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Death, Judgment and Eternity

In our day there are three solemn realities of which men have lost sight. These are death, judgment and eternity. Each of these is a dread and awful reality, yet men seem to be wholly blinded to them, and continue to live out their lives as though these weighty realities would never meet them.

The first of these is death. It would appear impossible for men to close their eyes to something so certain as death. Though the sickle of death is removing generation after generation, yet men fail to lay it to heart. Though the messenger of death is continually visiting homes and communities removing relatives and friends, yet each individual puts death far from himself or herself. The sudden death of a leading statesman may make a nation pause for a moment, but then things go on as before. Life is lived in the midst of death, yet no one enquires into the cause of death. Men do not look beyond the natural causes of death such as the illness or accident which brought about that death.

The Bible leaves men in no doubt of the certainty of death and the cause of death. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Men everywhere have to meet death. From this messenger there is no escape, nor can there be any delay. The time is appointed for each one, and they must answer that call. Sin is the procuring cause of death. Why is it that man is not immortal? Man is fallen and so must die. He cannot live here always. Death must inevitably and inexorably do its work. Man must go "to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." Not only must the wicked die but the righteous also, only the righteous has hope in his death. Because of the great work which Christ has wrought out for His people, of their death it can be said: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory." They obtain the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. When death will meet with us will it meet us in Christ or out of Christ? How much hangs upon that, for as the tree falls, so it shall lie.

The second reality to which men are blind is the great Day of Judgment.

That man is accountable to God his Creator and must appear before His judgment seat is a matter which men will not lay to heart. Men live out their lives as though they were not accountable to anyone. They may live as they please and no one should interfere with them. That is the attitude of the present generation. Often the view is expressed that we must not be judgmental, applying our own standards or the standards of the Word of God to other men. This is taken as interfering with the right of men to live out their life as they please. To even suggest that there may be a Higher Power to which man is ultimately answerable, is regarded as something belonging to a past age, from which the present age has been mercifully delivered. The teaching of God's Word is set aside. The testimony of that Word, that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ", is given no place whatsoever by the present and the rising generation. Yet the Bible makes plain that the Day of Judgement is certain. It will come at the end of the world when Christ shall sit upon the Throne of Glory, and before Him shall be gathered all the nations of the earth. How solemn was the views given to the Apostle John of that day, as recorded in the Revelation: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works."

Once men mocked at the very thought of millions being gathered together at one time to the Great Assize, there to give in their account to God of the deeds done in the body, whether they were good or bad. It was impossible, in their view, that such a thing could ever be. How could millions upon millions be gathered before one judgment seat? Now it is possible, through instruments of man's invention, for millions of men to view, all at the same time, one particular event. If that is possible for men, how much more is it possible for God to arraign before His judgment seat, all the generations of men that have been, or ever shall be, on the earth!

The third reality which is hidden from men, or rather to which they have shut their eyes, is the great eternity. Men are unaware of that realm to which they are going. Time and the things of time so occupy the minds of men that they remain totally blinded to what lies before them. No doubt, if questioned about it, most have a vague idea of a heaven of some sorts to which they expect to go — an extension of this present life without the miseries which attach to life here. It is all so nebulous that it is obvious

that they have never given any serious thought to the life that is to come. It is viewed as a place where those that die will be much better off than they are in this life, yet they have no real conception of what Scripture reveals it to be.

Few consider that the world to come — eternity — is of endless duration. That all do not go to the same place, has never been truly considered by men generally. The solemn doctrine of a lost eternity has been cast aside as unworthy of a God of love, as though the Saviour had never given utterance to these solemn words: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Men have lost sight of the holiness and justice of God, and of His declaration that sin shall not go unpunished. If we reason with those who deny a lost eternity, who say, 'Surely God will not deal alike with the righteous and the wicked,' they will then resort to the Romish doctrine of purgatory, and assume that the wicked will be punished only for a time and then admitted to heaven. It is vain to reply that there is no Scriptural warrant for such a belief. Those who hold such views do not ground their beliefs on the Word of God, but on the precepts of men. For such, only seeing is believing. How solemn it will be for those who refuse to accept the reality of a lost eternity — that place where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth — until they actually experience it, through being cast into that place of torment!

How different is the hope, and will be the experience of the righteous. They shall enter into their rest and that rest shall be eternal. It will not be a rest of inactivity but a rest of unwearied service throughout eternity. There sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The assaults of a tempting devil and of indwelling corruption shall be for ever at an end. "There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest." It will be an eternal Sabbath-keeping in the enjoyment of God. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Notes of a Sermon

by Rev A. McPherson

(Preached at Perth on 17th July, 1994)

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," Matth. 11: 6.

The whole of the previous chapter was addressed to the twelve disciples

in view of the difficulties and dangers they would meet with as the ministers of Christ, but it also has references to private christians, e.g. verse 22. From chapter 11 we learn that after sending the twelve off to preach, the Saviour made a tour on his own. At this time, John the Baptist was in prison for condemning Herod's incestuous marriage. Feeling that he needed reassuring that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ, John sent two of his disciples to inquire. Luke's account makes it clear that Christ's first answer to these men was to perform a variety of miraculous cures, and then give the reply in verses four to six. Let us notice —

1. WHY JOHN WAS QUESTIONING THE IDENTITY OF JESUS.

Let us remind ourselves that John was sent by God to prepare the Jews for the coming of their Messiah by calling them to repentance. From the four Gospels we find that he recognised Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God, and the Lamb of God. It is likely that John understood more of the meaning of God's Lamb than the disciples to whom he pointed out Jesus. It was not long, though, until John was imprisoned. His disciples would keep Him informed of events in the outside world, but what he heard of the activities of Jesus evidently raised doubts about his identity.

It would seem strange to John that Jesus had not declared Himself to be the Christ when the people were looking forward so much to the coming of that great deliverer. John would be surprised also that Jesus's manner of life was lacking in the austerity that had marked His own. There would be concern also that there was no sign of anything being done about the taking away of sins which he himself had declared to be the Lamb's great work. Neither had Jesus sent any message of encouragement to His persecuted servant. It would be a wonder also if indwelling sin and the workings of Satan were not raising unbelief, or at the least, depression of spirits. Some think that it was to relieve his disciples doubts that John sent this deputation, but I think there is enough evidence to show that John himself needed assurance.

2. HOW JOHN'S QUESTION WAS ANSWERED.

Luke says, "In that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." This was a demonstration there and then of His Messianic power. Let John see it in that way and his other difficulties would be resolved in due course. If Jesus was indeed the Christ, He would do what Christ ought to do, in God's time and way. For the present, let John remember that the Old Testament had foretold that Christ would be a notable healer and benefactor. Think of Isaiah 61: 1-3 which Jesus had quoted at Nazareth;

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Isaiah 35: 3-6 spoke in the same way of divine benevolence freely and powerfully shown towards the blind, the deaf, the lame, the dumb, and others. The cures were so numerous and so miraculous that the ordinary people argued, “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done.” (John 7: 31)

Christ’s miracles were proofs that He was the Messiah and they also illustrated that He came to save His people from their sins. Is there not spiritual blindness, and inability to walk in the paths of righteousness, and loathsomely diseased souls, and heedless listening to God’s Word, yes, and spiritual death? Not only did Jesus work cures that had replicas in the spiritual sphere, but He addressed Himself directly to men’s spiritual needs — “and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” Surely in this there was something directly in line with His being the Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world! Poor sinners, and especially the least advantaged among sinners, were being shown the way of salvation from sin.

This was the answer these two men were to take to John — a most satisfying proof that Jesus was the Christ.

3. THE TENDER ADMONITION

“Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Put in other words, it is, “Blessed is he whosoever shall believe in me, in spite of all he sees in me to hinder his believing.” We have seen that there were things that raised doubts in the mind of the poor captive. It would have been better if John had not doubted, but can the Lord’s people, conscious of their all-round spiritual frailty, strongly condemn the Baptist in his perilous and trying circumstances? See how tenderly the Saviour answered His servant! Mark carefully that there is a difference between doubting and disbelieving. Unbelief is a settled conviction that something should not be believed. Doubt is lack of conviction for want, for example, of evidence. What Jesus did was to provide John with the information he needed.

Many were offended with Christ while He was in his state of humiliation. The religious leaders, Pharisees and others hated Jesus for denouncing their sins and errors, and their misleading the people with regard to religion. The common people who looked for a temporal benefactor forsook Him when He made clear that he was not that sort of king. Even

His disciples took offence at the idea of His dying. Thus, what had been foretold came true; "When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." It is true still. Man in his hardness of heart is so opposed to God and His Christ that none of the proofs of His divinity and mediatorial office can melt and change him.

If it be asked, what it is today that gives offence as the Person and work of Christ revealed in Scripture come before sinners, several answers can be given.

(1) The world does not believe in Christ; there is overwhelming opinion against Him. And if we think of people in nominally Christian lands, they have been so prejudiced against Scripture and scriptural Christianity that they have become materialistic, secular and well-nigh godless. Christ's unpopularity gives offence to those who follow the crowd.

(2) The religious world, the Visible Church, does not believe in the Christ of Scripture, nor Scripture itself. They are offended by the unintellectual and unscientific aspect of Apostolic and Reformed doctrine. The biblical Christ, Priest and sacrificial Lamb in one, is rejected.

(3) Being a Saviour from sin does not commend Christ to persons who regard only certain things as sin, and wish to continue living in the way that suits them, and with no fear of judgment to come.

(4) Coupled with the previous ground of offence is the opinion most have that biblical holiness is not for them, nor, for that matter, the Saviour from sin who makes men holy.

(5) When it is learned that Christ's doctrine gives no credit to human works and merit, many are offended. Salvation by grace, the good news that offers sinners their only hope seems an insult to men's pride.

(6) Along with that, when Christ says, "Ye must be born again," and this is seen to mean that we are so sinful and morally ruined that only divine power can change us for the better, men are offended. It is no wonder that Christ's verdict upon men in their sinful state is, "And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. — And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (John 5: 38-40)

Yet, if the text warns that men in a state of nature will be offended by Christ, it also says that there are a blessed number who are not offended but, on the contrary, are in the highest sense pleased with Christ.

(1) They understand that Christ's unpopularity with the world has its basis in universal sinfulness that is diametrically opposed to the Saviour's divine goodness. They themselves were one of the world and know now what sort of God-hating nature they had then.

(2) They have been taught by the Holy Spirit that God's Word is truth, and that man's own thoughts on spiritual matters are vanity.

(3) Their hope for eternity is that Christ saves from the guilt and power of sin and makes men holy.

(4) Knowing something of the wickedness and vileness of sin, they long for holiness and strive after it.

(5) They see their once-fancied righteousness to be like filthy rags.

(6) They are amazed that God chose them, and thankful that He effectually called them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus. They also know how much they depend on the Holy Spirit.

So far from being offended in Christ, they love Him because He first loved them. They adore Him as God, and as their blessed Saviour who will save them to the uttermost. Their confession is:—

“My God, my strength, whom I will trust,
a buckler unto me,
The horn of my salvation,
and my tow'r is he.

Upon the Lord who worthy is
of praises will I cry;
And then shall I preserved be
safe from mine enemy .”

(Psalm 18: 2-3)

Offended? Never! The wonder is that Christ does not take offence at them. But He forgives unto seventy times seven. “Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.”

Where do we stand? Offended or delighted?

Letter

by Samuel Rutherford

To the Honourable, Reverend, and Well-Beloved Professors of Christ and His Truth in Sincerity in Ireland.

Dearly Beloved in Our Lord, and partakers of the heavenly calling, — Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. I always, but most of all now in my bonds (most sweet bonds for Christ my Lord), rejoice to hear of your faith and love, and to hear that our King, our Well-Beloved, our Bridegroom, without tiring, stayeth still to woo you as His wife; and that persecutions and mockings

of sinners have not chased away the Wooer from the house. I persuade you in the Lord, the men of God, now scattered and driven from you, put you upon the right scent and pursuit of Christ; and my salvation on it (if ten heavens were mine), if this way, this way that I now suffer for, this way that the world nick-nameth and reproacheth, and no other way, be not the King's gate to heaven; and I shall never see God's face (and alas! I were a beguiled wretch if it were so) if this be not the only saving way to heaven. O! that you would take a prisoner of Christ's word for it; nay, I know you have the greatest King's word for it, that it shall not be your wisdom to spier¹ out another Christ, another way of worshipping him, than is now savingly revealed to you. Therefore, though I never saw your faces, let me be pardoned to write to you ye honourable persons, ye faithful pastors yet amongst the flocks, and ye sincere professors of Christ's truth; or any weak, tired strayers who cast but half an eye after the Bridegroom, if possibly I could by any weak experience confirm and strengthen you in this good way everywhere spoken against. I can, with the greatest assurance (to the honour of our highest, and greatest, and dearest Lord let it be spoken) assert (though I be but a child in Christ, and scarce able to walk, but by a hold; and the meanest and less than the least of saints) that we do not come nigh, by twenty degrees, to the due love and estimation of that fairest among the sons of men; for if it were possible that heaven, yea, ten heavens, were laid in the balance with Christ, I would think the smell of His breath above them all; sure I am He is the far best half of heaven; yea, He is all heaven, and more than all heaven; and my testimony of Him is, that ten lives of black sorrow, ten deaths, ten hells of pain, ten furnaces of brimstone, and all exquisite torments, were all too little for Christ, if our suffering could be a hire to buy Him; and, therefore, faint not in your sufferings and hazards for Him. I proclaim and cry hell, sorrow, and shame upon all lusts, upon all by-lovers, that would take Christ's room over His head in his little inch of love of these narrow souls of ours that is due to sweetest Jesus. O, highest! O, fairest! O, dearest Lord Jesus! take thine own from all bastard lovers! O! that we could wadset² and sell all our part of time's glory, and time's good things, for a lease and tack of Christ for all eternity! O, how are we misted and mired with the love of things that are on this side of time, and on this side of death's water! Where can we find a match to Christ, or an equal, or a better than He among created things? O, this world is out of all conceit, and all love with our Well-Beloved. O, that I could sell my laughter, joy, ease, and all for Him; and be content of

¹ Seek.² Mortgage or pawn.

a straw-bed, and bread by weight, and water by measure, in the camp of our weeping Christ! I know His sackcloth and ashes are better than the fool's laughter, which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. But, alas! we do not harden our faces against the cold north storms, which blow upon Christ's fair face. We love well summer religion, and to be that which sin hath made us, even as thin-skinned as if we were made of white paper, and would fain be carried to heaven in a close-covered chariot, wishing from our hearts that Christ would give us surety, and his handwriting, and his seal for nothing but a fair summer, until we be landed in at heaven's gates. How many of us have been here deceived, and fainted in the day of trial! Amongst you there are some of this stamp. I shall be sorry if my acquaintance A. T. hath left you; I will not believe he dare stay from Christ's side; I desire that ye show him this from me; for I loved him once in Christ; neither can I change my mind suddenly of him. But the truth is, that many both of you and too many also of your neighbour Church of Scotland, have been like a tenant that sitteth meal-free, and knoweth not his holding while¹ his rights be questioned; and now I am persuaded it will be asked at every one of us, on what terms we brook² Christ, for we have sitten long meal-free; we found Christ without a wet foot; and He, and His Gospel, came upon small charges to our doors; but now we must wet our feet to seek Him; our evil manners, and the bad fashions of a people at ease from our youth, and like Moab, not casten from vessel to vessel (Jer. 48: 11), has made us like standing waters, to gather a foul scum, and when we are jumbled, our dregs come up and are seen; many take but half a grip of Christ, and the wind bloweth them and Christ asunder; indeed, when the mast is broken, and blown into the sea, it is an art then to swim upon Christ to dry land; it is even possible that the children of God in a hard trial lay themselves down as hidden in the lee-side of a bush, while¹ Christ their Master be taken, as Peter did, and lurk there while¹ the storm be overpast: all of us know the way to a whole skin, and the singlest heart that is hath a bye-purse that will contain the denial of Christ, and a fearful backsliding. O, how rare a thing is it to be loyal and honest to Christ when He hath a controversy with the shields of the earth! I wish all of you would consider that this trial is from Christ; it is come upon you unbought (indeed, when we buy a temptation with our own money; no marvel that we be not easily free of it, and that God be not at our elbow to take it off our hand); this is Christ's ordinary house-fire that He makes use of to try all the vessels of His house withal; and Christ now is about to bring His treasure out before sun and moon

¹Till.

²Possess or enjoy.

and to tell His money; and in the telling to try what weight of gold, and what weight of watered¹ copper is in His house. Do not now jouk,² or bow, or yield to your adversaries in a hair-breadth: Christ and His truth will not divide; and His truth hath not latitude and breadth that ye may take some of it, and leave other some of it; nay, the Gospel is like a small hair that hath no breadth and will not cleave in two: it is not possible to tryst³ and compound a matter betwixt Christ and antichrist; and therefore ye must either be for Christ or ye must be against Him. It was but man's wit, and the wit of prelates, and their god-father, the Pope (*that man without law*), to put Christ and His royal prerogatives, and His truth, or the smallest nail-breath of His latter will in the new calendar of indifferences; and to make a blank of uninked paper in Christ's Testament that men may fill up, and so shuffle the truth, and matters they call indifferent, through other,⁴ and spin both together, that the antichrist's wares sell the better. This is but the device and forged dream of men, whose consciences are made of stoutness, and have a throat that a graven image, greater than the bounds of the kirk-door, would give free passage unto.⁵ I am sure when Christ shall bring us all out in our blacks and whites at that day when He shall cry down time and the world, and when the glory of it shall lie in white ashes like a May flower cut down and having lost the blossom, there shall be few, yea, none, that dare make any point that toucheth the worship and honour of our King and Lawgiver to be indifferent. O, that this misled and blindfolded world would see that Christ doth not rise and fall, stand or lie, by men's apprehensions! What is Christ the lighter that men do with Him by open proclamation, as men do with clipped and light money? They are now crying down Christ some grain weights, and some pounds or shillings, and they will have Him lie for a penny or a pound, for one or for an hundred, according as the wind bloweth from the east or from the west, but the Lord has weighed Him, and balanced Him already, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." His worth and His weight standeth still; it is our part to cry Up, up with Christ, and Down, down with all created glory before Him. O, that I could heighten Him, and heighten His name, and heighten His throne! I know and am persuaded that Christ shall again be high and great in his poor, withered, and sun-burnt Kirk of Scotland; and that the sparks of our fire shall flee over sea, and round about to warm you and other sister-churches; and that this tabernacle of David's

¹Lackered.²Bend.³Arrange or compromises.⁴Each other.⁵The meaning, however, is, would give free passage to a graven image, etc., q.d. would swallow a camel.

house that is fallen, even the Son of David His waste places shall be built again; and I know the prison, crosses, persecutions and trials of the two slain witnesses, that are now dead and buried (Rev. 11), and of the faithful professors, have a back door and back entry of escape; and that death and hell, and the world and tortures, shall all cleave and split in twain, and give us free passage and liberty to go through them toll-free: and we shall bring all God's good metal out of the furnace again, and leave behind us but our dross and our scum; we may then beforehand proclaim Christ to be victorious. He is crowned King in Mount Zion; God did put the crown upon His head (Psal. 2), and who dare take it off again? Out of question, He hath sore and grievous quarrels against His Church; and therefore He is called (Isa. 39: 10), "He whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem." But when He hath performed His work on Mount Zion, all Zion's haters shall be as the hungry and thirsty man that dreams he is eating and drinking, and behold, when he awaketh, he is faint and his soul empty. And this advantage we have also, that He will not bring before sun and moon all the infirmities of His wife; it is the modesty of marriage-anger, or husband wrath, that our sweet Lord Jesus will not come with chiding to the streets, to let all the world hear what is betwixt Him and us; His sweet glooms stay under roof, and that because He is God. Two special things ye are to mind. 1. Try and make sure your profession; that ye carry not empty lamps. Alas! security, security, is the bane and the wreck of the most part of the world! O, how many professions go with a golden lustre and gold-like before men (who are but witnesses to our white skin), and yet are but bastard and base metal. Consider how fair before the wind some do ply with up-sails, and white, even to the nick¹ of illumination (Heb. 6: 5), and tasting of the heavenly gift, and a share and part of the Holy Ghost, and the tasting of the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come; and yet this is but a false nick of renovation, and in a short time such are quickly broken upon the rocks, and never fetch the harbour, but are sanded in the bottom of hell. O, make your heaven sure, and try how ye come by conversion; that it be not stolen goods in a white and well-lustred profession! A white skin over old wounds maketh an under-coating conscience; false under-water not seen is dangerous, and that is a leak and rift in the bottom of an enlightened conscience, often falling, and sinning against light. Woe, woe is me that the holy profession of Christ is made a stage garment by many to bring home a vain fame; and Christ is made to serve men's ends. This is as it were to stop an oven with a king's robes. Know, 2ndly, Except

¹Point.

men martyr and slay the body of sin, in sanctified self-denial, they shall never be Christ's martyrs and faithful witnesses. O, if I could be master of that house-idol myself, my own, mine, my own will, wit, credit, and ease, how blessed were I! O, but we have need to be redeemed from ourselves rather than from the devil and the world; learn to put out yourselves and to put in Christ for yourselves. I should make a sweet bartering and nifferring,¹ and give old for new, if I could shuffle out self, and substitute Christ my Lord in place of myself; to say, not I, but Christ; not my will, but Christ's; not my ease, not my lust, not my feckless² credit, but Christ, Christ. But alas! in leaving ourselves, in setting Christ before our idol, self, we have yet a glaiked³ back-look to our old idol. O, wretched idol, myself! when shall I see thee wholly decourted,⁴ and Christ wholly put in thy room? O, if Christ, Christ, had the full place and room of myself, that all my aims, purposes, thoughts, and desires, would coast and land upon Christ, and not upon myself! And yet howbeit we cannot attain to this denial of me and mine that we can say I am not myself, myself is not myself, mine own is no longer mine own; yet our aiming at this in all we do shall be accepted; for, alas, I think I shall die but minting⁵ and aiming to be a Christian? It is not our comfort that Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, is come betwixt us and God in the business, so that green and young heirs, the like of sinners, have now a tutor; that is God? and now God be thanked our salvation is bottomed on Christ. Sure I am the bottom shall never fall out of heaven and happiness to us. I would give over the bargain a thousand times, were it not that Christ, by His free grace, hath taken our salvation in hand. Pray, pray, and contend with the Lord, for your sister-church; for it would appear the Lord is about to spier⁶ for His scattered sheep in the dark and cloudy day. O, that it would please our Lord to set up again David's old, wasted, and fallen tabernacle in Scotland, that we might see the glory of the second temple in this land! O, that my little heaven were wadset,⁷ to redeem the honour of my Lord Jesus among Jews and Gentiles! Let never dew lie upon my branches, and let my poor flower wither at the root, so being Christ were enthroned, and His glory advanced in all the world, and especially in these three kingdoms; but I know He hath no need of me, what can I add to Him? But oh, that He would cause His high and pure glory to run through such a foul channel as I am! and, howbeit He hath caused the blossom to fall off my one poor joy that was on this side of heaven, even my liberty to preach Christ to His people, yet I am dead

¹Exchange.²Worthless.³Wanton.⁴Dethroned.⁵Intending.⁶Ask or seek.⁷Mortgaged.

to that now, so being He would hew and carve glory, glory for evermore to my royal King, out of my silence and sufferings. O, that I had my fill of His love! but I know ill manners make an uncouth and strange bridegroom. I entreat you earnestly for the aid of your prayers, for I forget not you, and I salute with my soul in Christ the faithful pastors, and honourable and worthy professors in that land. "Now, the God of peace that brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight." Grace, grace, be with you.

Yours, in his sweetest Lord Jesus,

S. R.

Aberdeen, Feb. 4, 1638.

The Inspiration of Scripture

by Rev. Keith M. Watkins

(Paper given at the Theological Conference held in Inverness, in December, 1994)

This paper will attempt to address the inspiration of Scripture in a topical manner. First, it will insist that Scripture is the inspired Word of God. Second, it will show that Scripture came through the instrumentality of men, and that, not by a process of dictation. And third, it will demonstrate that the view of human instrumentality here advocated is nothing other than the Reformed consensus over the centuries.

1. Scripture is the Inspired Word of God

Inspiration is *divine*. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration *of God*' (2 Tim 3: 16). So much is Scripture of God that it is His breath, for the word translated 'inspiration' means 'breathed-out'. The words of the Bible have been breathed onto its pages by the Most High. The writers of Scripture wrote out what was breathed out by God.

Scripture itself emphasises this: 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Peter 1: 21). Inspiration is a divine process, for the human writers of Scripture spake only 'as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' When the Spirit moved, they spake; when He did not move, they did not speak. The Bible is the Word of God, for there is nothing in it but it is there by His moving.

The Greek word here translated 'moved' appears also in Acts 27: 15, 17 for the ship that was 'driven' in the wind. The sailors no longer tried to steer the ship, but simply let her be driven by the wind. It was no longer their will trying to direct the ship, but it was the will of the wind that determined her direction. So with inspiration, 'For the prophecy came in

old time not by the will of man' (2 Peter 1: 21). In this sense then, the Bible is not a production of the will of man but a production of the will of God. It is God-breathed in such a sense that God's determination is the wind that has driven it and directed it and moved it. It is God's Word, and His servants were 'borne along' upon the breath of His own irresistible purpose.

One is reminded of Ezekiel's vision, where the wheels moved only when the spirit of the living creature moved: 'And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels' (Ezekiel 1: 19-21). How clearly this illustrates the process of inspiration. The holy penmen wrote only as they were moved by the Spirit of inspiration.

Inspiration is *plenary*. The *whole* Bible is inspired of God and breathed out by Him. Which Scripture is given by God? Just some part of it? No, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.' What a rebuke to liberals, who think that they can discern in the Bible what is God's word and what is merely man's word. They are willing to admit that God's word is *contained* within Scripture but not that Scripture *is* — in its entirety — God's word. How wrong they are! The Bible is the Word of God, the whole of it, from its beginning in Genesis 1: 1 to its end in Revelation 22: 21.

Inspiration is *verbal*. It extends to the very *words* used in Scripture. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Which things also we speak, not in the *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Corinthians 2: 13). It is not simply that the writers were given inspired doctrines, thoughts and ideas, and then left free to express those doctrines, thoughts and ideas in their own unaided words. On the contrary, inspiration is so verbal that it extends to every jot and tittle, every least dot and shortest stroke.

Anything less than this divine, plenary and verbal inspiration is not the inspiration of the Bible. There is one Author throughout Scripture, a Divine Author who determined the very words as well as the thoughts. In the fullest possible sense, Scripture is the Word of God. It is God who speaks to us through it. Therefore we are to receive the Bible, 'not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God' (1 Thessalonians

2: 13). This is why the Westminster Confession speaks of 'the majesty of the style' pertaining to the whole of Scripture. The majestic style of divinity pervades the whole.

But does this mean that men were not involved? Far from it.

2. Scripture came through the Instrumentality of Men

Divine inspiration was by human instrumentality. 'Holy men of God spake.' *Men* spake. We said that God speaks in Scripture. Indeed, and He so speaks as if no man spoke it all. But the Bible also says that men spake. As just one example of many, the Saviour said that Psalm 110 is spoken by David, 'And *David himself saith* in the book of Psalms' (Luke 20: 42). But the book of Psalms is God's book! It is God's word! In it, and throughout it, God speaks! Even the very words and expressions are God's! Nevertheless, 'David *himself* saith.' God saith — and David saith. Thus saith the Lord — and thus saith David. How wonderful is the Bible, in which both God and men speak! Inspiration was supernatural; it was miraculous. In a glorious and incomprehensible manner, men wrote not simply their own word, but the Word of God. Nevertheless, they, the men, wrote that Word, for it came through human instrumentality.

But just *how* did the men write God's Word? No full explanation can be given, any more than it can for the process by which the Saviour turned water into wine. Like that, inspiration was a miraculous process. Sadly, a rare few have attempted to detract from this miracle by taking a very mechanical view of human instrumentality, whereby the writers are rendered nothing more than mindless and characterless machines. They are viewed not as men but as automatons, and not as penmen but as mere pens. This is called the dictation theory, for its advocates argue that the process is like the company executive dictating a letter to the secretary, or the schoolteacher dictating an exercise to his pupils. The secretary or pupil simply writes down word-for-word what the executive or teacher says. The final result has nothing of the secretary or the pupil about it at all. Even an impersonal machine could do the same. This dictationist view is totally unacceptable.

It is unacceptable because the writers wrote as men, not as machines — 'Holy *men* of God spake.' God could have written the whole of Scripture with His own finger, as He did the Ten Commandments upon the tables of the law, but the fact is that He did not. He chose rather to use men, as instruments. And He used men as men, so that they wrote as rational beings, with faculties of understanding and affection. Sometimes they received revelations that they did not fully understand.

Even then, when they came to record those revelations by the process of inspiration, they wrote as responsible, rational, thinking, feeling men.

The dictation theory is unacceptable because inspiration *involved* the human writers in a way that simple dictation never could. As an instance, a mere machine or secretary could never write as the psalmist did in Psalm 45: 1, 'My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.' The psalmist's own heart was boiling or bubbling up with the good matter of the psalm. There was no mere dictation, but the expression of the psalmist's own exercises of heart. He was not a mere secretary! Even more pointedly, the psalmist asserted that he was speaking of the things which he — himself — had made. Never — ever — could a mere secretary or pupil speak of making anything. This one text is sufficient to silence all the holders of a dictation theory, and leave their theory broken upon the anvil of Scripture itself.

The dictationist view is unacceptable in the light of 2 Peter 1: 21, when it says, 'As they were moved,' or borne along. At first sight the reference to the ship in the storm might seem to support the idea of dictation. But on a more careful examination it does not. For although Paul's ship was moved and borne along only as the wind moved it, whereby God who was in control of the wind was in complete control of the ship, nevertheless the ship moved *as a ship*. It was borne along like itself, and according to its nature. It moved from side to side in the powerful waves like *it* would move, not like a piece of driftwood would have moved. It was likewise with inspiration. Yes, the breath of the Spirit of God was in complete control of the writers as they were borne along, but they were borne along *as they* would be borne along, according to their nature. The penmen of Scripture were moved as rational creatures, in accordance with the faculties of their own humanity. They were moved as free agents; they wrote freely, yet God controlled them fully. They wrote only as moved by God, but nevertheless they wrote as men.

In addition, the dictation theory is unacceptable because each writer wrote not only as a man, but also as his own man. Inspiration employed the human personalities as well as the human faculties of the writers. Although human error was suppressed, human personality was not suppressed in the process. Thus the different *styles* of the different writers are apparent to every reader. Paul writes as Paul, with Paul's character and personality, all coloured by Paul's background and experiences, and fully using Paul's gifts and graces. And then Peter writes with his own style, not with Paul's; and Peter's character, background, experiences,

gifts and graces are evident, and not Paul's. This tells us immediately that inspiration's use of the instrumentality of men was no mere dictation. For if an executive used two secretaries for dictation purposes, the resulting pair of letters would bear exactly the same style — the executive's. There would be nothing of either secretary in it at all, and no distinction in the style of the writing. The only style impressed on the result would be the executive's. Likewise with two competent pupils — their exercises would reflect no difference of style. Yet Scripture, although it bears the impress of divinity throughout its pages, nevertheless bears also the different impresses of the different human writers. They were not mere secretaries or pupils writing only dictated words.

Think again of the storm in the Mediterranean, but think of two different ships caught in exactly the same wind and storm. Both are borne along in the wind, and neither can resist it, both being in its absolute control. Nevertheless, the one ship would manifest different characteristics as it was borne along from the other. It would be moved as *it* would be moved, according to its bulk and shape and condition, and so on. And the other would be moved as *it* would be moved, according to its various characteristics. Although both ships would be moved in the wind's total control, yet they would still manifest their own styles of moving. This is all we contend for when we reject the theory of dictation. The wonderful miracle of inspiration is that God moved Paul to write as Paul would write, and Peter as Peter would write, not as impersonal machines, but according to their own personalities. And so the result bears out their human characteristics, except for sin and error. Their own individuality, far from being stifled and suppressed, has been allowed to manifest itself.

The advocates of the dictation theory fear that to speak of the personal styles of the human writers detracts from the majestic style of divinity. But does the employment of the human writers's personal characteristics detract from the divine character of the Scriptures? No it does not. Lying behind the dictationist fear is a too simplistic view of God's dealings. For example, whilst we hold entirely to divine sovereignty, we rightly condemn all forms of hyper-Calvinism which deny human responsibility. Does human responsibility detract from divine sovereignty? Not at all; and neither does human instrumentality detract from divine inspiration. In the mystery of divine providence, men think and act freely, yet every thought and deed is predetermined and governed by God so as to accomplish His will. The use of human instruments does not take away from the marvel of providence; on the contrary, it magnifies it. So with inspiration. Says Gaussen, quoted in the Free Presbyterian Magazine, 'The

abundance of humanity to be found in the Scriptures, far from compromising their divine inspiration, is only one further mark of their divinity.¹ To adapt Warfield's well-known illustration, the light of the sun streaming through a stained-glass window does not cease to be light because it is now coloured by the different panes of glass. So God's Word does not cease to be His Word because it is coloured with the different styles of the human writers.

The dictation theory fails to acknowledge that not only the actual writing of Scripture, but also the whole lives of the writers until that point, were all under the sovereign disposition of God. For example, it was always the will of God that the Epistle to the Romans should be written in the very style in which it was written. For that purpose then, in all the great events and smallest details of Paul's life and experience, the Lord was preparing him to be that very writer. Thus E. J. Young writes, '(God's) work of providence and His special work of inspiration should be regarded as complementing one another.'² Warfield reasons: 'What if the colours of the stained-glass window have been designed by the architect for the express purpose of giving to the light that floods the cathedral precisely that tone and quality it receives from them?'³ It is this marvellous designing and accomplishing work of God that the dictation theory denies.

3. The Reformed Consensus

The consensus among Reformed theologians has always been against the dictation theory. To quote Charles Hodge, 'The Church has never held what has been stigmatized as the mechanical theory of inspiration.'⁴ Volume 12 of our own Magazine states, 'Some Lutheran divines might be given as appearing to countenance the dictation theory, but it is unfair to charge orthodox Reformed divines with such a theory.'⁵ Nevertheless it has been suggested by some that the older Reformed writers did hold dictationist views. Now we acknowledge that some of them, such as Calvin, Turretin, Owen, Boston and Haldane, used the word 'dictation'. However, we absolutely deny that they held to a purely mechanical concept of the process of inspiration. Rather, they were using the word 'dictation' simply to emphasise that there is nothing in Scripture but what God willed to be there, that is, it is all there by His authoritative dictate. Although not mechanically dictated, the resulting words are as much the words of God as if they had been mechanically dictated. They were speaking of the result not the process of inspiration.

One passage alone from Calvin's Institutes proves that he accepted that the different styles of the human writers are found in Scripture: 'Indeed, I admit that some of the prophets had an elegant and clear, even brilliant,

manner of speaking, so that their eloquence yields nothing to secular writers; and by such examples the Holy Spirit wished to show that he did not lack eloquence while he elsewhere used a rude and unrefined style. But whether you read David, Isaiah, and the like, whose speech flows sweet and pleasing, or Amos the herdsman, Jeremiah, and Zechariah, whose harsher style savours of rusticity, that majesty of the Spirit of which I have spoken will be evident everywhere.’⁶ According to Calvin, the idea of accepting human styles does not in the least take away from the divine style of Scripture.

Calvin’s introductory comments to Paul’s epistle to Philemon are incompatible with the dictation theory: ‘The singular loftiness of the mind of Paul, though it may be seen to greater advantage in his other writings which treat of weightier matters, is also attested by this Epistle, in which, while he handles a subject otherwise low and mean, he rises to God with his wonted elevation. . . He discourses about Christian forbearance with such ability . . . He demeans himself so modestly and humbly, that nowhere else is the meekness of his temper painted in a more lively manner.’ There is no room for dictation here. Paul’s own mind, ability and humility are all apparent in his writing. And this was no style given for that time alone; it was the life character of the man.

Likewise, Turretin did not use the word ‘dictation’ to signify a purely mechanical concept whereby the personalities and styles of the human writers would be suppressed, as the following quotation makes clear: ‘Yea, it adds great and authority to the apostolic writings that they wrote in different places, for various reasons and on different occasions, in a different style and method to different persons and yet so consistent with each other.’⁷

Owen’s overriding emphasis was upon the divinity of Scripture:⁸ ‘Thus is it from God — entirely from him. As to the doctrine contained in it, and the words wherein that doctrine is delivered, it is wholly his; what *that* speaks, *he* speaks himself.’ Did this lead Owen to adopt the dictation theory and so to deny the individual styles of the human instruments? Not at all. Although he said of the penmen, ‘They were so guided, that their words were not their own, but immediately supplied unto them,’ nevertheless he also said, ‘Their mind and understanding were used in the choice of words, (whence arise all the differences — that is, in their manner of expression. . .)’⁹ Again, ‘We may also grant, and do, that they (the sacred writers) used their own abilities of mind and understanding in the choice of words and expressions: so the Preacher “sought to find out acceptable words,” Eccl. 12: 10. But the Holy Spirit, who is more intimate

unto the minds and skills of men than they are themselves, did so guide, act, and operate in them, as that the words they fixed upon were as directly and certainly from him, as if they had been spoken to them by an audible voice.'¹⁰ While he considered that 'The variety (of styles) intended ariseth mostly from the variety of the subject-matters treated of,' nevertheless, 'The Holy Ghost in his work on the minds of men doth not put a force upon them, nor act them any otherwise that they are in their own natures, and with their present endowments and qualifications, meet to be acted and used . . . The words, therefore, which he suggests unto them are such as they are accustomed unto, and he causeth them to make use of such expressions as were familiar unto themselves. So he that useth diverse seals maketh different impressions, though the guidance of them all be equal and the same; and he that toucheth skilfully several musical instruments, variously tuned, maketh several notes of music,'¹¹ Owen would certainly not accept the use of Balaam's ass to illustrate the process of inspiration. Men were used as men, their own men, not as machines contrary to their nature.

Boston wrote, 'The writers were inspired by the Spirit, who guided their hearts and pens; he dictated, and they wrote; so that it is his word, and not theirs.'¹² Did he hold a mechanical view of inspiration then since he used the word 'dictated'? Most certainly he did not. For he explains, 'This inspiration was extended not only to the things themselves expressed, but to the words wherein they were expressed, though agreeable to the natural style and manner of each writer.'¹³ Again, 'He did not give them the matter to put in their own words, but put the words in their hearts too, but in a manner suited to their native style.'¹⁴ According to Boston, God was not at the very moment of inspiration giving the writers a style altogether different or new from their own, but rather using their existing style. We insist upon this. See how incompatible with the dictation theory is the following statement of Boston: 'The matter of their writing was from him . . . Some things were matters of pure revelation, that could not be known otherwise. . . These things they had by immediate suggestion. Some things they might have by other records, their own judgment, or memory. In these the Spirit of the Lord infallibly guided them what to choose and refuse, strengthened their judgment and memories, so that they could not mistake.'¹⁵ Secretaries and pupils do not use their own judgment and memories, much less do machines.

Although Robert Haldane used the word 'dictate' in the following quotation, evidently no mechanical theory is contemplated: 'The style that God was pleased to employ was used, and the instruments were such as

that style was natural to, flowing, like the words, with their full consent, and according to the particular tone of their minds. The style of the Scriptures is the characteristic style of the different writers; but God is the author of it. The style is as truly God's as the matter; for if he has employed the style of different writers, he has likewise employed their expressions, thought, reasonings, and arguments. God did not leave them to the operation of their own mind, but he has employed the operations of their mind in his word. The Holy Spirit could dictate to them his own words in such a way that they would also be their own words, uttered with the understanding.'¹⁶ 'For while it is evident to all, that there is a certain characteristic distinction of style, that pervades the whole of the Scriptures, and sufficiently attests that they are the work of the same author, it is equally certain that each one of the writers is distinguished from the rest by a style peculiar to himself.'¹⁷

A whole battalion of Reformed writers may be summoned to add their testimony as a bulwark against the dictation theory of inspiration. It will be noticed that as understanding of the doctrine has crystallised, against much opposition, the word 'dictation' has come to be studiously avoided, to prevent confusion. So we should avoid its use in our day. That Warfield and Hodge were in full agreement with this Reformed consensus is plain enough from what has already been said.

Robert Shaw, in his standard work on the Westminster Confession, quotes Stevenson with approval: 'Though the inspired penmen were under infallible direction, both in regard of the sentiments to be communicated by them, and the phraseology best adapted to express those sentiments; yet the Holy Spirit, for wise reasons, seems to have accommodated his suggestions, so far as relates to mere style, to the age in which they wrote, and their respective talents for composition.'¹⁸

Chalmers wrote, 'It is thus that each prophet and historian and apostle of Scripture, preserves his own characteristic and complexional variety of style and manner.'¹⁹ Cunningham, Bannerman and Candlish all followed the same path. Hugh Martin, in a volume issued by our own Church's Publications Committee, agreed: 'The plan and condescension of God being such that he has accomplished or secured His own authorship of Holy Scripture through the instrumentality of the authorship of men, whom He reduced not to the level of machines, but made the real and intelligent fellow-workers with God.'²⁰

Ryle's view is most clear: 'I abhor the "mechanical" theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and St Paul were no better than organ-pipes, employed by the Holy Ghost, or ignorant

secretaries or amanuenses who wrote by dictation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind. I believe that in some marvellous manner the Holy Ghost made use of the reason, the memory, the intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar mental temperament of each writer of the Scriptures.²¹ Berkhof agrees: 'But in view of what we find in Scripture this (the dictation theory) can hardly be true. They . . . impressed upon their writings their own particular style.'²²

Many others could be added, but turning to our own Free Presbyterian Magazine, we read in the second volume, 'They acted intelligently and spontaneously; for in delivering this "sure word of prophecy", their self-consciousness was not suppressed neither were their faculties suspended.'²³ We shall conclude with an altogether conclusive and especially beautiful quote from Rev Donald Beaton writing in the fourth volume.²⁴ 'The writers were no mere machines, but each faculty was in full exercise; so that Paul writes as Paul, and not as John, and *vice versa*, each retaining his individuality, though all inspired by the same Spirit. The Holy Spirit passing over them as a wind passing over a forest consisting of different kinds of trees — each tree gives forth its own sound, though it is the same wind that is passing over the forest.' On this we take our stand: Scripture is by inspiration of God, but by the real instrumentality of men. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

1. Vol. 5, p. 458;
2. *Thy Word is Truth*, (Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 1963), p. 70.
3. *Works*, (Baker: Grand Rapids, 1981), Vol. 1, p. 102.
4. *Systematic Theology*, (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1986), Vol. 1, p. 156f.
5. Article by J.R.M., p. 417
6. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, J. T. McNeill, Ed., F.L. Battles, Trans. (Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1960), I, VIII, 2.
7. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, J.T. Dennison, Ed., G.M. Giger, Trans. (Presbyterian and Reformed: Phillipsburg, 1992), Vol. 1, p. 61.
8. *Works*, W.H. Goold, Ed. (Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 1967), Vol. 3, p. 144.
9. *Works*, Vol. 16, p. 305.
10. *Works*, Vol. 3, p. 145.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 144f.
12. *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 19.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
16. *The Authenticity and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (Edinburgh, 1832), p. 117.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
18. *The Reformed Faith* (Christian Focus: Inverness, 1974), p. 12.
19. *Theological Textbook* (Glasgow), Vol. IV, p. 377, quoted in N.R. Needham, *The Doctrine of Holy Scripture in the Free Church Fathers* (Rutherford House: Edinburgh, 1991), p. 74.
20. *Inspiration of Scripture*, (Free Presbyterian: Inveness, 1964), p. 33f.
21. *Is All Scripture Inspired?* (Wm. Hunt: London, 1891&, pp 36-39.
22. *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, (Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 1980), p 17.
23. Article by Rev. Alexander MacRae, Kames, p. 95.
24. p. 95.

Book Review

Autobiography by John G. Paton. Banner of Truth Trust. 497pp. £10.95

This second reprint of the Autobiography of John G. Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides, which was long out of print until the Banner of Truth Trust issued its first reprint in 1965, is to be welcomed. It contains the remarkable history of an outstanding missionary of the Cross.

The first part relates Paton's early life and preparation for the Mission Field. It then goes on to tell of Paton's settlement on Tanna, one of the islands in what was then known as the New Hebrides, where the natives were cannibals and were living in heathenism. Though soon after his arrival there, both his wife and little infant child died, yet he continued for many years to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the natives, and not without success. After many trials and sufferings he had to leave the island.

The second part records his attempts, through visits to Australia and Scotland, to secure support for a Mission Ship and to obtain more Missionaries for the New Hebrides. On his return he settled on another island, Aniwa, where the Word of God was greatly blessed to the conversion of many of the natives. He made a second visit to Britain later and obtained sufficient funds for a larger Mission Ship.

The third part of the book recounts his visits to America, Canada and Britain to foster support for the New Hebrides Mission. At the end of a long life devoted to the service of Christ in Mission work, Paton had to say: "Oh that I had my life to begin again! I would consecrate it anew to Jesus in seeking the conversion of the remaining Cannibals on the New Hebrides."

The book gives a clear insight into what Mission work entailed in the 19th Century for those who engaged in it — what trials the Missionaries had to bear, what dangers and difficulties they had to surmount. Yet the Lord sustained them and crowned their labours with success. What an inspiration such an account as this should be to missionaries in the present day, when they think back on what their fellow-missionaries had to endure in other days for the sake of Christ.

We warmly recommend this Mission life to old and young alike, for it confirms the common adage that 'truth is stranger than fiction'.

D.B.M.

Notes and Comments

Roman Catholic Priests and Sexual Abuse

In recent times scandals relating to the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church have come to light in many lands, including Ireland, where the abuse case brought down the Government. Very recently, in Scotland, the

situation in Blairs College, Aberdeen in the 1970's has been uncovered. In one case the victim was paid £42,000 in compensation by the Roman Catholic Church, yet the abuse was never reported to the police and the priest continued working in parishes. Dr Chiniquay exposed a similar situation in Canada over 100 years ago, and there is no doubt that the situation is not any better today, as more recent revelations in that country have made plain. These things reveal the true nature of Romanism as an antichristian system and exposes the falseness of its doctrine of celibacy as promoting a holier life in priests and nuns. To those who still believe in the false pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church, these revelations must come as a shock. May this open their eyes to the true nature of that system which has so long deceived them.

National Health Service Abortions

The Times reports that a record number of women are having abortions through the National Health Service. Since 1989 the number of abortions under the N.H.S. has risen by 9000 to almost 80,000. The reason given for this rise is that younger managers now set the level of service and that they have not the same outlook on abortion as some of the older gynaecologists, formerly in charge, who regarded abortion as unethical. It is a sad reflection on the N.H.S. and on the recently appointed managers if this is the case. We are told abortions peaked at 174,000 in 1990 but that this fell to 160,500 in 1992 because of a decrease in the population aged 15 to 30. Most of the abortions are performed on women in their late teens and twenties. Were an army of that size to be decimated in battle what a cry would arise at such a catastrophe! At least such men would have had a portion of their lives granted to them, but what of those whose lives are plucked away in the womb? This is Bosnia, Rwanda and Chechenia rolled into one. Is it any wonder that murder is now commonplace? The Lord will yet require the blood of the slain infants at the hand of the nations which have legalised such diabolical crimes.

Condoning of Pagan and Popish Idolatry

The Scottish Reformers' attitude to the observance of Christmas and other man-appointed "holy" days was both clear and unequivocal. They identified Christmas a "a feast invented by the Papists" and as it had "neither commandment nor assurance in the Scriptures, ought to be utterly abolished from the realm." That was the view held by the heirs of Knox and Melville down through the centuries and remains to this hour the view of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Articles in past volumes of this Magazine show clearly that we have been consistent in witnessing

against what has been perceived by our watchmen to be nothing other than a countenancing of paganism and idolatry by the professing Church. Outwith our bounds, there were others who were like-minded. In 1913, the late Rev. Kenneth A. MacRae was making the following entry in his Diary: *Wednesday, 24th December: Ferintosh — Mr Munro today was strongly condemning the growing tendency in the North to observe the Popish festival of Christmas*. It was a tendency that was to grow further. Those who tried to stem the tide were unsuccessful and the observance of Christmas kept pace with the incoming flood of ungodliness and infidelity.

In the 24th December, 1994, issue of the *Press and Journal*, the attention of any interested readers is drawn to the fact that the “first Presbyterian Christmas watchnight service in Inverness — and possibly in the Highlands”, was held 44 years ago. To help focus attention on the matter, the paper, also, carried a large photograph of the Church of Scotland minister who prides himself on being the one responsible for the innovation. It proved to be a popular innovation; so popular in fact that in 1995 it would perhaps be quite difficult to find a Church of Scotland congregation in the Highlands where such a service is not held. It has become the rule, rather than the exception. Even on the island of Harris, the Tarbert Church of Scotland congregation has its service, but this year, according to the *Stornoway Gazette*, there was held on Sabbath, 18th December, a “family Christmas service”. Carols were sung by the ‘Sunday’ school pupils on their own, and some with the whole congregation joining in. Scripture portions were read by selected children and finally the minister presented each pupil with a gift token. That this should be happening on the island of Harris, and on the Lord’s Day, is very surprising indeed and it shows how far the Church of Scotland has departed from Reformation principles, even in places where, until fairly recent times, some semblance of orthodoxy had been maintained. If ever the distinctive witness of our Church was necessary it is in this fearfully dark day when men take upon themselves to introduce into the public worship of God what He has not sanctioned in His holy Word, and the line of demarcation between the Church and the world has been all but obliterated.

The same *Press and Journal* newspaper that carried the story of the innovating minister also published what was called, “A Christmas message from the Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland.” We do not wish to do Mr MacLeod any injustice as he may have condemned Christmas observance in his “message” and it is possible that the newspaper might not have printed the full text. It is, however, perplexing, in this context,

to read such statements as the following. "Christian festivity can bring happiness to many. . . . As Mary fondly looked on her babe what gladness she had in her heart. . . . He is the sole substance of Christian festivity. Apart from Him Christmas is unsubstantial and without real joy." We fear the Free Church trumpet is now, also, giving an uncertain sound. This is not what we would expect from the Church claiming to be the Reformation of Scotland.

Another claimant to this distinction is, of course, the APCs. The hollowness of that claim becomes more evident by the day. The APC congregation in Lochcarron did not hold a watchnight service, at least not at midnight. However, the minister there thought the 25th December was an appropriate day to administer the Lord's Supper! Not to be outdone the Aberdeen APCs were also reported to be taking part in Christmas activities. An advertisement in "SCOT-ADS" under "Religious Notices" informs readers that a "Christmas Eve service for all the family" was to be held in Stockethill Church, "led by friends from the Associated Presbyterian Church." It was to be at 7 pm and "mince pies, tea and juice" were to be served after the service. These are the people who claim to be the true Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and on the strength of that claim continue illegally to occupy our churches and manses. Whatever has happened to the God-fearing in the APCs, who not so long ago were of one mind with us, but who now appear to be complacent and content within a body which tolerates and condones such departures from true Presbyterian and scriptural practice? Great indeed is our need of an outpouring of the Spirit of God!

J. McL.

Mission News

There is a large party of our Scottish friends at present in Kenya, engaged in preparing the way for the establishing of a hospital at Sengera. It is not intended to build a new hospital but to make use of the buildings already there. The recently built kitchen and laundry are much larger than is necessary.

Mr Ian MacLean, an Inverness builder, has already arrived in Kenya. There are three nurses, Jessie Coote from Zimbabwe, Truus Ringelberg, and Celia Renes. In addition, there is the welcome presence of Rev. John Goldby, and Mrs Goldby and three children. Last but not least, it was with much pleasure that Mr Donald MacDonald, his wife, Dr Christine and little Sarah were welcomed back during the month of December. They all have an arduous task before them, and we wish them the Lord's blessing and encouragement.

A letter has come from Sister Anne Zekveld from Mbumba. She writes first of the fact that cases of plague have diminished in number. She speaks of the great efforts of the Government to stamp out the epidemic. The area, one of four in the country, has been sprayed with D.D.T. and the people warned about symptoms to be noted, and precautions to be taken.

Anne says, 'One good result of the Government's interest in Mbumba at this time was that during the second week of October a big Army helicopter landed on the airstrip bringing high-standing officials to investigate the plague problem. One of these investigators was the Secretary for Health. After the Doctor had gone round the wards with Dr Janette, he asked how they were getting on with the new kitchen. It was he who had stressed the necessity of making use of the kitchen, when in conversation previously with Dr Janette. She now explained the situation and he immediately gave permission for two full-time workers to be employed in the kitchen, and for an additional domestic to be engaged for the hospital. As to the new experience of feeding the patients, formerly attended to by accompanying relatives, the Government has increased the annual allowance by more than double the previous amount so that the funding of the kitchen is no longer a problem'. Anne says, 'We are reminded again of the faithfulness of our God.'

Miss Louise Leiper's arrival at Mbumba was greatly welcomed. Her Work Permit has not yet been received so she is studying the language and observing the general running of the hospital, but she is not permitted to engage in the practical work. Miss Margaret MacAskill has returned to Mbumba and is at work as if she had never been away, to the pleasure and gratitude of all.

Miss Etta MacLennan is retiring from her work at the John Tallach School. Her teaching and special interest in religious instruction will be greatly missed. In addition, Etta was responsible for the daily clinic attached to the Boarding School. We wish Etta a happy retirement.

Rev. and Mrs D. A. Ross expect to leave for our South African Mission about the middle of January. They will visit Zimbabwe, Malawi and Kenya, if all is well. We trust that the Lord will be with them and bless His Word.

J.N.

Visit to Vancouver

by Rev John MacLeod

The Dominions and Overseas Committee decided early in the year that, if possible, a deputy should visit the small remnant in Vancouver who had remained faithful to our Church and its testimony. Having been asked

to undertake that duty I arrived in Vancouver at 5.30 pm (local time) on Thursday, 6th October, 1994. The ten-hour flight from Heathrow was uneventful. Since we were travelling westward, it was in daylight all the way. At the Airport I was met by Mr John A. MacLeod. A motel room had been booked for me and Mr MacLeod took me there first and after that on to his own small apartment where I was hospitably entertained by himself and his wife.

Due to a misunderstanding over the deadline set by the newspaper for the receiving of advertisements, it was not possible to give notice of the coming Sabbath services in the special supplement placed inside the paper on Saturdays. We did manage to get the information printed in another section of the paper but in the event no one outside our own faithful few turned up. That first Sabbath I preached to a small congregation; yet we were able to plead His promise, and we believe that we were in measure conscious of His presence among us.

On Monday, accompanied by Mr John A. MacLeod, I crossed over to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. At the ferry terminal we were met by Mrs Mann — a daughter of the late Murdo MacIver, who was an elder in North Tolsta — and we were very hospitably entertained in her home. Her husband — Dr Kenneth Mann — who was at one time a GP in Stornoway, was not at home at the time but I was able to speak to him on the telephone. I discovered that there were others from North Tolsta in Vancouver whose parents were faithful to the Church and I was very disappointed that none of them attended the services on this occasion.

On the following Wednesday Mr Robert Ross and his wife arrived and the following day we welcomed Mr Gerrit Schuit, the Chesley elder, and his son, David. The Schuits stayed at the same motel as myself while the Ross's were domiciled some distance away. The communion service began on Thursday evening when a number of people were present. Mrs Mary Hardy came across from Vancouver Island for the weekend. Her husband, Mr Ron Hardy, who had been a member, passed away about two years ago. We kept the usual weekday services, apart from the Question Meeting, and on Saturday the Session was constituted and "tokens" were given to intending communicants. On Sabbath the sacrament was dispensed and a small company of us sat at the Lord's table to keep His death in remembrance. My last service was on the Monday evening. The following evening I began my journey home. Mr and Mrs Ross were to continue on to New Zealand and Mr Schuit and David departed for Chilliwack to spend a few days there before returning to Chesley.

We were glad to meet Mrs Janetta Kursar again who attended some

of the services and kindly entertained Mr and Mrs Ross and myself. The attendance of Mr Schuit's nephew, who lives in Chilliwack, together with his wife and four children, boosted our numbers and was a great encouragement to us. We believe that others from that area might well have attended had they been aware of the services in time.

We think everything possible should be done to maintain our witness in Vancouver. Better days will surely come. The few there who love the testimony of our Church deserve our support. To Mr John A. MacLeod and his wife I would like to express my gratitude for their kindness and all others, also, whose help and encouragement were much appreciated. Above all, I have to acknowledge the kindness and care of the Keeper of Israel.

Church Notes

Ordination and Induction in North Harris

The ordination of the Rev. Roderick MacLeod BA, Probationer, and his induction to the North Harris congregation took place on Thursday, 8th December 1994. The Outer Isles Presbytery met in the Church at Tarbert at 7 p.m. and was constituted by the Moderator, the Rev. Donald Nicolson. Apart from the Rev. D. J. MacAskill, on whose behalf an apology was submitted, all the members of the Presbytery were present. The Rev. James Tallach, Raasay, and the Rev. Donald Boyd, Inverness, being present, were associated with the Presbytery. Mr Malcolm Gunn was appointed the Officer-of-Court and after the minute calling the meeting was read, and the Edict was returned attested as having been duly served, he was instructed to go to the most patent door of the Church and make proclamation three times, that if any person or persons had any objections to the life and doctrine of the Rev. Roderick MacLeod, Preacher of the Gospel, they might now repair to the Presbytery, presently met, and substantiate the same. The Officer-of-Court having returned from the door and having reported that no one had appeared to object, the Rev. Donald J. MacDonald went to the pulpit and preached a wholly appropriate discourse from Jeremiah 3, verse 15: *"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."*

Public worship being ended, the Clerk gave a brief narrative of the proceedings in the Call and the Moderator then addressed to Mr MacLeod the Questions appointed to be put to Probationers at their ordination and induction to a pastoral charge. Having returned satisfactory answers to these questions and having signed the Formula in the presence of the

congregation, Mr MacLeod then knelt down and the Moderator, with solemn prayer to God, and with the imposition of hands, in which all ministers present joined, ordained the Rev. Roderick MacLeod to the holy ministry. The ordination prayer having been concluded, the Moderator, in the name of the Presbytery, and by the authority of the Divine Head of the Church, admitted him to the pastoral charge of the North Harris congregation and along with the other members of Presbytery gave to him the right hand of fellowship. Thereafter, the Rev. Alexander Morrison suitably addressed the newly inducted minister and the Rev. Kenneth D. Macleod the congregation. The Rev. James Tallach and the Rev. Donald Boyd were given an opportunity of speaking and they in suitable terms expressed their good wishes to Mr MacLeod and the North Harris congregation. Several letters from well-wishers were read by the Clerk.

The Tarbert Church was full to capacity for the occasion. It is estimated that the congregation was over 300 strong with visitors present from as far afield as Glasgow, Inverness, Skye, Raasay, and many others from the congregations nearer at hand within the bounds of the Presbytery. The ladies of the North Harris congregation had prepared an abundance of food and the majority of those present at the service partook of it. The making of this provision had obviously involved much labour and we are very grateful to them. We are, also, grateful to Mr J. M. Morrison of the Harris Hotel for making available the Hotel's function room.

The last minister settled in North Harris was the Rev. Angus MacKay, now resident in Lochcarron, and that was in August, 1953. For the past nine years the charge has been vacant and the settlement of the Rev. Roderick MacLeod gives much satisfaction to the Presbytery. A total of 95 persons signed the Call — 11 members and 84 adherents. It is our sincere desire and prayer that the ministry now begun will be a long and fruitful one, and that the minister, together with his wife and young family, will be preserved in health of body and mind and enjoy much of the Lord's blessing in the days ahead.

John MacLeod,
Clerk of Presbytery.

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Skye: At Portree on 14th February at 11 a.m.

Northern: At Dingwall on 14th February at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 21st February at 6 p.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 7th March at 1 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 14th March at 2 p.m.

Committee Meetings

The following Committees will meet in Inverness Church on Tuesday, 21st March (D.V.):—

09.00 am - 10.00 am	Magazine Committee
10.00 am - 11.30 am	Training of the Ministry Publications
11.30 am - 01.00 pm	Sabbath Observance Outreach
02.00 pm - 05.00 pm	Finance
02.00 pm - 03.30 pm	Welfare of Youth
03.30 pm - 05.00 pm	Bookroom
05.00 pm - 06.00 pm	Dominions and Overseas
07.00 pm - 09.00 pm	Foreign Missions Religion and Morals

22nd March

09.30 am - 11.30 am	Church Interests
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Correction: The article in the January issue on the Eastern Europe Mission was by Rev. D. A. Ross. On page 26, line 12, 8 a.m. should read 8 p.m.

**The Reverend Donald Beaton MacLeod
1929 - 1995**

Most readers will already know that the Rev. Donald Beaton MacLeod, MA, the Magazine's Editor for the past twenty-five years, suddenly passed away on the 16th day of January. This issue was prepared by him and was actually in his hands for proof-reading when the time of his departure came. It is, therefore, with great and inexpressible sadness that this notice of his death is appended. The pages of this Magazine, over the years, have borne eloquent and ample testimony to the faithfulness and diligence with which he served his Master in heaven. He has now gone to receive His commendation and to enter into His joy. The loss we have sustained by his death is incalculable but since for him to live was Christ, so to die was immeasurable gain. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." A fuller notice will appear in due course.

J. McL.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr R. A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, wishes to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Bookroom Fund: Anon., (per Miss M.M.) £17.56.

Eastern Europe Fund: Anon., £140; A.M. (Youth Conference Tape Sales), £5.

Foreign Mission Fund: Anon., £100; Anon., Canada (Dec) CAN \$100; A.M. (Youth Conference Tape Sales) £5; Anon., For Kenya, Tolsta, £20.

Home Mission Fund: Anon., £25.

Publications Fund: Anon., £25; A.M. (Youth Conference Tape Sales) £5.

Welfare of Youth Fund: A.M. (Youth Conference Tape Sales) £10.

Correction: The donation of £75 from Providence S.B.C., Irthlingborough in the January issue was wrongly shown under Bookroom Fund instead of East European Fund. We apologise for this.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Bonar Bridge: Anon., £120 for Dornoch Manse repairs.

Dingwall: A Friend, £10 for Congr. Purposes per Rev. N.M.R.

Edinburgh: N. Skye Friend, £100; Anon., £60; E.M.S., £10; Envelope in plate, £10; D. & A.M., £200; Psalm 122: 1, £10; Dec. Coll. £350, all for Edinburgh Church Repairs Fund; Friend £10 for Collections.

Gairloch: Anon., £30; Anon., £30, both for Sust. Fd, both in plate; Anon., £10 for College Fd; N.M., Stoer, £30 for Congr. Fd., both per Rev. A.E.W.M.

Inverness: Anon., £30; Anon., £30; Anon., £20; Anon., £10; Anon., £20; Anon., £20; Anon., £100 all for Sust. Fd.; Anon., £10; Anon., £10; Mr and Mrs A. McK, £15, all for Mini-bus maintenance; Anon., £5 for Reformer, all preceding donations by envelope in plate; Anon., £10; Anon., £5, both per D.M.; Halkirk £20 per D.M.B., all for Tape Fund; Church use for Wedding, £20 for Church Funds per D.M.B.

Laide: Rena, Larne for Bibles for Eastern Europe £10 per A.D.R.; Aultbea Friend for Eastern Europe, £30, per C.R.; Senior Citizen Uig for Medicines Eastern Europe, £20 per D.J. Macdonald; Miss Annie Graham for Tapes, £10; Friend, Aultbea for Church Funds, £20; Friends, Holland for 100 Years Witness, £8; Aultbea Friend for Church Funds, £20 all per D.A.R.; In Laide collection plate for Communion Expenses, £10; Friends, Holland where most needed £12; Aultbea Friend for Church Funds, £20 both per D.A.R.

Larne: A Friend, £30, where most needed; Anon., £60 for Theological Conference Expenses.

North Tolsta: Mrs C.G. £40 for T.B.S.; Friend of the Cause, Breasclete £10; Friend £10 per D. MacK; both for Comm. Exps; Anon., Tolsta £20; Anon., £500 both for Congr. Fds and both in plate; In memory of our beloved parents, £20 for heating.

Portree: A.C. £120 per F.M.; Friend, £10; Friend, £10, both per S.Y.M., all for Sust. Fd., Anon., £15 for Bus Fund (envelope in plate); Catechising for Russian, £600; Trinitarian Bible Society £250.

Staffin: In memory of a loving husband, £500 for Sust Fd. by envelope per N.M.D.

Stornoway: Miss K. A. MacLeod, The Cottage, Callanish, £60 for Sust. Fund; C.M.M. £100, where most needed, both per Rev. J. Macleod; 'C' £100 for Sust. Fund; Anon. £10; Anon. £20, all per church plate.