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Which Version?¹

The shelves of today's bookshops carry an almost endless variety of Bible versions. But how should we assess them? And should we assume that the newer the translation the better? The book under review should give considerable help to those who are asking these and similar questions.

In his Preface, Mr Macgregor gives his own experience: "As a young Christian I went to a church that used the Authorised Version (AV). However, on moving with my wife and family to a different area, we went to a church that used the Good News Bible (GNB) and the New International Version (NIV). This enticed me away from the AV for a while. At first these new versions appeared to be easier to read and understand. However, soon I began to notice serious discrepancies (that is, Old Testament references to Christ veiled or missing) in the GNB. This troubled me greatly. I stopped using it, but continued with the NIV, which seemed more reliable. However, as I studied it and compared it with the AV I had first used, I began to feel concerned. The NIV had verses missing, and later I found it had many words missing. Its rendering of some parts gave a completely different meaning. The more I read and compared, the more concerned I became. Also, like the GNB, the NIV was more difficult to commit to memory. I bought a Revised Authorised Version (called in the USA, and now here, the New King James Version (NKJV)). Although modern, it seemed closer to the AV and thus more acceptable. However, eventually, after much exercise of mind and heart, I returned to the AV and became convinced that it is superior to every other version."

Since becoming a minister, Mr Macgregor has studied the question of Bible translations more thoroughly and has set out his conclusions in this volume, in which he focuses particularly on the NIV and NKJV but also discusses, to a lesser extent, the English Standard Version (ESV). "What follows", he tells us, "is not intended to be a sympathetic review of these modern versions – rather, an assessment of their more serious flaws."

¹*Three Modern Versions, A Critical Assessment of the NIV, ESV and NKJV*, by Alan J Macgregor, published by The Bible League, 128 pages, hardback £6.50, paperback £4.00, available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

So what has Mr Macgregor learned? Chapters 1-4 examine general issues, the first three addressing the question of the text from which these versions are translated. Although present-day scholarship has moved on significantly from the second half of the nineteenth century, when B F Westcott and F J A Hort flourished, the work of these two scholars is still fundamental to the “eclectic text” from which most modern versions are translated.

Mr Macgregor states: “Westcott and Hort argued vigorously that the majority manuscripts, from which the Received Text [that used for the AV and all other Protestant translations before the latter part of the nineteenth century] was compiled, contained a number of additions not in the autographs [the original manuscripts]”. However, he points to translations of the second and fourth centuries (one into Syriac and the other into Gothic) which support the Received Text and are earlier than those manuscripts on which Westcott and Hort rely. Perhaps the most serious omission from their text is the entire passage containing the last 12 verses of Mark’s Gospel, but it is contained in all manuscripts except two – those which these two scholars assumed were most significant. Yet it is their excessive reliance on these two manuscripts, with a sophisticated but mistaken theory to back it up, that has been at the root of many of the defects in modern translations.

A further brief chapter distinguishes between two methods of translation. One is known as the formal equivalence method, which aims at a version which is, as nearly as possible, a word-for-word equivalent to the original – as in the AV. The other is the dynamic equivalence method, used in the NIV and the GNB and many other modern translations, which allows itself much more freedom in its renderings, tends towards paraphrase and goes considerably further in interpreting the Scriptures than is proper – interpretation is the function of a commentary.

How, briefly, does the author regard the three versions he has focused on? He deals first with the NIV. Though this translation has an Evangelical pedigree and was undertaken as a result of dissatisfaction with the bias towards liberal theology which is evident in some other versions, it suffers seriously from a tendency to inexactness in translation. In other words, the NIV is very much a dynamic-equivalence translation, though much more restrained in this respect than the GNB. One serious instance of this inexactness is the NIV rendering of the last part of Micah 5:2 as “whose origins are from of old, from ancient times”. But, clearly, the Jews themselves regarded this as a prophecy of the Messiah (see Matt 2:4), which is what it was intended to be – and “ancient times” is an inadequate substitute for the “everlasting” of the AV. Nothing should be allowed to take away from the eternal existence of the Saviour. Besides, by substituting “origins” for “goings forth”,

the translators are again weakening Scripture's testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ as a divine Person had no beginning.

More extreme in its departure from a formal-equivalence method of translation is a revision of the NIV New Testament: Today's New International Version, where masculine words in the original languages are replaced wherever possible. For example, "a man is justified by faith" (Rom 3:28) is replaced by the awkward-sounding "a person is justified by faith" – in the interests of being "gender neutral".

The ESV is one of the most recent translations and is becoming very popular in conservative Evangelical circles. It is an attempt at something more literal than the NIV and is based on the Revised Standard Version (RSV). The liberal bias evident in many passages in the RSV has been removed, although this improvement is not universal; for instance, in Micah 5:2 the word "origins" has been retained. Mr Macgregor concludes that, "despite all the hype and glowing statements about the ESV, it fails to deliver on its promises. It is in reality nothing more than a very mild revision of a very liberal Bible version. While there are some pleasing improvements over the RSV, not all the changes are for the better."

Finally the NKJV, which is an attempt to modernise the language of the AV without departing from its principles of translation. Yet in a number of instances the translators have favoured the Westcott and Hort text over the Received Text. The NKJV makes over 100 000 changes to the AV, and Mr Macgregor feels that, while some of the updating is successful, "we must also point out that by far the majority of alterations the NKJV makes are not helpful at all"; there is a tendency to follow the NIV. "Many of the changes", he believes, "make it more difficult to understand the meaning, and indeed a great number seem superfluous."

In his book, the author highlights a multitude of verses in these recent versions where the translation is unsatisfactory. Sometimes the reader may feel that there is too much of a focus on details, but one suspects that this is in the nature of things and is indeed necessary; some of the broad issues involved have already been dealt with. The author recognises, as does the reviewer, that a number of words in the AV have become obsolete or have changed their meaning and that they will cause difficulties for some readers. Yet Mr Macgregor is absolutely accurate in commending the AV: "We believe it is by far the safest and most accurate translation of the Scriptures available to us. . . . The modern versions of the Bible, as we have sought to show, often portray the mind of man, rather than the mind of God, and this must be a far more serious problem than any apparent archaic language." It would be good if this book would help others to discover this for themselves.

“Why Will Ye Die?”¹

A Sermon by *Alexander Leslie*

Ezekiel 18:31b. *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

The text is brief but comprehensive. And the question which it contains strikingly illustrates the tenderness of Him who condescends in mercy to ask it. Surely there is something in it which ought to excite our admiration of God’s condescension and to call forth songs of grateful, adoring praise from our hearts. For we not only behold God offering to the poor sinner the mercy and love which he needs, but actually going after him, entreating him to stand and think, exhorting and imploring him to accept of them, when he ungratefully and with aggravated guilt turns his back on them as unworthy of his attention. Like all others, Israel had wandered from the path of safety and exposed themselves to that withering curse which constitutes the penalty of a broken law. But God in righteous sovereignty selected them, from among the nations of the earth, to be His peculiar people.

Amid the darkness which brooded over their guilty souls, He caused a light to shine which pointed to a coming Deliverer – the only, divinely-appointed means of restoration to heaven’s forfeited love. He told them of an approaching Saviour and graciously marked out to them the pathway that conducts to glory. But they wilfully closed their eyes against this light and persisted in treading the downward road to destruction. Might we then not have expected God to say of them in just indignation: “They are joined to their idols, let them alone”? But no, God’s condescension extended still further. And, mercy rejoicing over judgement, God pursued His stiff-necked Israel and called to them in sympathising compassion: “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

Ours is a clearer light than Israel ever enjoyed, but still we have preferred the darkness and have walked in the ways of sin. Surely, though not a single reproof had been employed, though justice had long ago taken its course against us and sent us from a land of Bibles and gospel privileges to the place of utter misery and endless woe, we dare not have questioned the righteousness of the sentence. But when, instead of this, mercy seems resolved to save us and, amid our thoughtless and guilty dash to destruction, we hear behind us the voice of the gracious and compassionate God, saying, “Why will ye die?” shall we continue regardless of such love and of our present and eternal well-being? In discoursing from this text, we shall strive, in God’s strength, to press the question it contains. And, be it remembered, it is a question asked

¹Reprinted, with editing, from *The Free Church Pulpit*, vol 1. Leslie (1816-1878) was at this time minister in Arbroath, and was afterwards translated to Aberdeen.

of you, not by a fellow sinner, but by the infinitely holy One, at whose tribunal you have so soon to stand.

1. Is it because you have concluded that God the Father is unwilling to save you? Who is this lying prostrate on the ground in Gethsemane’s garden, whose sweat is as great drops of blood? It is the Son of God. And what is the cause of such awful agony? No human foe is near to lift his hand in acts of violence. The Father gives Him the cup of wrath to drink, and this is what harrows His soul and makes Him “exceeding sorrowful even unto death”.

And who is that crucified on the heights of Calvary, “whose long reiterated cry bespeaks His soul’s deep agony”? Who can the sufferer be, when the sun refuses to behold His dying torment and the rocks are rent and the graves give up their dead and earth is convulsed to its inmost centre? It is the Son of God. And why is He there, and why does the doleful cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” proceed from the lips of Him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners”? The Father, from love to a condemned and perishing people, has taken the sword of justice from its sheath, is plunging it into the bosom of His own Son and with His own hand is holding it there, till that blood be shed which may make them whiter than the snow – till that atonement be complete through which alone they can be saved!

Where then is your warrant to conclude that the Father is unwilling to save you? What stronger pledge could He have given of His love to sinners, and of His desire to rescue them from death and hell, than to pour the vials of His wrath on the head of His only-beloved, eternal Son in order to deliver them?

“Why will ye die?” Perhaps you reply, The Father gave His Son to death only for those who were the objects of His everlasting electing love. And is this the reason why you banish from you all anxiety about your souls, why you are unconcerned about a coming eternity, why you will die? If you now answer, Yes, would you state by what mysterious process you have climbed to the throne of the Almighty to search the immutable record that lies before Him and become assured that you are not among the elect of God. We admit that God gave His Son to die for His elect, and for them alone. To deny this, as many have done in the pride of their hearts, is to challenge the sovereignty of God, which imparts consistency to the Bible and appears so conspicuous in all its parts – and in exercising that sovereignty, God has mercy “on whom He will have mercy” and hardens whom He will, to the manifestation of His own glory.

But assuredly this shall be no excuse for indifference and unbelief on your part. What you and your children, as guilty sinners, have to do with is the revealed command: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be

saved”, not the eternal and hidden decree which is wrapped up among those secret things that belong to the Lord. You dare not assert that the Father is unwilling to save you. Sinners, has it really come to this, that you are prepared to charge Him, whose name and whose nature is love, with your destruction? Will you venture to tell the Almighty, when you stand at His great white throne, that He was unwilling to save you? No, let not that be your excuse for indifference now which you will not dare to utter then.

We are not told that the guilty prodigal, when came to himself, inquired whether he was among the elect or not; but we are told that he resolved to return to his father, resting on the precious truth that there was plenty in his father’s house and to spare, while he was ready to starve. And what reception did he meet with? Did the father indicate an unwillingness to receive him? No, but when his eye beheld the first footstep of his most guilty son returning, his bowels were moved with compassion and, instead of waiting to hear his confession, he ran to meet him; yea, he fell on his neck and kissed him and said, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found”.

Well, my hearers, the same Father addresses you: “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live”; “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”. O sinners, can you not – will you not – trust His faithfulness? Can you steel your hearts against such tenderness? Can you still live without God, without hope, without prayer, without concern about your souls, though they must very soon enter the world of spirits, to share either the bliss of that house with many mansions or the unutterable woe of the damned in hell? Can you any longer resist the Father’s merciful inquiry, “Why will ye die?”

2. *Is Jesus not an Almighty Saviour, the very Saviour whom you need?*

Suppose no Saviour had been provided and you were forced to ask in despondency: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” If you were left in utter darkness as to the means of deliverance, you might reply to the question in the text: We desire not to die, but we can give no ransom for our life; we cannot satisfy the demands of an infinitely just and holy law.

But why will ye die, when an all-sufficient Saviour stands at your very door? Jesus, the Son of God, in the fullness of His redeeming mercy and in the outgoing of His unparalleled love, has done what you could never have accomplished. He has “magnified the law and made it honourable”; He has fulfilled all its demands; He has submitted to its penalty and endured its curse; He continued in agony on the tree till justice had not another demand to make – yea, till it cordially kissed mercy above His bleeding head, and advanced with mercy to save those for whom He died. And by Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of power, has the Father not given attestation to a lost and perishing world that the ransom is accepted and that, through faith in Him who paid it, the chief of sinners may be saved? O why then will ye die?

You have nothing to bring to God as the procuring price of your forgiveness. If you had to bring something, we would pronounce your condition hopeless. But the ground of pardon and acceptance is the active and passive obedience of the Son of God, His doing and dying. He is revealed to you as the very Saviour who can meet all the exigencies of your case, who has a fullness of merit to justify and of grace to sanctify. Why then will ye die? Perhaps someone replies, “I have long continued careless and unmoved and, though I have from Sabbath to Sabbath attended the means of grace and listened to threatenings of wrath and promises of love, still I have slighted and forgotten the grace of which I have so often heard; I fear there can be no salvation for me”. Another may answer, “I have grown old and grey-headed in sin and, though I have always made a profession of religion and have regularly attended the house of prayer, I have never given my heart to God, nor by faith closed in with an offered Christ. My children have grown up around me and some of them have entered the world of spirits, but I have never prayed with them or for them, nor told them of Jesus and His love. You need not ask me, ‘Why wilt thou die?’ for surely I must die.”

No, we answer both in the cheering language of the gospel: “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin”. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” We cannot allow you to die under the belief that Christ is not able to save you. The burden of your guilt may be very heavy, but it is not too heavy for the hand of an Almighty Saviour to take it off, for He has an arm that is full of strength. Your stains may be very dark and very deep, but not too deep for the blood of the Lamb to remove them and to make you whiter than the snow. Your fetters may be very strong and very tightly bound, but not too tightly to prevent Emmanuel executing the purpose of His mission and death, in setting the lawful captive free. Your

disease may be deeply seated, it may be inveterate, but not too inveterate to yield to the healing virtue of the balm in Gilead and the restoring skill of the Physician there.

O do not dishonour the once-crucified Redeemer, now exalted and reigning, by thinking that He is unable to save you. For threescore years and ten you may have disregarded His glory and your soul's welfare; you may have been amassing guilt from youth to old age; you may have been exhausting the patience and tenderness of a most gracious and sympathising Redeemer till time has covered your heads with grey hairs, and age has drawn its many wrinkles on your faces. Still if now, at the eleventh hour, grace has made you willing to come to Him, we tell you, on the authority of His own Word, that He is able to save you, for "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them". None ever perished who came to Him. No disease has ever yet baffled His power to cure it. No case that has been brought to Him has He been unable to meet. Why then should you perish? We cannot but expostulate with you, whether you are now in the morning of your days or your feet have already begun to stumble on the dark mountains of death. While we know that Christ is the very Saviour who is suited to your case, we cannot refrain from putting it to you again and again and insisting on an explicit answer to the question so compassionately asked by God in the text: "Why will ye die?"

3. *Are you not most cordially invited to come to Christ and live?* You might have attempted to give some reply to the touching question in the text, if an Almighty Saviour had merely been revealed but no invitation had been given to you to come to Him and be saved. A house may be quite sufficient to defend me from the wintry tempest, but I may not be welcomed to its cheering shelter. A medicine may be quite sufficient to counteract and remove my inveterate disease, but I may not be permitted to taste it. But "why will ye die" if, not only has a Saviour been provided who can meet all the requirements of your case, but you are also most cordially invited to take hold of Him and live? O guilty and perishing men, why will ye die?

I am sure there is not a single feature in your sad condition for which there is not a counterpart in the gospel invitation. Is degrading servitude a feature of your natural state? Are you naturally led captive by Satan at his will? Then you are invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written: "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee". Is pollution and depravity a feature in your case? Then you are invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you". Is it a feature in your case that

you are burdened with a load of guilt and ready to sink down beneath its pressure to the lowest hell? Then you are invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”. Are poverty and nakedness and blindness features in your case? Then you are invited to take the remedy and live, for again it is written: “I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see”. Poor sinners! Is it a feature in your case that through grace you are willing to be saved? Then you are invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”.

Why then will you die? What reason are you prepared to assign? Why will you perish of hunger when He in whom all fulness dwells is thus addressing you: “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it”? Why will you die of thirst when Jesus is standing at the wells of salvation to allure you to Himself by the invitations: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink”; “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely”? O why should you remain at a distance from the fold of salvation, with inevitable and everlasting destruction before you, when the great, the good, the chief Shepherd of the sheep thus addresses you: “I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture?” You that are out of Christ, and therefore perishing, are you resolved to cast behind you those full and precious invitations? Thus welcomed, thus entreated, thus earnestly urged to be saved, “why will ye die?”

4. Does the Spirit, by His common operations, not strive with you to induce you to close with the offered Saviour and live? Not only has an all-sufficient Saviour been provided, not only are you most cordially invited to come to Him, but amid your natural unwillingness to receive Him – yea. the aversion with which you turn from Him – the Spirit has often been, and He may be still, striving with you to convince you of Christ’s excellency and to impress you with the necessity of laying hold of Him. We believe that all gospel hearers are more or less the subjects of the Spirit’s common operations. Have you never had at least momentary convictions that all was not right with you, that your religion was but a cold, heartless, dead profession, and that your hopes (if hopes you entertained) were, like the spider’s web, at the mercy of every wind that blows, instead of being based on the immovable foundation laid in Zion? The Spirit was then striving with you, although you grieved and quenched Him.

Have you not at times been impressed, under the faithful preaching of the

glorious gospel, with the thought that it is not enough to give the cold assent of the head to the revealed Bible truth that there is a hiding place from God's merited indignation against the poor traveller to eternity? Have you not also been impressed that, if the traveller would be safe amid the storms and tempests that are quickly gathering, he must enter this hiding place and abide there? Have you not felt at times that it is not enough for the sinner, stained with condemning guilt, to know merely that a fountain has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, but that he must also be personally sprinkled with the atoning blood which it contains? When the ambassador of Christ has faithfully raised the alarm and warned you to flee from the wrath to come, have you not felt the necessity of being hidden in the very clefts of that Rock of Ages which endured the wrath which an eternally-chosen people deserved? True, you may have rubbed off such impressions, you may have banished from your breasts such fears of the second death as unwelcome visitants, but this does not alter the fact that the Spirit was then striving with you.

Perhaps He is striving with you at this moment. We implore you, do not resist His operations; do not stifle the convictions He imparts. Do not grieve Him away, for each time you quench the Spirit is just a step towards the commission of that sin which is never forgiven. If you deafen yourselves to the cry of danger – if you do not listen to His timely warnings – He may never again put to you the question in the text, “Why will ye die?”

5. Are you, after mature deliberation, finally and firmly resolved to reject all that can make you happy, and to court all that can make you miserable?

Are you resolved to be Satan's slaves rather than Jesus' freemen? Have you made up your minds that the vials of the wrath which agonizes soul and body throughout eternity are preferable to the cup of salvation which the gospel invites you to drink? Are you resolved that Christ and salvation shall never be yours? Are you resolved that those healthy countenances shall, throughout eternity, be writhed in unutterable anguish? Are you resolved that the voices which have mingled today in the songs of Zion shall ultimately be spent in the hideous wailings and lamentations of those who are consigned to the lake of fire? Have the shrieks of eternal despair more charms than the ceaseless song of ransomed, happy Zion? Are you resolved to dwell with devouring flames and to lie down in everlasting burnings, rather than in good earnest to seek an entrance into that blessed abode where there are pleasures for evermore? Are you resolved to cast away eternal life with all the glory and the happiness it implies, and to prefer the second death with all the unmitigated agonies it ensures? Eternal Spirit, draw nigh in preventing grace, touch and soften every heart, that all may listen to the question; “Why will ye die?”

John Wesley's Legacy¹

1. Evangelical Arminianism

Roy Middleton

The leadership of the evangelical revival in the eighteenth century in Great Britain and America was almost entirely Calvinistic. The major exceptions to this were John and Charles Wesley and John Fletcher. It was Wesley's vigorous defence of Arminianism that first split the revival movement and eventually caused a permanent division. During George Whitefield's lifetime, and largely due to his influence, a fragile harmony was maintained. Just months after his death the movement split irrevocably.

John Wesley was brought up in a High Anglican home where Calvinism was intensely disliked. His Arminianism was, however, of a different type to that of the Dutch Remonstrants.² Unlike Arminius, he did not deny total depravity and original sin. The Remonstrants asserted that man never lost the ability to respond to God if he so chose. Wesley taught that man lost this ability in the Fall but that it had been restored to everyone as a gift of grace. This was his doctrine of prevenient grace.³ As a young man of 22, Wesley was troubled by the seventeenth article of the Church of England creed, which deals with predestination. He wrote to his mother, Susanna Wesley,⁴ asking for her opinion and advice. This is how she replied:

“The doctrine of predestination as maintained by rigid Calvinists is very shocking and ought to be abhorred because it charges the most holy God with

¹John Wesley was born on 17 June 1703. At the Free Presbyterian Theological Conference in the year of the tercentenary of his birth a paper was given on *The Life and Legacy of John Wesley*. This and subsequent articles are a slightly revised version of the second part of the paper, which dealt with five elements of Wesley's legacy that have gone beyond worldwide Methodism and have penetrated into the Evangelical churches, and two of them into some churches claiming to be Reformed. This article deals with the first of these aspects of Wesley's legacy.

²The Remonstrants were the followers of Jacobus Arminius. Their teachings were condemned at the Synod of Dort (1618-19).

³See Luke L Keefer Jr, “Characteristics of Wesley's Arminianism”, in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol 22:1, Spring 1987. A recent exposition of Wesley's Arminianism is Herbert Boyd McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace – John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism*, Carlisle, 2001.

⁴Susanna Wesley's father was Samuel Annesley, a leading London Puritan. He was ejected from St Giles, Cripplegate, in 1662 and was the main support of the Morning Lectures at Cripplegate. Six of his sermons will be found in the volumes containing the sermons delivered at the Cripplegate Exercise. On this noble dissenting background Susanna turned her back and became a High Anglican. Her decision was taken at the early age of 13 and was one from which she never swerved.

being the author of sin. . . . I do firmly believe that God from all eternity hath elected some to everlasting life, but then I humbly conceive that this election is founded on His foreknowledge according to Romans 8:29-30, "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son". Whom in His eternal prescience God saw would make a right use of their powers and accept of offered mercy, He did predestinate – adopt for His children, His peculiar treasure. . . . This is the sum of what I believe concerning predestination . . . nor can it with more reason be supposed that the prescience of God is the cause that so many finally perish than that our knowing the sun will rise in the morning is the cause of its rising."⁵ This is exactly the view of predestination and of the meaning of Article 17 of the Thirty-Nine Articles that Wesley upheld in later life.

Wesley's view of the Five Points of Calvinism involved the following: prevenient grace removed, for all mankind, the effects of total depravity; election was based on God's foreknowledge of man's sovereign choice. He then rejected entirely a definite atonement, effectual calling and the final perseverance of the saints. During John Wesley's entire career as a travelling evangelist he was in constant conflict with Calvinism.

The Calvinistic controversy during Wesley's lifetime had five distinct phases. The purpose of this article is to highlight the major issues, the men who were involved, and to show Wesley's contribution to the development of an evangelical version of Arminianism.

The dispute with George Whitefield. The first phase of the Calvinistic controversy was Wesley's dispute with George Whitefield. It began in 1739, after Whitefield had asked Wesley to assist him in his work in Bristol. No sooner had Whitefield left for his second mission to America than Wesley published a sermon titled *Free Grace*.⁶ Wesley's understanding of the meaning of the term *free grace* was very different from that of the Calvinists. To Wesley, free grace meant grace freely available to all; to Whitefield and the Calvinists, free grace is grace given, or withheld, freely by God. Whitefield eventually responded to the sermon in his *Letter to the Rev John Wesley, in answer to his sermon entitled Free Grace*.⁷

⁵The letter is given in Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, London, 1871, vol 1, pp 39-40. A fuller version is now contained in the first volume of the definitive edition of Wesley's letters. *The Works of John Wesley*, vol 25 Letters I, 1721-1739 (ed Frank Baker), Oxford, 1980, pp 178-180.

⁶The sermon is printed in *The Works of the Rev John Wesley*, London, 1872, vol 7, pp 373-386 (cited afterwards as *Wesley's Works*). After it was preached, Wesley circulated the sermon as a pamphlet, with a hymn by Charles Wesley on universal redemption annexed.

⁷Whitefield's letter is printed as Appendix 2 to *George Whitefield's Journals*, London, 1960, pp 563-588. The appendix contains a most useful prefatory note by Iain Murray.

Arnold Dallimore has provided in his life of *George Whitefield*⁸ an objective account of Wesley's unsatisfactory behaviour throughout this controversy. During Whitefield's absence in America, Wesley prejudiced Whitefield's converts against him, and did so after Whitefield had invited him to take care of them. Thomas Maxfield and his wife were among those whom Wesley sought to prejudice. Maxfield gave this testimony: "When the contention began, both she and I were warned by the persons into whose hands Mr Whitefield had entrusted us till he should return . . . not to go near him upon any consideration. No, not near enough to hear his voice in the fields! No, not by all that is sacred."⁹ In a letter to Gilbert Tennent, Whitefield writes, "Brother W[esley] had so prejudiced the people against me that those who were my spiritual children would not so much as come and see me: nay, they have gone by me whilst preaching in Moorfields and stopped their ears".¹⁰

The main theological issues in this initial Calvinistic controversy were election, particular redemption and Wesley's view of perfection. Amongst the literature the controversy produced was an anonymous tract by Wesley's mother defending her son.¹¹

John Gill and Final Perseverance. The second phase of the controversy began in 1751, when Wesley published a short anonymous tract entitled *Serious thoughts on the Perseverance of the Saints*.¹² He sums up the teaching of the tract in these words of the last section: "If the Scriptures are true, those who are holy or righteous in the judgement of God Himself; those who are endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience; those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual, invisible Church; those who are branches of the true vine, of whom Christ says, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches'; those who so effectually know Christ as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world; those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and of the fruits of the Spirit; those who live by faith in the Son of God; those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly".¹³

Whitefield's letter is also printed in Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, Edinburgh, 1980, vol 2, pp 549-569.

⁸Vol 2, pp 19-78.

⁹Cited in Dallimore, vol. 2, p 47.

¹⁰*The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, vol 1, reprinted Edinburgh, 1976, p 362.

¹¹Susanna Wesley, *Some Remarks on a Letter from the Reverend Mr Whitefield to the Reverend Mr Wesley, in a Letter from a Gentlewoman to her friend*, London, 1741.

¹²See *Wesley's Works*, vol 10, pp 284-298.

¹³*Wesley's Works*, vol 10, p 298.

The pamphlet caught the attention of the Baptist pastor-theologian, John Gill, who responded with a short treatise, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Final Perseverance Asserted and Vindicated; in Answer to a late Pamphlet called "Serious Thoughts" on the Subject*.¹⁴ Gill was rightly shocked by Wesley's approach to the sure promises of God. In his essay, Gill lists Wesley's arguments and then deals with them one by one. Gill's essay had not been in print long before Wesley replied with a larger work, *Predestination Calmly considered*, with the sub-title, *A full answer to Dr Gill's pamphlet on perseverance*.¹⁵ To this Gill responded with *The Doctrine of Predestination stated and set in the light of Scripture*.¹⁶ It was now clear to Gill that Wesley was the author of the earlier anonymous tract and he expressed some surprise at how Wesley had changed the subject from final perseverance to predestination. This, however, was a favourite Wesley tactic as he always felt more comfortable attacking predestination and reprobation. Gill thought Wesley's second tract was more of a harangue than an argument.¹⁷

Wesley's final response to Gill was a 12-page pamphlet composed entirely of selections from the hymn book *Hymns of God's Everlasting Love*, a production that contained such notorious productions as "The Cry of the Reprobate" and the "Horrible Decree".¹⁸ This indicates the confidence of Wesley in hymns as statements of theology. A W Harrison, the Methodist historian, regards this collection of hymns as by far the most effective publication in the controversy with Calvinism.¹⁹

James Hervey and Imputed Righteousness. At the centre of the third phase of the Calvinistic controversy were the doctrines of justification and the imputed righteousness of Christ. James Hervey had asserted these doctrines very forcibly in his book *Theron and Aspasio*,²⁰ published in 1755. Wesley is said to have provocatively dismissed the doctrine of the imputed right-

¹⁴ John Gill, *Sermons and Tracts*, Primitive Baptist Library, 1981, vol 3, pp 63-100.

¹⁵ See *Wesley's Works*, vol 10, pp 204-259.

¹⁶ John Gill, *Sermons and Tracts*, vol 3, pp 100-132.

¹⁷ It is to be regretted that both Iain Murray and Geoffrey Thomas appear to provide excuses for Wesley in their recent criticisms of Gill. See I H Murray, *Wesley and Men Who Followed*, Edinburgh, 2003, p 61-62; G Thomas, "John Wesley – Bane or Blessing" in *The Voice of God*, Papers read at the 2002 Westminster Conference, p 75. Whilst we appreciate Murray and Thomas's disagreement with aspects of Gill's theology, in his controversy with Wesley he was clearly defending Calvinism.

¹⁸ *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love* are printed in George Osborn, ed, *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, London, 1868-1872, vol 3, pp 3-106.

¹⁹ A W Harrison, *Arminianism*, London, 1937, p 195.

²⁰ James Hervey, *Theron and Aspasio, Or a Series of Dialogues and Letters upon the Most Important and Interesting Subjects*, London, 1755.

eousness of Christ as “imputed nonsense”.²¹ He attacked Hervey's teaching in his tract, *A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion*,²² which was printed in 1758.

An outcome of this protracted phase of the Calvinistic controversy was to make clear that Wesley's Arminian doctrine of justification was similar to that of Richard Baxter. Both Wesley and Baxter taught that faith itself, rather than the righteousness of Christ, is the ground of justification. The Arminian and Baxterian view of justification is that Christ has procured a new law for mankind by satisfying the demands of the old one. The new law is the obedience of faith.²³

In Wesley's critique of *Theron and Aspasio*, he makes some quite startling comments which reveal his intense hatred of Calvinism. Hervey had written, “The righteousness wrought out by Jesus Christ is wrought out for all His people, to be the cause of their justification and the purchase of their salvation. The righteousness is the cause and the purchase.”²⁴ This is Wesley's response: “‘For all His People.’ But what becomes of all other people? They must inevitably perish for ever. The die was cast or ever they had a being. The doctrine to pass them by has: Consigned their unborn souls to hell, / And damned them from their mother's womb.”²⁵

“I could sooner be a Turk, a Deist, yea an atheist, than I could believe this. It is less absurd to deny the very being of God than to make Him an almighty tyrant.”²⁶

Augustus Toplady and Absolute Predestination. The fourth phase of Wesley's battle with Calvinism was the prolonged controversy with Augustus Toplady. In September 1758, when merely a 17-year-old student at Trinity College, Dublin, Toplady had written to Wesley approving of his criticism of James Hervey. Toplady, then an Arminian, had written, “I have long been convinced that self-righteousness and Antinomianism are equally pernicious; and that to insist on the imputation of Christ's righteousness, as alone requisite to

²¹A Sell, *The Great Debate – Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation*, Worthing, 1982, p 66.

²²This work is a collection of thirteen pamphlets, mostly written by Wesley, on a variety of topics. The twelfth piece was “A letter written to the Rev Mr Hervey” in 1756. The letter is also contained in *Letters of John Wesley*, (edited by John Telford), (cited afterwards as *Wesley's Letters (Telford)*) London, 1931, vol 3, pp 371-388.

²³Wesley's controversy with Hervey is dealt with in L Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists*, London, 1873, pp 279-333; A Brown-Lawson, *John Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals of the Eighteenth Century*, Bishop Auckland, 1994, pp 193-269; G M Ella, *James Hervey, Preacher of Righteousness*, Eggleston, 1997.

²⁴Cited in *Wesley's Letters, (Telford)*, vol 3, pp 386-387.

²⁵*Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, vol 3, p 33.

²⁶*Wesley's Letters, (Telford)*, vol 3, p 387.

salvation, is only strewing the way to hell with flowers. I have myself known some make shipwreck of faith, and love, and a good conscience, on this specious quicksand.”²⁷

Shortly after writing the letter, Toplady became a decided Calvinist, after reading Thomas Manton’s *Exposition of John 17*.²⁸ Over a decade later, in 1769, Toplady wrote two tracts, *The Church of England Vindicated from Arminianism*²⁹ and *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination Stated and Asserted*.³⁰ The latter treatise was largely a translation of a work by Jerome Zanchius and was very offensive to Wesley. On seeing these works, Wesley wrote to one of his literary helpers: “Add a word to that lively coxcomb, Mr Toplady, not only with regard to Zanchius, but his slander of the Church of England. You would do well to give a reading to both his tracts. He does certainly believe himself to be the greatest genius in England.”³¹

This led to a protracted exchange on the topic of predestination that continued until Toplady died, in 1778, at the age of 38. Wesley published what he called an abridgment of Toplady’s teaching³² that parodied his view of predestination. An advertisement beneath the title of the tract contained what Wesley claimed to be a summary of Toplady’s teaching. It read as follows: “The sum of all is this: One in twenty (suppose) of mankind is elected: nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned. Reader, believe this or be damned. Witness my hand. Augustus Toplady.”³³

The Minutes Controversy. The final phase of the conflict is what has been called the “Minutes Controversy”. It was a direct result of the minutes of the 1770 Methodist Conference. These minutes repeated a statement that had been made in the minutes of the 1744 Conference, a quarter of a century earlier, shortly after the dispute with George Whitefield. The statement was

²⁷Toplady’s letter to Wesley is printed in L Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol 2, pp 315-316. The citation is on p 315.

²⁸This treatise is in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol 10, pp 107-490, and vol 11, pp 1-149, London, 1872.

²⁹Reprinted in *The Works of Augustus Toplady*, (cited afterwards as *Toplady’s Works*) London, 1837, pp 610-663.

³⁰Reprinted in *Toplady’s Works*, pp 663-718.

³¹This comment is in a letter to Walter Sellon. See *Wesley’s Letters (Telford)*, vol 5, p 167. It should be noted that at the time Toplady was 29 and Wesley was 66.

³²The title of the tract was *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination, Stated and Asserted*, by the Reverend Mr A . . . T . . . , London, 1770.

³³See *Wesley’s Letters (Telford)*, vol 5, p 167; *Toplady’s Works*, p 721; George Lawton, *Within the Rock of Ages, The Life and Work of Augustus Montague Toplady*, Cambridge, 1983, pp 100-101.

“Have we not then unawares leaned too much towards Calvinism?”³⁴ The minutes then go on to explain what the statement meant. The meaning was essentially this: salvation by faith alone had been stressed at the expense of the need for good works. The explanation of how the Methodists had leaned too much towards Calvinism was in these terms:

“(1) With regard to man’s faithfulness. Our Lord Himself taught us to use the expression: therefore we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert upon His authority that if a man is not ‘faithful in the unrighteous mammon, God will not give him the true riches’.

“(2) With regard to ‘working for life’, which our Lord expressly commands us to do. ‘Labour’, literally, ‘work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life’. And in fact every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life.

“(3) We have received it as a maxim, that ‘a man is to do nothing in order to justification’. Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God, should ‘cease from evil, and learn to do well’. So God himself teaches by the prophet Isaiah. Whoever repents, should ‘do works meet for repentance’. And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?”

The resulting minute,³⁵ of which the above citation is just the first part, looked alarmingly like a popish statement of justification by works. It also contained the following rather inflammatory statement: “As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid. We are rewarded according to our works, yea because of our works. How does this differ from, ‘for the sake of our works’? . . . Which is no more than ‘as our works deserve’. Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.”³⁶

The 1770 Methodist Conference minutes sparked off a bitter controversy that lasted for six years.³⁷ The Countess of Huntingdon and her nephew Walter Shirley organized a protest at the 1771 Methodist Conference. The Calvinists

³⁴See *Minutes of some late conversations between the Rev Mr Wesley and others*, Minute of Monday, 25 June, in *Wesley’s Works*, vol 8, p 278.

³⁵The entire minute is in *Wesley’s Works*, vol 8, pp 337-338; it is also cited in full in C W Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today*, London, 1960, pp 61-62.

³⁶Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today*, p 62.

³⁷More historical analysis is still required of this crucial controversy. It is briefly traced in A Brown-Lawson, *John Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals of the Eighteenth Century*, pp 301-354 and A W Harrison, *Arminianism*, pp 204-222. Fuller accounts appear in the biographies of John Fletcher; see Luke Tyerman, *Wesley’s Designated Successor – The Life, Letters, and Literary Labours of the Rev John William Fletcher*, reprinted Stoke on Trent, 2001, pp 183-354; Patrick Streiff, *Reluctant Saint? – A Theological Biography of Fletcher of Madeley*, Peterborough, 2001, pp 149-237.

defended the biblical doctrine of justification and its compatibility with godly living, whilst Wesley's lieutenant, John Fletcher of Madeley, accused the Calvinists of being Antinomians. For Wesley, justification was merely forgiveness; he rejected the forensic imputation of Christ's righteousness to His people. The literature of the controversy is very extensive and includes John Fletcher's *Five Checks to Antinomianism*.³⁸ Wesley greatly admired these volumes and they seem to have been the basis of Wesley appointing Fletcher as his "designated successor".

The main authors on the Calvinistic side who defended the Protestant doctrine of justification were Augustus Toplady, Richard and Rowland Hill and John Berridge of Everton.³⁹ The Minutes controversy resulted in the revival movement being irrevocably divided. One of the organs used by the Calvinists was the *Gospel Magazine*, which was edited for a time by Toplady (and is still published). To counter the influence of the *Gospel Magazine* Wesley began in January 1778 the *Arminian Magazine*. It was in the midst of this last phase of the Calvinistic controversy that Toplady produced his tract descriptive of Wesley, *An Old Fox Tarred and Feathered*.⁴⁰

Towards the end of his life Wesley wrote:

Q. What is the direct antidote to Methodism, the doctrine of heart holiness.

A. Calvinism. All the devices of Satan for these fifty years have done far less towards stopping the work of God than this single doctrine.⁴¹

"Misrepresentation like this", as J I Packer has observed, "from a godly man who over fifty years had had many Calvinistic friends and abundant

³⁸John Fletcher's *Five Checks to Antinomianism* is a series of volumes published between 1771 and 1774 that greatly fuelled the controversy. There were six tracts with this title – the Fifth Check was in two parts. These were followed by three further volumes in 1774 and 1775, *An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism* (in two parts) and *The Last Check to Antinomianism*. These volumes were long regarded by Methodists as models of Arminian doctrine.

³⁹The major treatise by Toplady during the controversy was *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England*. The title of one of Richard Hill's many contributions gives a sense of the intensity of the theological battle: *A Review of all the Doctrines taught by Rev Mr John Wesley; containing a full and particular answer to a book entitled, "A Second Check to Antinomianism". In six letters to the Rev Mr Fletcher. Wherein the Doctrines of a twofold justification, free will, men's merit, sinless perfection, finished salvation, and real Antinomianism, are particularly discussed; and the Puritan Divines and Protestant Churches vindicated from the charges brought against them of holding Mr Wesley's doctrines. To which is added, a Farrago; and some remarks on the Third Check to Antinomianism*, London, 1772. John Berridge's most significant contribution was *The Christian World Unmasked; Pray, Come and Peep*, London, 1773.

⁴⁰*An Old Fox Tarred and Feathered; Occasioned by what is called Mr. John Wesley's Calm address to our American Colonies*, in *Toplady's Works*, pp 762-766.

⁴¹*Wesley's Works*, vol 8, p 336.

opportunity to read Calvinistic books, argues a degree of prejudice and closed mindedness which is almost pathological."⁴² Before Wesley, Arminianism in England was of the rationalistic Dutch type as seen in men like Archbishop Laud. After Wesley, Arminianism became the hallmark of a section of Evangelicalism. All the modern Arminian evangelists from Charles Finney (who was born in the year Wesley died) to Billy Graham are Wesley's children and inheritors of this aspect of his legacy.

Obituary

Robert Ross, Elder, Foindle

In days gone by, there were not a few worthy men and women who passed the period of their sojourning in the north west of Scotland, and in that part of Sutherland where Robert Ross was born and brought up. The standard of godliness which they set for themselves and others was that found in the Word of God, and the manner in which they lived in close communion with God is left on record in several publications. Such was Robert Ross's stature as a Christian, and as a living epistle of Christ known and read of all men, that he might well be regarded as one whom those outstanding Christians of the past would have readily taken to their bosoms, discerning in him those very marks of saving grace which they so earnestly sought to discover in themselves and which they looked for in others professing godliness before accepting them into their fellowship and confidence.

Robert was born on 29 June 1920, at Ardmore, a small, isolated crofting village situated on the northern shore of Loch Laxford and within the bounds of the parish of Eddrachillis. He was the third oldest in the family of nine children born to Hector and Robina Ross. As there was no road of any kind to Ardmore, access to it was either by sea, or overland by walking along the rough three-mile-long moorland track which branched from the Durness-Scourie road three miles south of Rhiconich. The nearest Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland congregation met at Kinlochbervie eight miles away, and the able-bodied among those in Ardmore who loved "the gates of Sion" regularly walked there on the Sabbath Day. It was, of course, not possible for young children to attend regularly, but those

⁴²J I Packer, *Collected Shorter Writings*, vol 4, p 300.

able to make the journey did so from time to time, if the weather permitted.

However, the means of grace became more accessible when a Sabbath service was started at Achlyness School, just over three miles from Ardmore. These services were conducted by Mr George MacKenzie, a godly elder who is described in his obituary as “receiving marvellous nearness to the Most High and who was endowed with remarkable gifts and talents”. He preached mainly in Gaelic, but he was not forgetful of those who were not fully fluent in that language and would use some English to explain what he was saying. This, we are told, made quite an impression on the Ross children and their mother, who was able to be there with them. One of Robert’s sisters still remembers how the man of God would often pray that the weather would keep dry for the homeward journey and that it often did. Robert Ross often mentioned the name of George MacKenzie and it is clear that he was much loved and respected by him and the other members of his family circle at Ardmore.

The writer of George Mackenzie’s obituary mentions that two other men noted also for their godliness – Donald Macleod, Duartbeg, and Hector Morrison, Foindle – had also recently been removed to their everlasting rest and that by their removal the Church militant had suffered a great loss, especially the cause of truth in Eddrachillis. He goes on: “They were men who prayed fervently that faithful witnesses would be raised up in the congregations where they worshipped and, it may well be, their prayers will yet be answered”. We believe that Robert Ross, in his day and generation, was indeed one of those faithful witnesses, raised up in answer to the prayers of these righteous men.

Robert left school on reaching 14 years of age and worked for some time with his father and older brother at lobster fishing. Thereafter he was employed for some time in Overscaig before moving to Killin, where he worked on a farm for two years, but it had always been his ambition to join the Royal Air Force. That ambition was realised in 1938 and, when his training was completed, he was posted to RAF Kinloss, a base that had newly been commissioned. With the outbreak of World War II, he was stationed at various places in the United Kingdom before being posted overseas. The destination was Singapore, but before the troopship arrived there the colony fell into the hands of the Japanese, and a new course was set for Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). In view of the harsh, inhuman manner in which the Japanese treated prisoners of war, many of whom died in captivity, Robert afterwards saw the Lord’s hand in his preservation at this time.

After service in the Far East and having, in the Lord’s providence, come unscathed through the war, he took advantage of the offer open to ex-

servicemen to learn a trade. It was thus that he came to Glasgow to train as a painter and as a result began to attend St Jude's church. At the time, the minister was Rev D J Matheson. It was about this time that Robert was converted, but, as in the case of many other honest and true-hearted Christians, he apparently could not pinpoint the exact time of the change or the means which were employed. He had three godly grand-aunts living in Partick at the time, but we are told that he had no desire to visit them until the change came and that, when he did visit them, they persuaded him to go with them to hear Rev Roderick MacKenzie. Robert was then 27 years of age. Robert would not deny the fact that he obtained much good from being under Mr MacKenzie's preaching, but on his first visit home to Ardmore, his father told him that Donald Campbell, Missionary, disapproved of him attending his ministry. For Donald Campbell, Robert had the greatest respect, and for that reason, among others, he regularly attended St Jude's when he returned to Glasgow.

After some time, he returned north and was employed with a firm in Tain. He thus came to attend the services held by Archie Robertson, who was the Church's able and well-known missionary there at the time. It was in Tain, in 1951, that he came before the Kirk Session and sat at the Lord's table for the first time. As it happened, Mr Robertson's oldest son was preparing to emigrate to Canada and Robert decided to join him. Accordingly, he arrived in Vancouver, where he was to be resident until December 1955. Humble and circumspect in his walk, life and behaviour, the Vancouver congregation, and especially the Lord's people among them, took him to their hearts. It was in Vancouver that he was to meet Mary Macaskill, who was later to become his true helpmeet in life and is now left to mourn his death.

In December 1959 they were married in Scotland and, while many thought that it would be advantageous for the young couple to return to Vancouver, Robert felt that he could not leave the area when his services were required in keeping the church door open in Kinlochbervie and Scourie. Alex MacDonald, the Missionary – a man held in the highest regard by all who knew him – was to depart for Stoer. As Robert was greatly attached to him, regarding him as a father and mentor in spiritual things, parting with him as he boarded the Kylesku ferry on the day of his removal was a painful and sorrowful experience. Alex MacDonald's cloak was now to fall on the shoulders of Robert Ross and, putting the cause first, as he consistently did all his life, any thoughts of emigrating to Vancouver were banished, and with his young wife (who was of the same self-denying mind) he now decided to settle down in his native place. A home was to be wonderfully provided. Godly Hector Morrison, already mentioned, had a house in Foindle in which,

after his death, his son resided. As he was now in his eighties and living alone, he decided to move, and the house was offered to Robert. It was thus that he and his wife came to live in what many would regard as one of the most idyllic spots on the face of the earth. He worked from his home and, as time passed, his skill, honesty and integrity as a tradesman became widely known.

On 9 July 1958, at Kinlochbervie, he was ordained to the office of the eldership. In October 1960, much to the joy of Robert and the people there, Rev D B Macleod accepted a call to the Kinlochbervie and Scourie Congregation. Mr Macleod was to remain there for two years. The attachment between himself and Robert Ross was to remain strong and unbroken until Mr Macleod's lamented death in January 1995. After an interval of eight years Rev John Tallach was inducted. By now Robert's oldest son was due to go to a secondary school and it was thought expedient that the family should buy a second home at Ardgay. There they were to remain for 16 years, but the Foindle home was retained and they returned to it in 1988. By this time Rev John Tallach had moved, and his brother, Rev Fraser Tallach, had already taken his place.

In 1989, the Free Presbyterian Church was agitated by the departure of the ministers and elders who formed the Associated Presbyterian Churches. Although Rev Fraser Tallach was prominent among those who defected, Robert Ross and his fellow elders remained steadfast. The congregation was much reduced numerically, but as a result of their faithfulness, services were maintained and the church buildings remained in possession of the Church, apart from the manse, which was recovered later. Robert did his utmost to maintain the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, not only in his native Sutherland, but also in Caithness. Once a month he travelled to Halkirk, a round distance of over 200 miles, to keep the door open there on the Sabbath and he did so self-denyingly and in the face of the many difficulties which the performance of that duty entailed.

Robert Ross would be the last to claim pre-eminence, but others would judge him to be a worthy follower of such laymen as George MacKenzie and the others already mentioned, who served Christ in their day and in the sphere of labour allotted them. His delight was to speak well of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. Latterly his sky appeared to be unclouded. About a year before his death the writer, as well as others present in his home, heard him say, quite spontaneously, "For 40 years I could not say it, but I can say it now, 'My beloved is mine and I am His'". This assurance was far from that which savours of presumption and inclines men to looseness; it was that of a mature Christian and that for which "a true believer may wait long, [and] conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it". Those close to

him would testify that he was habitually found seeking “the Father, which seeth in secret”. We are told that his close communion with God was revealed in several instances when portions of the Word of God, accompanied with light and power, afforded him the direction or comfort which he was seeking at the time. In public and at family worship he earnestly prayed for the coming of Christ’s kingdom, fully persuaded that all these precious promises relating to the whole earth being yet filled with His glory would in due time be fulfilled.

He read Puritan authors such as John Owen with relish. Latterly his eyesight failed to some extent and he was not able to read as much as before. We are told that a few weeks before his death, he asked his wife to print out in large characters an excerpt from Matthew Henry’s *Commentary* in relation to Philippians 2:5-8. It reads as follows: “Here is a gospel pattern proposed to our imitation, and that is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus’. Observe, Christians must be of Christ’s mind. We must bear a resemblance to His life, if we would benefit from His death. If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His. Now what was the mind of Christ? He was eminently humble, and this is what we are peculiarly to learn of Him. ‘Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.’ If we were lowly-minded, we should be like-minded; and, if we were like Christ, we should be lowly-minded. We must walk in the same spirit and in the same steps with the Lord Jesus, who humbled himself to sufferings and death for us; not only to satisfy God’s justice, and pay the price of our redemption, but to set us an example, and that we might follow His steps.” The piece of paper bearing these words, written in capital letters that they might all the more easily be read, was afterwards found on his desk.

Although he had undergone surgery in November 2000, he had made an excellent recovery and his health remained good and his mind clear right to the end. However, on becoming unwell on Friday, September 3, he was taken to Raigmore Hospital, where it was discovered that his condition was terminal. He remained buoyant and hopeful that he might yet return home to his beloved Foindle and render further service to his Master, but it was not to be. On Thursday, September 16, he suddenly passed away. The time of his departure had come and in the twinkling of an eye he was, we firmly believe, “absent from the body and . . . present with the Lord”. He was found prepared for death; his feet were long beforehand planted upon the rock and the new song was already in his mouth.

He was laid to rest in Scourie cemetery on Wednesday, 22 September 2004. It is where the precious dust of others whose memories he cherished is also found.

To his sorrowing widow and the four sons and three daughters, who are acutely aware of the loss of a beloved husband and father, we extend our sympathy. We are not forgetful of his brothers and sisters also, as well as the small but faithful congregation who mourn his passing. The comfort is theirs that they are not to sorrow as others which have no hope. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

(Rev) J MacLeod

Protestant View

The Protestant Succession under renewed attack

Enemies of the Protestant nature of the British throne will never rest until it is abolished. Conservative MP, Edward Leigh, is to introduce, under the 10-minute rule, a bill to repeal the legislation which prevents heirs to the throne marrying "Papists". He believes his Royal Marriages: Freedom of Religion Bill would be simpler to pass into law than bigger pieces of legislation, because it simply seeks to remove the relevant clauses.

As *The Times* reports, "The bill has no chance of receiving sufficient parliamentary time to become law". But the newspaper goes on to show its pro-Romanist bias when it gives expression to what sadly is the prevailing view among many MPs: "It is a measure of cross-party concern that antique legislation such as the Bill of Rights, Act of Settlement and Acts of Union between England and Scotland should include provisions for concerns which have long passed into history except for a small fringe of Protestant fundamentalists."

Rome's view has been given by Cardinal Keith O'Brien, who told *The Times*: "It will be measures which abolish all religious restrictions on members of the royal family which will alone remedy this unsatisfactory situation". And in a recent article in *The Spectator*, the Roman Catholic writer Paul Johnson expresses his belief that the Incitement to Religious Hatred legislation presently going through Parliament may have unintended effects. He writes: "It may be that the whole established Church and its consequences, the Protestant throne and the ownership of our mediaeval churches and cathedrals, will be thrown into irreparable confusion by this new statute. I certainly hope so." We suspect he is also giving utterance to the fervent desire of Rome.

Let us continue to pray that the Lord will preserve the Protestant Succession to the throne, which has been a bulwark of the Reformed faith in our nation. But whatever He may permit its enemies to do, He will not fail

to fulfil His promise, “Upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18). NMR

Notes and Comments

Secularism

“In the land of Knox, religion isn’t what it was”. This was the title given to an article in *The Scotsman* of 1 March 2005 which attempted to analyse the results of the first national census which identified religious affiliation. While 65% of the Scottish population identified themselves as “Christian”, the census is taken to show an increasing actual secularisation of Scottish society – though the nation is enthusiastically described at the same time by political and religious commentators as “multi-ethnic, multi-faith” and “still a very spiritual country”. The Christian character of the country as judged by its constitution and by the professed allegiance of the majority of its citizens is largely ignored by legislators when they deal with specific matters such as religious education and observance in schools, as well as in their general approach to moral and social issues. Were it not for the secularisation and practical irreligion of society at large, there would be much stronger resistance to the programmes pursued by the politicians.

The remedies proposed by many who are somewhat concerned at the accelerating trends include the churches putting aside their differences and the churches “reconnecting with issues that matter to ordinary Scots”. Advocating the second of these remedies, Andrew Collier gladly notes that “there is a recognition that age-old theological arguments about the nature of grace or the validity of transubstantiation are less important – and certainly less meaningful – than a common front against the global afflictions of AIDS, environmental damage, hunger, clean water, poverty and warfare” (*The Scotsman*, 1 March 2005).

Christians have ever been in the forefront, personally and collectively, in actions and causes which are truly helpful to the temporal well-being of their fellows. Much of the decline in the Church’s influence can be traced, however, to the adoption of attitudes to such issues which are formulated on humanistic considerations rather than gospel principles. The basic cause of the loss of influence by the Church and the consequent secularisation of society has been the Church’s general abandonment of the mission and message which was entrusted to her by her Lord and, indeed, by the refusal to recognise His authority as that is communicated via His Word.

The only remedy for the increasing secularisation of Scottish society and

the growing influence of non-Christian religions is that the professing Church of Christ in the land would return to the proclamation of the certainties of God's Word – ruin by the Fall, redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit – and that this message would be accompanied by the gracious, saving power of God. *HMC*

Sectarianism

In his drive to banish “sectarianism”, which he famously called “Scotland’s shame”, the First Minister is demanding that all organisations “get rid of anything that could cause offence within their organisations”. He responds to Cardinal O’Brien’s opportunistic call for the removal of the nation’s commitment to a Protestant Throne with the opinion that there are more important ways of tackling discrimination. But to keep the balance he maintains that separate Roman Catholic schools play an important part in the drive against sectarianism.

Sectarianism is generally perceived in terms of a Protestant-Roman Catholic divide and blamed upon Protestants. We have previously commented on the ignorance which cannot distinguish between the rivalries of mindless and drunken hooligans and the rational and biblically-based arguments of Protestants against the religion from which the Reformation delivered Scotland, a religion which has moved even further from biblical foundations with, for example, its acceptance of the dogma of papal infallibility in 1870 and the growth of Mariolatry under the current Pope. Professor Steve Bruce, commenting on research into this type of violence, characterises the description of it as “sectarianism” as “a social myth” largely explained by the fact that “opinion-leaders such as politicians and the mass media believe that sectarianism is a major problem, and that belief distorts their perceptions” (*The Scotsman*, 15 February 2005). The *Scotsman*’s own leader of the same day illustrates this by its assertion that “sectarianism is a scourge”.

We were glad to see the point being made in a recent public statement by Rev Robert Anderson of the Church of Scotland: “From the time of the Reformation, Roman Catholic theology has regarded Protestant Christianity as schismatic and sectarian . . . the implicit message is that Protestant Christians are necessarily sectarian simply by existing”. If confirmation of this is needed, it is found in the reported assertion of a married former Anglican minister, who recently was the subject of a much-publicised ordination as a Roman Catholic priest, that “Anglican orders are invalid in the Roman Catholic Church, so I had to serve as a deacon and be ordained again” (*The Scotsman*, 5 March 2005). It is found also in Professor Tom

Devine's response to Professor Bruce's article, where he gives as his reason for identifying a specific organisation as sectarian the fact that its members are required strenuously to "oppose the fatal errors and doctrines of the Church of Rome" and "resist the ascendancy of the Church, its encroachments and extensions of its power" (*The Scotsman*, 16 February 2005). The conclusion is that to oppose Romanism is sectarianism. Perhaps Mr McConnell should take this matter up with the Cardinal when he next confers with him!

It is "Scotland's shame" that her political leaders have largely abandoned the Bible, the religion which it clearly teaches and fosters, and the moral code which is derived from it. It is no wonder, consequently, that they expend their energy in attacking men of straw such as "sectarianism" and "bigotry" while condoning and encouraging the breakdown of moral values which is leaving them with the health, education and social problems which they find so difficult to solve. HMC

Euthanasia Legislation

Amidst the renewed attempts to introduce legislation to permit euthanasia, comparatively few voices are raised in support of the sanctity of human life. We were glad therefore to read in the religious press a letter from Dr Peter Saunders, General Secretary of the Christian Medical Fellowship. In it he refers to a letter by Leo Alexander, a psychiatrist at the War Crimes trial at Nuremberg, published in 1949 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Alexander described the process which ended in the murderous extermination by Nazi Germany of millions of people in camps such as Auschwitz and Belsen in the 1940s. It began in the 1930s in nursing homes, geriatric units and psychiatric hospitals with the killing of 60 000 adults and 5000 children on supposedly compassionate grounds. In other words, it began with the attitude of physicians (which is foundational to the thinking of those who advocate euthanasia), that life may not be worthy of being continued. This attitude, said Alexander, "in its early stages concerned itself merely with the severely and chronically sick, but gradually the sphere of those to be included in this category was enlarged".

Dr Saunder's warns that a similar kind of progression "requires only four accelerating factors: favourable public opinion, a handful of willing doctors, economic pressure and a law allowing it. We have the first three already." It requires no leap of the imagination to see a chilling scenario develop if legislation is put in place and society departs still further from God – and all in the name of compassion. Truly, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Prov 12.20).

We recognise that the palliative care of the terminally-ill confronts medical staff with complex questions, but it is helpful to bear in mind that God has not only appointed affliction in His holy and infinitely wise providence but also mercifully provides a multitude of means for alleviating affliction. In any case, He has set the limits of our time in this world. It is His prerogative to bring into being, and He alone has appointed the day of our departure from time to eternity. *NMR*

Children and Gambling

The Government's new Gambling Bill is supposed to be a reforming measure to keep crime out of the gambling industry and protect the vulnerable, including children. The reality is that the Bill will relax the general prohibitions on gambling advertising, increase the use of slot machines, permit the opening of Las Vegas-style casinos, and licence internet gambling in the UK.

The Government claims that they "will put social responsibility at the heart of the new regime", but after a ten-month inquiry, a Parliamentary Committee has categorically stated that "this legislation would increase the number of people in the United Kingdom with a gambling problem". Nevertheless, the Government is cynically pressing ahead with its proposals, and so more young people will become addicted to gambling.

Research by the Christian Institute shows that "younger people are particularly vulnerable to the lure of gambling". The Gordon House Association, a residential centre for gambling addicts, reported to the Committee that almost 90% of their residents during the past three years were under 18 when they began gambling and that about a third of these started between the ages of eight and 12. In this age-group, one specially dangerous type of gambling is on fruit machines.

It is shameful that the UK is the only country in the developed world that permits children to gamble. Polls show that 82% of people are opposed to children gambling, and academics and various organisations have presented compelling evidence against it. It is little wonder that a speaker in the House of Lords declared, "Given the strength of opposition to children playing these machines it is almost unbelievable that the Government are set to allow children to carry on playing them".

But gambling is lucrative for some; it increases government revenue, and also swells the coffers of the gambling industry. Scripture warns, "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing" (Prov 10:2), and, "He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor" (Prov 28:8). *NMR*

Church Information

Ordination and Induction of Rev Donald Macdonald

On Monday, 14 February 2005, an encouraging number of people came from various parts to attend the ordination of Rev Donald Macdonald, Probationer, and his induction to the North Uist congregation. Most of the Bayhead church was filled for the occasion, with about 180 present. Among the visitors were Revs James R Tallach, Raasay, Rev Wilfred A Weale and Barry W Whear, who were associated with the Presbytery.

After Rev Angus Smith, the Moderator of the Outer Isles Presbytery, had constituted the Presbytery, Mr Angus Macleod was appointed Officer of Court and made the usual proclamation at the door of the church. When there were no objections to Mr Macdonald's life and doctrine, Rev J Bruce Jardine went to the pulpit to conduct public worship and preached an appropriate discourse from Matthew 20:28 "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many". From this verse he drew the following lessons: a minister (1) should be humble, (2) can expect to undergo affliction, (3) is meant to serve others, and (4) must preach Christ.

When public worship was over, the Clerk gave a brief narrative of the proceedings in the Call, and the Moderator addressed to Mr Macdonald the Questions appointed to be put to Probationers at their ordination and induction to a pastoral charge. After returning satisfactory answers to these questions, Mr Macdonald signed the Formula in the presence of the congregation. He then knelt down, and the Moderator, with solemn prayer to God ordained Mr Macdonald to the holy ministry, the ministers present joining in the imposition of hands. The Moderator, in the name of the Presbytery and by the authority of the Divine Head of the Church, then admitted Mr Macdonald to the pastoral charge of the North Uist congregation and, along with the other members of Presbytery, gave him the right hand of fellowship. Rev Angus Smith then suitably addressed the newly-inducted minister, and Rev Kenneth D Macleod the congregation. The Clerk read a number of messages of good wishes from other ministers.

An excellent meal had been prepared in the nearby Paible School, and most of those present moved across to enjoy it. The ordination and induction had previously been arranged for January 12 but had to be cancelled as a result of a severe storm which disrupted ferry services to the island and caused substantial damage. We were thankful to have had favourable weather on the new date.

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This settlement brought to an end the vacancy created when Rev A Morrison passed away six years ago. The Presbytery are thankful to see the charge filled again and wish Mr Macdonald much of the Lord's blessing in his ministry in North Uist, and trust that the congregation will be much profited through his work among them.

(Rev) K D Macleod, Clerk of Presbytery

Meetings of Presbytery (DV)

Southern: At Glasgow, on Wednesday, April 6, at 4 pm.

Skye: At Portree, on Tuesday, April 12, at 11 am.

Australia & New Zealand: At Wellington, on Friday, July 15, at 2.30 pm.

Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003.

This Act aims to strengthen safeguards for children by preventing unsuitable people from working with them. In the Synod of 2002 an Ad Hoc Committee was appointed in connection with the implications of this Act for the Church and, subsequent to the Synod of the following year, checks on prospective employees in our Care Homes were started. In the 2004 Synod it was agreed that checks be made as required by the Act on all those within the Church covered by the Act whose work would put them in a position of trust with children. The Church is therefore, as far as the Synod is concerned, in a position to comply with this law.

This Act came into force on 10 January 2005. However, in order to give voluntary bodies more time to prepare, the Executive has deferred implementation of two subsections of the Act. As a result no criminal proceedings will be taken under the Act for three months from January 10. From April 11, however, all organisations not complying will be liable to criminal proceedings. The Executive is offering further information on this Act on the internet at www.scotland.gov.uk/childprotection, or by phoning 0131 224 1567.

(Rev) J R Tallach, Convener of the Ad Hoc Committee

General Building Fund

By appointment of Synod, this year's special collection on behalf of the General Building Fund is due to be taken in congregations during April.

R A Campbell, General Treasurer

Texas Church and Manse Building Fund

It was reported to the Southern Presbytery at their meeting on 23 February 2005 that the Deacons Court of the Richmond, Texas, congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland have set up a fund with a view to purchasing a church and manse. The Presbytery agreed to endorse an appeal in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* on behalf of this fund. Contributions may be sent either to Mr Mark Smith, Congregation Treasurer, 6220 Avenue O, Santa Fe, Texas, 77510, USA, or to Mr R A Campbell, General Treasurer, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, the latter being the least expensive method for contributors in the United Kingdom.

(Rev) H M Cartwright, Clerk of Presbytery