



Prayer of Thanksgiving: that God has given us the freedom and the joy to live confidently in our Lord's strength. **"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." (Eph 6:10 ESV)** Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF August 2018

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday

In **Saint John**, worship services will be September 9 and 23

Communion- on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

Address: Moncton—70 King St. —Sage building;

Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

Friday, October 5 and Saturday, October 6 – Thanksgiving celebration same venue as last year – Congregational Christian Church of Moncton, 1530 Ryan St, Moncton.

Prayer for the churches – ours and others - that we will stand firm and be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Let us pray, as Matthew (Matt. 24:12) that even if lawlessness increases around us that we will not let the love God has poured in our hearts grow cold.

The good news of the gospel is a message to be shared with others. Please pray that God will give us the love and wisdom to be able to share this message with others in a loving, clear and confident matter as we participate in his missional work on the earth in our generation. **"5 ¶ Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." (Col 4:5-6 ESV)**

Please pray that God will put an end to the senseless violence happening every in our North America continent and other parts of the world.

Pray that we will see the good works that God has prepared for us in advance so that we can enthusiastically participate in the on-going work He is doing now on this earth in bringing people in relationship with him in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

Please pray, as per Jesus instructions, the disciples prayer, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:9-10) as our world is suffering so much and in need of complete restoration by the King of kings, Jesus. As we are his royal priesthood, let us proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2.

Pray for the world and for all people: we live in a world that does not know the way to peace. Important to pray as we are instructed by the apostle Paul — **"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior," (1Ti 2:1-3 ESV)**

WHY PROPHECY?

Posted by GCI Update on August 22, 2018 under From the President |

Dear Brothers and Sisters,



Joseph and Tammy
Tkach

It seems there is always someone claiming to be a prophet or trying to calculate the date of Jesus' return. I recently saw a rabbi attempting to tie the predictions of Nostradamus to the Torah, and another fellow predicting that Jesus will return on Pentecost 2019. Many prophecy buffs try to fit current news events into Bible prophecy. Though both Herbert Armstrong and Karl Barth advocated "holding the newspaper in one hand while reading the Bible in the other," they had very different things in mind.

Armstrong was promoting a premillennial-dispensational, futurist approach to prophecy (one still followed by many) and Barth was urging people to stay firmly grounded in Scripture while seeking to understand the ever-changing modern world. "Take your Bible and take your newspaper and

read both," said Barth, "but interpret newspapers from your Bible." Barth had it right—he understood that staying firmly grounded in Scripture enables us to, 1) understand the core message of the Bible (including its prophetic passages) and, 2) navigate our way through life within a culture that constantly challenges Scripture. We can confidently follow Barth's advice knowing that the Bible is reliable. That God has given us reliable copies of Scripture was affirmed in the discovery (beginning in 1946) of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Old Testament fragments in those ancient scrolls agree 98% of the time with the texts of Scripture passed down to us.

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I STILL HAVE MY SIGN FROM THE LAST
TIME THERE WAS A WAR AND/OR
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testimony of the apostles in the New Testament affirms this Christ-centered interpretive method.

As the perfect image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), Jesus reveals God's nature through his interaction with humanity. This is good to bear in mind when reading the Old Testament. It's especially relevant in keeping us away from things like trying to apply the story of Daniel in the lion's den to a current situation in our world, say a vote for political office. The prophecies of Daniel are not given to tell us who to vote for. Rather, the book of Daniel shares a story about a man being blessed for his faithfulness to God. In that way, Daniel points to the faithful God who is always for us.

But is the Bible relevant?

Many people question the idea that a book as ancient as the Bible can be relevant today. After all, the Bible says nothing about such modern things as cloning, modern medicine, and space travel. Modern science and technology raise questions and conundrums that did not exist in Bible times. Nevertheless, the Bible is highly relevant in our day because it reminds us that our technological advances have not changed the human condition, nor have they changed God's good purpose and plans for humankind.

The Bible enables us to understand our role in God's plan, including the coming fullness of his kingdom. Scripture helps us recognize the purpose and meaning of our lives. It teaches us that, rather than ending in nothingness, our lives are headed toward a great reunion where we'll meet Jesus face-to-face. The Bible reveals to us that there is *meaning* to life—we have been created to be in union and communion with our triune God. The Bible also provides a guide to equip us for this abundant life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It does so by continually pointing us to Jesus, the one who gives us abundant life by connecting us to the Father (John 5:39) and by sending us his Spirit.

Yes, the Bible is reliable, with a distinctive, highly-relevant purpose. Nevertheless, many people dismiss it. Back in the 1700s, French philosopher Voltaire predicted that in 100 years the Bible would pass into the mists of history. Well, he was wrong. The *Guinness World Records* states that the Bible is the best-selling book of all time. Over 5 billion copies

have been sold and distributed to date. It's both humorous and ironic that Voltaire's home in Geneva, Switzerland, was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society and became a Bible distribution center. So much for predictions!

The purpose of prophecy

Contrary to the view of some, the purpose of Bible prophecy is not to help us predict the future, but to help us know Jesus, the Lord of all history. Prophecy prepares the way for Jesus and points to him. Note what the apostle Peter wrote concerning the calling given to prophets:

Concerning this salvation [described in the previous seven verses], the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.... (1 Pet. 1:10-12a) Peter says that the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit) is the source of prophecy, and that the purpose of prophecy is to predict the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He implies that when you've heard the message of the gospel, you've heard all you need to know about prophecy. The apostle John made a similar point in writing this: "Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus" (Rev. 19:10b).

Scripture is clear: *Jesus is the purpose of prophecy*. Bible prophecy tells us who Jesus is, what he has done, and what he will yet do. Our focus in GCI is on Jesus (and the life he gives us in communion with God) not on geo-political alliances, trade wars or whether someone predicted something in a timely manner. It is a great comfort to know that Jesus is both the foundation and the completion of our faith. Our Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever. Loving Jesus our Savior, the focus of all prophecy,
Joseph Tkach

TORRANCE ON ELECTION, FREEDOM, UNIVERSALISM AND HELL

by Ted Johnston (from <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2017/12/torrance-on-election-freedom-and.html>)



TF Torrance (left) and JB Torrance
(public domain via Wikimedia Commons)

The Torrance doctrine of election: all are included; all is of grace

Key to the Torrances' Christ-centered (incarnational) Trinitarian theology is their understanding that God, in Christ, has *unconditionally elected all humanity*. According to TF, "in Christ we are all judged--and in so far as Christ died for all, then are all dead---but in Him we are all chosen by God's grace." In like manner, JB asserts that "the doctrine of election, interpreted in this Christological way, enshrines the good news that our salvation is by grace alone, and is from beginning to end the one work of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He chose us, not

we him. The doctrine of election is another way of saying that all is of grace" (pp. 29-30).

The Torrances' doctrine of election contradicts those articulated by Jacobus Arminius (father of Arminian Theology) and John Calvin (father of Calvinist theology, which developed later into what is called Federal Theology or Covenant Theology). Calvinism and Arminianism, in their own particular ways, *separate election from grace*--a theological viewpoint that TF and JB repudiated in the strongest terms.



Jacobus Arminius (left) and John Calvin from
<https://www.thoughtco.com/calvinism-vs-arminianism-700526>

Contra Calvinism

The Torrances disagree with the Calvinist (Federal Theology) doctrine of election, which is dependent on the ideas of a *limited atonement* and *irresistible grace*, which yield the conclusion that God elects only those he predestines to be saved, then extends his saving grace only to the elect who are unable to resist that grace.

Contra Arminianism

The Torrances also disagree with the Arminian doctrine of election, which teaches *conditional election*--the idea that God (in accordance with his foreknowledge of all things) elects only those people he foresees responding in faith and repentance to his offer of salvation.

Both of these doctrines of election (which predominate within much of Protestantism in the West) tend to *separate election and grace*. The result, according to the Torrances, is the loss of any assurance of salvation, resulting in us "being turned back upon ourselves to attempt to achieve it" (p. 31). In contrast, the Torrances' view of election of the whole of humanity in Christ, as noted by Radcliff, "offers us assurance that we are all included in God's love" (p. 32).

God's sovereignty establishes human freedom

For the Torrance's, God's election of all humanity in Christ is an accomplished fact. In and through Christ, God has reconciled to himself all people apart from any action or decision of their own. But what then of human freedom? As Radcliff notes, the Torrance's understanding of universal, unconditional election and reconciliation has been criticized for undermining human freedom.

As Radcliff notes, rather than diminishing human freedom, the Torrance's doctrine of election establishes it. It does so by defining human freedom as "contingent freedom." This freedom, rather than being independent from God, is upheld by God who grants us this freedom as a gift of grace. Contingent freedom deals with the fact that, as fallen humans, we are all slaves to sin (Romans 6) and thus incapable of making decisions that are truly free of that slavery. God solves this dilemma for us by giving us freedom that, rather than overriding our freedom, grants us, in Christ, true human freedom. This freedom, though very real, is contingent upon participating in the life that is ours in Christ.

God has given us this freedom and all aspects of his grace apart from any action or decision of our own. However, when it comes to the grace of contingent freedom, God gives us the freedom to decide either for him or against him---to receive or to reject the grace already given. Radcliff comments:

God's grace is not irresistible [as Federal Theology claims]; we remain free to reject God's grace, inconceivable as this is. But for TF, humanity can only make a free and true decision for God because of God's prior decision for us: "It is WE who believe, and we come to believe in a personal encounter with the living Word. Faith entails a genuine human decision, but at its heart there is a divine decision, which as it were, catches up and makes it what it is, begotten of the Holy Spirit." (pp. 36-37, quoting TF)

Thus, we understand that TF and JB teach that human freedom (understood as contingent freedom), rather than being undermined by God's sovereignty, is established by it.

Is this universalism?

The Torrance's have been accused of teaching universalism by insisting on their doctrine of universal and unconditional election and reconciliation. Are the Torrance's universalists? The answer is no, as Radcliff notes:

[The criticism that the Torrance's teach universalism] misunderstands the Torrance's scheme of universal atonement. Salvation is not a mere possibility, it is an accomplished reality. As God incarnate, Christ fulfills both sides of the covenant, God's side and our human side on our behalf. This means that our human response to what Christ has already done does not contribute anything to our salvation. Salvation is not dependent upon our human response because Christ has already provided the perfect human response. Our human response can agree and live in accordance with this reality, but it does not accomplish the reality. (p. 39)

The Torrance's' doctrine is misconstrued by some as universalism because those making the accusation are succumbing to the use of "human rational constructs of thought," which insist that Christ's death for our salvation must accomplish its intended effect, otherwise God would not be sovereign. Therefore, they reason, the Torrance's doctrine of universal election/atonement must mean that all will be saved. But that is not the reasoning that stands behind the Torrance's doctrine. Instead, they have reasoned in a way that seeks to be fully "faithful to the self-revelation of God in Christ" (p. 40). That revelation speaks of the reality that all humans are united to God through the incarnation of the Son of God (via the hypostatic *(relating to the persons of the Trinity)* union that has united divine and human nature in the one person of Jesus). Having been united in this way with God, people are then called, by the Spirit, to participate in that union.

This subsequent work of the Spirit, which involves human response, leaves open the *possibility* that some people will refuse to participate (see the section on human freedom above). What is universal in the Torrance's scheme is God's love, but that love, according to the Torrance's, cannot be equated with universal salvation in the sense of all people *participating* in the salvation that already is secured for them in the person of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

According to Radcliff, TF rejects universalism because "it does not recognize the urgency of evangelism... [and] the reality of hell and the necessity of mission.... [Moreover] it does not take adequate account of the fundamentally irrational fact of sin" (pp. 41-42).

The reality of hell

Concerning the reality of hell, TF wrote that "If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness! To choose our own way and yet in that choice still be chosen by God would be hell" (p. 42). Radcliff comments:

TF believes that God does not send the damned to hell, nor did he create the hell they experience. God loves the whole of humanity everlastingly. It is in rejecting this love that one can experience a hell of one's own creation: "Even when a man has made his bed in hell God's hand of love will continue to grasp him there." (p. 42, quoting TF)

As Radcliff notes, though TF does point to the *possibility* that all will be saved, he rejects the classic doctrine of universalism "because he cannot point to the impossibility of some being lost" (p. 43).

Where is the logic?

If some reason that the Torrances' embrace of universal election/inclusion/reconciliation/atonement logically contradicts their rejection of universalism, it is because the reason being used is human *logico-causal reasoning*, whereas the Torrances reason on the basis of a Trinitarian logic of grace (what TF refers to as "Christo-logic")---the logic of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (p. 44). That means that in their theological reasoning, the Torrances look first to who God reveals himself to be in Jesus (the truth of God's being), in order to understand what God's does for our salvation (the reality of God's acts). In disciplining their reasoning in this way, the Torrances are placing priority on the "who" question over any "how" questions. According to the Torrances, when it comes to who God is and what he has done and is doing for our salvation, human logic must be subordinated to the revelation of these divine realities (and not the other way around).

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshipim.ca, www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton: For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—evautour47@outlook.com*