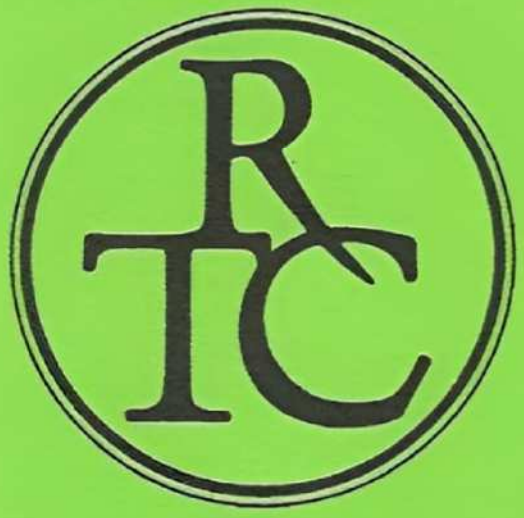

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CONTENTS

DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 - 1834) has been called the father of modern theology. His approach to theology represented a change from older methods as he sought to lay the foundation of theology in experience. Unwilling to accept the orthodox doctrine of the authority of Scripture, and unable to meet the philosophical scepticism of Locke and Hume, Schleiermacher was driven to a theology of feeling and experience, and so in modern theology the centre shifted from a theistic to a humanistic basis. Indeed some theologians would begin with the doctorine of man before discussing the doctrine of God. Theologians began to 'tune in' to their inner consciousness.

The result of this shift was that theology no longer had a firm foundation, for "Christian consciousness" at best is fluid and uncertain. Whose consciousness is normative? Thus doctrine could no longer be viewed as permanent and unchanging: it simply clothed religious experience in the thought forms of the day. In liberal circles propositional theology was on the way out long before the time of Barth and Brunner.

There is a radical flaw in the position which sees experience as the source of truth and belief, and the guiding principle in religion. Herman Bavinck put his finger on the nub of the issue: "Experience comes into being only when, first, there exists something to experience, and afterwards this something is really experienced; it cannot otherwise exist. Religion is without doubt a matter of the heart; but it cannot be separated from all objective knowledge of God through His revelation in nature and history, in Scripture and conscience . . . . Experience does not come first, after which interpretation follows, but revelation precedes, and is experienced in faith."

Given the attitude of liberal theologians to Holy Scripture, one need not be surprised at the drift to vague subjectivism. But it is alarming, to say the least, to note the growing tendency in some evangelical circles today, particularly where charismatic influence is evident, to find the same reliance on experience and observation of phenomena as determinative for belief. Then the tendency is to interpret Scripture in the light of experience rather than *vice versa*. When this happens the authority of Scripture is *in effect* just as really undermined as in current theological modernism. Doctrine may be *confirmed* by experience (Ps. 34:8): it must, if it is to be termed Christian, be *founded* on Holy Scripture (Isa.8:20; 2 Tim. 3:16). *F.S.L.*

PREACHING FROM JOB

by Hugh J. Blair

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There is an abundance of material for preaching in the book of Job. John Calvin for one found that to be so, for he preached one hundred and fifty-nine sermons from this book. In view of that detailed exposition, it might seem presumptuous to try to compress preaching from Job into a single article, but here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the Bible, a broad view of the book is essential if we are not to get bogged down in the details.

It could be a good starting-point to hear God's question to Satan addressed to ourselves: "Have you considered my servant Job?" (1:8). Many preachers have not given Job the depth of consideration that he needs. But we cannot stop with considering Job, for the subject of the book is much more than Job. It has often been too readily assumed that its subject is Job and his suffering. Certainly, unspeakable suffering is the background of the book, but, if that were its only theme, one who has known little of suffering would hesitate long before daring to preach from it or write on it. Such hesitation explains the comment made once about a scholar who was planning to write a commentary on Job: "How can that man write a commentary on Job? He has never had a day's illness in his life." That criticism could stand if Job was only about the problem of suffering, a problem which, let it be remembered, is not answered in the book. Job is not about suffering: it is about God and God's purpose for His suffering child, about God's relationship to him and his to God. That we can preach, whether we have personal experience of suffering or not.

Let James in his epistle give us a concise and Biblical summary of the subject of the Book of Job: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."(James 5:11, AV) There are two things there. First, the patience of Job. But 'patience' is much too weak a word for what is meant, in spite of the fact that the verse is often quoted about the quality of patience

needed to deal with impossible people. "You would need the patience of Job to deal with him!" What James is talking about is not 'patience' in that sense, but steadfast endurance. The same word in Hebrews 12:1 is applied to running. The marathon runner does not run with patience: he runs with dogged endurance. That was what Job needed, and that was what Job had.

The rest of the verse in James 5 needs clarification too. "You have seen the end of the Lord" means "You have seen the purpose of the Lord", and that purpose was to reveal to Job His pity and His tender mercy, His steadfast covenant love and His compassion.[1]

James then gives us this summary of the Book of Job: the steadfast endurance of Job, and the Lord's purpose of pity and compassion; in short, a man and his God. That is a good subject for preaching at any time and in any situation.

A Man and his God

The first verse of the book leaves us in no doubt about the character of Job, a man "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." In view of the accusations that his friends were to make later, that assessment of his character is significant. God Himself challenges Satan, the Adversary, with Job's character, and honours Job by allowing him to be tested by Satan. Job does not know anything of the dialogue with Satan, nor of the confidence that God has in his servant. That is going to make the suffering that is to come harder to bear and even to understand, but the fact is that God can trust Job with suffering. Paul, writing to the Philippians, sees suffering as a special gift from God, beyond the gift of faith:"To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil.1:29, New King James Version)[2]. God trusted Job with that special gift, and His confidence was justified, for Job endured.

Beneath Job's integrity and his endurance there is his faith. That faith is confirmed beyond all doubt by his response to disaster in 1:21: "The

Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord", and his determined resolve in 13:15: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." That faith stands out all the more clearly when it is compared with his wife's response to his adversity: "Curse God and die!" Before we make a harsh assessment of that advice, let us remember that she shared all the devastating experiences of chapter one. It was her ten children no less than his who were taken away in a moment. But it was even harder for her to see his suffering. Anyone who has watched a loved one suffering excruciating pain can understand her desire to see it all finished. It may be that her faith cracked, but who can blame her? But Job's faith did not crack. He said to her, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" "In all this Job did not sin with his lips"(2:10). Here was a man of whose integrity there could be no doubt, a man honoured by God in being allowed to suffer testing to the limit, a man who endured, a man whose faith did not fail.

What can we learn of Job's God in all this? We see God's sovereign control. God was in control of all that was happening. Satan could only go so far. God would not allow Job to be tested beyond what he was able to bear. There are things that we cannot understand about suffering and about the place that Satan is allowed to have in it. But the truth shines out that God is still in control. There is abiding comfort there.

We see that God had a purpose in all that happened. That is what James fixes on: "You have seen the end intended by the Lord," what the Lord had in mind in all that He did. He had several purposes. We can only begin to glimpse them, for the purposes of God, as Job came to see, are beyond our understanding. Part of God's purpose was to have an outstanding specimen with which to confront Satan. Another part was to draw Job into a closer relationship with Himself. Job would say at the end of the story, "Now my eye sees You." And what he saw in the long run, as James tells us, was God's pity and God's tender mercy. God's purpose to manifest His compassion and His pity was fulfilled at the last.

We see God's victory. We might easily miss that, but the fact is that Satan was utterly defeated. He disappears from the story altogether. That is the measure of God's victory seen in His servant Job. Every servant of

His can share that victory, for "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"(Romans 8:37).

A Man, his Friends and his God

A very large part of the book of Job is taken up with the arguments of his friends: they take over and go on and on. At first they did very well. For seven days they sat with him in silence. They knew that he was suffering, and he knew that they had come to comfort him, and the comfort came through their silence. But once they started talking they undid any good that they might have done. The sad fact is that so many of the things that they said were true and commendable, but they did not apply to Job and his need; they were not relevant to the suffering through which he was passing. Consequently much of the rest of the book is one long confrontation, with Job strenuously resisting their contention that, since he is suffering so greatly, he must have sinned greatly; crying out to God to vindicate him; longing for someone to mediate between him and God. His reaction to their arguments is summarised in one telling question: "How forceful are right words, but what does your arguing prove?" (6:25).

The practical value for preaching of the chapters which give the arguments of Job's friends lies in the example that they give of how not to bring comfort to someone who is experiencing suffering. Eliphaz can be taken as representing all three, as indeed is done by God in the final chapter: "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as my servant Job has'"(42:7). The arguments of Eliphaz manifest three weaknesses which can serve as a warning to all intending comforters.

(1) *He states truths that are not relevant to need.* In the chapters in which he speaks - 4,5,15,22 - he says many true and accurate things. For example, in 5:17 he expresses the same truth as Hebrews 12:5, quoting from Proverbs 3:11,12: "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty." In 22:21ff, he gives wise counsel for a sinner: "Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his

mouth and lay up his words in your heart...." (NIV). So many of the things that Eliphaz said were true, but they did not apply to Job in the desperate situation in which he was placed. The theory was all right, but it had no real application to Job's need. Job himself identified that need in 6:14 : "To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend." George Philip comments, 'How many "miserable comforters" give you a sermon, when a word of human kindness is what you really need!'[3]

(2) *Eliphaz claims a spiritual experience that does not give spiritual help*. In 4:12,13 he says, "Now a word was secretly brought to me, and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night...." We cannot tell what his experience was or how it came, but Eliphaz feels that it gave him the right to tell Job how sinful he was and what he must do to avert God's judgement from him. But he had no real spiritual help to give Job, nothing that would have made God more real to him or made him more sure of God.

There is always a danger in relying on our own spiritual experience, whatever it may have been, when we are called to bring comfort and help to someone who is passing through a time of trial, for our experience may be inadequate to deal with his experience. It is safer by far to bring our help and comfort from the Word of God.

(3) *Eliphaz has a knowledge of facts that does not lead to sympathy*. He knew the facts of what had happened to Job, the terrible losses that he had sustained; and he had his theory of why these things had happened. Quite simply, Job was suffering because he had sinned (4:7ff). But his knowledge of the facts did not lead to one word of sympathy. In 5:3,4 he shows his utter lack of sympathy for the most terrible of the losses that Job had suffered, the loss of his children: "I myself have seen a fool taking root, but suddenly his house is cursed. His children are far from safety..."(NIV). How else could Job apply that but to his children, who had been so tragically taken from him? That kind of insensitivity is matched only by Bildad, in 8:4, when he bluntly said to Job, "When your children sinned against God, He gave them over to the penalty of their sin." 'Sympathy' means 'suffering along with', but for Eliphaz and Bildad Job's suffering was something to be discussed, not something to

be shared. They knew the facts, they had the theories, but they had no sympathy.

From Eliphaz then we can learn that the sufferer's need is not met by words, which, however true, do not apply to his need; that personal spiritual experience is not necessarily adequate to meet someone else's spiritual need; and that the greatest help is a suffering along with the sufferer.

It is significant that as the debate goes on Eliphaz grows more and more critical of Job, until in 22:5ff he gives a list of Job's sins that has no foundation in fact at all: "You have taken pledges from your brother for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have not given the weary water to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry... You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the fatherless was crushed." That shows how desperate Eliphaz is to prove Job a grievous sinner.

But the wonderful thing is that the harsher are the things that his 'comforters' say about Job, the more surely does he get a message from God that he can trust and lean upon. It is true that the hostility of his friends sometimes makes him feel that God Himself is his enemy. "Why do You hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy?" (13:24). "He tears me in His wrath, and hates me; He gnashes at me with His teeth; my adversary sharpens His gaze on me" (16:9). But Job himself answers the apparent hostility of God in the closing verses of chapter 16: "Surely even now my witness is in heaven, and my evidence is on high. My friends scorn me; my eyes pour out tears to God. O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbour!" He can still pour out his tears to God, and his longing for someone to plead with God on his behalf is surely evidence that there is such a one. We know that there is - the Lord Jesus Christ, making intercession for us before the throne of God, One Who watches, One Who keeps the record, One Who has entered into heaven, now to appear before God for us (Hebrews 9:24). For his comfort Job had a glimpse of that.

Again in chapter 23, after the accusations of Eliphaz in chapter 22, even though Job feels that he cannot find God on the right hand or the left,

he can say, "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." In effect he is saying, "I do not know where He is, but He knows exactly where I am, and I can trust Him." That is the comfort that a man finds when he looks away from his friends to his God.

Man right with God and God right with Man

Two questions are in view in Job 9 and 10. The first is, Can man be right with God? The second – though Job does not put it in so many words – is, Can God be right with man?

Can a man be right with God? All of Job's friends say, No! And they were right, for no man can claim to be, or can claim to make himself right with God. Their mistake was in applying that truth only to Job. Eliphaz in 15:14 was pointing at Job when he asked, "What is man that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?" Bildad asks the same question in 25:4 : "How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?" And he answers his own question: "If even the moon does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is a maggot, and a son of man, who is a worm?" For Bildad Job was the maggot and the worm! Zophar in 11:4-6 says that when Job would say that he was clean in God's eyes, God would say something very different: "But oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against you....Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves." Job accepts all that. God is so great and so far above man that if a man tried to justify himself before God, he could not answer one charge out of a thousand (9:1-3).

But Job knows the way in which a man can be made right with God. In 9:15 he says, "For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him. I could only plead with my Judge for mercy". Job took his place beside the publican in Christ's parable who prayed, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner," and who went down to his house justified, right with God, rather than the other.

Faith, too, had its place in Job's justification. In 13:15 he says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," and though other verses come in between, he goes on to say in v. 18, "I know that I shall be

justified." "I will trust Him....I will be justified." Job was right with God when he pleaded for mercy, and when he trusted the Lord. And that led to assurance. In 27:6 he says, "My righteousness" - my being right with God - "I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live."

A second question, running right through the book of Job, though it is not put into so many words, is: Can God be right with man? The problem that Job had was not the problem of suffering: it was the problem of knowing why God acted as He did. Job makes his complaint to God in chapter 10, verses 2 - 7. In effect he is saying, Tell me what is wrong. Is God trying to seek out his iniquity and search for his sin? God must know that he is not wicked. Why then does He abandon him in his suffering? Can it be right for God to do that?

So often we find ourselves asking questions like that. Is it right that godly people have to suffer? Is it right that the wicked are allowed to prosper, while God's people go through times of trial? The prosperity of the wicked is very much the question in Job's mind in chapter 21. Can it be right for God to allow that?

Job gives an answer to his own questions in 10:8,9 :"Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you moulded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?" God's hands had fashioned him like a Master Potter. Does that same God intend to destroy him? It is the same answer that we find in I Peter 4:19: "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as unto a faithful Creator." If God is a faithful Creator, a Creator Who can be depended on, He did not make us to destroy us. In his heart of hearts Job knows that. He cannot understand what is happening, but he knows that he can trust the God Who has made him, Who has given him both life and loving-kindness, and Whose providence has guarded him. "You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit" (10:12,NIV). A faithful Creator will not allow all that to be for nothing. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Job still has his doubts and questionings. But he knows what is

needed if his doubts and questionings are to be fully answered. In between the question of 9:2 - "Can man be right with God?" - and the implied question of chapter 10 - "Can God be right with man?" - Job expresses a heartfelt longing for someone who will reveal the answer to both questions: "If only there were someone to arbitrate between us" - someone to be a middleman - "to lay his hand upon us both..." For Job that was a wistful longing: for us it is glorious reality in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are made right with God through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone: and we are sure of the righteousness of God, for it has been revealed in Christ. We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness...." (Romans 3:24,25).

Job's Personal History

In chapters 29-31 Job defends himself, largely by recounting his personal history, and is content to leave it at that, when at the close of chapter 31 this is written, "The words of Job are ended."

In chapter 29 Job looks back with nostalgic longing on what in verse 4 he calls "the days of my autumn", days of an autumn which had brought a harvest of success and fulfilment. Details of Job's success in past days can be seen in different areas of his life. He had a happy home life, when, as he says, "God's intimate friendship blessed my house, when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me" (29:4,5,NIV). He had a successful business life, "when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured for me streams of olive oil" (v.6). He had a respected life of service in the community, taking his share of public service in the city council (vv. 7ff). He had a life of charitable social service, bringing help to all kinds of needy people (vv. 11-16).

We must note the source of all his prosperity and service. It is underlined in the opening verses of the chapter. The days he is longing for are the days "when God watched over me"(v.2). More simply translated it is "the days when God kept me": v.3 speaks of walking in God's light; and when we take both verses together we are reminded of

the blessing recorded in Numbers 6:24-26, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you...." To know God's keeping and to walk in God's light is blessing indeed. NIV catches the significance of the Hebrew word translated 'secret' in AV - "the secret of God was upon my tent" - when it translates, "when God's intimate friendship blessed my house." Job means that everything that he possessed had the hallmark of God's blessing upon it. That was the source of all his prosperity.

Chapter 30 highlights the prosperity of chapter 29 by the complete contrast provided by Job's present situation. Instead of the respect of the leading men of the city, he has to endure the mockery of young men, sons of men so despicable that Job would not even have put them with the dogs of his flock, young men who spit in his face. His dignity and even his safety are gone (vv. 1-15). All that is in addition to the burden of physical suffering that he has to bear in place of the happiness that he once had known (vv. 16,17).

The hardest part of it all is that just as he had seen God as the source of his prosperity and blessing, now he sees Him as the source of his pain (vv.20-23): v. 26 sums up the contrast, "When I looked for good, evil came to me; and when I waited for light, then came darkness."

The contrast between Job's past and his present might almost have been enough to make him yield to the pressure of the arguments of his friends and admit that the change in his situation must have been due to his sin. But Job will not do that. In chapter 31 he still insists that he is not guilty. He is not claiming sinlessness, but he is claiming that he has maintained certain principles of his living. The form in which he states his principles is characteristically Hebrew. If a man wanted to make a strong statement that he was not guilty of a crime, he would put it like this: "If I have done so-and-so, then let such-and-such happen to me", specifying the retribution that was due to the crime. Sometimes the retribution was left undefined, but always this form of statement was a strong protestation of innocence.

In verses 1-12 he claims innocence of sexual immorality, putting it positively in verse 1: "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully

at a girl" (NIV). It seems that the whole passage, 31:1-12, is dealing with this sin. And v.5, with its thought of adultery as involving falsehood and defrauding, has a parallel in I Thessalonians 4:6 "that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter." Verses 9 and 10 give the full protestation of innocence: "If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbour's door, then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her."

In verses 13-23 he claims innocence of any denial of the rights of others - his servants, or the poor and needy, the widow and the orphan. In verses 24,25 he claims innocence of love of money. His protestations of innocence continue throughout the chapter. He is not guilty of idolatry, vindictiveness against his enemies, any failure in hospitality. Job's final protestation of innocence has a modern ring to it, for in verse 38 he ranks himself among the conservationists in declaring that he has not misused the land.

It is important to note that in all this Job's concern again and again is what God would think of his actions. For example, in 31:4 he asks, "Does He not see my ways and count all my steps?" In short, Job's basic principle of conduct is the fear of the Lord.

Elihu, God's Messenger

Elihu, who comes on the scene after Job's three comforters have fallen silent, has been viewed in two very different ways. By some he is considered to be long-winded, self-opinionated and unduly severe. Certainly he does a lot of speaking; he himself says that he is full of words (32:18), and that he will burst if he does not get rid of them (32:19). He does talk a lot about himself; in chapter 32 he uses the word "I" no fewer than 19 times and "me", "my", and "mine" 13 times. And he has some severe things to say about Job: for example in 34:37 : "To his sin he adds rebellion; scornfully he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God."

It has been pointed out that no reply is given to him, from Job or from God: he is simply ignored, and there is no mention of him again after he

has spoken. Some scholars would cut his speeches out altogether, as a later addition to the book.

But there are others who see Elihu differently. So much of what he says focuses on God. He sees God in a different role from the three comforters, as a Teacher, using varied methods, including suffering, to instruct men. And, most significantly, at the end of his speeches, he gives a wonderful picture of God's power, particularly in the world of nature. That leads straight on to the message that God is going to give to Job. In the light of all that, we must think of him as God's messenger. Like all God's human messengers, he has his flaws. He speaks, as we learn from the introduction to his speeches in 32:1-5, from a heart filled with anger - anger against Job, because he saw Job as justifying himself rather than God; and against Job's three friends because they had provided no answer to Job. Preaching from an angry heart can be a perilous thing.

He is too long in his preaching; one commentator has described him as "Endless Elihu"![4] He does draw a lot of attention to himself, and that is always a serious weakness in a preacher. He is much too critical of the man whom he is supposed to be trying to help. Yet God uses Elihu to bring messages about God that enrich our knowledge of Him, and messages that bring at least a partial answer to the problem of suffering. It must be an encouragement to any preacher to learn from Elihu that God can use us in spite of all our imperfections to bring His message to men.

In these chapters where Elihu speaks he brings three messages about God.

1. God teaches.

Elihu pays tribute to God's teaching in 36:22 : "Behold, God is exalted by His power; Who teaches like Him?" In 33:14 he says, "For God does speak - now one way, now another - though man may not perceive it" (NIV). Then he details two ways in which God does speak. He may speak by revelation, "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men." God spoke to Samuel like that, in a vision of the night. Elihu goes on to say that God may teach by chastening, by allowing suffering to come into a man's life: "Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in his bones" (33:19, NIV).

Elihu realises that a man may need an interpreter to help him to understand the teaching that chastening may bring, and to show him that God's grace is in it: "If there is a messenger for him, a mediator, one among a thousand, to show man his uprightness, then he is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the Pit; I have found a ransom.'" (33:23,24)

2. God loves.

In 37:13, to begin with, Elihu is talking about the weather. He says, God "causes it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." But we can apply it, as indeed Elihu is doing, to everything that happens. Ultimately God allows it to happen for love: the word translated 'mercy' is the rich, full word for God's grace, God's steadfast, covenant love for His people.

In 33:24-26 Elihu details what God's gracious love does for the sinner. He delivers him from the Pit, and says, "I have found a ransom." He gives new birth: "His flesh shall be young like a child's, He shall return to the days of his youth." He makes the sinner right with Himself: "He restores to man His righteousness." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!"

3. God reigns.

At the end of his speaking Elihu says, "God comes in awesome majesty. The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power" (37:22b, 23a, NIV). Chapter 36:24-33 and chapter 37 have given wonderful examples of that power of God in action in the world of nature. All nature gives the message, "God reigns." There Elihu anticipates the message that God Himself is going to bring to Job in the closing chapters of the book. God reigns. That may not solve the problems of individual suffering, but it answers all the problems of life as a whole. God is in control, and of everything that He sends we can say this: it may be for our correction; it may be for the blessing of others; and always it is for love, His love; and nothing can separate us from that.

God's Answer to Job

God's answer to Job is not to give an explanation of all that has

happened to him; it is not to give a solution to his problem, but rather to give him a picture of the might and majesty of God in the wisdom and power of His creation. God answers Job by giving a revelation of Himself. He does it in a very telling way by asking a whole series of questions. The questions do not really expect an answer from Job, but they are God's way of letting Job see how great God is and how limited man is.

These final chapters give what J. S. Stewart has called "an overwhelming revelation of God." He describes that revelation as "a torrent of questions from the mouth of the Almighty, rapid, relentless, resistless - more than one hundred and twenty verses of them: 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Hast thou commanded the morning forth? Canst thou bind the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou play with the stars? Hast thou an arm like God?' - and so the torrent of questions rolls on and on..."[5] It is possible to read these chapters like that; and Job's final response, "Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes", could be the response of a man overwhelmed by his interrogation.

But there is another way to read the questions of these chapters. Their purpose is not to humiliate Job in his lack of knowledge and of ability, but rather to show God in all His power and majesty. Campbell Morgan puts it very well when he says that God does all this as gently as a mother when she laughs at her child.[6]

For example, at the beginning of His answer to Job, in chapter 38, God reveals His power to Job by referring to the miracle of creation, and asks him, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions (like an architect planning his work)? Surely you know!" And again in verse 21, "Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!" Can you not hear the laughter in it, and appreciate the teasing of it?

God's revelation to Job can be summarised under three headings: the majesty of God the Creator; the sovereignty of God the Provider; and the mystery of God the Eternal.

Almost the whole of chapter 38 challenges Job to say whether he could have done what God did in creation. The chapter describes the making of the universe, the limiting of the sea, the coming of the dawn, the snow and the rain and the ice, the stars and the planets , the lightning, the rain poured out of the water-jars of heaven. All these things underline the majesty of the Creator Who has made and Who controls them all. We need to hear that message today when man's swollen pride thinks that he is the controller of the universe. A wonderful picture of God as the One Who controls and provides for the animal creation is found in the passage running from chapter 38:39 to 39:30. God reveals Himself in control as well as in creation.

Take the wild donkey, for example (39:5). He is absolutely free to roam as he pleases. The noise of the city and the shouts of a driver do not trouble him, for God has set him free from man's control. More dramatically, two of the largest and most frightening of the animals, behemoth (40:15), probably the hippopotamus, and leviathan, probably the crocodile, are used to remind man of things in creation beyond his control. "Can you catch a crocodile with a fish-hook....Lay your hand on him; remember the battle - never do it again!" (41:1,8). But God controls them and provides for them. The implication for us is obvious. If God's sovereign control can do all that for the animal world, can we not trust it for ourselves? Christ uses the same argument, not about the vast animals, but about sparrows!

Again and again in these chapters we are confronted with the mystery of God the Eternal. For example, there is the mystery of light and darkness in 38:19,20: "Where is the way to the dwelling of the light? And darkness, where is its place, that you may take it to its territory, that you may know the paths to its home?" It was that kind of mystery of God's working, in creation and in providence, that made Job say in 42:3, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know."

The implication for us of God's revelation to Job amounts to this: When we can say "How great Thou art" we have come into a relationship with Someone greater than all our problems, Someone Who can deal with

them all, in the majesty of His power, in the sovereignty of His control, and in the mystery of His providence.

Job said three things in response to God's revelation of Himself.

First, he recognised his own insignificance. In 40:4 he said, "Behold I am vile," but a better translation is, "Behold, I am of no account." All Job's pride and self-sufficiency were gone, and he recognised himself for what he was, a weak and helpless man.

Secondly, alongside that humble thought of himself he put a lofty thought of God - 42:2 - "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted" (NIV). It was not enough that Job should be humbled so as to recognise his own insignificance. The chapters that follow his renunciation of pride tell of God's greatness. That is needed too, for it is a reminder that human weakness can be transformed by the mighty power of God. When self-trust goes, trust in God's almighty power and grace can take its place.

Job's self-renunciation is made complete in the third thing that he said - 42:5,6 - "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job means, "I repudiate myself." Self has become nothing and God is all in all.

Hearing and Seeing

One of the things which had sustained Job in the furnace of his affliction was that one day, when the limitations of the body were no more, he would see God - 19:26,27: "This I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Job knew that that full vision could come only after death, but now he knows that he does not have to wait till then for a vision that will satisfy him here and now. God has revealed Himself, and Job with awe and wonder in his heart says, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You."

Both hearing and seeing are essential for our experience of God. In all the translations of 42:5 a contrast is implied between hearing and

seeing. The familiar translation of the AV is followed by all others in underlining the contrast: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." That makes a stronger contrast between hearing and seeing than the original Hebrew of the verse justifies. Translated literally it reads, "By the hearing of the ear I have heard Thee, and now my eye has come to see Thee."[7] There may be a contrast implied between hearing and seeing, but to begin with one is the continuation and completion of the other. Hearing comes first and is followed by seeing.

The Bible leaves us in no doubt that spiritual experience begins with hearing: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). That had been Job's experience. He had asked in 42:4 (where he is quoting his own words) that God would speak: "Listen now and I will speak; I will question You, and You will answer me." More than once that had been his plea. For example in 31:35, underwritten by his signature: "Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature) Oh, that the Almighty would answer me." Now God has spoken and Job has heard. "Faith comes by hearing."

But hearing is only the beginning: it must be followed by seeing. Job says, "And now my eye has come to see You." The implication of the generally accepted translation of 42:5 - connecting the two parts of the sentence with 'but' - is that there can be a hearing which does not result in seeing. Certainly the Bible elsewhere makes it clear that that can happen. At the end of Romans 10 Paul is looking at possible reasons why his own people, the Jews, tragically had not come to see Jesus as their Messiah. He asks a series of questions: "How shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" He knows that faith comes by hearing. Could it be that Israel had not heard? Impossible! For the gospel heralds had gone everywhere. "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." Israel had heard. Then there can be only one reason for their failure to believe, and Paul gives it to them in words from their own Old Testament: "To Israel God says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people'." Disobedience and stubborn unbelief meant that hearing never became seeing.

Job made the transition from hearing to seeing when he had a personal experience of God's Word - a word reaching down from the heights of God's glory and majesty to make personal contact with him in the depths of his need - spoken directly to himself. "Now my eye sees You."

We have noted that Job's immediate response to his hearing and seeing God was self-repudiation: "Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job made himself nothing. God's response to Job's self-repudiation was a wonderful one. God said in verse 8, "I will accept him." And in verse 9 He did it: "The Lord accepted Job." The word 'accept' is a translation of a Hebrew phrase which means 'to lift up the face'. "The Lord lifted up Job's face." Job had his face bowed down to the earth in self-repudiation and repentance. God tenderly lifted his face up, and received him graciously. At the heart of the gospel is this truth: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." There is a moving significance in the fact that one commentator on Job ends his commentary with these words: "We have reached the heart of the message of Job when we can say, 'Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy Cross I cling'."[8] If preaching from Job brings one soul to that place of self-repudiation and faith, it will not have been in vain.

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6. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Answers of Jesus to Job*, Oliphants, 1964, p. 98
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PRESBYTERIANISM IN IRELAND 1642 - 1992

by Robert L. W. McCollum

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The year 1992 marks the 350th anniversary of the formation of the First Presbytery in Ireland. It must not be assumed that this was the introduction of Presbyterianism to Ireland. This Presbytery, in fact, gave formal expression to a movement which had been gaining momentum since the beginning of the 17th century.

Presbyterian Settlers

The origins of Presbyterianism in Ireland may be said to date from 1607, when, after the flight of the Earls, families from Britain were encouraged to settle in Ulster. In this "Plantation of Ulster" many lowland Scots embraced the opportunity and brought over with them, not only their farming practices but also their Presbyterian convictions. Although the Irish Church was episcopalian it nevertheless was strongly Calvinistic as the Irish Articles of 1615 illustrate. These Articles also, as Dr Wyse Jackson points out, "tended towards Presbyterianism".[1] This fact helps explain why several Scottish ministers of Presbyterian conviction did not find it too difficult to conduct their ministries within the parishes of the episcopal Church of Ireland. This practice was also facilitated by the fact that some of the bishops had themselves been ordained originally by Presbyteries in Scotland. The influence of Scottish landowners in Ulster, men like Hamilton and Montgomery, was also a contributing factor in having Scottish Presbyterians installed within their parishes.[2] The preaching of these men was soon having a profound influence upon many. Of particular note are the ministries of John Livingstone in Killinchy and Robert Blair in Bangor which made an outstanding contribution to the spiritual wellbeing of the settlers under their ministry. The Six Mile Water Revival of 1625 was also through the instrumentality of these Scottish Presbyterians. This period of Irish Church History has been described by Professor A. F. Scott Pearson as "Prescopalian"[3].

With the arrival of Sir Thomas Wentworth as Lord Deputy in 1633

a radical change took place. Under the guidance of Archbishop Laud he introduced ecclesiastical reforms such as the adoption of the English "Thirty-nine Articles" in place of "The Irish Articles" and a new set of canons. It was Wentworth's intention to enforce religious conformity upon the Scots in Ulster or be sent "over to their fellows in Scotland"[4]. Recently appointed bishops Bramhall (1634) and Leslie (1635) were jealous to enforce Wentworth's policies. Soon ministers like Blair and Livingstone were deposed and forced to return to Scotland. Bramhall could report to Laud in June 1637 that "the ringleaders of our nonconformists"[5] had left Ulster and returned to Scotland. Reflecting on this fact Presbyterian historian Finlay Holmes writes:

> Laud and Bramhall may have regretted the Ulster ministers' return to Scotland for there they were to play an important, perhaps even crucial, part in the Scottish resistance to the ecclesiastical policy of Charles I and Laud.[6]

This resistance led to the overthrow of episcopacy and the introduction through the General Assembly of 1638 of legislation which laid the foundation of the Second Reformation in Scotland. The vast majority of the population had pledged themselves to such reformation through the signing of the National Covenant in the spring of 1638.

There was a natural sympathy between many of the Ulster Scots and the Scottish Covenanters which led Wentworth to devise a plan to drive "Covenanters" out of Ulster and intimidate the less determined.[7] They did this by enforcing the so-called Black Oath upon the Scottish residents in Ulster above the age of 16. The Black Oath was in effect the abjuration of the Scottish National Covenant. This persecution which forced many Ulster Scots to return to Scotland coupled with an uprising by the native Irish against the Scottish and English settlers in 1641 appeared to have dashed any hopes of an organised Presbyterian system of church government in Ireland.

The Rebellion of 1641

The rebellion of 1641 in which W. M. Barkley reckons that the number of Protestants who perished cannot be much under 40,000[8] was the event which in Divine Providence led directly to the formation of the

First Presbytery in Ireland. To quell the rebellion and give protection to the Irish Protestants, a Scottish army of 10,000 was sent to Ireland under General Robert Munro in April 1642. After a campaign to restore law and order, the army returned to Carrickfergus.

Most of the regiments in this Scottish army were accompanied by chaplains who were ordained ministers and firmly attached to the doctrine, worship and government of the Covenanted Church of Scotland[9]. The first duty of these ministers, upon the return of the army to Carrickfergus, was to erect sessions in each of the regiments for which they had the responsibility. These sessions "... were composed of such of the officers as were pious and godly men...."[10] It was then decided to form a Presbytery, the first meeting of which took place on 10th June 1642. It was attended by five ministers and a representative elder from each of the four sessions. Rev John Baird, later to be installed at Derrykeighan (1646) preached on the text Psalm 51 verse 18 "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem." Rev Hugh Peebles was appointed Clerk and in 1645 was installed minister in Dundonald and Holywood.

From the beginning the Presbytery was not only intended to serve the army. When it was known that a Presbytery had been erected applications for membership came from Antrim, Ballymena, Ballywalter, Bangor, Cairncastle, Carrickfergus, Comber, Dervock, Donaghadee, Holywood, Killyleagh, Larne, Newtownards, Portaferry and Templepatrick. As a consequence "elderships being erected in these places, there began a little appearance of a formed church in the country".[11]

Recognising their need for ministers a petition was presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to provide men to meet this need. By appointment of the Assembly, Robert Blair (former minister of Bangor) and James Hamilton, (former minister of Ballywalter) came to Ulster in September for four months. The labours of these two men were greatly blessed by Christ during their itinerary preaching. J. S. Reid summarises the impact of their work:

> Guided by these experienced ministers, who were intimately acquainted with the circumstances of the country, and who had already proved themselves skilful and successful missionaries, the Church in Ulster rapidly

> revived, and "broke forth on the right hand and on the left." The seed which had been sown in faith by these eminent men and their persecuted brethren, prior to the rebellion, though long checked in its growth by the chilling severities of the prelates, now began to spring up with renovated vigour, and to gladden the wilderness with its verdure and fertility. The fruit of their labour appeared in the numbers who had preserved their principles uncorrupted, and their attachment to Scriptural truth and freedom unabated, notwithstanding the discouragements of ecclesiastical bondage and the ravages of civil war. Multitudes from all quarters hastened to declare themselves in favour of the Presbyterian Church, and expressed the strongest desires for her establishment in Ulster. They were most anxious to be permitted to join her standard and partake of her privileges.[12]

The Covenants of 1638 and 1643

The National Covenant of 1638 was instrumental in the renewal of a Reformed and Presbyterian Kirk in Scotland (called the Second Reformation 1638-1649). It was also through the Scottish ministers, covenanted to this Reformation (Covenanters), that Presbyterianism was formally established in Ireland.

The outbreak of Civil War in England in 1642 led to the Solemn League and Covenant between Scotland and England in 1643. This Covenant among other things pledged to bring the churches in these kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for public worship and catechizing ... according to the Word of God and the best example of Reformed Churches.[13]

With respect to Ireland the Solemn League and Covenant attributed the deplorable state of the church and the kingdom in Ireland to what was called "the enemies of God", and a reformation of religion in Ireland was one of the earnest endeavours of the Covenanters. Accordingly the Scottish Assembly in March 1644 appointed ministers to administer the Covenant in Ireland. On 1st April 1644 the Presbytery in Ulster agreed that the Covenant should be administered to Munro's army and Patrick Adair records:

> in those places where the Covenant was administered to the army the whole country about came and willingly joined themselves in the Covenant.

Of particular interest is the manner in which the Covenant was subscribed in Coleraine.

> From Ballymena they went with a guard of horse toward Coleraine .... The whole people of the country present did solemnly acknowledge the oath, and by lifting up hands to God entered into the Solemn League and Covenant, with which were mixed prayers and singing of psalms, after the ordinary exercise of preaching was over. There were few of the townsmen who entered into the covenant the first day, but they gave the ministers knowledge that their purpose was on Monday to enter into it. The ministers, first commending them for their deliberate way of doing such a thing, observed the Monday, and received them into covenant, both the Mayor and others of the town, they desiring to do it by themselves, but so that in their entering into the covenant they did abjure their former corruptions, and renounce them.[14]

The signing of the "Solemn League and Covenant" by thousands of Irish Presbyterians in 1644 strengthened the commitment of these Protestant dissenters to the principles embodied in Presbyterianism.[15]

The Cromwellian Period

When Charles I was beheaded by the Parliamentarians in 1649 the Scottish and Irish Covenanters believed this to be a breach of Covenant. In the "Solemn League and Covenant" they had vowed:

> to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the kingdoms; that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, and that we have no thoughts or intentions to diminish his Majesty's just power and greatness.[16]

The Irish Presbytery on 15th February 1649, two weeks after the king's death, sent a protest to the Government in England. In this they charged the Government "as proceeding without rule or example to the trial of the King and as putting him to death with cruel hands".[17] Later that year the Covenant was renewed throughout the north of Ireland.[18]

These two factors caused great suspicion to fall upon the Irish Presbyterians. They were considered as plotting the overthrow of the

Cromwellian Commonwealth. It was only after Cromwell dismissed the Parliament in April 1653 that a measure of relief came to the Presbyterians in Ireland. The authorities in Ireland, being unhappy at Cromwell's action, were less zealous in carrying out his decrees than they were in administering the laws of their former masters in the English Parliament.[19]

The state of Presbyterianism in Ireland towards the end of the Cromwellian period is summarised by Finlay Holmes:

> By the end of the Cromwellian period, that is by 1660, there were between 70 and 80 Presbyterian ministers in Irish parishes. The original Presbytery in Ulster was divided into local 'meetings' or sub-presbyteries -in Antrim, Down and the Route in 1654, the Laggan being formed in the west of the province in 1657 and Tyrone in mid-Ulster in 1659.[20]

A time of severe testing was to follow, during the reign of Charles II who, after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, sought to re-establish episcopacy throughout the three kingdoms. Shortly after his succession to the throne sixty-one of the sixty-eight ministers of Presbyterian sympathies in Ulster were ejected from their pulpits for refusal to conform to the episcopal system.[21]

The appointment in Ireland in 1663 of Margetson as Archbishop brought some relief to the non-conformists. He exercised a more tolerant regime and the campaign against Presbyterians was prosecuted with less vigour.[22] Consequently, in the words of Patrick Adair, the ministers

> took liberty to preach more publickly in barns, and such places in their parishes where the bulk of the people met, and did in the night administer the Sacrament to them; and by degrees attained to such freedom that, in the year 1668, they began in divers places to build preaching houses, and there met publickly, and performed all ordinances in a public way.[23]

The Regium Donum

Presbyterianism received positive recognition when in 1672 Charles II made a grant of £600 to Presbyterian Ministers in Ireland.[24] This grant, or regium donum as it came to be called, was accepted by all the ministers, many of whom were suffering considerable hardship

because of the oppressive measures under which they had laboured. The acceptance of this grant from a king who had abjured the Covenants of 1638 and 1643 did not meet with the approval of some Presbyterians who still adhered rigidly to them. This allegiance to the Covenants was kept alive by occasional visits to Ulster between 1679-1681 by the Scottish Covenanter preacher, Alexander Peden.[25] Then in 1687, David Houston, a Scottish licentiate who came to Ulster in 1661,[26] finding that his preaching of Covenanting Principles was unacceptable to the Route Presbytery, became attached to the Presbyterian adherents of the Covenants. These Covenanters, by this time, had formed themselves into groups or societies.[27] As Presbyterian historian Finlay Holmes acknowledges, the members of these societies

> held uncompromisingly to the covenants, which they believed to be compacts with God permanently binding on the church and nation.[28]

This minority grouping within Presbyterianism in Ireland maintained its witness and although without a minister in Ireland for over 60 years experienced God's blessing, a Presbytery being formed in 1763 and the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in 1811. The Reformed Presbyterian Church has by Divine grace maintained a covenanted witness for Reformed and Evangelical truth for over three centuries. Nevertheless if our Covenanter forefathers saw fit to describe the state of the church as deplorable in 1644 who will state that it is much better today? In the words of the text preached at the constitution of the First Presbytery in June 1642 the church today needs to pray:

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion
build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

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THE REV. ANDREW STEVENSON – COVENANTER OF THREE COUNTRIES

by Eldon Hay

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We can think of Stevenson's life in three time blocks and three countries. Born in Ireland 10 January 1810, he received his early education there, and taught school. As a catechist and school teacher, Andrew Stevenson was invited to go to the Lower Provinces of British North America. In 1831 he left Ireland, and laboured in what was to be Canada, in the province of New Brunswick, in or near a place called Jemseg. He was to remain there for a period of some 18 months. Finally, early in 1833, he went to the United States, and studied for the ministry, continuing to teach. In November 1839 he was ordained and inducted into the Second RP congregation of New York City. He was minister for many years, until illness forced him into a premature retirement in 1875. He died in New York, 24 June 1881.

Stevenson's Early Life and Background to the New World

Andrew Stevenson was born in Ballybay, County Monaghan, Ireland, January 10, 1810, the son of John Stevenson and Isabella Brown. "The family was of Scotch descent - the great grandfather of John Stevenson having passed over from Ayrshire, in Scotland, toward the end of the reign of William III."[1] Stevenson's early life was marked by hardship and trial. His father died in 1818, and the family was in straitened circumstances, leaving bereft a mother and six children, "ill provided for."[2] Andrew was a precocious child, and not long after his father's death "actually commenced to teach the children in the neighbourhood to read."[3] Precocious indeed: "when only ten years of age he was appointed Committee man to represent the Society of Covenanters, which met in the village, at the meetings of the congregation."[4]

For the next decade of his life, Stevenson succeeded in attaining a good education. Two persons were instrumental in his education and

growing maturity. One was the Rev. J.P. Sweeny, pastor of the RP congregation at Faughan Bridge;[5] the other was his mother, a woman of eminent piety and discretion. It was the influence of these two persons who were primarily responsible for his readiness for the transatlantic adventure to which he was to be called. That adventure demands some historical background.

In the new world, Covenanters were found in Saint John in the early 1800s, and they appealed to American Reformed Presbyterians to come to their assistance. Two American ministers came to that city, organized the Covenanter families into a 'society,' a prayer and fellowship group, wrote to the Scottish and Irish RP Synods, drawing their attention to the needs of the Saint John RPs, and went back home. The Irish Synod took up the challenge, but could not find immediately any minister willing to go out.[6] Finally, in 1827, the Rev. Alexander Clarke and his wife Catherine and daughter set sail from Ireland. On the way over Catherine gave birth to another daughter.

The Clarkes reached Saint John with an enlarged family and high hopes; but they found that the Covenanters were dispersed. Many had left the city, the few remaining were dispirited and scattered. Clarke looked to the Church of Scotland in Saint John for assistance but was given a cold shoulder. Clarke conducted preaching forays outside the city, and may have done so in or near Jemseg. But in 1828, Clarke moved to Amherst, N.S., and began a life work in what seemed to him to be more appropriate circumstances. And Clarke kept pleading with the Irish RP Synod to send more ministers. The Synod wanted to but there were no volunteers.

Was there another way of getting assistance for Clarke? Clarke himself came up with a scheme, which was outlined in the 1830 Report of the Irish RP Missionary Society.

> Mr Clarke has suggested a plan... Could there be sent to him a few persons, members of the church, acquainted with her principles, who would be qualified to act as English teachers, he proposes to find situations for them in different of the provinces. As there is a demand for such - they would obtain at least £30 per annum and boarding with the people and they might

> be appointed to the Eldership, or be found otherwise serviceable in advancing the cause, the interests of genuine religion amongst a destitute people. We would rejoice sincerely to hear of persons, suitably qualified, offering themselves for this service. In the purest days of the Church of Scotland, Catechists were employed and sent into those places where a regular ministry could not be established and the plan was eminently blessed for the furtherance of the gospel. In no place, we are persuaded, could this primitive practice be tried with better effect than in the British colonies of North America.[7]

Clarke's suggestion did not fall on deaf ears. Thomas Houston, secretary of the Missionary Board, was obviously supportive of the idea.

> [When] the Rev. Alexander Britton, of Bready, stated at a meeting of the missionary board that there was a young person in his congregation who was of an old Covenanting stock, a good mathematical scholar, and ...[he] had some experience in teaching. This was Mr. Andrew Stevenson. On my writing to him, exprssing the unanimous wish of the board and proposing the terms, which were that we would only pay the expense of the passage to the colonies, he at once consented to go out to labour in the mission in accordance with the plan proposed.[8]

Early in July, 1831, Andrew Stevenson sailed from Ireland for his field of labour. On the same vessel was a freshly ordained Covenanter minister, also coming to assist in Covenanter work in the British Colonies, Rev. William Sommerville. The two became life-long friends. It has been suggested that the older Sommerville was instrumental in persuading Stevenson to go into the ministry.[9] It is more likely that he was supportive of the plan, rather than the instigator. After a voyage of forty days the ship "reached Saint John, N.B., on the 16th of August."[10]

Stevenson in British North America

Stevenson was licensed to teach in Queens County, New Brunswick, 16 September 1931.[11] He taught in Jemseg - some 40 miles from Saint John - or in that vicinity. Why Jemseg? We do not know. Perhaps Clarke had been in the neighbourhood. At any rate, Stevenson is mentioned in Irish RP Missionary Board reports. "Andrew Stephenson the Cathechist is usefully employed as a Schoolmaster and Conductor of a Sabbath School, he circulates also copies of the Scriptures and Tracts among the

people."[12] One of Stevenson's letters survives. The Mission Board Report introduces Stevenson's letter appropriately. "We gladly make room for the following extract of a letter from Andrew Stevenson, the Catechist sent out...who has been acting in the capacity of an instructor of youth, in New Brunswick, and seems throroughly devoted to his Master's work: the letter is dated Jemseg, New Brunswick, Nov. 7th, 1832."[13] Stevenson thus writes:

> I am of opinion that pious Schoolmasters could do much in spreading Reformation principles, and preparing the people for hearing the Gospel, as both young and old, in this country, are so ignorant of the first principles of religion that they understand little of a sermon when they hear it. Still the plan upon which schools are established here is such that great things need not be expected all at once.[14]

After setting a background, Stevenson relates his first steps:

> When I first came to Jemseg, I endeavoured to begin the school every day with prayer, but the people soon let me understand they did not want me to teach their children to pray. My next effort was to raise a Sabbath School (for the state of the young is truly deplorable), this also was looked upon with a jealous eye, many refusing to send their children lest it was a plan to make them pay more wages.[15]

Jemseg folk needed some persuasion.

> After I had convinced them that it was entirely free, and had distributed Bibles and Testaments at the Society's prices, they began to think me their friend, and to help me in every way that they were able. At first, I gave the scholars chapters in the Gospels to commit to memory, and when they had gotten into the method of getting tasks, I gave them such tasks as the following: - Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy - Find the threatenings denounced against such as profane the Sabbath, and the blessings promised to such as sanctify and keep it. In this manner I went over all the Decalogue. I always marked the passages on a slip of paper, and gave it to those who could not find any themselves. After I had finished the Decalogue, I told them to prove original sin, &c., till there is scarcely a doctrine in the Confession of Faith which they have not gone over; and I hope the Lord has owned and blessed the work.[16]

Trust having been established; Stevenson was able to expand the work.

> There are about 50 scholars who regularly attend, and almost as many old

> folks and adults who come to hear, because there is seldom preaching of any sort in the neighbourhood. We begin at nine o'clock in the morning, and continue till twelve; the time is spent in reading the Old and New Testament, and catechising - when a chapter is read, I break it into short questions, which the children answer sometimes with their books open, sometimes shut: after reading, I hear the tasks, and examine them upon the subject, that they may understand it. It would be almost impossible for you to believe the improvement which the children have made in religious knowledge. Mr. Sommerville will join me in saying that some of them would put to shame the children of many Covenanters at home.[17]

Stevenson was able to collect some funds.

> I took up a collection on the school, and sent it to the Tract Society, and got upwards of 200 pretty large tracts, which are lent to the scholars every Sabbath, and always one given as a reward to the child who says the best task. Those very parents who would not allow prayer in the daily school at first, are now the most constant attendants at the Sabbath school, and the greatest hands at finding verses; not that they see the good of it altogether, but that their children may gain the reward.[18]

The scheme of sending school teachers is commended by Stevenson.

> In conclusion I would say, there is much encouragement for pious, steady Schoolmasters to come here; if their manner happen to please the people, after a little they may do almost anything among them. Good schoolmasters need not fear to get £40 per annum, and boarding, this place being better than Nova Scotia. I would rather advise the Society to encourage married men to come out.[19]

Andrew Stevenson was not destined to stay in Jemseg very long, leaving early in 1833. David Bates, another Catechist, was soon to take over Stevenson's position in Jemseg.[20] Stevenson went to Philadelphia, though he intended to come back to British North America in the future. His plan was "to return to Ireland for his theological training, with a view of being sent out as a missionary to the colonies."[21] Those plans never materialized. He may have returned to Canada several times; but we have the record of only one such visit. And that was to what is now called Ontario. In 1853, when Stevenson went there, it was commonly called Canada West. A report reached Rochester Presbytery about a visit to Perth that year.

> It was stated that there was a *fama clamosa*, that a member of the New York Presbytery had [been] there.... The elder from Perth stated that Mr. Stevenson had preached and dispensed sealing ordinances, but he was not aware that it had been by invitation; and ...that so far as his influence extended, no such invitation should be given for the future[22]

Stevenson was the minister referred to; and he explained the situation. Being in Canada West, he spent a Sabbath in the bounds of a vacant congregation, which had been led to believe that he might be there on that Sabbath by a letter from a member of the Rochester Presbytery. In Stevenson's own words:

> The people partly expected me; they had been long vacant; they urged me to preach; I could not refuse. One of the elders, encourged by Rev. [John] Middleton's letter to hope that a minister might be in Perth, had brought an infant and a very delicate mother some twenty-five or thirty miles over a country road, hoping to obtain baptism for the child. This the old elder and father of the flock urged as an additional reason why I should preach, as they could make no calculation on another ministerial visit. When I saw the journey the parents had performed, and when there was no reason known to the elder or member why baptism should not be dispensed, I consented. I, therefore, under these circumstances, dispensed a sealing ordinance. But that I dispensed sealing ordinances, as charged in the *fama*, adjudicated by the Rochester Presbytery, *I positively deny*.[23]

In view of the explanation, the *fama clamosa* died.

We return to Stevenson, leaving New Brunswick, on his way to Philadelphia, early in 1833.

Stevenson in the United States

Stevenson's friend, William Sommerville, had been in communication with the renowned Covenanter professor and preacher, Dr. Samuel Brown Wylie. Wylie invited Stevenson to Philadelphia, in order that he could study theology; and Wylie arranged a situation as teacher in the preparatory school of the University of Pennsylvania. It seemed to augur well, but it was not be so.

Wylie, once a Covenanter stalwart, began to falter in some central convictions; and in fact was to become a leader of the New Light

movement. A short time after his arrival, Stevenson became aware of Wylie's wavering. "Mr Stevenson only heard him preach once or twice on the Sabbath, when he resolved not to give him his certificate of church membership, and not to seek admission to his congregation."[24] In fact, Stevenson relinquished the position as teacher; and his trust in Wylie, so rudely shattered, left Stevenson lonely and vulnerable. "Had it not been that, at the time, the harbour was locked with ice, he would at once have gone back to the [British] colonies."[25]

Stevenson, recovered from his disappointment, commenced a private school, and was able to conclude his literary course. "His original intention had been to return to Ireland for his theological training,"[26] but a financial panic in 1837 interfered with his savings, so the plan had to be temporarily abandoned. He studied for several years under Dr. James R. Willson.[27] "He still entertained the purpose of proceeding in due time to Ireland, for ordination as a missionary."[28] However, the disruption of the RP church in 1833 had left many congregations vacant, and Stevenson was asked to accept license, and labour in the U.S. for a few years. He was licensed by the Southern, later New York, Presbytery, on May 15, 1839. Soon he had competing calls, accepting the one from Second Congregation, New York City. He was ordained and installed as its pastor, November 14, 1839. Shortly after, he was married to Ann Mary, eldest daughter of Dr. J.R. Willson. Her "companionship and influence exerted upon him a most happy power throughout his whole public life and labours."[29] The Stevensons were to have four children.

Stevenson ministered with remarkable success from the time of his ordination in the Second New York congregation. Space forbids but a sketch of that ministry.[30] He began with a weakened congregation. The congregation was built and consolidated; though in 1848 Stevenson's strong stance led to a division. A much smaller congregation built a new place of worship, and by 1854 all debt was removed. Before the end of his active ministry, the congregation had grown to the point where another new and expanded church building was necessary. He was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of the City of New York in 1865; and he was Moderator of Synod in 1869. He

was a vigorous presbyter, and was much interested in foreign mission work. Several subjects evoked writing from Stevenson; for instance, he wrote about covenanting.[31] He was interested in theological education: his address on raising funds for the Theological Seminary was published.[32] In the mid-1850s, Stevenson directed the theological studies of William Graham,[33] later to be a long term and effective pastor in Boston.[34] He was noted, as well, for his great interest in "emigrants coming from the sister Churches beyond the ocean, frequently finding them employment, and by his kindness and attention gathered them into the Church."[35] His earlier intention of returning to Ireland for study and ordination never came to fruition, though he later made two trips to Ireland. Impaired health caused Stevenson to retire from active duty as emeritus pastor, May 17, 1875. A lingering illness led to his death in New York on June 24, 1881. He was succeeded as pastor by the Rev. Robert McGowan Sommerville, the son of his friend, Rev. William Sommerville.

In the early part of his ministry, Stevenson took a clear and courageous stand on two important measures, later adopted by the Synod, and "their unanimous adoption was in no slight degree owing to his earnest pleadings and able advocacy."[36] The two issues were the liquor traffic and the deacon controversy.

As to the liquor traffic, Stevenson writes in 1875.

> The present generation will never conceive the bitter passions awakened, the fierce words spoken, and the tremendous effort made in behalf of rum shops. Sin never dies easily, but we gained a lasting victory. The traffic was driven from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, but this congregation felt for a long time the effects of this sore conflict.[37]

The controversy evoked from Stevenson the publication of an address entitled *The Duty of Professing Christians in Relation to the Traffic in Ardent Spirits.*[38] But before Stevenson and the Second Congregation had recovered from the liquor traffic, another "much more severe [trial] was approaching, arising in some measure from the management of our Temporalities."[39] The severe trial is normally called the deacon dispute.

The deacon issue became a church-wide dispute when the Synod began to work on a revised book of church goverment. The disscussions began in earnest in 1838. Regarding deacons, the revision said:

> The scriptures specify another class of office bearers whose office is not spiritual like those of preaching and ruling Elders, but relating only to temporal matters, namely, deacons. The office of the deacon is to attend to the temporal concerns of the congregation.[40]

The proposal caused a storm of controversy; and the 1838 Synod did not adopt the deacon clause, nor was the dispute settled for several years. The disagreement had some historical precedents.

During the Reformation, the office of deacon had been re-established to deal with the finances of the church, but had fallen into disuse during the Scottish time of troubles in the seventeenth century. So the Westminster Form of Church Government said little about deacons, because it was written when deacons were less used. And there were scriptural and theological difficulties. "Undoubtedly there were sincere differences of opinion at the outset about the Scriptural validity of deacons."[41] There were also more mundane concerns. "The practical opposition to deacons centred around the right of a congregation to control its finances, without placing them in the hands of ordained officers, who were not accountable to the people."[42]

The deacon dispute affected Stevenson's flock; as Stevenson himself put it, "every congregation was more or less agitated by the question."[43] At the time of the organization of the Second New York congregation, which predated Stevenson, deacons had not been elected; an act of incorporation had been obtained by which the property was held and finances run by a board of trustees. Over these trustees the session had no authority. When installed in 1839, Stevenson's congregation was in financial difficulties, and remained so for several years. Apparently Stevenson and some of the congregation were not happy with the powers held by the trustees; for their part, the trustees showed no willingness to give up their prerogatives. Stevenson took the whole matter to Synod in 1847.[44] Synod declared itself definitively: "the covenanted testimony recognizes as a divine right, not the congregational trustee; but the scriptural deacon.... Business which is ordinarily transacted by congregational trustees ought to be entrusted to deacons."[45] So the Synod upheld Stevenson's convictions, but there was a significant body of dissent within Synod.[46]

In the Second New York congregation, the Synod decision produced a crisis. The congregation divided; the Stevenson-led group was the smaller, and had to build a new church. "The division almost destroyed our existence, we were left much feebler."[47] Nonetheless, Stevenson and those loyal to him elected deacons, and rebuilt. "We opened the new church on the 1st Sabbath of October 1848. On the same day, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was dispensed. It was a day of great gladness."[48]

Finally, a brief assessment of the man and his ministry. He was courageous; and prepared to accept the consequences of vigorous leadership, at considerable risk. He was a good preacher, if not a great one: "his preaching was always characterised by plain and apposite illustration, spiritual unction and the practical tendency of his public instructions."[49] He was a devoted pastor - "he was unwearying and unceasing, and strong above many."[50] "He was specially faithful in administering the discipline of the house of God."[51] Glasgow notes that Stevenson, "was an organizer. This is where his great success lay. He always found something for every one to do."[52]

Stevenson's life did not unfold the way he had originally planned. Nevertheless, living and witnessing as he did, Stevenson, the Covenanter of three countries, was a faithful servant of the gospel.

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'RABBI' DUNCAN AND THE BUDAPEST MISSION

by John S.Ross

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John Duncan was born in Aberdeen in 1796, the son of a poor shoemaker. His parents had several children, yet none but John survived infancy. Indeed one of the earliest memories he could recollect was the funeral of his brother George. At one time John himself seemed to lie at death's door after an attack of small-pox. One of his mother's sisters was present at the home to give support if death should come; but as she looked on the infant the words of the Scottish metrical version of Psalm 118:17 came to mind:

I shall not die, but live and shall
The works of God discover

"Discover" in this version has the meaning, "to tell". Many years later she heard his preaching and commented, "And, oh! what 'works of God' he has lived to 'discover'".

His parents were members of the Secession Church, more conservative in its theological commitment than the national church. But despite all the evangelical influences surrounding him in his formative years Duncan became a pantheistic atheist, following the radical teachings of the Dutch Jew Baruch Spinoza. Nevertheless he undertook theological studies and in 1816 joined the established Church.

The Making of a Missionary

Under the influence of one of his tutors, Dr Mearns, Duncan's scepticism began to fall away and he was enabled to believe in the existence of God. It happened suddenly when he was crossing one of the bridges in Aberdeen. He later recalled the emotional impact the truth of God's existence had on him, "When I was convinced that there was a God, I danced on the Brig o'Dee with delight." [1]

The three "dreary" years of atheism created in him a deep sense of shame and among his memories was that of his regrettable influence over

a fellow student who became an athiest and died in that frame of mind. The remorse of this never left him and he would quote with sympathetic understanding the words attributed to the writer John Paul, "I wandered to the furthest edge of Creation...and I heard the shriek of a Fatherless world."

The recovery of true Biblical faith was long and tortuous. From rejecting atheism he fell into unitarian views then enjoying a new vogue. For the next nine years he opposed all the central doctrines of Reformed theology, living, as he himself confessed, in habitual sin and without prayer. In 1825 he was licensed to preach, a step taken, "in ungodliness and doctrinal unbelief and heresy."

Around about this time God brought into Duncan's life two influences; a friend who was later to be his biographer, John Brown, and the preaching power of Cesar Malan, who came to Aberdeen in 1826. His conversion under Malan's ministry gave him an immediate sense of assurance that he was a child of God and revolutionised his ministry.

However, his difficulties were far from over. He was so freed from all doubts that his preaching began to take on the tone of Malan's high but unrealistic view of assurance. Typical of those who hold these views, Duncan's life was in many regards exemplary and his conscience sensitive to his failings, yet he was unable adequately to understand the difficulties other Christians often passed through.

This sense of personal peace continued for about two years and then gradually began to taper off; the earlier superficial spontaneity had run out of steam and now gave way to an empty formality. David Brown was also passing through a similar experience. As a result of their conversions they were led to see that other Christians may have had the same tendency to superficiality and decided to invite them to a little early morning meeting to consider prayerfully the things they felt they were neglecting. Yet, however helpful this may have proved to others, Duncan did not find it a means of recovering his lost feelings and he again fell into deep fears that he was not converted. Worst of all he now despaired that he had irreparably seared his conscience and placed himself beyond where he could again feel the joys of salvation.

Brown continued to exert a beneficial influence over his friend and one day was wonderfully encouraged after reading to him the story of Mr. Fearing from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. This episode so spoke to Duncan that he derived considerable encouragement from it. Another means of helping him were the words of James 5.11, "...the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy", which he would repeat to himself for almost an hour at a time as he paced up and down Brown's room. Comfort came from reading and reflecting on certain passages from the works of John Owen, Herman Witsius, and Dr Love. Support was also found in the personal ministries of Gavin Parker and the eccentric but brilliant, Dr Kidd.

Duncan was being brought belatedly through that aspect of normative Christian experience which logically, if not experimentally, precedes conversion, namely a deep awareness of the hideousness and culpability of sin. He was brought to see clearly that without God's mercy he was utterly lost. Of course he also understood that God may have mercy on sinners, there was a covenant of grace, and that grace suited his case. But the covenant was not, as he saw it, engraved with his name, it said nothing about his person. In his despair he cast himself afresh on the mercy of God and prayed earnestly for the Holy Spirit to enable him to believe on Christ.

Throughout his life he was so filled with a dread of superficial Christianity that he never again enjoyed a permanent sense of assurance. The sunshine of hope was frequently interrupted by clouds of doubt. Reluctant to go beyond what he felt he had warrant to believe, he often felt unable to positively affirm that he was regenerate, but likewise he was unable ever to pronounce himself unregenerate. These struggles continued with him right up until his death and though painful for himself, gave to his ministry a depth and urgency found in few called to preach God's Word.

Duncan was a man of remarkable intellect, a true polymath. Once a German student was comparing the German approach to knowledge with the typical Scottish attitude: "The Germans study one thing and know it thoroughly; the Scotch have a smattering of everything, and know nothing well; but there is one man in Scotland, John Duncan, who knows everything, and he knows them all better than we know any one."

When once Duncan applied for the Chair of Oriental Languages in the University of Glasgow, he could claim not only an extensive knowledge of Hebrew literature but also ability in Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Sanscrit, Bengali, Hindustani, and Mahratti. To this must also be added an amazing ability to express himself most lucidly and elegantly in Latin. This would stand him in good stead for his work in Hungary where Latin was widely used in intellectual circles, even being the medium of parliamentary debate. Added to this he was widely read in theology and philosophy.

Joined to his intellectual powers was an endearing eccentricity. In 1831 Duncan married a Miss Janet Tower of Aberdeen. John Marshall reminds us how during their courtship, which was largely carried on through an exchange of letters, he set himself to teach her Greek! She once described such a 'love letter'.

> He covers his paper with Greek inflexions in bold characters, illustrates this by a comparison with the structure of Latin, and fills with compact sentences every quarter of an inch of space in the margins and corners of the quarto pages. Then he worries whether he is trying her too much and so breaks off into French! [2]

Duncan's eccentricities started early in life. When still a theological student he also taught at a school in Stonehaven. At times his pupils would arrive at school to discover their teacher still in his bed in his lodgings and when he did arrive belatedly he would often be wearing mismatching boots or shoes and stockings. [3]

He had the habit of taking snuff even whilst preaching. Some concerned friends once exchanged the snuff for a bottle of smelling salts. So preoccupied was Duncan with his sermon that instead of sniffing the bottle he snuffed up the crystals, without in the least realising what he was doing. However the cumulative effect of inhaling doses of smelling salts eventually sickened him and made his preaching that day very ineffective!

David Brown spoke of him as "a child and a giant in one, both characters curiously intermingled...No man ever inspired less awe, nor called forth deeper reverence". But neither his brilliant scholarship, nor endearing eccentricities are the measure of the man, for he was above all

a devoted Christian, serving his Saviour with all his powers. Which powers he dedicated to the salvation of Israel for a short but crucial period between 1841 and 1843.

New Interest in the Jews

One of the great motivating forces behind the nineteenth century resurgence of interest in the Jews was a renewed interest in the interpretation of Biblical prophecy and particularly the debate concerning the timing and nature of the millenium. To a large extent the debate can be traced to the influence of the enigmatic figure of Edward Irving whose brief but meteoric rise reached its zenith with his early death in 1834 at the age of 42. At this time Robert Murray McCheyne was a theological student and had been greatly, but not uncritically, impressed by Irving. He recorded his death in his diary and refered to him as "A holy man in spite of his delusions and errors".

Andrew Bonar and his brother Horatius were also won over to a pre-millennial view of prophecy. At a number of General Assemblies in the 1820's Irving held early morning lectures on prophecy. It was at one of these, when the subject under consideration was Matthew 24, that Andrew Bonar became convinced of the pre-millennial return of Christ. Many years later he recalled how . . . "That chapter decided me on the subject. I could not see a foot-breadth of room for the Millenium before Christ comes in the clouds."

Those who then embraced pre-millennialism did not come into head-on conflict with the Reformed Confessions. For example Dr Andrew Bonar could affirm his commitment to the Westminister Confession without renouncing his pre-millenial opinions. As Principle John MacLeod puts it in his Scottish Theology :

> Modern Chiliasm had not yet learned to cut and carve the ages into dispensations with the cocksureness it has now reached. It had not found out the elaborate system that overturns the character of the dipensation of law that is gone. Nor had it yet mapped out the field of the unfulfilled prophetic future until the expected dispensation of the Millennial presence and vision of the Returned Lord which will modify seriously its message and dispense salvation on other terms than those which the Gospel now sets forth . . . most . . . did not shift the centre of gravity from the Word of the Cross to the hope of the Crown.[4]

There were many of the old school who could not accept this new emphasis and not a few who denounced it's advocates as the 'Evangelical Light Infantry'. Yet others, including Duncan, welcomed the renewed interest in the Second Coming of Christ. His attitude to the question of the millenium was rather ambivalent. Once he confessed to a friend, "I am neither 'pre' nor 'post'. I am willing to hear what the Pre-millennialists have to say, provided it does not take away from the Pentecostal dispensation. Can you tell me of any system that reconciles the literal taking of Ezekiel's temple with the Epistle to the Hebrews?" When parting from her he added, "Now mind, there must be no more slain beasts." [5]

This interest in prophecy led to a widespread belief that the restoration of the Jews would include both a return to the homeland and a renunciation of the tenets and traditions of Judaism, with an affirmation of the Covenant through faith in Jesus. This balance meant that there was no tension in holding to a pro-Zionist viewpoint and supporting missionary activity. Indeed, that foremost British pro-Zionist Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, was president of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.

In Scotland, largely as a result of the persistent efforts of Robert Wodrow in pleading the spiritual case of the Jews, the idea became current of sending a deputation to investigate evangelistic possibilities among the Jews in Europe and especially Palestine. The idea was first suggested by Dr Robert Candlish to his friend and colleague Dr Moody Stuart.

The 1838 General Assembly appointed a four man team consisting of two younger ministers and two "of age and experience". The two older men were Dr Alexander Keith, whose interest in prophecy had resulted in a widely acclaimed book on the subject, and Dr Alexander Black the erudite professor of Divinity in Aberdeen, of whom it was said that he and "Rabbi" Duncan were so proficient in languages ancient and modern that they could talk their way to the Great Wall of China. In fact Black spoke nineteen languages and wrote twelve. Bonar once said of Keith that "he could scarcely speak any language; but he had such a kind and winning way...that he never failed to get what he wanted!

The younger men were Robert Murray McCheyne the minister of St Peter's, Dundee and Andrew Bonar minister in Collace, Perthshire. To many in Scotland and further afield both McCheyne and Bonar became household names.

After the return of Drs Black and Keith from Hungary and McCheyne and Bonar from Palestine the Church of Scotland gave further serious consideration to the setting up of a Jewish mission. The debate as to the most suitable location of this work centred on the choice of either Pesth or Palestine. Eventually the General Assembly agreed the work should commence in Pesth and appointed a team of workers led by Dr John Duncan.

Duncan At Budapest

The first missionary party consisted of Dr Duncan assisted by Mr Smith, Mr Wingate and Mr Allan. With the exception of Wingate, they arrived in Hungary on 21 August, 1841, very conscious of the place they held in the hearts and prayers not only of the Scottish Church but also the Hungarian Archduchess. For reasons of discretion they dared not mention her name in correspondence; Duncan used to refer to her cryptically in his letter as: "The Sister on the Hill".

Duncan, though set apart for mission work to the Jews, realised the intimate connection between all parts of the work of the Kingdom of Christ and understood that his mission to the Jews could only prosper as the work of Christ generally prospered. In one of his earliest letters he wrote,

> Certain I am, that if we are by the blessing of God to succeed in our aim in this place, it must be by pursuing it, as the main object indeed, but by no means as the sole object of our exertions. I am therefore very decidedly of the opinion that whoever shall be stationed here must...labour for the revival of true religion (both as regards sound doctrine and godly living) in the Protestant Churches of the land; which, if it please the Lord to visit them graciously . . . would then become . . . the best instruments for carrying on the work of gathering in the lost sheep of the house of Israel to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. [6]

Duncan was highly sensitive to the obligation of the Scottish missionaries to the Hungarian Church; its revival was central not peripheral to the success of the Jewish work. In the same letter he adds, "To this work...we,though strangers, are imperatively called. Warm fraternal love bound our fathers together."

In response to a desire by Maria Dorothea, the Archduchess, to have a church built in Buda, Duncan appealed to his supporters back home for help. His appeal was couched in terms of the Reformation heritage that bound the two nations together. [7]

> 'I beg,' he said, 'the Gospel for Hungary; I beg it for God, I beg it of you. Remember the fathers of the Reformation. Rekindle the lamp that kindled ours. Even amidst domestic afflictions liberally devise liberal things'. [8]

Within three months of his arrival in Hungary Duncan had mastered the grammar of the Magyar language and understood its peculiarities but with characteristic modesty did not attempt to speak it in public. His friend and helper, Mr Torok, the superintendent of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Pesth, bore testimony to the meticulous care he took in his accomodation to the laws and customs of the country. Torok commented on the demeanor of Duncan and its profound effects. "I must further speak of his wisdom, modesty, and judicious procedure. He thus won us all, and carefully and happily avoided every cause of offence – all conflict with the political and ecclesiastical authorities." [9]

A major part of Duncan's chosen missionary strategy was to hold public services each Lord's Day. These were held in English, primarily for the British engineers building the Chain bridge between Buda and Pesth. Among the Hungarians wanting to improve their English were many Jews, a number of whom began regularly to attend the services where they were introduced to the claims of the Messiah and the promises of the Gospel.

As well as this public ministry Duncan carefully cultivated close relations with people of influence in the Hungarian Jewish community, including the Chief Rabbi, Low Scwhab, with whom he had a particularly

warm friendship. Schwab, born in Moravia in 1794, became a brilliant pupil of the famous Rabbi Moses Szofer and settled in Hungary in 1836. His conservative understanding of Judaism and his delight in mathematics and philosophy would have helped to create a bond with Duncan. Schwab was principally responsible for the building of the magnificent Dohany Street Synagogue, distinguished both by its size and flamboyant Moorish-Byzantine style. In 1848 he sided with the nationalist revolution led by Lajos Kossuth. With the failure of the revolution in 1849 Schwab was imprisioned by the Austrians. How much he reflected at this time on his earlier conversations with Duncan history does not record. He died in 1857 in Budapest.[10]

Duncan became increasingly well known and greatly respected amongst Jewish teachers and thinkers for his familiarity with Rabbinical literature and the Hebrew language. He and his co-workers were invited to attend a Bar Mitzvah ceremony, and the Chief Rabbi also invited Duncan to attend the marriage of his daughter with a young Rabbi. The bridegroom was delighted that he was able to attend because, he said, he now had an opportunity to become acquainted with the man of whom he had heard so much.

A third way in which Duncan and his second wife exerted an influence was through the open hospitality of their home. One writer recalls that "their house in Pesth was thrown open to the Jews; they saw all their habits and ways, and had Christianity presented before them without being forced upon them. His very peculiarities seemed to suit them, and to attract rather than offend; and his truly Christian tact was so great that his opponents spoke of him as 'a very cunning missionary'." [11]

The reference to his "cunning" was taken up years later by himself at the 1862 General Assembly when he was given the opportunity of speaking on behalf of the Jewish work. His legendary love for the Jews had been caricatured by Hugh Miller in the Christian press, but he did not mind in the least losing something of his dignity for the sake of the cause, "I allowed myself to be cheated with my eyes open that I might gain an opportunity of slily stealing away a prejudice or two, and insinuating a word for Him who is the Gentiles' light and Israel's glory."

Although present in Hungary for only a few months, the list of converts grew almost daily as the Lord blessed the diligence and faithfulness of his servant. Duncan was in the habit of spending whole days in receiving visitors and bringing into play his remarkable conversational and persuasive powers. Amongst those who came to faith were Israel amd Adolph Saphir, Alfred Edersheim and Alexander Tomory, to name but four of the most influential.

In early days it was the custom of the missionaries to have the communion in an upper room where they were joined by other Christians. On one occasion prior to his conversion, old Israel Saphir attended the meeting as an observer, something he had done before. It is recorded that he brought with him his young son, Adolph.

> The boy, standing, was between his knees, the young head reaching nearly to the aged face, the face nearly resting on the youthful head. We had ended the Supper. Dr Duncan gave out the sixty-fourth paraphrase, 'To Him that loved the souls of men.' To our surprise the voice of the old Hebrew rose above our voices, and when we looked to him the tears were falling plentifully on the head of Adolph. These are days to be remembered. [12]

Israel Saphir, highly respected in the Hungarian Jewish community, and his whole family were some of the first fruits of the mission. The boy on whose head his old father's tears fell became one of the best respected Presbyterian ministers and evangelical authors of his day. He was originally ordained to the ministry of the Irish Presbyterian Church by the Belfast presbytery in 1854 when Dr Henry Cooke was moderator and set aside to that Church's Jewish missionary work in Hamburg.

Alexander Tomory, who became a long serving missionary to the Jews in Constantinople, tells of how he was brought to faith through the ministry of John Duncan. When first he began to show an interest in Christian teaching he approached both liberal Protestant theological professors and Roman Catholic bishops; but understandably they had nothing to say that could help him. Then one bishop suggested he should go to Pesth and see John Duncan, he recalls how that :

> Three days later I was introduced to the dear man. In a most syllogistic way, and in fluent Latin, he brought out the truth of the gospel, and urged me to accept Christ as my Saviour...But quite in keeping with the character of the doctor,...in the same breath he began to teach me in English. While the tears were yet in my eyes and his, he began to conjugate an English verb, and made me repeat it. After that I saw him almost daily till he left for Italy. This was in the year 1842. He left, but the blessing remained behind. [13]

Duncan's ministry was interrupted after about a year through ill health. He was persuaded to leave Budapest and visit Italy in order to recover his strength. Though he did return to the mission in Pesth it was but for a very short stay before being recalled to Scotland to become the first Professor of Hebrew of the Free Church of Scotland.

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2. *'Rabbi' Duncan and the Problem of Assurance*, John E Marshall, Banner of Truth, issue 201 p.24
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5. Brown, p.416
6. Ibid., p.319
7. The church, a Lutheran one, stands in the Castle district and contains the only known portrait of Maria Dorothea.
8. Brown, p.321
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CALVIN AND THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT

by Frederick S. Leahy

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During the sub-Reformation age in Scotland one name in particular attracted attention, that of John Cameron (1580-1625). Cameron, described by Dr John MacLeod as "restless and speculative, with a dash of ambition in his nature,"[1] tried to steer a middle course between the Calvinism of the Synod of Dort and the Arminianism which that Synod condemned. He propounded the theory which became known as Hypothetical Universalism, namely, that the Atonement was universal in its extent, but limited in its effect due to God's purpose to save the elect. Thus the Atonement was not seen as effectual in itself, otherwise all would be saved.

Cameron for some years was minister of the Reformed church at Bordeaux and he served in a professional capacity in the schools of Saumur and Montauban and finally in the university of his native city of Glasgow.[2] While his teaching made little impact upon Scotland until a century after his death, it made an immediate impact on the Huguenot movement in France. On Cameron's novel theory Christ's death did not actually save anyone, although it provided the basis for the salvation of the elect. Thus not only the extent, but also the nature of the Atonement became a live issue within the Reformed circles and all those involved in this debate claimed the support of Calvin!

Election and the Gift of Faith

Cameron's system of universal grace and unlimited atonement, which he taught at Saumur, was enthusiastically embraced by one of his students, Moses Amyraut (Amyraldus), who was to succeed Cameron at Saumur. Amyraut, a lawyer by training, developed the doctrine of Hypothetical Universalism affirming that God wills the salvation of all on condition of faith, that Christ's death was equally for all, and that God,

foreseeing that no one in fact would believe, elected some to receive the gift of faith. Thus there was taught a universal decree in which Christ was said to be given as a Mediator for all without exception, and a special decree in which God elected a definite number to be saved.

The Amyraldian scheme, as it is called, has many weaknesses; a split decree, a certain mutability on the part of God, if not a self-contradiction! As Charles Hodge remarks,

> It cannot ... be supposed that God intends what is never accomplished; that He purposes what He does not intend to effect; that He adopts means for an end which is never to be attained. This cannot be affirmed of any rational being who has the wisdom and power to secure the execution of his purposes. Much less can it be said of Him whose power and wisdom are infinite.[3]

The greatest weakness of Amyraut's scheme, so far as the Atonement is concerned, is the notion that the substitution of Christ does not infallibly secure the salvation of all for whom He died, and that many for whom he gave His life shall perish. Scripture, however, clearly teaches that Christ's work is efficacious and renders certain the outcome it was designed to accomplish. All are saved for whom God gave His Son. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Rom.8:32). Christ in dying designed to effect by His death what that death actually accomplished, the salvation of His Church (Eph.5:25). As God there can be no discrepancy between His design and His accomplishment. Dr A.A. Hodge comments,

> He must accomplish precisely that which He designed, and He must have designed to effect precisely that which in fact He does effect.[4]

Amyraldianism, with its conflicting double decree, making as it does salvation of the elect depend in the final analysis not on the Atonement, but on the gift of faith, obliterates the splendid truth of Christ's design in dying, for He died not to put sinners in a salvable condition, but actually to save sinners. Amyraldianism strikes at the very nature and design of the Atonement, for by making faith a condition of salvation, albeit divinely bestowed, it makes Christ's substitution conditional in that it is of value only to those who are granted faith.

As far as the nature of the Atonement is concerned, Amyraldianism is no improvement on Arminianism. Its position is well analysed by Warfield:

> Christ did not die in the sinner's stead, it seems, to bear his penalties and purchase for him eternal life; He died rather to make the salvation of sinners possible, to open the way of salvation to sinners, to remove all the obstacles in the way of salvation of sinners. But what obstacle stands in the way of the salvation of sinners, except just their sin? And if this obstacle (their sin) is removed, are they not saved?...He removed, then let us say, all that prevented God from saving men, except sin; and so He prepared the way for God to step in and with safety to His moral government to save men. The Atonement lays no foundation for this saving of men: it merely opens the way for God safely to save them on other grounds.[5]

All advocates of universal atonement, of whatever hue, hold that Christ died equally for all with the design of making the salvation of all possible, and nothing more. Whereas Scripture teaches that He died for the express purpose of saving the elect.

In France the followers of Cameron and Amyraut were known as the New Methodists because they claimed that their *method* of leading sinners to salvation through faith was more excellent than that of traditional Calvinism. Says Principal John MacLeod, "It is at this point - their strongest - that I find them weakest."[6] And it was at this point that the school of Saumur was challenged by Francis Turretin, the distinguished theologian of Geneva (1623 - 87).

> It quickly becomes evident that this is not a problem concerning a new method, but that under this pretext a new doctrine has been introduced. For who would say that the dogmas that have been presented, concerning universal mercy, redemption, and calling pertain simply to the matter of method? Or, is it only a matter of method to teach that God earnestly and ardently wills something that He knows will never take place, and can never take place, and for which He, Who alone could do so, does not will to give man the necessary means? Or is it a matter of method to teach that the mediator has been appointed to those by whom He has never become known, and that men have been called, sufficiently for their salvation, if not directly, at least indirectly, by the contemplation of heaven and earth, and that the divine search for salvation extends more broadly than its application, and that Christ did not, strictly speaking, merit faith for us? In truth, anyone

> who really studies these and similar teachings will realise that the discussion is not about method, but of most significant dogma, and those with whom we are debating cannot deny it.[7]

Although Amyraut's peculiar doctrines were rejected by French synods, he was not personally disciplined and he was always regarded as "Reformed." It is significant, however, that Amyraldianism did not find the foothold in Switzerland that it found in France. In 1647 Zurich forbade its students to enter the school of Saumur, and in 1666 Bern followed suit. This was because the Swiss theologians stood by the decisions of the Synod of Dort and regarded the teaching at Saumur as a departure from the orthodoxy of Dort. It was Swiss theologians like Heidegger and Turretin who prepared the Helvetic Consensus Formula, 1675, as a refutation of the theology of Saumur.

Warfield comments optimistically,

> The theory of hypothetical universalism, according to which Christ died as the proper substitute for all men on the condition, namely, that they should believe - whether in its Remonstrant or in its Amyraldian form - has in the conflict of theories long since been crushed out of existence - as, indeed, it well deserved to be.[8]

Error, however, has a deep root. The view of Amyraut not only infected the Huguenot movment in France, to its considerable detriment, but also it has reappeared from time to time ever since.[9] John W.Beardslee suggests that

> Both Arminianism and the theology of Saumur illustrate the principle that Continental 'radicalism', driven underground at home, might yet bear fruit in England, for both are numbered among the spiritual influences that worked upon John Wesley.[10]

Amyraut is not without his followers today. Charles Bell writes,

> It is quite clear that Calvin taught a doctrine of universal atonement. It is also clear that he taught a doctrine of predestination in which faith is limited to the elect. He could do so because he did not link the doctrines of election and atonement in a logical order of cause and effect.[11]

Election and Christ's Intercession

One of the leading proponents of 'Calvinistic Universalism' today is R.T. Kendall, whose doctoral thesis, "Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649", was published in 1979. He, too, claims support from Calvin, but his theory is different from that of Amyraut in that he holds that while Christ died equally for all, He intercedes only for the elect.

> The decree of election...is not rendered effectual in Christ's death but in His ascension and intercession at the Father's right hand.[12]

'Calvinistic Universalists' have argued that without the belief that Christ died equally for all, there can be no assurance of salvation, for how can the sinner be sure that Christ died for him? So Kendall insists that

> Had not Christ died for *all*, we could have no assurance that *our* sins have been expiated in God's sight.[13]

With this Charles Bell agrees, but rightly points out that when Kendall makes Christ's intercession crucial in man's salvation he "simply removes the problem of assurance from the area of Christ's atonement to that of Christ's intercession."[14] Indeed! And how can one be sure that Christ intercedes for *him*? Both Kendall and Bell fail to show how universal atonement could prove a sufficient ground for assurance, since both agree that, on their respective positions, all covered by the Atonement will not be saved!

While the Amyraldians held that Christ died for all and that the Holy Spirit applied that work only to the elect by granting them faith, the followers of Kendall affirm that the scope of Christ's death is different from that of His intercession. Paul Helm, in his reply to Kendall, suggests that further research might well reveal that Kendall's view of Calvin is nearer to the position of the Amyraldians than it appears to be.[15] He is right. Certainly the least common denominator in their respective postions, tacitly assumed, is that Christ's death in and of itself does not actually redeem men. It does not of itself procure their salvation. Here, as shall be shown, they are completely at variance with the Calvin they profess to understand. Paul Helm asks pertinently

> If Christ discharged all satisfaction, how can anyone for whom He died fail to be saved?...If Christ discharged all satisfaction by His death, how could anything remain to be accomplished by His intercession? If His death is sufficient, how could anything else be necessary?[16]

Hypothetical Universalism, in one form or another, has in modern times been espoused or sympathetically considered by men like Paul van Buren,[17] James B. Torrance,[18] James W. Anderson,[19] and Basil Hall.[20] It is treated sympathetically by Philip Schaff, J.J. van Oosterzee, James Orr and A.H. Strong. It would seem that Moses Amyraut was the progenitor of a number of doctrinal aberrations. Otto Weber expresses surprise that Karl Barth when discussing election did not appeal to Amyraut as one of his theological precursors.[21]

The Appeal to Calvin

Hypothetical universalists in the Reformed camp have insisted that their position was essentially that of John Calvin. Otto Weber describes Amyraldianism as "a real blow for predestinarian orthodoxy, because Amyraut was able to base his position firmly on Calvin..."[22] Both Amyraut and Kendall make their appeal to Calvin and in particular to his discussion of the "all" and "world" passages in Scripture. Thus, commenting on Romans 5:18, Calvin affirms, "Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world." With reference to Isaiah 53:12, he states, "On Him was laid the guilt of the whole world," and he adds, "It is evident from other passages, and especially from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that 'many' sometimes denotes 'all'." Such statements abound in the writings of Calvin and hypothetical universalists are quick to make full use of them. Here several observations are in order.

First of all, Calvin, in total submission to Scripture, never suppressed the biblical emphasis on the universality of the Gospel call. On the contrary, he emphasised that call. It does not follow, however, that a universal command to obey the Gospel is tantamount to universal atonement.

Secondly, Calvin does show an awareness of limited or definite redemption. Commenting on 1 John 2:2 he says, with reference to the clause "and not for ours only"

> Here a question may be raised, how have the sins of the whole world been expiated? I pass by the dotages of the fanatics, who under this pretence extend salvation to all the reprobate, and therefore to Satan himself. They who seek to avoid this absurdity, have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Though then I allow that what has been said is true, yet I deny that it is suitable to this passage; for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church. Then under the word *all* or whole, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world. For then is really made evident, as it is meet, the grace of Christ, when it is declared to be the only true salvation of the world.

Of this comment John Murray writes,

> This is an explicit statement to the effect that the reprobate are not included in the propitiation and that 'the whole world' refers to all throughout the world who are partakers of salvation without distinction of race, or clime, or time.[23]

Thirdly, those who appeal to Calvin's remarks on the "all" and "world" passages have been less than fair to him, at times, quoting selectively and even out of context. Such manipulation results in distortion. Thus Kendall quotes, out of context, from "Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God," it is "incontestable that Christ came for the expiation of the sins of the whole world."[24] In context Calvin's intent becomes clear. He is discussing 1 John 2:2.

> Wherever the faithful are dispersed throughout the world, John extends to them the expiation wrought by Christ's death. But this does not alter the fact that the reprobate are mixed up with the elect in the world. *It is incontestable that Christ came for the expiation of the sins of the whole world.* But the solution lies close at hand, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but should have eternal life (Jn. 3:15). For the present question is not how great the power of Christ is or what efficacy it has in itself, but to whom He gives Himself to be enjoyed[25]

When Calvin's statement, in italics above, is wrested from its context, it can convey a meaning opposite to the Reformer's intention.

Fourthly, Calvin does make clear his understanding of the "all" and "world" passages. Preaching on 1 Timothy 2:3-5 he says, with reference

to the words, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,"

> We must observe that St. Paul speaketh not of every particular man, but of all sorts of men, and of all people. Therefore, when he saith that God will have all men to be saved, we must not think that he speaketh of them individually, but his meaning is this: that whereas in times past He chose a certain people to Himself, He meaneth now to show mercy to all the world: yea, even to them that seemed to be shut out from the hope of salvation.

It is true that Calvin does not deal explicitly with the extent of the Atonement, but this was not an issue in his day. Students of Calvin have found only one passage which could be regarded as explicitly denying an unlimited atonement. It occurs in his reply to Heshusius, a Lutheran defender of the corporal presence of Christ in the Holy Supper.

> I should like to know how the wicked can eat the flesh of Christ which was not crucified for them? and how can they drink the blood which was not shed to expiate their sins.[26]

That statement may well stand alone in Calvin's writings, but it is hard to see how he would have made it had he believed in universal atonement. Robert A. Petersen thinks that Calvin's position is obscure and that it is uncertain what position he would have taken in subsequent debates. But given Calvin's strong emphasis on substitutionary atonement, and that the doctrine of election was fundamental in his thinking, and that he clearly saw Christ's death as actually redeeming men, it is not so difficult to decide which side he would have taken in subsequent discussion of the extent of the Atonement. Petersen, however, is right when he comments that "it is unfair to ask for a man's position on a matter that became an issue only after his death."[27]

One cannot help wondering at current suggestions that Calvin did *not* believe in limited atonement. Alister McGrath writes

> It may be stressed that at no point does Calvin himself suggest that Christ died only for the elect...[28]

What about his reply to Heshusius? Kendall says that "Calvin ... thinks that Christ died for all and yet that all are not saved"[29] James B. Torrance writes,

> Limited atonement was certainly regarded as the 'orthodoxy' of the Westminster documents ... But it was not so taught by John Calvin. [30]

William Cunningham is more balanced when he writes

> There is not, then, we are persuaded, satisfactory evidence that Calvin held the doctrine of a universal, unlimited, or indefinite atonement. And, moreover, we consider ourselves warranted in asserting, that there is sufficient evidence that he did *not* hold this doctrine.[31]

Cunningham regards the doctrine of universal atonement as

> somewhat alien, to say the least, in its general spirit and complexion, to the leading features of his (Calvin's) theological system.[32]

Beyond all question Calvin taught that Christ's death accomplished the redemption of His people. He has made full satisfaction for their sins. His intercession was a reality before and on the cross as well as in heaven. Let Calvin speak for himself. If a man learns

> that he was estranged from God through sin, is an heir of wrath, subject to the curse of eternal death, excluded from all hope of salvation, beyond every blessing of God, the slave of Satan, captive under the yoke of sin, destined for a dreadful destruction and already involved in it; *and that at this point Christ interceded as his advocate,* took upon Himself and suffered the punishment that, from God's righteous judgment threatened all sinners; that He purged with His blood those evils which had rendered sinners hateful to God; *that by this expiation He made satisfaction* and sacrifice duly to God the Father; *that as intercessor He has appeased God's wrath;* that on this foundation rests the peace of God with men; that by this bond His benevolence is maintained toward them. Will the man not then be even more moved by all these things which so vividly portray the greatness of the calamity from which he has been rescued?[33]

The notion of any substitution of Christ that did not infallibly secure the salvation of all for whom He died would have been utterly repugnant to Calvin. Nor would he have tolerated for a moment a break between the death of Christ and the intercession of Christ, or entertained the idea that many for whom Christ gave His life would nevertheless perish. For Calvin, with Bible in hand, Christ died for all without distinction, not all without exception.[34]

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1. *Scottish Theology*, p.60.
2. John MacLeod states that "it was a veritable blue riband of the Theological schools to be called to teach in one of the chairs of Sedan or Saumur or Montauban or Diez. And not a few of the Scots scholars shared with Andrew Melville in this honour," Op. cit., p.60.
3. *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, p.323, 1883 ed.
4. *The Atonement*, 1868 ed., p.332.
5. *The Plan of Salvation*, p.95.
6. Op. cit., p.251.
7. *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*, locus IV, 'Concerning the Decrees of God,' Question XVII, par. XI.
8. *Works*, vol. IX, p.288.
9. Dr A.A. Hodge and Principal William Cunningham affirm that Bishop Davenant and Richard Baxter were influenced by Amyraldianism. Principal MacLeod also includes Baxter among those affected. On the other hand, Dr George Smeaton states that "Baxter has been often unfairly claimed as an Amyraldist," and he considerably qualifies the criticism of Davenant, one of the five English deputies present at the Synod of Dort. See Hodge's "The Atonement," p.349; Cunningham's "Theology of the Reformation," p.399; MacLeod's "Scottish Theology," p.62 and Smeaton's "Doctrine of the Atonement According to the Apostles," p.542. See also James Buchanan, "The Doctrine of Justification", p.190.
10. *Reformed Dogmatics*, (Wollebius, Voetius and Turretin), p.7.
11. *Calvin and Scottish Theology*, Edinburgh 1985, p.17.
12. *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, p.16.
13. Op. cit., p.14.
14. Op. cit., p.18.
15. *Calvin and the Calvinists*, p.36, fn.15.
16. Op. cit., p.43.
17. *Christ in Our Place*, p.50. See review by John Murray, Collected Writings, vol.4, p.310.
18. *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, p.47.
19. Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, "The Grace of God and the Non-elect in Calvin's Commentaries and Sermons," quoted by Robert A. Petersen, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement*, p.90.
20. 'Calvin Against the Calvinists,' in *John Calvin* (Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology, 1966).
21. *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol.2, p.475.
22. Op. cit., p.127.
23. Review of Paul van Buren's *Christ in Our Place*, in *Collected Writings*, vol.4, p.312.
24. Op. cit., p.13.
25. *Eternal Predestination*, (1961) p.148.
26. *Tracts and Treatises*, vol 2, p.527.
27. Op. cit., p.90.

28. *A Life of John Calvin*, p.216.
29. Op. cit., p.15.
30. 'Strength and Weaknesses of Westminster Theology,' in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, p.47.
31. *Theology of the Reformation*, p.398.
32. Ibid.,
33. *Institutes*, 2:16:2.
34. There are several aspects of the theology of Amyraut and that of Kendall which represent a departure from the historic Reformed theology. These are not discussed in this article. They are discussed by William Cunningham, John MacLeod, the Hodges and Paul Helm. Useful articles in the *Westminster Theological Journal* include Rodger Nicole's "John Calvin's View of the Extent of the Atonement," (47, 1985), and Stephen Strehle's "Universal Grace and Amyraldianism," (51,1989).

BOOK REVIEWS

The Life of John Duncan, A. Moody Stuart, Banner of Truth Trust, 1992, 231pp., £6.95.

John Duncan is often remembered today by the stories of the eccentricities that characterised his remarkable and distinguished life. They were understandable eccentricities of genius and they form a very small part in a life of gracious courtesy and unremitting toil in the service of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Few men were better equipped to tell the story of John Duncan than Alexander Moody Stuart. He was the minister of St. Luke's Church, Edinburgh, of which, in his later years, John Duncan was both a member and an elder. They were great friends, and each admired and profited from the other's exceptional gifts.

John Duncan was born in Aberdeen in 1796, the son of God-fearing parents who were firmly attached to the principles of the Seceders who withdrew from the Church of Scotland in 1733 in protest against the Law of Patronage by which ministers were forced upon congregations against the wishes of the people. But it was also a protest against "a complex course of defection in doctrine, government and discipline carried on with a high hand by the present judicatories of the Church of Scotland, justifying themselves in their procedure and refusing to be restrained". (Rev. William Wilson: "Defence of Reformation Principles")

In spite of that godly ancestry and background, the young man did not find an easy entrance to faith. The death of his mother when he was about six years of age left an indelible mark on his life. She was "full of human kindness and divine grace", and he missed her gentleness that had often tempered the severity of his father's disipline. In God's providence he welcomed in due course a stepmother whom he describes as 'admirable', and with whom he developed a very special relationship.

His inquisitive mind and insatiable curiosity led him into barren areas of speculation. He began to doubt the Bible and sank into a period of unbelief. By God's grace, the words of Psalm 73 brought him back to faith. "My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped"

describes his fear. "But God is the Rock of my heart and my portion forever".

During his student years he joined the Church of Scotland, and in a state of confusion and uncertainty he began to prepare for the work of the gospel ministry. He was the most brilliant student of his time. To his skill in Hebrew, that earned him the nick-name of 'Rabbi', he gained proficiency in Arabic, Sanskrit, Syriac and Persian as well as several Indian languages. He could also discourse fluently in Latin, Greek and French.

After ten years in pastoral work in rural Perthshire and industrial Glasgow, he became a pioneer in Jewish Evangelism and established the work in Hungary in 1841. Within three months he had mastered the language, though he normally preached in English as the Jews were anxious to learn that language. The number of converts grew daily as God blessed this diligent and faithful and unusual approach to presenting the Gospel.

Dr. Stuart has put on record for indebted readers the thrilling story of an outstanding life: his conversion, his hesitant preaching, his friendship with William C. Burns and Robert Murray McCheyne, his life in Edinburgh as Professor of Hebrew in New College, his mental prowess and his burning love for Christ and for his fellow men.

One of the most distinctive features of Dr. Duncan's character was his singular humility. His whole life was dominated by a childlike simplicity. He declared: "The people of God are a plain people; and Doctors of Divinity, when they go out of this plainness must be shoved to a lower form". His high view of the Majesty of God filled him with an ever-present sense of unworthiness. His love of holiness stemmed from a deep sense of sin. His love for Christ was stimulated by a feeling of gratitude for His saving grace. Like Paul, he considered himself "less than the least of all saints".

He had an intensely spiritual mind. He thought much and spoke much of his dependence on the Holy Spirit. He was distressed that the person and work of the Holy Spirit was so little emphasised in his day. Of his preaching in Glasgow he said: "I was a very popular preacher till I began to preach on the work of the Holy Spirit; then the church grew thin".

Though a giant in the field of Hebrew scholarship, it was not his handling of the subject in class that impressed his students most, but his personal conversation with each of them and his concern that they would prove to be good ministers of Jesus Christ. They remembered his brief but telling addresses at the students' prayer meetings in which he constantly exalted the person and work of the Saviour.

The publishers suggest that no 20th century biography of Dr. Duncan has been produced because the school of experimental heart religion that he represented has suffered a major decline and that a colourful but superficial memory of the man has militated against his true nature. Perhaps would-be biographers have hesitated because of the excellence of Dr.Stuart's story that could scarcely be equalled let alone surpassed.

Few biographies contain so much vital substance in such small compass, and the reprint in excellent format, by the Banner of Truth, of this classic, will delight all who love the truth and who covet the childlike qualities of a truly Christian life.

Adam Loughridge

Annotations to the Heidelberg Catechism, J. Van Bruggen, Inheritance Publications, 1991. Pb. 299 pp., CN.$15.95; U.S. $13.90.

A living church takes seriously the task of instructing its youth. The Reformed confessions and catechisms were written to that end. The catechism of Heidelberg (1563) is no exception: it also looks to the future of the church.

This book was written as an aid to the teaching of the catechism in order that covenant youth should become full-fledged members of the church. It bears the subtitle: "For use in the catechetical instruction in Reformed Churches in the Netherlands" and was used over many years, and is still used, in those Churches for this purpose. The author was a minister of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands for a lengthy period until his death in 1965. Having used the book both as a young catechumen and later as a teacher of a senior catechism class, Prof. A. H. Oosterhoff believed it merited a wider readership and therefore translated it into English. This work is a translation of the fifth edition, which was first published in 1965.

In the Introduction the purpose of catechetical instruction, the origin of the Heidelberg Catechism, the nature of the covenant of grace and the position and responsibility of the children of believers in that covenant are carefully and clearly explained. Van Bruggen sees the Bible as laying the task of catechesis, not only upon ministers, elders and parents, but also upon the covenant children themselves. "For the Lord has caused you also to belong to those with whom he established an eternal covenant of grace. And in the covenant he admonishes you to know, love and obey him (Pro.8:17; Ecc.12:1) Let us therefore clearly realize at the outset that neglect of catechesis amounts to a violation of the covenant and is the first step on the road to leaving the church!"

Following the Introduction, the hundred and twenty nine questions and answers in the Heidelberg catechism are dealt with in fifty two separate lessons, with one lesson set for each Sabbath of the year. The structure of each lesson is more or less the same, being divided into three sections. In the first section there are notes explaining concisely and simply the truth set forth in the catechism answer. In the second section there are cross references from the Scriptures and the Belgic Confession confirming the truth stated, and to which the reader is directed for further study. The third section is composed of a list of questions whereby the reader can review the lesson and examine himself as to how well its content has been grasped. In some lessons there are also additional comments and a list of the heresies that that particular answer refutes. The study of the book is facilitated by the very helpful "Table of Contents" in which the reader will find it easy to locate the subject or doctrine he wishes to consider. It is a pity, however, that an explanation of the chief abbreviations has not been included.

Van Bruggen has achieved his objective in that he has produced a faithful transcript of the faith once delivered to the saints, the faith to which the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands stand committed, and produced it in a format and language which young people, and those who find it hard to grasp theological concepts, can understand. He has written with clarity and force. The young person and layman will find this a veritable mine of biblical instruction that informs the mind, warms the heart and motivates the will. It is safe to say that there is not a dull page in the whole volume. On every page he has said something that compels attention and has said it well.

A few quotations will help give a flavour of the book's content and style. One of eight notes on Predestination and Election reads, "This election does not make us careless, for it does not exclude our responsibility. For it is election to faith. And the Lord calls us to this faith by the preaching of the holy gospel. It is necessary to distinguish between the decree of predestination and its execution. God carries out his decree in such a way that our responsibility is not excluded. He who is lost is lost not because he was rejected, but because of his own sin." In answer to Question 65, Where does faith come from? he has this to say: "Note carefully that the catechism does not say that God awakens faith by the preaching of the gospel, but that he works faith thereby. The Holy Spirit does not work faith in us immediately (i.e., without using means); he does not place the seed of faith in us in order to awaken it to growth by the preaching of the Word, as the sun does to seed that has been planted in the ground. Instead the Holy Spirit works faith through the preaching (Jas.1:18)." He faithfully explains the answer to Question 89 by emphasising that conversion is a hating of sin. "We no longer justify and cover up sin. We are its enemy and flee from it. It is a hero's flight! This flight is the only way to win. He who believes that he can remain close to sin and the places where sin is powerful, because he knows how far he can go, does not know himself. He is like a moth which circles around a flame! The catechism says we do this 'more and more.' For there is growth in conversion. We begin to hate sin more and more because we begin to see more and more that its nature is sinful and dishonours God." The exposition of the three answers on Holy Baptism is excellent. The following quotations are taken from notes five, six and seven. "We must make use of baptism. We have to ACCEPT the PROMISE which is SIGNED and SEALED to us, and cleave to God, 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit..trust Him, and...love Him with our whole heart, soul, and mind, and with all our strength.' Otherwise, baptism, that cheque of God's grace, will make us more guilty! Thus, baptism obliges us to profess the Lord's name in our entire life and, therefore, also in the church (public profession of faith)." "Yet baptism is called 'the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins' (see Q&A 73). We call this a SACRAMENTAL LOCUTION, in which the sign is spoken of as it were the depicted matter itself. We also do that when we say that a bank note is $10, even though it only seals the entitlement to $10." "Answer 74

confesses separately that infants (i.e., of believers) should (i.e.,must) also be baptised. For there have always been opponents to the baptism of infants. The Catechism says that they must be baptised because they 'belong to God's covenant congregation.' (Learn Gen.17:7 and Acts 2:39). That is why they are entitled to the sign and seal of the covenant. Prof. Lindeboom, therefore, said, correctly: 'Baptism is administered, Not on basis of presumed regeneration, But on the basis of the Lord's command, to those who profess their faith, and to their children because the promises of the covenant extend also to them.' This is why the children must 'by baptism, as sign of the covenant...be grafted into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers' (A.74). They are not received into the covenant and the church by baptism. They ARE in them according to God's promise, but this is made VISIBLE in baptism. In baptism they receive the 'mark and emblem' of the Lord, to whom they belong. This is the more so since baptism replaced circumcision (Col. 2:11-12). That is why the children must now be baptised, just as formerly they were circumcised. Were it not so, then infant baptism should have been forbidden in the N.T. But since that is not the case, the rule which was established in the beginning of the O.T., remains in force."

Wherein lies the value of this work? Ministers will find it a good model to follow in teaching doctrine to the baptised youth of the congregation in the Senior Sabbath School Class or Young Adult Class. Some chapters could be made the basis of study for a Church Memberhip Class. The church members would profit from its use in the mid-week meeting by going through the contents of each section by means of the set questions. The individual Christian would find it a constructive way to employ part of the Sabbath day by working through the lesson that is set for each Lord's day. No one can study this volume without increasing his knowledge of truth and being made to worship and adore the God of all grace.

This book will help every minister in the instruction of his people, both young and not so young, every parent in the task of catechizing and is commended to every Christian for personal study.

John A. Hawthorne

Communion with God, John Owen (abridged by R.J.K.Law), Banner of Truth Trust 1991. Pb. 209pp. £2.95.

The Puritan era in England was distinguished by learned and spiritual authors whose writings had a powerful influence in a day which was deeply entrenched in ignorance and corruption. Today the intellectual strength and depth of their experimental theology is increasingly recognised by contemporary historians, despite its eclipse during the hey-day of liberal theology.

Among the Puritans none has been regarded more highly than John Owen (1616 - 1683). The Banner of Truth Trust reprinted sixteen volumes of his works in 1965, and until recently, volume 2, entitled 'Communion with God' has been read by only a small number of people with access to the 275 closely-printed pages. Owen's writings require diligent study, and much time and stamina are necessary properly to read and appreciate their worth. Dr. R.J.K. Law has now produced a very readable abridgement of one of the greatest Christian classics, bringing Owen's rich teaching to a much wider readership.

In this particular volume John Owen explains the nature of the Christian's communion with God and the many privileges it brings. He believed that communion with God lies at the very heart of the Christian life and with the apostle Paul he recognised that through the Son we have access by the Spirit to the Father, and along with the apostle John, he was constantly amazed that "our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." Owen's basic thesis is that communion with God is a relationship in which Christians receive love from, and respond in love to, all three persons of the Trinity. On the basis of Scripture, Owen insists that the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of the Christian's faith. He argues that all three persons of the Godhead are active in fulfilling a common purpose of love to unlovely people, all three give distinct gifts of their love to the chosen people of God, and all three, therefore, should be distinctly acknowledged in faith, with an appropriate response by Christians in their minds and hearts.

In considering firstly communion with the Father, Owen states that His special gift to us is an attitude and exercise of fatherly love which is free, undeserved and eternal. Owen points out that in the New Testament

love is singled out as the special characteristic of the Father in relation to us. (cf John 3:16; 1 John 4:8). The way to receive the Father's love is by faith in a living Christ who comes to us, not of His own initiative, but as the gift to us of a loving heavenly Father. We are to respond to the Father's love to us in the Lord Jesus Christ, by love. " Men are generally esteemed by the company they keep. It is an honour to stand in the presence of princes, even if it be as a servant. What honour then have all the saints to stand with boldness in the presence of the Father and there to enjoy His love!" (P.34)

Secondly, regarding communion with the Son, Owen states that His special gift to us is grace, coupled with all the spiritual benefits which flow from such grace. All grace is found in Jesus Christ, and is received by receiving Him. In expounding the meaning of Christ's grace, Owen refers to the 'conjugal relationship' between Christ and His people and gives a detailed Christological exegesis of the Song of Songs 2: 1-7 and 5. As Christians we are to respond to this conjugal affection and loyalty of Christ towards us by maintaining spiritual marital chastity towards Him. Daily we should rejoice in faith before Him as the only Saviour from sin; daily we should take the sins and failures of that day to His cross to receive forgiveness; daily we should wait by faith on Him for the supply of His Spirit to purify our hearts and work holiness in us.

Finally, in the section on communion with the Spirit, Owen reminds us that He is called 'the Comforter' because in that capacity He brings strength, encouragement, assurance and joy to the believer's soul. This comfort is conveyed to us in and through the daily understanding and experience which He gives us of the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. We, in turn, respond to this comforting work of the Holy Spirit by taking care not to grieve Him by negligence or sin (Eph.4:30); nor to quench Him by opposing or hindering His work (1Thess.5:19); nor to resist Him by refusing His Word (Acts 7:51); but to give Him constant thanks and to pray for a continuation of His presence and peace in our hearts.

As a valuable introduction to the works of John Owen, this abridged 'puritan paperback' deserves prayerful perusal, and is also highly recommended as a prized devotional aid for all serious students of God's Word.

George M. McEwen

The Power of Prayer, The New York Revival of 1858, Samuel Prime, Banner of Truth Trust 1991, Hb 265pp £7.95

The Church is indebted to the late Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, for it was at his suggestion that this rare title was republished. The author, Samuel Prime, became a minister in the Presbyterian Church in 1834. Ill health hampered him in his pastoral work and so he concentrated on a written ministry. This book was his most popular work and it is claimed that more than 175,000 copies were circulated. Reprints were made in Europe, Africa and Asia.

The book is, as its title suggests, the record of the year which saw America's last national awakening. Throughout there are helpful and perceptive comments on the nature and characteristics of true revival. Yet the greater part of the book is the human story of the people into whose lives God came. The twenty-six chapters introduce a wide range of individuals who experienced the saving power of Christ.

In the opening chapters Prime sketches the background to this revival. He describes the autumn of 1857 as a time when there was a 'sudden and fearful convulsion in the commercial world.' Many of the inhabitants of New York were ruined by the financial failure which affected the city. This financial and social upheaval was followed very quickly by reports of revival and remarkable displays of God's grace. Many assumed that the two events were related closely to one another as cause and effect. Prime's comment on this is important and underlines the sovereign nature of all revival. "When the hand of God is suddenly laid upon a city and country and the sources of prosperity dry up, it is natural to believe that men will look away from themselves and say 'Verily there is a God Who reigns'." The author adds, "It was believed that the financial storm had driven men to pray. And it doubtless did." But the significant fact which Prime rightly emphasises is that the meetings for prayer had already been established before there was any sign of financial collapse and while people were still enjoying the fruit of material success.

Those meetings for prayer began with one man, Jeremiah Calvin Lamphier, a lay missionary of the Old Dutch Church, New York. He had a burden for the people in the city and began to pray for them and that others would join him in this ministry of intercession. At first the response

was small but within six months one hundred and fifty meetings for prayer were held daily in the city.

Several features of these meetings for prayer are apparent. The praying was earnest. 'The great revival in the time of Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards and the Tennents was marked by powerful preaching. The present by believing, earnest prayer.' The praying was united. 'The great truth illustrated and established by this revival is the cardinal doctrine of Christian union; oneness of the Church, a real unity of all her members in Christ the Head.' How better can this true unity be demonstrated than by believers praying together for the conversion of their friends and neighbours? This is the answer to all false ecumenicity and at the same time is a guard against denominational rivalry. Prime comments on the meetings for prayer "The question was never asked 'To what Church does he belong?' The whole atmosphere was love."

The praying was specific and expectant. At the prayer meetings requests were read aloud and then made the basis of the petitions offered. 'Christians became emboldened to ask great things and expect great things'.

This little volume is heartily recommended. It brings to the Church at the end of the twentieth century a much needed rebuke for our prayerlessness and at the same time a great encouragement to seek God's reviving grace in our day. 'This revival' says the author 'is to be remembered throughout the history of the Church as simply an answer to prayer.' But why did men pray as they did? Prime's answer is correct 'We must look behind all means and acknowledge that this is the Lord's doing. He said that He would be inquired of by the house of Israel and when they called the Lord answered and heard. This is to be the standing testimony which the revival will bear forever in the history of religion.'

Knox Hyndman