

PROFILE OF A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER JOHN KENNEDY OF DINGWALL : "Spurgeon of the North"

"He became a man of prayer before he became a preacher," said old Colin Forsyth of Killearnan, "and to my mind his prayers were always ahead of his preaching". Forsyth, a godly man and parishioner of old John Kennedy of Killearnan, was remembering how he had seen the young John Kennedy, on a winter day in 1841, return from Aberdeen University to the manse at Killearnan, summoned home by the news of his father's death. On arrival, "he was so overcome that he could not enter the house, but retired to the garden, and there poured out his soul to God"¹ There, unbeknown to the young man, Forsyth could not but overhear his pathetic supplications.

Thus it was that one of Scotland's greatest preachers, a pastor and evangelist began his long spiritual crisis, his faith, though weak in degree at first, nevertheless was saving in its nature. His was a giant spiritual struggle which was to press upon him through three more years of theological studies at Aberdeen. He had difficulties, says his biographer Auld, in acquiescing in God's dealings with man, in his diary for January 1842, a year after his father's death, we read that he was: "Getting views of the rebelliousness of my heart against the right of the Almighty to charge the guilt of sin. I can admit the guilt of Adam, and its being justly chargeable on me; but as sin is great not as the act of man, but as it is against God, the hellish enmity of my heart goes back beyond the transaction and whets itself against the sovereign authority of the Almighty. Along with this, at the same time, it bears an unblushing front. How well styled the 'desperately wicked' heart! What is it but a devil lodging in flesh?"²

Suffice it to say that the young John Kennedy's diaries give but a glimpse into the long and harrowing trawl through the wickedness of his own human heart that he was propelled through in those years, years that ingrained upon his soul the awful truths of man's relations to God, and of how, at last, a man could have peace with God, through Christ, and Christ alone. His was a deep, and prolonged, awful experience, and in it the Holy Ghost impressed indelibly upon his soul those vital truths that, years later, with the wisdom begotten of sanctified experience and humble learning from the Scriptures, he was to distill through his keenly logical mind into sermons that were to move mountains of sin in many a hearer's heart, and again, in 1869, into that little gem of a theological book "Man's Relations to

¹ Cf. Alexander Auld: *The Life of John Kennedy D.D.* (London: Thomas Nelson 1887) p.7.

² Auld: *Op cit.* p. 34.

God". Therein one can find the clear Reformational and Biblical tones that characterized John Kennedy's whole ministry, the very same tones of Knox, Rutherford, Gillespie, and all the glorious train of Scotland's Reformed Heritage. John Kennedy's theology was Reformed Orthodoxy of the first order, sound and sure-footed in its path, unalloyed by the sentiments of his age, pure in its reflection of the sure biblical Orthodoxy of the Westminster Standards.

"It is not with an abstraction God deals when acting judicially," he was to write, "Persons must be at His bar. When He is dealing with sin it is not a crime, but a criminal that is before Him." And "the sinner has dared to strive with his Maker - to bring His will into collision with the Most High.....the flame of His wrath serves to make more manifest the majesty of His being ; and if I cannot but dread, I cannot but adore Him."³ Again, "The Gospel of God is concerning His Son Jesus Christ. The Person, who is the Christ and the Son of God, is presented to us in the gospel. It is a personal Saviour - a saving Person - the gospel reveals to us." "It is in Him I must trust.....I must, in the light of His doctrine, recognize in the flesh Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God."⁴ And of men redeemed in Christ, "He had them in Himself, when they but gave Him all the anguish of His travail ; let Him have them in Himself, that His love may be gratified in giving them all the blessings of His purchase."⁵ "But they are sons indeed. Jehovah hath arranged for their being so - mean, loathsome, guilty though they were,- so that He may be glorified in being their Father, and they, not only can endure, but find perfect blessedness in being sons of God."⁶

Not for John Kennedy the new and rising fads of the ebullient Victorian age. When others were prepared to take aboard the new German "Neology" of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Feurbach and all their servile train of "moderns", Kennedy held strong to the Old Paths. Nor would he countenance the rampant and subjective Biblical Criticism of the Graaff - Keunen - Wellhausen school, for him the Bible was God's Sacred Word, without error or contradiction, inspired fully by the very Holy Ghost Himself . Evolutionary theory was a rising tide of that era, and was to sweep many away down the gulfs of infidelity, but Kennedy was adamant - man "was **instantly** developed (from the dust of the ground) into the organization and symmetry of a perfect human body, **by an exercise of Jehovah's power.**" "Six thousand years" Kennedy had no doubt, "the lines of Scripture genealogy, determine this to be the distance between us and the parent pair in Eden."⁷ Thus he thought in an age when even the best minds, like A.A. Hodge, of Princeton,

³ John Kennedy : "Man's Relations to God" (Edinburgh : John Maclaren 1869) pp.17 - 18.

⁴ Kennedy, Op Cit. pp 91 -92.

⁵ Ibid.p. 129

⁶ Ibid. p.168

⁷ Ibid. pp. 3 and 4.

could adjust to evolutionary theory.

But it was not only the infidelities of the rising world of Victorian culture that Kennedy eschewed. He was acutely aware that the fads of the age had penetrated into the Evangelical camp as well, worse, even into the very citadels of Calvinism itself. So deeply had God impressed on his soul the eternal verities of Biblical and Reformed Orthodoxy, that he wielded the two-edged sword of God's truth right against those of his own beloved Free Kirk who were dallying with, nay, outright flaunting the new and "moderated" Calvinism that had swept in with the effects of "Finneyism", and then of Moody and Sankey. So acute was his concern, and so acute was his polemic, that he made not a few enemies, it is to be feared, even amongst the leading lights of his denomination. Auld can tell us that Kennedy had "an acute and penetrating mind" - an intellect of "extraordinary power", with the capability of gaining a comprehensive grasp of whatever subject to which he applied himself, in all that subjects relations and bearings, and with a "remarkable capacity for analysing points of difficulty or delicacy". Added to all this was a prodigious memory, capable of "yielding up its stores whenever occasion required", and a "vivid and suggestive imagination" which, though well utilised in the service of elucidation and edification, was yet kept well under subservience, strictly avoiding emotional excitation when preaching.⁸ Such powers brought to bear fearlessly on any area of deviation from Biblical and Confessional Orthodoxy presented a formidable and indeed, indefatigable force.

To the eye, John Kennedy was of average height, but thickset, with a large head crowned with a profusion of auburn hair, and this, with the firm jaw and set, determined expression, and the sideburns along his cheeks, gave him a leonine appearance. Yet, Auld can tell us, his countenance was "fair.....full, and open, on which sat mingled dignity and gentleness" manifesting an amiable and sociable disposition, "quite alive to the humorous", but on no account "betrayed at any time into a levity unbecoming the character of a Christian or the gravity of the ministerial office"⁹. He was of uncommonly "tender and sympathetic heart", like his Highland parishioners fervent in feelings and warm in his affections, "his loving nature instilling happiness all around",¹⁰ and "exercising a kindly familial spirit with all amongst his flock without dissimulation, and most liberal and generous with his money towards those in need, to a degree that necessitated kindly cautions from some of his friends on many occasions".¹¹ A man with a pastor's heart, indeed!

This then, was the man who was ordained by the new Free Kirk's Presbytery of

⁸ Auld : op. cit. pp.89-90

⁹ *ibid.* p.91

¹⁰ Cf. Neil M. Ross : Biographical Introd. to "The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire", (Inverness, Christian Focus Publications , 1979 reprint.) page 12.

¹¹ Auld : op. cit. p.89. It was said of Kennedy that he was "never rich, and he had the art of constantly making himself poor". See Ross, Op. cit. note 10 above, and page 11 therein.

Chanonry in the Synod of Ross, in September 1843, barely four months after that great disruption of the 18th May that year, that saw the valiant successors of John Knox bid their farewells to an Establishment where the free manifestation of Gospel ministry was being obstructed by "patronage", and the unwelcome "intrusions" of spiritually dead and unwanted clergy over the wishes of godly parishioners.

In Dingwall, that quaint old county-town of Ross-shire, nestling beneath the frowning southern slopes of Ben Wyvis, the parish minister remained with the Establishment. But many of his parishioners had seceded, and the newly formed Free Kirk congregation in that town needed a minister. John Kennedy was their choice, and he was inducted to this charge in February 1844, with Mr. Campbell of Kiltearn, preaching in Gaelic, and Mr. Flyter, Alness, in English. In this charge, the young Kennedy was warmly welcomed. Though relatively small at first, the congregation, blessed with a core of fervent and prayerful men and women, grew steadily under his ministry. To them fell the burden of establishing a new place of worship, and a new manse. Increasing crowds necessitated that by the year 1867, with the first building not sustaining the weight of folk in attendance, a larger, more robust edifice had to be constructed, and this was opened by Charles Haddon Spurgeon on the 17th May 1870.

To return to his early years, the young pastor shouldered an immense burden in taking on this new, and pioneering congregation. Presbyterianism, properly organised, does not engender the "our little chapel down the road" mentality, and both congregation and minister found themselves involved in duties that extended beyond their own local horizons. It is a mark of God's mercy and providence in Scotland that it is the Presbyterian system that has taken root there. Faced with that terrain, and hundreds of tiny islands separated by boisterous seas, tiny hamlets of fisher-folk and crofters in the remotest corners of Britain would never have been able to establish Independent churches of their own. But Presbytery flung its arms wide, and spread its wings over them like a mother hen with its chicks. Folk who would never have been able to afford a minister, or to build a church, found that the Presbyterian system, working like the "body" portrayed by the apostle Paul (in I Cor. 12 : 16 ff.) made up what was lacking. Big urban churches were required to free their ministers for ministry around the locality at regular intervals. Thus, many tiny little congregations in the Highlands and Islands could look forward to hearing the best ministry from time to time, and young John Kennedy was soon in constant demand. We can read in his diaries, for instance, fascinating notes like the following, which indicate something of the extent and depth of his labours :

Monday : Ordaining elders in Urray (5 miles distant)

Tuesday : Writing the Synod Record

Wednesday : Presbytery at Kilmorack (10 miles distant).

Thursday : Preaching at Nairn (35 miles distant)

Friday : At the school, for inspection

In reading that list, one should bear in mind that it refers to the year 1854. Most transport was then by horse over bad roads, though the railway was beginning to revolutionise some travel. And interspersed with all this, Kennedy had to prepare for **three** Sabbath services, and officiate at two weeknight services, the Gaelic service on Tuesday, and the English on Wednesday. To some, today, the idea of spending time writing "synod records" would seem a waste of time, something unnecessary, unspiritual, and certainly lacking what is fondly imagined as the romance of preaching. But St. Paul bids us that all things be done decently and in order (I Cor. 14 : 40), and faithfulness in the "unglamorous" but vital works of administration is as much required as in the pulpit.

But John Kennedy's labours extended even further afield. Part of the unique nature of Presbyterianism in Scotland is that of its Communion Service system. Often much criticised, usually by those who have little understanding of maintaining churches in such remote areas, the Sacrament is held by Presbytery, rather than by local congregation, and the Presbytery will move the communion service around, Sabbath by Sabbath, from one church under its care to the next. Over the space of a year, if not less, each tiny congregation, as well as the large ones, will have the Sacrament administered locally with them, together with the few days preaching services and catechism examinations that precede it. Ministers from various quarters of the Presbytery are called in to these "Communion Seasons", and members of various congregations from miles around attend, producing an occasion marked by the best preaching, and large numbers in attendance, thus bringing home in force to the local community the "showing forth of the Lord's death" (Cf. I Cor. 11 : 26). Constantly, the best preachers were "on call" for these duties, organised under the auspices of the Presbytery. And thus it was, that the crofters and the fisherfolk of the remotest quarters of the kingdom were gathered to take their place in Christ's church, and enjoy to the full the best ministry the Church could provide. John Kennedy's travels all over the vast Highland terrain, his dangerous voyages in little schooners across angry seas, to participate in these "Communion Seasons", were all part of a Presbyterian minister's duties, duties that recognised the wholeness of the Body of Christ.

It was, Auld tells us, on the Sabbath that Kennedy was "in his true element". The day was a delight to him, "the calm of that holy day appeared to reflect itself on his noble countenance and to pervade his whole being.....no converse on secular things was allowed to dispose the repose of spirit necessary to preparation for hal-
lowed service..."¹² In his congregation at Dingwall Dr. Kennedy coped with two distinct charges, one Gaelic, and one English. On the Sabbath he commenced with the Gaelic service at 11.00 a.m., which contained a **lecture and a sermon** ! This was not over until 1 . 30 p.m. ! Then at 1 . 45 p.m. he began the same to the English congregation (only 15 minutes break here ! No sumptuous "Sunday"

¹² Auld : Op cit. p. 69.

lunch for him !). Then followed the evening services, which alternated initially between Gaelic, on one Sabbath, and English, the next. As the years passed, and the English congregation became so much larger due to the younger generation being exclusively English speakers, the Gaelic gave way to the English service on the sabbath evening completely. ¹³

In the pulpit, Dr. Kennedy had the mein of an Old Testament prophet. His leonine features must have been quite startling, but added to this was a “deep and full” voice, intelligently and appropriately modulated in “copious and unhesitating” speech,¹⁴ in mellifluous tones, as readily in English as in Gaelic. Auld astutely observes that with such unusual gifts, he “would, wherever his lot had been cast, have taken a prominent position among his fellows,” but in God’s sovereign dispensation these gifts were sanctified and consecrated into the service of the Gospel.¹⁵

“His impressive manner, his earnest tones, soon drew to him the eyes and ears of his audience, and riveted their attention” Auld goes on, and he had, it seems, copious infusions of that unction of the Holy Ghost such that many were compelled to say “the Lord was in this place, this is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven”. Thousands of Highlanders, says Auld, “rose up and called him blessed”. There were indeed, few living Christians at that time in Scotland’s north who were not indebted to God on account of His gracious influences through John Kennedy’s ministry.¹⁶ Auld is probably correct when he says that the published sermons of Dr. Kennedy “excellent though they are”, do not convey an adequate idea of the impact of his preaching. The only way to gain some appreciation of what his preaching was like is to consult the testimony of eyewitnesses.

First, let us examine the reminiscences of one who was to become an esteemed Free Kirk minister :

“In the year 1864 I was concerned as to my state before God..... I was much troubled by the sinfulness of my nature.....and hearing in June of that year that Mr. Kennedy, Dingwall, was to preach in a place about 12 miles from where I resided, I persuaded a young man of my acquaintance to accompany me to hear him”. It appears that Kennedy’s sermon was directly apposite to this young man, and in the preaching from Isaiah 55 :1 our witness can go on to tell us : “The glowing fervour, yet deep solemnity, with which he uttered these words quite overcame me, and as he went on to prove the **truth** of what he had stated, my enjoyment was such, that it was as a **begun heaven**. He exhibited Christ as the living waters to which the text invited, not only as by his atoning death satisfying the sinners

¹³ One can only think that Kennedy must have had the constitution of an ox !

¹⁴ Auld : Op cit. p.90

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 91.

¹⁶ Ibid p. 96

thirst for peace with God, but as also in His risen life procuring the outflow of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of those who responded to the call.....often since,remembering that day's message, I have sought 'to look again to God's Holy Temple' for the renewing grace treasured up in Christ for the chief of sinners."¹⁷

Every Sabbath, Auld can tell us, blind Mary M^l Lennan could be seen, at nigh 80 years of age, groping her way along from Kinellan to Dingwall to wait upon the ministry of Dr. Kennedy. She had so waited upon the ministry of Dr. Kennedy's father at Killearnan, week after week, year in, year out, and now she found her soul refreshed by the ministry of old Kennedy's more gifted son.

"I much disliked his preachings" one man could say, "especially the close dealings with conscience" (!). "So I left the district"...(!).....but, "during the year 1851 I went (again) to Dingwall....and was arrested by the closing address.....the exceeding sinfulness of my own sin (now) oppressed me, and the next Sabbath-day found me on my way to Dingwall Free Church. During my long walk of 15 miles (!), whilst saying 'Be merciful to me a sinner', I could not name the name of God. When the service was almost finished, and I feared that I was to hear nothing that would reach my soul ; Mr. Kennedy said : *'There is one listening to me, and his feeling is that he has no right to name the name of God in the prayer of the publican, and that he has nothing but the groaning arising from corruption ; but I tell you that such groaning in sorrow for sin is sweet music in the ears of God'*. Then, as one said, 'he showed me all my heart' and into its bleeding wound he poured the oil of consolation. **For ten years I walked 15 miles to church,** but the fatigue and time seemed small and short while my soul was fed and refreshed by the living word."¹⁸

At Aberdeen, at the Bon Accord Free Kirk, they were blessed with many a visit by the seraph from Dingwall. "The congregations favoured with his ministrations prized them deeply" wrote one young woman from Bon Accord, "He preached the awakening message of the Word of God and the free and full and glorious Gospel with such power and unction that the young and the careless flocked to hear ; the church lobbies and stairs were crowded to the door, and many could not get in at all.... some of us felt that he 'preached the Gospel to us with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven'it will be known hereafter how many more among those riveted and solemnised hearers received Christ in heart under the choice and faithful and powerful preaching of Mr. Kennedy in those days at Aberdeen."¹⁹

In the August of 1877 Dr. Kennedy was found to be at the Stornoway Communion season, brought thither under the dispensations of the Presbyterial system.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp.104 - 106.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 106 - 107.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 107 - 111

He there took on him the burden of almost the whole of the work in the Gaelic Church. For the first three days witnesses noted that he seemed to have great freedom in preaching, but it was on the Sabbath, when he preached the 'action'¹⁹ sermon from Song of Solomon 5 : 10, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand," that he appeared to have extraordinary liberty. One witness on this occasion can tell us : "Though I was privileged to hear many great and precious sermons from himself and many others before that time, yet the manifestations I had of the glorious majesty, love, worthiness, beauty, and suitableness of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His mediatorial offices I never experienced before, nor indeed to the same extent since. I can never forget it. The impression made on my mind was so overpowering that I could not bear it for long, and so real that for a moment I thought I had seen Him with my bodily eyes....."²⁰

All across the Highlands, and through the Hebrides, similar testimonies abounded in those days. And all this was not any 'revival', be it of the Moody-Sankey type, or the mass movements of 1839 or 1859, that is, such 'revivals' as are looked upon as 'orthodox' and 'Calvinistic' by many authorities of today. What we witness in Kennedy's ministry is the fact that God's blessing to souls is not shackled to "times of revival", but that a godly ministry will bring forth the presence of Christ regularly, and edify the Saints, convict and convert sinners. It was not during the mass movement of 1859 that Dr. Kennedy preached those intense sermons at Stornoway, far out on the lonely island of Lewis. It was 18 years after that 'revival'. From every quarter in the north, indeed, the testimonies poured in...and they had no need of the artificial "working-up" of the Moody-Sankey system amongst the Highlanders, indeed, Dr. Kennedy was to engage in a tense battle and series of polemics with those in his own denomination over what he termed the "Hyper-Evangelism" of the Moody-Sankey cartel headed by such leading Free-Kirk lights as Horatius Bonar. Comparison between the two kinds of spirituality is most instructive. With Moody back in the U.S.A., the Moody-Sankey bandwagon had ceased to have any lasting effects, their 'revival' went back to the U.S.A. with them, and left a spiritual trough behind. But the Highlands were the constant scene of many visitations of God's gracious presence, in the ministry of Dr. Kennedy, and other men like him. There was no need for "working up" of emotional steam up there, under the edifying didaction of a constantly God-annointed ministry the presence of God was sensed, yea, felt, and year in, and year out, not in the fits and

¹⁹ For those readers not conversant with the Scots Presbyterian communion system, we append these details : 1). for perhaps three days prior to the 'Communion Sabbath', ministers such as Kennedy would be brought in to preach sermons preparing people for the solemn duties of the Sacrament, and 2)., perhaps helping in Catechism examinations of new professing Christians. 3). On the Communion Sabbath itself, prior to the dispensing of the sacrament, a sermon would be preached introducing the congregation to the solemnities and joys of partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ. This important sermon is known in Scots circles as the "action sermon".

²⁰ Auld : Op. cit. p.113

and starts roller-coaster religion of "revivals" with their inter-revival troughs of spiritual depression, or in the artificial 'spiritual machinery' of big-time Campaignism. Highland religion in those days was a classic example of the truth that "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" as the Lord promises. (Matt. 18 : 20) And they certainly gathered in the north in those days, in His name, and in greater than just twos and threes.

John Kennedy sought to defend this pure, apostolic type of Christianity against the innovators in the South, the "Southrons" as he called them. He provoked bitter invective against himself. He fought valiantly against that "modified" Calvinism that put, in Amyraldian fashion, a double reference in the atonement, against the dangers of the "Marrow" notions of faith and the gospel offer, and reaped the acrimonious slanders of those who accused him of being a "hyper-Calvinist" who "refused to preach the offer of the Gospel". One can only look around now and remember our Lord's teaching "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7 : 20). A hundred years on and more, and where is the fruitage of the mass revivals and the Moody-Sankey machinery in Scotland ? All the southern areas of Scotland that were the hub of these movements sunk in the later 19th Century under the influences of Amyraldianism, then Arminianism, then Broad Evangelicalism, then sheer modernism. But it is, in the main, in the northern and western areas, the zones of the old Highland Calvinist Orthodoxy, that the backbone of modern Scots Presbyterian Orthodoxy has been centred over the last century. There one sees the long-lasting fruitage of a godly ministry with no gimmicks. A testimony indeed to the likes of Dr. Kennedy. It is however, a matter of sadness today that amongst those very heirs of his Reformation truth, many appear not to know of the works or even of the names of these such old-time stalwarts, and many of those who do, seem to be straddled across compromises with "double-referenced" atonement, Arminian style "gospel offers", the very things which Kennedy fought against so hard and so long. Alarming, the "innovations" of the 19th Century, now cast off as "old hat" by most of the modern generations in the South, are insidiously making their way north, and the old Highland Calvinism is already, in some quarters, ready to take it all aboard. But it is true to say that the ministry of John Kennedy, and other men, lesser gifted perhaps than he, but nevertheless equally stalwarts for the old paths, their ministry, their stand, halted the rising tides of infidelity in the Highlands and Islands to such a degree that one might well say that much of those areas are perhaps a hundred years behind the bulk of the rest of the realm in terms of apostasy.

Dr. Begg, John Kennedy's friend and confidant, was in the south, ministering at an Edinburgh church, and to these premises on many occasions Kennedy came on his "Spurgeonic Forays" to the south, which also took in Glasgow as well as the Capital. What was so impressive about these visits was the way even the poor working class people thronged to hear the stentorian Highlander, having to over

-come great obstacles in order to come and wait upon his ministry, who, "by their tearful earnest faces when present" showed that they "came to hear Mr. Kennedy's burning words of entreaty on behalf of his Lord and Master." "He brings eternal things near" one said, "I never miss the opportunity of hearing him," said another. And an eyewitness to one of Kennedy's visits to preach at Dr. Begg's Church in Edinburgh captured a vision of apostolic ethos and proportions... "how eagerly they listened - how beautifully they sang the Psalms....such a great Gospel, and such a great preacher to declare it.....floods of precious memories pour into mind...so masterly were his expositions, and so conclusive his reasoning....a more tender hand in dealing with spiritual concerns was never experienced by anyone. He was certainly mindful of the bruised reed and the smoking flax".....yet to those who opposed themselves, he was one of "few who could more effectively dispose of error or more scathingly expose the insincere."²¹

Thus then, the preacher they called, the "Spurgeon of the North". And if these testimonies tell us anything at all, they tell us this, that it was the preaching of the Word of God, the instruction of the soul through the mind, that brought forth such illustrious fruitage from Dr. Kennedy's ministry. Here was no direct assault on the emotions or affections, as in "revivalism". His ministry, as we have seen, depended not on the action of any "revival", and stands in stark contrast to the testimonies of certain revivalists who could talk about loosing "the anointing" as suddenly as they were supposed to have gained it,²² when the "wave of revival" had passed over. Neither was his ministry a direct assault on the will, as with the mass-campaign techniques manufactured in, and imported from, the rampant Pelagian centres like Oberlin in the U.S.A. Kennedy's approach was always apostolic, not shunning to declare unto his auditors "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20 : 27), that is, he made his approach through the mind, "so masterly were his expositions and so conclusive his reasoning" as the witness said in the previous paragraph above. By expounding the Word, this man approached his hearers through their minds and their understanding, and thereon their affections, and their hearts, and ultimately their wills were affected by the truth, God's truth expounded faithfully.

But what of Dr. Kennedy's faults ? It is difficult to write anything biographical about one of God's children. Speak of their sins, and you immediately begin

²¹ Ibid....pages 117 through 121.

²² Such for instance, was the strange testimony of more than one 'revivalist', who, after the passage of the great emotional wave of the revival, seemingly lost their ability to 'move' people, and simply fell back into the ranks of being pretty dull and ordinary preachers. Two notable examples can be cited from the Welsh revival of 1859, a revival accredited as being a "genuine" Calvinistic revival. After the mass wave of emotion had swept Wales, the two revivalists experienced their own individual 'let-downs', the Calvinistic Methodist Dafydd Morgan seemingly 'lost his power' and just dropped back to being a very 'ordinary' preacher again, and the Wesleyan Methodist Humphrey Rowland Jones went out of his mind. Similar post-revival 'depressions' can be discerned from all over the world.

to touch that area that is the business between the subject and God. It is unpleasant and unbrotherly to trot out any man's sins into the open. Yet, speak not of these sins and faults, and a biography becomes *hagiography*, a distortion which lives next door to *idolatry*. Too easy it is to fall into either of these two chasms, indeed, too much biographical writing emerges as *hagiography* and consequently plays its part in extending the "Reformed Hall of Icons", something dangerously close to the Icon worship of Eastern Orthodoxy and the Roman system.

Suffice it to say that Dr. Kennedy was aware of his sins and faults only too acutely, and waged a life-long war against them. The glimpses Auld gives us into his diaries indicate a man struggling against "my utter insufficiency to perform the work", and betimes, "the little delight I have in preparation and discharge of my work", "so little impression of eternal things and the preciousness of immortal souls", "untenderness to sin in private and public", "resting too much satisfied in my own efforts", "I need to watch more closely the state of my soul", "I have forgotten much that was fitted to humble me, and much that was a cause of gratitude", "My soul is in a decayed state. I have been for some time in darkness. I have little relish for Divine things. Formal in secret duties, selfish in public work, unwatchful in society, and awfully remiss in the discharge of hourly duties", "My lips are sealed when I attempt to pray", "during the morning my soul was in darkness and bondage", "Oh what a wretched preacher of Christ !....a vile sinner (I am), How little self-denial,....how little faith, how little tenderness, how little prayerfulness of spirit ! O cast me not from Thy sight ; take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."²² Truly, Dr. Kennedy was like Elijah in so many respects ! A man, indeed, "subject to like passions as we are" (Jas. 5 : 17). It is therefore great Glory to God that He wrought so much at the hands of such a poor sinner as John Kennedy, to Him, and to Him alone, be the praise !

In 1844, when the young Kennedy commenced his ministry, in the weeknight meetings he began to expound the Psalms, beginning at Psalm 1. "I think not," said he, to some of his parishioners, "that my ministry at Dingwall will be over until I have gone right through the Psalms". Forty years on, some of his older parishioners remembered this, with foreboding, when, on the very week he reached Psalm 150, he went down, seriously, with what proved to be his final illness.

And so he passed on.....out and away from the storms of this life, unto the care of that Celestial Presbytery, yea, "the General Assembly and church of the firstborn....to the spirits of just men made perfect," where "the four and twenty elders" "clothed in white raiment", "fall down before Him that sits upon the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne", whereon "He that sat was like a jasper and a sardine stone"....yea, the very Lamb of God, to whom be all the Glory for ever and ever.

Editor.

²² Auld, Op. cit. pp.100 - 103.