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## Intelligent Design

In Britain, fewer and fewer people make any acknowledgement of God. They live as if He did not exist; they never attend public worship; they assume that beyond death there is nothing – no judgement, no eternity, no heaven, no hell. And behind all this unbelief lies one highly-significant factor – the theory of evolution. The education system and the media consistently support the view that the universe just happened to come into existence and that life developed from one stage to another through a series of random changes.

The situation in America seems, at first glance, to be different. After all, a sizeable proportion of the population claim to believe in God as Creator. Yet the education system and the media there oppose such a belief just as effectively as in this country. Indeed the curious interpretation the courts have put on the constitution – that the state must not support religion in any way – has turned American schools into wholly-secular institutions. Accordingly in 1987 the Supreme Court ruled it was unconstitutional to teach creation in science classes. And the merest suggestion that a public school teaches what may be taken to imply that God is Creator is likely to provoke a law case. Which is what Dover Area School Board in Pennsylvania discovered when they arranged for a brief statement to be read out to 14-to-15-year-old pupils at the beginning of their biology course.

This statement seems totally innocuous and includes the following: “Because Darwin’s theory is a theory, it continues to be tested as new evidence is discovered. The theory is not a fact. Gaps in the theory exist for which there is no evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations. Intelligent design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin’s view. The reference book, *Of Pandas and People*, is available for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what intelligent design actually involves. With respect to any theory, students are encouraged to keep an open mind. The school leaves the discussion of the origins of life to individual students and their families.” However, a group of 11 parents are asking a Federal Court to rule against the statement. A lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union,

who are supporting the parents, has claimed that there are two questions at the heart of this case: “Did the school board have religious intentions in adopting a policy that mentions intelligent design? and Does intelligent design have ‘religious underpinnings’?”

Lying at the back of this case is one which involved the state of Louisiana, after it passed, in 1981, a law requiring the teaching of evolution to be balanced with creation science. The Supreme Court held the law unconstitutional because its purpose “was clearly to advance the religious viewpoint that a supernatural being created humankind”. The court was no doubt influenced by the National Academy of Sciences, which argued that creation science is not science, because “it fails to display the most basic characteristic of science: reliance upon naturalistic explanations”<sup>1</sup> – in other words, explanations which do not in any way involve the supernatural. By this definition, nothing is science if it involves any reference to God.

Of all who argue in this way, it must be said: “God is not in all his thoughts”; so, no matter how vast their knowledge or how powerful their intellects, they display a fundamental foolishness (see Psalm 14:1). No doubt, they feel much more at ease by persuading themselves that there is no divine creator. T H Huxley, known as Darwin’s bulldog, claimed that he found great comfort in not having to account for his sins to a creator. Is this what explains the militant tone of the outburst by Richard Dawkins, a professor at Oxford University and one of the most prominent promoters of evolution today: “It is absolutely safe to say that, if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I’d rather not consider that)”<sup>2</sup>? He went on to state that what he dislikes particularly about creationists is that they are intolerant, which sounds very much like a pot calling the kettle black!<sup>2</sup>

Promoters of the concept of intelligent design point to the vast amount of evidence in nature for a designer and demonstrate that the random changes supposed by naturalistic evolution could not have produced life. Professor Dawkins admits: “Physics books may be complicated, but . . . the objects and phenomena that a physics book describes are simpler than a single cell in the body of its author. And the author consists of trillions of those cells . . . organised with intricate architecture and precision-engineering into a working machine capable of writing a book. . . . Each nucleus . . . contains a digitally-coded database larger, in information content, than all 30 volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* put together. And this figure is for *each* cell.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Phillip E Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, pp 6-8.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in *Darwin on Trial*, p 9.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Phillip E Johnson, *The Wedge of Truth*, p 126.

Dawkins does indeed admit that there is *apparent* design, but he adamantly refuses, in common with all other Darwinists, to accept any evidence of actual design.

However, in his *Darwin's Black Box*, Michael Behe uses the concept of irreducible complexity to demonstrate the fact of design in nature. For a simple illustration he uses a mousetrap. It consists of a platform, a hammer, a spring, a catch and a holding bar; if any of these components is missing, it cannot function as a mousetrap. So with a cell, or indeed the constituent parts of a cell. William A Dembski summarises Behe's description of the bacterial flagellum: it "is a whip-like rotary motor that enables a bacterium to navigate through its environment. The flagellum includes an acid-powered rotary engine, a stator, O-rings, bushings and a drive shaft. The intricate machinery of this molecular motor requires approximately 50 proteins. Yet the absence of any one of these proteins results in the complete loss of motor function."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Darwinian speculation assumes that a flagellum or any other component of an organism has come about by a long series of slight, random mutations, each of which brings about an improvement in that component, which has functioned effectively during its development.

Intelligent design performs a useful function by pointing out the weaknesses in Darwinism and stating what should be absolutely obvious: that the world as we know it cannot have come into being as a result of random changes. There was indeed a Designer. And, if through a widespread acceptance of intelligent design, the whole structure of evolution was swept into oblivion, there would, humanly speaking, be much less resistance to the truths of God's Word – which would represent enormous progress. Yet there is generally an unwillingness among those who promote intelligent design to go on to identify the Designer. And some of them support theistic evolution, the idea that God somehow or other controlled the process of evolution to bring about life as it exists today. Others may be willing to go beyond intelligent design if Darwinism were to lose general support. Yet one fears that, however much progress is made in identifying its weaknesses, Darwinism is likely to continue to rule the scientific roost as long as the Bible continues to be despised.

When the Bible becomes once more generally received as a revelation from God, neither scientists or non-scientists will have any difficulty in accepting the evidences of design in nature. Nor will they have any difficulty in identifying the Designer – the One who in six days made heaven and earth. But, whatever may be the result of the Dover School Board court case, all who deny the facts about the origin of this world will yet have to appear before their Creator to account for all their activities, and for all their beliefs.

<sup>4</sup>*Intelligent Design*, p 148.

## Walking with God<sup>1</sup>

A Sermon by John Macdonald

Genesis 5:24. *Enoch walked with God.*

The attitude of a Christian should ever be that of observation. As the eyes of a servant are to his master, or of a child to his father, so ought the believer to have his faith directed to his God. He should especially seat himself under the vast heaven of providence and, with the telescope of the Word, sweep the whole canopy of events and providential movements, for these are fulfilments of God's will and rich discoveries of His character to the children of men.

Those of you who are thus minded, we invite to turn aside with us for a little to behold by faith one wonderful movement of the divine arm which took place nearly 5000 years ago, when one bright luminary in the patriarchal firmament suddenly disappeared from man's vision and reappeared as quickly in the presence of the angels of glory. Behold your Lord, by an extraordinary and sovereign act, snatching from this sinful, mortal world, Enoch His servant, divesting him by an immediate process of all corruption and mortality, transporting him to His kingdom of glory and there setting him as His first crown-jewel, perfected from amongst men in soul and body, for eternity. Such singular procedure was only once again repeated, in the case of Elijah, the great prophetic reformer of Israel. Surely then there is something worthy of note in this, the prior of the two solitary cases of deathless translation.

Now what was the *character* of this man Enoch, whom God delighted so to honour and in whose translation He gave so clear a manifestation of what God most loves and will have near to Him in heaven? That character is simply described in these few words: "Enoch walked with God". This was what pleased God so much. No biography was ever written like this: "Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him". If the Christian can have an object of envy, it must be such a character as that – and such an end, though in another form.

What we know to be good and pleasing in the sight of God becomes forthwith our duty to seek after and to practise with all our might, even as our Lord Jesus Christ says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"; and as also His blessed apostle says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ". Let us then direct

<sup>1</sup>This sermon, quoted in last month's instalment of "John Macdonald of Calcutta", is taken, slightly edited, from the volume of his discourses, *A Pastor's Memorial*.

New Testament light to this Old Testament fact and statement, especially as we find that light concentrated on this very case in Hebrews 11:5,6, and may the Lord the Spirit enlighten us!

1. The first idea that strikes us on this subject is that, if Enoch walked with God, then he must have been *reconciled* to God, and God to him. Reconciliation is essential to a godly life. God and man are at variance on account of sin: man hates the holy character of God, and God hates man's unholy character. God is angry with man's sin, and man is angry with God on this account. The sentence of eternal death is upon man for his rebellion and hatred and anger towards his Lord, and the sinner contends against this sentence of justice unto death and so sinks deeper and deeper under the curse. Such was the original condition of Enoch and of every saint now in heaven, as well as of every believer now existing on earth.

How is this variance removed? How is reconciliation effected? How shall God's anger be removed, the sentence of death executed, the curse cancelled, the enmity of the sinner slain and himself justified? The world groans for an answer, but can find none from all her children. Therefore the world, being unreconciled, cannot walk with God.

But the gospel tells us that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them". In the cross – the sacrificial death of Christ – the enmity is slain and peace is made. In the sacrifice of Christ, the evil of sin is seen and its guilt punished; in the sentence of death fulfilled and in the curse fully executed, the character of God as a sovereign is honoured and the authority of His law magnified. Thus God may now righteously and graciously forgive whom He pleases and reconcile to Himself the guiltiest of Adam's race.

In this cross of Christ, man also sees displayed infinitely the love of God and the loveliness of His character. And being humbled in the dust on account of his own vileness and enmity, he seeks reconciliation with his blessed and beloved Sovereign. Finding the way open and hearing the invitation, "Be ye reconciled", he enters in and finds peace for his soul. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." The first promise and the ordinance of sacrifice were the avenues by which Enoch entered into a state of reconciliation with his God; and by the gospel of the grace of the Lord we must now become the friends of God, so that we may walk with Him in all godliness of life. "Blessed is the people that know [this] joyful sound! They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

2. *Renewal of spirit* in man must also be understood as necessary in order to walking with God, and as implied in such an exercise. As a fallen being, man is the very opposite of God instead of being His image as at first. There is no congeniality of spirit, no oneness of mind, between them. God is sovereign, but man is rebellious; God is spiritual, but man is carnal; God is holy and righteous, but man is unholy and unrighteous; God is light, but man is darkness; God is love, but man is hatred.

How can parties so different in character ever walk together in real unity of mind, even if a reconciled relationship were established? It cannot be without a change in one of the parties. But God cannot change – He is good and unchangeably perfect. Man then must be changed, in order to correspond with his Lord. But how shall he be changed in his inward nature? How shall he become a new creature? How shall he be born when he is old? Again the world groans for an answer, but in vain – her sons cannot solve the problem. Therefore the world unrenewed cannot walk with her God.

But in the gospel it is said that a man shall be “born again of the Spirit” and so he shall “enter into the kingdom of God”. By the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, a man becomes “partaker of the divine nature”. Being “born of the flesh” he is flesh; but “being born of the Spirit” he is spirit, or becomes like the Holy Spirit. The life of God is in him, like a fountain of living water. His understanding is enlightened, so that he knows his Lord; his heart is renewed, so that he loves his Lord; his conscience is purified, so that he waits upon his Lord. He is thus in a capacity for walking with God in spirit and in truth. Reconciled in state and conformed in nature, the foundation of a blessed union is laid. And as regeneration grows up into full sanctification, and grace advances towards glory, so does the soul draw nearer to its God. There are inward and sore conflicts with indwelling sin; and there are outward and painful trials, for the Lord’s sake; but all these only send the believer more into the presence of his God and make him more meet for dwelling with him for evermore.

Thus was Enoch sanctified and ripened for heaven. That Spirit who ministered in the patriarchal world – who strove with sinners before the flood until in anger He left them – worked effectually in him then and has continued His gracious ministration in all saints to this day. And it is just in proportion as we walk in the Spirit that we shall walk with God. Let us remember and hold fast this precious promise: “I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God” (Ezek 36:27,28).

3. In order to walking with God we must be *possessed of faith*. God is a Spirit invisible to the flesh; therefore, in order to commune with Him, we

must have some corresponding spiritual power and some corresponding and spiritual medium of sight. That medium is divine truth, however it may be revealed; it is light to the soul, in which God is manifested. The power by which we see is faith, for it is the reception of light from the Word and the apprehension, in their true nature, of the objects set forth. "Faith is the substance [or confidence] of things hoped for, the evidence [or conviction] of things not seen." This faith Enoch had, for it is written: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:5,6). Such faith we must have.

Testimony being to faith what light is to the eye, we must see God revealed in His Word as we see the sun revealed in its own rays, and so we may walk in the brightness of His face. Enoch saw God revealed in the promise and in sacrifice; and he firmly believed on Him as thus seen. No image made by hands, no imagination of the mind, can take the place of faith. When the gospel of Christ comes in word to us, and the Holy Spirit comes with power within us, then we meet with God "in Christ reconciling [us] unto Himself". True faith never rests in the mere word, even as the eye does not rest in the light; it passes on to the object revealed in the truth. Such is the living faith of a true saint. It converses substantially with its objects according to their true nature, and walks with God according to the varied ways in which He manifests Himself.

When faith beholds Him in His glory, humility falls down at His feet and worships Him. Zeal bows his head clad in armour and says, "Lord, here am I, send me". Hope fixes her pure eye on His everlasting throne and she whispers, "He is the same, yesterday, today and for ever". Joy takes up his harp of grace and sings, "Upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God". Sorrow wipes her dewy cheek and adds in plaintive voice, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, thy God." Patience takes up his cross and girds up his loins, saying, "Thou doest all things well". And love, with fixed, unwavering gaze, silently drinks in the divine glory and shines unconsciously, like Stephen's face reflecting the lustre of the heavenly throne. O let us seek such faith as this! Let us seek the power of faith from the Spirit, the means of it from the gospel, the object of it in our God and Father, and the end of it in the salvation of our souls by Jesus Christ. "Lord, increase our faith."

4. *Personal communion with God* is certainly involved in walking with Him. This naturally springs out of that living faith of which we have just

spoken and is in fact the life of faith in exercise. When the Apostle John describes the chief privilege of believers, he says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ". Who can read over the Book of Psalms without observing how it overflows with such communion? And who can study the Epistles without seeing that communion with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit constitutes the joy and glory of a saint's life in this world?

There is a mutual acquaintance between the Lord and His people. He "knoweth them who are His", and they know Him in whom they believe. There is a mutual communication of mind between them; they make known their wants and requests to Him, and He reveals Himself to them as their Father, Redeemer and Comforter. There are the reciprocal actions of giving and receiving. The Lord gives Himself to them as their covenant God, and they give themselves to Him as His covenant people. The souls of the saints of God are affected by a sense of His presence or absence, His smile or frown, His favour or displeasure. They seek Him; they thirst for Him; they faint for Him; they cry out for Him – and He is "found of them". "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." In prayer they speak to God; in His Word they hear Him; on His Sabbaths they rest with Him; in His sacraments they taste and handle the pledges of His love; in meditation they walk in His secret chamber; in worship they are openly with Him in His courts.

God's people go forth to meet Him in the dispensations of His providence; sometimes lifting up their faces for joy in the bright sunshine; sometimes covering their heads for sorrow and shame. Sometimes He takes them up into His chariot for a little while in triumph; at other times they lie with their faces in the dust, while He passes by. In the discharge of duty, saints seek communion with their Lord. They desire to have Him ever as their witness and their helper, yea, present with them as the supreme end of their activity. They would make their own business the Lord's service, and so would they commune with Him in all the common and constant details of life.

This is the triumph, the crown, of godliness in this world. Blessed is the man who thus "walketh up and down" (for so the word is) "with his God". Men may and do deny that there is any such divine fellowship; but the Christian, holding the Bible in his hand, can return the sigh of compassion for the smile of scorn. "Poor men," says he, "they are blind and therefore they say there is no sun and that we have no communion with its rays. Lord, grant them their sight; then they shall see the sun and their fellowship shall be with us." Let us seek such personal communion with God and we shall then understand the benediction which says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,



and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all” for evermore.

5. *Separation from an evil world* must evidently arise out of a life of communion with God. Enoch was distinguished from the men of his day by his holy walk. He stood alone, as an oak in the midst of the tempest, as a rock amidst the raging of the sea. He was a witness for God against the world, and he constantly rebuked the rampant ungodliness by which he was surrounded. It is vain to think that we can walk with God and with the world too. We must separate ourselves from the world’s principle, for it is pride; we must separate from its practice, for it is rebellion; we must separate from its profession, for it is hypocrisy; we must separate from its motivation, for it is selfishness. We must shine as lights, making manifest the evil that is around us, bearing testimony for God and against sinners, even unto the death. We must despise the world’s censure as dross and count its reproach as the dust under our feet. “The friendship of the world is enmity with God,” are the words of the Divine Spirit.

It is also written: “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”. The world hates the character and the law of God in proportion as these are made manifest, or brought into contact with its pleasures or pursuits. It therefore hates the people of Christ in proportion to their holiness or conformity to Him. O let us separate ourselves from such a world, except to do it good! And let us remember that they who live with the world must also die with it and share its doom for ever. The grand test of separation is in adherence to God’s authority and God’s grace. Sinful men cannot endure these two things in practice and, if we abide in these steadfastly, we shall soon find that the world itself declares of us that we do not belong to it. Let us never forget the description of true saints embodied in Christ’s intercessory prayer: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”. They of whom this cannot truly be said have no place in Christ’s intercession and, if so, who shall bless them?

6. *Patient continuance unto the end*, is included in Enoch’s walking with God; for it was only interrupted by his passage to glory. They who truly walk with God will not be deterred by obstacles, for greater is he that is with them than all who can be against them. They will not be deterred by conscious weakness, for God’s “strength is made perfect in weakness”. They will not be afraid of the world, for Christ hath said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”. Indwelling sin shall not prevail to destroy them, for it is written: “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace”. In tribulation they shall be found glorying; because it “worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope”. The Spirit

of God dwelling within them, the Son of God interceding for them, and the fatherly love of God resting on them, according to the eternal covenant, they are kept “through faith unto salvation”.

Their duty is to walk in this their privilege even to the end. While Enoch was walking with God from day to day, he was suddenly removed into glory. So it shall be with the saints of the Lord now. Some day when groaning, it may be, under the evils of life, you shall receive a summons in your mortal bodies to depart and be with the Lord for ever. Then you shall see Enoch and, above all, you shall see Enoch’s God. Blessed are the people whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find waiting for Him; they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

Are there *saints* before me at this time? To you I say, happy are ye, however few and despised by the world. Go on and fear no evil. Walk in reconciliation with God, through the constant reception and sprinkling of the precious blood of Christ. Walk in conformity of mind, by a constant submission of yourselves to the blessed Spirit of grace. Walk in lively faith of the divine testimony. Walk in personal communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, carrying on spiritual and heavenly communion – praying “without ceasing”. Walk in non-conformity to the world; whilst in it, be not of it; adhere to the Lord’s Word, grace and cause always. Walk also in patience, in all things giving thanks and “casting all your care” upon the Lord, knowing that “He careth for you”. Let me beseech you to walk closely with your God, as you value your soul’s salvation, the honour of your Lord and Saviour, and the good of your fellow men, as you would value a holy and useful life or a blessed and glorious eternity, as you would be Christians indeed and be found accepted at the coming of your Lord. At last you shall hear a voice say, “Come up hither”. And when you are gone up, men will say of you too, in your measure: “These walked with God among us, and now they are not, for He hath taken them. Arise, let *us* follow them!”

*Men of the world:* God, for whom I speak, knows you; and He knows all the secrets of our hearts toward Himself. You do not walk with Him, nor do you seek to do so. Self is your god, and you walk according to your own course. Unreconciled through the blood of Christ, and unrenewed in the spirit of your minds, you have no living faith in the living God. You make Him to be an infinite shadow, and His Son to be an incarnate creed. You seek no communion with the Father of your spirits, but you love His enemies and you rejoice in the company of hypocrites, apostates, Sabbath-breakers, fornicators, swearers and infidels. The very idea of walking with God is a mystery to you, or else a nonentity.

Now we beseech you to reflect, to repent, to turn from this most unnatural

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state of estrangement from God. In His name, and by His authority, we beseech you: “Be ye reconciled to Him”. Behold the cross, the symbol of peace, the meeting-place of souls for pardon, the starting point of walking with God. Behold that cross revealed to you, for we preach to you “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”. Come, be reconciled. Lay down your enmity and take up divine friendship. Lay down your guilt and take up a free pardon. Lay down the flesh and take up the Spirit. Lay down sight and take up faith. Lay down the world and take up heaven. Lay down your self-righteous works and take up grace. Lay down sin and take up salvation. Lay down time and take up eternity. Lay down care and take up peace. Lay down sorrow and despair and take up joy and hope. Lay down all evil and take up all good. All, all this is free to you, at the cross of Christ. You are welcome, you are invited, you are besought, you are commanded to do all this, freely, “without money and without price”. Arise, then, O my fellow-sinners, arise! “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found” and walk and commune with Him, and be followers of them who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises, who are with Enoch in heavenly glory.

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## Benefiting from Affliction<sup>1</sup>

### 5. A Preparation for Extensive Usefulness

*James Buchanan*

**A**dvorsity is a means of preparation for *extensive usefulness*. The complaint which is usually made by those who are visited with affliction in the prime of life is that, when it comes upon us, either in the shape of bodily indisposition or extreme poverty or blighting calumny, it unfits us for the active service of God. On the other hand, many an aged disciple, who is completely disabled by his infirmities, is apt to wonder why he is still preserved in life when his usefulness is apparently gone. But he who considers that the greatest usefulness consists in glorifying God will see at a single glance that there is no ground for such thoughts in either case. In regard even to present usefulness, and without reference to the future service for which affliction may be preparing them, they may glorify God as much by patient suffering as by active service and may thus be in the highest degree useful to those who are around them. The mere consideration of their sufferings may impress many a salutary lesson on the minds of others, especially of the

<sup>1</sup>Taken, slightly edited, from Buchanan’s book *The Improvement of Affliction*. The previous article appeared last month.

young; while the active and consistent exercise of their Christian graces in such circumstances may afford an example of religion in its sustaining power, such as is admirably fitted to commend it to the acceptance of their friends.

Thus even the aged sufferer, disabled as he is from active duty, may be a powerful witness for Christ. And, although he has no prospect of being restored to his former sphere of exertion, he is occupying with good effect the post which the Lord has assigned to him. If it be true, as unquestionably it is, that even an old blind beggar is not without his moral use in the world, how much more certain is it that the aged and apparently-disabled believer is, even in his greatest infirmities, a blessing to his family and friends. How can he be more useful to them, or how could he better glorify God, than by exhibiting, as he does in the hour of his greatest need, the worth of that divine religion which comforts him in all his tribulations and smooths his path to the grave – nay, which enables him to rise above the love of life and the fear of death and to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory and to bear his testimony to the love and faithfulness of his Lord throughout the whole course of his protracted trials?

Such a man is not useless. O no. Though his limbs be inactive, his memory faded, all his faculties impaired, yet his moral feelings are strong within him, his faith is firm, his hope is heavenly, his heart is full of peace and joy. And many another heart feels that the aged sufferer makes a deeper and more salutary impression on it than all the learning and eloquence of the universities. As an aged believer was wont to say, when reduced to extreme poverty and wholly disabled by a stroke: “I often seem to myself and others to be a useless burden on the world, but I know and believe that God must have something yet to do *by* me or *in* me; otherwise I should not be here”.

But while the believer is really occupying a post of usefulness during the time of his affliction, that season is designed, in many cases, to prepare him for more extensive and successful exertion in God’s service hereafter. While the aged believer looks forward to heaven as his only remaining sphere of service, the younger brethren may anticipate a restoration to health and a course of usefulness on earth. And their present afflictions are designed and fitted to prepare them for exerting a higher and more beneficial influence over their fellow men. They do this by their influence in promoting our personal sanctification, by deepening our impressions of the vanity of the world and the value of the soul and the magnitude of eternity, by enlarging our experience of the power of religion and teaching us its unspeakable importance.

In proportion as affliction serves to promote our personal growth in grace, in the same proportion it prepares us for future usefulness. Our capacity of

glorifying God in all the ways of private or public duty depends on the condition of our own souls; and if their condition has been improved by the discipline of adversity, our testimony to God and His truth, and our love and care for our fellow men, will be proportionately more constant and more effectual than before. Thus the apostle refers to his own experience during his manifold afflictions as having been a means of fitting him more fully for one important part of the Christian ministry. “Blessed be God,” says he, “even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, *that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted by God*” (2 Cor 1:3,4).

Everyone can feel the force of these words. The word of comfort comes with unspeakably greater power from the lips of a suffering Saviour or a sorely tried disciple than from the lips of one who has never known adversity. And this holds good, not only of the minister of religion, but of every private Christian. In respect to *all* the departments of Christian usefulness he is better prepared, by means of his experience, for comforting the afflicted – and also for exhibiting, in his own life and conversation, the sanctifying and supporting power of religion; for commending it to the consideration of his family and friends; and for making many exertions and submitting to many sacrifices, to which others, living in uninterrupted prosperity, might be less inclined to submit. In a word, the deeper the impressions which he has received on his own soul, the better is he prepared, both in point of knowledge and zeal and sympathy, to care for the welfare of others, and to promote it.

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## The Reformed Doctrine of Inspiration

### 3. How a Sinner Comes to Recognise the Inspiration of the Bible

*Rev Hugh M Cartwright*

**H**ow do we become assured that the Bible is the inspired Word of God? If we depend on faith rather than reason for our conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, what is the difference between Christianity and other religions which claim a “holy book”?

1. *The testimony of the Church is not to be discounted.* That we have been led by the Church and by our parents to grow up accepting that the Bible is the Word of God is part of the Lord’s providential kindness toward us. William Whitaker, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge (1579-1599), whose *Disputation on Holy Scripture* (1588) evidently influenced the construction

of chapter 1 of the *Westminster Confession*,<sup>1</sup> says that “the authority of the Church may at first move us to acknowledge the Scriptures: but afterwards, when we have ourselves read the Scriptures, and understood them, then we conceive a true faith”. Cornelius van Til, in his little publication, *Why I Believe in God*, written to challenge an atheist or agnostic acquaintance, makes a similar point in response to the accusation that his belief was the result of his early home life: “You know as well as I that every child is conditioned by its environment. You were as thoroughly conditioned not to believe in God as I was to believe in God . . . . To be ‘without bias’ is only to have a particular kind of bias. The idea of ‘neutrality’ is simply a colourless suit that covers a negative attitude towards God”.

Those whose early “conditioning” is in accordance with truth have much reason to be thankful. What they see of the effect of Scripture in the lives of those whom they love and respect has its own evidential value. In no realm other than religion would critics dismiss the benefit of being reared in an environment where the influences were for good rather than evil.

As a result of God’s providential working in the history of the Church we are not left to search for documents to recognise as the Word of God. We have a Book historically recognised by the Church as composed of documents received by the original recipients as inspired Scripture. The unity of the Old Testament is such that genealogies and histories which might not in themselves convey the impression of inspiration to even a spiritual reader are recognised as inspired because they are integral parts of a volume with all the marks of inspiration. The unity of the New Testament, which consists of books written by different persons in different circumstances over half a century, is a remarkable fact on the same level as the unity of the Old Testament and the unity between the Old Testament and the New. The coherence between all parts of the Bible means that to be assured of the inspiration of any part is to be assured of the inspiration of it all.

The Church did not give these books their status or authority but only recognised it. The Church received as inspired Scripture those books presented to it as such by the Apostles or by apostolic men and acknowledged as such by the original recipients because of this origin and the divine authority which impressed them upon their souls and minds and consciences. Robert Shaw, in his *Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*, says: “The task of searching the records of antiquity has been undertaken by learned men, and executed with great industry and zeal”. They discovered “that the books now included in the New Testament were received as inspired by the primit-

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, W R Spear, “The Westminster Confession of Faith and Holy Scripture”, in *To Glorify and Enjoy God*.

ive Church, and numerous passages were quoted from them by the earliest Christian writers; that catalogues of these books, which coincide with ours, are inserted in the works of different authors who flourished in the third and fourth centuries; and that these books were publicly read in Christian congregations, and were continually appealed to by Christian writers as the standard of faith, and the supreme judge of controversies". By God's providential work in the Church we have a Book which claims to be the Word of God. In "The Authority of the New Testament",<sup>2</sup> N B Stonehouse makes the point that "the testimony which the Scriptures themselves bear to their own authority" and which is intrinsic to themselves "established itself in the history of the Church through the government of its divine Head".

2. *The rational arguments for the inspiration of the Bible have a function to perform.* The truthfulness of Scripture is sometimes argued from the correspondence between what is written in the Bible and those aspects of reality which can be tested by human observation or experiment. John Blanchard quotes from the conclusion of a 1974 article in *Time* magazine: "After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived – and is perhaps better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms – historical fact – the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack." He comments that "the Bible's prophetic element adds an impressive dimension to its integrity and presents an enormous problem to the sceptic".<sup>3</sup> Such arguments may clear objections from honest minds. But as Adolph Saphir puts it: "God did not leave a matter of such vital importance as the authority of Scripture to depend upon minute investigation, for which only the learned have leisure and ability; nor upon abstruse and metaphysical argument, for which the mass of mankind have no aptitude. There must be something about the Scripture obvious and tangible, to prove its authority and demonstrate its high origin."<sup>4</sup>

The *Confession* concentrates on arguments drawn more directly from the character and effects of the Bible and specifies "the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof" as "arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God". George Gillespie, considered the source from which this description was derived, specifies as additional factors the Bible's irresistible power over the con-

<sup>2</sup>*The Infallible Word*, p 140.

<sup>3</sup>*Does God Believe in Atheists*, pp 404,410.

<sup>4</sup>"Holy Scripture its own Evidence", in *Truth Unchanged, Unchanging*.

science, the holiness and honesty of the penmen, its confirmation by miracles, the fulfilling of prophecies and its conservation over against enemies. The significance of the evidences enumerated by the *Confession* is that they are available to the reader of Scripture without access to anything external to Scripture or dependent upon historical or other human research.

Wayne Spear quotes Whitaker to the effect that “to persuade our souls thoroughly, it is not these or any other arguments of the same kind that can avail, but only the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking inwardly in our hearts”. Spear adds that “in coming to faith, no one is dependent on the ability to follow sophisticated reasoning like that of the Schoolmen. God deals directly with the heart by the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, who, in effectual calling, enlightens the mind to perceive the truth and beauty of the Scripture, and persuades and enables us to embrace it”. In keeping with the *Confession*, E J Young asserts that “in themselves, however, these arguments do not bring us to full persuasion that the Bible is God’s Word, and the reason for this is that the human understanding is darkened by sin”.<sup>5</sup> As B B Warfield puts it, “their failure to produce ‘sound faith’ is due solely to the subjective condition of man, which is such that a creative operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul is requisite before he can exercise ‘sound faith’”.<sup>6</sup>

3. *The conclusive evidence for the inspiration of the Bible* comes from “the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. . . . The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), and the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.”<sup>7</sup> The primary reason for believing that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is that it claims to be such. The difference from other books which claim to be the Word of God is that the claim of the Bible is validated, particularly by the work of the Spirit causing the soul to concur in the claims which the Bible makes for itself.

John Owen, in *The Divine Original, Authority, Self-evidencing Light, and Power of the Scriptures*<sup>8</sup> says of the Bible that “we do so receive, embrace, believe and submit unto it, because of the authority of God who speaks it, or gave it forth as His mind and will, evidencing itself by the Spirit in and with that Word unto our minds and consciences: or, because that the Scripture, being brought unto us by the good providence of God, in ways of His appointment and preservation, it doth evidence itself infallibly unto our

<sup>5</sup>“The Authority of the Old Testament”, in *The Infallible Word*.

<sup>6</sup>“Calvin’s Doctrine of the Knowledge of God”, in his *Calvin and Augustine*.

<sup>7</sup>*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:4,5.

<sup>8</sup>In *Works*, vol 16.



consciences to be the word of the living God”. He compares the Scriptures to light and power. Drawing attention to 2 Corinthians 4:2-4, he says that “to give us an infallible assurance that, in receiving this testimony, we are not imposed upon by cunningly devised fables . . . the Scriptures have that glory of light and power accompanying them, as wholly distinguisheth them by infallible signs and evidences from all words and writings not divine; conveying their truth and power into the souls and consciences of men with an infallible certainty”.

John Murray<sup>9</sup> makes the point that “rational demonstration is not the ground of faith. . . . The nature of faith is acceptance on the basis of testimony, and the ground of faith is therefore testimony or evidence. In this matter it is the evidence God has provided, and God provides the evidence in His Word, the Bible. This means simply that the basis of faith in the Bible is the witness the Bible itself bears to the fact that it is God’s Word, and our faith that it is infallible must rest upon no other basis than the witness the Bible bears to this fact.”

How does the Holy Spirit convince a sinner that the Bible is the inspired Word of God? Not by justifying the claims of Scripture at the bar of reason, so that man rather than God is the foundation of faith, although He will show that acceptance of these claims is most reasonable. Not by directly impressing upon the soul the proposition that the Bible is the inspired Word of God – though that conviction may be entertained rationally by a sinner before he submits to these claims. Louis Gaussen suggests that the Reformed Confessions teach that “to every truly converted Christian the Bible is presented in some way to his soul, with evidence, as a miraculous book – as a living and efficacious word, which ‘pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit’; illumines in a moment the inmost depths of his being and reveals to him the features, hitherto unknown, of his inner man; softening, persuading and subduing it with incomparable power. . . . Henceforth the soul can no longer be under a mistake about it. To it this book, in the whole or in part, is certainly from on high. The seals of the Almighty are attached to it. But this ‘witness of the Holy Spirit’, of which our fathers spoke, and which every Christian has more or less acknowledged when he has read his Bible with vital efficacy – this witness may at first be heard by him only in a single page of the Scriptures; but this page suffices to spread over the book which contains it an incomparable lustre in his eyes.”<sup>10</sup>

John Murray makes a similar point: “The Confession represents the authority of Scripture as resting not upon the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit

<sup>9</sup>“The Attestation of Scripture”, in *The Infallible Word*.

<sup>10</sup>*The Canon of the Holy Scriptures*, pp 416,417.

but upon the inspiration of the Spirit, a finished activity by which, it is clearly stated, the sixty-six books enumerated were produced and in virtue of which they are the Word of God written. It is, however, by ‘the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts’ that we become convinced of that authority. The authority of Scripture is an objective and permanent fact residing in the quality of inspiration; the conviction on our part has to wait for that inward testimony by which the antecedent facts of divinity and authority are borne in upon our minds and consciences.”

R L Dabney, speaking of the Scripture’s self-evidencing light, says that “the literary evidences of its divine origin, drawn by the learned from antiquity, have their value; but wherever the Bible is read with honesty, it presents, within itself, sufficient proof to evince that its claims are reasonable. Only on this supposition can its lofty and imperative attitude be justified.”<sup>11</sup> As Thomas Halyburton puts it: “The Word, by a God-becoming manifestation of the truth . . . dives into the souls of men, into all the secret recesses of their hearts, guides, teaches, directs, determines and judges in them and upon them in the name, majesty and authority of God. And when it enters thus into the soul it fills it with the light of the glory of the beamings of those perfections upon it, whereby it is made to cry out, ‘The voice of God and not of man’ (Heb 4:12; 1 Cor 14:24).”

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin writes of the connection between the rational proofs and the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit: “In vain were the authority of Scripture fortified by argument, or supported by the consent of the Church, or confirmed by any other helps, if unaccompanied by an assurance higher and stronger than human judgment can give. . . . On the other hand, when recognising its exemption from the common rule, we receive it reverently and according to its dignity, those proofs which were not so strong as to produce and rivet a full conviction in our minds become most appropriate helps.”

After indicating several weighty arguments for receiving the Bible as the Word of God, he concludes: “There are other reasons, neither few nor feeble, by which the dignity and majesty of the Scriptures may be not only proved to the pious, but also completely vindicated against the cavils of slanderers. These, however, cannot of themselves produce a firm faith in Scripture until our heavenly Father manifest His presence in it, and thereby secure implicit reverence for it. Then only, therefore, does Scripture suffice to give a saving knowledge of God, when its certainty is founded on the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Still the human testimonies which go to confirm it will not be without effect, if they are used in subordination to that chief and

<sup>11</sup>“The Bible its own Witness”, in vol 1 of his *Discussions*.

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highest proof, as secondary helps to our weakness. But it is foolish to attempt to prove to infidels that the Scripture is the Word of God. This it cannot be known to be, except by faith. Justly, therefore, does Augustine remind us that every man who would have any understanding in such high matters must previously possess piety and mental peace.”<sup>12</sup>

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## Centenary of the Zimbabwe Mission

*Rev Neil M Ross*

**I**n 1905, the Rev John Boyana Radasi, a member of the Fingo tribe of South Africa and a recently ordained missionary of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, established a mission at Ingwenya in what is now Zimbabwe. In September of that year he wrote to Rev Neil Cameron of Glasgow, “I have a great responsibility as a missionary among the heathen, and need the prayers of the Lord’s people that I might get grace and strength to discharge faithfully all the duties I may be called upon to perform. ‘Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.’” Prayers on his behalf were answered, for he proved to be a most faithful servant of Christ, who had souls for his hire. The mission he established has grown greatly and continues to this day, 100 years later.

Our Zimbabwe Presbytery decided to mark the centenary by a public commemoration at Ingwenya. On the morning of Friday, 9 September, more than 1500 people assembled in the quadrangle of the John Tallach Secondary School, about 1000 of them being pupils from our schools. The remaining 500 were from our congregations and preaching stations in the Ingwenya, Mbumba, Zenka, Bulawayo and Zvishivane areas, which was remarkable considering the present travelling difficulties.

The meeting began with public worship, conducted by Rev James Tallach, who worked at our Mbumba Mission in the 1970s and 80s as a doctor and then also as a minister of the gospel. He commenced in Ndebele and continued in English, preaching to an attentive audience on Ezekiel 34:11, “For thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out”. It was appropriate and encouraging to be reminded that the Chief Shepherd sought out His sheep in Ingwenya and our many other mission stations in Zimbabwe by sending out His under-shepherds with the gospel; and also that such a precious privilege could never have been granted if the Good Shepherd, had not laid down His life for the sheep. The great volume of

<sup>12</sup>Vol 1, chapter 7: “The Credibility of Scripture Sufficiently Proved, in so far as Natural Reason Admits”.

harmonious psalm singing, led by Rev S Khumalo, was solemnly impressive.

The programme continued under the able guidance of the master of ceremonies, Mr J B Mpofo, an elder from Nkayi. The visitors from Scotland, Rev James R Tallach, Clerk of the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee, and Rev Neil M Ross, Moderator of Synod, were then introduced by Rev S Khumalo. He also introduced the local ministers, Rev P Mzamo, Mbumba, Rev Z Mazwabo, Zvishivane and Rev M Mloyi, Zenka; also the members of Mbumba Zending who had come from Holland: Rev Tj de Jong, Chairman, Mr D van der Sluis, Treasurer, and Mr A B den Breejen; and finally Rev K M Watkins, Superintendent of our Kenyan Mission, Rev A B MacLean, and several former members of the teaching and nursing staff who had travelled from Scotland for this historic occasion.

Rev Petros Mzamo presented an interesting summary of the history of our Zimbabwean congregations, schools, clinics and hospital. When Rev J B Radasi pegged his tent at Ingwenya 100 years ago, said Mr Mzamo, farmers and miners were pegging their land in the hope of *getting* wealth. But Mr Radasi *brought* wealth: the wealth of heaven in the preaching of the gospel to the people. While farmers looked for rain to water their seed, he was praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to make the good seed of the kingdom fruitful – and the Lord blessed the Word. Mr Mzamo then spoke of the labours of succeeding missionaries and mission staff.

He recollected the arrival in 1924 of Rev John Tallach, in time to conduct the funeral of Mr Radasi, who died tragically on his way to meet Mr Tallach – when Mr Mzamo himself was boy. He spoke also of Rev Dr R MacDonald, who sought the healing of souls by preaching the gospel and the healing of the sick in his clinics; of Miss Jean Nicolson, the much-loved first headmistress of Ingwenya Primary School; of John Mpofo, who had been a soldier of King Lobengula and was later a valiant soldier of the King of kings preaching the gospel in Shangani Reserve; and of several others. Mr Mzamo left with us the encouraging promise, “A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this” (Ps 22:30,31). Before he left the dais, he read a letter of warm greetings from Rev D MacLean, who was, for 25 years, Clerk of the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee. Mr MacLean wished the blessing of the Lord on the meeting.

Rev Neil Ross, in his address, recalled Rev Neil Cameron’s opinion of Mr Radasi as one who proved to be “taught by the Lord, faithful to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, prudent, patient and brave”. Mr Radasi’s successor, Rev John Tallach, “never spared himself,” wrote Rev A McPherson. “The Great Day will declare how many Africans were converted from gross

darkness to God through his ministry among them.” Rev James Fraser, “the man who loved the people”, began his work here in 1938. “He worked so vigorously and so continuously in his twenty years of active service for Christ,” Mr McPherson testified, “that the life of the average believer seems empty and feeble by comparison.” Mr Ross also mentioned the dedicated service of numerous other missionaries and mission workers belonging to several countries. He emphasised especially the work of the Lord in having maintained and prospered His cause here for the past 100 years and providing for it through generous supporters. Our people in Scotland contributed well but the work could not have extended as much as it has without the liberal financial aid of our Dutch friends who have been giving through Mbumba Zending for more than 40 years.

Rev Tj de Jong, Chairman of Mbumba Zending, spoke next and based his earnest, apposite talk on Acts 10:34,35, “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him”. Having ended his address, Mr de Jong announced that Mbumba Zending had decided to present to our Zimbabwe Mission, for certain areas of the work and to help meet the expenses of the Centenary, the sum of 100 000 euros (equivalent to about £67 200). This was in addition to the Society’s regular instalments, which have already been increased by 15% this year.

It was expected that Chief Khayisa, Ingwenya, a helpful friend of our mission, would address the people. Regrettably, he was unwell but his representative conveyed his kind message of good wishes to the gathering.

Finally, Rev Z Mazwabo, minister of New Canaan Mission, reminded the people of their debt of gratitude to God for the precious means of grace, their duty seriously to make good use of them, and their need to beware of only accepting material benefits from the mission, while rejecting the gospel – like one who foolishly keeps the attractive wrapping of a jewel but throws away the jewel itself. He then conducted the concluding worship of prayer and praise and pronounced the benediction.

Afterwards, we were hospitably and warmly entertained to a generous meal in the school dining room. We were much impressed by how well the Centenary Committee had organised the meeting and how much work they had done to make the event run so smoothly. We are grateful to them.

It was a great privilege to be present on this very happy and memorable occasion. We pray that, by the blessing of the Lord, it will result in the strengthening of our work in Zimbabwe. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps 127:1).

## Book Review

***New Testament Commentaries***, by Geoffrey B Wilson: vol 1, *Romans to Ephesians*, 680 pages; vol 2, *Philippians to Hebrews and Revelation*, 601 pages, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, £9.50 each, available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

This series of commentaries on individual New Testament books by the former minister of Birkby Baptist Church, Huddersfield, conveniently collected in these two volumes, began in 1969 as "A Digest of Reformed Comment". Mr Wilson identifies the origin of his quotations, and the commentary on each book is followed by a list of the works he used, hopefully stimulating further study. In the Preface to the 1974 edition of the commentary on *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, the author states that his aim in the series "is to simplify and condense the thought of the great commentators". His commentaries are more than collections of quotations and give the fruit of his own studies. The purpose which the commentaries are intended to serve is indicated in the 1970 Preface to his commentary on *Hebrews*: "As this book was produced under the conviction that nothing is truly devotional which is not wholly scriptural, it is hoped that it may arouse feelings in the reader which can be rightly called Christian because they are the fruit of serious reflection upon the Word of God".

Commentaries are useful not only to those whose work is to provide public expositions of the Word of God but also to private Christians who know that, while God teaches His people, He uses means. "Understandest thou what thou readest? . . . How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30,31). C H Spurgeon's words to theological students in his "A Chat about Commentaries" have a wider application: "It seems odd that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves should think so little of what he has revealed to others. . . . A respectable acquaintance with the opinions of the giants of the past might have saved many an erratic thinker from wild interpretations and outrageous inferences." A commentary of this kind can be helpful to the Scripture reader who does not have the time or opportunity to delve into more extensive works.

Not all those consulted and quoted can strictly speaking be regarded as Reformed, but the author's approach is theologically conservative and proceeds from reverence for the Word of God. The reader can deduce from comments on certain passages such facts as that the author holds Baptist views, does not subscribe to exclusive psalmody, interprets the "thousand years" of Revelation as "the gospel age" and does not maintain the Pauline authorship of Hebrews (so well argued for by John Owen). But it can also be seen, for example, that he is doctrinally Calvinistic, that experimentally he regards the "wretched man" of Romans 7 as undoubtedly regenerate, that he does not

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dispose of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 as merely cultural and temporary and that he is not a modern charismatic.

The early commentaries by Mr Wilson which this reviewer possesses printed the text of the Authorised Version of the Bible, though translations were given from other versions. We regret that, in later commentaries and in this republication of the earlier commentaries, the AV has been replaced by the American Standard Version (1901) as the basic text. In his "Acknowledgements" in the 1972 commentary on *2 Corinthians* the author qualified his appreciation of "the helpfulness of modern versions (RSV, NEB and Moffatt) at certain points" by stating that "their use should not be taken as blanket endorsement of the theological liberalism they so often reflect". We have no doubt that the all-too-general abandonment of the AV and the use of a variety of modern versions has undermined regard for the authority of Scripture, left the reader as judge of the Word of God and reduced popular acquaintance with the Scripture text.

As far as the effect on the reader is concerned, the fact that inferior versions are used and that one comes on truncated translations (such as the omission of "broken" in 1 Corinthians 11:24 and of "God" in 1 Timothy 3:16) reduces the pleasure one might have in using what is otherwise a helpful, sober and succinct popular tool in the consecutive study of the books commented on and an appetising introduction to more detailed and extensive works.

*(Rev) H M Cartwright*

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## Protestant View

### Making Saints

Saints, according to the Word of God, are sinners separated from the world around by God's sovereign and distinguishing grace, united to Jesus Christ by faith, redeemed by His blood and made new creatures by "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Paul wrote to the "saints" at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi and Colosse, and it is clear that he was addressing Christians in these places, people far from perfection – though perfection was their eternal destiny. When he described himself as "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8), he was not comparing himself with those already in heaven but with the Lord's people on earth.

The Roman Catholic view of saints is quite different. Saints are found only among those who have passed into heaven. They depend for their recognition as saints on the resolution of the Church on earth and its pontiff. An essential qualification is that they have performed at least one miracle in answer to prayers addressed to them. Those that are, as Turretin puts it, introduced into heaven by

a pope who, according to his own religion, cannot be sure of his own salvation, are regarded as mediators and intercessors with God, who can obtain spiritual and temporal benefits for us, not only by their prayers but also by their merits.

The *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* claim that in celebrating “certain masses in honour and memory of the saints” the priest is not offering sacrifice to them “but unto God alone who crowned them”. But, “giving thanks to God for their victories, he implores their patronage, that they may vouchsafe to intercede for us in heaven, whose memory we celebrate upon earth” (*session 22, chapter 3*). In the *Canons and Decrees* of its twenty-fifth session, the Council enjoins all bishops and others in a teaching office that “they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints; the honour paid to relics; and the legitimate use of images: teaching them that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men”.

They go on to teach “that they think impiously . . . who assert either that they do not pray for men, or that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular is idolatry, or that it is repugnant to the Word of God and is opposed to the honour of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus . . . . They who affirm that veneration and honour are not due to the relics of saints, or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honoured by the faithful, and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned and now also condemns them.” This is spelled out in chapter 9 of session 22 of the Council: “If anyone saith that it is an imposture to celebrate masses in honour of the saints, and for obtaining their intercession with God, as the Church intends, let him be anathema”.

The last pope was a great maker of saints. A move is currently afoot to elevate John Henry Newman to this status. Newman (1801-1890) was an Anglican clergyman who in his youth professed evangelical conversion and was influenced by William Romaine and by Thomas Scott’s *Force of Truth*. Abandoning first his Calvinism and then his Evangelicalism, he adopted High Church views and was a leader in the Oxford, or Tractarian, Movement, which aimed at incorporating the Church of England in the Roman fold and tried to prove that the *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England could be understood consistently with Roman dogma.

Not succeeding in this aim, he became a Roman priest in 1847 and a cardinal in 1879. Newman personally had no difficulty with the infallibility of the pope but was disturbed when he realised that this dogma was to be formally promulgated in 1870, mainly because he thought this would postpone the day when Rome would triumph in England. The letter, subsequently withdrawn, in which he confessed this indicates his own belief in the invocation of saints: “All I do is pray to those early doctors of the Church, whose intercession would decide the matter (Augustine, Ambrose



and Jerome, Athanasius, Chrysostom and Basil), to avert this great calamity”.

He would justify belief in such unbiblical notions by his Development theory, popular at times in some Romanist circles, whereby, under the divinely guided supervision of the Church, “the doctrines taught by inspired men might be legitimately developed or drawn out in subsequent times into notions which were not contained in, or even deducible from, the doctrines themselves, but merely stood related to them in some vague and distant connection” (Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, vol 1, p 41). This he described as “the germination, growth and perfection of some living truth in the minds of men over a sufficient period of time” (Cunliffe-Jones, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, p 513). No doubt it is part of Rome’s ongoing wooing of England, so dear to Cardinal Newman’s heart, that – a miracle having been recently claimed in the Boston Diocese and attributed to his intercession – the 50-year-old process of collecting data to support his beatification will move more speedily towards recognising him as England’s one modern saint.

Originating in the cultic reverence shown to martyrs when the early Church was departing from the truth, and developing throughout the dark ages of the Church, no justification can be found in Scripture for the religious honour and invocation of saints. The practice is condemned by Scripture principles and by common sense. It is not possible here to give a complete refutation of this idolatrous practice, but John Calvin indicates the main arguments in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 3, chapter 20: “There is not a word on the subject in Scripture. . . . But if we appeal to the consciences of all who take pleasure in the intercession of saints, we shall find that their only reason for it is that they are filled with anxiety, as if they supposed that Christ were insufficient or too rigorous. By this anxiety they dishonour Christ, and rob Him of His title of sole Mediator, a title which being given Him by the Father as His special privilege, ought not to be transferred to any other. . . . At the same time, they reject the kindness of . . . God . . . if they do not recognise Christ as their brother. This they plainly refuse to do if they think not that He feels for them a brother’s affection; affection than which none can be more gentle. . . . No less insult is offered to the intercession of Christ by confounding it with the prayers and merits of the dead, than by omitting it altogether, and making mention only of the dead. . . .

“While men are alive upon the earth, they can mutually commend themselves to each other’s prayers. It serves to keep alive a feeling of charity when they, as it were, share each other’s wants, and bear each other’s burdens. This they do by the command of the Lord, and not without a promise, the two things of primary importance in prayer. But all such things are inapplicable to the dead, with whom the Lord, in withdrawing them from our society, has left us no means of intercourse.”

As Calvin says, “See the depth to which miserable men fall when they forsake their proper station, that is, the Word of God”. HMC

## Notes and Comments

### Divorce in Scotland

Proposals from the Scottish Executive on divorce have been toned down by a committee of MSPs. The Justice 1 Committee was scrutinising the Family Law Bill when it voted against plans to reduce the separation period before divorce, with consent of the parties, from two years to one and settled instead for 18 months. Where there is consent, the Executive wanted the time reduced from five years to two, but MSPs backed a proposal for three years before divorce.

We are glad that the proposals have been watered down, but what Scotland needs is a return to biblical principles. Everyone does realise that, in the words of one MSP, “some marriages break down”, but that does not necessarily give the right to divorce. Another made the comment: “We all realise marriage is a serious commitment. We have to question whether allowing people to remove themselves from marriage in such a short period of time upholds that commitment or undermines it.” True. But what is needed, on the part of the whole country, is a view of marriage as a permanent union, when a man and a woman become, in the Scripture phrase, “one flesh”.

The Committee’s decision is itself a step too far. Divorce should only be allowed on the grounds of adultery or desertion which cannot be remedied.

### The Response to Terrorism

Legislation has been published which would allow fugitives from justice in Northern Ireland to return home without fear of punishment. The proposals apply to up to 150 people wanted for crimes committed before 1998. They would have their cases heard by a special tribunal and, if found guilty, would be freed on licence without having to go to jail. This is a complete disgrace. Where is the rule of law if men, many of them accused of atrocious crimes, are to go completely unpunished?

On the very day when these proposals were revealed, the Government was trying, unsuccessfully, to get the House of Commons to agree to increase from 14 to 90 days the period for which it would be possible, in England and Wales, to hold terrorist suspects without charge. It seems a further fundamental feature of the rule of law that no one should be held for three months without being told what crime they are accused of. One recognises that there are practical difficulties in securing convictions against those involved in terrorism but, if our precious freedoms begin to be eroded, where will the process stop? For instance, is our freedom to preach the whole counsel of God as secure as we might hope, in an age of political correctness – in particular, our freedom to make clear that there is only one true religion, and that every form of immorality, particularly what is unnatural, is sin?

### Parents and Abortion

A Manchester mother has gone to the High Court in an attempt to require parents to be informed if a girl under the age of 16 is referred for an abortion. Mrs Sue Axon regrets having had an abortion herself 20 years ago; it made her “physically very, very ill”, she says, and she “emotionally suffered for about 10 years”. She points out: “If my daughter needs two paracetamol at school, I have to give permission; yet the Department of Health has issued this guidance that we parents don’t need to know [about abortions]”. She is no doubt right to claim that “confidentiality encourages sexual activity”.

But the Chief Executive of the Family Planning Association claims that “compulsory parental notification of their visit will drive teenagers away from services and prevent many of them coming forward for help.” The possibility that parents might give appropriate help to their daughters is dismissed; there is rather a presumption that abortion is inevitably the correct option. When will there be a general recognition that abortion is totally wrong, except when the mother’s life is in danger – indeed, that it is murder?

### Television Pornography

The latest newsletter of Mediawatch labels Britain as “the porn capital of Europe” – a conclusion based on a new survey by Screen Digest which found that Britain now has 27 licensed TV channels dedicated to showing pornography. It also states that a new study, *Language and Sexual Imagery in Broadcasting*, produced by the Office of Communications, shows that swearing and offensive language on television have steadily increased and become stronger, that there was more sexual imagery on television than ever before – and that it was more explicit and started earlier in the evening. The Director of Mediawatch said that pornographers were endlessly testing the waters with worse and worse material, while the Obscene Publications Act has failed to prevent the “sex industry” moving into television in a big way and with minimal regulatory constraint.

We welcome the announcement by the Minister of State at the Home Office of proposals to make it illegal to view or possess violent and abusive pornography downloaded from the internet. Such imagery, he said, “should have no place in a decent society”. However, the increased debauching of our society by vile television material underlines the urgent need for the Government to revisit the Obscene Publications Act and make it more effective. Mediawatch urges people to “write a short letter to your Member of Parliament (before December 6) supporting Home Office plans but expressing the wish for more wide-ranging political action against all forms of pornography on the grounds that it undermines human dignity and respect for others and contributes significantly to the coarsening of our society, to the continually rising rates of sex crime and sexually-transmitted infections”.

NMR

### **The 100-Minute Bible and the Authorised Version**

*The Times* of September 23 combined criticism of *The 100-Minute Bible* with a ringing endorsement of the Authorised Version. This drastic abridgement of the Bible is an attempt to reach those “interested” in Christianity but who supposedly lack the time and “tenacity” to read the whole Bible. It was offered to the public at Canterbury Cathedral in September; its author is Rev Michael Hinton, and Rt Rev John Pritchard, Bishop of Jarrow, was a consultant. They profess to have picked out the main stories of the life and ministry of Christ.

With good reason, *The Times* writer, Oliver Kamm, rejects the book as “banal” and complains that it squanders the Christian and liturgical inheritance found in the English Bible. A brief look at some of its pages immediately makes clear that this attempt to bring God’s Word to men is not successful.

It is always encouraging to read positive comments about the Authorised Version in the public press. In a day when Evangelical churches have all but abandoned this most trustworthy and divinely-honoured translation of Scripture, positive comments are all the more welcome. Kamm declares emphatically: “The English Bible in the Authorised Version is among the noblest expressions of the language. Its power lies in its directness. So far from being couched in archaic and impenetrable language, the King James Bible uses short and unambiguous words. Its poetic quality lies not in ornamentation but in rhythm.” This endorsement of the AV answers much of the modern criticism levelled against it and we quite agree with the further comment that “few of these qualities are left in modern English translations of the Bible”. *The 100-Minute Bible* is the latest in a long series of versions aimed at particular groups in society. All such attempts are dishonouring to the Word of God itself.

We see no usefulness for *The 100-Minute Bible*, however laudable the aim to interest people in the Scriptures. Reading the Bible is not only a profitable and enjoyable activity, it is essential for the salvation of our souls. The Bible itself informs us that “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”. No one can benefit from reading the Bible without some concept of its being the very Word of God, inspired by Him and delivered to men as His authoritative revelation of truth. Apart from the criticisms already mentioned, the most serious flaw in this attempt to adapt the Bible to the tastes of modern man, is its obvious failure to portray Scripture in this light. *The 100-Minute Bible* is not the Bible by any stretch of the imagination and should not be advertised and sold as though it was. DC

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### **Magazine Prices for 2006**

Due to increasing costs, the price of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* is going up to £1.30 per issue and that of the *Young People’s Magazine* to 70p.

# **The Free Presbyterian Magazine**

**2005**

**Volume 110**

Editor:  
Rev Kenneth D Macleod

*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,  
that it may be displayed because of the truth (Psalm 60:4)*

**Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland**



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