We are exceedingly grateful for their warm and generous hospitality.

During our stay of 10 days we had much work to attend to – most importantly the church services on Sabbath and weekdays, including those of a communion season. We also took aid to the hospital; held meetings of the Kirk Session, Deacons' Court and the Field Committee of the Eastern Europe Mission; had several consultations with our lawyer, Mr Popov; sourced and purchased a new computer printer/scanner/copier for the work there; and met government officials in connection with further establishing our presence in the Ukraine. In our activities we were very much dependent on Mr Levitskiy's invaluable interpreting skills, and on Mr Zadorozhniy for transporting us around the city.

We were able to hold the services in the newly-completed meeting room in Mr Zadorozhniy's home. Previously they met in his living room, but now two rooms have been made into one, and it is furnished with a reading desk on a small dais, a communion table and upholstered metal chairs to seat 20 or more people comfortably, and has had air conditioning installed for the very hot Odessa summers. Altogether, it is a remarkable step forward, and we are much indebted to Mr and Mrs Zadorozhniy for providing such a place for the time being, and to both them and Mr and Mrs Levitskiy for all the work they have done in preparing it.

It was encouraging that the church services were attended by, not only the few who gather regularly, but also by several visitors from the city who are acquainted with them, including four who had never attended previously. The communion Sabbath was indeed a solemn holy day, and we felt, we believe, some measure of the gracious presence of the Lord in seeking to comply with the dying command of the great Head of the Church, "This do in remembrance of Me". The Kirk Session has decided to hold an election for an elder in the congregation by late autumn, God willing.

No further progress has been made in registering our Church. However, our registration as a charity is being processed by the Department of Justice. As we are not yet registered as a Church, the charity will be registered in the name of Mr Zadorozhniy, who will be the Church's contracted representative to run it until the Church itself is registered.

Mr Zadorozhniy continues to send out 100 parcels every month, each parcel containing a Ukrainian Bible, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and other

items. There is an increased interest in the *Confession of Faith*, judging by the number of requests and questions addressed to him. Several evangelical groups, from places such as Kiev, Rivna, and Makeyevka in the Donetsk district have requested scores of copies to distribute among their people. These are being sent out steadily as time and funds permit.

A Ukrainian translation of *The Mother's Catechism* is being prepared for the people of the Carpathian region. Our Russian translation projects – Shaw's *Exposition of the Confession of Faith*, *Sermons by Rev D Macfarlane*, and tracts on *Pentecostalism* and *Seventh Day Adventism* – are progressing well; indeed the tracts were ready for printing at the time of our visit.

Both Mr Zadorozhniy and Mr Levitskiy believe that interest in the Reformed faith is growing in certain places. Not only is there a greater demand for the *Confession of Faith* but letters from some recipients show that they much appreciate it; one of them said, "It is like rain in a hot summer". It is a sad fact that many denominations from abroad which work in the Ukraine are liberal or charismatic, and therefore people belonging to them fail to get the spiritual food they evidently desire.

Another encouraging development is that our Church has been able to purchase a piece of land which is very conveniently located where a main street meets the street where Mr Zadorozhniy lives. Our hope is that, as funds become available, the Church will be able to build a depot for the new charity and literature distribution work. Eventually, when the Church is registered, God willing, it will be a most suitable site for a church building.

On our visit to the Odessa Children's Hospital we brought a gift of money with which we intended to purchase medicines at the hospital pharmacy and present them to the department for sick babies. We were met by our old friend, Dr Torbinskaya, who energetically runs the department on a shoestring. We readily acceded to her request that on this occasion we would purchase a large refrigerator for storing medicines. A few days later, having bought it on our behalf, she showed it to us at the hospital, declaring that it would be a tremendous help to them in their work, and warmly expressed their heartfelt thanks to the Church.

Finally, we pray that the Lord will keep the Odessa congregation and that their regular services will be beneficial to all who attend. May the Lord also undertake for Mr Levitskiy in his studies as a divinity student, and for Mrs Levitskiy as she continues to translate the Psalms into metre. As in other countries, nothing but the sowing of the good seed of the kingdom and the work of the Holy Spirit will result in fruit to the glory of God. Truly, as Mr Zadorozhniy remarked to us, "The Ukraine is like an unploughed field waiting to be tilled". May the Lord send forth labourers to that work!

Feeding the Five Thousand¹

J C Ryle

These verses describe one of our Lord's most remarkable miracles. Of all the great works that He did, none was done so publicly as this, and before so many witnesses. Of all the miracles related in the Gospels, this is the only one which all four Gospel-writers alike record. This fact alone – like the four-times-repeated account of the crucifixion and resurrection – is enough to show that it is a miracle demanding special attention.

We have in this miracle, for one thing, *a lesson about Christ's almighty power*. We see our Lord feeding 5000 men with five barley loaves and two small fishes. We see clear proof that a miraculous event took place in the 12 baskets of fragments that remained after all had eaten. Creative power was manifestly exercised. Food was called into existence that did not exist before. In healing the sick and raising the dead, something was amended or restored that had already existed. In feeding 5000 men with five loaves, something must have been created which before had no existence.

Such a history as this ought to be specially instructive and encouraging to all who endeavour to do good to souls. It shows us the Lord Jesus "able to save to the uttermost". He is one who has all power over dead hearts. Not only can He mend that which is broken, build up that which is ruined, heal that which is sick, strengthen that which is weak, He can do even greater things than these. He can call into being that which did not exist before; He can call it out of nothing. We must never despair of anyone being saved. So long as there is life there is hope. Reason and sense may say that some poor sinner is too hardened or too old to be converted. Faith will reply, "Our Master can create as well as renew. With a Saviour who, by His Spirit, can create a new heart, nothing is impossible."

We have, for another thing, in this miracle, *a lesson about the office of ministers*. We see the apostles receiving the bread from our Lord's hands, after He had blessed it, and distributing it to the multitude. It was not their hands that made it increase and multiply, but their Master's. It was His almighty power that provided an unfailing supply. It was their work to receive humbly and distribute faithfully.

Now here is a lively emblem of the work which a true minister of the New Testament is meant to do. He is not a mediator between God and man. He has no power to put away sin or to impart grace. His whole business is to receive the bread of life which his Master provides and to distribute it to the

¹Taken, with slight editing, from Ryle's comments on John 6:1-14 in his *Expository Thoughts on John*, vol 1.

souls among whom he labours. He cannot make men value the bread or receive it. He cannot make it soul-saving or life-giving to anyone. This is not his work. For this he is not responsible. His whole business is to be a faithful distributor of the food which his Divine Master has provided; and that done, his office is discharged.

Book Reviews¹

The Passionate Preacher, previously unpublished sermons by Robert Murray M'Cheyne, published by Christian Focus Publications, hardback, 332 pages, £16.99. This is a welcome selection of M'Cheyne's sermons, transcribed from his own handwritten notes, and edited, by Dr Michael McMullen. Most of the sermons are just notes or outlines, which M'Cheyne prepared for preaching. Of the 77 sermons in this volume, only 10 are at least five pages long, whereas 29 of these 67 are but one or two pages.

Nevertheless, the reader comes away from the book with the distinct impression that M'Cheyne was truly a passionate preacher who felt deeply about the spiritual needs of his people. In preaching about Christ building His church from living stones, he told them, "Ah, I sometimes fear lest God should have taken all the stones He means to take out of this place and that you may be left like a deserted quarry".

These sermons are Christ-centred. It was M'Cheyne's delight to display the sufficiency of the Saviour and to press upon the people their constant need of Him. "There is a supply in Him for every need", he proclaimed. "You have divine wrath over you, but He is a divine Saviour to shelter you. You have a world of sins upon you. Well, but behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. You need one who can save you from sin and from hell. He is able to save to the uttermost. You need one who can save the chief of sinners. Well, He came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Oh, He is a most sweet and precious Saviour."

M'Cheyne's language is clear and direct. Indeed, one of the striking features of these sermons is how pointedly he addresses his hearers, both converted and unconverted, and applies the truth to their various cases. He most skilfully, searchingly and solemnly dissects and lays bare the evasions and objections of sinners in their opposition to God's claims upon them. How earnestly he shows their need of being born again. "The best natural man in the world cannot get above nature," he declares.

Professing Christians are also dealt with freely and faithfully. While he

¹Both books reviewed here are available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom

comforts the Lord's people in their trials, he solemnly warns them against being at ease in Zion, or being enemies of the cross of Christ. He wrote at the foot of his notes on "Enemies of the Cross" (Phil 3:17-21), "Many were deeply affected during the preaching of this discourse, especially when that head on being enemies of the cross was given. Many sobbed aloud."

This selection also confirms M'Cheyne's well-known love for the Lord's Day. In one of the two almost-identical sermons about the Sabbath (which were obviously the basis of his tract, "I love the Lord's Day", included in his *Memoir and Remains*), he says, "We love the Lord's Day because it is His. Every hour of it is dear to us, sweeter than honey, more precious than gold. It is the day He rose for our justification. It reminds us of His love, and His finished work, and His rest. And we may boldly say that that man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ who does not love the entire Lord's Day."

Another commendable feature of the sermons is the frequent use of suitable illustrations. He obviously thought in pictures and elucidates point after point by succinct and striking similes. It is an example that some of us would do well to follow. This is how he describes the unregenerate heart: "The natural heart is given over to idols. In the Greek churches abroad, the walls are painted round and round with idols. And you will often see the people choosing out their favourite idol and bowing down to it. Such is the natural heart. In every cell of it there is a different idol. And the soul bows down to each in turn. Sometimes it worships money, sometimes praise, sometimes dress, and sometimes sensual pleasure."

It is clear that M'Cheyne was steeped in the Word of God. He not only ably uses Scripture passages to support his teaching, but also earnestly commends the searching of the Scriptures. "What a wonderful book is the Bible," he says in one sermon. "Every time you read it, if the Spirit breathes over the page, you will find new light – new nourishment to the soul. The Bible is the green pasture where He maketh His flock to lie down and feed, and every time the hungry flock return to it, they find the pasture has grown richer and more verdant than before."

Many of M'Cheyne's statements are eminently quotable, and we do not wonder that there is a website which includes quotations from his other sermons. Some of his language is quite poetic although not extravagant. However, we feel he lets his imagination go beyond the bounds of Scripture when he makes conjectures about the holy angels perhaps pleading for the fallen angels (p 217), Nicodemus covering his face when visiting Jesus, and John on the Isle of Patmos labouring in the mines.

It has also to be said that there are some phrases which are theologically imprecise or suspect, and some interpretations of Scripture passages with

which we cannot agree. Sainly minister though M'Cheyne certainly was, it would appear that he did not have the theological robustness of many others. However, it is to be borne in mind that these are only preparatory notes and that in preaching he would no doubt have qualified what appears questionable as he fleshed out what are in many instances just skeletons.

There are some smaller points to note. First, there appear to be several errors in transcription. In his preface the editor takes responsibility for any such mistakes, noting that M'Cheyne's handwriting "is not altogether clear", but it is surprising these were not eliminated by the publisher during the editing process.

Some of the titles given to the sermons (whether by M'Cheyne or the editor we cannot say) are not descriptive of the content. Some sermons are repeated in a slightly different form (sermons 6 and 7, for example), and half of the 20 outlines under the heading "Types of Jesus" are not in fact presented by M'Cheyne as types. It might also have been wiser to have excluded those particularly cryptic notes which are no more than bare indications of his line of thought.

These points aside, this is a volume which is not only full of searching matter for all and heart-warming instruction for believers, but also useful for ministers in stimulating their minds in preparation for the pulpit. We can only admire Dr McMullen's painstaking dedication and perseverance in preparing these 133 000 or so words for publication. *(Rev) Neil M Ross*

The Lord's Supper, by Thomas Watson, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 96 pages, £3.75.

This little book was first published in 1665 and has long been out of print. Those who enjoy Watson's warm devotional writing need no further recommendation than to say that he is the author.

In introducing the subject, the author sets out his purpose by saying, "It is to excite holy ardour of soul in such as intend to partake of" the Lord's Supper. He deals with every aspect of the Sacrament under the following chapter headings: The Mystery of the Lord's Supper, the Consecration of the Elements, the Benefits of the Lord's Supper, Christ's Love Displayed in the Sacrament, the Broken Body of Christ, and the Blood of Christ.

One quotation encapsulates, we think, the gist of the book: "Behold the amazing love of God, His body was broken. The cross, says Augustine, 'was a pulpit from which Christ preached love to the world'. Let us see in the cross a holy culmination of the love of Christ." The book contains two brief but useful chapters on Self-examination, and True and False Faith, followed by an answer, for weak believers, to objections against coming to the sacra-

ment. He concludes with a chapter entitled: Comforts to Believers and Warnings to Unbelievers. It is an excellent little book, thoroughly commended.

(Rev) D J MacDonald

Protestant View

More Evidence of the Inquisition

Another testimony to the unspeakable cruelty of the Inquisition is being unveiled. *The Daily Telegraph* reports that “a seventeenth-century prison in Sicily where hundreds were tortured during the Inquisition is being turned into a museum, featuring the anguished graffiti of those once tormented there. The cells are entirely covered with prisoners’ graffiti, their hopes and prayers.” The architect in charge of the restoration said, “When the Inquisition was abolished . . . all archives and documentation were destroyed. This graffiti is the only evidence we have. It does not have great artistic value, but it has human value, being the only evidence of a horrible demise.”

Has Rome really changed? It does not have much opportunity to practise this kind of cruelty at present, but surely the spirit which motivated such barbarism in the past is still alive when we read that an archbishop declared at a Bishop’s conference earlier this year: “A united Europe with a divided Christianity would be intolerable”. It is striking that this museum should be announced so soon after the Vatican tried to minimise the horrors of the Inquisition by issuing a book claiming that the number who died at its hands was much less than previously thought.

May we prize the Biblical Christianity bequeathed to us, believing that God will not only unveil more of Rome’s cruelty, but also show that its Christianity is the kind of which He says, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt 15.9). *NMR*

Notes and Comments

Islam’s Agenda and God’s Purpose

The advance of Islam in the West “is not by chance or coincidence, nor even through sheer weight of numbers,” says a writer in the *Barnabas Fund* magazine. “Rather, it is a deliberate and well-planned process.” This sounds like a conspiracy theory, but “there’s no plot,” says Anthony Browne in *The Spectator*. “Islam really does want to conquer the world. That’s because Muslims, unlike many Christians, actually believe

they are right, and that their religion is the path to salvation for all.”

The *Barnabas Fund* magazine also states that “in 1980 the Islamic Council of Europe published a book called *Muslim Communities in Non-Muslim States* which clearly explained the Islamic agenda in Europe. . . . The ultimate goal of this strategy is that the Muslims should become a majority and the entire nation should be governed according to Islam.” Other Islamic sources point in the same direction. A Saudi Arabian embassy, says *The Spectator*, directs one to the home page of its Islamic Affairs Department, which says, “The Muslims are required to raise the banner of jihad in order to make the Word of Allah supreme in this world”.

Even Dr Badawi, the former director of the Islamic Cultural Centre in London, who is regarded as a moderate, has said, “Islam is a universal religion. It hopes that one day the whole of humanity will be one Muslim community.” Already, according to *The Spectator*, Islam is the second religion in the USA, Australia and Europe. In Britain, attendance at mosques is higher than it is in the Church of England.

But the Lord reigns. He shall yet say to Islam, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed” (Job 38:11). Not only so, but He will say to His own Church, “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left” (Is 54;2,3). It is God’s purpose and not Islam’s programme which will prevail. NMR

Perverse Christianity

A measure of the growing power of the homosexual movement is the capitulation of sections of the Christian church to its demands. Although it is not legal for couples of the same sex to marry, a Church of Scotland minister, Rev Iain Whyte, is reported to have officiated at a same-sex “wedding” in Edinburgh in July. Two men, who wanted a Christian ceremony, made marriage vows before him, and he “blessed” the union. Last month two women in Inverness had a similar “wedding ceremony”, but the name of the minister who officiated and gave the ceremony his blessing has not been released.

A Church of Scotland spokesman said after the Edinburgh ceremony that the General Assembly has declined to forbid giving a ministerial blessing at same-sex ceremonies. How shameful that our national Church should lead the way in giving them the stamp of moral approval!

We note also that Alpha course leaders in the UK are in talks with the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement about enrolling more homosexuals, but the Movement requires courses to “avoid discussion about issues where

people may have differences”. Alpha USA has already said that “homosexuals can be Christians whilst remaining active homosexuals”.

In whatever way one may define this kind of Christianity, it is not that of the Bible. Scripture is unequivocal in its condemnation of such unnatural and perverse conduct. To be a true Christian one must “*repent* and believe the gospel”. Therefore, if such people are to be Christians, they must, as God requires, repent of, and renounce, such conduct, as did some of the Corinthians in the days of the Apostle Paul. “Such were some of you,” he told them, “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:10,11). *NMR*

“The Classroom of History”

The above title of the concluding chapter in Steve Taylor’s *The Skye Revivals* (published in 2003) rightly reminds us of the important principle that we should learn from the records of the past. It is said of the inspired historical writing of Scripture that “all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11). We are also to apply the interpretative principles of the Bible to the history of later times and seek to profit from the experiences of mankind and especially of God’s people in the past. Nothing less can be expected of those who believe that history is the outworking of the purposes of God – that it is, in the phrase popularised by Jonathan Edwards, “the history of redemption”.

Mr Taylor’s popularly-written account of some chapters in the history of Evangelical religion in Skye in the nineteenth century brings together the fruit of his reading and research. He presents his narrative in an interesting and largely-factual and sympathetic manner. When he does speculate or comment he occasionally reveals the angle from which he is coming, as is the case with most writing of this kind, since presuppositions do influence conclusions. We are not aware of Mr Taylor’s ecclesiastical affiliation, but his concluding chapter indicates that he has read the history of Skye through the tinted spectacles of the modern charismatic. He bemoans “dead formalism” and the “many churches that are devoid of the freshness and freedom that the Holy Spirit brings”, but seems to explain this in terms of suppression of culture; “Sabbatarianism”; repudiation of the “gifts of the Spirit”, especially “prophecy”; opposition to phenomena which sometimes accompanied awakenings; and the substitution of legalism for grace.

The lack of historical and theological perspective in the conclusions of this book – shared with many others who should know better – is illustrated, for example, in the author’s tendency to equate the experiences of modern

charismatics with those of the godly ministers and people of whom he writes. This may be partly explained by their use of terminology, regarding which they would exercise more caution in today's religious climate, but mainly by a failure to appreciate the true nature of the experiences which they recounted. The failure to acknowledge the fundamental relation between theology and practice and experience is seen in the author's conclusion that it is ironic that a (Calvinistic) minister, who considered that he had experienced revival under his own ministry in Skye, should have criticised the (Arminian) revival movement associated with Duncan Campbell and the Faith Mission in Lewis. It is seen in the conclusion that this was because "theological prejudice knows no bounds".

Spending time in "the classroom of history", with the Holy Spirit as our teacher and the Bible as our textbook, will certainly lead us to bemoan the degeneracy and apostasy of modern Scottish Christianity and the absence, even where the gospel is, of spiritual power in general, as compared with former days of spiritual prosperity. But it will also let us see that the remedy is not along the lines of desiring the "charismata" which characterise much current bankrupt Evangelicalism. These "charismata" are not to be compared with the fruit of the Spirit which accompanies His reviving work in the souls and communities of His people. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Is 59:1,2). There is also the solemn truth of Ezekiel 14:14: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God". It is for the Lord's people to seek grace to repent and to "live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12) and to wait upon the Lord in the spirit of the psalmist: "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations? Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" (Ps 85:5,6). *HMC*

Sabbatarianism

"Sabbatarianism" is a word generally used with strong undertones of disapproval. The perpetuity of the Sabbath as a creation ordinance, as a requirement of the moral law and as a day subject to the Lordship of Christ in the interests of mankind – and its transference from the seventh to the first day of the week with all the implications of this fact for the manner in which the Lord's Day is to be observed – are principles to which most sit loose who profess regard for the Bible today. Steve Taylor in *The Skye Revivals* presents a typical caricature of Sabbath observance, equating it with the hypocritical legalism of the Pharisees and regarding it as a "thorny issue"

which “has continued to plague Evangelicalism in the Highlands and Islands”. He disposes of it by an irrelevant reference to Colossians 2:16, which refers to Jewish festivals and not to the weekly Sabbath.

Some time ago Rutherford House published a booklet, *The Lord’s Day in a Secular Society*, intended “to challenge Christian people to think seriously about their use of the Lord’s Day, and to ask them if they are fully persuaded in their own minds from Holy Scripture that their lifestyle and family patterns are founded firmly on the Word of God, recognising His gracious purposes for His people”. However, there was no desire “to foist one particular view upon today’s Evangelical Christians” and the booklet offers “two different viewpoints in the prayerful hope that readers will find each author presenting an understanding of the Bible’s teaching which will enable them to focus more clearly on their own attitudes and practices”.

In the first part, “Why I love the Lord’s Day”, Douglas Kelly helpfully points out “the dangers of splitting the Lord’s Day from its true home in the original, universal Sabbath” and shows the influence of the Sabbath in promoting the worship of God, bringing blessing to the whole of life and hindering the progress of secularism, with all that means for individuals, homes and society. In the second part, “Sabbath and Sunday in a Secular Society”, Graham Dickson denies that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance and that its principle applies exclusively to the first day of the week. He claims that “a change is as good as a rest” and that, for those in sedentary occupations, playing sport or digging the garden might be “just the right kind of Sabbath activity”. While he regrets, for social reasons, the loss of a recognised day of rest he sees no reason to insist that one day be the day of rest and of worship.

More recently *The Evangelical Magazine*, July/August 2004, follows a similar pattern. One article, “The Right Use of the Lord’s Day”, by Stuart Olyott, argues from the Bible for the Christian Sabbath as “a holy resting from one set of objectives so that we can pursue some very different objectives”. Another article, “The Lord’s Day – an Abiding Sabbath?” by Peter Baker, basically argues that a particular approach on matters such as sport on the Lord’s Day, “whether sabbatarian or libertarian, like so much else in our glorious cultural heritage in Protestant, Reformed Wales, is a non-essential – a non-essential that we can spend far too much time arguing about when there are more important battles to fight”.

Certainly, legalists may use the Fourth Commandment, as they use other commandments, in a vain endeavour to secure their own salvation by works of righteousness which they have done. But, as with all the revealed will of God, the endeavour of those who are saved by grace must be to manifest

their love to the Lord their God by hallowing the Sabbath Day according to the pattern shown in His Word. It is to the godly in gospel times these words are especially addressed: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord" (Is 58:13,14). The absence of Sabbath observance in the churches today is indicative of the low state of religion and of delight in the God of holiness and grace. The Sabbath has always come into its own in times of true spiritual revival and will do so again. Let us value our heritage and seek to keep the Sabbath in spirit and in truth as "the pearl of days". *HMC*

Church Information

Committee Meetings

These Synod committees will meet, DV, in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church as follows:

Tuesday, October 5:

- 9.30 - 11.00 Training of the Ministry Committee
- 11.00 - 12.00 Magazines Committee
- 12.00 - 1.00 Sabbath Observance Committee
- 2.00 - 5.00 Finance Committee
- 2.00 - 3.00 Outreach Committee
- 3.00 - 4.00 Religion and Morals Committee
- 6.00 - 7.30 Publications and Bookroom Committee
- 7.30 - 8.30 Welfare of Youth Committee
- 8.30 - 9.30 Dominions and Overseas Committee

Wednesday, October 6:

- 9.00 Ad-hoc Committee on Children and Vulnerable Adults
(Rev) John MacLeod, Clerk of Synod

Meetings of Presbytery (DV)

Southern: At Glasgow, on Tuesday, September 7, at 3 pm.

Skye: At Portree, on Tuesday, September 28, at 11 am.

Northern: At Dingwall, on Tuesday, September 28, at 2 pm.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo, on Tuesday, October 12, at 11 am.

Western: At Laide, on Tuesday, November 2, at 6 pm.

Australia & New Zealand: At Auckland, on Friday, January 28, at 2.30 pm.

New Publication

Free Presbyterian Publications are glad to announce that volume 7 of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* is now available at £16.50. If ordered from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom the cost will be £13.20 until September 30.