

Charles Scott on Life and Salvation

As we have seen, the Judaisers had a mantra: ‘No circumcision, no salvation!’ (Acts 15:1). Paul took this up and responded by linking ‘salvation’, ‘justification’, ‘progressive sanctification’, and ‘life in the Spirit’, linking them in an unbreakable bond, and all without the law. In light of this, the following from Charles A. Anderson Scott needs hardly any emphasis from me. But before we get to Scott’s words, let me remind you of the passage which, seen in the proper light, plays such a big role in this discussion:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written: ‘The righteous shall live by faith’ (Rom. 1:16-17).

These two verses standing so early in Romans provide a key introduction to all the truth which Paul set out in the following several chapters of that letter (and elsewhere). This must be kept in mind. Paul, whatever else he was, was a man devoted to logical argument, one thing leading on to another in a reasoned process. It is his overall argument, not simply individual verses – above all, not isolated verses – which is vital. It is, once again, the big picture.

Now for Scott:

‘To live’ or ‘life’ is used as equivalent for ‘to be saved’ or ‘salvation’. The most general, but at the same time the most pregnant, word for participation in salvation is ‘life’... ‘Life’ was for [Paul] synonymous with salvation in its positive aspect.

Scott has caught the right tone. The Judaisers talked of ‘salvation’. Very well. In Romans, Paul set out what ‘salvation’ involves, expounding the verse: ‘The righteous shall live by faith’. In so doing, he placed the emphasis where it belongs: life and living. The regenerate man is spiritually

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alive; the unregenerate man is dead. Here is the great divide. Other major words cluster round the main point – righteousness, justification, progressive sanctification, for instance – but life is there vital point. As the rest of Paul’s letter bears out, obedience to the law on the part of the unbeliever or the believer has no role in this ‘righteousness’ and the ‘righteous living’ (justification and progressive sanctification). The Judaisers could not be more wrong!

Scott:

All that he [that is, Paul as a Jew, expecting the coming of the Messiah – DG] had been taught to expect as the contents of a distant salvation was already his – peace with God, freedom from the dominion of sin, the gift of the Spirit – ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost’. Of this Paul could have no doubt. It was witnessed by every day’s experience. Neither could he doubt that he owed it to the mediation of Jesus, the crucified but risen Messiah; for that he had the ineradicable witness of the vision on the way to Damascus. God had revealed his Son to him, and in him; to Christ, he had yielded himself in full surrender; and this was the result – life.

That’s it: life! And all by the Spirit, not the law.

Scott then quoted Otto Schmitz:

‘It is out of the realisation of this new life that the letters of the apostle are written. There speaks in them a man who knows himself to have been renewed up to the inmost essence of his being. Not only his thought, his feeling, his aims have become different; he himself in the depth of his nature is no longer the same. It is on that account that he can no longer think as he thought, no longer feel as he felt, no longer will as he willed. Another lives in him, Christ’...

Scott went on:

If... Paul had been asked for a satisfying example and illustration of ‘life lived in the favour of God’, he would probably [too weak – he would certainly – DG] have pointed to the historical Jesus... He refers to the ‘obedience shown by Christ’ (quoting F.J.A.Hort, who referred to 1 Pet. 1:21; 2

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Cor. 1:5); his submission to the Father (2 Cor. 10:6); his 'consideration' and 'courtesy' (2 Cor. 10:1); his 'endurance' (2 Thess. 3:5); and his 'grace' (2 Cor. 8:9)...

If, however, he had been asked for an example and illustration of life in the highest sense he would probably [too weak, again – he would certainly – DG] have found it in the life of the risen and living Saviour. That was a spirit-life, life on the spiritual plane, life which raised all the qualities of personality to an immeasurably higher power. But as experienced by the believer in Christ, life in this sense was limited by two important considerations. It could not be wholly or entirely his under the conditions of earthly existence. He had it now, but in the future he would have it 'more abundantly'. He was 'alive by the Spirit' now (Gal. 5:25), and yet life in its fullness was part of his hope of the future. His life was 'hid with Christ in God', 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John 10:10).

And what obviously set a stern limitation on this experience was 'the earthly body', the body of flesh [that is, his life in the body, here and now – DG] which was weak through corruption introduced by sin. Not until that had been 'redeemed', and replaced by the 'spiritual body' would life be experienced in its fullness.¹ For this life was no mere addition to or development of the natural life of man, but the bestowal or emergence of life of a higher order, which transformed or eventually would transform the whole personality. And inasmuch as 'body' or 'frame' is essential to the idea of distinguishable personality, the 'frame' also must be raised to the plane of Spirit, participating in the quickening due to 'life indeed'.

It is incorrect to speak of life in this sense as 'eschatological'. The point is that what had been eschatological, in fact the great hope of the future, had now become experimental, a hope which had been realised. The primary proof that it was so was found probably [too weak – it was certainly found – DG] in the possession of the Spirit. That had been anticipated as the most striking feature of the Messianic period (Joel 2:28) [I would include John 7:39; Acts 2:16-21 – DG]. The experience of the Spirit's presence and power was the observed result of the apostolic preaching and the response to

¹ See my *Undervalued*.

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it. 'My preaching was with the manifestation of the Spirit and of power' (1 Cor. 2:4). And this would bring in its train the other factors included in the eschatological hope, and among them the conviction of having life. Nor was confirmation lacking in the new ethical mastery and the development of new ethical standards, ethical life springing from and expressing the newness of spiritual life which was claimed...

In speaking of 'ethical life', Scott was referring to progressive sanctification, the believer's transformation. And it would all be by the Spirit:

Paul saw the author of life in this sense in God, [but] God's agent in bringing it to birth in himself and others who were called to preach the gospel, and the means whereby the result was achieved in the preaching of that gospel of the grace of God. It is of God that he says: He 'has made us alive together with Christ' (Eph. 2:5; *cf.* Col. 2:13); of Christ that he has been made (since the resurrection) 'a life-giving Spirit' (1 Cor. 15:45); of the Holy Spirit that 'we are alive by the Spirit' (Gal. 5:25). If anyone is in Christ Jesus 'there is a new creation'; there is a new race, the race of humanity redeemed, 'renewed after the image of him that created it' (Col. 3:10). The initiative lay with God, but a human agent was necessary. And the new life in his converts was so real to Paul that he conceived of himself as standing to them in the relation of father: 'Onesimus whom I have begotten in my prison' (Philemon 10; *cf.* 1 Cor. 4:15).

It seems probable that it was through the experience of life as the contents of salvation ethically interpreted that... Paul was led to the discovery that salvation had already come. In other words, the positive aspect of salvation would be the first to be realised; the recognition of the negative aspects would follow as the result of intellectual process. We have examined the factors of salvation in its negative aspect; what is common to all three factors of salvation in that aspect, redemption, justification, reconciliation, [Paul would have included progressive sanctification – DG], is that each of them depends on something accomplished by the death of Christ. What is common to the factors of salvation in its positive aspect is that they are intimately connected with his life, the life of one who 'has been crucified', but is 'alive for evermore'. 'Much more shall we be saved by his life'.

Again, all is by the Spirit:

...Paul saw the principle of the life which was the synonym for salvation on its positive side in the Spirit, the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit.²

Scott may not always be easy to unravel, but he clearly saw ‘salvation’ as more than justification; it includes progressive sanctification. His choice of headings for the section of his book from which I have drawn the extracts – ‘The Christian Conception of “Life”’ leading to ‘The Principle of Life’ in ‘Salvation as a Progressive Experience’ – is explicit. In this respect, his testimony is invaluable when looking at Paul’s teaching against the *pseudodelphoi*.

When the Judaisers talked of ‘salvation’, Paul hammered their doctrine by arguing that salvation meant life – including justification and progressive sanctification – none of it depending on the believer under the law in whole or in part. The Reformed, undervaluing the work of the Spirit, and wanting to drive a wedge between justification and progressive sanctification – the former without the law, the latter tied up with the law – are utterly at variance with Paul.

² Charles A. Anderson Scott: ‘The Christian Conception of “Life”’ leading to ‘The Principle of Life’ in ‘Salvation as a Progressive Experience’ in *Christianity According to ...Paul*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1932 (but several editions 1927 – 2009), pp136-141.