

A GENTLEMAN was in the studio of Bacon, the sculptor, and found himself in front of a bust of Whitefield. Whereupon he remarked that after all that had been said, Whitefield was a truly great man—the founder of a new religion. ‘No,’ replied Bacon, ‘Whitefield’s was the *old* religion revived with *new* energy, and treated as if the preacher really meant what he said.’

MY dear grandfather, after having preached the gospel sixty-three years in one place, came to die; and as one of my uncles stood by his bedside he quoted that hymn, ‘Firm as the earth Thy gospel stands.’ Said he, ‘James, I do not like Dr. Watt’s saying, “Firm as the earth.” Why, the earth is slipping away under my feet even now. James, I want something firmer than the earth now; I like the doctor better when he sings, “Firm as His throne His promise stands.”’ Ah, that is it; we want something as firm as the throne of God.—C. H. SPURGEON.

THERE is a legend told by the ancient Greek and Roman churches of two youths who sought concealment in a lonely cave to escape the prevailing persecutions of the time. In this cave God caused them to fall into a death-like sleep. They slept two hundred years. When they woke they cautiously entered Ephesus, their native city, and inquired if there were any Christians there, ‘Christians?’ was the answer, ‘we are all Christians!’ But, alas, how were they disappointed to find that the offence of the cross had ceased. They found that the greater part who called themselves Christians were indifferent to Christ and His laws; they found that, as the world had become Christian, Christianity itself had become worldly. They found that with many the religion of Christ was only a name. They sought to escape from it, as they did from their persecution, and asked God to take them by death to their early friends in heaven.—*The Daily Course*, p. 374.

HAVE you ever been in a large wood or forest? You know that in some parts the trees are very thick, and there are no paths, and it is quite lonely. If any of you were to get into such a place, you might be in a danger of being lost, and you would be very anxious not to stay there until it was dark. You would say to yourself, ‘The best thing I can do is to try and find the footpath, and then perhaps I may meet somebody who will show me the way home.’ Then very

likely you would come to a place where three or four ways met, and you would say, ‘I am sure I don’t know what path to take; I will wait here until I see someone who will tell me.’ And so you would ‘stand in the ways.’ This would be a much better place to stand in than where there was no path, would it not? Yes. And while you were standing in the way you would do the second thing: you would think, you would see how foolish you had been to get so far away from home. And so you would ‘stand in the way,’ and ‘see,’ or consider. Presently a man would come along; and what would you do then? You would *ask*, would you not? You would say, ‘Oh, please, sir, tell me the way to such a place’; and when he had told you, you would take the first step towards home, and you would *walk in the way* and never stop until you reached your father’s house. And so you would get home—first, by *standing in the way*; secondly, by *thinking*; thirdly, by *asking*; fourthly, by *walking*.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 62.

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Two Manuscripts of the Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick.

BY THE REV. GEORGE D. LOW, M.A., EDINBURGH.

FROM Boston’s letter to his children prefixed to the *Memoirs* we learn that he left for their use two autobiographical manuscripts, ‘committing them to the Lord for preservation and a blessing on them.’ The one, a book bound in quarto, was entitled ‘Passages of my Life,’ and the other ‘A

General Account of my Life.’ It was Boston’s express wish that these manuscripts should remain in the family and be in charge of one of his descendants, ‘if such an one there be, as shall addict himself to the holy ministry’ (see *Memoirs*, 1st ed. p. 3). Accordingly they passed into the

hands of his son Thomas Boston the younger, and of his grandson Michael Boston, who died in 1785, both of them ministers of the gospel. Subsequent to that date, there being no other of the name of Boston in the ministry, the manuscripts passed out of the possession of the family. In a previous article (see THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, February 1900) we stated that the 'Passages of my Life' had been preserved, but that we had no information regarding the 'General Account of my Life.' Quite recently, however, the 'General Account' has come into our possession, and the two manuscripts, after long years of separation, have now been brought together, and are before us as we write.

Boston tells us he was not yet twenty years of age when, without a prompter, 'he began to record passages of his life, the which he did on loose papers.' This was toward the end of the year 1695. Three years later, in December 1698, 'he kept a large diary, moved thereto by converse with Mr. Mair, minister of Culross.' Various references are made to this diary in the *Soliloquy on the Art of Man-Fishing*, written by Boston in 1699, but not published till 1773. The transcriber of the volume in which the *Soliloquy* appeared, alludes to these references in a prefatory note, and says they 'would have been suppressed as superfluous were there not cause to think that the Reverend Mr. Michael Boston, his grandson, will soon favour the world with his diary and memoirs, in which case the particulars referred to may be consulted with pleasure.' This statement is not quite accurate. The diary in its original form was never published. Boston speaks of it as written 'with not much discretion.' The two books which contained it he preserved till October 1730, but having made what use of it he thought necessary, incorporating so much of it in the existing manuscripts, he committed this diary to the flames (*Memoirs*, p. 478).

I. *The Passages of my Life*.—The 'Passages' form a volume bound in leather, eight inches by six by two. There is no title on the back, but the letters M. T. B.—Mr. Thomas Boston—are impressed on the front board outside. The narrative proper closes at page 362, and is signed T. Boston. It is followed by a Continuation, which extends to page 370. Each page is numbered, and beneath the number, the year is given.

Two pages are numbered 51. One leaf, pages 366, 367, forming part of the Continuation, is lost.

An examination of the *Memoirs* at page 497 shows that the leaf was wanting when the volume was prepared for the press.

Boston uses a good many contractions, but the writing throughout is distinct, and is easily read. The writing is smaller and firmer in the earlier part of the manuscript than in the later. Hence the number of lines on a page diminish from forty at the beginning of the volume to about thirty toward the end.

For the first forty pages the broad margin is crowded with texts of Scripture. These gradually disappear, and in the second half of the volume only an occasional note or correction is given. Deletions of one to five lines made by Boston occur six times. These are carefully noted, and initialled or signed by Boston in full.

The years 1699, 1700, 1715, 1727 to 1731 inclusive are treated fully, others are dismissed in a page or two, while the years 1701-1703 are blank.

It was not till after his settlement at Ettrick, in 1707, that Boston began to write the 'Passages' in their present form (*Memoirs*, pp. 94, 259).

The first note of time in the manuscript occurs at p. 4 in connexion with the parish of 'Abbey of Saintbothans.' Boston had good reason to expect his settlement as minister there, but the vacant charge was filled by another. Referring to his disappointment, he says, 'Never parish got so much of my heart to this day. July 14, 1708.' Again, at p. 17, after narrating his experience at Stenton in 1699, he adds, 'the remembrance of it melts my heart at the writing hereof, which is nine years after the enjoyment,' *i.e.* 1708 (*Memoirs*, p. 75).

It is somewhat perplexing to find in the *Memoirs*, p. 136, under the year 1700, a date given so late as March 4, 1730, but on inspecting the MS. the difficulty is at once removed. The paragraph with this date is in the margin, and has been added much later, as the handwriting clearly shows.

No fewer than seven days in August and September 1727 are incidentally noted, during which time it appears Boston filled in the entries covering a period of more than eleven years (*Memoirs*, p. 414).

After this manuscript was practically completed, Boston projected a second. Without loss of time 'he put pen to paper for that work, on the next day being the 15th of December' (1729) (*Memoirs*, p. 470).

Again, he says (MS. p. 265): 'On Tuesday morning, June 23 (1730), I had brought up the "Account of my Life" as scrolled in shorthand characters, to the day of my beginning it. And having a tryst for secret prayer, . . . I observed it, and withal laid the matter of the said "Account" before the Lord, for assistance and direction therein. And just after that, the same day I began this manuscript,' namely—

II. *A General Account of my Life.*—Boston left the 'Passages' bound in one volume, and although he does not expressly state it, it is likely that the 'General Account' was bound in his lifetime. Both are quarto volumes similar in form and size. The fly-leaf bears the title 'A General Account of my Life.' The preface follows in the shape of a letter, 'To John, Jane, Alison, and Thomas Bostons,' dated 'From my study at Eterrick Manse, October 28, 1730,' and signed.

The Contents are then given in the first person, 'From my birth, till I left the Grammar School'; and so on through the twelve periods into which Boston divides the story of his life.

The 'General Account,' which extends over 279 pages, was completed on the 24th October 1730, and is signed. The 'Continuation' is added, extending from page 280 to page 315. By a curious blunder, page 285 is numbered 258, followed by 259, 260, which reduces by 27 the number of pages in the manuscript. This mistake is corrected by another hand on the last page, the true number 342 being placed alongside Boston's number 315. The year is also noted on every page.

As might be expected, Boston's early years are much more fully treated in the second MS. than in the first. The years 1676 to 1698, which occupy barely five pages in the 'Passages,' take up forty-eight pages in the 'General Account.' Sixty-one pages are devoted to the year 1699. A few corrections and additions by Boston appear in the margin. On several pages are found the words, 'this paragraph deleted in the printed copy,' 'this paragraph deleted,' or 'deleted'; added by another when the *Memoirs* were prepared for publication in 1776. Boston's handwriting is uniformly of the same character as that of the later part of the 'Passages,' the average of lines in each page is the same throughout. For a period of twenty-three years, from 1708 to 1731, Boston made entries in the 'Passages,' whereas the 'General Account,'

apart from its Continuation, was written in the short space of four months, from June to October 1730.

It was a matter of regret to Boston that ere he closed the 'General Account' he had nothing definite to state regarding the publication of his treatise on the Hebrew Accents. 'Thus I find myself obliged to shut up this "Account of my Life" without being capable to show the issue and present state of that affair, either at Aberdeen or London. But I do believe that my God and Father, who of His great mercy brought it to me, will at length cause the iron gates in the way thereof to flie open; and will bring it forth, to His own glory and the benefit of His Church: even though I should never see it, but be laid in the dust ere it came to pass' (MS. p. 272; *Memoirs*, pp. 477, 478). That treatise was not published till 1738, six years after Boston's death.

Boston closes the 'General Account' with a sincere and discriminating review of his life. He touches on his health, his temper, his gift of application, his dislike of controversy, his love of peace, whilst the concluding sentences, which show Boston's power of expressing himself in simple, vigorous, and impressive language, sum up appropriately the record of a brooding, studious, strenuous life spent in the service of his Divine Master.

In preparing the *Memoirs* for the press, Michael Boston preserved the framework of the 'General Account,' and distributed the 'Passages' chronologically among its twelve 'Periods.'

Boston admitted it would have been 'more natural to have made one continual history of both manuscripts,' but did not feel himself called thereto. This method of fusion which was before Boston's own mind, was followed by his grandson, who judged it absolutely necessary to reduce both the records into one continuous narrative or history. Something perhaps has been gained by this procedure, but much has been lost. Here and there in the manuscripts one meets with quaint paragraphs, and vivid phrases, and illuminating touches, which are absent from the printed page. At the very opening of the 'General Account' he describes his mother not only as 'withal prudent and virtuous,' but also as 'a tall and stately woman.' Why the grandson dropped the second sentence from the *Memoirs* it would be hard to say. His father 'was a man of a low stature, a cooper to his employment, keeping withal a malting in my time.'

From his earliest years he was a diligent reader of Scripture, which he attributes partly to his curiosity, 'as about the history of Balaam's ass.' He is ashamed at the remembrance of his 'injustice under trust, taking a halfpenny or so, of my father's money, when trusted with his key, saying 'tis like, it is no transgression, as Proverbs 28²⁴.'

At school he was 'straitened as to books, having none of those that were of any considerable value except the old dictionary, Latin and English, yet among my books; but the principal Roman authors were either borrowed or wanting, I being left to look on with others. The which error in conduct I studiously guarded against in the case of my children, being sensible of the disadvantage thereof by my own experience.'

Again, in closing the second period of his life, this paragraph is added: 'I often have regretted my not having learned more Greek than the New Testament, and never got the loss made up in any good measure. My total want of the mathematics I regretted in like manner on many occasions. And hence being in much concern to have these my defects supplied in the education of my sons, I have seen Providence plainly checking me in that matter; both my sons having got a trial of the mathematics, but, to my great mortification, made nothing of it thus far.

'This my straitened education did strengthen my natural disposition for lurking in the world and for low things; conscience of duty being the only thing able to break through it, to make an appearance.'

There are many pathetic allusions to his pecuniary straits as a student and a probationer. Again and again he had to borrow money for necessary uses, but all his debts were in due time honourably discharged. 'My provision and money being both near spent, and the weather exceeding stormy, I was put to trust God for my daily bread, and it was not in vain I trusted Him.' Again, in the year 1699, the following entry appears: 'Having been obliged to give out of the remains of my money, on my father's account, I had but threepence left that morning, of which I gave twopence halfpenny to buy bread for the poor, as elsewhere noted: which bread was committed to a woman that kept school in the next chamber to mine, for distribution. That method I had fallen on that season, in order to contribute according to my

ability for the relief of the poor, who were in great need by means of the dearth; and withal to keep myself easy, being in the chamber alone. So all my money was now gone, save a halfpenny reserved for the Sabbath's collection.'

Although he was of a retiring and silent disposition, Boston was far from being morose or gloomy. We are assured by those who knew him best that he was 'pleasant and lively in conversation, quite free of that sourness of temper or ascetical rigidity that generally possesses men of a retired life. He was benevolent, obliging, and courteous, with a natural aversion to anything rude or uncivil in words or behaviour, compassionate and sympathizing with the distressed, charitable to the needy, religiously setting apart the tenth of his worldly substance yearly for their supply, a sincere, faithful, and affectionate friend.'

It was a distinct loss to Boston that he was without a sense of humour. Had he possessed it, he would have met in a genial spirit the annoyances and trials of everyday life which he was too prone to associate with the divine displeasure, and would have escaped the depression which often cast its shadow on him. In this connexion the following paragraph, belonging to the year 1706, is interesting: 'After the harvest, we drowned some bees, that we had in our garden. And I, continuing still to be in ill case as to my health, began to eat of the honey, and drink mead. And withal, one night, Mr. David Brown aforesaid, and Mr. Robert Mien, a probationer, two persons of a very cheerful disposition, being very merry in our house, obliged me to laugh very heartily: and I found myself thereafter sensibly better. I still thought I owed my recovery at that time to these two things trysting together.'

Among the quaint paragraphs which colour the narrative, the following, which refers to the difficulties he encountered at Ettrick in the year 1715, may be given (see *Memoirs*, p. 309): 'I began to be very apprehensive my work in this place was near an end. And several things concurred to the strengthening of it. The three first Sabbaths of November, whenever I went into the pulpit in the morning and laid my watch in the wooden case in the pulpit, she stopt. After the second Sabbath (as I remember) I had the curiosity to try the laying her in on a week-day, which I did over and over again, but she stopt not. The watch indeed has been for a long time out of

order. However, four Sabbaths are past since, and she has not so stopt.'

The helpful ministry of good angels and the machinations of evil were very real to Boston. Writing in 1729 he says: 'My wife lately told me these passages. In her sleep she heard singing, but of a kind different from what she had ever heard before. And it left a sweetness on her spirit when awake, and that for a good time after she heard it.

'At another time, her head having fallen down betwixt two pillows, she, being between sleeping and waking, thought with herself on the occasion of the uneasiness, "Oh that one of the lasses (her daughters) would come and lay me right." And thereupon her head was really lifted and laid right by one who, with one hand that felt soft exceedingly, lifted her head, and with the other righted the pillow. Whereupon she was thankful to God who had pleased to direct one to come so opportunely when she was wishing for it in her heart. But the matter being afterwards inquired into, which of them it was that did it, they knew nothing about it. I have had in a dream the sweetest music I ever heard, which may have been the effect of imagination. But I see no reason why the agency of a good spirit may not be acknowledged in her case so circumstantiat. I look on that good office done for her, in lifting of her head, to have been by the ministry of some good angel. She says that for some time that often passeth through her heart, "God remembered Noah." A passage most suitable in her case—buried alive, but in the true ark.'

Boston's devotion to his wife, so grievously afflicted for many years, shines out conspicuously from the pages of the MSS. 'She was a woman of great worth, whom he passionately loved and inwardly honoured.' The tribute he pays her after they had been married for thirty years, is a noble one most felicitously expressed (*Memoirs*, pp. 161, 162).

In closing his address to his children, he thinks of her and commends her specially to their loving and helpful care.

Worn out with constant and unsparing toil in the service of the gospel, Boston died at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. For the last three years of his life he felt his days were numbered. 'Death is now become somewhat familiar to me.' But what strength remained he gladly spent in the work to which he had dedicated his life.

We cannot close this paper better than by quoting the following sentences of the younger Boston regarding his father: 'But so great was his delight in his Master's work, and so earnest his desire to be found occupied therein, when he should be called hence, that he preached two or three Sabbaths from a window in the manse to the people sitting without, after that he was no longer able to go to the kirk. And as the two Sabbaths, or three at most, in which he was, by growing indisposition, laid aside from his public work, were very heavy unto him, so his Master was pleased to call him home on the Saturday, May 20, 1732, to celebrate the eternal Sabbath in that place where the inhabitant shall not say any more, "I am sick."—*Sermons and Discourses*, 1753, I. iv.

At the Literary Table.

A MANUAL OF CHURCH HISTORY.

A MANUAL OF CHURCH HISTORY. By
Albert Henry Newman, D.D., LL.D.
(*American Baptist Publication Society.*)

AMONG the many ways in which Church history may be written the most popular is the biographical way. It has always been the most popular, it is now also the most difficult way. For Church history is now a science, and it must be obedient to scientific law and order. We still prefer men

to movements, for we must always prefer whatever is human to everything else. But the men must be men, not monsters. They must look before and after. They must receive from those that preceded them, and they must hand on to those that followed them. A history of the Church must be more than a biographical dictionary of the Church, as the Church is more than all the individuals that are in it.

A biographical *Manual of Church History* has been written by Professor A. H. Newman, D.D.,