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Proclaiming the Saviour

The disciples had been imprisoned. And after they were miraculously released, by an angel, they were again arrested and brought before the council. When Gamaliel urged caution in dealing with them, the Apostles were beaten and released. But, although they were commanded not to “speak in the name of Jesus”, they could not give up the activity to which they had been called by the Son of God. “Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). Why could they not give up? Why could they not stop speaking in the name of Jesus? Many reasons might be given, but let us focus on five related themes, which were at the centre of their message.

1. *There is a Saviour.* The Apostles had been sent out to address those who, in common with all the rest of mankind, needed to be delivered from the power of sin and from its consequences. All mankind fell in Adam and, throughout their lives, they have gone on adding sin to sin. They are alienated from God, and the solemn fact is: “They that are far from [Him] shall perish” (Ps 73:27) – unless they are delivered by a Saviour who can truly meet their needs.

And the Apostles were indeed able to proclaim a Saviour who could exactly meet these needs. They knew that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). They had known Him personally; they had seen His wonderful works of healing bodily afflictions – and, still more gloriously, they had watched as He healed sinners of their spiritual diseases. They knew that, though He was no longer physically present with them, Christ’s power to save was still the same. And as, from the Day of Pentecost onwards, they pointed their hearers to the One who had died, they did so in the full confidence that He had indeed made atonement for guilty, rebellious sinners.

2. *He is an appointed Saviour.* Here was no self-appointed religious leader, or someone who had achieved influence because a group of human beings had recognised his abilities and had thrust him to the forefront. No,

here was One who had been set apart from all eternity by God Himself to deliver sinners from their sins. The basis of the authority of Jesus Christ as redeemer is that God “*the Father* sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). There can therefore be no other saviour; there can be no other way of escape from the guilt and power of sin. We dare receive no other doctrines but those He has set before us; we dare follow no other religion. Although He had been rejected by the people, it was God who had raised Him up; therefore, as Peter expressed the matter so plainly: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Christ was the Saviour appointed by God, and the Apostles had been appointed to proclaim Him to the whole world. They recognised, as did Paul – soon to be added to their number – that there is “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim 2:5f). Recognising their appointment, they could not give up bearing testimony to this God-appointed Saviour. And, what is more, they must faithfully proclaim the message they had been given; they had no right to modify even its details to suit the spirit of their time. They had the attitude which led Paul to tell the Galatians: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8).

Equally, those who listen to these messengers ought to recognise their authority, which is implied in the term *ambassadors*. All God-sent preachers come in the name of the King of heaven; as they address their hearers, they may use the words of Paul: “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you *in Christ’s stead*, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20). Thus hearers have no more right to reject this call than if it came directly from heaven – even if it is delivered by those who are not apostles but have been called in another generation to preach the same gospel to their contemporaries.

3. *He is a living Saviour.* The Apostles proclaimed a Saviour who had died, One who had offered Himself “the just for the unjust” so that sinners might be reconciled to God. But that was not the end; death could not hold Him; He rose again on the third day. So Peter proclaimed: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:30,31) – and not only to Israel but to sinners throughout the world. He has ascended to heaven, where He reigns in glory, administering the kingdom of God and distributing the benefits He purchased by His death. And these blessings of repentance and

forgiveness come to sinners particularly through the preaching of the gospel – the truth concerning a living Saviour.

Christ's resurrection declared that His sacrifice had been accepted. It was a token from heaven that the Father was well pleased with the whole work of redemption. It was, in effect an echo of the words heard at His baptism and again at His transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". This was the Saviour the Apostles were preaching: One whose power to save was abundantly clear. They were under His living authority and had no right to turn back from the work He had given them, but they knew too that not even a hair of their head could be damaged unless He allowed it.

4. He is an effective Saviour. No one has come to Him and found Him unable to save – no matter how far away from God they were, no matter how deep in sin. The assurance is given: "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb 7:25). Everyone who came to Him for bodily healing, while He was on earth, was made completely well; His power was always perfectly sufficient. Likewise, all have been saved who have obeyed the call to look to the Saviour, and so it will always be.

This is no merely-human saviour; He is also God – the eternal Son of God, who took our nature. But He is now exalted, and Paul explained the certainty of a complete salvation, for those who come to God through Christ as Mediator, by adding: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them". And it was Paul who expressed such entire confidence in the message that he had been commissioned to bring to sinners, and in the Holy Spirit through whom that message is applied: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom 1:16). A preacher with that conviction would never give up.

5. He is a willing Saviour. He has never turned away one sinner who came to Him. He has made it clear: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Paul and Silas had no need to hesitate when the Philippian jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They could answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31), and they could speak in this way with the perfect certainty that, if the jailer would only believe, the Saviour would most willingly receive him. So it was proved in his case, and so also in the case of every sinner who has sought salvation in the way God has appointed.

When the leper came to the Saviour pleading, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean", Christ assured him: "I will [that is, I am willing]; be thou clean". And we are told that "immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt 8:2,3). That was bodily healing, but the Apostles could think back to what they had seen their Master do, on this and so many other occasions,

and feel encouraged to go on proclaiming the gospel. They could do so in the assurance that Christ, by then exalted to the right hand of power, was just as willing to heal souls. And preachers today, though they do not have the miraculous powers of the Apostles or their inspiration, may go on with the same encouragement, for the One who sits on the right hand of power is unchanged in His willingness to heal.

As we draw to a conclusion, we must be clear that this is the Saviour who is to be proclaimed today to an unbelieving world in spite of how readily they dismiss the message as not worthy of their attention. Without taking the least pains to examine the facts revealed in the Bible, most people very easily assume that there is no beauty in Christ that would make them desire Him. What they very much need is that the Holy Spirit would be poured out so that they would see the beauty of the Saviour and flee to Him as the God-appointed, ever-living Saviour who is altogether willing to save all that come to Him – and who is also perfectly able to save them to the uttermost. What reason then for preachers of the gospel to continue with their work! There is no reason why they should become despondent even in the face of the varying forms of twenty-first-century opposition to the message of the gospel. And what reason for all God's children to be earnest in prayer! Let them pray the Lord of the harvest to send a multitude of labourers into the harvest today. And let them pray that He would greatly bless the work of those whom does send out, so that there would be an abundant harvest.

The words of Archibald Alexander are just as relevant today as when he addressed a gathering of his former students in Philadelphia in 1834: “Most assuredly, if the world is to be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea, if all nations are to be given to Christ as His inheritance, if all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, then the ingathering of souls in all former seasons is nothing more than the first-fruits of the glorious harvest which is yet future. God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save; the Word has lost nothing of its energy and the residue of the Spirit is with Him. Why then are we so unbelieving and so easily discouraged, as though Zion would never arise; as though the fulness of the Gentiles would never come in; as though the promise would never be fulfilled, that all Israel shall be saved?”¹

Just as surely as the Apostles were not to stop proclaiming the gospel, so today's preachers must persevere in their work. The authority of Christ, who sent them, is unchanged; the gospel is the same, and the encouragements are as sure as ever. And let those who listen to the gospel be thankful for their privileges; let them take care not to “neglect so great salvation”.

¹Quoted by James M Garretson in his recent work, *Princeton and Preaching*, p 130.

Returning to Our First Love¹

A Sermon by Archibald Alexander

Revelation 2:4,5. *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 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.*

Here we have seven epistles, dictated by the Saviour after His ascension to glory. The first of these was addressed to the church at Ephesus, the capital of proconsular Asia; and the other churches to which epistles were addressed were situated in the vicinity.

Most of the cities to which these epistles were addressed are now in a state of utter desolation, and none more so than Ephesus, which in the days of the apostle was one of the most celebrated cities in the world. The threatening in our text against the church in this place has been most clearly fulfilled. Not only has the candlestick been removed, but the city is a total ruin. In viewing the utter desolation of many ancient cities there is a warning for us. Will the candlestick be removed from our great cities? Already Ichabod may be inscribed on some churches in our land, for the glory is departed.

Before speaking of the declension of these Ephesian Christians, it will be proper to say something of what is here called “first love”. The prominent characteristic of every soul truly converted to Christianity is *love* to the Saviour. The faith wrought by the Holy Spirit works always by love. Love is therefore set down as the principal fruit of the Spirit. Now there is something distinctive in the first love of the young convert. Its exercise is fervent and tender though not founded on such accurate views of Christ as are afterwards acquired, and commonly less pure than that of the mature Christian, but it is accompanied with more joy. These joyful frames, so common in new converts, may be ascribed to several causes. The first is the recent transition of the soul from a conviction of condemnation, ruin and helplessness to a state of favour and reconciliation. When the views of the way of salvation are clear and faith strong, there is commonly a joyful persuasion of safety and pardon. This case is well illustrated by that of a criminal reprieved from death when under the gallows. His first feelings will be ecstatic, but though his safety is as certain years afterwards, he never will experience the same liveliness of joy.

The first love of the Christian is also distinctive because the objects now

¹Reprinted with abridgement from Alexander’s *Practical Sermons*. This fine volume has recently been reprinted in paperback by Solid Ground Christian Books under the title *Evangelical Truth*; it is available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom for £17.95.

presented to his enlightened mind seem new. All his lifetime he has been in darkness respecting the true nature of spiritual things, for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”. But now, because the eyes of his understanding have been opened and the true light shines into them, everything appears new and attractive, and sometimes a divine glory is exhibited to his enlightened mind. An apostle therefore calls this light “marvellous”, and the love which accompanies it partakes of its marvellous nature. “Whom,” says the Apostle Peter, “having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Again, God deals with His children in the infancy of their spiritual life as mothers with their young children. They nurse them with tender affection, and do every thing in their power to render them comfortable. They furnish them with the sweetest nutriment, cherish them in their bosoms, carry them in their arms, and rock them in the cradle. But when they have been weaned and have grown strong, they must learn to work and endure hardships; they are no longer cherished at the breast or dandled on the mother’s knee.

Thus, our heavenly Father, who exercises a warmer affection for His children than the kindest mothers, is pleased to deal very tenderly with young converts and often pours streams of divine comfort into their impressionable hearts. They are for a season led in smooth and pleasant paths; dark clouds may occasionally come over them and “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”. In their prayers and other religious exercises, they enjoy liberty of access to their heavenly Father; and much of their time is spent in grateful songs of praise for redeeming love and converting grace. Their state of soul at this period is beautifully expressed by the poet:

“Sweet was the time when first I felt the Saviour’s pardoning blood . . .”.

Earthly things now have little or no attraction. Their thoughts and feelings, conversation and actions, are chiefly occupied with religion. These are indeed halcyon days, and will often afterwards be remembered with a mournful pleasure, when the scene is greatly changed, and especially when inbred corruption grows strong, when temptations vex the soul and the heart seems to have lost all tenderness – when, instead of joy, darkness and trouble almost overwhelm the soul. Then the exclamation of Job is often uttered: “O that it were with me as in months past”.

The union of the believer to Christ is often compared in Scripture to marriage; and the joy of the young convert is like the joy experienced in the day of espousals (Jer 2:2). The early days of the true Christian may also be well illustrated by the feelings of the newly-enlisted soldier. He rejoices in the

pomp and circumstance of military life, is animated by the sound of martial music and by the sight of splendid banners; he leads a life of idleness, while his bounty money supplies him with such luxuries as he desires. But how different are the condition and feelings of the same person when he receives marching orders, and especially when he is led into battle, when all his energies must be exerted, and his life is placed in imminent danger!

But the change in the Ephesian church, of which the ascended Saviour complains, does not take place without a real declension in the vigour of piety. When He says, "Thou hast left thy first love", He charges them with actual backsliding. And to speak of the declension of a church assumes declension in the members of which it is composed. Let us, then, consider the causes and symptoms of backsliding; and the imperative duty of all who may unhappily have fallen into this state.

Declensions in vital piety are due to a variety of causes, internal and external. Some of these operate in one case and different ones in others. The whole, however, may be attributed to the temptations of Satan, the allurements of the world, and the inbred corruptions of the heart. Vital religion is a delicate plant and declensions are very commonly produced by too much contact with a careless, money-loving, pleasure-seeking world. He who is clothed in clean white garments will find it difficult to avoid defiling them with spots if he has to live in a filthy house.

Piety is not the natural state of the heart, and many things are inimical to its preservation and growth. At first, the young convert thinks but little about the business and cares of the world. Perhaps he is culpably inattentive to the duties required of him. But soon he finds that he must make honest provision, in a lawful calling, for his own needs and those of his family. It is hard to pursue the world just as far as duty calls and then to stop. When efforts to acquire property are successful, pleasure is naturally experienced in the acquisition of good things. After a while, an undue love of the world is apt to creep in insidiously, and nothing unjust is thought of; but undue love of the world – whether its riches, honours, or pleasures – will soon injure the love of the soul to its Saviour. The thoughts are too much drawn away from divine things, and the relish for spiritual duties and enjoyments is diminished. The duties of the closet are no longer anticipated with delight; and the hours consecrated to private devotion, which used to be the pleasantest in the whole day, do not now afford the same comfort as formerly.

The lack of enjoyment in religious duties, and the wandering of the thoughts in them, tend to produce a reluctance to engage in them; so that if the person were not forced by conscience to enter his closet, he would often omit the duty altogether. But when the person on whom the world has an

undue influence attends to secret prayer, he hurries over it; and often the omission would be better than the performance, when it is merely formal – when the knee is bowed and words uttered without one devotional emotion.

Worldly company and too much involvement in secular affairs are almost sure to deaden our pious affections and disqualify us for spiritual exercises. At first, the one in whom is the “root of the matter” may be alarmed at the defect of his spiritual enjoyment and make some inefficient efforts to recover lost ground; but when these prove unsuccessful, he gives himself up to a kind of indifference. He avoids reflecting seriously on his former lively feelings, or perhaps is tempted to think that there was more enthusiasm than real religion in the joyful frames he once valued so highly. This temptation derives strength from recollecting our ignorance and the many false impressions we were then subject to. Just so far as this temptation has influence, the backslider loses all desire to renew his former exercises of religion.

This is a fearful and dangerous delusion. In this state, he tries to persuade himself that he has lost nothing, that sober thought has taken the place of enthusiastic fervour. But where there is any spiritual life, there will be times of uneasiness, of an irrepressible feeling that all is not right. These, however, are but waking moments in the sleep of carnal security into which the soul has fallen. For the most part, the conscience is lulled into a false security, and many things now appear innocent which would have been avoided as highly criminal in the time of first love. Indeed, in this state of slumber, you can perceive very little difference between the declining professor and the mere moralist who makes no pretension to religion. The people of the world are surprised and gratified to find those whom they once shunned on account of their seriousness so much like themselves, joining with them in light-hearted conversation and participating in their amusements without scruple.

But see how repugnant such persons are to laying open the state of their hearts if a lively Christian will attempt to engage them in spiritual conversation. They will soon contrive to change the subject; and while it continues, they assent with painful feelings to what is said. “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.” There is no surer sign of declension from our first love than an aversion to speak about Christ and His love, and our great obligations to love, honour and praise Him to the utmost of our power.

Many who leave their first love never fall into open transgression, but some are not so much favoured. They are “overtaken in a fault” under some sudden temptation, as Peter was. Others gradually sink into a state of carnal security until, like David, they become entangled by some insidious lust. When off their guard, the enemy comes in and presents the bait of sensual pleasure; they are overcome and remain for a season under the dominion of

sin. Often it becomes necessary to exclude them from the communion of the church because of their conduct. The judicious exercise of discipline is sometimes the means of recovering true Christians from shameful backsliding. Discipline is not intended to destroy those on whom it is exercised, but so that they may be saved, by destroying their pride and sinful propensities.

A more common means of restoring backsliders is the rod of affliction. God “scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” because all have imperfections, which a kind Father aims to correct. By affliction, the vanity of the world is seen. The infatuation produced by the love of the world is broken. In the dark day of adversity, when the idols of the backsliding Christian have been snatched away, when sickness has invaded his dwelling and no earthly consolation remains, he sorrows for having departed from the fountain of living water and is driven to seek refuge in the mercy of Christ.

The last thing we propose to consider is the return of the soul to its first love. Backsliding Christians might justly be cast off for ever; but God is faithful to the covenant He has entered into with His people. One of the promises of the new covenant is to “heal their backsliding”. The good Shepherd looks after His wandering sheep, and restores them by bringing them into deep conviction of their sin. Their second conversion is, like the first, attended with painful feelings. But after many discouragements they are enabled to come to Christ and cast themselves upon His mercy; and, to their astonishment, their reception is most gracious. They are welcomed as though they had never offended and are restored to the joy of the divine favour.

But let us attend to the directions given to the Ephesian Christians. The first is to remember where we have fallen from. In a state of declension there is a strange forgetfulness of former experience, which is very significantly represented by a state of sleep. The very first step towards a return to God is to awaken from this spiritual slumber, remember what we once possessed, and compare our present condition with our former. This awakened recollection will lead the soul to understand the cause of its departure from God and to trace all the steps of its retrograde course. Memory is a valuable faculty of our minds, and its exercise is of much avail in religion.

My hearers, our exalted Saviour seems to address this word unto us. Let us then remember what lively feelings of penitence, love and joy sweetly mingled in our early experience in religion. Let us remember what hopes we then cherished, what resolutions we formed – yea, what solemn vows we made in the house of God. Did we then suppose that we should ever become so cold and indifferent in our religious feelings as at present? When aged Christians warned us of our danger, we were disposed to think that their solicitude was superfluous, for we were confident that we should never decline

from the walk of faith. Our foresight was indeed short; by insensible degrees we left our first love and wandered like straying sheep.

But now the good Shepherd again causes us to hear His voice. His first call is to “remember” whence we have fallen. This is in order to the next step, to *repent*; to be sorry for what you have done. We should be willing to admit the humbling conviction that we have grievously sinned in departing from the living God. Sin is embittered to no one more than to the penitent backslider; the sin of ingratitude especially breaks his heart. He is astonished at his own blindness and unbelief, which prevented him seeing the snare which the enemy spread to entangle his feet. O what infatuation, to turn again to folly after having tasted the joy of pardoned sin and being favoured with the spirit of adoption! He now asks himself: “What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?” Where now are the promised pleasures of sin? Alas, what was sweet in the mouth is turned to wormwood in the stomach. Remember then from whence thou hast fallen and *repent*.

But our obedience must not be confined to the affections of the heart, however pious and penitent these may be. A good tree will produce good fruit. Our Lord therefore adds, “Do the first works”. Immediately on a sinner’s first conversion, he begins to work. “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” is the language of every renewed heart. “He that hath My commandments and keepeth them,” says our Lord, “he it is that loveth Me.” “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” But in a state of backsliding, the commandments of Christ are neglected, or obeyed in a very imperfect manner. Undue conformity to the world takes the place of self-denial, and formality is substituted for spirituality in the worship of God.

But when the backslider is reclaimed – which is really a new conversion – he is again led to engage cordially in the service of God. He now returns to the performance of his first works, as well as to the exercise of his first love. He again abounds in prayer and praise, makes the Sabbath a delight and counts it honourable, draws nigh to God in the holy supper, and walks in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. He does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God. The heart of a reclaimed backslider is sure to be more humble and distrustful of itself than before. There is now also more caution and watchfulness in regard to the heart. It has been found to be “deceitful above all things”, and therefore ought not to be trusted. The vain self-confidence of such is now cured. The reclaimed penitent knows by experience that his standing is not in himself; that unless he is preserved by the grace of God, he will certainly fall away again. The penitent backslider is especially on his guard against those sins and temptations by which he was overcome when he departed from God,

so that he is more secure from these than from other sins in all his later life.

Two feelings are predominant in the exercises of a returning backslider: shame and a lively sense of the baseness of ingratitude. Such a soul is ashamed to look up and is often so overwhelmed with this feeling that he remains silent before God. This frame of mind is vividly described by Ezekiel as follows: "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God".

The mercy of God, in graciously receiving the returning backslider, appears to him more wonderful than it did on his first conversion, and his admiration of the long-suffering of the Lord is greatly enhanced. It is true that God in His wisdom overrules even the falls and declensions of His people, to increase their humility and watchfulness. The reclaimed backslider is also rendered more charitable and forbearing to his brethren when they appear delinquent in duty, or are overtaken in a fault.

Let all churches inquire seriously and honestly if they have left their first love. With many the fact is notorious; their departure from God is visible and great. Where now is that fervent affection and ardent zeal which once characterised them? Where now is that spirit of earnest, wrestling prayer which seemed as if it would give God no rest until He should cause the righteousness of Zion to go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth? Where now is that fruitfulness in works of piety, mercy and benevolence which adorned your profession?

Remember therefore from whence you are fallen, and repent and do your first works. Otherwise, the threatening against Ephesus, so fearfully executed, may be inflicted in your case. Your candlestick may be removed. Darkness may succeed light. Error may overspread the church. Faithful ministers may be withdrawn and false teachers come in their place. For your own sakes, and that of your posterity, awake out of your sleep. Seek the Lord for the return of His grieved Spirit. Cry mightily to God for His reviving influences.

As every church consists of individuals, I would call upon all professors to consider their ways. Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith and whether you are in a growing, thriving condition. If not, you are surely in a state of declension. There is no standing still in religion; if you are not pressing forward, you are certainly going back. You are this day solemnly called to remember the times which are past, to remember the love and joy of your espousals unto Christ, when the candle of the Lord shone upon your tabernacle and when your chief delight was in the service of God, when the very name of Jesus was as ointment poured forth, when He gave you songs in the night – and in the morning your first thoughts arose spontaneously to God your

Redeemer. Then you could say, "It is good for me to draw near to God". "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." You rejoiced when they said, "Let us go into the house of the Lord".

But how is it with you now? What does conscience testify as to your present condition? What testimony would your closet give, if it could speak? Alas, what a change! Where now are your religious comforts? What has become of that sweet peace you once enjoyed? Perhaps you even doubt the genuineness of your former experiences. You have, like the virgins in the parable, fallen into a slumbering state, in which the awful truths of religion are dimly perceived and make but a slight and transient impression on your mind. To you I would say, Awake out of sleep; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Remember from whence you have fallen; repent and do your first works. Your present situation is one of extreme danger. While in this deadening state, you cannot possess satisfactory evidence of the genuineness of your piety. While in this state you cannot glorify God or be useful to men according to your ability and opportunity. And how sad your condition if death should find you in this unprepared state! "O that they were . . . that they would consider their latter end."

Are there any present who have been made conscious of their sinful departure from God, who are agonized with fear lest they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy and bounds of forgiveness? To them I would say, Do not dishonour God by entertaining such hard, unbelieving thoughts. His mercy is infinite. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so far are His thoughts of mercy above our conception. He has left special promises to encourage such as you, and He has never rejected anyone who came to Him. You cannot gratify the heart of your sympathizing Saviour more than by exercising confidence in His power and willingness to save you.

I conclude by addressing you in the language of God by Hosea: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously . . . for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." To which His gracious answer is, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely; for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under His shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?"

The Eternal Sonship of Christ¹

1. Divine Testimony

Rev J R Tallach

The Westminster Confession of Faith states: “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son” (2:3).

John Gill has the following comment on the centrality of the doctrine of Christ’s eternal Sonship: “The Sonship of Christ as a divine Person, and as by generation, even eternal generation, is the distinguishing criterion of the Christian religion, and what gives it the preference to all others, and upon which all the important doctrines of it depend. Without this the doctrine of the Trinity can never be supported; without this the distinction of persons in the Trinity can never be maintained; and, indeed, without this there is none at all; take away this, and all distinction ceases – it is all over with the doctrine of the Trinity.”²

The biblical truth just stated has been under attack since the early years of the Christian Church, when the Clementine Homilies were introduced in 150 AD. These homilies maintained that Christ was a mere man. This heresy continued to plague the Church and reached its most refined expression in the Racovian Catechism of the Socinians in 1609.³ Defective views on the subject of the Trinity have appeared in our own day. In 2001 Paul Helm, a Professor of Philosophy and professed Calvinist, who contributes articles to Reformed magazines, delivered a paper in which he suggested that we know nothing of the eternal relationship between Father, Son and Holy Ghost in a past eternity and that we only know about Their activities in this world in the work of salvation.⁴ In the first edition of his recent book, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*,⁵ Robert Reymond, an American theologian, questioned the begetting of the Son of God from eternity⁶. There

¹The first part of a paper given at the Theological Conference in December 2004. The plan of the paper is: (1) to state the scriptural view of the Eternal Sonship, (2) to identify some errors on this subject, (3) to give some practical uses of this doctrine in the life and witness of the Church.

²*Body of Divinity*, vol 1, p 241.

³A A Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, Banner of Truth Trust reprint, p 104, (first ed 1860).

⁴R T Beckwith, *The Calvinist Doctrine of the Trinity*, p 7, The Harrison Trust, 2001.

⁵Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998, pp 324-327.

⁶Beckwith, p 10.

is therefore a present need to restate the biblical teaching on the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ.

1. The scriptural view of the eternal Sonship. Scripture speaks of everything being established “in the mouth of two or three witnesses” (Matt 18:16). The following witnesses testify to the truth of the Eternal Sonship:

(1.) *The witness of the Father.* In Psalm 2:7 we read: “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee”. When Paul refers to this text in Acts 13:33: “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee”, he shows that the Son spoken of is Christ. Again, in Hebrews 1:5, while proving the superiority of the Saviour to the angels, he writes: “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?” And in Hebrews 5:5, Paul deals with the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of the Old Testament. He recalls the honour that attached to being called to the priesthood in the Old Testament; but infinite honour already belonged to Jesus before He was called, as He was the Son of God from all eternity.

The meaning of the words, “Today have I begotten Thee”, is the key to these passages, as it sheds light on Christ’s eternal Sonship. Some relate these words to a specific time in the New Testament, as though the Father was saying in Psalm 2: “Thou shalt become My Son in a thousand years’ time. I will beget Thee at such and such a specific time in the future.” But the “anointed one” was no less than the Messiah, the Christ of God and the “today” of His begetting could not refer to a specific time in the future but to eternity itself. The decree declared in the following two verses is evidently based on the eternal Sonship of God’s Son. At His resurrection, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power; this means that the Sonship which Christ already possessed from all eternity was demonstrated when He rose again from the dead. The “day” referred to cannot then be any 24-hour period in this world but must be understood of God’s day, which is eternity itself. In God’s day there is no yesterday or tomorrow but all is one day.

Luther’s comment on this passage, as quoted by Gib, is illuminating: “If we will speak as the thing is today, every day and always, the Son of God is begotten; for in eternity there is neither past nor future, but a perpetual today . . . today is here taken for God’s time, not ours. For God is not there speaking with us but with Him who is with God beyond time. . . . It is evident that our Lord’s generation as the Son of God was not in any day of time, but in the day of eternity.”⁷

⁷Adam Gib, *An Antidote Against a New Heresy*, Edinburgh, 1740, p 20.

Again, in the New Testament, the Father witnesses to the eternal Sonship of His Son at His baptism: “Lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. John states of that same incident “I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:31-34). The Spirit who was sent, and the words spoken by the Father, were to the same effect; they gave the same witness: Jesus is God’s Son. This was confirmed on the Mount of Transfiguration: “Behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matt 17:5). Peter speaks of Jesus receiving honour and glory when this voice came “from the excellent glory” (2 Pet 1:17). The term, *My beloved Son*, has a special emphasis and might be rendered: “My Son, even the beloved”. Honour and glory is further given to the Son in the words: “in whom I am well pleased” or “I greatly delight”. The form of the verb so translated is significant to our present discussion, as it does not merely mean “in whom I now am well pleased” but “on whom my regard and complacency are steadily fixed”.⁸

The complacency witnessed to did not commence at Jordan but was a habitual complacency existing in the divine mind – including the past as well as the present. On the banks of the Jordan, the One so honoured is none less than Jesus “the Son, the beloved” – as distinct from John, the greatest “born of women”. And on the Mount of transfiguration He is Jesus “the Son, the beloved” – as distinct from Moses and Elias, the outstanding representatives of the Old Testament Church, and from the three chosen disciples representing the New Testament Church. He was the One who was eternally “in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18), eternally beloved and loving.

Owen writes: “No small part of the eternal blessedness of the holy God consisteth in the mutual love of the Father and the Son by the Spirit. As He is the only-begotten of the Father, He is the first, necessary, adequate, complete object of the whole love of the Father. The ineffable, eternal, unchangeable delight and complacency of the Father rested on the Son, as the full object of His love. The same love is expressed in that description of Him as ‘the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father’ (John 1:18). He, being the only-begotten Son, declares His eternal relation unto the person of the Father, of whom He was begotten. . . . He was in the bosom of the Father, in the eternal embraces of His love, as His only begotten Son. The Father loves, and cannot but love, His own nature and essential image in Him.”⁹

⁸R Treffry, *The Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ*, London, 1865, p 134.

⁹*Works*, vol 1, p 144.

The honour and glory done to Jesus had in view His eternal Sonship.

(2.) ***The witness of the Son Himself.*** In John 5:18 we read: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath; but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God". This passage may be compared with John 10:33: "For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God", and with Jesus' reply: "Say ye . . . Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:36). The charge brought by the Jews was blasphemy and it formed the basis for their determination to kill Jesus. He had said that God was His Father and that He was the Son of God; and therefore, they claimed, He had committed blasphemy.

Jesus' defence was that what He had claimed was true; He was God's eternal Son. It is evident that He had not merely become the Son of God at His coming into the world some 30 years before. He claimed no mere temporal Sonship but that He was equal with God, and so was God. The Jews would have understood the temporal sonship attributed to the angels, as in Job 38:7; to the first man, as in Luke 3:38; and to other men who believed in God, as in Genesis 6:2. But Jesus' claim was of another order altogether. The Jews knew from the Old Testament scriptures that the divine Son, to be manifested in the flesh, was the promised Messiah and Saviour. So they rejected Jesus, recognising that His claim to Sonship was equivalent to a claim to be the Messiah. Further evidence to the same effect is found in John 10:30, where Jesus claimed, during the same exchange with the Jews: "I and the Father are one". By this claim Jesus declared that He was one in essence with His Father. Though the human nature of Jesus was taken up into His Person as God, it could not be said that it was one with the Father in nature and essence. It was therefore in His divine Sonship that he claimed oneness with the Father. Jesus' witness to His eternal Sonship is consistent and clear.

(3.) ***The witness of the Holy Spirit.*** The witness of the Spirit may be taken as the Word at large, as it is all inspired by Him. In Proverbs 30:4 we read: "Who hath ascended up into heaven or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters as in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" The actions stated here are the actions of God. He has both ascended and descended. He descended on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law (Ex 19:18) and is recorded as "going up" from Abraham after establishing His covenant with him (Gen 17:22). In creation, God established all the ends of the earth. The Holy One whom Agur mentioned is said to have had a son when he established the earth and thus is from everlasting.

Another verse to the same effect is Micah 5:2. "But thou Bethlehem

Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come shall come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting”. This glorious promise is expressly applied to Jesus in Matthew 2:6. “Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel”. The only sense that these words can bear is that of the eternal generation of God’s Son. The “coming forth” belongs to His generation as man and “His goings forth” can only denote that other generation which belongs to Him as the Second Person of the Trinity from everlasting.

His “goings forth” are seen by some as an example of the Hebrew form of speech in which *goings* is the plural of excellence, so that it expresses the incomparable perfection and excellence of His eternal generation. Another example of this use of the plural to denote excellence is to be found in the seven spirits mentioned in Revelation; it serves to emphasise the all-seeing nature of the one Holy Spirit of God. The One referred to in Micah has all the distinguishing activities of the Messiah – calling the nations, a pastoral kingdom, the strength of Jehovah, and the extension of glory and peace on the earth. The Spirit witnesses to the eternal generation of the Son.

Separatism in the North of Scotland

2. Peter Stuart (c1762-1840)

Rev D W B Somerset

Peter Stuart is said to have been of Strathspey extraction, but he was born at Dalganachan in Caithness in about 1762.¹ Dalganachan is in Strathmore, a long valley in the south-eastern part of Caithness, towards the Strath of Kildonan. There were many godly people in the district in Peter Stuart’s day, but it is now virtually uninhabited. He was a small man, with a large head and a broad forehead, but he was immensely strong, and several anecdotes refer to his physical prowess.² He came under concern of soul at the early age of eight and his conversion was not preceded by as deep a conviction of sin as some other Men of the north experienced. Speaking to John Grant about his comparative lack of certain spiritual experiences, he said, “O John, your growth has been so sudden that you have learnt these things in a short

¹The two main sources for his life are: Donald Munro, *Records of Grace in Sutherland*, Edinburgh, 1953, pp 244-6; John Macleod, *By-Paths of Highland Church History*, Edinburgh, 1965, pp 91-96. There are one or two discrepancies between these accounts.

²Donald Maclean, *Duthil: Past and Present*, Inverness, 1910, p 34.

period, whereas in my case, it is little by little that I reach these experiences". Nevertheless he was held in the highest regard in Caithness and Sutherland, and one of the Men, John Sutherland, Badbea, described him as "the right hand of North Country godliness".³

Donald Sage states that Peter Stuart was the founder of Separatism, but it is not clear exactly what he means.⁴ The immediate cause of the Separatist movement, as related in the previous article, was an incident at a Kildonan communion in about 1797. Peter Stuart's name is not mentioned in the accounts of the incident, and one would have thought that he was too young, and living too far from Kildonan, to have played a prominent part on that occasion. Nevertheless, he must have come to the fore very early on in the Separatist movement.

In 1798 Peter Stuart moved from Strathmore to Croy, a few miles east of Inverness, to become the catechist in the parish. He lived in picturesque Rose Valley just to the south of Croy. It had been the dying wish of the previous catechist, the godly William Mackay of Syre (1750-98), that Peter Stuart should succeed him. When Peter was interviewed in Edinburgh to see if he was suitable for the position, the question was put to him, "Which is stronger, grace or holiness?" His instant reply was, "Grace is stronger, for Adam had holiness and he fell, and Joseph had grace and he stood".⁵

The minister of Croy was Hugh Calder (1746-1822), son of the eminent James Calder, the previous minister, and brother of Charles Calder who was John Macdonald's predecessor in Ferintosh. Hugh Calder suffered from an illness in his later years with the result that he had to employ assistants, and from March 1803 until 1810 his assistant was David Carment (1772-1856), later minister of Rosskeen. Carment, like Peter Stuart, was a Caithness man, and he merited an entry in *Disruption Worthies of the Highlands*. But he was a difficult man and, within a short while of his arrival in Croy, he fell out with Peter Stuart, presumably over the latter's Separatist leanings. In a letter dated 1 March 1806, John Grant refers to an unsuccessful attempt to appoint a new catechist in Croy, Peter Stuart evidently having left by that time.⁶

Peter Stuart's next position was as catechist of Strathdearn in the united parish of Moy and Dalarossie. He also laboured in the neighbouring parishes of Duthil and Daviot, and he seems to have had an official connection with Daviot from about 1810 onwards. He was a tenant of the farm of Knocknagael, immediately to the south of Inverness. The minister of Moy and

³*Records of Grace*, pp 244-5; *By-Paths*, pp 97-8.

⁴Donald Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica*, Wick, 1899, p 201.

⁵*By-Paths*, p 91.

⁶*Letters by the Eminently Pious John Grant, Joseph M'Kay, and Alexander Gair*, np, nd, p 14.

Dalarossie, until his death on 7 March 1804, was Hugh Mackay, who had been the missionary in Achreny in Caithness from about 1787 to 1789. Thereafter he had been assistant to Hugh Calder in Croy until his removal to Moy in 1793. Peter Stuart's birthplace, Dalganachan, had been within the bounds of Hugh Mackay's labours at Achreny, and Peter Stuart and Hugh Mackay had a great regard for each other. Whether Peter Stuart transferred to Moy in Hugh Mackay's lifetime is unclear, however. Hugh Mackay's successor at the Achreny mission had been John Robertson, who in 1810 became minister of Kingussie, 20 or 30 miles south of Strathdearn. Peter Stuart had a similar affection for John Robertson, and it was to him that he went for the baptism of some of his children.

Peter Stuart was both gifted and popular as a catechist. His skill, or what Rev Donald Beaton calls his "penetration and humility", is brought out in the following anecdote: "He was one day catechising a woman, when he asked her if she was praying. She replied that she was. He asked her if she was spoiling any of her prayers. She answered, 'Yes'. 'And what do you do then?' he said. 'O,' said the woman, 'I go and pray again.' 'And do you spoil the next prayer?' 'O yes,' was the answer. 'And what do you do then?' 'I go again and again,' the woman replied. 'O that will do,' Peter said, and added no more. Some of those present asked him why he did not catechise the woman more. 'O,' Peter replied, 'I think that, instead of my catechising her, she catechised me.' He felt that the woman's earnestness had searched and rebuked himself."⁷

Hugh Mackay's successor as minister of Moy and Dalarossie was James Maclauchlan who was inducted in September 1806. His father Lachlan Maclauchlan (c1729-1801) had been catechist in Abriachan on the north side of Loch Ness, and was remarkable both for his godliness and for his Gaelic verse.⁸ James, however, was not prepared to stand with the Evangelical party, though he had some sympathies with them. He continued in the Established Church after the Disruption, dying in November 1843. Nevertheless, two of his sons became Free Church ministers, one of them, Thomas, being his assistant in Moy and Dalarossie at the time of the Disruption. Thomas was a fierce opponent of the Separatists, and was later eminent as a Celtic scholar. It was James Maclauchlan's practice to preach alternately in Moy and in Dalarossie, with Peter Stuart holding a service in Dalarossie the Sabbath that the minister was in Moy. It is a measure of Peter Stuart's abilities that he drew a far larger congregation in Dalarossie than the minister did.⁹

⁷*Free Presbyterian Magazine*, vol 22, p 28.

⁸A brief memoir of Lauchlan Maclauchlan, by his grandson Thomas, is given in John Rose ed, *Metrical Reliques*, Inverness, 1851, pp 85-9.

⁹*Records of Grace*, p 246.

As the years passed, Peter Stuart became more extreme in his Separatism, and in 1817 formal complaints were lodged against him by James Macphail, the minister of Daviot.¹⁰ The Presbytery of Inverness was asked to investigate, and its report is embodied in its minute of 4 November 1817.¹¹ No definite steps were taken against him at that stage, and on 8 January 1818 John Grant was writing that he was afraid that Peter Stuart “has not the spirit of his calling, as they have not put him out of the synagogue.” Soon afterwards, however, Peter Stuart was “disowned” by the Presbytery and his salary was taken away. Nevertheless, the people of Daviot and the neighbouring parishes were not prepared to part with him, and they undertook to maintain him as their catechist themselves.¹²

In 1825 Peter Stuart lost a good friend when John Robertson of Kingussie died, and in the meantime he had made a bitter enemy in John Macdonald, the minister of Alvie, which lies between Kingussie and Strathdearn. John Macdonald had been Donald Sage’s teacher in Dornoch from 1801-3, and Sage says that he was an able teacher but a cruel and a merciless disciplinarian. He became minister of Alvie in 1806, where he was “a very pronounced anti-evangelical”. In 1828 he published a lengthy poetical attack on Peter Stuart which Principal John Macleod describes as “coarse vituperation” and Donald Maclean as “undiluted scurrility”. A second, slightly revised, edition was issued later in the year¹³. Peter Stuart was himself the author of a number of Gaelic poems, some of them of a violent nature.¹⁴

For many years there had been agitation from Roman Catholics to be admitted to Parliament and to other positions of authority closed to them since the Glorious Revolution of 1689. Various concessions had been granted, but George III had made it plain that he would not give his consent to any more, and the matter rested until his death in 1820. A number of leading Evangelicals favoured granting concessions on the ground that it would remove Roman Catholic hostility and prepare the ground for evangelism; among these were

¹⁰James Macphail (1766-1839) was the son of the eminent Hector Macphail, minister of Resolis. He had been minister of Daviot since 1802. He “very much resembled his revered father in the simplicity of his Christian character”, *Memorabilia Domestica*, p 224.

¹¹*By-Paths*, p 125.

¹²*Letters by . . . John Grant . . .*, p 32. On 6 October 1836 the Commissioners of Religious Instruction reported on the parish of Moy and Dalarossie: “There is a catechist named Peter Stewart, employed and supported by the people themselves,” *Fifth Report by the Commissioners of Religious Instruction in Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1838, p 33.

¹³*Memorabilia Domestica* p 112; John Kennedy, *Apostle of the North*, Inverness, 1932, pp 336-7; *By-Paths*, p 96; *Duthil: Past and Present*, pp 34-6, where some of John Macdonald’s stanzas are given.

¹⁴For further information on his poems, see *By-Paths*, pp 93-4.

Thomas Chalmers, Andrew Thomson, and, rather surprisingly, John Macdonald, Ferintosh. Others, however, such as John Love, John Colquhoun of Leith, Thomas M'Crie, Alexander Stewart of Cromarty, John Kennedy of Killearnan and John Robertson of Kingussie, opposed the measures. In 1829 the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed, permitting Roman Catholics to sit in the Houses of Parliament and to become judges.

The Church of Scotland made no protest against this Act, and there were many in the North, particularly Peter Stuart and the Separatists, who felt that the Church had betrayed the Reformation in this matter. One of Peter Stuart's bitterest elegies was on the subject. In it Thomas Chalmers is described as having "led the boobies [that is, the fools] to believe / he'd heal the man of sin". The part Chalmers had played in supporting the Emancipation Act was a significant factor in the hostility of the Separatists towards the Disruption. It has to be said, however, that Chalmers lived to regret the support that he had given to the Act; he later described the passing of it as "an historic blunder".¹⁵

Peter Stuart's influence in Strathnairn and the neighbouring areas was very considerable. When James Macphail, the minister of Daviot, died in 1839, Separatism in the parish was so strong that it was a number of years before another minister could be settled. When this "Daviot Case" came before the Synod of Moray in May 1842 it was stated that only ten heads of families in the parish were communicant members, and several of these were Separatists. Peter Stuart had died in 1840, but during his lifetime these Separatist communicants had been in the practice of collecting annually in the parish for his support, to the great annoyance of their minister.¹⁶ The case was appealed to the 1842 General Assembly, which appointed a special commission to visit the parish.

Peter Stuart died on 30 March 1840 near Raigmore, at the age of 77, and he was buried in the Chapel Yard burying ground in Inverness, immediately opposite the Free Presbyterian Church.¹⁷ Over his grave is a table-stone with the following appropriate inscription:

"There lies here the remains of Peter Stuart, a worthy Christian, who was one of the valiant men of David. A catechist in Strathnairn, Strathspey, and Strathearn during the space of 42 years, he was a faithful and just instructor to the Church of the Firstborn, and a valiant man in the Scriptures and against

¹⁵*Duthil: Past and Present*, pp 36-8; John Macleod, *Some Favourite Books*, Edinburgh, 1988, p 60.

¹⁶*Inverness Courier*, 4 May 1842.

¹⁷John Macdonald, Helmsdale, (about to be quoted) gives the date of his death as March 29. He might well have died about midnight.

the Pharisees and the ungodly until the day of his death.” His wife, Isabella M’Kay, died at Culcabock on 23 April 1852 at the age of 79.¹⁸ They evidently had a number of children.

In his diary for Sabbath, 5 April 1840, John Macdonald, minister of Helmsdale, who was sympathetic towards the Separatists, has the following entry: “In the evening preached from Rev 14:13, ‘And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them’. Preached this sermon in reference to the death of Peter Stuart, a pious man, who died near Inverness on Sabbath, the 29th March. He was a native of Caithness; noted for his piety before he left Caithness, and since.”¹⁹

*The Dutch Annotations*¹

Rev D W B Somerset

The *Staten-Bybel* (States Bible) was first published in 1637 and is the Dutch equivalent of the 1611 Authorised Version of the Bible in English. The AV was deliberately produced without marginal comments, but the *Staten-Bybel*, like the Geneva Bible, which was the predecessor of the AV, has explanatory notes on almost every verse. It is these notes which are known as the *Dutch Annotations*.

The earliest printing of any part of the Bible in Dutch was a medieval translation of the Old Testament (the Psalter excepted), based on the Latin Vulgate, which appeared in 1477. A translation of the Vulgate New Testament was published in 1522, and the following year translations of Luther’s German Bible into Dutch started to appear. The most important publisher was Jacob van Liesveldt, who was martyred by the Inquisition in 1542. In 1562 the so-called “Deux Aes” version appeared, translated by Govaert van Wingen, and this became the standard Bible for the Dutch Reformed Church until 1637. The Old Testament was based on Luther’s German translation, and the New Testament on Jan Utenhove’s translation, which had been made directly from the Greek in 1556.

¹⁸There is an anecdote about her in *By-Paths*, p 130.

¹⁹John Mackay, ed, *Memoir of Rev John Macdonald, Helmsdale*, Edinburgh, 1856, p 62.

¹A review article on *The Dutch Annotations upon the Whole Bible*, translated by Theodore Haak, 2 vols, London, 1657, facsimile reprint in 1 vol, Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, Netherlands, (around £130); and *The Dort Study Bible: 1 Genesis to Exodus*, translated by Theodore Haak, edited by Roelof A Janssen, Inheritance Publications, Canada, 351pp, (around £15). Interested readers may order available volumes through the F P Bookroom.

In 1571 a desire was expressed at the Synod of Emden for a Dutch translation of the Old Testament taken directly from the Hebrew, and in 1578 the Synod of Dort (not to be confused with the more famous Synod mentioned below) appointed Philips van Marnix van St Aldegonde (1538-1598), an eminent statesman and poet, and Petrus Dathenus, a leading preacher, to supervise the work. Dathenus had been the translator in 1566 of a metrical version of the Psalms – a version which continues in use to this day in some quarters, though generally it has been superseded by that of 1773. Marnix started translating Genesis, but for various reasons he got no further and the project came to a complete halt about 1608, although others were appointed to it. The translation of Genesis, however, was almost ready, and this was eventually incorporated into the Staten-Bybel.

The famous Synod of Dort met in November 1618, and one of the first matters it took up was the reviving of the work on a new Dutch translation. The English delegates to the Synod were consulted on the rules which had been used for the AV, and similar rules, but with a few significant differences, were adopted for the Dutch translation. The original text of Scripture was to be followed as closely as possible, but the words and expressions of earlier Dutch versions were to be preserved as much as they could. Words not found in the original but necessary to complete the sense were to be printed in italics, and the Divine name *Jehovah* was to be translated as *Heere* (Lord), printed in capital letters. The Apocrypha was to be translated, but printed as an appendix and in different type to mark it off from Scripture (the Apocrypha is not included in Haak's English translation).

James I of England had forbidden marginal notes in the Authorised Version because he regarded some of the notes in the Geneva translation as “very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits” – in other words, contrary to his favourite theory of “the divine right of kings”. Marginal notes were to be permitted in the Dutch translation, however, but they were supposed to be only of a textual or explanatory nature. Happily the translators seem to have ignored this restriction. One other noteworthy feature of the Dutch Bible, which is due to the translators rather than the Synod, is that they adopted a fixed system of spelling. By contrast English spelling was not standardised until well into the eighteenth century. The Synod appointed three men for the translation of the Old Testament and three for the New Testament. Those for the Old Testament were Johannes Bogerman (1576-1637), the President of the Synod, Wilhelmus Baudartius (1565-1640), and Gerson Bucerus (c1565-1631). Those for the New Testament were Jacobus Rolandus (1562-1632), Hermanus Faukelius (c1560-1625), and Petrus Cornelli. It is a remarkable testimony to the state of learning among the

Dutch ministers at this time that all six of the translators were occupying pastoral charges rather than university chairs.

For various reasons there were further delays before the work started, and in the meantime Faukelius and Cornelli had died. Festus Hommius (1576-1642) and Antonius Walaeus (1573-1639) were appointed in their place. Bucerus died in 1631 and Rolandus in 1632, but the translation went ahead, and the complete Bible was published at Leyden in 1637. It at once aroused interest in Britain, and in 1645 members of the Westminster Assembly, including the four Scottish commissioners Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, and Robert Baillie, signed a letter indicating their desire to have the Dutch Annotations “translated into the English tongue, promising unto themselves a rich treasure of knowledge and spiritual understanding from the labours of so many eminent divines”. The man they suggested for the work was Theodore Haak (1605-1690), a German who had been resident in England and who had translated a number of Puritan writings into German. Haak was reluctant at first to undertake the task, but after various delays and difficulties he completed his translation, which was published in two volumes in 1657.

The first book under review is a facsimile reprint of Haak’s two volumes, bound together in one. The book is nicely produced, and will probably last for centuries, but it is of enormous size and weight. There is a modern introduction of seven pages with some historical information, and also some interesting prefatory material dating from Haak’s time. Haak’s method of translation is to give the text of Scripture in italics, paying careful attention to any divergences between the Dutch translation and the Authorised Version, and then to give the translators’ annotation in square brackets immediately after the words being commented upon. Words which were added in italics in the Dutch version are enclosed in round brackets in English. Thus Genesis 4:9, for instance, reads: “And the Lord said to Kain; Where is thy brother Habel? And he said; I know (it) not; [An impudent lie] am I my brother’s keeper? [Presumptuous arrogance!]”

This book is of great value for two reasons. The first is that it gives the English reader access to the Staten-Bybel, which was the last of the great Protestant translations of the Reformation period. Just as the Westminster Confession was built on earlier confessions such as the Scots Confession of 1560, the Irish Articles of 1615, and the Canons of Dort, so the Staten-Bybel was able to take advantage of the godly scholarship which had gone into earlier translations of the Bible. The translators had before them, not only the Greek and Hebrew texts, but also Luther’s German version, the French version of 1588 (translated by Bertram, Beza and others), Diodati’s Italian version of

1607, the Authorised Version, and the Latin translations of Muenster, Leo Juda, Beza, and Tremellius, and many others. Not only did they have the works of these men, but they possessed much of the same spirit, so that where they differed, for instance, from the AV, they did so not because of theological aberrations, or unbelief, or liberal textual principles, but because there was some good ground for their preference. In Isaiah 53:10, for example, they adopted the marginal reading of the AV: “when His soul shall have made itself a trespass-offering.” Similarly in Heb 2:16 they followed the AV margin in omitting the words “the nature”, which the AV had supplied in italics: “For verily He assumeth not the angels, but He assumeth the seed of Abraham.”

The second reason why this book is valuable is that it provides the English reader not only with the Dutch translation, but also with the translators’ explanations of the more difficult verses, so that there can be no doubt what their mind was. The book serves, therefore, as a brief commentary on the Bible, along the lines of Matthew Poole’s. Thus the reader has the considered opinion, on every difficult verse, of a body of Reformed scholars, acting in a Church capacity when they might expect more of the guidance of the Holy Spirit – and at a time when learning and piety were at their height.

The second book under review is a rendering of Haak’s translation, both of the Scriptures and of the annotations, into modern English. The reviewer has never felt the need of modern English revisions but it is only fair to mention certain advantages which the present one can claim over the facsimile reprint. The first is that, according to its translator, it is a more accurate translation of the Dutch. A second advantage is its more manageable size: the book can be held, for instance, in one hand. Against this, however, one has to consider that the project of modernizing Haak, if completed, will probably result in something like eleven such volumes. So far only the first two, covering the Pentateuch, have appeared. A third advantage is that many marginal references to other verses, omitted by Haak, have been restored in this edition.

The cost of these books will probably be sufficient to deter many, but anything that makes the Dutch Bible more accessible to the English reader is welcome. It is the great “Church versions” – the Septuagint, the Vulgate, Luther’s version, the Authorised Version and the Staten-Bybel – which have stood the test of time, and which have remained in print when countless other versions have passed into oblivion.

Hypocrisy may let a man into the visible Church; it cannot let him into heaven. It may procure admittance into the bosom of the Church; it cannot procure admittance into the bosom of Christ.

Ralph Robinson

Book Review

Manual of Christian Doctrine, by Louis Berkhof, published by Christian Liberty Press, paperback, 176 pages.

This is the second edition of a book first published in 1933. It is much less well known than either the author's *Systematic Theology* or his *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, and stands between them in terms of difficulty. This edition is much more attractively presented than the previous one, though it is questionable if the drawings add much to the work, and certainly the drawings of the cross are completely inappropriate.

All of Berkhof's books are broadly reliable and are fruit of his 38 years' teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, whose background, like the author's, is in Holland. Perhaps one is least happy with his treatment of the more experimental aspects of doctrine; in particular, one would appreciate an explicit treatment of effectual calling.

In this "revised and updated" edition, there seem to be relatively few changes. The introduction of selected sections of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is to be welcomed. Also included is a recent translation of the Heidelberg Catechism; but here a couple of footnotes make the simplistic assumption that earlier manuscripts of the New Testament are necessarily better. The biggest changes seem to be in the section on the Millennium. These changes indicate a more positive attitude to post-millennialism than Berkhof had, but it is to be regretted that the classic view of the subject has not been included among the three "kinds" referred to.

Used with a little care, this book could prove helpful to those who wish to study the doctrines of Scripture in a systematised form but do not feel ready to tackle a full-blown volume (or set) of systematic theology.

Notes and Comments

Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

It is a well-documented fact that, in many countries around the world, those who profess Christ in any meaningful or public way are exposed to persecution. This may take the form of social exclusion, physical and material suffering and, in not a few cases, death. This is often perpetrated by religions and political philosophies which claim and enjoy freedom of expression and equal civil rights when they are minorities in professedly-Christian nations. Many of these professing Christians do not have the Christian heritage and understanding for which we shall have to give an account. But they are

suffering because they are identified in the minds of their persecutors with the One who said: “But all these things will they do unto you for My name’s sake, because they know not Him that sent Me” (John 15:21).

Most of us know very little of what it is to be reproached for the name of Christ (1 Pet 4:14), though we recognise that, even among us, some of the Lord’s people may, perhaps unknown to others, be in circumstances of great trial on account of their faith. Paul spoke with a note of irony and rebuke when he said: “For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face” (2 Cor 11:20). It must have made these first readers feel small on account of their complaining when he narrated something of what he himself had suffered for the sake of Christ and His cause. Should it not also make us feel somewhat ashamed of our complaining?

We almost suggested that, as we remember the persecuted in our prayers, we should weep with those that weep. It seems, however, that it can be said to many of them, as it was said to the Hebrews: “Ye . . . took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance” (Heb 10:34). So perhaps we need rather to learn from them to seek the spirit which enabled the apostles to depart from the presence of the council which had beaten them, “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

The Church in lands where freedom is enjoyed should do whatever is possible to relieve those who are in distress and to bring their plight to the attention of those who may be in a position to intervene on their behalf. We wonder what the Government of the United Kingdom is doing to secure the interests of professing Christians in Iraq and other nations with which friendly relations are being maintained for material reasons. We should support those who endeavour to bring pressure to bear on the Government in this area. *HMC*

Tolerance and Shame

Two letters side by side on a recent “Letters to the Editor” page of a Scottish newspaper express sentiments which illustrate the moral confusion and contradiction of a society which has practically abandoned the wholesome parameters set by God’s “perfect law of liberty” (Jas 1:25). Claiming (rather irrationally) that the recent civil-partnerships legislation “helps support the principle of marriage”, the first letter asserts that “civil partnerships also show that the UK is moving in the direction of greater tolerance and understanding of minorities and sends out a message that all members of society have the right to love and be loved without the censure of the state or any individual”. The other letter describes the (commendable) action of the

Western Isles Council in supporting registrars unwilling to participate in civil-partnership ceremonies as “a nasty decision” which “has brought shame on Scotland”. It proceeds to affirm that, “if the registrars concerned are not prepared to offer a fair and respectful service to all, they are not suitable for the job and should make way for others”.

The language of these letters is moderate compared with the abuse often directed towards those who even suggest that some present-day legislation is indefensible and exposes our nation to God’s just displeasure – laws which put relationships forbidden in Scripture as unnatural on the same level as marriage. But it still illustrates the fact that none is as intolerant of truth and biblical morality as the person who demands toleration for error and for what the Bible describes as sin. And the society which endorses the positive toleration of error and sin will become increasingly intolerant of anything which calls these in question. Cases are increasing where the promotion of Christian doctrine or moral values is resisted on account of the offence which it would cause, while the promotion of what biblical Christians regard as error and sin is encouraged in the name of tolerance and civil rights. Those who glory in their shame (Phil 3:19) are lauded while some who have endeavoured to protest in a reasonable, quiet and law-abiding manner have even been threatened with prosecution.

Although this benighted generation cannot see the obvious signs, the further we depart from the standards of God’s Word in our social and legal life, the more rapidly we lose, not only our moral fibre as a nation, but the freedoms which were won for us at great expense by past generations. Our situation has strong echoes of that which caused Isaiah and his contemporaries to mourn sorely: “And judgement is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey; and the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgement” (Is 59:14,15). *HMC*

A Disturbing Development

Further to the previous note, the readiness of some police forces to intervene when homosexuality is criticised is disturbing. A member of the public complained to police after author Lynette Burrows told a phone-in programme on Radio Five Live in December that she did not believe homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children. An officer contacted her the following day to say that a “homophobic incident” had been reported against her.

“I was astounded,” said Mrs Burrows. “I told her this was a free country and we are allowed to express opinions on matters of public interest. She told me it was not a crime but that she had to record these incidents. . . .

They were leaning on me, letting me know that the police had an interest in my views. I think it is sinister and completely unacceptable.”

A spokesman for Scotland Yard said it was policy for community safety units to investigate “homophobic, racist and domestic incidents” because these were “priority crimes”, yet admitted that no allegation of crime had been made. Thankfully, the matter is now closed, but clearly many are liable to be intimidated into remaining silent rather than bearing witness against, or even commenting on, what is a sinful way of life. It would be appropriate if the police concentrated on fighting actual crimes, and it would be for the country’s good to return to biblical standards of right and wrong.

Alcohol Abuse in Scotland

Scotland, once renowned as the land of the gospel, has now become notorious for the abuse of alcohol. Scotland has a higher death rate from alcohol-induced disease than any other country in western Europe – 3000 Scots a year dying when the Europe-wide rate is falling dramatically.

There is also the heavy cost to the Scottish economy of around £1.1 billion a year. Drunkenness accounts for about half of all incidents of violent crime, results in much sexual misconduct, and is a heavy drain on medical facilities and police resources. It is the result, say experts, of 20 years of liberal drink laws, an increase in the number of pubs and off-licences, and the easy availability of alcohol, which is 54% cheaper in relative terms than in 1980.

Measures to lessen the availability of alcohol are long overdue. Despite the increase in alcohol-related problems in society, the Scottish Parliament has actually relaxed the law further, allowing some pubs and clubs to open for 24 hours a day. Some Executive ministers have even argued that relaxed laws will make binge drinkers consume alcohol in moderation! Such arguments not only fly in the face of the facts but are contrary to common sense.

It is shameful that Scotland is becoming a byword for intemperance and its ill consequences – and this alone should move our politicians to take purposeful, preventive measures. The most solemn consequence is, of course, that those who die as impenitent drunkards are excluded from heaven. “Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor *drunkards*, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:10). *NMR*

Protestant View

A Historic Appointment to the Vatican

Last November, Mr Francis Martin-Xavier Campbell was made British Ambassador to the Vatican, the first Roman Catholic in this post since the

Reformation. The President of Britain's Institute of Religion and Public Policy described the appointment as "truly historic". After Henry VIII broke with Rome in 1534 there were no diplomatic relations between Britain and the Vatican until 1914, when they were partially restored. In 1982, when full diplomatic relations were established, a British ambassador was appointed who was a Protestant, as were all his successors – until Francis Campbell.

"The Foreign Office", says *The Tablet*, "has been scrupulous in stressing that religious affiliation played no part in the selection, and that the board responsible for making the appointment was not aware of the religious background of candidates." But were they not aware that Campbell had begun training as a Roman Catholic priest, and had later studied at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, where he gained a Master's degree in European Integration? Did they not know that Campbell, as private secretary to the Prime Minister from 2001 to 2003, helped plan the Building Bridges Seminar (a Christian-Muslim dialogue funded by the Government), and also organised a reception at 10 Downing Street for 220 religious leaders from around the world?

A Roman Catholic periodical has described him as "a man with a mission", that mission evidently being to develop ecumenical and inter-faith relations, which, he said, will be a major theme of his time as ambassador. In fact, when he presented his credentials to the Pope, the main issue of his address was "dialogue between Christians, and between Christians and other faiths such as Islam" – an issue that presumably the Government, through the Foreign Office, directed him to highlight.

In his reply, the Pope said, "The wounds resulting from more than four centuries of separation cannot be healed without determined efforts. . . . I encourage all those involved in this work never to rest content with partial solutions but to keep firmly in view the goal of full visible unity among Christians." In the language of Rome this can only mean achieving her undying ambition of recovering Britain as "Mary's dowry". We fear that Campbell's appointment does not augur well for our Protestant throne and constitution. Campbell is seen as being close to Mr Blair, and he is, says Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, "an experienced diplomat who has worked with the Prime Minister" and is "familiar with the language and the workings of the Catholic Church".

No doubt the Foreign Office agrees with assessments of the Vatican such as this one from the Catholic News Service: "The Holy See is the hub of a global network of a billion people which leading nations regard as vital to world diplomacy". Our government cannot serve the interests of the Vatican at the expense of our Protestant constitution without dire consequences.

“And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Mk 3:24,25).
May God intervene in mercy. *NMR*

Church Information

Committee Meetings

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

Monday, March 20:

7.00 Ad-hoc Committee on Children and Vulnerable Adults

Tuesday, March 21:

9.30 - 11.00 Training of the Ministry Committee

11.00 - 12.00 Magazines Committee

12.00 - 1.00 Sabbath Observance Committee

2.00 - 5.00 Finance Committee

2.00 - 3.00 Outreach Committee

3.00 - 4.00 Religion and Morals Committee

6.00 - 7.30 Publications and Bookroom Committee

7.30 - 8.30 Welfare of Youth Committee

8.30 - 9.30 Dominions and Overseas Committee

(Rev) John MacLeod, Clerk of Synod

Appeal for Mission Staff

Kenya: Applications are invited for the post of Administrator at Sengera, Kenya; there are also openings for work as a nurse at the Omorembe Clinic there. These vacancies have arisen at very short notice and we commend the situation to the prayers of the Church and the attention of suitably qualified candidates.

Zimbabwe: There will be vacancies for two teachers at the John Tallach Secondary School in September this year. The preferred qualifications are science, mathematics or computing, and successful applicants would be required to teach Religious Education, but any qualified teacher is encouraged to enquire. The work is demanding but satisfying and every teacher has a place in helping to make the school a true handmaid to the gospel.

This notice first appeared in September 2005 and there has been no response. The need has become correspondingly more compelling.

Details of the vacancies in both Kenya and Zimbabwe may be obtained from the Clerk of the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee, Rev J R Tallach, F P Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB; e-mail: jamesross@tallach.fsnet.co.uk; and applications should be submitted to him.

London Communion

By decision of the Kirk Session, the spring communion in 2006 will be on the fifth Sabbath of April, with the Monday service (on the May 1 public holiday)

in the forenoon instead of the evening and the times of the services as follows, God willing:

	London	Broadstairs
Thursday	7.00 pm	7.00 pm
Friday	7.00 pm	7.00 pm
Saturday	3.30 pm (prayer meeting at 2.30 pm)	
Sabbath	11.00 am, 6.30 pm	6.00 pm
Monday	11.00 am	

E P C Greene, Session Clerk

Aberdeen Communion

At a meeting of the Aberdeen Kirk Session it was decided that the date of the communion this year be changed from the first Sabbath of May to the last Sabbath of April, DV. This is to apply to this year only. *Alistair Macrae*, Session Clerk

Bookroom Fund

By appointment of Synod, the special collection for the Bookroom Fund is to be taken in congregations during February. *R A Campbell*, General Treasurer

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library Fund: Anon, Harris, £75; Friend, Newcastle, Jer 17:9-11, £40; McCarter Family, USA, \$300.

Dominions & Overseas Fund: Anon, for Singapore congregation, £120.

Eastern Europe Fund: FS, £50; Anon, £2330; Stichting Hulp Verdruchte en Vervolgde Christenen, £507.70

Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund: Anon, Harris, £225; FS, for Jewish Fund, £75; Anon, Wales, Rev 7:12, for the work in Israel, £110.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Breasclete: *Congregational Funds*: Anon, £50.

Edinburgh: *Communion Expenses*: DM & AM, £50. *Sustentation Fund*: Anon, £150 per CAF.

Fort William: *Congregational Funds*: Anon, £75.

Lochcarron: *Congregational Funds*: Anon, for Kyle & Lochcarron manses heating, £1000. *Eastern Europe Fund*: Anon, £10, £100, £100, £200, £550, £1000 for Odessa building. *Sustentation Fund*: Anon, £1000.

North Tolsta: *Communion Expenses*: Anon, £10 per Rev DC. *Congregational Funds*: M Finlayson, £10, £5, £10, £5 per AG; Anon, "In memory of a much loved brother", £40; Ian & Peggy MacPherson, Oban, £30; Anon, for manse expenses, £100. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund*: Friend, Stornoway, for Zimbabwe Mission, £40. *Sustentation Fund*: C MacDonald, Stornoway, £25 per Rev DC. *TBS*: Anon, £20, £25. *Where Most Needed*: Anon, "In memory of my parents", £100 per Rev DC; Friend, Stornoway, £60.

North Uist: *Sabbath School Fund*: D J MacVicar, £50 per Rev DMD.

Raasay: *Congregational Funds*: Friend, £115; Anon, £200.

Staffin: *Door Collection*: Anon, £20. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund*: Anon, £50. *Sustentation Fund*: Anon, £40. *Where Most Needed*: Friend, Raasay, £10, £10 per Rev WAW.

Tomatin: *Communion Collections*: Anon, £30.

Zimbabwe Mission: *John Tallach Secondary School*: Friends, £100, £130, \$300.