

[R1964 : page 84]

THE TRUTH DEFENDED IN SCOTLAND.

SOME months ago we gave a little account of Brother Houston's success in the colporteur work. He is a merchant, but is able to give a considerable portion of his time to special service for the Truth, of which he is not ashamed. His business talent and training are thus, as part of his stewardship, being used for the Master. And we might remark that he is not alone in this. In the United States there are a number of business and professional men and many artisans and farmers who are similarly using what time they can disengage from labor for the meat that perisheth. Indeed, everywhere, those who are filled with [R1965 : page 84] the spirit of the Truth are finding and using opportunities for serving it.

Brother Houston's activity soon aroused opposition. MILLENNIAL DAWN was attacked through the public press, especially by a minister named Davidson, who endeavored to prejudice the people so that they would not read the DAWN. After several newspaper battles Mr. Davidson evidently thought his tongue would be mightier than his pen, and challenged Bro. H. to a public debate of the questions at issue. His challenge was accepted, and below we give a report of the discussion, by an unknown, clipped from one of the local papers. Bro. H. wrote us that it was his first experience in a debate, but that he felt it to be his duty to defend the Lord's cause, and that he was relying on help from on high. From the report below, he was evidently sustained by the Lord.

"A CRITICISM ON THE DISCUSSION."

"I was present at the theological discussion in Canisbay Free Church on Wednesday evening, and followed both speakers with great interest. Will you kindly allow me to say how very much disappointed I was with Mr. Davidson's method of dealing with his opponent, and why? Mr. Houston affirmed the universal applicability of the ransom

sacrifice by Christ, taking as his key text 1 Tim. 2:5,6 – 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' I think that in the course of the discussion he made, among others, the following points: –

"That in view of our fall in the first Adam, the basis of hope for the human race is in the ransom – 'corresponding price' – given by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

"That this is confirmed by numerous other statements of Scripture, among which he quoted the following; 'Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;' 'as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life;' that the gospel is thus 'glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people;' that in 'the seed of Abraham' – the Church (Gal. 3:29) – 'all the families of the earth shall be blessed;' that Christ died 'for our [the Church's] sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;' that 'God so loved the world that he gave,' etc. – John 3:16.

"That salvation is thus a free gift to all men, the conditions being, accept, believe, obey.

"That when Christ died millions had gone into their graves who had not known of the coming Savior even in type and shadow.

"That his, however, is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved.

"That millions have died since without ever having heard of the 'only name.'

"That justification by faith is the central doctrine of the Christian system.

"That St. Paul argues that they cannot believe in Him of whom they have not heard.

"That therefore all must hear – have a full and fair opportunity before being finally condemned, and that it is only if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.

"That the hope of the Church – the company to which many are called but of which only a little flock make their calling and election sure, the very elect, His Bride, specially called out in the Gospel age – is that she shall share the glory of her Lord as his joint-heir. That the present work of the Church is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service – preparing by following Christ's footsteps of self-sacrifice for being the kings and priests of the next age. That the hope of the world lies in the blessings [R1964 : page 85] of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to *all* by Christ's Millennial kingdom – the restitution of all that was lost in Adam to the willing and the obedient at the hands of the glorified Church. That the ransom does not essentially or by the mere fact of it give or guarantee salvation to any man, but that the knowledge of it, with the corresponding opportunity, will be testified to all men in God's due time.

"That there is no obstacle to belief in all this except the idea that death ends all probation – an idea for which there are no grounds in the Scriptures except the words, 'Where the tree falleth there shall it be' (Eccl. 11:3), which may be interpreted to mean that no change takes place in the period of the grave, in harmony with Eccl. 9:10. That as the hope of the restoration of the Jews is the resurrection from the dead, so in that day (a thousand years), which God hath appointed to judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained, all that are in their graves shall come forth, when all who have not had full knowledge shall receive it. ('I am the resurrection and the life. He that liveth and believeth in me though he die shall live again; and no one who lives again and puts faith in me shall in any wise die until the remotest age.

Believest thou this?' John 11:24,26.) That the preaching of the gospel to all who hear it now is a savor of life unto life or of death unto death, knowledge proving our condemnation if we do not accept the free gift.

"That, *per contra*, the teaching of the Confession of Faith is that all mankind (save and except the elect) God was pleased to pass by and to *ordain them* to dishonor and wrath for their sin; and to assert and maintain that men can be saved by any other religion, or the light of nature, 'is very pernicious and to be detested' – thus absolutely shutting the door of hope for the ignorant masses of mankind.

"That this is out of all harmony with the God revealed to us in the Bible – the God who is infinite in justice, love, mercy, and who gave his only begotten Son as a ransom for all.

"Here, surely, was plenty of work cut out for Mr. Davidson. Why did he not take up all, or some, or even one or two of these points, and show wherein they were unscriptural? I venture to say your readers will search your report in vain for an answer to any of these points. Here was constructive matter. What was wanted was destructive criticism. To merely relate the commonly accepted beliefs avails nothing. Why were these passages of Scripture not taken up and their true meaning explained – that is, if the wrong construction was placed upon them by Mr. Houston? Instead, amid much that was wholly irrelevant, and in execrably bad taste, Mr. Davidson read lengthy extracts from the book, MILLENNIAL DAWN, with the view of trying to prove that it teaches 'a second chance.' It was noticeable that the extracts as read met with no marked objections on the part of the audience. The book teaches that to every man is guaranteed one full opportunity in the Second Adam – not that if, in God's providence, one gets an opportunity in this life and refuses he gets another in the next life, but that all who had not heard *will* hear; it will be testified to them in due time. The quotation given by Mr. Houston from the book was a complete answer to the charge that it teaches a second opportunity to those who already had one. 'We do not wish,' says the author of MILLENNIAL DAWN, 'to be

understood as ignoring the present responsibility of the world, which every man has, according to the measure of the light enjoyed, whether it be much or little, whether it be the light of nature or of revelation.' p.145. From this it is manifest that by answering either 'yes' or 'no' to the categorical questions put to him – a most unusual thing, by the way, in a debate – he would be giving a misleading impression of the teachings of the volume in question.

"A 'second chance' to those who have heard and understood the gospel, and have wilfully rejected it, might be 'unphilosophical, repugnant to Christian thought and feeling, and highly dangerous to morality;' but a plan of ages and dispensations, in the course of which all will come to a full knowledge of the ransom, is highly philosophical, by no means repugnant to Christian sentiment, and, if generally understood, would be a much more powerful lever to morality than the fear of everlasting torment. The world, sir, has outgrown a theology of gloom and despair. Reprobation is scouted all along the line of the best Christian thought of the day; and if Mr. Houston lacked in anything it was in failing to invade his opponent's territory and show up the logical absurdities into which much that is preached as the gospel to-day leads us.

"As a Bible student I protest against points like those indicated above being scoffed at as 'a mixture of sense and nonsense,' and our would-be spiritual leaders going away fondly imagining that by the re-stating of thousand-times-told platitudes and playing upon our emotions by throwing a sanctimonious tremor in the voice, they had successfully answered important points of Bible teaching affecting the most vital doctrines of our faith."
