

The Fight for the Reformed Faith

The Decline of Reformation Calvinism in 19th Century Scotland

PART TWO

THE SERPENT COMETH - HATH GOD SAID?

By the summer of 1874 the mass waves of religious enthusiasm entrained by the Moody campaigns had passed their meridian as the American comet returned south of the border, before finally setting sail for his homeland. But he left Scotland in a turmoil behind him, the “generous evangelicals”,²⁶ inflated like gas balloons, now had to face the humdrum of ordinary, everyday church life....the excitement of the big meetings had passed, and in the emotional trough of the aftermath sudden deflation, reaction, and large-scale apostasy of the “converts” became commonplace enough.

Into this emotional and spiritual trough Dr. John Kennedy shot a lightening bolt with his famous tract: “Hyper-Evangelism”. The explosive reactions from Bonar and the “generous evangelicals”, with Kennedy’s “last word” in the debate can be read in the book, “Evangelism: A Reformed Debate” reviewed in issue No. 22 of the BRJ. The Free Kirk mirrored the whole evangelical world in Scotland in those times, divided as it was between “generous evangelicals” like Bonar, and “Old School Calvinists” like Kennedy. With the Moody siren now muted, Kennedy launched into a serious polemic via tracts and newspaper articles, in which he surveyed the whole scene of Scottish Church life and made forboding prognostications on the basis of what he could see.²⁷

The truth was awful. After massive nation-wide “revivals” in 1839, more localised revivals in 1840 and 1841, and then again nationally in 1859-60, then the “Moody” campaigns, one might have expected that by 1874 religious life in

²⁶ “Generous evangelicals” is herewith the term used to denominate that wing of the Free Kirk characterised by its liberal approach to doctrine, Confessional Standards, and Scripture. The term was coined in the Free Kirk in those times by N.L. Walker, in his biography of the “generous evangelical” Robert Buchanan. Cf. *British Reformed Journal* No. 22, pp.21ff.

²⁷ A series of articles in 1879 in the *Perthshire Courier* opens up a window into the Scots Church life of those times. These articles have recently been reprinted in the “*Presbyterian Standard*”, the magazine of the James Begg Society.

Scotland would have been positively glowing with godliness and the fruitage of the Spirit. To the contrary, it was by 1874 in a shocking condition. Through just 35 years, punctuated by two “terrific” revivals, then the “mighty” works of Moody, and Scottish religious life had gone rotten. One asks the question: “What good then, were all those revivals?”²⁸ To the superficial observer, to one unfamiliar with spiritual verities, the burgeoning congregations and denominational growth would doubtless have suggested all was well with the churches. To the experienced eye of Kennedy, the nation’s churches were infested with creeping evil. That he was correct in his piercing analysis was to become frighteningly clear.

“Generous evangelicalism”, now an avowed opponent of the “Old School Calvinism”, turned out to be much more than just a stamping-ground for moderate Calvinists, Amyraldians, and Arminians. By the 1870’s it had become a nest of vipers. The insidious breed found amenable breeding conditions in the “generous evangelical” milieu, nay, more, it found that therein it was fawned upon, nursed, encouraged, propagated, and even lauded. “Seed of the Serpent”, of their father the Devil, these evil men had crept in unawares (Gal. 2:4; Jude:4), “before of old ordained to this condemnation”. And with forked tongues like their evil progenitor, these wicked men hissed into the ears of Scotland the age-old skepticism: “Hath God said?” This time the hiss was directed against the Bible, the very inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God.

Strange, but tell-tale, that amongst the most fervent advocates of “revival”, and “religious experience”, amongst those who placed the major premium on “heart-warming” experiences, and on “*knowing* that their sins were forgiven”, those who made much high talk of “being born again”, amongst *them* was the plague of Higher Criticism of the Bible incubated in the Churches. *Their* hearts were to prove the fertile ground for generating and spreading the blight that has cast a curse across the whole vista of Christianity, not only in Scotland, but right across the world.

Strange, because one would have expected such infidel and unbelieving attitudes to the Word of God to have arisen and developed amongst atheists, agnostics, and other so-called free-thinkers, men whose reading of Scripture could only be under the blindness of sin, totally incapable of discerning truly the things of God therein. (So 1 Cor. 2:14). True, some of the worldling skeptics had developed critical theories of the Bible in the 18th century, but it had little effect on the churches until, in the 19th century, it found fertile ground in the hearts of evangelicals.....evangelicals above all! “Generous evangelicals!”

Tell-tale, because at the heart of “generous evangelicalism”, whether it be of the

²⁸ Even **Bonar**, a rank Moody supporter, had to admit the apostasy that marked many after these revivals, even those who apparently had had the most powerful religious experiences. Cf. *Evangelism: A Reformed Debate*; page 88.

moderate Calvinist breed, or of the Amyraldian, or of the outright Arminian, God has essentially been dethroned in order that the premium concern can be man-centered. The subjective "spiritual experience" of "salvation" in the individual, fueled by the hyper-excitements of "revivals" and "campaigns", was exalted above the Word of God, such that any soberminded solid individual who was a stickler for Biblical Orthodoxy was soon denounced by these people as being "dead orthodox", or, as Bonar slurred Kennedy, a "hyper", even a "hyper-hyper Calvinist".

When the subjective "spiritual experience" is exalted above the Word of God in this way, it psychologically replaces the Word of God as the touchstone of Divine Truth, and incipiently, an "inner light" mysticism, akin to Quakerism and Medieval Roman Catholicism gradually takes control of the evangelical scene.²⁹ John Wesley in the 17th century had gone far down the "mysticism" road, imbibing the notions of Romanist "mysticism" from his mother, who herself valued the Romanist *Pugna Spiritualis* of Lorenzo Scupoli.³⁰ Here, in the hands of the Wesleys and others, the subjective "spiritual experience" dogma began to fuel the mass propagation of public mysticism in giant waves of social hysteria that we today denominate as "revivals", waves of which were generated by the clever techniques of itinerant preachers through a period of some 150 years from 1735 on in the Western world.³¹ And it was in the wake of those "revivals" that godless skepticism, Biblical higher

29 "Experientialism" is in fact at the heart, not only of Evangelicalism, but of Liberal Modernism. Enough is said herein to indicate how Evangelicalism was the spawning ground for Higher Criticism and Liberal Modernism, because of its placing of inner experience as paramount over external written Scripture.. Frighteningly, "experientialism" is also at the heart of Buddhism, Hinduism, Spiritism, Voodoo, and Animism. Thus it is that the modern fruitage of the "generous evangelical" vine is one that advocates a "one world religion", in which all dogma is relativized, and only seen as cultural talismans to propagate what is viewed as being the same experience of Divinity whether it be that of the Evangelical, or that of the Pentecostal, or the "nirvana" of the Buddhist. And some have even gone so far as to include in all this the "ecstasy" of the dope addict. In respect of dope addiction, note should be taken here of the massive influence of the English poet **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**, 1772-1834. Coleridge influenced the entire spectrum of religious thinking in Britain in the early 19th Cent. He taught that God was to be experienced via an inner "mystic experience" of which his description was couched in the terms of the new Romanticism breaking across the West in those times. To aid propagation of this inner mystic experience, Coleridge took to opium, became addicted, and suffered broken health. He also taught that the Bible contained "much ineffectual and erroneous material", and that those who adhered to the doctrine of the Divine inspiration of the Bible were "orthodox liars for God". Cf. entry "Coleridge" in **IVP New Theological Dictionary** (Leicester IVP 1988) in loc. See also **D.W. Bebbington: "Evangelicalism in Modern Britain-1730's to the 1980's"** (London: Unwin Hyman 1989) for how Coleridge was intimately involved with the proto-Charismatic Scots Presbyterian Edward Irving, influencing him greatly. Bebbington says: "Deep draughts of the teaching of Coleridge fortified Irving to lead the adaptation of Evangelicalism into the Romantic idiom of the day" (p.80).

30 Cf. D.W.Bebbington: Op cit. pages 37 ff. Bebbington points out that John Wesley veered away a little from all this in later life, but never shook it off completely, whereas his brother Charles was subject to a life-long fascination by it. Bebbington saliently points out that **"the Evangelical and the mystic shared a common attachment to experiencing the divine"**.

31 Bebbington: Op cit. passim for many details. But see also especially **George Stout's "George Whitefield, the Divine Dramatist"** (Eerdmans 1994); **Frank Lambert's "Pedlar in Divinity- George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals"** (Princeton University Press 1994); and **C.J. Hardman's "Charles Grandison Finney"** (Baker USA 1990).

criticism, and Modernist theology surprisingly began to flourish.

To one who has had a precious “spiritual experience” of enormous proportions, the “experience” becomes the “Archimedian” point in his psychology. Everything is referenced back to this experience, and judged accordingly. And those evangelicals whose experience was of “accolades of fire”, or “depths of divine love”, were the very ones in Scotland who first came into conflict with the Reformational Creeds and the heritage that stemmed back to Knox. Their convictions concerning the “love of God” (engraved, so they thought, deeply into them by their so-called “born-again” experiences), could not harmonise with the Creedal dogmas of the Sovereignty of God, of Divine Election, of Reprobation, of Imputed Righteousness. The sturdy old doctrines of the Westminster Standards simply rasped against their “love” experiences and instincts, and their allegiance to the Creedal Standards became de facto a loose, not to say, elasticated one. But worse, a perusal of those doctrinal standards yielded the knowledge of how certainly they were founded on Scripture, and henceforth, it was the Word of God with which droves of these Evangelicals began to feel uncomfortable. To them the Old Testament emerged as a dreadful book, even obscurantist with its Genesis creation account, and the Psalms grated on their souls such that hymns with their sentimental Victorian “love-ism” were preferred. And many sayings of Christ in the Gospels they came to feel were sheer unacceptable. As to Saint Paul, they felt his epistles were shot through with material unacceptable to the evangelical “love dogma”. Such evangelicals, some of them professing an “ameliorated” or “moderate” Calvinism, others Arminians, and the ever-present Amyraldians, whilst still high-talking of their “evangelical faith”, having first developed an elasticated allegiance to the Westminster Standards, now went on to manifest an elasticated allegiance to Scripture. To them, “love” was the touchstone that decided whether anything in the Bible was “a word from God”. And this same “love” could, they thought, be the touchstone that could detect inspired “words from God” even outside the Bible, amongst the secular poets and writers of the day. At the heart of this rising liberal modernism was a dreadful misconception, in that it divorced spiritual experience from attachment to the Word of God, and viewed that experience as the primary foundation from which to adjudicate religious dogma.

Into their hearts, the Old Serpent had whispered again the old Edenic insinuation, this time concerning the Bible, “hath God said?” And, so to speak, they relayed this question, first surreptitiously amongst themselves, then, as they gained ascendancy, they broadcast it open and bold, until almost all of Scotland’s religious life fell, hypnotized, under their baleful ophidian stare and the whispering insinuations of doubt.

At first sight it comes as unbelievable that professing “Calvinists”, “born again” in “mighty revivals”, could turncoat like this. But it is the psychology which explains it all here. With the premium being placed on “spiritual experience”, men were effectively, in principle, in radical disjunction from Scripture right from the word “go”, whatever their *professed* allegiance to Scripture and Confession. The

individual man had effectively placed himself on the throne above the Word of God. In line with the prevailing "Zeitgeist", he subordinated God to himself, just as the engineers of that age were subordinating nature to human power. In short, there were men, accomplished ministers of "generous Evangelical Calvinism" in Scotland's churches who could speak with a forked tongue, one moment relegating whole phalanxes of Scripture to the trash can, and the next moment vociferously avowing their "evangelical salvation experience" of "being born again", and amazingly, claiming to be faithful to Scripture!³²

It is amazing now to adumbrate the tide of events on this front. Good, stalwart, orthodox Calvinist men in high places in the Free Kirk looked straight at these people, even examined them, and apparently saw not a whiff of danger. The noxious brew began early on to surface in no less a place than that of New College, Edinburgh, where the "Great Senatus" of Cunningham, Bannerman, Smeaton, Buchanan, John "Rabbi" Duncan, and R. S. Candlish formed one of the most august assemblages of divines ever concentrated in one seminary in Britain. Just 15 years after the famous "disruption" of 1843 that brought the Free Kirk into being, a young probationer licentiate for the Free Kirk ministry, of some two years standing, was, in the absence of a call to a congregation, offered the post of assistant Hebrew tutor to old "Rabbi" Duncan himself. Of considerable accomplishments, the 27 year-old Andrew Bruce Davidson passed through the "custom posts" as it were, of that august assemblage in 1858. Amongst them he took his place, and as the glory-road phenomena of the great "revivals" of 1859 - 60 swept all before it in the Free Kirk, Davidson became ensconced more and more as a scholar within this very citadel of Scottish Reformed Orthodoxy. And in 1863, he succeeded Duncan as Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament exegesis, in which post he remained till his death in 1902.³³

Some time in the early 1860's, Davidson availed himself of a visit to Germany. To Göttingen to be exact, to the very University first set up in 1747 by George II., King of England, and over which Johann Laurenz Von Mosheim, famous chronicler of Church History, was placed as its first chancellor.³⁴

³² There was a serious slippage in the modernist direction by men such as Alexander Whyte, of Free St. George's Edinburgh. He could steep himself in his favourite Puritans, none other than Rutherford and Goodwin (!), fill his sermons with favourable references in that direction, but in parallel to all this he flirted with higher Criticism and liberal modernism, and went out of his way to pay his respects to Cardinal Newman. Cf. **The Free Presbyterian Magazine** (Sept. 1896 pages 186-190) and *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland 1893-1970* (page 48). Altogether, the performance of ministers like Whyte was guaranteed to throw even the godly into bamboozled confusion. Whyte claimed that the Bible had nothing to fear from higher criticism. He adhered to the union party in forming the unification of the Free Kirk with the UPC in 1900, and became principal of New College, Edinburgh 1909-1918, where he was apparently quite happy in amongst a brigade of higher critics and liberal modernists. Cf. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh T & T Clark 1993, hereinafter DSCOT in loc.)

³³ For this and the following data concerning Davidson I am indebted principally to DSCOT in loc.

³⁴ That a German University should be set up by an English King is easily explained, as George II was of German lineage, via William of Orange and the House of Hanover.

A hundred years on, and Göttingen was sliding down the slippery slope into Liberal Modernism and Higher Criticism. There, Davidson fell under the influence of the German critic, H.G.A. Ewald, at whose feet he heard the serpent's hiss.³⁵ And imbibed it. "Hath God said?" "Is the Bible really God's Word?" Returning to Edinburgh, Davidson soon, before the 1860's were out, had "redated Deuteronomy to Jeremiah's time", and "abandoned belief in the primacy of the Pentateuch over the Prophets." He came also to admire the work of another German, Julius Wellhausen, who had cut the Pentateuch in pieces with his vigorous "Higher Criticism" positing the theory that Moses never wrote the Pentateuch, instead it was a "stitch-up" of about four different and disparate traditions, most of which dated from times later than Moses. Divine inspiration was relegated to the status of a non-entity in this kind of thinking, the Scriptures being conceived as being primarily the product of man's religious intuitions evolving and probing the spiritual realm. Such were the poisoned wells from which Davidson now drew his spiritual sustenance.

Primarily a linguist, he manifested a distrust for logic in theological matters, "preferring intuition and experience".³⁶ Also, he was "said to be unsympathetic to certain aspects of the Westminster Confession", specially with regard to the teachings on predestination.

Side by side, this man "rubbed shoulders" with the "Great Senatus". While Bannerman was preparing his perceptive and eminently useful tome defending the inspiration of Scripture, (which he published in 1865), the Professor of Hebrew working alongside of him was a snake-in-the-grass, working stealthily but effectively to undermine everything that Bannerman was teaching and publishing. In those years, as Buchanan penned and published his excellent tome on "Justification" (publ. 1866) and Smeaton was preparing his two excellent volumes on the Atonement, (publ. in 1868 and 1870), Davidson was injecting the serpentine poison into class after class of Free Kirk ministerial students. Gradually he was rising to a nation-wide renown. Edinburgh University conferred on him the degree DD in 1868, and in the same year Aberdeen awarded him the degree LLD. Such honours were beginning to push the man's reputation up above the socially acceptable bounds of criticism and censure.

Since the death of Cunningham in 1861, the "generous evangelical" R.S.Candlish, regarded high and wide in the Free Kirk as second only to Chalmers, had been made Principal of New College. Did he know what was going on in Davidson's lectures? If he knew, and it is likely he did, he must have considered

³⁵ Ewald was one of the so-called "conservative higher critics" of the Bible. Not as radical to tear scripture to bits as others of the critical ilk, he could maintain an "evangelical" faith in parallel to his higher critical theories. The fact is that this made the man all that much more dangerous amongst evangelicals. Cf. Schaff-Herzog: In loc.

³⁶ Cf. DSCOT in loc. Manifestly this exposes what was going on.....spiritual experience was the cardinal foundation of all this liberalizing "generous evangelicalism". Note too, Davidson's manifest "distrust for logic". Is it too much to say that this exposes an unsavoury pedigree for much of today's evangelicalism, and indeed, much of modern "calvinism"?

Davidson's views to be acceptable. But Candlish himself was already by the late 1860's turning out to be a Judas to the Orthodox Calvinist party, and his "generous evangelical" outlook would not have drawn the line at what was more and more being euphemistically called "believing criticism" of the Bible.

An "overwhelmingly effective" teacher of a difficult subject, Davidson won the confidence, affection and esteem of his students, and in a gentle but cryptic way, introduced them to the contentious skeptical notions of the German "higher criticism".... "Be careful to give this to ye congregations in small doses....." he would intimate.³⁷ Drove of his students imbibed from him the ophidian hiss.....evidently convinced that they could hold to "evangelical experience" and the corrosive new notions about the Bible, in the same way, indeed, that their teacher did himself. For after all, this was the "revivalist-generated" evangelicalism they had been reared in, the very "theology of experience", and it was the "experience" of the Divine Love that mattered, not the written dictates of Scripture. Indeed, so confident was the rising generation that "spiritual experience" was the ultimate matter in theology, that they displayed a carnal delight in denigrating Scripture to lower and lower levels, distancing themselves radically from those aspects of the Word of God which they could not fit with their experientially-gained sentiments and dispositions.

Such were the tenets gaining ground fast in an orthodox seminary in a seemingly orthodox church, in the years immediately following the "block-buster" revivals of 1859-60. Deploying serpentine stealth, Davidson continued his surreptitious assault on the Word of God, and avoided any ecclesiastical censure right to his death in 1902. He rose in renown, nation-wide, and world-wide...being appointed to the Old Testament Committee for the Revised Version of the Bible, where his judgments on issues of translating the Hebrew "were regarded as final". His "Introductory Hebrew Grammar" went through 17 editions in his own lifetime, and is still in print a hundred years later. Towards the end of his life, the world heaped more honours on his shoulders....Cambridge University awarding him a LittD in 1900, and Glasgow awarding him another DD in 1901. ³⁸

Come the autumn of 1873, Bannerman and Buchanan had departed the scene, and New College was steering a more overtly modernist-generous-evangelical course. In that year one of the Free Kirk's most brilliant young students threw in his lot hook, line and sinker with Dwight Lyman Moody. Moody looked straight at this man, and far from discerning so much as a whiff of danger, took the fellow to his heart, engaged him full tilt in the work of his evangelistic campaigns, and more, was to send this young man out to lead mini-campaigns. A deep friendship developed between the two, one that was characterised by fervent loyalty on both sides. The student, later to become world renowned, was none other than Henry Drummond,

³⁷ Actual eye-witness testimony by an aged witness to the late **R. A. Finlayson** (1895-1989) formerly a Professor at Free Kirk College Edinburgh (1946-1966) and published in the **Banner of Truth** magazine: Aug.-Sept.1976 issue156 p.25 in Finlayson's article "How Liberal Theology Infected Scotland". (My thanks to Michael Kimmitt for digging out this one for me.)

³⁸ One should contrast the Lord's statement recorded in John 5: 41.

(1851-1897). The entry against his name in the Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology certainly takes the lid off a can of worms, to which Moody seemed not so much oblivious, as incapable of perceiving the worms to be worms.³⁹ Graduating from Edinburgh University, Drummond went on to study theology at the Free Kirk's New College in Edinburgh. Evidently brilliant, he went on to spend some time studying abroad, in fact at Germany's famous Tübingen University. Alarm bells should have been ringing all round when he returned from that institution of learning. For Tübingen was the centre of a particularly pernicious school of Biblical Higher Criticism. There, Ferdinand Christian Baer had imported Hegelian dialectical principles into the analysis of the New Testament. The so-called "Tübingen School" of theology taught that the New Testament was a compromise synthesis between the polar opposites of Peter and Paul, and that the supernatural elements in the Scriptures were to be denigrated as fundamentally mythical stories used for didactic purposes.

Drummond's association with Moody was reinforced when the latter returned in 1881-82, but in between these times, Drummond himself had risen to fame. During those years he was involved in leading evangelistic campaigns himself, and was for a time assistant minister to Marcus Dods at a Glasgow outreach mission to the working class. Dods, of course, was another enigma....another "born-again" evangelical who was destined to become a world-renowned Bible skeptic.⁴⁰

Drummond's career climbed exponentially in the company and tutelage of such as Dods. By 1883 he published what was to be a land-mark volume in the world of modern theology, the famous and best-selling: *"Natural Law in the Spiritual World."* Henceforth he rose like a rocket to world renown.⁴¹ Within ten years, he was famous enough world-wide to be invited to deliver the prestigious "Lowell Lectures" at Boston in the USA. These lectures were to take the world of theology by storm, and under pressure, Drummond published them in 1894 under the title: *"Natural Law and the Ascent of Man"*. This provocative and deviant production reconciled (sic) Darwinian Evolution and Christianity!! Fundamental to its thesis was the ubiquitous characteristic of "generous evangelicalism", a florid Victorian notion of "love" as communicated via a syrupy "religious experience". This "love"

³⁹ Moody was something of a rough and ready theologian, after all. Untrained in theology and all the concomitant disciplines, he was no doubt clean out of his depth, and Drummond could dazzle him, and even as likely as not, bamboozled him. The tragedy is that in giving his "imprimatur" to Drummond, Moody opened the door for the denial of the very gospel he thought he was preaching.

⁴⁰ The thought that a modernist like Marcus Dods, of all people, should have been engaged in running an outreach mission to the working class leaves the mind boggling at first. But it all falls into place when one understands the idiosyncratic "generous evangelical" and "moderate Calvinist" influences of the time, enforcing the exaltation of "experience" over the Word of God. At heart, they are all the same. On Dods, and his pernicious influences that aroused protest even from the later thoroughly apostasised United Free Kirk, see **DSCOT** in loc.

⁴¹ For this and the following data concerning Drummond I am indebted again to **DSCOT** in loc. Henry Drummond.

was the “principle behind the universe”, and which propelled mankind’s progress ever and anon upwards on “an exponential curve toward the Kingdom in Heaven.” A characteristic of Drummond’s exposition here is a general blurring of distinctions between ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’, such that “evolutionism, naturalism, and Christianity shift and weave in kaleidoscopic fashion” !!! Worse, it appears that “the radical quality of his syncretism is, from the standpoint of the history of ideas.....presaging both certain current types of evangelism, and the metaphysical writings of the New Age proliferating across the West today”!!!⁴² So radical was this thesis in its times that even the by then thoroughly apostate Free Kirk had to deal with a motion from opponents of the book which demanded the setting up of a committee to examine its contents. And this apostate Free Kirk could only muster a 2 to 1 majority stifling the motion. Drummond by then was too big a name world-wide for the sycophantic leaders of the Free Kirk to dare to censure in any way. The man travelled the world extensively, lecturing, and spreading the liberal-modernist-evangelical virus. He lectured by invitation at Havard, Yale, and Princeton, in Germany, Australia, even China and Japan. Significantly, after Drummond’s death in 1897, the first to write his biography was none other than George Adam Smith, (1856-1942), whose modernist critical views of the Bible, which he set out in his book *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* (London 1901), were extreme to the point that the book nearly caused a heresy trial in the apostate United Free Church in that year! Smith opposed dogmas of “verbal inspiration”, and reduced the death of Christ to no more than that of a “moral example”.⁴³

Birds of a feather.....as the saying goes.

It is interesting to note here that Moody never turned a hair at all this heresy in Drummond’s belief and witness. To the contrary, the passing years deepened the friendship between the two men.

W. Robertson Nicoll, editor of “The British Weekly,” in his introduction to Drummond’s “Ideal Life,” speaks as follows regarding the awakening in Scotland, and the relation to it of Moody and Drummond:

“With his keen American eye he (Moody) perceived that Drummond was his best instrument, and he immediately associated him in the work. It had almost magical results. From the very first Drummond attracted and deeply moved crowds, and the issue was that for two years he gave himself to this work of evangelism in England, in Scotland, and Ireland. During this period he came to know the life histories of young men in all classes. He made himself a great speaker; he knew how to seize the critical moment; and his modesty, his refinement, his gentle and generous nature, his manliness, and, above all, his profound conviction, won for him disciples in every place he visited. His

⁴² DSCOT in loc. Amazing!

⁴³ Ibid. In loc. George Adam Smith.

companions were equally busy in their own lines, and in this way the Free Church was saved.” (sic. !)⁴⁴

The reader might well blanch at the phrase “in this way the Free Church was saved” ! Such were the idiosyncratic views of this William Robertson Nicoll, another great name amongst Scots Free Kirk evangelicals of that era.⁴⁵

As to Moody’s attitude with respect to Drummond’s heretical views, the younger Moody can tell us in his biography of his father that:

Professor Drummond was only twenty-two when in 1873 he began his work with Mr. Moody in Scotland. When, in later years, the fires of criticism were kindled about Drummond, his great-hearted friend (Moody) stood by him. He believed in the man with all his heart, even though he might not follow him in all his theories. He knew him to be a Christian “who lived continually in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.” Is it a wonder that the affection between these broad minded, loving-hearted men became a bond that could not be severed? To those who knew both it was not a matter of surprise that, speaking to Dr. Henry Clay Trumbull alone, at different times in the same day, each should say of his friend:

“He is the sweetest-tempered Christian I ever knew.”⁴⁶

“Sweetest-tempered *Christian*”?

Gen. 3 : 1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.

In the wake of the revivals and the Moody campaigns, there were more and more “generous evangelicals” emerging in the Free Kirk. We pass now to another phenomenon who was to win world-wide renown as a scholar, and, like the rest of his ilk, receive all his honours from this wicked world....

We speak here of a genius. An evil one. Educated largely by his father during the years 1846-1861 in the Free Kirk manse at the parish of Keig and Tough in Aberdeenshire, this precocious upstart must have felt the force of the 1859-60 revivals.⁴⁷ So intelligent was young William Robertson Smith that he entered Aberdeen University at the age of 15 in 1861, swept all before him, then transferred to New College, Edinburgh, to study under Davidson, Candlish, Bannerman, Smeaton, and Buchanan. There he struck up a close relationship with Davidson, imbibing Davidson’s views. In the years 1867 and 1869 he too, made his way across

⁴⁴ Cf. **Biography of Moody** by his son: on the “The Master Christian Library” Ages Digital Library CD ROM. and pages 175-176.

⁴⁵ History shows us that the Free Kirk was anything but saved...the sorry present state of its dwindling remnant is evidence of that. So much for **Robertson Nicoll**, (1851-1923) He did, however, attain to a knighthood in 1909, to which was added CH in 1921. Cf. **DSCOT** in loc.

⁴⁶ **Moody: Op. Cit** CD-ROM pp.258-259.

⁴⁷ Again, for this and the following information I am largely indebted to **DSCOT** article in loc. William Robertson Smith, and to various references made by the Free Presbyterian historians.

to Germany, where he arrived already primed to drink deeply at the poisonous wells. Returning, he testified to "never being so interested on a theological subject" as when listening to the "believing-evangelical-modernist-critic", Albrecht Ritschl. Ritschl had once imbibed the outlook of the Tübingen school, and followed the religious views of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, stressing the ethical elements in religion and rejecting any metaphysical knowledge of God. God could not, for Ritschl, be known "in himself", but only in his effects on mankind. Thus Jesus, he said, has the "value" of God to us. All religious dogmas he said, are really "value judgements" that affirm or deny a man's worth.....

Such were the sentiments that sunk home to the young Scots genius. Returning home, in 1870 Smith was elected by the Free Kirk General Assembly to be Professor of Hebrew at the Kirk's Aberdeen College. Within a few years there was trouble afoot. Unlike his mentor Davidson, young Smith was pugnacious and swash-buckling. Putting over to his students his bigoted and opinionated predilections favouring the new liberal theology of the age, many took alarm. As time went on Smith's views got worse, escalating to the level of the more extreme of the German liberal modernist school and the "advanced critical" conclusions of that school with respect to the Bible. The Pentateuchal theories of Wellhausen found a nesting place in him, and as his academic renown rose startlingly, he wrote a particularly nasty piece for the Ninth Edition of "*Encyclopaedia Britannica*" vol. 3, under the heading "Bible", published in 1875.

This launched Smith into 5 years of controversy which was ultimately to end his career in the Free Kirk, though much against the will of the "generous evangelical" school and the rising generation of ministers who had imbibed Davidson's venom. In the ensuing trials before the Free Kirk General Assembly, Smith villified the faithful Dr. Begg, thus propagating roars of approving applause from the "generous evangelical" side, who were evidently openly and wildly delighted to see Begg humiliated in public by their cheeky champion. At this point Smith could protest his "thoroughly evangelical faith and experience".

The convoluted course of these events is too much for us to examine here, but suffice it to say that by May 1880, Smith and the General Assembly appeared to have negotiated "a compromise", with Smith promising to be more careful in the future. But as he spoke, he knew that the eleventh volume of "*Britannica*" was going through the presses, in which his article on "Hebrew Language and Literature" would throw grave doubts on the historical truth and the divine inspiration of several of the books of Scripture.

Smith had his tongue in his cheek at this juncture, and when the truth came out, his career as a Free Kirk Professor was over, but it was a martyr's exit, rather than the deserved liar's exit, that he made. From it he marched to greater honours, being appointed co-editor of "*Britannica*" in 1881, then on to a series of lofty professorial posts at Cambridge University, where he died at the age of 47 in 1894. To a host of Free Kirkers, he was a martyr and a hero, such was the degenerate state of affairs

in the Kirk by that time.⁴⁸

Smith's dismissal, far from casting a sense of shame over him and his theological position, the rather acted as the catalyst to bring out into the open the rising modernist tide that had quietly crept up upon the ramparts of Free Kirk Orthodoxy. If 1874 had marked the triumph of Amyraldo-Arminianism in the Kirk, 1880 and the Smith affair marked the triumph of liberal modernism and higher criticism. From there on, it was all over, (bar the shouting, as they say), only a matter of time before the whole denomination was to be plunged into night, and Biblical Orthodoxy marginalized to the point of being regarded as utter obscurantism. After Smith came a plethora of liberal modernist giants.... Marcus Dods became Professor of New Testament Exegesis at New College in 1889, George Adam Smith and William Robertson Nicoll rose to prominence, as did the likes of James Denney. By 1890 the few remaining old-school men raised a libel issue against Dods in the General Assembly because of the man's liberal modernist denigration of the inspiration of the Bible. The libel failed, and Dods' triumph was a tacit recognition by the Free Kirk majority that liberal modernist evangelicalism and Higher Criticism were now ensconced as a de facto new "orthodoxy". Within a few years, a Declaratory Act was initiated which *officially* elasticated their allegiance to the Westminster Standards.

Then, rolling on the crest of this tide of wickedness, came the famous Hugh Ross Mackintosh (1870-1936). Another product of a Free Kirk manse in the generous evangelical tradition, Mackintosh was another benighted genius with a rich "evangelical experience". He was to become Professor of Divinity at New College (1904 - 1936). Those who knew him testify that his lectures were "richly lit with Christian experience and the conviction of a soul resting on God's redeeming grace". Yet simultaneously with all this Mackintosh "rejected the view that saw propitiatory or punitive features in the atonement". Accepting the classification of being a "liberal evangelical" he translated into English German modernist theological works, and from his tutelage came forth such modernist theologians as the famous D.M. and J. Baillie, and Henry Van Dusen. On Mackintosh's tombstone is inscribed the words "I know that my Redeemer liveth"! Incredible! ⁴⁹

Those were dark days for Scotland. How, it must be asked, could such evil fruit flourish on such a tree as the Free Kirk, blessed abundantly as it was, with intensive revivals and, initially at least, good men teaching in her seminaries? How could such a Kirk fall away, and fall away *so far* and *so fast*? The finger of indictment points indubitably at those revivals, and the Romanticised Calvinism of "experientialist" Revivalism. Such lay too, at the bottom of the German liberal modernism and higher criticism, where the mystic experientialism of Romanticised evangelical pietism exalted itself above the Word of God. *To be continued.....(DV).*

⁴⁸ All these betrayers of the Word of God got their honours from men. They each got their thirty pieces of silver, so to speak.

⁴⁹ For these details Cf. DSCOT article "Mackintosh" and IVP New Dict. of Theol. in loc.