

Sovereign Grace Union: Doctrinal Basis

The Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given, as the inspired and infallible and inerrant Word of God, and as the sole, supreme, and all-sufficient authority in every matter of Christian faith and practice.

The Trinity

One living and true God, Sovereign in creation, providence and redemption, subsisting in three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – the same in substance, and equal in power and glory.

The Lord Jesus Christ

The Eternal Sonship and the essential, absolute, and eternal Deity, and true and sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth, death, and burial; His physical resurrection and ascension into heaven, and His coming again in power and glory.

The Holy Spirit

The Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, through Whom the sinner is born again to saving repentance and faith, and by Whom the saints are sanctified through the truth.

The Fall of Man

The fall of mankind in Adam, by which they have totally lost their original righteousness and holiness, and have come under the righteous condemnation of God.

Unconditional Election

The personal and unconditional election in Christ of a multitude which no man can number unto everlasting salvation, out of God's pure grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works in them.

Particular Redemption

The personal and eternal redemption from all sin and the penal consequence thereof, of all God's elect, by the substitutionary sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Effectual Calling

The effectual calling of all the elect by the irresistible grace of God.

Justification

The justification of sinners by faith alone, through the atoning death and resurrection and imputed righteousness of Christ.

Final Perseverance

The final perseverance in the state of grace of all those who have been elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, so that they shall never perish but have eternal life.

In reference to the above, consult the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England, the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration and the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

Editorial

In adjacent psalms, David exclaims: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psa 11.3) and cries: “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa 12.1). There is a clear link between the destruction of society’s foundations and God’s removal of godly men from among us. Society is based on justice, truth and righteousness; where these are denied or even neglected, not only are society’s foundations shaken (as in Isaiah’s day; see Isa 59.11-15), but also few godly men are around to protest at the destruction.

Back in 1977, at a day seminar held in Glasgow city halls, James Packer saw a parallel between King Jehoiakim’s attempt to destroy God’s Truth (Jer 36.23-24) and similar trends in our society.

First, he observed, Jehoiakim rejected the Truth because he regarded it as a merely human product, not as God’s Word in man’s mouth. Today, the nation’s leaders refuse to submit their policies and their defence of them to the Word of God, but rather do what is right in their own eyes.

Second, the king thought that, as Scripture is a merely human product, it need not be believed. Similarly, through the destructive work of Bible critics, many today view the Bible as nothing more than a record of ancient Jewish religion and the expression of early Christian disciples. Consequently they feel no obligation whatever to believe its truths or follow its moral demands.

King Jehoiakim’s third error was to imagine that the Word of God could be destroyed. That is why he cut up the prophet Jeremiah’s scroll. Soon, however, the king himself was destroyed, but the Word of God is still with us today. The lesson is clear: if we as a nation continue to turn our backs on God and His counsel, we shall fall under His judgments. Indeed, they are already upon us.

Jehoiakim’s final mistake was to regard the Word of God as no basis for human society. Instead, he placed his trust in forbidden alliances with Egypt and Assyria. Today, many of our leaders and

people seek the safety of society in alliances with Europe and the United States of America, whereas our only safe course is to return to God. We are not to say ‘a confederacy,’ that is, ‘our society can flourish only in alliance with other nations.’ But we must “sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself,” and make Him our fear and our dread. Then He shall be “for a sanctuary” to us (Isa 8.12-14). God was our strength and defence in Queen Elizabeth I’s and in Oliver Cromwell’s day. Should we not beseech Him to be so in ours?

As we look around us, we see a society that regards God’s Word as virtually worthless, yet pays vast sums of money to people who lie to us, deceive us and entertain us. Spin, ‘double-speak’ and avoiding all responsibility for wrongdoing are rife. We live in a society manipulated by deception. What would King David say if he could see today’s media in all its ugliness, fantasies and pride?

So the question still presses on Christian believers: “What can the righteous do?” Surely the answer, for both Church and State, is “relay the foundations.” Just as Samuel relaid the foundations of God’s covenant with His people (1 Sam 12) and Ezra relaid the foundations of God’s temple and law (Ezra 3-6; Neh 8), so we should seek to relay the foundations of justice, truth and righteousness in our character, conduct and speech. Then, with God’s blessing, we may hope to see society transformed and reformed according to the written Word of God, as it was in the Reformation.

“What is the secret of Britain’s greatness?” an African chief once asked Queen Victoria. “The Bible,” she replied, handing him the sacred book. We have no desire to make the Word of God a servant to British prosperity or imperialism. Rather, we wish to honour it in every aspect of our national life. For “them that honour me, I will honour;” and “righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” May God in His mercy restore justice, truth and righteousness to us before it is too late.

Knowing One's Election

Sermon preached by Mr John M Brentnall at Zion Chapel, Tonbridge, on 17 June 2006 at the Annual General Meeting of the Sovereign Grace Union. Printed by request.

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God

1 Thessalonians 1 verse 4

I would be grateful if you would turn with me to Acts chapter 17, because there the founding of the church in Thessalonica is described. And certain features reported there form the basis of Paul's remarks in that first chapter, which I have just read.

Now when the Lord purposes to call out those whom He has chosen from eternity to be His people, He raises up certain means; namely, the apostle Paul, Silvanus, Timotheus and other godly ministers of the gospel, and He, by the Holy Spirit, directs them and guides them to the very place where He wishes them to go. That is what we find here: *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures* (Acts 17:1 and 2).

Now that is the first point: When the Lord sends someone to declare the unsearchable riches of His grace, He opens the door for them *to reason* with the hearers, and *reason out of the scriptures*. There were there in that synagogue, you remember, the Jews, and these were traditionalists who believed they could be saved by keeping the commandments of the *decalogue*, the Ten Commandments of the Law. And there were also some Gentiles whom they called *proselytes*, or God-fearers, devout men who attached themselves to the Jews, because they had wearied of all the pagan worship, their superstitions and their heartless worship. And so they were there when Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned. He expounded several Old Testament passages, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, *opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and*

risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ (Acts 17:3).

Now you note that wonderful phrase: *opening and alleging*. Opening up the scriptures as the Lord had previously opened up *his* mind and *his* heart. He read the Old Testament scriptures and opened them up, exegeted them. And then he alleged the truths that these scriptures teach, the truths leading to this conclusion: that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the anointed One of God.

Now it is clear to us, is it not, dear friends, that he must have referred to Psalm 2, because the enemies of God were raging against God *and His anointed*, His Messiah. And yet God says: *I have set my king upon my holy hill*. And surely he referred to Psalm 22, depicting the dreadful sufferings of our dear Saviour at the hand of the wrath and justice of God: *they nailed, they pierced my hands and my feet, they gave me gall, they gave me vinegar to drink* and they taunted Him, saying: *He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him seeing he delighted in him* (Psalm 22:8).

It is all foretold, says Paul. It's here in these Holy Scriptures. And this Jesus is the same One spoken of. Then he spoke also, I am sure, of His resurrection from the dead. In Psalm 16: *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*. That is the prophetic voice of the Saviour, through King David. And then, of course, His Kingly office: *The Lord said unto my Lord: sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool* (Psalm 110:1).

So Paul *reasoned out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered*. The sufferings and the glory of Christ are all laid out in the Old Testament and he brought these to the notice of those in the synagogue. Now we notice the results: *And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people* (Acts 17: 4 and 5).

As a result of the apostle Paul opening and alleging that Jesus is the Christ, there was a division. My dear friends, faithful preaching of the gospel will always cause a division. It will search out the carnal, hard hearts of men who resent Jesus Christ encroaching on their sinful selfish life, and it will seek out God's elect and draw them with the cords of love and the bands of a man, so that there will be a clear division: those who believe not and those who believe. Those who believed went and met in the house of Jason. My dear friends, let us not be afraid of what happens as a consequence of faithful preaching of the gospel. We can expect men to hate our dear Saviour. He demands our soul, our life, our all; and sinful, self-centred men, women and children are not willing to give their soul, their life, their all. They resent these sovereign claims over them; but there will be God's elect, and they will believe and they will meet together somewhere or other as these did in the house of Jason.

And we know this too, for a contemporary lesson: we are never to unite with anyone at the expense of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel will divide and the gospel will point out to us those with whom we may have fellowship. It is in the glorious gospel of our blessed God and Saviour. We are not to unite with those who reject Him or proclaim a spurious Christ. There is a lesson in passing there.

But then we notice that the Jews who believed not did a most wicked and satanic thing. They gathered together from out of the streets and lanes of Thessalonica, various ruffians, louts, idlers, layabouts. Tyndale calls them 'vagabonds'. The Authorised Version most beautifully and appropriately: '*lewd fellows of the baser sort.*' Isn't that a wonderful description? They were so prone to cause trouble because they were aggressive and they liked attacking people. So they stirred them up, these Jews, these unbelieving Jews stirred them up to go to Jason and try and find the apostle and his colleagues and brethren, but they didn't find them, because they then were ushered away and left. *And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come*

hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea (Acts 17: 6-10). The brethren loved their spiritual fathers in Christ. They realized that they had a future in preaching the gospel. They wanted to protect their lives, so they sent them away. And Jason was just ordered to keep the peace, and in the mercy and providence of the Lord neither they nor the preachers were harmed.

Now as we turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, we find something quite wonderful here, something remarkable, I would say. The young church in Thessalonica was very dear to the apostle Paul. Its members were only recently converted from darkness to light, from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and yet Paul loved them very dearly; and we can see that, not only by the customary apostolic introduction in verse 1, but look at verses 2 and 3: *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.*

We know Paul loved them because he prayed for them all. My dear friends, let us not say we love one another if we don't pray for one another. That is the proof of love initially, that we pray for the brethren, that we pray for the people of God. And the apostle Paul prayed for those whom he knew in Thessalonica and those in Rome whom he did *not* know. He hadn't even visited Rome, but he tells them that he prays for them all as well and gave thanks to God for them. And you and I may never see some churches on this earth, but we are to pray for them, if we are of the right spirit, as the apostle Paul was. And he appreciated the grace of God in them, which is another token of his love for this young church. He mentions right at the outset their work of faith. In other words: it wasn't a dead faith, it wasn't a faith without works, it was a faith

that produced works. So he mentions the work of faith and it was a love that made them labour in the cause of Christ, not sparing themselves, even though they were afflicted much by these Jewish enemies and the louts and the rabble. What a labour of love they set about, even in their youth in Christ Jesus. And when they grasped the hope of the Gospel, that is to see the Lord Jesus in all His glory, they patiently waited for Him – *the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*. They knew He would come again and they patiently waited for Him, whatever they received by way of slander and persecution and deprivation from their enemies. Paul recognizes this and he mentions it at the very outset of his letter to them. Oh my dear friends, we must pray for grace, much grace, to love the people of God. Love the people of God, whoever they are. Love the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, whoever they are. Pray for them. Those in difficulties and trouble, plead with God for them. Those who are being blessed, give thanks for them. We fall very short if we do not.

But now we come to our verse, *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God*. You know, this is a very striking statement: *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God*. It is not only striking, it is a very remarkable and astonishing statement. In fact it is almost unique even in the writings of the apostle Paul. He says, I know you are chosen of God, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, without any respect to your character or your works or persons at all. Of His free and sovereign love and mercy and everlasting kindness He chose you in Christ, He made Christ your head: *My chosen one, my elect, in whom my soul delighteth* (Is.42:1). I made Him your head and I chose you in Him and I gave you to Him and I placed your salvation in His hands so that He would accomplish it and apply it. And I know that, says the apostle Paul, I know that you are God's elect. That is a most striking and astonishing statement, isn't it, when you think about it? And you know the apostle Paul is so full of this that he mentions it again in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. That is an amazing statement in a varied form in verse 13: *But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the*

beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What an astonishing amount of truth is packed into just two verses, and the apostle knew that they were going to glory. He knew that they were genuine converts and not fakes or hypocrites. Now there is something remarkable about this, for this reason: he is linking an eternal decree hidden in God with the practical details of Christian living. He is linking eternity with time. He is linking an eternal decree – unconditional and absolute and irrevocable (for God would never go back on His decree of choice and purpose) - with the daily events of their daily lives and their character and conduct. That is a remarkable thing.

Now the question is: How did the apostle know? – *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.* How did he know? Well, it was not by extraordinary revelation. He didn't have a supernatural vision at all, indicating to him that they were God's elect. Oh, he had a thing of that nature in connection with the Corinthians. He was directed to go to Corinth, and the Lord said to him: *For I have much people in this city.* The Lord told him beforehand that His elect were in that city and therefore he must go and be the instrument and channel of grace and gospel truth to them. But in the case of Thessalonica there was no such vision. So how did the apostle know? Not by extraordinary revelation, but by simply seeing the evidence of God's grace in their hearts and lives. Now there are some people, I am aware of, who don't believe in examining themselves to seek the evidence of God's grace. I know some people who say, Well, I believed thirty years ago and that was my salvation finished. And I know that most people who are like that are very careless in their way of life. But here the apostle Paul says: *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.* Why? Because certain things were known and visible in their character and conduct. You notice the recurrence of the word *for, for, for,* repeatedly in those verses. Now, my dear friends, I believe there are three classes of people to whom this verse and this passage speaks.

First of all, there are those who are already assured of their salvation. They know that they are bound up in the bundle of life with Christ Jesus and they know it by the grace of God, and they have a good conscience towards God and towards man. The general tenor of their life confirms this. They are godly people and they know it. Now this passage is of great value to those, because it will confirm and strengthen their knowledge. There are some who do know the Lord Jesus, but you know, the enemy will try to rob us of our assurance. He will always get at us. He cannot deprive us of our salvation, but he will try to rob us of all our comforts and our assurance. And I know one dear friend of mine, who has been fifty years a professing believer and has not been assured. But there are those who are assured and they will be confirmed by these things. But then it may be of value to others. There are those who profess Christ, but they bear no fruit. There is no evidence whatever that they are changed in their heart, that they are born again of the Spirit and the Word of God. They are just the same kind of people that they ever were. Oh, they may have adopted the language of Canaan. They may have dressed up as they think Christians should dress. They may say and do the things they think Christians say and do. But they are not changed in their hearts, and it may be that the Lord will bless this passage to them, and awaken them and expose their hypocrisy and show them that they really do not possess Christ in their heart.

When I was unconverted, as a teenager I was taken by the English mistress at our grammar school to Nottingham playhouse to see Shakespeare's *Richard the Third*. And there was a famous actor of the day called John Neville. Now I was only a teenager, but the way he played Richard the Third was so convincing that, when I came away from the play, I thought: 'That's Richard the Third, I've seen him. I've seen Richard the Third'. He was so utterly convincing. You see, the whole idea, as you know, of a hypocrite comes from the Greek and Roman theatre, a play actor, a pretender, someone who pretends and professes to be what he is not. And sadly some of us have had dealings with those. The Lord has exposed them before our very eyes.

But then there are the Lord's people who are constantly doubting, constantly in fear, constantly saying, Am I His, or am I not? They cry to the Lord, *Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation*. Lord, make me sure that Thou art mine and I am Thine. Speak to my soul and show me clearly that I belong to Thee, that I am truly changed, truly converted and I am heading for glory. And those, I believe, will benefit most from this particular passage.

Now what are those evidences? Well, very briefly, there are five. And the first one is that they were RECEIVERS.

*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having **received** the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.*

Our gospel came to you in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. In other words: the Holy Spirit impressed the word of grace on their hearts so indelibly that they could not doubt its truth that Jesus is the Christ, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. They began to realize: I have a soul and the salvation of my soul is very precious, and I see no way of saving my own soul, because I am convicted of guilt and sin and lostness and I deserve to go to hell. When I see something of the riches of God's mercy and grace in Christ Jesus, I see that His grace is accessible to me.

And they received the word of God. They received the gospel, not in word only (so many receive it in word only) but these received it in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. That doesn't mean that they were assured immediately of their own personal salvation. It means they were sure that the apostle and his brethren were preaching the truth as it is in Jesus. Now there is a twofold action here, dear friends, very briefly: they received the Holy Spirit into the heart – as passive listeners. They were sitting in the synagogue, and the apostle and his brethren were speaking to them, and they were passive, but God the Holy Spirit was active. And just as He opened Lydia's heart when Paul was preaching

outside Philippi, so He opened their hearts and they received. He opened the door of their hearts enabling them to receive, because they would never do it of themselves. And then, actively, there was an active response as a result of the Holy Spirit giving further grace enabling them to receive Christ Jesus, as he was placarded as a crucified Saviour, a Surety-Substitute, a blood-shedding sacrifice for sinners. And they were enabled to draw Him, appropriate Him into their hearts by faith and by the operation of God. They were receivers, and that is a most wonderful thing. And you and I, I trust, are fully convinced that nothing less than the almighty and most merciful power of God can open a sinner's heart and enable him or her to receive the Word, to receive the Gospel, to receive Christ Jesus in the Gospel, wrapped up, as Luther would say, in the swaddling clothes of Holy Scripture. You know, I love this, I love this. Paul doesn't say, We came to you in the gospel. He says, *Our gospel came to you. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* He didn't put himself forward: the messenger was hid, as it were, behind the message, and that is how we should preach, and that is how we should hear. Not criticizing the preacher but listening to what God the Lord would say to us, because to His own folk He will speak peace, but He says, *Let them not return to folly.* 'I have taken you from the horrible pit and the miry clay. I have taken you from your Jewish legalism or your pagan superstitions; now you are not to go back.' The message is far more important than the messenger. And the redeemed of the Lord will understand that.

Now this active receiving, as we saw, is the result of God's active working in the hearts. And it is never to be assumed by preachers that everyone before them is a child of God. And you, dear friends, in the mercy of the Lord, have heard the true gospel. You have heard Paul's gospel, and I believe some of you have heard it for many years, perhaps from childhood. You have been called, and commanded, and invited by God to repent of your sins and your wickedness and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and us sinners, with all your heart and with all your soul. And my question, dear friend, in all love is, Have you

received Him? Have you received the Word of God, because it *is* the Word of God? Have you received the gospel because it is good news to your soul? Have you heard the sound of God's voice in your own soul? *Take him out of the pit, take her out of the pit, I have found a ransom.* Have you received Christ Jesus the Lord? That is so essential because it is foundational to everything. These Thessalonians were receivers; and I would like to add just one caution. I am dealing with a person under great distress, just now, pastorally, because she is a very emotional person and she depends so much upon her feelings. Now there is a treachery and tyranny of feelings. Under the gospel and under any light that may come to us through the preaching of the gospel, our feelings may be aroused and stirred up to an uncommon degree. But then, as Luther says: *For feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. My hope is in the Word of God, nought else is worth believing.* Beware of treacherous, tyrannical feelings: they will lead us wherever they like. Oh, that the Word of God may be God's seed, as John Wycliffe used to say, cast into our hearts, and then we will receive it by the operation of God.

Then *secondly* we find that they were not only receivers, but they became FOLLOWERS. Verse 5 at the end and the beginning of verse 6: *Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became **followers** of us, and of the Lord.* Receivers do become followers, inevitably. There is an inward link between receiving the gospel and becoming followers of those who preach the gospel to us and ultimately to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. They became followers in that they were willing to suffer for Jesus' sake. Almost immediately after they had received the gospel, the Jews were upon them, tormenting and persecuting them and they were willing to receive that persecution. They were willing to follow the apostles in that respect. They were willing to follow their godly example. *Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.* Oh my dear friends, we can't impress this upon each other too much. *Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.* What is he saying? You watched us when we

came to you. You realized that we didn't seek yours but you. We didn't come begging for money, we didn't come trying to get a name for ourselves. We sought your souls, we sought you for our God and our Saviour. And that transparent holiness and sincerity of motive shines through every preacher of the gospel.

One of the most painful moments in my life was when I was in a car after a communion service in Scotland and the minister next to me took out what he called his 'wage packet' and he said: 'and that is all I came for.' And that is all I came for: filthy lucre, instead of preaching the gospel out of love and compassion for perishing souls.

The Thessalonians became followers of the apostles because they saw the apostles were holy men, godly men, men of integrity and uprightness, and it is no use, dear friends, ever preaching the gospel while we harbour sin in our hearts and in our lives. We may say the words, but God will not bless them. We may say all the right things and the great orthodox truths of our faith, but God will not use us. We are to be men of outstanding godliness, and that means, surely, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, humble men. Who was more humble than our dear, blessed Saviour? We are to seek to follow Him, that others may follow us. Who was more zealous for the honour and glory of His heavenly Father than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? We too are to be zealous for Him with a wise zeal. As Spurgeon said: 'Fire in the fireplace, not in the thatch.' And ah, we want to be men of love. I have known men preach the gospel with no love whatsoever for their hearers. They treat their hearers as preaching fodder, without any love or compassion for them, without any realization that they are precious, immortal souls, going on through time into an eternity, a never-ending eternity of either bliss or misery and torment. Oh my dear friends, if we are not stirred to the depths by these things we will not get anyone to follow us or to follow our Saviour and our Lord. When we lack these things, as much as we do, let us go back to Him, and humble ourselves before Him and say, Lord make me like Thyself, make me like Thyself more and more and more in meekness, in zeal, in love, in humility, in all these beautiful graces that Thou hast. Says

John Duncan: Can you conceive of a more beautiful character than that of Jesus Christ? He is our pattern. He is the One we are to follow, and others are to be followers of us and of our Lord. A great factor in the conversion of the lost is the character of the preachers of the Word of God. In passing, there is a warning there: let us not follow men except in so far as they follow the Lord Jesus. One of the curses of evangelicalism in this country is people forming parties, following this man and rejecting that man. They are not there to listen to the message. I have suffered this myself: glaring eyes from the pew: 'Oh I wish he would be quiet.' There was one that called out in the congregation: 'I hate that man,' simply because I said that we are not to know *about* God but that we are to know God personally. We are to know the Lord Jesus as our personal Saviour and Friend and not merely *about* Him. See, dear friends, it is so important that when they become followers of us, they have something to follow, and that we can direct them more and more to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are not to follow men, except in so far as they follow the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, when we follow the Lord we put ourselves in the background. Again, I love John Duncan, and he said something very precious to his congregation; he said: 'I know you love me, but I didn't die for you. I know you love me, but I didn't die for you.' You see, he reflects it off himself onto the Saviour. Just like William Carey, as you know, on his deathbed. 'Let's go and tell the world about William Carey,' said a colleague. 'Oh no,' he replied, 'go and tell the world about William Carey's Saviour.' Oh my dear friends, is your heart full of Christ? I must ask you, because if it isn't there is something sadly lacking. Is it full of that Dear, Blessed, Holy One, Who came from heaven's glory to save sinners like ourselves, worthless hell-deserving sinners? We've learned nothing if we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ and seek to follow Him, so that when others became converts through our ministry, we can direct them not to ourselves but to Him, pointing men, women and children to Jesus Christ our Lord.

I was preaching once at Greenock, on the river Clyde in Scotland, and there was a woman there and she couldn't take her eyes off the

preacher and she was drinking in every word. Her concentration was so intense, so I went to her afterwards and I said: ‘How is it with your soul?’ She said: ‘Faint but pursuing, faint but pursuing.’ And I thought, What a beautiful answer: she is seeking to follow the servants and messengers of our Lord and seeking to follow our Lord Himself, faint but pursuing. Now you may not think that is helping you to know whether you are elect or not. But I believe it is a great mark of grace even if we have a desire to follow the apostles and the Saviour. Even if we seek in our own faint and weak and distant way, faint but pursuing, followers. Receivers become followers.

Well then, *thirdly*, they became EXAMPLES, as we see in verses 7 and 8: *So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.* Now we need to be very careful here because we are not to look at ourselves at all. And in this case it was others who saw the Thessalonians and said: ‘Hey, in Thessalonica there is a group of people who have received what they call the Word of God and they’ve been changed by it, and they’re different, because we used to know them what they were. We used to go to the temple of Jupiter and Venus and Mars and Diana together, but now they won’t come with us. We used to go to the Roman amphitheatres to watch the gladiatorial combats, and now they don’t come with us any more.’ Augustine rebukes his congregation about this, and he says: ‘You come here, you listen to me preaching the gospel, and then you go and watch men killing each other.’ There was no change! But you see, the Thessalonians became examples to others. And I believe there is a lovely parallel here with Moses, when he came down from his meeting with God. His face shone, but he knew it not. That is how it should be with the Lord’s people: others will see your change of character, your change of life. They will see your new honesty where you used to tell lies before. They will see your new integrity, where you used to make a little for

yourself before. They will see a change in you. You may not realize it, you may not know it, but it is a mark of election and grace upon you as others notice it. So we don't need to say anything, says the apostle Paul. It is evident that you are a changed man, that you are a changed woman. It was by their holiness of life. And, you know, corrupt society in ancient Rome was thoroughly corrupt – just like we are by nature: carnal, self-centred, grasping, full of lust for prestige and status, dominion over other people. But then these people were changed by the almighty power and grace of God, and the change was obvious. It will be obvious to others even if it is not obvious to us. They began to adorn the gospel of God. I say again, dear friends, and it is such a burden to me: I was preaching in the open air in Derby, and I met a young woman. She was doing market research and I began to speak to her, and she said: 'No, I am sorry, I can't receive what you have to say. You see, my husband went off with his secretary and he was preaching here, there and everywhere on the Lord's day. I am sorry. It doesn't go down with me.' Oh my dear friends, isn't it awful if we dishonour God by an immoral life, by a lack of integrity and uprightness? People notice it and say: 'I am not listening to their gospel because their lives don't bear it out.' Yet this is a mark of those who are elected and truly converted by God's grace: they become examples to others. I think it is so important in ordinary conversation. Dear John Colquhoun of Glendale on the Island of Skye - he was only little, about five feet tall, but my, he was a lion in the cause in God. He was one day in the butcher's shop and Laird Macleod was there as well in the queue, and Laird Macleod taunted him: 'Is it cold down there Mr Colquhoun?' 'No,' says Mr Colquhoun, 'It is very hot, and *a living dog is better than a dead lion.*' What boldness, what boldness in speaking on behalf of the Saviour! I wish I had such boldness: some of us are so timid, some of us are so backward, even reluctant at times to speak of our Saviour to others. But there was this godly minister, pint size, and the laird was a big man - *A living dog is better than a dead lion.* And it is very hot down there. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, he was not ashamed to witness to anyone, and that is a wonderful example. I believe that wherever

we go, if the Lord ignites that flame within our hearts, that thirst for souls and for His glory, and we pray specifically to Him to give us opportunities to bear witness to the Saviour by our kindness, by our love, by our verbal testimony, He will give us openings. He will give us the most surprising openings, openings that we never expected or looked for. And the outcome is left in His hands. But the people of God will be examples, and dear friends, if we have forgotten this point, let us record it again – you are watched, you are watched by your close neighbours, and you are watched especially on the Lord's day. You are watched by your work mates in the place where you work, and they will be ready to trip you up. Oh, how we need to be men and women of integrity and uprightness, as the apostle and his fellow workers were. The psalmist prayed: *let integrity and uprightness preserve me*. May that be our prayer too. May we be examples to others, disseminating the gospel and disseminating something of the grace and the character and the loveliness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But then *fourthly*, there is this, they became SERVANTS. First of all, you remember, they were **receivers**, then they became **followers**, then they became **examples** to others, and then they became **servants**. *For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God.*

They turned from idols to serve the living and the true God. Now in those days their idols were Mars the god of war, so if they were going into war, they took sacrifices of animals and they prayed to this imaginary god, this idol god, Mars. And if they were making a venture in love, they would turn to a statue of Venus and they would make special prayers and offer sacrifices to Venus. And if they were going on a journey over the sea, they would turn to Neptune and they would make prayers and offer sacrifices to Neptune. Well, the apostle says, you have turned from these things, to serve, not vain idols (*vain* meaning a thing of nothing, originally in Hebrew a puff, a vanity, a nothing). You have turned from these vanities, these nonentities, these nothings, because they are only in

men's minds and superstitious imaginations. They are no gods, but you turned in order to serve the living and true God; that glorious, holy, transcendent God who controls all things, who purposes all things that come to pass, and who will bring all things to issue in His glory, whether in His mercy or His justice. You turned from these nonentities to serve the living and the true God. My, what a wonderful transformation that is, dear friends! Now, we need not speak at length of current idols – science, the idol god of science (so called), the idol god of technology, the idol god of sport, the idol god of sporting heroes, the idol god of entertainment, 'celebrities' as they call them, and these poor souls who walk the cat walk. These effeminate men - how it grieves the heart to see them set up as models for our youth. Oh my dear friends, have nothing whatever to do with it: it is of Satan, it is of the world, turn from it all, whatever it may cost you, and serve the living and the true God. You know, the older we become, the more we realize what a blessed privilege it is to serve the living and the true God. God is not unfaithful. He sees His people's labour of love. He sees their willing service, their self denying service and He is delighted with it and well pleased with it. My dear friends, may we never, never cease to serve Him, to serve the living and the true God. Calvin, you might think, is rather severe in this, but we mustn't lower the standard that the Word of the Lord sets: Only the man who has learnt to put himself wholly in subjection to God is truly converted to Him and serves Him. My, that is searching isn't it? That is searching isn't it? Not my will, Lord, but Thine; not my way, Lord, but Thine. To give ourselves, our bodies, our eyes, our ears, our tongues, our hands, our feet and all the faculties of our souls, our understandings, our feelings, our wills, our memories, our consciences, to give them over to the Lord to serve Him and lay them down (as it were) before Him saying: 'Lord use me, if it please Thee, and lay me aside, if it please Thee;' so that we are wholly committed to Him, serving the living God.

You know how it was with Paul in another place, at Lystra. Paul and Barnabas - they went, and the townspeople idolized them: *the gods have come down in the shape or likeness of men. And they*

called Barnabas, Jupiter and Paul, Mercury – the messenger of the gods. Now Paul restrained them. We could hardly restrain them, it says. Look, we preach to you that you should turn from these vanities. Why? Unto the living God. They are all vanities. Do you know the fickleness of a football crowd, my friends? If your favourite team is winning they are all over you, but if their favourite team is losing, they cry out: ‘Sack the manager.’ That is how fickle they are. That is the world, that is the vanity of this world. Oh, to serve the living God, the true God. My times, says the psalmist, are in thy hand, and I believe there is a searching message for us from William Cowper:

*The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’re that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.*

Oh, it’s a struggle, it’s a struggle, grace against indwelling sin. Tearing these idols away. You know them better than I do – I know mine by the light of the Spirit, and you know yours; if we do not, the devil will give us a rough time when we come to die. If our consciences are not clear before God and man the devil will give us a rough time, he certainly will.

Lastly they became EXPECTANTS; not only **receivers**, not only **followers**, not only **examples**, not only **servants**, but **expectants**. Verse 10: *And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

I first read the word ‘expectant’ in Andrew Gray. He always referred to those who were hoping and tending towards glory as expectants. ‘Expectants,’ he says, ‘Ye expectants of glory, ye expectants of heaven.’ That is where the word comes from. How were these Thessalonians expectants? They were waiting for God’s Son. They realized that the Son of God had been chosen to be their Head, that He had come into the world for them, that He had lived and suffered and obeyed and died and rose again and ascended into

heaven for them, and that He was interceding for them at the right hand of the Father. And the Holy Spirit had taught them also through the apostles that He is to come again in power and great glory, and that every eye shall see Him, even those who crucified Him. But oh, how He will be admired in all them that believe! Oh, my dear friends, what a glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour! May the Holy Spirit put into all our hearts a longing and an earnest desire for His great, glorious appearing. How we would love to see Him, the Man of sorrows, the Man whose face was more marred than that of any man; the Man who bore the wrath of God for us hell-deserving, unworthy sinners. What a glorious day that will be! To see Him, to be made like Him and to dwell with Him for ever and ever and ever. How can we be dead about this glorious appearing? It's a mark of God's elect. Oh, my dear friends, search your heart and ask: 'Do I really want to see Him? Would I welcome Him if He came? We know not when He shall come, but do I wait for His Son from heaven who has delivered us from the wrath to come?' You know, that is a very telling phrase, isn't it? 'Deliverer' is the equivalent of 'Saviour' – He took us from the horrible pit and the miry clay and He set our feet upon a rock and established our goings and He put a new song in our mouth, even praise unto our God. He is our Deliverer, but He is yet to be our deliverer *from the wrath to come*. There is to be a final day, when, as Samuel Rutherford says: 'We shall all appear in our blacks and whites before Him.' And on that day it shall be said, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. He that is righteous, let him be righteous still. He that is holy, let him be holy still.* In other words: that is final, the verdict is final; and what we are now and when we die and pass into eternity, that we shall be throughout all eternity.

Now, my dear friends, will you greet your Deliverer when you pass from time into eternity? One in my own congregation, formerly in Derby, whose father was blind, said: 'Just think, John, the first sight he will see is the glorified Saviour who loved him and gave Himself for him.' The eyes of his soul will be opened never to close again,

to gaze and gaze on that glorious Saviour. It is a mark of God's elect to look for His appearing.

Now I want to conclude. I realize, having thought very carefully over all this, that some of us may be not more assured now than we were at the beginning, because the standard of godliness is so high, isn't it? But that is where we need to go straight back to Christ and say: 'Lord, I do love Thee, but my love is so faint, so weak, so poor. Give me grace to love Thee more. I would like to be more and more like Thyself.' So there *is* an encouragement here, even though I fear it is tearing me apart and making me wonder if I have any grace at all. The marks are there, aren't they? And if we have a mixture of the two, so that we can clearly see some marks in ourselves but others are not so clear, or not visible at all, then we need not be afraid; because there is indwelling sin jostling for priority in our souls, and there is the work of grace saying: 'Yes, He has changed you; yes, He has taken you from darkness into light, He has given you a new nature.' But if we are still unsure, let us ask the Lord to search us in the light of Galatians 5, where the works of the flesh are opposed to the fruit of the Spirit, and beg Him to clear up our evidences for us. And if He is pleased to do this, then we shall be humbly thankful, and even astonished, that He has chosen us in Christ to be with Him for ever and ever. When we see ourselves as subjects of His distinguishing, electing grace, we shall cry out in wonder: 'Why me?' because there is nothing more humbling than the truth of election, when it is applied to our souls. Then we may draw near to Him in prayer, and say with the Psalmist: 'O God, thou art MY God.' Then we see how He has established with us a most precious relationship, one that was conceived by the Father in eternity, forged in the fires of the Saviour's sufferings, made known to us by the Spirit's effectual calling, and destined to remain throughout all eternity. *Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*

Some Reformation Theologians: Patrick Hamilton (1504-1528)

Introduction

Despite the steady trickle of Lutheran and Calvinistic teachings into Scotland in the second quarter of the 16th century, the country did not formally break with Rome until 1560. Then the Reformation Parliament severed official links with the papacy and with Romanism as the established religion, “by repudiating the pope’s authority, forbidding the celebration of mass and by approving a Protestant Confession of Faith” (James Kirk). By that date a good number of believers, including the English Lollard John Resby and the Moravian Hussite Pavel Kravar, had been martyred. The first recorded Scot to yield up his life for the Saviour was Patrick Hamilton, known as Scotland’s ‘protomartyr.’ John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* or *Book of Martyrs* mentions him, and John Knox feelingly places him among those who fought in the “terrible conflict . . . betwixt the saints of God and the bloody wolves” of Rome. Although his death contributed as much as his teaching towards the Reformation, his few ‘theses’ on theology qualify him to be regarded as a Reformation theologian.

His Life

Born at Kincavel near Glasgow in 1504, he was the second son of Sir Patrick Hamilton of Kincavel and Stanehouse, and the great grandson of King James II. In 1517 he was appointed titular abbot of Fearn, in Ross-shire. The same year he went to study at the University of Paris, where he was registered a Master of Arts in 1520. Here he came into contact with the teachings of Erasmus and Luther. By 1523 he was back in Scotland, studying under John Major at St Andrews University, where he excelled in choral music. It was in 1526 that he first showed openly his support for the banned doctrines of Luther. Cardinal Beaton (Knox’s ‘carnal cardinal’) soon ordered an investigation into his teaching, which prompted Hamilton to flee Scotland into Germany.

At Marburg he found fellowship with Francis Lambert, whom Philip of Hesse had invited to assist him in reforming his territories. Lambert showed him just how pure and simple is the true Gospel. For his part, the young Scot “astonished Lambert” with his knowledge of Holy Scripture. “The freshness of his thoughts . . . charmed him; the integrity of his character inspired a high esteem for him; his profound remarks on the Gospel edified him” (Merle d’Aubigne). Indeed, Lambert told the Landgrave Philip: “I have hardly ever met a man who expresses himself with so much spirituality and truth on the Word of the Lord.” During his stay at Marburg Hamilton enrolled as one of the first students at the new ‘Protestant’ university there.

Hamilton had originally intended to visit Wittenberg to acquaint himself with Luther and Melanchthon, “those renowned teachers and champions of the Reformed Faith” (J.A. Wylie). But no record of a visit exists; he probably decided to stay away from the plague-stricken town where the university had closed.

In Marburg Lambert encouraged Hamilton to write his only theological work, certain ‘theses’ (common places in theology) which came to be known as *Patrick’s Places*. These he successfully ‘maintained’ in public debate. Later they were translated into English by the martyr John Frith. Decidedly Lutheran in tone, they place great emphasis on Justification by Faith Alone. Comments Wylie: “The doctrine of his *theses* was not more evangelical than the phraseology was clear, precise and salient.”

Hamilton’s preparation for his return to Scotland was now complete. He had seen how the merit theology of Rome had covered Europe with thick darkness, and how the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone could flood it with light. After only six months abroad, therefore, he returned home burning with zeal for the salvation of his fellow countrymen.

Back in Kincavel Hamilton first taught the recovered Gospel to his own family. In God's mercy, his brother, sister, mother and sister-in-law all embraced it, and gave later proof that their conversions were genuine. Then he visited the gentry in his neighbourhood, where he was warmly welcomed. At the same time he began to preach in local village churches and to farm labourers in the fields. With great boldness he went to St Michael's, Linlithgow, where, surrounded by images and altars, and with priests and members of the royal household as hearers, he proclaimed the central truths of the Reformation. "Knowest thou what this means," he asked them in echoes of Luther, "Christ died for thee? . . . thou shouldest have died perpetually; and Christ, to deliver thee from death, died for thee, and changed thy perpetual death into his own death, for *thou* madest the fault, and *He* suffered the pain . . . acknowledge what He hath done for thee, and bear it in mind; and . . . help others for His sake, even as He helped thee for nought and without reward" (Quoted in Foxe: *Acts and Monuments*).

Among Hamilton's hearers was a young lady from the nobility. Won by her graces, he disobeyed the papal ruling on priestly celibacy and married her. Doubtless he had by then discovered that the apostle Peter himself, from whom the popes claim descent, was married (Mark 1.30). Their wedding took place only "weeks before his martyrdom" (Peter Lorimer). By now, Cardinal Beaton, the ever watchful enemy of the Gospel and its servants, faced a dilemma: how could he seize an ordained priest with royal blood in his veins without rousing the hostility of the nobility, yet allow the undermining of the papacy before his very eyes? The "cruel and crafty" cardinal hit on a scheme to procure Hamilton's death while concealing his murderous design. In January 1528 he invited the young Reformer to a 'theological conference' at which they would discuss church reform. Despite the pleas of his family, Hamilton decided to attend, certain that he would soon lay down his life. And so he set out for St Andrews, at that time "the metropolis of the kingdom of darkness" in Scotland (John Howie).

When the hypocritical “gracious reception” was over, Hamilton was examined and set free. But after refuting Alexander Alane (who was soon to become a Reformer but in 1528 was still “full of zeal for holy kirk”) he was summoned once more to Beaton’s tribunal, where he was formally charged with heresy. (Little did Beaton know that already the good seed of God’s Word had been sown in the hearts of priests, church doctors, students and townsfolk in St Andrews.) Both the church historians Spottiswood and Calderwood list the charges, which we shall mention in the section on Hamilton’s theology. The measure of Beaton’s Satanic boldness and cruelty is seen by the verdict of guilty and the sentence of death by burning. It almost surpasses belief, comments Wylie, that “one so nearly related to the reigning monarch would be ruthlessly murdered by the priests of the realm.” But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

At the stake outside St Salvator’s College on 29th February, Hamilton was accosted by a Dominican prior named Alexander Campbell, who tried to reason with him. The martyr replied, on the basis of a previous conversation with him: “Thou knowest in thy conscience that I am no heretic.” Soon he added: “In the name of Jesus I give up my body to the fire and commit my soul into the hands of the Father.” When prior Campbell railed on him as he burned, Hamilton replied: “Depart from me, thou messenger of Satan, and leave me in peace.” In his *History of Scotland* George Buchanan tells us that the iron band round the martyr’s body was red hot, and that he was almost burnt in two. Iain R Torrance also says: “he was roasted rather than simply burned alive.” After six hours in the flames the Lord took his soul to heaven. His last words were: “How long, O Lord, shall darkness overwhelm this realm; how long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of men? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” God, however, made his death a great blessing to Scotland. Many began to enquire why he was burnt, so that the saying became widespread: “the reik of Maister Patrik Hammyltoun hes infected as many as it blew upoun.”

His Theology

There is a beautiful simplicity about Hamilton's theology, springing as it does from a young man's heart at the beginning of the Reformation. Calderwood reduces the number of articles for which the martyr was condemned to seven:

1. Man hath no free will.
2. A man is only justified by faith in Christ.
3. A man, so long as he liveth, is not without sin.
4. He is not worthy to be called a Christian who believeth not that he is in grace. [This confusion of saving faith with assurance crops up quite often in the early Reformers. Ed.]
5. A good man doeth good works; good works do not make a good man.
6. An evil man bringeth forth evil works; evil works being faithfully repented [of], do not make an evil man.
7. Faith, hope and charity be so linked together that one of them cannot be without another, in one man, in this life.

These seven points summarize the doctrine found in *Patrick's Places*, from which the following extracts are taken:

Under the heading 'The Doctrine of the Law,' Hamilton lays down eight propositions based on the Ten Commandments:

- I. 'He that loveth God, loveth his neighbour.'
- VI. 'It is not in our power, without grace, to keep any of God's commandments.'
- VII. 'The law was given to show us our sin.'
- VIII. 'The law biddeth us do that which is impossible for us.'

Under the heading 'The Doctrine of the Gospel,' out of twenty-five propositions, twenty-three refer to the work of Christ. The following are representative:

- 'Christ is our Saviour.'
- 'Christ hath made satisfaction for us and for our sin.'
- 'Christ hath delivered us from the law, from the devil and hell.'
- 'The Father of Heaven hath forgiven us for Christ's sake.'

A beautiful section entitled ‘The Nature and Office of the Law, and of the Gospel’ states the heart of the matter:

‘The Law showeth us our sin, our condemnation,
Is the word of ire [anger or wrath],
Is the word of despair,
Is the word of displeasure.

The Gospel showeth us a remedy for it,
Our redemption,
Is the word of grace,
Is the word of comfort,
Is the word of peace.’

‘A Disputation betwixt the Law and the Gospel’ distinguishes their functions so clearly that many subsequent Scottish theologians, especially Ralph Erskine and John Colquhoun of Leith, made the distinction essential to a right grasp of God’s way of saving sinners:

‘The Law saith, Pay thy debt.
Thou art a sinner desperate,
And thou shalt die.

The Gospel saith, Christ hath paid it.
Thy sins are forgiven thee.
Be of good comfort, thou shalt be saved.

The Law saith, Make amends for thy sin.
The Father of Heaven is wrath with thee.
Where is thy righteousness, goodness and satisfaction?
Thou art bound and obliged unto me, to the devil and to hell.

The Gospel saith, Christ hath made it for thee.
Christ hath pacified Him with His blood.
Christ is thy righteousness, thy goodness and satisfaction.
Christ hath delivered thee from them all.’

Under the heading ‘The Doctrine of Faith,’ he says:

- IX. 'Faith is the gift of God.'
- X. 'Faith is not in our power.'
- XI. 'He that lacketh faith cannot please God.'
- XII. 'All that is done in faith pleaseth God.'

Under the heading 'A Man is justified by Faith,' Hamilton lets Habakkuk 2, Romans 1 and 4 speak for themselves.

In the section 'Of the Faith of Christ,' he says:

'The faith of Christ is to believe in Him; that is, to believe His Word, and to believe that He will help thee in all thy need, and deliver thee from evil.'

'He that believeth in Christ, the Son of God, is saved.'

In the 'Comparison betwixt Faith and Incredulity,' the martyr draws some beautiful contrasts:

'Faith is the root of all good, maketh God and man friends.'

'Incredulity is the root of all evil, maketh them deadly foes.'

'Faith showeth God to be a sweet Father.

Faith holdeth stiff by the Word of God.

Faith knoweth God, loveth God and his neighbour.

Faith only saveth, extolleth God and His works.'

'Incredulity maketh God a terrible Judge . .

Maketh Him false and a liar.

Incredulity knoweth Him not.

Incredulity loveth neither God nor neighbour.

Only condemneth,

Extolleth flesh and her own deeds.'

A brief section on Hope tells us that:

'Hope is a trusty looking for of things that are promised to come unto us: as we hope the everlasting joy which Christ hath promised unto all that believe on Him.'

As with all the other Reformers, Hamilton makes the rule of 'Charity' 'to do as thou wouldest were done unto thee; for charity

esteemeth all alike: the rich and the poor, the friend and the foe, the thankful and the unthankful, the kinsman and stranger.'

Four sections on 'Good Works' round out our Reformer's simple yet pure theology. He states that 'no manner of works make us righteous' and 'no works make us unrighteous.' This is because man must first be made good before he can do good.

The great sin in trusting in our works is to make ourselves into little Christs; 'for he calleth himself a saviour, which appertaineth to Christ only. What is a saviour but he that saveth? And thou sayest: I save myself; which is as much to say: I am Christ.' This is why we should never do good works in order to merit heaven. 'You shall be saved for Christ's sake: sins are forgiven you for Christ's sake.' Furthermore, if we think we shall inherit heaven through good works, 'then we believe not to get it through the promise of God.' 'I condemn not good works,' he adds, 'but I condemn the false trust in any works,' because all the works we sinners can ever do are 'intoxicate or empoisoned' and 'evil.' The sum of all self-righteousness, he concludes, is proud unbelief: 'thou wilt take nothing of Him for nought; and so shalt thou fall as Lucifer fell from heaven for his pride.'

'Thus ends the said Master Patrick's Articles.'

THE PRESBYTERIAN STANDARD is the quarterly magazine of the James Begg Society. It contains a variety of items of a Reformed and Presbyterian nature. We believe this magazine will be of help and encouragement to many of the Lord's people.

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Book Reviews

We apologize to our readers, reviewers and publishers that, owing to the length of the two main articles in this issue, we shall have to defer reviews of the titles sent to us until the next issue.

Christ and Preaching

Christ stands in a fourfold relation to preaching:

1. All preaching is to explain Him. Acts 10.43 - *To Him give all the prophets witness.* And so do the four evangelists and the apostolic epistles. . . . that preaching which stands not in relation to Him is beside the text and mark.

2. He is held out as the Foundation and ground work of preaching, so that preaching without Him lacks a foundation, and is the building . . . of a castle in the air. 1 Corinthians 3.10 - *for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

3. He stands as the great end of preaching, not only that hearers may have Him known in their judgments, but may have Him high in their hearts and affections. 2 Corinthians 3.4 - *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.* . . . our scope is not to be great or much thought of, but our end in preaching is to make Christ great.

4. He stands in relation to preaching as He is the power and life of preaching, without whom no preaching can be effectual, no soul can be captivated and brought in to Him. 1 Corinthians 1.23 - *We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are saved, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

James Durham.

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