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## Eternal Punishment

There can be no more solemn subject than a lost eternity. Yet, as we are obliged to receive all of God's revelation, we must believe it. Especially in an age when the word *hell* is rarely used except as a swear word, we must give the subject due emphasis. Yet one suspects that there is some sense of the reality of eternal punishment behind, for instance, the wish of a victim's family, as they stand on the steps of a court, that the man just convicted of murder should "rot in hell". So it is particularly sad when the doctrine of a lost eternity is questioned by men generally counted as Evangelicals, such as Rev John Stott and the late Professor F F Bruce, and not merely by the countless liberal theologians who reject the authority of Scripture.

In a statement on the subject, Dr Stott has written: "Both sides are faced with difficult texts. I am disturbed by the excessive dogmatism of those who claim that only one view is biblical. I plead for a greater humility of judgement. We evangelical people need to give one another liberty in areas in which Scripture is not absolutely plain. F F Bruce wrote to me in 1989 that 'annihilation is certainly an acceptable interpretation of the relevant New Testament passages'. He added, 'For myself, I remain agnostic'. My position is similar."<sup>1</sup> But in the light of overwhelming Scripture testimony one can only conclude that the difficulties lie less in the interpretation of the relevant passages than in the solemnity of the doctrine.

Apart from particular passages which refer to a lost eternity, we must bear in mind some general principles of Scripture: we are sinners and God is altogether holy. He cannot pass by sin. Habakkuk's question is still relevant: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" (1:13). The solution to the prophet's difficulty is that the punishment is not necessarily inflicted in this life. But Scripture does make it plain that every unrepentant sinner must experience, beyond death, the penal consequences of their iniquities. There is no justification for agnosticism on this point.

<sup>1</sup>Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry*, IVP, 2001, p 354.

Thus W G T Shedd, in his book defending this doctrine, points out: “The fall and eternal ruin of an immortal spirit is the most dreadful event conceivable. That some of God’s rational and self-determined creatures will for ever be in deadly enmity to Him, cannot be thought of without sorrow and awe.”<sup>2</sup> But we dare not allow the sorrow and the awe to prejudice us against the doctrine. As Shedd points out, “most of the awful imagery in which the sufferings of the lost are described is found in the discourses of our Lord and Saviour. . . . He, the Judge of quick and dead, assumed the responsibility of teaching the doctrine of endless retribution.”<sup>3</sup> How majestically solemn are the words with which Christ introduced the final section of Matthew 25: “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left”.

From this glorious throne, the glorious Judge will pronounce just sentence in favour of each sheep and against each goat. The sheep will be perfectly holy, with all their transgressions forgiven; so Christ will call them to enjoy eternally the perfect blessedness of the kingdom prepared for them. But the goats will still be sinful and guilty; so they must be sent away with the words: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”. We should particularly notice how this passage concludes: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”. The punishment of the finally ungodly will be as endless as the reward of the righteous, for *everlasting* and *eternal* translate the same Greek word.

Shedd is clear that there ought to be no difficulty in accepting the Bible’s teaching that the sufferings of hell are eternal: “The mere perusal of Christ’s words when He was upon earth, without note or comment upon them, will convince the unprejudiced that the Redeemer of sinners knew and believed that for impenitent men and devils there is an endless punishment”.<sup>4</sup> Of course Shedd realised that no unconverted reader of the Bible is unprejudiced; he understood the blindness of the natural heart. But the main reason why so many reject the doctrine of a lost eternity is that they wish not to believe it.

A common argument against the existence of hell is that it contradicts the love of God. But with Bible in hand, Dabney shows the fallacy in that approach: “It is . . . vain to appeal to the paternal benevolence of a father, claiming that God is more tender, and to ask whether any earthly parent is

<sup>2</sup>*The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, Banner of Truth reprint, 1986, p v.

<sup>3</sup>*The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, p 13.

<sup>4</sup>*The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, p 15.

capable of tormenting his own child, however erring, with endless fire. The answer is in such passages as Psalm 50:21: 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will rebuke thee,' and by the stubborn fact that this 'God of Love' does punish a sinful world, under our eyes, with continual woes, many of them gigantic. How are these dealings to be reconciled with God's benevolence? By the sufferer's guilt. Then, if the guilt of any is endless, the benevolence of God may permit them to suffer endlessly."<sup>5</sup> And let us be clear that those who endure endless punishment in hell go on sinning endlessly against a holy God.

If we reject the reality of eternal punishment, we are rejecting the authority of the Bible, and of Christ Himself. He repeatedly referred to a lost eternity for a very practical purpose: so that sinners would flee from the wrath to come and escape the eternity of woe which is justly due to them – woe which can only be avoided by faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is only possible because He, to the eternal glory of the Triune God, suffered in His infinite Person all the awful punishment due to every sinner who will believe.

Let Shedd spell out, as we draw towards a conclusion, some further practical implications of this solemn subject: "The doctrine of eternal perdition . . . is given in charge to the ministry, and to the Church, by the Lord Christ Himself, in His last commission, as a truth to be preached to every creature. If they are false to this trust, His message to the Church of Ephesus is for them: 'Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent' (Rev 2:5)."

Shedd goes on, in a strain of powerful reasoning so typical of his writing: "The kindest way therefore for both the preacher and the hearer is to follow the revealed Word of God and teach the plain and exact truth. Eternal perdition is like any other danger. In order to escape danger, one must believe in it. Disbelief of it is sure destruction. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. They who foresee an evil prepare for it and avoid it; but 'the simple pass on and are punished'. Speaking generally, those who believe that there is a hell, and intelligently fear it, as they are commanded to do by Christ Himself, will escape it; and those who deny that there is a hell, and ridicule it, will fall into it. Hence the minister of Christ must be as plain as Christ, as solemn as Christ, and as tender as Christ, in the announcement of this fearful truth. 'When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes' (Luke 19:41,42)."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>R L Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, Banner of Truth reprint, 1985, p 855.

<sup>6</sup>*The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, pp v,vi.

## “Your Labour Is not in Vain”<sup>1</sup>

Synod Sermon by Rev Neil M Ross

1 Corinthians 15:58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

This was the encouraging exhortation the Apostle Paul gave to the church in Corinth. Paul himself abounded in the work of the Lord, not least in Corinth. When he came to Corinth he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading both Jews and Greeks, and “many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised” (Acts 18:8). Paul continued in Corinth for 18 months, “teaching the word of God among them”, and thus the church was founded in that great city. It is a priceless blessing for a community to have the church of Christ; and how highly favoured our own nation has been in having the Christian church and Reformed faith established in it.

But the church in Corinth declined. Divisions arose within it; the Seventh Commandment was transgressed; there were abuses in connection with the Lord’s Supper; women worshipped in public with their heads uncovered; and some in the church were saying, “There is no resurrection of the dead”. How rapidly that church deteriorated spiritually! This is a lesson for ourselves. We need to be kept – and nothing but divine power can keep us.

The Apostle wrote this epistle to remedy what was amiss in the Corinthian church. He therefore instructed them in the teachings of Scripture bearing on their situation. In this chapter he expounds what some among them were denying: the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of everyone – particularly of believers – but most especially of Christ.

He then concludes: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”. This was the message to the church in Corinth at that time, and it is a message to us as a branch of the visible Church this evening.

With regard to *the work of the Lord* there are four things which, with His help, we shall consider: **firstly**, the *people* who are to engage in it: they are described as “my beloved brethren”; **secondly**, the *nature* of the work: it is “the work of the Lord”; **thirdly** and principally, the *manner* in which it is to be performed – with steadfastness, and abounding in it; and **fourthly**, some *incentives* for performing this work, not least that their labour was “not in vain in the Lord”.

<sup>1</sup>The substance of the sermon preached by the retiring Moderator at the opening of this year’s Synod, in Glasgow.

**1. The *people who are to engage in the work of the Lord.*** Paul addresses them as *beloved brethren*. In calling them brethren he is, as it were, saying, We belong to the same spiritual family; we are children of God by the new birth, children by faith in Jesus Christ, children by adoption, and so we are spiritual brothers to one another – and not only brethren to one another but also brethren of Jesus Christ, who is not ashamed to call His people brethren. As those “beloved brethren” in Corinth were then to engage in the work of the Lord, so such people are to do the work of the Lord today – that is, those who are spiritual brethren, who belong to the family of God, and who have love to one another in the Lord.

Paul calls the Christians in Corinth not only brethren but also “*beloved brethren*”, showing his deep affection for them. He addressed them in this loving manner, not only because they were dear to him, but also to motivate and encourage them to continue in the work of the Lord and to abound in it – and he did so as an apostle of Christ. Paul’s affectionate and encouraging manner of addressing them is undoubtedly an example to ourselves to love as brethren, and to provoke one another to love and good works.

**2. The *nature of this work: it is described as “the work of the Lord”*** – that is, the work which the Lord *commands* to be done by His believing people. What is the primary work He gives them? Surely it is this: to work out their *salvation* (Phil 2:12) or to work *righteousness* (Acts 10:35). In other words, believers are to live a godly life, follow holiness and proceed in the path of righteousness to the completion of their salvation. They are to be doers of the Word of God, living to His glory and furthering His kingdom. This is the fundamental work required of every believer.

Working out one’s salvation involves giving glory to God by worshipping Him. It also includes carrying out all the duties laid upon us in relation to our family, our daily calling, our neighbours, fellow believers and the cause of the Lord; it includes the good works prescribed by the Word of God, which are the fruit and evidence of saving faith.

The work of the Lord also involves the believer exercising the graces of the Holy Spirit. We cannot engage in a “work of faith” and a “labour of love”, or do “works meet for repentance”, without having the graces of repentance, faith and love. If a person does not possess these graces, he cannot even begin to do the work of the Lord – even although he might be very active in religion. He needs also the grace of godly fear, for Scripture says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”.

While the work of the Lord, fundamentally, is to work out one’s salvation, it necessarily includes *promoting the kingdom of God*. It was particularly this work of furthering the cause of the Lord to which the church in Corinth was

called. Every believer today has this work assigned to him in the sense that he is to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”. However, it is a work laid especially upon those in office in the Church, and more especially upon ministers of the gospel. Paul said about Timothy: “He worketh the work of the Lord” – that is, he preached the gospel. Christ commands His ministering servants in every age to work in His vineyard, to be labourers in His harvest, to go “into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. It is the great work which Christ gave to His apostles; it is the work He has given to His Church in the world; and it is the work He has given to us as a branch of His Church.

When the work is described as “*of the Lord*”; it means also that it is the work which He, as the Head of His Church, has committed to her. It is as the King of Zion that He commands us to abound in His work. We therefore have a most solemn responsibility. When the Church of Christ and ministers of the gospel are faced with this onerous task they cannot but ask, How is it to be accomplished? We shall try to answer this question as we look now at our next, and principal, point.

**3. The *manner* in which the work of the Lord is to be performed.** First, we see that it involves *steadfastness* – “be ye steadfast”. This quality is highly necessary in doing the work of the Lord properly. The word *steadfast* here simply means settled, established, firm and unwavering. While we are to be steadfast in promoting His kingdom and preaching the gospel, the basic steadfastness required is steadfastness in the doctrines of His holy Word. We are to be settled and unwavering in the truth. We are to be established and firm in the faith delivered to the saints. Peter the apostle exhorted others: “Be established in the present truth”. Without this steadfastness in the truths of Scripture, our labour is in vain.

What are those truths? In this chapter, the Apostle sums them up in verses 3 and 4: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures”. Above all others we are to proclaim this truth: the death of Christ. The Church is to preach the death of Christ as a real death (for His burial showed its reality), as an atoning death (for He died, said Paul, “for our sins”), and also as a conquering death (for “He rose again the third day according to the scriptures”). “Hold fast this truth,” Paul was saying, in effect; “continue steadfast in this fundamental truth of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Proclaim the good news that His death abolished death, and procured life and immortality.”

To us as a Church, the Lord is saying anew: Be steadfast in the doctrines

of My holy Word. We are therefore to be steadfast in these doctrines as summarised and systematised in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The forefathers of our Church stood fast when these doctrines were attacked by the notorious Declaratory Act of 1892. In 1843 it was the doctrine of the headship of Christ that was under attack in our national Church in Scotland, but in 1892 it was nothing less than the whole of Scripture that was assailed, in its veracity and authority. We can never be steadfast in the work of the Lord without being steadfast in the Word of the Lord.

One doctrine attacked in the church in Corinth was that of the resurrection of man – and therefore the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, as we see in verses 12 and 13. This doctrine is still under attack. Most of you will remember that in the 1970s Professor Geering, a theological teacher in the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand, denied the resurrection of Christ (and he is still promulgating that heresy in his old age). Then in the 1980s we had the notorious Bishop Jenkins of Durham also denying the bodily resurrection of Christ. Hardly a year passes but there is some news item reporting that some ecclesiastical person calls in question, or denies, the resurrection of the Saviour.

There is an ongoing debate in certain quarters about whether or not a person can be regarded as a Christian if he denies the resurrection of Christ. The present Bishop of Durham, N T Wright, despite all his study of the subject (he is the author of a scholarly defence of the resurrection of Christ), said recently, “I have friends who, I am quite sure, are Christians who do not believe in the resurrection [of Christ]”. We can be quite sure that a profession of faith in Christ by one who denies the resurrection of Christ is a nonsense, a nothing. This is what the Apostle Paul means when he says, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain” (verse 17) – by which he meant: Your faith is empty; it is nothing.

Let us then be steadfast in the doctrines of God’s holy Word, fixed in believing them, firm in retaining them, and unwavering in preaching them! Beware, brethren – O let us beware – that there be not in us the spirit of those who in their day were not steadfast with God, neither were they steadfast in His covenant, as Psalm 78 informs us. Our text warns us to be on our guard lest we move away from the faith once delivered to the saints. As we noted at the outset: how easily and quickly this can happen. “Beware lest ye fall from your steadfastness” (2 Pet 3:17).

It is a fact that the children of God are encouraged when they see others steadfast in the faith. How encouraged Paul himself was when he saw the believers in Colosse being steadfast! He said that he rejoiced in beholding their order and the “steadfastness” of their faith in Christ (Col 2:5). How

encouraging it is to ourselves, especially in this age of ecclesiastical compromise, when we see others steadfast in the faith!

Paul also told the Corinthian church to be *unmoveable* in doing the work of the Lord. The word *unmoveable* conveys more than the word *steadfast*: they were to let nothing move them from their steadfastness in believing, practising and preaching the truth. In effect, Paul was saying to the Christians in Corinth what he said to the church in Colosse: “Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” – a hope which includes a blessed resurrection, through the death and rising again of Jesus Christ.

The word *unmoveable* implies that those who seek to be steadfast in the faith will be opposed; endeavours will be made to move them off the foundation of truth, and to divert them from the ways and the work of the Lord. In Corinth it was false teachers who were engaged in this wicked activity and they were, to a significant extent, successful in spreading the error that there is no resurrection of the dead.

False teachers of religion today spread their errors boldly, not only in pursuit of their liberal agenda, but also to give credence to their ideas – and how successful they are in projecting an air of plausibility and even certainty. Behind their promotion of error is Satan, the father of lies. Sadly, many believers have been deceived about various doctrinal and practical matters in the Church of Christ, and every believer and church must therefore pray to be preserved from error. “Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”

Paul himself was enabled to be unmoveable. “None of these things move me,” he said, “neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” And how earnestly he pled with the Philippian believers to be steadfast and unmoveable likewise: “Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved”. Here, friends, in our text, is a word sent to us tonight with great authority from the divine Head of the Church. May we indeed be steadfast and unmoveable in retaining and disseminating “the word of the truth of the gospel”.

Thirdly, the work of the Lord is to be carried out in an *abounding* manner. We are to abound in the work of the Lord by being zealous and diligent in our Christian duties, especially in promoting the interests of Christ’s kingdom. Paul himself abounded in the work of the Lord. In verse 10 he says, “I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”.

While the work of the Lord in which we are to abound especially is to

promote His kingdom, we are to abound in all other Christian duties. To the believers in Thessalonica, Paul wrote, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more”. The children of God are to abound especially in love: “to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men”. The ministers of Christ in particular are to abound in love to the souls of men, setting before them the way of salvation and the unsearchable riches of Christ. When they have this solemn responsibility of abounding in the work of the Lord, they cannot but ask, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

**4. Some incentives for performing this work.** The particular incentive to note is this: “Your labour is *not in vain* in the Lord”. This was the Lord’s comforting message to the church in Corinth then, and it is His message of consolation to His people and Church today. Whatever Satan may say, or unbelievers may say, or the enemies of the cause of the Lord may say, or unbelief in one’s own heart may say, this is an incontrovertible fact: “Your labour is *not in vain* in the Lord”. The certainty of this fact is shown by the prefixed words, “ye know”. In other words: You have the assured knowledge from the Word of God, which cannot lie, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord; therefore, there can be no doubt about it.

The servants of the Lord are at times tempted to conclude that their labour is in vain – when, for example, they are so burdened that they are weary *in* the work of the Lord, although not weary of it. The word *labour* indicates work which fatigues. One verse of Scripture which, when applied to the heart of the weary servant of the Lord, enables him to press on in the work of the Lord is this:

“My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never:

For of my heart God is the strength and portion for ever”

(Ps 73:26 metrical).

These heartening words, “Your labour is not in vain in the Lord”, assure the servants and the Church of God that there will be success in the work of the Lord sooner or later, more or less. It cannot be otherwise when the great Head of the Church has commanded, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”. Do you think that He would send His servants and His Church out with that word if it was to return to Him void? Of course not! He promises, “My word . . . shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”.

The devil tempts the servants of the Lord that their labour is in vain by

bringing before them their sins, faults and shortcomings, as he did in the case of Luther. At the same time, however, Christ is saying to His servants: My blood cleanseth you from all sin. The servant of the Lord may rest assured that, in resorting to the cleansing blood of the Lamb and being accepted in the Beloved, his labour is not in vain in Him.

“Our labour seems to be in vain,” other labourers complain, “because there is no improvement in the low spiritual condition of the Church or in the abysmal moral state of the nation. We sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land.” There is much reason to weep before God for our national sins, but we must go on in the work of the Lord, believing that, if we do so, our work will not be useless. The man who goes out weeping, sowing precious seed, shall undoubtedly bring back sheaves (Ps 126:6). In Jeremiah’s day, Israel was exhorted: “Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord” (Jer 31:16). And in the same terms He exhorts His servants today.

It is to be noted that the statement, “Your labour is not in vain in the Lord,” is in the present tense. Our text does not say, “Your labour *shall* not be in vain,” but, “Your labour *is* not in vain”. Even at this present time, as you are afraid that your work is futile, the Lord is saying, “Your labour *is not in vain* in the Lord”. It is true that, in so many cases, the sowing of the good seed results in nothing more than the birds of the air picking it up – Satan taking away the seed of the kingdom from the minds of hearers.

But even in this “day of small things”, the blessing of the Lord is upon the preaching of the Word. Thus the preaching of the Word is being blessed to believers so that they get some glimpses of the glory of Christ, some feeding for their souls, some comfort in their afflictions, some light in their darkness, some guidance in their perplexity and some strengthening in their weakness. Also, the gospel is being blessed to some unbelievers, here and there, to bring them from death to life, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to follow the Saviour. The “rod of His strength” – the gospel – is still being used for the good of sinners to make them willing to come to Christ.

Another incentive to the messengers of the cross is that their labour is “in the Lord” – that is, it is done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, under His authority, in obedience to His command and for His cause. Therefore it will not be in vain, even although the labourers have their difficulties and disappointments, and much opposition. The opposition of the enemies of the gospel resulted in Paul being imprisoned; yet he could say with God-given assurance: “But the word of God is not bound”.

Furthermore, this work being “in the Lord” means also that it is done by His grace and in His strength. What an encouraging word Christ gave to Paul

when he was buffeted by a messenger of Satan: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness”. Paul could therefore say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me”, and, “Having obtained help of God, we continue to this day”. Today the ambassadors of the cross must say, and we in particular as a branch of the Church must acknowledge, “Having therefore obtained help of God, we continue to this day. To Him be the praise and glory.”

Let us note also the incentive of a promised reward for the faithful servants of the Lord. There will be the reward of fruit being given in due time. The Word of the Lord shall not return unto Him void but it shall prosper. Let us underline these words: “It shall prosper”! It seems at times as if the good seed of the kingdom is rotting in the ground and that there will be no harvest, but God does give the increase.

As the ministers of Christ do the work He bids them to carry out, they are also to consider Him as risen from the dead and exalted on high. As such He has received gifts to bestow upon the sons of men, and He assures His servants, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”.

That brings us to think of the reward that will be given at the end. What reward is that? Is it not victory? Our text is preceded by the words: “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”. The word *therefore* in our text points back to the victory that is demonstrated by the resurrection of Christ. He conquered death by conquering him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Therefore He rose victorious, having robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

For the people of God and the servants of the Lord, there certainly will be victory: victory over death – victory over that which is the cause of death, even sin. For them there shall be a glorious resurrection; their very bodies will be made like Christ’s glorious body. His glorious resurrection is the guarantee of their glorious resurrection. “Because I live ye shall live also.” So those who do the work of the Lord at His command, and by His grace, will at last have the Lord Himself say to them, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou in to the joy of thy Lord”. What an incentive! What an encouragement! What a motivating prospect! Matthew Poole says that the work itself is a reward, and so it is. “But it is lawful,” he adds, “to have an eye to the recompense of the reward.”

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” This is the charge given by Christ to us as a branch of His Church. May we be found faithful to it!

## Jonathan Edwards<sup>1</sup>

### 3. A Time of Surprising Conversions

Sixteen years had passed since the last revival in Northampton under Solomon Stoddard when, at the end of 1734, there were again the beginnings of a work of grace; five or six people “were to all appearances savingly converted”. By early 1735, people throughout the town were speaking about “the great things of religion, and the eternal world”. Everybody seemed to treat the ordinary affairs of the world as of very little consequence; indeed every day seemed in many ways to be like a Sabbath.

They seemed now, Edwards felt, to be spending too little time on worldly affairs and too much on religious activities. “The only thing in the view”, he wrote, “was to get the kingdom of heaven, and everyone appeared pressing into it. The engagedness of their hearts in this great concern could not be hid, it appeared in their very countenances. It then was a dreadful thing amongst us to lie out of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell; and what persons’ minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives and to fly from wrath to come. All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls and were wont very often to meet together in private houses for religious purposes.”<sup>2</sup> The people gave up their quarrels and kept away from the inn; in fact, far more of them were now making their way to Edwards’ parsonage, for spiritual counsel, than ever used to go to the inn. Scarcely anyone, old or young, seemed any more to be unconcerned about their souls. And the influence of Edwards’ preaching also touched many who visited Northampton from the surrounding districts.

Based on the numbers who applied to be admitted to the Lord’s table, Edwards believed that, for five or six weeks, an average of about four people were being converted each day. He may later have had to take a less optimistic view, but at this point he considered that the majority of people in the town who were at least 16 years old had a “saving knowledge of Jesus Christ” and that there were very few homes in the town in which at least one person had not been recently converted. He noted too the suddenness of the change in many cases; many who had been living carelessly were “seized with strong convictions of their guilt and misery, and in a very little time old things have passed away and all things have become new with them”.<sup>3</sup>

But this was not the uniform experience of the converts. “Others”, Edwards

<sup>1</sup>Last month’s article saw Edwards installed as minister of Northampton, as successor to his grandfather, the noted Solomon Stoddard.

<sup>2</sup>*Select Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol 1, 1965 Banner of Truth Trust edition, p 13.

<sup>3</sup>Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, p 21.

noted, “are awakened more gradually; they begin at first to be something more thoughtful and considerate, so as to come to a conclusion in their minds that it is their best and wisest way to delay no longer but to improve the present opportunity. They have accordingly set themselves seriously to meditate on those things that have the most awakening tendency, on purpose to obtain convictions; and so their awakenings have increased till a sense of their misery, by God’s Holy Spirit setting in therewith, has laid fast hold of them. Others who before had been somewhat religious and concerned for their salvation have been awakened in a new manner, and made sensible that their slack and dull way of seeking was never like to attain that purpose.” These awakenings had two effects: those under conviction of sin gave up at once their sinful practices, and they earnestly made use of the means of salvation. Their cry was, as Edwards expressed it: “What shall we do to be saved?”

He noted a great variation in the degree of fear that different individuals experienced. And some were concerned that they had not been awakened at all but were sleeping on the brink of hell. Edwards considered that the purpose of the Spirit “in His legal strivings with persons” was to bring them “to a conviction of their absolute dependence on His sovereign power and grace, and a universal necessity of a mediator”. But he pointed out the great variation also in “the manner and distinctness of such convictions”.<sup>4</sup>

In his dealings with those under conviction, Edwards felt obliged to lay emphasis on the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners – “that God is under no manner of obligation to show mercy to any natural man whose heart is not turned to God, and that a man can challenge nothing, either in absolute justice or by free promise, from anything he does before he has believed on Jesus Christ, or has true repentance begun in him”. He believed that if he had presented any other teaching to those who came to him under soul concern, “I should have taken a most direct cause utterly to undo them”.<sup>5</sup> He was afraid of encouraging self-flattery and carelessness and so putting an end to their convictions. He believed that none of his sermons were more blessed than those which dealt with the doctrine of God’s absolute sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, in answering their prayers and in blessing their efforts to seek for salvation. Yet he was also aware that at the other extreme to self-flattery there was the danger of despair.

Edwards observed that, most frequently, when spiritual deliverance was given, “Christ is distinctly made the object of the mind, in His all-sufficiency and willingness to save sinners, but some have their thoughts more especially fixed on God in some of His sweet and glorious attributes manifested in the

<sup>4</sup>Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, pp 26,27.

<sup>5</sup>Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, p 30.

gospel and shining forth in the face of Christ. Some view the all-sufficiency of the mercy and grace of God; some chiefly the infinite power of God and His ability to save them and to do all things for them; and some look most at the truth and faithfulness of God. . . . Some are struck with the glory and wonderfulness of the dying love of Christ, and some with the sufficiency and preciousness of His blood, as offered to make an atonement for sin, and others with the value and glory of His obedience and righteousness. In some the excellency and loveliness of Christ chiefly engages their thoughts; in some His divinity, that He is indeed the Son of the living God; and in others the excellency of the way of salvation by Christ and the suitability of it to their necessities. . . . There is often in the mind some particular text of Scripture holding forth some evangelical ground of consolation, sometimes a multitude of texts, gracious invitations and promises flooding in one after another, filling the soul more and more with comfort and satisfaction.”<sup>6</sup>

Edwards was later to become well-known for his book on *The Religious Affections*, in which he defined the *affections* as “the more vigorous and sensible [that is, conscious] exercises of the inclination and will of the soul”.<sup>7</sup> But at this stage he was already commenting that “it was very wonderful to see how persons’ affections were sometimes moved – when God did, as it were suddenly, open their eyes and let into their minds a sense of the greatness of His grace, the fullness of Christ and His readiness to save – after having been broken with apprehensions of divine wrath . . . under a sense of guilt which they were ready to think was beyond the mercy of God”. Yet he noted how others, even after a long “course of gracious exercises and experiences”, had not been able to accept that they were converted.<sup>8</sup> But he believed that it was those who had experienced the greatest terrors under conviction who were most conscious of the *time* of their conversion.

Referring to the fact that, “because they see them in a new light”, many of the converts referred to the Bible and the preaching as new, Edwards used as an illustration a 70-year-old woman who had spent most of her days under his grandfather’s “powerful ministry”: “Reading in the New Testament concerning Christ’s sufferings for sinners, she seemed to be astonished at what she read, as what was real and very wonderful, but quite new to her. At first . . . she wondered within herself that she had never heard of it before, but then immediately recollected herself and thought she had often heard of it and read it, but never till now saw it as real. She then cast in her mind how wonderful this was, that the Son of God should undergo such things for sinners and how

<sup>6</sup>Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, pp 34,35.

<sup>7</sup>1961 Banner of Truth Trust edition, p 24.

<sup>8</sup>Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, pp 37,38.

she had spent her time in ungratefully sinning against so good a God and such a Saviour – though she was a person apparently of a very blameless and inoffensive life. And she was so overcome by those considerations that her nature was ready to fail under them.”<sup>9</sup>

But why were converted people afflicted with doubts and fears about the state of their soul? Edwards believed that it was because of the degree of corruption remaining in their hearts. At first, their souls seemed to be all alive and they could engage in religious duties with little difficulty. But when they later found themselves unaffected by the same religious duties, and when they felt such sins as pride, envy and revenge in their souls, they were ready to conclude that they were only hypocrites. As a good physician of souls, Edwards points to the true explanation: “The case seems plainly to be that now they feel the pain of their own wound; they have a watchful eye upon their hearts that they did not use to have. They take more notice of what sin is there, which is now more burdensome to them; they strive more against it and feel more of its strength. They are somewhat surprised that they should in this respect find themselves so different from the *idea* they generally had entertained of godly persons.”<sup>10</sup>

In the last chapter of his *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, Edwards gives accounts of the experiences of some of the converts. The first of these was Abigail Hutchinson<sup>11</sup>, a young woman who did not enjoy good health. She came under concern one Monday when she heard about another young woman who had been converted and through a remark her brother made about the necessity of earnestly seeking regenerating grace. She felt it was impossible for her to be converted because she knew so little about the principles of religion. She decided she must search the Scriptures and started to read from the beginning of Genesis. Her concern suddenly increased on the Thursday and she gave up reading the Old Testament, turning to the New to see if she could find relief for her soul there. She was particularly concerned about the sinfulness of her nature. Her great fear stemmed from a consciousness that she had sinned *against God*. She was amazed that, while she had for long been so concerned for her body, often consulting doctors, she had completely neglected her soul. On the Saturday she read the Bible so intensely that, in the end, she was no longer able to make out the words. Then she remembered the warning of Christ that the heathen will not be heard for their “much speaking” in prayer. She saw that she had been trusting in her own prayers and religious duties, and now she did not know where to turn.

<sup>9</sup>Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, p 44.

<sup>10</sup>Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, p 50.

<sup>11</sup>See Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, pp 55-63 for the account of Abigail Hutchinson.

But when she wakened on the following Monday, she felt great happiness in thinking of the scriptures (though she did not remember them with perfect accuracy): “The words of the Lord are pure words, health to the soul, and marrow to the bones”, and, “The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin”. And in these last words she saw clearly the excellency of Christ and His sufficiency to satisfy for the sins of the whole world. Edwards wrote in some detail about her sense of the glory of God and of Christ, particularly of the excellence and loveliness of Christ in His meekness, referring to the glory of God in nature. She died not long afterwards, after displaying remarkable submission to the will of God.

Another convert was Phebe Bartlet<sup>12</sup>, who was just four. She was influenced when her 11-year-old brother spoke to her about the truth. Her parents noticed her going away several times a day on her own; they realised that she must be going to pray. Just once she said something to the effect that she could not find God, but for about three months she kept going away to her bedroom to pray. One day her mother heard her praying out loud. Very earnestly she was pleading, “Pray, blessed Lord, give me salvation. I pray, beg, pardon all my sins.” She then came very upset to her mother and sat beside her. Her mother asked her what was wrong. Eventually she replied, “I am afraid I shall go to hell”. Her mother tried to encourage her, but Phebe went on crying. At last she suddenly stopped crying and began to smile. She said, “Mother, the kingdom of heaven is come to me”. Her mother did not know what to make of this and said nothing. Then Phebe told her: “There is another come to me and there is another; there is three”. When her mother asked what she meant, she answered, “One is, Thy will be done, and there is another, Enjoy Him for ever”. The “three” were evidently portions of Scripture. Later she told her mother: “I can find God now”.

After Edwards had visited her home, with some people visiting the district who talked to her about spiritual things, she said, “I wish they would come again”. Her mother asked, “Why?” She explained, “I love to hear them talk”. Another day she went with some older children to a neighbour’s garden and they took away plums without permission. Her mother explained that she should not have done so because it was sin. She was upset. Even after the neighbour was told and said the children could have the plums, Phebe would not eat them. She became upset again. At last she told her mother why she was crying: “It was because it was sin”. One morning her mother asked Phebe why she was crying in bed the previous night. “I was thinking about God and Christ, and they loved me,” she explained. “Does thinking of God and Christ loving you make you cry?” her mother asked. “Yes, it does some-

<sup>12</sup>See Edwards, *Select Works*, vol 1, pp 63-69 for the account of Phebe Bartlet.

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times,” Phebe answered. Anyone listening could well have found the words of the Saviour particularly appropriate: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise”.

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## Christ in the Psalms

### 2. The Legitimate Bounds of Messianic Interpretation

*Rev Roderick MacLeod*

The question seems to me not to be: “Where do we begin to look for Christ in the Psalms?” but: “Where do we stop?” W S Plumer writes as follows: “The weightiest matter in the controversy respecting the interpretation of the Psalms regards their application to Christ. How far are they Messianic? Has any portion of them a primary application to David or Solomon, and a secondary reference to Christ? Were these kings types of the Saviour? If so, how far may we go in regarding them as typical? In this matter there may have been rashness and folly on both sides. An unbridled fancy may find supposed analogies where none was intended. And a cold critical turn of mind may reject the most striking types.”

From what we have done so far, especially in the section on the witness of the New Testament to the Messianic element in the Psalms, we might suppose it possible to identify a definite number of texts from the Book of Psalms which have been infallibly interpreted in the New Testament as Messianic. Some interpreters say that this constitutes a complete list of all the Christological passages in the Book of Psalms. Moses Stuart expresses this view as follows: “Just so much of the Old Testament is to be accounted typical as the New Testament affirms to be so, and no more”.

Others, however, say that these inspired interpretations are not a complete list at all, but that, on the contrary, they teach us to interpret the Psalms in a spiritual or Messianic way, wherever appropriate. The main difference then between interpreters lies in this: some say that unless the New Testament states that a particular part of a Psalm is Messianic, it is wrong to interpret it as such; while others say that the existence of the divine interpretation of the Psalms shows that such Messianic interpretation is not only possible but, wherever appropriate, necessary.

Berkhof says in *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*: “It is well known that the New Testament interprets several passages of the Old Testament messianically, and in so doing, not only points to the presence of the mystical sense in those particular passages, but also intimates that whole categories of related passages should be interpreted in a similar manner”. Plumer states:

“To say that nothing in the Old Testament is a type of Christ unless, in the New Testament, it is expressly declared to be so is as contrary to reason as to say that no prophecy of the Old Testament relates to Christ unless it is quoted as such in the New. The entire old dispensation was full of figures. So Paul teaches in Hebrews 10:1.”

Did the visible ceremonies of the Old Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace speak richly of a Christ to come? Should we not also expect the songs of daily worship to contain much that is to His praise. I imagine that few would contradict the view that the believing expectation of the Messiah was cherished by the Old Testament writers. Is it conceivable that the manual of praise was not “charged with the Messianic hope”? Furthermore, is it conceivable that the events and experiences in one man’s life, viewed without reference to a higher and more spiritual truth, would make up a large part of the manual of sacred praise? Are we not rather, as far as that is proper, to see in David a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the faith of the Church was placed? Is it not more satisfactory to think that, through the type, they worshipped and praised God in the faith of the Messiah to come?

We will give a few quotations from authors on this side of the controversy. Matthew Henry: “In the Book of Psalms there is so much of Christ and His gospel, as well as of God and His law, that it has been called the abstract or summary of both Testaments”. And Thomas Scott: “No doubt every pious mind will allow that each of [the Psalms] immediately points to [Christ] in His Person, character and offices, or may be so applied to lead the believer’s thought to Him who is the centre of all acceptable religion”.

“It is astonishing”, protests W W Barr, in an essay on the sufferings of Christ as depicted in the Psalms, that anyone could read Psalms 2,16,18,22, 24,40,45,69,72,96,98,110 and others like them “and say that Christ in His incarnation, His life, His Person, His sufferings, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His offices and work, the triumphs of His kingdom, His coming again and His judging the world are not in the Psalms”. “There is not a page of the book of Psalms in which a pious reader will not find His Saviour.”

Another writer comments: “It is the thought itself, the grand and sublime, the tender and touching, the thrilling and affecting truth of redemption through Christ . . . that gives the Book of Psalms its value and power”. And Jonathan Edwards writes: “The main subjects of these songs were the glorious things of the gospel, as is evident by the interpretation that is often put upon them, and the use that is made of them in the New Testament. For there is no other book of the Old Testament that is so often quoted in the New Testament as the Book of Psalms. Here Christ is spoken of in multitudes of songs.”

Finally, an extract from an article in the *Christian Banner*, reprinted in

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1937 in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* (vol 42, p 143), begins: “The Psalms are full of Christ. Christ is the speaker in many of them, and of many He alone is the subject. . . . The truth is that no book of the Bible reveals Christ with such fullness as the Book of Psalms, not excepting the Gospel according to John or the Epistle to the Hebrews. Truly I believe that there is one view of Christ that can be discovered only in the Psalms, I mean His inward life. The Holy Spirit has there laid open the inmost thoughts, sorrows and conflicts of our Lord.”

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## George Campbell<sup>1</sup>

*Rev J S Sinclair*

It is with much regret we record this month the death of Mr George Campbell, formerly postmaster at Kilmore, Oban, which took place suddenly at 35 Scotia Street, Glasgow, on January 2. Mr Campbell, who had reached the advanced age of 82 years or upwards, was the youngest and last-surviving of three worthy brothers, who were well known in religious circles in the Highlands in their day. They were sons of George Campbell, a godly Gaelic schoolmaster, who died at Scourie, Sutherland, shortly after the Disruption of 1843. The oldest was the late Mr Walter Campbell, missionary, North Uist, and the second was the late Mr William Campbell, missionary, Wick. The third is the subject of this notice.

For the last two and a half years Mr Campbell was closely identified with the John Knox’s congregation in Glasgow and often conducted its services, to the edification of the hearers. Office-bearers and people became much attached to him, and his sudden removal is felt as a painful breach in their midst. Though a man of such advanced years, he retained his vigour almost to the very last, and was out visiting friends two days before his decease. Mr Campbell was a man of a lively, acute intellect, possessing more than ordinary understanding of God’s Word and experience of its power and, though marked by some peculiarity of manner, was a truly lovable and estimable Christian man. In some respects an outstanding personality, a brief account of him, we believe, will be interesting to our readers.

It appears that his spiritual concern did not begin until he had reached the years of manhood. Before then, to quote his own words, he was “very light

<sup>1</sup>Taken from the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, vol 9 (1904-05), which has recently been reprinted. It costs £16.50 but is available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom at £14.00 until August 31. This article is typical of many obituaries of the godly of the time. Rev J S Sinclair was minister of John Knox’s congregation in Glasgow and the first editor of this Magazine.

and foolish, and very ignorant even of the letter of the Bible,” though brought up under the instruction of a pious and intelligent father. His mind was wholly taken up with the world and its pleasures. At this time he went to hear that highly-honoured servant of Christ, Rev Duncan Campbell, Free Church minister of Kiltearn, whose text on the occasion was, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). The hearer’s impressions were of a melting nature – and these under the first part of the text – but they soon faded away and left him very much as he was before.

He again heard Mr Campbell, Kiltearn, at Alness, and on this occasion the impression was of a deep and lasting nature. The preacher in the course of his sermon delivered those solemn words of warning first spoken by Christ: “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgement, than for you.” The words struck “like balls of fire” upon the young man, and he almost fell from the seat where he was sitting. It is worth noticing for the benefit of preachers and others that no other part of the discourse, though containing excellent matter, had any appreciable effect. It was just the delivery with power of a portion of God’s Word that went home to the heart of our friend and was the beginning of a good work in him.

After he came out of the Church, he began to reflect upon his experience and thought that surely now he was converted, and he even contemplated the pleasure he would derive from the company of God’s people whom he expected to meet at his father’s house. But a disappointment awaited him; he found that he could not enter into or relish their conversation, nor enjoy their society. He was “shut up under the law”, and the gospel had not yet come to him in the power of the Holy Ghost. Though convinced of sin and the curse, he did not understand the way of salvation by Christ nor had experienced the light and liberty of the children of God. His experiences of law and gospel were very distinct and separate from each other. Under the work of legal conviction he continued for a considerable time, kept at prayer and religious duties, making mention of the name of Christ, and yet having no understanding of Him, feeling himself getting worse and worse and beginning to think he was an undone outcast for ever.

It was while under such painful reflections as these that he went with his brother Walter to a communion “in Dr Mackay’s Church”, Inverness, at which the late Dr Kennedy, Dingwall, was assisting. He heard Dr Kennedy each day until Monday without any relief, but on Monday, towards the close of

the discourse, his soul got a clear and marked deliverance. The text, if we are not mistaken, was Psalm 45:10, beginning: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear," and in his application Dr Kennedy spoke with special power. In endeavouring to encourage and win sin-convicted souls, he made the striking remark (one that we have also observed in Whitefield's sermons) that Christ always accepts (or gets) "the devil's leavings", and shortly thereafter quoted the apostle's words: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father". Here our friend felt the chains of bondage and despair fall off, and was led into hope and liberty. Others in the audience seemed also deeply affected at this stage of the discourse.

When he came out of the service, he felt as if he were in a new world. Everything had assumed a changed appearance. He saw a new beauty and attraction in the people of God; he beheld them "so near", when before everybody and everything appeared so dark and distant. The Scriptures were opened up to him in a way never experienced before; he understood more of them by that short experience of the Spirit's teaching than he did in all his previous lifetime of natural instruction. Even the earth and the skies had a new brightness for him.

As may be expected, he could not contain himself, but expressed his delight at the change to his brother Walter, who prudently dropped a word of caution: "See that it will continue". And there is no doubt but it did continue in George Campbell's case, whatever ups and downs he may have had in his life's history.

Mr Campbell, as has already been remarked, had a very acute intellect, which was much exercised on God's Word. His delight was in the law of the Lord, and in that law he meditated day and night. His conversation on particular texts and points of doctrine was very interesting and instructive. A little impulsive in his way, he was also at the same time remarkably sincere and single-minded, genial and child-like in disposition – a man, indeed, who had the true "spirit of adoption". It was noticeable that the real breath of the Spirit often accompanied his remarks in ordinary conversation, and to a degree seldom met with.

He had also interesting reminiscences to relate of worthies he had seen and met in days of old, and especially of eminent ministers of the gospel whom he had heard. There were three of these whom he specially delighted to converse about: Dr Kennedy, Rev Archibald Cook, and Rev John Macrae (Macrath Mor). Of Dr Kennedy's elevated doctrine and intimacy with the Lord in prayer, of Mr Cook's holy character and original handling of divine truth and Christian experience, and of Mr Macrae's rich, powerful preaching

of the gospel in a way suited to the varied wants and cases of the poor and needy in Zion, he would often speak in the most lively and edifying manner. He was greatly interested in these Gaelic sermons of Mr Cook's which are appearing in the Magazine, and often described them with an intense sense of relish as "well-cooked meat".

Mr Campbell was one who took a deep interest in the public cause of Christ and, in consequence of the passing of the well-known Declaratory Act in the Free Church, he left that communion in 1893 and associated with those who formed the Free Presbyterian Church. Though a good deal impressed with the recent decision of the House of Lords in favour of the Free Churchmen who remained along with the majority until the union of 1900, he ever held that the right time to separate was after the passing of the Act referred to. Indeed he sometimes said, "We should have come out sooner – when the Assembly placed Dr Dods in the chair,<sup>2</sup> a man who denied the infallibility of the Word of God".

This leads us to notice an outstanding characteristic of Mr Campbell in recent years, namely, a most fervent opposition to the errors of the higher critics in regard to the Holy Scriptures. In regard to this evil sign of the times he was all on fire; it was with him day and night; and he could hardly meet a friend on the street without denouncing, in the strongest terms, the deadly heresies and blasphemies against the holy Word of God by professors in Presbyterian colleges. The United Free Church in its maintenance of such teachers was the object, justly, of his severest condemnation. "That Church", he said, "supporting these Professors is the greatest curse that ever rose in Scotland." He often quoted in this connection the words of the inspired Apostle, "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev 22:19).

Mr Campbell was a man of prayer. His prayers in public were for the most part accompanied with the unction of the Spirit, and were pointed, fresh and stimulating. "The presence of the Lord" in religious exercises was what he most desired for himself and others, and the grand theme which he loved to dwell upon, and which often completely broke him down, was the glorious person of Christ as "God . . . manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit". Mr Campbell died as he lived. On his knees, in the usual attitude of prayer, "he was not, for God took him". To those friends with whom he often walked in sweet counsel and fellowship during the closing years of his life, his memory will always be fragrant and precious.

<sup>2</sup>Marcus Dods was appointed Professor of New Testament in the Free Church's New College, Edinburgh, in 1889.

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“Help, Lord, because the godly man doth daily fade away,  
And from among the sons of men the faithful do decay” (Ps 12:1).

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## Book Reviews<sup>1</sup>

***A Summary of Christian Doctrine***, by Louis Berkhof, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 172 pages, £6.75.

This is indeed an excellent summary of biblical truth by an American theologian of Dutch extraction who died in 1957. With a minimum of explanation, Berkhof sets out the doctrines of Scripture in remarkably clear terms. Only on such subjects as the millennium and the identity of Antichrist would we differ from him.

Following each brief chapter is a set of passages to memorise, grouped under headings corresponding to the particular doctrines covered in it. These are quoted from the American Standard Version of 1901; it would be far better to learn them from the Authorised Version. There follow some questions “for further study”, which involve consulting additional passages of Scripture; and finally “questions for review” based on the content of the chapter.

This is a book which has gone through repeated printings but has now been reset in a much more attractive format. Those who take the trouble to study this little volume carefully should end up with a good understanding of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible.

***William Carey and the Missionary Vision***, by Daniel Webber, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, paperback, 128 pages, £6.00.

Few missionaries are better known than Carey, who sailed for a lifetime of devoted labour in India in 1793. One modern writer is quoted as saying: “More than any other individual in modern history, he stirred the imagination of the Christian world and showed by his own humble example what could and should be done to bring a lost world to Christ”.

The first half of the book gives a brief account of Carey’s life. Carey was born in 1761 near Northampton and, as a young preacher, was earnestly concerned for the spiritual state of the heathen. He became active in publicising the need for missionary activity. Perhaps his greatest contribution in India was the translation of the Bible into several languages.

The second section of the book is a reprint of Carey’s little work entitled, *An Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. In this sinful world, Carey believed, “God repeatedly made known His intention to prevail finally over all the work of the devil and to

<sup>1</sup>Both books reviewed here are obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

destroy all his works, and set up His own kingdom and interest among men and extend it as universally as Satan had extended his. It was for this purpose the Messiah came and died.” This was the foundation on which Carey’s own missionary work was built – a confidence in God’s purposes, as revealed in Scripture, to save multitudes of sinners from all parts of the world.

After reviewing the New Testament evidence of missionary endeavour, particularly Paul’s, Carey briefly surveys previous efforts – such as John Elliott’s among the Indians of New England – to spread the gospel among peoples who had never before been evangelised. Included here is a remarkable series of tables in which Carey listed the various parts of the world and the number of their inhabitants, along with their religions. If there were errors in this compilation, as no doubt there were, that is irrelevant; his efforts impressively demonstrated the vast number of people still living “in darkness and in the shadow of death” because they had never heard the gospel; that was Carey’s main purpose in his research. But his labours also showed his persistence and commitment in carrying out every task he undertook.

Carey then goes on to demonstrate “the *practicability* of something being done . . . for the conversion of the heathen”. He concludes his argument with the words: “Surely it is worthwhile to lay ourselves out with all our might, in promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ”. He believed that God “can as easily remove the present seemingly-formidable obstacles as we can move the smallest particles of dust”.

The final part of the book is a sermon by Andrew Fuller on Haggai 1:2, entitled: “The Instances, the Evil Nature, and the Dangerous Tendency of Delay in the Concerns of Religion”. Fuller was prominent among those who formed the Particular Baptist Missionary Society, which sent Carey to India. He addresses the danger of delay in attending to the concerns of one’s soul as well as in undertaking work for the cause of Christ or the good of mankind.

Altogether, this is a worthwhile and useful book.

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## Protestant View

### Another Attack on the Act of Settlement

The 1701 Act of Settlement forbids the British sovereign to be a Roman Catholic, or to be married to one. However, the leader of the Scottish National Party, Alex Salmond, has “agreed a pact”, says *The Scotsman*, with Cardinal Keith O’Brien, leader of Scotland’s Roman Catholics, to campaign against the Act.

It would appear that, on Mr Salmond’s part, the pact is an act of political

expediency in an effort to gain support from Roman Catholic voters in central Scotland, who traditionally have supported the Labour party. O'Brien, on the other hand is zealously pursuing the late Cardinal Winning's agenda to have the Act revoked, and is understood to have put his views on the Act to Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown in the middle of June, when he met them in London.

The Salmond and O'Brien pact is undoubtedly a further ratcheting up of opposition to the Act. O'Brien intends to keep the issue to the forefront, according to his spokesman, who said, "The meeting [between Salmond and O'Brien] will be followed up with initiatives to raise awareness about this. There was agreement that the issue had slipped into the background in recent years and that people needed to be reminded of the injustice that it represents."

All the more reason for true Protestants to be vigilant at the throne of grace, seeking that God would prevent the Act from being repealed or adversely amended and preserve this most important safeguard of the Protestant constitution of Britain. "Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail" (Ps 9:19). *NMR*

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## Notes and Comments

### The Enlightenment

Some in the media have recently been showing an interest in the Enlightenment, particularly in its Scottish expression, and celebrating it as a movement which made the Western world what it is. To the ideas which it let loose they attribute the advances made in many areas of modern life – specifically philosophy, science, economics, medicine and architecture.

*The Enlightenment* is a term used for at least the past hundred years to describe the intellectual movements which dominated eighteenth-century Europe. The term was intended to indicate that, through these movements, humanity in the West was delivered from the darkness of a past in which people had been dependent, for their understanding of reality, upon faith in an authoritative revelation from God. The main thrust of this period was to exalt the place of human reason in determining what reality is – though some of those regarded as philosophers of the Enlightenment either differed over what human reason is, or reacted against the idea of human reason and went down such roads as scepticism or speculation. Whatever the differences, and however fundamental some of these were, common factors were the assertion of the autonomy of man and the dismissal of any knowledge – whether of natural or supernatural objects – based on the authority of divine revelation. The expectation was that man would inevitably make

progress if left to determine the nature of reality by powers of his own.

In these movements we find the modern roots of secularism and of an optimism grounded in unaided human capacity to understand and handle the total environment, which seems to survive even the most devastating setbacks. There we find the roots of unbelieving theological scholarship. There we find the roots of a loss of confidence among believers which makes them desire, not only to express the truth in a way which addresses the thinking of the day, but also to justify before the bar of human reason that which is accepted on the basis of revelation.

There is no doubt that persons driven by an unquestioning confidence in human reason and science, and by an optimistic expectation of the possibilities for the race, may be motivated thereby to make discoveries potentially beneficial to mankind. A denial of God, and a belief in the self-contained nature of the universe and in man's capacity to master its secrets, may even move some to intellectual and scientific efforts which have useful by-products. It was in the line of ungodly Cain that men initially developed cattle-keeping skills, learned to handle the harp and organ and became artificers in brass and iron (Genesis 3).

What is often forgotten or denied is that in Scotland the Church had long provided, in its religious services and educational schemes, a stimulus to thought and enquiry, even on what some would regard as the most abstract matters. The use of reason was always encouraged in Calvinistic circles, but it was recognised that the existence of reason – and of an ordered universe of reality which could be investigated and whose laws could be discovered and acted upon – was to be accounted for by the existence of God, the creator and sustainer of all. It was recognised that the exercise of reason should be regulated by divine revelation. While we are dependent upon revelation for our knowledge of God, there is nothing more reasonable than the revealed existence of the God of the Bible. The exercise of all the powers of human reason, when regulated by revelation and empowered by grace, is productive of good spiritually and naturally, and its outcome is not blighted by the uses which sinful men make of their discoveries.

However ignorant some may be of the philosophy of the Enlightenment and however sceptical of it others may be, we see everywhere the effects of that autonomy of man and rejection of the God of revelation which it fostered. How much we – ministers of the gospel, but also scientists, educators, people in every realm of life – need to heed the call of God: “Come now, and let us reason together” (Is 1:18)! Subjection of our reasoning to the revelation of God does not stifle the exercise of reason in any realm but ensures that it is exercised in a way truly in keeping with reality.

*HMC*

### **Growing Turmoil in the Anglican Church**

The more immediate cause of turmoil in the worldwide Anglican Church lies in two controversial decisions in the 2.3-million-strong Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA), a US branch of Anglicanism. The first was to ordain the homosexual bishop, Gene Robinson. The second was to elect as its leader Katharine Schori, Bishop of Nevada, the first woman to head a branch of Anglicanism, and one of the bishops who voted for Robinson – but her controversial election is overshadowed by the Robinson ordination.

About 2700 conservatives in ECUSA, including 800 clergy and 46 bishops, gathered last month for a protest meeting in Dallas, Texas. They demanded that their leaders “repent of and reverse the unbiblical and schismatic” actions in ordaining homosexual clergymen. In response, ECUSA agreed to a resolution to “exercise restraint” in ordaining homosexual bishops – a watered-down version of an earlier resolution to stop doing so. However, the liberal diocese of Newark decided, a week later, to nominate Canon Michael Barlowe, a homosexual priest, as one of four candidates for bishop. As the BBC’s religious affairs correspondent Robert Pigott commented, Canon Barlowe’s nomination could barely have come at a more sensitive moment.

“The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error;” says the Westminster Confession of Faith, “and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan.” It is clear that ECUSA has so degenerated, and the duty of those conservatives in it who grieve over such unscriptural and sinful decisions, is to heed God’s call: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:17). *NMR*

### **Doctrinal Crisis in the OPC**

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) is an American denomination founded in 1936 by J Gresham Machen, following the triumph of liberalism in the Presbyterian Church of the USA. It has well over 200 congregations and around 25 000 members. It was the denomination in which Professor John Murray was ordained and is still comparatively conservative, at least on paper. It is committed to a slightly-modified version of the Westminster Confession of Faith (rejecting, sadly, the Establishment Principle and identification of the Pope as the man of sin); it opposes homosexuality, abortion and the charismatic movement; and it does not ordain women. It does, however, allow hymns, musical instruments and modern versions of the Bible. It has fraternal links with the Free Church of Scotland and, less formally, with the Free Church (Continuing).

In recent years the denomination has been severely troubled by a heresy

on the doctrine of Justification. This heresy comes in various guises, and under various names such as “the New Perspective on Paul”, “Federal Vision Theology” and “Auburn Avenue Theology”. It originates from the writings of New Testament scholars such as E P Saunders, K Stendahl, and James Dunn; its most influential proponent has been N T Wright, who is currently Bishop of Durham and is professedly Evangelical. This heresy is now established, seemingly beyond remedy, in the OPC.

Without entering into unedifying details, the essence of this heresy, or rather family of heresies, is the subtle re-introduction of works into the doctrine of justification by faith. This is done by redefining terms such as *righteousness*, *justification*, *imputation*, and *works of the law* so as to include an element of works in the believer’s title to heaven. This has always been Satan’s purpose – to persuade men to rest, in some way, on the rotten foundation of their own righteousness. It was Luther’s rediscovery of the perfect righteousness of Christ as the gift of God, freely bestowed on those who believe, that led to the Reformation; and it is sufficient proof of the deadly nature of this present heresy that it regards Luther’s view of justification as utterly wrong. One of its particular subtleties is that it enables an office-bearer, if his conscience is sufficiently elastic, to give assent to the words of the Westminster Confession while holding an entirely unorthodox view of their meaning.

The heresy was introduced into the OPC by Norman Shepherd, John Murray’s successor as Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. Following an acrimonious struggle from 1975 to 1982, Shepherd left Westminster Seminary and the OPC and joined the Christian Reformed Church, but his views remained uncondemned. Many of his students and some of his colleagues had imbibed them, and the leaven has been spreading ever since, both in the OPC and in other Evangelical denominations such as the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA). Shepherd has continued to receive invitations to OPC pulpits.

The issue resurfaced in the OPC in 2001 when an elder in Pennsylvania, John O Kinnaird, was tried for heresy and eventually suspended by his kirk session. Kinnaird had been a defender of Norman Shepherd during the 1975-82 crisis, and had even tried to bring a case of discipline against Shepherd’s orthodox opponents. Since that time he had held many prominent positions in the denomination. On appeal, the Presbytery of Philadelphia upheld his suspension by the kirk session, but this was reversed by the General Assembly in 2003 and he is now restored.

The 2006 General Assembly, which has just finished, received a long-awaited report from its Committee on Justification, appointed two years

earlier. The report strongly affirms the orthodox position and opposes the New Perspective, but the upholders of orthodoxy are not hopeful that it will do any good. They point to the following defects: (1) The report does not condemn the New Perspective as *heresy*. It is not enough merely to declare that it is “error” when it is a false gospel destroying men’s souls. (2) The report turns a blind eye to the existence of this heresy in the OPC. All its criticisms are directed at those outwith the OPC. (3) It is not enough to denounce error, even in strong terms, if one will not proceed eventually to the discipline of those who are guilty. Heretics are generally not nervous types, to be silenced with expressions of disapproval, and they do not usually leave of their own accord. The Assembly has made it plain that those who preach the New Perspective have nothing to fear.

Apart from the necessity of discipline, the crisis also illustrates the scriptural truth that there are ultimately only two ways of salvation: faith and works. The New Perspective begins as a re-juggling of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith but it soon resembles the Roman doctrine of a justification essentially by works. Already some of its proponents are teaching a form of baptismal regeneration. The real choice is between Protestantism and Romanism, and every variant turns out to be Romanism in disguise. There is only one gospel and one way to heaven, and that is the way which was revealed so plainly to Luther: to trust solely in the righteousness of Christ. “I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only” (Ps 71:16). *DWBS*

### **Sabbath Opening of Stores**

In the words of a press report, “large stores such as Ikea, Asda and Next had hoped to increase the current six-hour limit on Sunday opening [in England and Wales] and become deregulated, as in Scotland”. But Trade and Industry Secretary Alistair Darling has announced: “Having considered all the evidence from the review, we have concluded there should be no change to the Sunday trading laws”.

The news that Sabbath-opening hours are to remain unchanged has been welcomed by trade unions, who are concerned for families to have some opportunity to be together. But those who love the Sabbath and grieve over its desecration have a different motivation, and they are thankful that further desecration of God’s holy day in this particular direction is not to be permitted. Yet they have reason for sadness over the degree to which large stores are already permitted to open on Sabbaths, and the fact that there are no restrictions whatever on the opening of smaller shops.

At the same time, we would dearly love to see measures enacted for the protection of the Sabbath in Scotland. Our Church presented a petition

requesting such measures to the Scottish Parliament last year. The Scottish Executive said in response that such legislation would affect employment rights, which are not devolved to Scotland and remain in the province of the Westminster Parliament. However, the Church was encouraged to resubmit the petition in another form. Accordingly we are requesting the Scottish Executive “to consider and debate the need for a weekly day of rest from work throughout Scotland and to encourage business and commerce to close on that day, and that the day appointed be the Christian Sabbath”.

It seems that some in the Scottish Parliament are concerned that Christmas Day and New Year’s Day be kept free from trading. The Scottish Parliament is therefore seeking views on a proposed bill, which aims to prohibit large shops from opening for trading on those days. (See website [www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/59-xmasday/index.htm](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/59-xmasday/index.htm).)

But the day which really needs to be kept free from trading is the Christian Sabbath. Let us pray that the Scottish Parliament will give a favourable response to our petition, and that at least some of our MSPs will see that their primary concern must be to preserve the only day which God has commanded us to keep: “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”. *NMR*

### **BMA Change on Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide**

The campaign for euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide received a boost last year when the British Medical Association voted against opposing the legalisation of physician-assisted suicide. Euthanasia involves the active participation of the doctor, while in physician-assisted suicide the doctor gives a patient the means to commit suicide, by prescribing a lethal dose of a drug for self-administration.

However, just a year after adopting a neutral stance on the issue, the BMA has voted, at its conference in Belfast, to reinstate its policy of outright opposition to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide – by a 65% majority in each case. We believe that this is an answer to the prayers of many who have been deeply concerned by our increasing national decline into a barbaric devaluing of human life. We should not only give thanks to God but continue to pray that this BMA decision will prove an impediment to enacting Lord Joffe’s proposed bill to allow physician-assisted suicide. *NMR*

### **The Shame of Europride**

Europride was the title which homosexuals gave to a huge procession, of tens of thousands, through the streets of London on July 1. It is especially shocking that representatives of our forces of law, order and defence, in the form of uniformed contingents of the Royal Navy and police, marched in it. Stephen Green of Christian Voice says, “As if that was not enough, the

Metropolitan Police sponsored a reception for homosexual activists and the Gay Police Association is now trying to stir up hatred against Christians with an advert in *The Independent* linking the Bible and our faith with bloody attacks on homosexuals”.

At one time Christians could look to the police for help against the aggressive agenda of the homosexual lobby but it appears that Christians are more likely to be censured by some police authorities for condemning homosexual practices as against the law of God. It seems to us that hatred against true Christians, on the part of those who promote this sinful and dangerous lifestyle, is becoming more overt. This ought not to stop our mouths; let us rather testify more against their sin and pray increasingly for the speedy arrival of the promised day when such people will no longer “declare their sin as Sodom” (Isa 3:9), and when “all iniquity shall stop her mouth” (Ps 107:42). *NMR*

## Church Information

### Induction of Rev John Goldby

At the request of the Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee, in accordance with a decision of the recent Synod, the Southern Presbytery resolved to meet, DV, in St Jude’s Free Presbyterian Church, Glasgow, on Wednesday, 16 August 2006, at 7.15 pm (service beginning at 7.30 pm), for the induction of Rev John Goldby to work among the Jews in Israel. Rev John MacLeod has been appointed to preach and preside and Rev N M Ross to address the minister and the congregation.

*(Rev) Hugh M Cartwright, Presbytery Clerk*

### Student Licensed

The Southern Presbytery, at their meeting in Glasgow on 14 June 2006, licensed Mr Lyle T Smith to preach the gospel within the bounds of the Presbytery and wherever else his lot may be cast in the course of God’s providence. The Presbytery wish Mr Smith the Lord’s blessing and guidance.

*(Rev) Hugh M. Cartwright, Presbytery Clerk*

### Eastern Europe

It is intended God willing that Mr Christopher Lamont and Mr Edward Ross will visit Odessa with a truck load of aid for the Children’s Hospital there. They hope to leave Scotland on July 31 and return after about 10 days. During their stay in Odessa they will take the services on the Sabbath in the small Free Presbyterian congregation in the city, and also attend to business in connection with the Mission house which we hope to build there.

The aid to the hospital consists mostly of medical items and curtain material, most of which was donated by Raigmore Hospital, and we are indebted to the Hospital authorities for their help. In addition there is a quantity of clothing and

other articles. We are much indebted to the ladies in Inverness and the Laide area who packed these articles. (Rev) D A Ross

### Ordinary Meetings of Presbytery (DV)

**Outer Isles:** At Stornoway, on Tuesday, September 5, at 1 pm.

**Southern:** At Glasgow, on Tuesday, September 5, at 3 pm.

**Skye:** At Portree, on Tuesday, September 19, at 11 am.

**Zimbabwe:** At Bulawayo, on Tuesday, October 10, at 11 am.

**Western:** At Lochcarron, on Tuesday, October 31, at 12 noon.

**Australia & New Zealand:** At Auckland, on Friday, January 26, at 2.30 pm..

### Jewish & Foreign Mission Fund

By appointment of Synod, the second of the year's two special collections for the Jewish and Foreign Mission Fund is due to be taken in congregations during August. R A Campbell, General Treasurer

## Acknowledgement of Donations

**The General Treasurer** acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

*College & Library Fund:* Anon, USA, \$300.

*Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £2000.

*Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, for Kenya Mission, £1000; Mrs AB, for Thembeiso Children's Home, £100.

*Outreach Fund:* Anon, Glasgow, £5; Anon, Wales, £5 per Bookroom.

**Congregational Treasurers** acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

**Achmore:** *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £20; MAM, £5. *Sustentation Fund:* KBM, £100.

**Bracadale:** *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £100 per JC.

**Breasclete:** *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £50.

**Glasgow:** *Bus Fund:* Anon, £20, £20, £10, £10. *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £50. *Congregational Funds:* Miss C MacL, £10. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £50, £50, £45, £40, £40, £40, £40, £40, £40, £35, £30, £30, £30, £30, £25. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, for work in Israel, £50; Anon, for African Mission, £40; Miss C MacL, for African Mission, £40; Anon, for African Relief, £40; Anon, for Kenya Mission, £40. *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £70, £50. *TBS:* Anon, £200, £50, £20, £5; Miss M MacL, £25.

**Greenock:** *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £20, £20. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, £26. *TBS:* Anon, £40, £40, £40, £20, £20. *Where Most Needed:* Anon, £20.

**Laide:** *Congregational Funds:* J & N, Glasgow, £100; Friend, North Uist, £25 per Rev DAR. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £40 per ER; Mr & Mrs de Bruin, £70 per MS; R Kershaw, £50; Friend, Dunfermline, £500; Friends, Edinburgh, £20; Friend, Shieldaig congregation, £25; Friend, £10; Friend, Gairloch, £20; Old Reformed Congregation, Utrecht, £159.64 per Rev DAR; MR, Aultbea, £10 per CR. *Bibles:* Isle View Nursing Home Residents, £13, £8, £8, £10.50. *Odessa Church Building:* Friend, Inverness, £100; Friend, Lochcarron, £500; Friend, Fort William, £40; Friend, Laide, £100, £20; Anon, Laide, £100 per Rev DAR; Friend, Aultbea, £40 per CR. *Outreach Fund:* Anon, Portree, £1.07, £5.41; JG, Portree, £20 per Rev DAR.

**Raasay:** *Communion Expenses:* Anon, £50 per Rev JRT. *Manse Fund:* Anon, £50 per Rev JRT.

**Shieldaig:** *Where Most Needed:* Anon, £20 per DMC.

**Staffin:** *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £100, £100. *Sustentation Fund:* Friend, £300 per CAF.

**Stornoway:** *Congregational Funds:* Family of the late Mrs C M MacLeod, £50; Family of the late Mrs Morrison, Stewartfield, £200 per WMK. *Sabbath School:* Anon, £20.