

Hyper-Evangelism: Another Gospel, Though a Mighty Power

by John W. Kennedy

The speaker critiques hyper-evangelism for neglecting the supreme end of the gospel, misrepresenting it as a scheme of salvation adapted to man's convenience, and employing unscriptural means to advance the movement.

Scripture: Isaiah 8:20, Matthew 7:20, Luke 4:18, John 3:3, John 6:44, 1 Timothy 2:5, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 6:4, James 2:26

Topics: "Reformed Theology", "True Evangelism"

Description

John Kennedy of Dingwall, a champion of the Reformed faith in Scotland, warned against the dangers of a superficial presentation of the gospel and the lack of saving faith even under orthodox ministries. He emphasized the importance of a full proclamation of the biblical gospel, resisting the drift from the Westminster Confession and advocating for the true cooperation of church and state. Kennedy's words of caution remain relevant today, as he critiqued the hyper-evangelism movement that focused on excessive emotionalism and neglected essential aspects of biblical and Reformed doctrine, leading to a potential rise of antinomianism. His insights serve as a reminder to prioritize the glory of God, the sovereignty of God in salvation, the necessity of repentance, and the true understanding of faith in Christ.

Transcript

In Reformed circles in Scotland today, John Kennedy of Dingwall (1819-1884) is regarded as the greatest champion of the Reformed faith in the Highlands during the latter years of the nineteenth century. If Kennedy was outspoken about the dangers resulting from a superficial presentation of the gospel, he had reason to understand that saving faith can be lacking in a profession of faith made under the most orthodox of ministries. Kennedy himself had only been converted in 1841 while in his second year of academic preparation for the ministry, and after the death of his father, who had exercised a compelling preaching ministry at Killearnan. Licensed to preach soon after the Disruption, Kennedy was settled as pastor of the Free Church of Scotland charge in the county town of Dingwall, in Ross-shire, where he remained for his entire ministry. There he served a congregation of over one thousand, half of whom were Gaelic speaking.

Through the years Kennedy was a stalwart opponent of the drift in Scottish Presbyterianism away from the Westminster Confession, allying himself with Hugh Martin and James Begg to resist erosion of the doctrine of the particular design in Christ's atoning work, and to contend for the propriety of a cooperative

association of church and state to promote the true religion.

The essay here reprinted appeared in 1874 in the wake of an evangelistic campaign by Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, whose 1873 tour wrought a revolution of sentiment in Scotland. Scottish pastors, wishing to think the best, and inattentive to the new trends of thought and practice, were caught up in the swell of excitement. Though Kennedy was temperamentally disinclined to controversy, he was constrained to raise his voice for a full-orbed proclamation of the biblical gospel.

Kennedy's words of warning have an undiminished relevance in our generation, when constitutionally sound Presbyterian churches hear voices calling them to a presentation of the gospel which abandons the characteristic traits of a biblical and Reformed piety. Methods of church growth and evangelism, and practices of worship which are alien to the historic Reformed faith, are offered as helps to overcome the offense which sinners feel, and the indifference which they display, toward the Scriptures and a godly life.

The features of modern American revivalism brought to Scotland by Moody are traceable to a man whose influence over evangelistic practice in our time has been immense, the Presbyterian minister Charles G. Finney (1792-1875). For an exceptionally fine critique of Finney's message and method, Iain H. Murray's address on Finney at the 1992 Banner of Truth Minister's Conference is available on tape for \$6 postpaid, from Sound Word Associates, P.O. Box 2035, Mall Station, Michigan City, IN 46360.

At Kennedy's death, his friend C. H. Spurgeon--who had journeyed to Dingwall in 1870 to preach at the opening of the Free Church's new building--wrote of him as one "whom I venerated as every inch a man of God. His death was a loss to the Highlands greater than could have befallen by the death of any other hundred men. True as steel and firm as a rock, he was also wonderfully tender and sympathetic." Further information about Kennedy can be found in Maurice Roberts' address at the centenary of Kennedy's death: "Dr John Kennedy--A Memorial Sketch," Banner of Truth, Issue 251-252, Aug-Sept 1984. Two books in which Kennedy wrote of the history of the Reformed faith in the Highlands have been reprinted in Scotland in recent years: Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire, and The Apostle of the North.

Hyper-Evangelism:

Another Gospel, Though A Mighty Power

When a movement is in progress in our land, during which many are awakened to thought and feeling as to eternal things who were utterly unthinking and insensate before, when thousands think that they have lately believed in Christ, and with the joy of assurance profess that they have found Him, when from the church are seen issuing many who have enlisted as recruits in a crusade against the ungodliness and unbelief of the world, when so many who have a high position and commanding influence in the church declare that it is a gracious work of God by which these results have been produced, and when many more, believing this, are exceeding glad and abound in thanksgiving, sad, yea strained to breaking, must be the heart of one who seeks the glory of God and the salvation of souls, if he cannot share in the prevalent hopefulness and joy. Being one of those to whom the present movement has hitherto yielded more grief than gladness, I feel constrained to tell why I am a mourner and apart.

Preliminary Remarks

Those who, ere the movement had been developed into its abiding fruits, hastened to declare it to be a gracious work of God, must have laid claim to inspiration; and only if that claim is good can their judging

be allowable. It may be legitimate to form an unfavorable judgment, even at the outset of a religious awakening, if the means employed in producing it are such as the Lord cannot be expected to bless; but a favorable verdict at that stage, no man, not a prophet, has any right to pronounce. Only He who "trieth the hearts and reins" can then judge. He allows His disciples to try to know men only by their fruits (Matthew 7:20). Not at the outset, and not by the immediate results, but by the fruits produced after the trial, does He allow them to form a favorable judgment regarding a religious movement (John 8:31). It is not enough to justify such a verdict, that souls are anxious, that anxious souls attain to a faith that is assured, and to a joy that is exceeding, and that a change of conduct and zealous service are for a season the result. All this was, once and again, under the ministry of Jesus Himself, without any lasting and saving result; and men are sadly forgetful and madly bold, who in the face of such a fact venture to trace similar appearances at once to a gracious work of God (John 6, 8 and 12).

One is not compelled to affirm that a religious movement is not a work of grace, if he refrains from saying that it is. This is a position into which some men, more zealous than discerning, seek to drive those who do not share their own blind sanguineness. I am not to judge, at the outset, except of the means employed, and if these are unscriptural, I am forbidden to expect a good result (Isa. 8:20). If the means employed and the agents are unexceptionable, I can legitimately form no decided opinion of the work, till its fruits are in due time developed.

There is no necessity for regarding it as the great Deceiver's work, if it is considered not to be a gracious work of God. There are impressions, which are not saving, produced by Divine influence in connection with the gospel (Heb. 6:4-6). The temporary impressions produced by the preaching of Christ are instances of this. But that Satan can produce counterfeit, as surely as the Lord can make real, converts, I firmly believe. And when he is at work as "an angel of light," he best succeeds when men blindly accept, instead of wisely testing the results. There is surely some reason to fear that his hand is on the agents as well as on the subjects of the work, when neither are careful to apply the test of truth (John 3:20, 21; I John 4:1).

If I regard with little hopefulness a movement over which so many are chanting songs of joy, till all Christendom bends its ear to the voice of gladness that thrills from our land, my saying so will suffice to make some men decry me as opposed to a revival of the work of the Lord. To this I lay my account. If the Lord knows that I am not, I feel not very anxious as to the judgment of men. But which of us incurs the greatest responsibility--you, who proclaim this movement to be a work of grace, or I, who cannot say that I as yet do so regard it? You commit the credit of true religion to cases which have not been proved--you point the attention of the ungodly to individuals whom you declare to be converts, and you call on them to judge of godliness by these; you tell those, who are suddenly impressed, that they have been born again, when you know not whether they were or not; you tell the Church to count on a great accession to her strength, when, so far as you know, only traitors may be added to her ranks; you say, with the voice of thanksgiving to God, that He has done a work which you cannot know that He will acknowledge to be His. Yours, at any rate, is a tremendous responsibility. And if your estimate is false--and you cannot as yet prove it to be true--how fearful the results must be! You will have hardened in ungodliness an unbelieving world; you will have flattered into delusive security precious perishing souls; you will have cheated the Church by inducing her to form a false estimate of her strength; and you will have dishonored God by ascribing to Him work which His hand had never wrought. I merely refrain from judging anything "before the time." What I judge now, I am required to judge. I form an opinion, as one bound to "try the spirits" of the doctrines and modes of service which are the means of advancing the movement. If I do so fairly, I am

so far free from blame. If my estimate is proved to be false as well as unfavorable, I am guilty, and if I formed it under the influence of prejudice, I am very guilty; I suffer in the lack of the hope and gladness by which the hearts of others are so greatly stirred; and I incur a woe, if, under the influence of a biased opinion of the work, I refuse to take part in it, though called to do so by the Lord (Judges 5:23).

Of the means employed in promoting such a work, one is bound to judge. I am not to be blinded by dazzling results. A worthy end does not sanctify all the means that may be used in attaining it, nor does a seemingly good result justify all the means employed in producing it. Many seem to think that if they choose to call a religious movement a work of grace, no fault should be found with any instrumentality employed in advancing it. All must be right, they think, if the result is to be regarded as a revival of the work of God. To censure any doctrine preached or any mode of worship practiced, seems to them to be opposition to the good work, and to tend to mar its progress. They may be of the same opinion, as to the impropriety of some of the means which are employed, with those who do not refrain from condemning them, but for the work's sake they tolerate them. As if the Lord's work could receive aid from ought that was unscriptural! An enemy's hand is surely here. May it not be, that under cover such as this, the deceiver is introducing into the creed and worship of the Church what shall be statedly obstructive to a real work of grace? Some there are who have this fear. It were well if all were careful lest this should be the result of acquiescence in unscriptural teaching and practices.

Some ministers, who took part with hesitation in the movement, justify their having done so by declaring their object to have been to check irregular tendencies, and to shape the development of the work. And what has been the issue of their prudence? They merely serve to swell the volume, while utterly powerless to control the force, of the current. Hundreds of ministers have I seen, sitting as disciples at the feet of one, whose teaching only showed his ignorance even of "the principles of the doctrine of Christ"; who, to their face, called the churches, which they represented, "first-class mobs"; was organizing before their eyes an association, for religious objects, outside the churches, which may yet prove as troublesome as the naked forces of the world; was casting ridicule on their old forms of worship, which they were sworn to uphold; and was proposing to convert prayer meetings into occasions of religious amusement, a change he certainly did not ask them to approve, without giving them a specimen, which excited the laughter of thousands, and gave to themselves a sensation of merry making in the house of the Lord.

I carefully refrain from forming an estimate of the results of this work, as these are to be found in individual cases. I confine myself to the general character of the movement, in so far as that is determined by the more prominent teaching under which it has advanced, and in connection with its bearing on the religious condition of the country. I most persistently continue to hope that good has been done; for even were I persuaded that Satan was busy in forging counterfeits, I cannot conceive what would induce him to do so, unless he was provoked by a genuine work of grace which he was anxious to discredit and to mar.

There are two reasons why I cannot regard the present religious movement hopefully. 1. Because the doctrine which is the means of impression seems to me to be "another gospel," though a mighty influence. Hyper-Evangelism I call it, because of the loud professions of evangelism made by those who preach it; and because it is just an extreme application of some truths, to the neglect of others which are equally important parts of the great system of evangelic doctrine. 2. Because unscriptural practices are resorted to in order to advance the movement.

In forming an estimate of the doctrine that was mainly effective in advancing the movement, I had sufficient materials at hand. I heard the leading teacher repeatedly, and I perused with care published

specimens of his addresses. I have before me as I write what appears to me amply to justify all that I venture to affirm. Those who were present to hear, will recollect enough to enable them to judge of the correctness of my account of the kind of instruction by which such marked and frequent impressions were produced.

My objection to the teaching to which I refer, is, that it ignores the supreme end of the gospel, which is the manifestation of the Divine glory; and misrepresents it as merely unfolding a scheme of salvation adapted to man's convenience. It drops the first note of the angel's song, in which the gospel is described as "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." This objection has grown and has been confirmed in my mind, by considering, 1. That no pains are taken to present the character and claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, and no indication given of a desire to bring souls, in self-condemnation, to "accept the punishment of their iniquity." 2. That it ignores the sovereignty and power of God in the dispensation of His grace. 3. That it affords no help to discover, in the light of the doctrine of the cross, how God is glorified in the salvation of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. 4. That it offers no precaution against tendencies to antinomianism on the part of those who profess to have believed.

I. No pains are taken to present the character and claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, and no indication given of a desire to bring souls in self-condemnation, to accept the punishment of their iniquity.

The law of God has its place in the book, and its use in the work of God. "By the law is the knowledge of sin"; and the Spirit, who convinces of sin, uses it in that department of His work. A due regard to the glory of God demands that it be so used. Sinners are not to be saved on a misunderstanding as to what they are, and as to what they merit. They must know Him against whom they have sinned. They must know what is justly due to Him from them as His creatures. They must be made acquainted with their iniquity as well as guilt, as sinners. And through the coming of the commandment sin must "revive" in their consciousness, so that they know that they are desperately wicked, as surely as that their persons are condemned to die. Without this they can have no conception of gospel grace. Any hope attained to without this, can only be based on a misunderstanding, and must involve dishonor to God. God is not to be conceived of as one who has to study man's convenience only, instead of supremely consulting his own glory. It should be an aim of preaching, therefore, to bring sinners to plead guilty before God; to feel themselves, in excuseless guilt, shut up to the sovereign mercy of Him against whom they have sinned. The attainment of this may be the result of a moment's working of the power of God, or it may be reached only after a protracted process; but to this all must come who are reconciled to God.

True, it cannot be expected that the operation of the applied law, on an unrenewed soul, can ever bring him to submit to God's claims as a Lawgiver, or to His terms as a Savior. Subjection of the will to the law, is as impossible as submission to "the righteousness of God," on the part of an unregenerate sinner.

And this is one reason why this is not insisted on in ultra-evangelic teaching. To insist on God's claims--to consider what is due to God in the personal transaction between the sinner and Him as to peace--would bring the moral as well as the legal difficulty into view, and thus the necessity of the new birth would have to be faced as well as that of atonement. The latter cannot be passed over by any who profess to preach the gospel at all, though in the teaching referred to it is most perfunctorily dealt with; but the former, as shutting up souls to repentance, to which only the renewed can attain, is most persistently ignored.

And this is done professedly in the interests of gospel grace. To require men to consider the claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, in order that they may feel themselves shut up to His mercy as Sovereign, seems

to such teachers to be raising an obstruction between sinners and the grace of the gospel. It seems hard to them that man's convenience should be interfered with by the claims of God. A call to repentance, therefore, never issues from their trumpet. In their view, there is no place for repentance either before or after conversion. A vague brief sense of danger is all that is required at the outset; and converts are taught that, once they have believed, they are not to remember and mourn for their sins. "Why raise up your sins again, to think of and to confess them?" their leading teacher said to them; "for were they not disposed of nearly two thousand years ago? Just believe this, and go home, and sing, and dance." It is no wonder, then that they decry as not evangelical the preaching that does not ignore repentance. But they forget that, on the same ground, they might bring this charge against the Word of God itself; and not only against the Book of Exodus, but against the Epistle to the Romans as well, the writer of which had not learned how to bring men to know the grace of the gospel, except by bringing them first to know God and His law, their sin and its demerit, and their hearts and their desperate wickedness. What a strange delusion men labor under who imagine that what is essential to any right appreciation of the grace of God and to an intelligent submission to it, must be dispensed with, in order to guard the freeness of the gospel! By a "free gospel" they can only intend to indicate a gospel that suits a sinner's disposition, instead of being adapted to his state, that dispenses with all humbling of the soul before God, and of which man, unaided, can make sure. Verily, for the defense of such a gospel, repentance must be excluded.

The favorite doctrine of sudden conversion is practically a complete evasion of the necessity of repentance. Suddenness is regarded as the rule, and not the exception, in order to get rid of any process preliminary to faith. And on what ground do they establish this rule? Merely on the instances of sudden conversion recorded in Scripture. True, there are cases not a few of sudden conversion recorded in Scripture, and there have been such instances since the Book of God was sealed. There was a wise and gracious design in making them thus marked at the outset. They were intended, by their extraordinary suddenness, to show to all ages the wondrous power of God. But was their suddenness designed to indicate the rule of God's acting in all ages? This it will be as difficult to establish, as that the miraculous circumstances attending some of them were intended to be perpetual. The work of conversion includes what we might expect to find detailed in a process. There can be no faith in Christ without some sense of sin, some knowledge of Christ--such as never was possessed before--and willingness, resulting from renewal, to receive Him as a Savior from sin. If a hearty intelligent turning to God in Christ be the result of conversion, it is utterly unwarrantable to expect that, as a rule, conversion shall be sudden. Indeed, the suddenness is rather a ground of suspicion than a reason for concluding that the work is God's. The teaching of Christ, in the parable of the sower, warrants this suspicion. They who are represented as suddenly receiving the word with joy are those who, in time of temptation, fall away. Suddenness and superficiality are there associated, and with both ephemerality. In the experience of some, whose conversion was sudden, there was, as in the case of the Apostle of the Gentiles, an after-process, intended to prepare them for useful service in the church. And is it not the fact, that those, who were most remarkable, in latter times, for their godliness and their usefulness, were the subjects of a detailed and extended process, before attaining to "peace and joy in believing"?

The extremely unguarded use of the statement, that it is through faith, and not through feeling, salvation is attained, tends to the same effect. True, there is a danger of hampering oneself by the idea that, unless there is a certain state of conscious feeling, an effort to believe is vain. There is a danger, too, of substituting feeling for faith, and of resting on a certain experience, instead of on what is objectively presented in the Word, as a ground of hope. All earnest souls are apt, at a certain stage, to search for the warrant of faith in their own state of feeling, rather than in the written Word. True, reception of Christ is the

immediate duty of all who hear the gospel; and nought can excuse their not doing so. But is it not extremely dangerous even to appear to say that faith is the opposite of feeling? Does not faith itself express a state of feeling? Is it not an exercise of the heart as well as of the understanding? Those who so thoroughly separate faith and feeling, are led to regard faith as merely the assent of the understanding to certain statements regarding the way of salvation. And is it not the practice of some evangelists to press men to believe certain propositions, while telling them that their state of feeling is to be made no account of, that they are just to receive these as true, and that, if they do so, they are to regard that belief as faith, and at once to conclude that they are saved because they have so believed? It seems to be imagined that, in order to have in faith the opposite of works, it is necessary to reduce it to mere belief. But in reality this is but to place it on the same footing with works. Faith, as mere belief, is considered to be something within the power of all; and, by reducing it to a minimum of effort, both as to time and action, it is made to appear to be something different from protracted self-righteous labor. But it is only different as an easier thing for men to do. Never can faith be truly seen to be opposed to works, till it is considered as indicating a state of feeling--till it is seen to be a "believing with the heart"; for it is only when it is regarded as a hearty reception of Christ Himself as "all in all," that salvation through faith can be recognized as salvation by grace. To some minds the facility and the suddenness seem essential to the graciousness of faith. They reduce it to mere belief, that men may appear able to do it, and it must be done at once, that there may be no room for repentance, and that it may appear to be something else than a work. But there never was more legal doctrine delivered, than that of those, who urge men to mere belief, in order to salvation.

II. It ignores the sovereignty and power of God in the dispensation of His grace.

This omission is usually justified on the ground, that references to these are apt to be abused or to give needless offense. If men are to be told that salvation is entirely at the disposal of God's sovereign will, and that sinners are so utterly lost that only the working of God's power can move them either to will or to do what is required by the claims of the law and by the call of the gospel, then the result will be, that some will be offended and go away, others fold their hands and sleep, and others still sink down into despair. Am I therefore to refrain from proclaiming Jehovah as King? Am I to be silenced by fear of the result of telling that it is His right to regulate, by His own sovereign will, His own work of grace? Am I not rather very specially called to announce His sovereignty in connection with salvation? In no other sphere does he appear more gloriously kingly than in this. Did not the Divine preacher make the sovereignty of God the theme of His very first sermon, though His hearers were thereby so incensed, that only by a miracle could He preserve His life from their fury (Luke 4)? And did He not, in all His preaching, ascribe salvation to the sovereign will of the Father who sent Him?

Men, anxious to secure a certain result, and determined to produce it, do not like to think of a controlling will, to whose sovereign behests they must submit, and of the necessity of almighty power being at work, whose action must be regulated by another will than theirs. Certain processes must lead to certain results. This selfish earnestness, this proud resolve to make a manageable business of conversion work, is intolerant of any recognition of the sovereignty of God. "Go to the street," said the great American evangelist to a group of young ladies who were seated before him, "and lay your hand on the shoulder of every drunkard you meet, and tell him that God loves him, and that Christ died for him; and if you do so, I see no reason why there should be an unconverted drunkard in Edinburgh for forty-eight hours.

There is of course frequent reference to the Spirit, and an acknowledgment of the necessity of His work, but there is, after all, very little allowed to Him to do; and bustling men feel and act as if somehow His power was under their control. There is a prevalent notion, only in a few utterances assuming definite

shape, that there is a pervading gracious presence of the Holy Spirit, requiring only, in order to its effective influence, a certain state of feeling and certain amount of effort. There is prayer, but many who engage in it look around them for an overflowing, rather than upward for an outpouring, of the Spirit of promise. There is prayer, but it is rather to constitute a ground of hope, than the result of reaching that which is set before us in the gospel. Faith in the efficacy of prayer is far more common than faith in the Hearer of prayer. Prayer, in order to produce expectation, may seem to be followed by an answer, when the susceptibility, caused by the hopefulness it engendered, accounts for all the result.

It is true that it is quite as unwarrantable to expect the outpouring of the Spirit, without prayer for His coming, as it is to hope for His coming because this has been asked. There is a call and encouragement to ask, and those who ask in faith shall never ask in vain; but the asking is under the sovereign control of God as surely as the giving. I believe, too, that men professing to ask for the coming of the Comforter, may really be asking something else, and may, in answer to their cry, be receiving as a judgment what they regard as a mercy. It is also true that to pray for the Spirit's coming, and not to employ, in all earnestness, the means which He has been wont to acknowledge and to use, is nothing short of presumption. To wait for His coming is not to be idle till He comes. But it is also true, that those, who are blindly craving some excitement, may be preparing instruments to be used by some other power than that of the Spirit of the Lord. The prayers and the efforts, the asking and the preparation, may correspond, but the one may be directed towards something else than that which is presented in the promise of the Lord, and the other adapted for another hand than that by which the promise is fulfilled. It is true, besides, that the withholding of the Spirit, in His gracious influences, is a token of the Lord's anger provoked by iniquity, but it is terrible to think of an impenitent people, regarding as a gracious work of God that which is really not so, that, under covert of an imagined mercy, they may remain at ease in their sins, and congratulate themselves on having been favored by the Lord, without having to part with their idols.

In the present movement, at any rate, there seems to be little that is allowed of work to the Spirit of the Lord. In the prominent teaching, there is no exposure of the total depravity and the utter spiritual impotence of souls "dead in trespasses and sins." To face this reality in the light of God's word, would be to discover the necessity of the Almighty agency of the Holy Ghost. This cannot be endured. But another reason must be assigned for avoiding the doctrine of total depravity. To preach it is decried as treating men as inert matter, to be wrought upon, but never to be active. This must not be preached to sinners, it is said, lest they fold their hands and sleep. They are intelligent and responsible beings, and must be differently dealt with. And how do you propose to treat them? Are you to hide from them what they must know, ere they can ever act as intelligent beings in dealing with their souls' condition? Are you to set them to work, as if they were what they are not? Is this your way of urging them to act as becomes responsible beings? You would hoodwink their understandings, and misdirect the movements to which their sense of responsibility urges them! But you hide the true state of things from yourselves as well as from them. You do so that you may have hope of success. You have no faith in the Spirit of God. You cannot bear, therefore, to discover that there is a great work for Him to do; and you cannot endure to feel dependent on His love, for you cannot trust in it as the love of God; and if you think of it as Divine, you know that you must also think of it as sovereign. And you would fain account the work to be done as not too much for your own power of persuasion; for you are ambitious of having it to do yourselves, as well as hopeless of having it done by the Lord. And yet, forsooth, you are the men who have faith, and those who differ from you are the dupes of unbelief. Yes, you are men of faith, but yours is faith in men. The man who can cry in faith for life, with a valley of dry bones before him, is the man who has faith in God.

Sometimes, an address may be heard, in which the necessity of regeneration is very strongly urged, but this is sure to be followed by some statement that blunts the edge of all that was said before. After some strong sayings about the necessity of regeneration, in one of the leader's addresses, the question was put, "How is this change to be attained?" And the speaker answered the question by saying, "You believe, and then you are regenerated"; and in confirmation, he referred to John 1:12, forgetting the verse which follows! Faith regenerates! If it does so, as the act of a living soul, then the soul could not have been dead in sins. If it was, whence came the life put forth in believing? If that regenerating faith was the act of a dead soul, then a dead man, by his own act, brings himself alive! The same teacher said on another occasion, "God would not call men to believe, unless they had the power to do so." I would like to hear his answer to the question, Can natural men "love God with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," who yet are required by God to do so? And how would he expound the words, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"; and the words of Jesus, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him."

There is a faith which can be exercised without the gracious aid of the Holy Ghost, but it cannot be the faith that is "to the saving of the soul." That is expressly declared to be "of the operation of God," and to require for its production "the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." That faith stakes the eternal all of an immortal being, who is a lost sinner, on the truth of Divine testimony. Can one do so who does not regard the testimony as Divine? Can one so regard it who does not realize that God is, and that He speaks in that testimony to him? Can a dead soul thus believe? As well expect a sense of your presence, and a response to your words, from the bones that lie mouldering in the grave, beside which you stand and speak. True, there may be a persuasion of the truth, arising from its correspondence to the dictates of conscience, and because of evidence which has led to a rational conviction of its divinity; for in the grave, in which lie the spiritually dead, there is still intellectual life and a moral faculty that may occasionally be very active. But this is something very different from the faith in God, which is the gift of God.

That faith, too, respects the person of Christ. It does so, not merely as looking to the historical personage who appears in the inspired record, nearly two thousand years apart in the hazy past from us, who has left a gospel and a salvation with us, with which, apart from His person, we can deal by faith. It not only realizes Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ and the Son of God, but it apprehends Him as a living present Savior in the testimony of God regarding Him. It actually receives Him as He is actually presented by God. It embraces Himself in order to finding all in Him. It is not merely belief in testimony, it is also trust in the person who is presented therein. It is the homage of confidence in and submission to the Son of God as Jesus the Christ of God. That faith, besides, implies unreserved dependence on the grace of God. It is not merely taking advantage of a convenient ground of hope. It is an acknowledgement, at the foot stool of the Divine throne, of being justly condemned and of being utterly helpless,—It is the acceptance of salvation from the hands of the Sovereign in order "to the praise of His grace."

That faith is, moreover, the cordial reception of Christ in order to salvation from all sin. It is not the mere appropriation of the boon of deliverance from death. This is all that is desired by those who allow themselves to be hurried vaguely to believe in the love of God, and the substitutionary death of Jesus. True faith is the act of a soul who, up to that hour, was a lover of sin and an enemy to holiness, but who now cordially receives the Savior in order to the destruction of what he loved, and to the attainment of what he hated before. Can a man thus believe who has not been regenerated by the Holy Ghost? And

why hide from sinners that they cannot? Surely this cannot be wisely done in order to make the gospel more manifest. Which knows best about the grace of the gospel--the man who thinks he is saved by grace through a faith which he owes to himself alone, or the man who has also learned that the faith, through which he is saved, is not of himself, but "is the gift of God"? Did Jesus hide this in His preaching from His hearers? Did He do so in His first sermon (Luke 4)? Did He do so in His first recorded dealing with an inquirer (John 3)? Did He not openly proclaim this in His great gospel sermon addressed to a multitude by the sea of Galilee (John 6)? It was while preaching that sermon He said, "No man can come unto me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw Him."

It does raise one's indignation to hear some men speak of what would conserve, to the Spirit of God, His place and His work, as a mere obscuration of the grace of the gospel, and a fettering of souls in bondage. But it grieves one's heart to know that this is tolerated, and even approved of, by some who ought to be more zealous for the grace and glory of the Lord, than to be able to endure it.

III. No care is taken to show, in the light of the doctrine of the cross, how God is glorified in the salvation of a sinner.

The designed overliness with which the doctrine of sin is stated, necessarily leads to this. The omission of any definite unfolding of the law's claims, and of any distinct tracing of the sinner's relation to it and to God--the lack of all that would raise the question, "How can God be just in justifying the ungodly?"--leaves the anxious in such a state of mind and feeling, that all they require, to satisfy them, is to discover that they have a convenient warrant to hope. Neither teacher nor disciple seems to desiderate aught besides the assurance, that salvation can be reached through faith. The gospel seems convenient for man, and that suffices. How salvation is to the praise of God's glory the one is not careful to show, the other is not anxious to know. To any unprejudiced observer, this must have appeared a marked feature of revival teaching.

True, much use is made of Christ's substitutionary death. But it is usually referred to only as disposing of sin, so that it no longer endangers him who believes that Christ died for him--who accepts Christ as his substitute. This use of the doctrine of substitution has been very frequent and very effective. Christ, as the substitute of sinners, is declared to be the object of faith. But it is His substitution rather than Himself. To believe in the substitution is what produces the peace. This serves to remove the sense of danger. There is no direct dealing with the person who was the substitute. There is no appreciation of the merit of His sacrifice because of the Divine glory of Him by whom it was offered. Faith, in the convenient arrangement for deliverance from danger, is substituted for trust in the Person who glorified God on the earth, and "in whom" alone we can "have redemption through his blood." The blood of Jesus was referred to, and there was an oft-repeated "Bible reading" on the subject of "the blood"; but what approximation to any right idea regarding it could there be in the mind, and what but misleading in the teaching, of one who could say, "Jesus left His blood on earth to cleanse you, but He brought His flesh and bones to heaven"?

Souls who have a vague sense of danger excited by the sensational, instead of an intelligent conviction of sin, produced by the light and power of applied truth, are quite ready to be satisfied with such teaching as this. To these, such doctrine will bring all the peace they are anxious to obtain. But what is the value of that peace? It is no more than the quiet of a dead soul, from whom has been removed an unintelligent sense of danger. A true sense of peace with God there cannot be, unless a sinner, assured that God was glorified by Him who died on the cross, can, with reverence of His glorious name, approach Him in the right of the crucified and exalted Jesus, having hope of acceptance in His sight. To this he cannot attain

till, in the light of the Son's glory, he appreciates the merit of Jesus' blood, comes to Christ Himself to appropriate His blood in Him, approaches through Him to God, and receives, by the application of the promise of peace, a persuasion of acceptance, in faith, from the throne.

Where there is no wounding, there can be no healing, of the conscience. The doctrine that can do neither can only do deceiver's work. A sinner having peace without knowing, or caring to know, how the law which he has transgressed hath been magnified, how the justice that demanded his death hath been satisfied, how the name of God which was by him dishonored has by Christ been glorified, and how what availed for these ends can be a ground of hope to him in the presence of the God with whom he hath to do, may have enjoyment, may be zealous, may be active, but cannot have "a good hope through grace."

IV. No precaution is offered against a tendency to antinomianism in those who profess to have believed.

Yea, this tendency must be fostered by the teaching given to them. If the law of God has not its own place accorded to it, in connection with the sinner's natural relation to God, and in order to conviction of sin, it is not likely to get it at a later stage. The man, who is disposed to think of his sin, as a great calamity, rather than as a heinous crime, is not likely either to reverence God or to respect His law. To his view, salvation is something which it would not be fair to withhold from him, rather than a gracious gift which a sovereign God is glorified in bestowing. The government under which he ventures to claim his salvation presents nothing venerable to his mind. He thinks of an easy reign of mercy, under which he can be as imperious as if his own will were law. In his altered position, it is easy for him to ignore the law of God. He never had to face it; and, if he has faith without life, there is nothing in him to incline him to do so now. Not having respect to the standard of God's law, it is easy for him to imagine that he is without sin. He is taught that now he has nothing to do with confession of sin, because his sins were long ago disposed of, and that he should not now remember them. As for "the corruption of his whole nature," it never was a trouble to him, and is less likely to be so now than before, since a delusive peace has drugged his soul to sleep. Antinomianism leading, in the first instance, to perfectionism, must be the result of the teaching under which he has been trained. In his leader's prayers he never hears any confession of sin, and he is apt to think that, if he follows him, he must be right. True, he is urged to work; and there is no service, however high, which, during his novitiate, he is not directed to attempt. The work which he is disposed to choose, and the first work he is instructed to engage in, is to preach to others what he himself has found. Meetings are multiplied that he may attend them, and crowds are gathered that he may address them. The excitement of his first impressions is thus to be kept up by the bustle of evangelistic service. And what kind of being is he likely to become under such training as this? A molluscous, flabby creature, without pith or symmetry, breathing freely only in the heated air of meetings, craving to be pampered with vapid sentiment, and so puffed up by foolish flattery, as to be in a state of chronic flatulency, requiring relief in frequent bursts of hymn singing, in spouting addresses as void of Scripture truth as of common sense, and in belching flippant questions in the face of all he meets. Self-examination he discards as a torture only meant for slaves, humility and watchfulness as troublesome virtues which the wise will eschew, secret communions with God as a relic of less enlightened and less busy times, and the quiet habitual discharge of home duties, in the fear of God, as a tame routine for legalists.

The doctrine of assurance, which is preached, tends to the same effect. Assurance is regarded as the direct result of faith, or as essential to its exercise. A consciousness of faith is of itself deemed a sufficient ground of assurance. There is no place at all allowed to an attestation of faith by works. True, faith does often rise into assurance as to the sufficiency of Christ as its object, and of the Word of God as its warrant. There is a hope arising from the consciousness of this faith, as well as a hope occasioned by its exercise.

But there is also a place reserved by God for the hope arising from the attestation of faith by works. And the Lord calls the believer to examine himself, as to fruits which his faith produceth, in order to ascertain that his faith is genuine, and that therefore Christ is already his. "Faith without works is dead." Where there is a careful disallowing of self-examination, there is sufficient proof of the law being ignored as the authoritative rule of the Christian's life. Suggestions to this exercise, are not infrequently decried as temptations of Satan, or as necessarily the result of backsliding. And why so? Because it is imagined that a man is not required to prove himself to be a genuine believer, by doing the will of Christ, in obedience to His law. And yet it will be on the ground of works, as evidence of true faith, that Christ Himself, on His great white throne, will justify the verdict which proclaims them blessed, who are heirs of the kingdom prepared by His Father.

A religion without reverence and without contrition can alone be fostered under such teaching as this. But now, as surely as of old, "Thus saith the Lord," "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Now, as of old, the heirs of the "kingdom which cannot be moved," "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear"; and only in that measure can they taste "the peace of God," and "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I make no attempt to trace, to its source, the influence exerted in producing the marked effects resulting from the present religious movement. I confine my attention to the advantage afforded by the feeling which preceded that movement, and to certain elements of power in the means employed to advance it.

It was preceded by a very prevalent desire for a change. All classes of religious society seemed to be stirred by a wistful longing for something to break up the dead monotony, of which all were wearying. Some were actuated by genuine spiritual feeling. They felt that tokens of the Lord's absence abounded; and turning to the Lord they cried for the manifestation of His power and glory. Others, strangers to stated spiritual enjoyment in the means of grace, were longing for some change--some excitement to lift them out of their dullness--and for some bustle in which they might take their share of service. Others still, who knew no happiness in the house of God, and had no desire for His presence, would fain that something new were introduced into the mode of service which they felt so jading. The excitement of a revival would be to them a relief. "Special services" they strongly craved. Prayer for a revival was called for; and many were ready to take part in the meetings convened for that purpose. These meetings resulted in the hope of an answer. Though but few truly appreciated what was needed, and really dealt with God, we cannot but hope that something was done by the Lord in answer to their cry. But many there were who merely craved a change--something to relieve them of the tedium of a routine in which they found no enjoyment, because they were estranged from God--and who joined, in asking this, with those who were asking something better. These were the persons disposed to make much of their prayers, and who found it easy to hope just because they had chosen to ask; and they may have received, though not in mercy, what they sought. The expectation of a change, at any rate, was general. There was an opening up of men's minds to an expected influence. This tended to affect even the Gallios who "cared for none of those things." A revival was talked of, prayed for, and expected, and thus a general susceptibility of impression was produced. Prayer meetings, fostering the desire and expectation of a change, were in all places the pioneers of the movement. Those who heard that a revival had taken place elsewhere, sought that it might reach their own locality. Many blindly asked for what was done in other places, instead of seeking the fulfillment of the Lord's promise.

In course of time, musical practicings were added to prayer meetings, as preparation for a revival! From both the addresses and the music much was expected, when evangelistic deputies arrived. What the

effect would have been, had the awakened expectancy been left to be operated on by the stated ministrations of the sanctuary, or by extraordinary efforts that introduced no departure from the usual mode of worship, no one can tell; but I cannot refrain from expressing my persuasion, that the result would have been a healthier one than that which new appliances developed.

But on this wakeful state of mind was brought to bear a system of doctrine that ignored those aspects of the truth which are most offensive to "the natural man," and that, while offering something that seemed plausible to an unenlightened conscience, seemed to conserve the old heart's imagined independence of the sovereign and almighty grace of God, and by ignoring repentance preserved to it its idols. The gospel, modified to suit the taste of unrenowned men, was welcome. The recommendations of it, given by men of influence, tended to put down suspicion, and to induce the public to receive it as "the gospel of the grace of God." The new style of teaching made it seem such an easy thing to be a Christian. To find oneself easily persuaded to believe what was presented as the gospel, and to think that by this faith salvation was secured, and that all cause of anxiety was for ever gone, gave a new and pleasing sensation, which thousands were willing to share.

And once the movement had begun it could command an indefinite supply of agents. All who say they were converted are set to work. Anyone who can tongue it deftly, can take a part,--he requires neither knowledge nor experience. The excitement is kept up by the bustle of public service. No fear is felt of lifting up novices "lest they fall into the condemnation of the devil." That feeling may have been suitable in Paul's day, but it has now ceased to be so regarded. But there is a fear of converts ceasing to seem to be so, if they are not kept busy in religious service. A proselytizing bustle must therefore be the outcome of their faith. There is an utter avoidance of testing work on the part of their instructors; but attesting work enough is done. They have at once been proclaimed Christians in their own hearing, and in the presence of thousands; and those who presume to tell them this are quite ready to join with themselves in thinking that they are fit for any service that they may choose to try. A season apart, to be alone with God, a solemn time for careful counting of the cost, has from Christ the double recommendation of His example and of His precept, but is desired neither by nor for these so-called converts.

To these advantages for effect were added various devices, which, though quite unscriptural, or rather, because they were so, were fraught with impressing power.

Unscriptural Devices

1. Excessive hymn singing is one of these. The singing of uninspired hymns even in moderation, as a part of public worship, no one can prove to be scriptural; but the excess and the misdirection of the singing in this movement were irrational as well. Singing ought to be to the Lord; for singing is worship. But singing the gospel to men has taken the place of singing praise to God. This, at an rate, is something new--that indeed is its only recommendation--and when the singing is also good, its melody combines with its novelty to make an impression. The singing produced an effect. Many professed to have been converted by the hymns.

2. The use of instrumental music was an additional novelty, pleasing to the kind of feeling that finds pleasure in a concert. To introduce what is so gratifying there, into the service of the house of God, is to make the latter palatable to those to whom spiritual worship is an offense. The organ sounds effectively touch chords which nothing else would thrill. To Scottish Presbyterians this was something new; but as their spiritual guides did not object to it, why should they? Tided thus, by their pastors, over all difficulties

which their scruples might occasion, they found it pleasant to enjoy the new sensation. They could be at the concert and in church at the same time. They could get at once something for conscience and something for the flesh.

And yet it is not difficult to prove that the use of instrumental music in the worship of God is unscriptural, and that therefore all who have subscribed the Confession of Faith are under solemn vow against it. There was a thorough change, in the mode of worship, effected by the revolution which introduced the New Testament dispensation. So thorough is this change that no part of the old ritual can be a precedent to us. For all parts of the service of the house of God there must be New Testament precept or example. No one will pretend that for instrumental music, in the worship of God, there is any authority in New Testament Scripture. "The fruit of the lips," issuing from hearts that make "melody to the Lord," is the only form of praise it sanctions. The Church of Rome claims a right to introduce into the worship of God any innovation it lists; the Church of England allows what is not expressly forbidden in Scripture; but Scotch Presbyterians are bound, by the Confession of Faith, to disallow all that is not appointed in Scripture (Confession, chapter 21). How those, who allow the use of instrumental music in our Assembly Hall, can reconcile their doing so with their ordination vows, I cannot even conjecture.

It may seem strange, but it is quite as true as it is strange, that those who are ready to plead that principles and doctrine, inculcated under the former dispensation, are no longer entitled to our acceptance, unless redelivered with New Testament sanctions, are just the parties who are also ready to go back to Old Testament antecedents in the mode of worship. What is eternally true is treated as if it were temporary, and that which has "vanished away" is regarded as perpetual. But if the ancient mode of conducting the service of praise furnishes an example for all time, on the self-same ground you are entitled to choose what you list out of the ceremonies of Old Testament worship. The altar and the sacrifice may be defended as surely as the organ.

"But we use the organ only as an aid," it is said. "It is right that we should do our best in serving the Lord; and if the vocal music is improved by the instrumental accompaniment, then surely the organ may be used." On the same ground you might argue for the use of crucifixes and pictures, and for all the paraphernalia of the Popish ritual. "These," you might say, "make an impression on minds that would not otherwise be at all affected. They vividly present before worshipers the scenes described in Scripture, and if, as aids, they serve to do so, they surely cannot be wrong." To this, there are three replies, equally good against the argument for instrumental music.

They are not prescribed in New Testament Scripture, and therefore they must not be introduced into New Testament worship.

They are incongruous with the spirituality of the New Testament dispensation.

These additions but help to excite a state of feeling which militates against, instead of aiding, that which is produced by the word. An organ may make an impression, but what is it but such as may be made more thoroughly at the opera?

It may help to regulate the singing, but does God require this improvement? And whence arises the taste for it? It cannot be from the desire to make the praise more fervent and spiritual, for it only tends to take attention away from the heart, whose melody the Lord requires. It is the craving for pleasurable aesthetics, for the gratification of mere carnal feeling, that desires the thrill of organ sounds, to touch pleasingly the heart that yields no response to what is spiritual. If the argument against the use of the organ, in the

service of praise, is good, it is at least equally so against its use in the service of preaching. If anything did "vanish away," it surely is the use of all such accessories in connection with the exhibition of Christ to men.

3. The novelty of the "inquiry room" was another effective aid in advancing this movement. It is declared to be desirable to come into close personal contact with the hearers of the gospel immediately after a sermon, in order to ascertain their state of feeling, to deepen impressions that may have been made, and to give a helping hand to the anxious. Such is the plea for "the inquiry room." In order that it may be supplied, hearers are strongly urged, after a sensational address, to take the position of converts or inquirers. They are pressed and hurried to a public confession. Strange means are resorted to, in order to commit them, by an open avowal of a certain state of feeling. But what right has any individual, not authorized by the Church of Christ, to do so,--to insist on a public confession on the part of anyone? Even the Church can admit to public confession only after trial. And the admission must be in connection with the dispensation of the appointed sealing ordinances. But here is a stranger, who never saw their faces before, hurrying people, whom a sensational address has excited, to make public profession of faith, thus associating them, without possibility of trial, with the Christians of the locality, and involving the credit of religion in their future conduct before the world. This, surely, is both unwise and presumptuous. How unlike this to the Divine Teacher's way! When a crowd of seemingly anxious souls gathered around Him, instead of urging them to confession, He tested them by searching doctrine, and the result was, that instead of crowding an inquiry room, they "went away and walked no more with Him." I feel persuaded that if an excited crowd, at a revival meeting, were to be addressed as were the multitude at the Sea of Galilee, the conductor would put the speaker down, denounce him for casting a gloom over the meeting, and give him no other opportunity of dealing with inquirers.

Why are men so anxious to keep the awakened in their own hands? They, at any rate, seem to act as if conversion was all their own work. They began it, and they seem determined to finish it. If it is at all out of their hand, they seem to think that it will come to nothing. They must at once, and on the spot, get these inquirers persuaded to believe, and get them also to say that they do. They may fall to pieces if they are not braced round by a band of profession. Their names or numbers must, ere the night passes, be added to the roll of converts. They are gathered into the inquiry room, to act in a scene that looks more like a part of a stage play than aught more serious and solemn. Oh, what trifling with souls goes on in these inquiry rooms, as class after class is dealt with in rude haste, very often by teachers who never "knew the grace of God in truth!" The inquiry room may be effective in securing a hasty profession of faith, but it is not an institution which the Church of Christ should adopt or countenance.

4. Even prayer meetings are converted into factories of sensation. Brief prayers and brief addresses to the stroke of hammer, or the toll of bell, silent prayers, hymns, which often contain a considerable amount of nonsense, and occasionally of something worse, sung to the strains of an organ, and a chance to address or prayer given to anyone who chooses to rise and speak,--such are the arrangements of the new prayer meeting. The silent prayer, what is it? It is secret prayer, and therefore ought to be prayer in secret. It must be secret, just because it is silent. And where is it engaged in? In the closet? No; it was Christ who directed it to be there. There are other leaders now, and they direct that it should be in open assembly. Christ would have men, when they pray secretly, to enter their closet and shut the door. Now it must be done so that those who do it "may be seen of men." And this device, so directly opposed to the mind of Christ, is lauded as if nothing could be better. And it is becoming the habit now of worshipers as they enter the house of God. They assume, before the eyes of hundreds, the attitude of prayer, to do, in the public assembly, what Christ directed to be done in the closet. If they intend this as a public confession of their

sin, in neglecting prayer in their closet, such confession would not be at all uncalled for, if duly made. They who forget to do it where Christ required it to be done, are the persons most likely to do it where it can only be a bit of will-worship and formality.

The device of "open meeting," what of it? It is simply ceasing to take care that, in the worship of God, "all things be done decently and in order"; and giving the place to those who have conceit and tongue, and nought beside, which ought to be filled by those who in honor prefer others to themselves, and who seek grace to "serve with reverence and godly fear."

I have had to endure the trial of watching over a darling child, during her dying hours. Spasm, succeeding spasm, was the only movement indicating life, each one, as it came, shattering the frame which it convulsed, and thus wearing out its strength. While the spasms lasted I knew there still was life, but I also knew that these must soon end in death. There was life, but it was dying, and the convulsions of life soon ended in the stillness of death. But after the double pain came the ecstasy of a resurrection hope, and my heart could sing beside the grave, that covered for a season my dead out of sight. With still greater grief should I look on my Church, in a spasmodic state, subject to convulsions, which only indicate that her life is departing, the result of revivals got up by men. It will be a sad day for our country if the men, who luxuriate in the excitement of man-made revivals, shall with their one-sided views of truth, which have ever been the germs of serious errors, their lack of spiritual discernment, and their superficial experience, become the leaders of religious thought and the conductors of religious movements. Already they have advanced as many as inclined to follow them, far in the way to Arminianism in doctrine, and to Plymouthism in service. They may be successful in galvanizing, by a succession of sensational shocks, a multitude of dead, till they seem to be alive, and they raise them from their crypts, to take a place amidst the living in the house of the Lord; but far better would it be to leave the dead in the place of the dead, and to prophesy to them there, till the living God himself shall quicken them. For death will soon resume its sway. Stillness will follow the temporary bustle, and the quiet will be more painful than the stir. But to whatever extent this may be realized in the future of the Church in Scotland, our country shall yet share, in common with all lands, in the great spiritual resurrection that will be the morning work of that day of glory, during which "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth," and "all nations shall be blessed in Messiah, and shall call Him blessed." Meantime, were it not for the hope of this, it would be impossible to endure to think of the present, and of the immediate future, of the cause of true religion in our land. The dead, oh, how dead! the living, oh, how undiscerning! And if there continue to be progress in the direction in which present religious activity is moving, a negative theology will soon supplant our Confession of Faith, the good old ways of worship will be forsaken for unscriptural inventions, and the tinsel of a superficial religiousness will take the place of genuine godliness.

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