

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

John Wycliffe, the ‘Morning Star of the Reformation,’ said that every man should be a theologian; that is, a student of God as He has revealed Himself in His works, Word and dear Son.

In pursuit of this ideal, we include in this issue a study of some thoughts on the glory of Christ. Such a study is deemed irrelevant in many ‘Christian’ circles today. Christ has either been pushed to the perimeter of our shallow, activity-driven existence (I do not call it life), or He seems too remote to take an interest in our petty affairs, or He is degraded into a ‘Jesus cult’ idol, or He is made a symbol of some pathetically weak ‘god’ who, hanging on a crucifix, sympathizes helplessly with the plight of mankind. (This last travesty is merely a projection of men’s selves onto ‘the unknown God.’) This is why He is not in so many professing Christians’ thoughts and conversations.

Yet being in a right relationship to Christ and having right thoughts of Him is the only cure for all the evils we are heir to. Furthermore, to know Him as the Son of the only true and living God, and as *our* God, is the sum of all blessedness. Who is happier than the man or woman who can say: “My Beloved is mine, and I am His”? To really believe that He who hung up the heavens like a tent to dwell in loves me with a perfect, unchangeable love, died for me, and has made me to honour and enjoy Himself for ever, alongside all His saints, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, is a privilege beyond all expression.

Having said this, we need the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, making us pause to reflect on His glorious person and work, and constraining us to turn our weak, finite knowledge into faith and love, prayer and praise, assurance and obedience. It is for this reason that God desires us to study Christ, know Him, receive Him, please Him, as we see Him here and now by faith in the Gospel, until at last He brings us to see Him face to face in eternity.

The Glory of Christ

Introduction

The glory of Christ is one of the great themes of the Bible. Indeed, ‘the personal glory of the Lord Jesus is to the Bible what the sun is to our planet.’ (Octavius Winslow) Foretold in the Old Testament with increasing clarity, it bursts forth in the New in a blaze of holy splendour. Considered as the luminous revelation of the character of God, this glory lies at the heart of the Gospel of our salvation. For although in the Person of His Son the essential glory of God has ever shone forth and ever will shine forth, yet it is in His self-manifestation to us as sinners that the glory of God may be seen. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3.18) “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4.6) Let us try to catch a glimpse of it from a few passages of Scripture where it shines most brightly.

The Glory of Christ in the Old Testament

The glory of Christ was revealed to Old Testament saints on several notable occasions. We pass by many passages to concentrate on (a) two clear examples of the public manifestation of His glory and (b) two famous appearances to individuals.

(a) On Sinai and in the Temple

In Exodus 24.16 we read that when God gave His people His holy law “the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai.” This appearance does not signify merely the awesome, transcendent nature of the God with whom we have to do. It points also to the wondrous fact of God mercifully and graciously dwelling with His people. And because of His unapproachable holiness and our indescribable sinfulness, He always does this through Christ. Indeed, the Puritan Thomas Manton suggests that the law is called ‘royal’ (James 2.8) because it came from the hands of Christ as the King of saints. In this connection God’s presence with us in Christ calls forth our

reverent love for Him; for what God would dwell with man except the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Commenting on Exodus 13.21, a similar passage, Calvin says: ‘It was indeed a marvellous act of loving-kindness that . . . He familiarly presented Himself before their eyes.’ Further, ‘in order that His power might be more manifest, He chose to add also His visible presence, to remove all room for doubt.’ Soon afterwards, he concludes, ‘our heavenly Father then led the Israelites only by the hand of His only-begotten Son. Now, since He is the eternal guardian of His Church, Christ is not less truly present with us now by His power than He was formerly manifest to the fathers.’

Another such manifestation was made at the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem under Solomon. On that occasion, so overpowering was “the glory of the Lord” that filled His house that “the priests could not stand to minister” to Him. (1 Kings 8.10-11) He whose incarnate appearance was symbolized by the very temple in which they worshipped revealed Himself with such heavy spiritual pressure that His servants staggered under its weight. The exceeding and eternal weight of glory mentioned by the apostle (2 Corinthians 4.17) entered our world and left its objects weak. The heavenly visitant who came on them with such glory was the pre-incarnate Christ, re-assuring His people yet again of the abiding presence of God with them. Says Robert Murray M’Cheyne: ‘God Himself came down, and filled every chamber of the house with His presence.’

(b) To Moses and Isaiah

In response to the ardent cry of His servant Moses - “I beseech thee, show me thy glory” (Exodus 33.18) - God made all His goodness to pass before him. (Exodus 33.19; 34.5-7) That goodness, embodying His mercy, grace, long-suffering, truth and righteousness, was our Lord Jesus Christ, whom Paul terms “the Lord of glory.” (1 Corinthians 2.8) ‘*Lord of glory*’, says Charles Hodge, ‘is a title of divinity. It means, possessor of divine excellence.’ The Messianic Psalm 24.10 - “Who is the king of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory”, along with Acts

7.2 and James 2.1 make it clear that God appeared to Moses in Christ. There is no other way in which we sinful men can bear Him to draw near us. What a sight Moses had when the glory of Christ passed before his eyes, for all divine excellence dwells in Him! God reveals Himself to us in a way that will not consume us!

Isaiah's famous vision, recorded in chapter six of his prophecy, was a vision of the glory of Christ. [John 12.41] Comments J. C. Ryle: 'We should there see a magnificent description of the Lord's glory, before which even the seraphim veiled their faces. We should observe their cry, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. We should mark how Isaiah says: My eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts. And then let us remember that John says: Esaias saw Christ's glory, and spake of Christ.' Says Matthew Henry: 'Isaiah saw not *Jehovah* - the essence of God (no man has seen that, or can see it), but . . . he saw the Lord Jesus . . . See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch,' he continues, 'he sits *upon a throne* - a throne of glory, before which we must worship; a throne of government, under which we must be subject; and a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly.'

If such pre-incarnate days of the Son of Man as these were glorious, how much more glorious would the day of His incarnate glory be? His evangelical prophet Isaiah pointed God's saints to that day with unmistakable clarity: "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isaiah 40.5) No sooner would His messenger John the Baptist prepare the way by preaching repentance (Luke 1.17) than the Messiah Himself would be revealed 'in His glory, working miracles, and by His grace binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of divine glory' would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles", for all flesh would see it together. Accordingly, we must be brought 'into such a frame of spirit as will dispose us to receive Christ and His Gospel.' (Matthew Henry)

The afflicted saints of the old dispensation were comforted with such thoughts of Christ. “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” (Isaiah 60.1) Christ, the light of the world and the glory of His people Israel (Luke 2.32), would come to them. As a result, many would come ‘by faith, and hope, and holy love’ into the family of Christ. ‘When Christ arose as the sun of righteousness . . . then the glory of the Lord was seen upon us, the glory as of the first-begotten of the Father.’ (Matthew Henry)

The Glory of Christ in the New Testament

When our Lord entered this world on His mission of mercy to fallen mankind, He came ‘trailing clouds of glory.’ (B. B. Warfield) The earliest sight of His glory was granted to the shepherds of Bethlehem and the wise men from the east. With a sense of wonder at the grace of God shown to a select few at His incarnation, Martin Luther exclaims: ‘No-one [of importance in this world’s reckoning] noticed . . . what God was doing in that stable.’ He was manifesting the glory of His Son in His wondrous work of redemption. By the very circumstances of His birth, Luther continues, Christ teaches us to despise all the glory of this world and unite our hearts in the worship of His glorious name.

It was, however, when He was manifested to His disciples that the glory of His Person in the beauty of His grace began to influence a much wider circle. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” (John 1.14) Despite our Lord’s lowly condition in this world, the perfections of His Godhead shone through the veil of His human nature in such a way that those whose eyes were opened to contemplate them discerned the divine glory in them. More specifically, the glory they perceived was a glory befitting the eternal Son of God, a Son who displayed all the wisdom, power, righteousness, holiness, mercy and love of His Father. As D. A. Carson says: ‘The incarnate Word is the true *shekinah*, the ultimate manifestation of the presence of God among human beings.’ No longer in the

tabernacle or temple, but in our frail human nature, the wondrous perfections of God began to shine into the hearts of His people.

The glory of Christ consists especially in that unique combination, as Jonathan Edwards describes it, of “majesty and meekness.” The majesty of Christ is seen in His perfect representation to us of the majesty of God. He is the image of the invisible God; as John Owen majestically says: “In him God was, in him He dwelt, in him is He known, in him is He worshipped . . . in him is there a nearer approach made unto us by the divine nature than ever could enter into the heart of man to conceive. In the constitution of his person . . . and in the work it was designed unto, the wisdom, power, goodness, love, grace, mercy, holiness and faithfulness of God are manifested unto us. This is the one blessed image of the invisible God wherein we may learn, wherein we may contemplate and adore all His divine perfections.” On the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples caught a glimpse of this glory and were overawed by it. May we too seek a glimpse of it.

The meekness of Christ is seen in the perfect beauty of His sacred humanity. “Can you conceive anything,” asks John Duncan in wonder, “more beautiful than the character of Jesus Christ?” Is it not remarkable that though He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, yet publicans and sinners were drawn to Him? The proud ‘Churchmen’ of the day were repelled by His meekness, but the ‘rejects’ of society saw in Him the beauty of a sinless yet loving Man. It is no surprise to discover the true Church in the Song of Songs crying after Him: “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” (Song 1.4) He says: “I am meek and lowly of heart.” (Matthew 11.29) Comments J. C. Ryle: “How true that is, the experience of all the saints of God has often proved. Mary and Martha at Bethany, Peter after his fall, the disciples after the resurrection, Thomas after his cold unbelief, all tasted ‘the meekness and gentleness of Christ.’ It is the only place in Scripture where the ‘heart’ of Christ is actually named.”

What a privilege is ours, if we know Him in both His majesty and His meekness. We then know Him as the One “on whose almighty arm we can rest and to whose human sympathy we can appeal.” (B. B. Warfield) ‘And by this,’ says George Hutcheson, ‘Christ is commended to His people as He who should be only and chief in their hearts.’

No sooner did the Son of God in our nature begin to work miracles than further rays of His glory were shone into His disciples’ hearts. “This beginning of miracles [the turning of water into wine] did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” (John 2.11) The divine perfection that struck the disciples most forcibly was ‘the Almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (J. C. Ryle). What a comfort, Ryle continues, ‘that the same almighty power of will which our Lord here displayed is still exercised on behalf of His believing people. They have no need of His bodily presence to maintain their cause . . . If He ‘wills’ their salvation and the daily supply of all their spiritual needs, they are as safe and well-provided for as if they saw Him standing by them.’ But this is not all: ‘A greater marriage feast than that of Cana will one day be held, when Christ Himself will be the bridegroom and believers will be the bride. A greater glory will one day be manifested, when Jesus shall take to Himself His great power and reign. Blessed will they be in that day who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Revelation 19.9)’

The amazing miracle of the raising of Lazarus revealed the same almighty and loving power. “Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” (John 11.40) In this one act alone, Christ shows His power over the king of all terrors. Is He then not glorious? And does not His victory over death in the case of Lazarus encourage us to look forward to our own glorious resurrection? From this remark to Martha we learn too that believing is the only way to see God’s glory in the miraculous works of Christ. The contrary is also true: “He did not many mighty works because of their unbelief.” (Matthew 13.58) We should not be discouraged when naturalistic critics pour scorn

on the miracles of Christ. Not believing in Him who is the greatest miracle of all, they are bound not to believe His miracles. The only glory they perceive in Christ is not His divine glory, but the glory of some divinized man, invented by their own brains. Of such, our Lord commands us to “let them alone.” (Matthew 15.14)

One incident in our Lord’s earthly life lifted the veil between time and eternity. It gave His disciples an astonishing glimpse of His glory. This was His transfiguration. Having taken with Him into a local mountain Peter, James and John, our Lord began to pray. As He prayed, His whole appearance changed, and two Old Testament saints appeared with Him in glory. The conversation that followed was all about “his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” When the three disciples woke from sleep, “they saw his glory.” (Luke 9.28-36) The key to this amazing supernatural transaction lies in the voice of the Father. When Peter saw Moses and Elijah, he placed them on the same level as Christ. But the Father corrected him with the words: “This is my beloved Son; hear him.” The law had been given through Moses and had been restored through Elijah, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1.17) He was to magnify the law by keeping its precepts and suffering its penalty. His fulfilment of the law was to culminate in His “decease”, or atoning death. The Father showed that no other than His beloved Son could die as the sinner’s substitute; therefore they were to hear Him. James Ussher draws a great spiritual lesson from all this: ‘When Peter saw Moses and Elias with Christ in his transfiguration, though he had but a glimpse of glory, yet he says: ‘It is good for us to be here.’ But oh, how infinitely good will it be to be in heaven! How shall we then be wrapt up with glory, when we shall be forever with the Lord!’

Nothing reveals the mystery at the heart of our most holy faith than the glory of Christ’s atoning death. Among all deaths there is no death like the death of Christ, for it is the death of the Lord of glory. When He prayed: “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee,” (John 17.1), our Lord was referring to the glory of His death. Paradoxically, it is in ‘that glorious

despised object' (John Maclaurin), the crucified Redeemer, that the glory of God is 'set before the whole world . . . as in a splendid theatre.' (John Calvin) In a truly awesome way the glory of Christ is seen supremely at the moment of His deepest degradation. Rejected by man and abandoned by God, He appeared utterly inglorious. Yet, notes Calvin, 'in that death we see a boundless glory which is concealed from the ungodly. For there we know that by the expiation of sins the world has been reconciled to God, the curse [of His broken law] blotted out and Satan vanquished.' Hence Paul's determination: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Galatians 6.14) To the physical eye, the crucifixion is the most degrading spectacle imaginable, but to the eye of faith it is the most glorious.

It is very significant that Christ revealed His glory only to believers and not to others. "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14.22) "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matthew 11.26) So many, like the townspeople of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum and Nazareth, both witnessed the wonderful miracles He performed and heard the gracious truths that He taught, yet saw in Him no glory at all. As Isaiah predicted: "And when we shall see him, there is no beauty [in him] that we should desire him . . . he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isaiah 53.2-3) All the demonstrations of divine wisdom, power, kindness, holiness and truth that He gave them fell on blind eyes and deaf ears.

In reflecting on these momentous events, we find one great truth shining out most clearly: since the glory of Christ is an intrinsic property of His nature, it found expression in everything He did. His whole incarnate life on earth, right up to His ascension, was the embodiment of the glory of God. The wonder is that in Him the thrice holy God of eternity has drawn near to us, and has even become one with us, so that we may be restored to a right relationship with Him, and learn to worship, adore and live with Him now in preparation for the glory that is to be revealed in us.

Puritans and Covenanters *(Continued)*

Thomas Case on Afflictions

[Thomas Case (1598-1682) was reckoned by his contemporaries to have been one of the most outspoken ministers of the day, but apparently he mellowed with age. Along with his passionate advocacy of Presbyterianism, he was a most skilful soul surgeon. Charged with conspiracy in what Oliver Cromwell's government termed the 'Christopher Love Plot,' while in prison he wrote a valuable *Treatise of Afflictions*. In it he says: "Oh how amiable are the assemblies of the saints and the ordinances of the Sabbath, when we are deprived of them." Evidently his time behind bars was sanctified to him. By the date of his death Edmund Calamy could describe him as "one of a quick and warm spirit, an open plain-hearted man, a hearty lover of God, goodness, and all good men." The following edited extract is from this treatise. It both accounts for the martyr spirit in so many of our ex-Muslim brethren and sisters, and teaches us three sobering lessons. May we in our comparative safety be willing to learn them. Ed.]

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Psalm 119.67.

'In affliction God teaches us to **redeem the time**. When life is tranquil, how many golden hours we throw down the stream that we shall never see again. Who is there that knows how to value time at its true worth? Most men waste it as if they had more time than they could ever spend . . . How sad to hear men complain: "O, what shall we do to wile away the time?" But O, when trouble and danger come . . . and death is at the door, how precious would one of those despised hours be! Evil days cry out: "Redeem the time!" In life-threatening dangers, we can think of redeeming time for prayer and meditation . . . But if our time is gone, and our work [of

living to God] is not yet begun, what a state we are in! . . . A traveler that sees the sun setting when he is just beginning his journey must be aghast. The evening of our day and the beginning of our task do not agree well together, and the time we have left is too short to lament the loss of by-past time. God comes upon the soul as the angel upon Peter in prison . . . and bids us rise up quickly . . . that we may redeem lost opportunities.

Our own sufferings give us a **partial insight into the sufferings of Jesus Christ**. In our prosperity we pass by the cross. The story of Christ's passion stirs our hearts for Him, but the pity is quickly gone. But let God pinch our flesh with some sore affliction . . . and we look on Him whom men have pierced and say: "If my bodily pains are so bitter, what were the agonies the Lord sustained in His soul? . . . O what was it for Him, who made heaven and earth, to be bound, mocked, abused, spit upon, buffeted, reviled, cast into prison, arraigned, condemned, and executed in a most shameful and accursed manner! O what was it for Him to endure all this contradiction of sinners, the rage of the devil, and [the] wrath of God! . . . Blessed be God, my prison is not hell . . . my cup is not filled with wrath, and I am delivered from the wrath to come! By our sharing the remainders of His cross . . . we may come in some measure to understand the sufferings of Christ, or, by comparing our sufferings to His, we are able to guess at what we cannot understand.

Affliction teaches us to **prize and long for heaven**. In our prosperity we are content with the present world, and say with the disciples: "It is good for us to be here." While life is sweet, death is bitter. We do not crave heaven while the world gives us her friendship. But when poverty, imprisonment, persecution, and diseases come, we are not so fond of this earthly life. Then we parley with death, and take heaven into our consideration. In discipline God takes our hearts away from this present world, and makes us look homeward . . . When God lessens our esteem of this world, He draws out our desires for the heavenly world. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Affliction reveals the glory of heaven. To the

weary, it is rest; to the banished, home; to the scorned, glory; to the captive, liberty; to the warrior, conquest; to the conqueror, a crown of life; to the hungry, hidden manna; to the thirsty, a fountain of life; to the grieved, fullness of joy; and to the mourner, pleasures for evermore. Heaven is then precious, and the soul desires to be with Christ. And though hope keeps life in the soul, it is unable to fill it. It longs to be at home in its Father's house. Those who walk by faith are not content till their faith is actual sight. . . . Augustine sweetly said, on the answer of God to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face and live" (Exodus 33.20): "Then, Lord, let me die, that I may see thy face!"

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Suffering times are teaching times.

William Bridge

A Christian never moves so swiftly to heaven as when he is under a sanctified cross.

Andrew Gray

The little cross we bear is a trifle if we compare it to the benefits that come to us from creation, redemption, and sanctification.

Martin Luther

Our afflictions prepare us to receive the grace of God.

John Calvin

The chief comfort in tribulation is that nothing can possibly separate the faithful and elect servants of God from God.

Henry Bullinger

When prosperity is abused, it is God's mercy to us to visit us with the rod of affliction.

David Dickson

The Lord is specially near to His people in affliction.

John Duncan

Memoirs of Elizabeth West *(Part Two)*

Spiritual Experience

Besides testifying to the Evangelical and experiential nature of the post-Revolution ministry and to the people's love of Communion Seasons, these Memoirs are of great value as a record of the range and intensity of Elizabeth's spiritual experience.

1. Covenanting

It would be misleading to view personal covenanting with God in Christ merely as an ingredient of Communion Seasons. Rather, the believer's entire life between conversion/baptism and death was regarded as an acceptance of the Covenant of Grace, especially in terms of spiritual marriage to Christ. The Lord's Supper was simply an opportunity to re-affirm one's marriage vows. It is in this light that Elizabeth writes of the Communion held at the Tron Kirk, Edinburgh, in October 1695: "It pleased the Lord to bestow upon me an occasion of renewing my covenant with Himself." When the Communion was over, she recorded: "There I renewed all my engagements, and gave myself anew to the Lord."

It comes as no surprise to discover that she viewed every Sabbath as an opportunity to renew her covenant pledges. On April 14th 1695, for example, George Meldrum, her own minister at the Tron Kirk, had just concluded his sermon on Revelation 3.20 with "one of the largest offers of Christ" that Elizabeth had ever heard, when (she records) "I went home to secret prayer, where I met the Lord, and there we covenanted one with another."

Neither were mid-week services excluded from the practice of covenanting. On Wednesday, September 21st 1697, while attending "an exercise" conducted by the intrepid John Hepburn of Urr on Isaiah 63.3 - 'I have trodden the wine press alone,' her heart "was made entirely willing to receive Him." Taking minister, all in the building along with her, and heaven and earth to witness,

she declares: “I am Thine for now and ever, and am content to forsake all other lovers, and to take Jesus for my all in all, on any terms whatsoever. There was nothing in the world I longed so much for as to have the image of Jesus printed on my heart . . . and also to have communion with Father, Son and Holy Ghost . . . And now again, O Lord, as Thy servant offered Thee to me, so I give myself to Thee, soul and body, to be for Thee and not for another.”

Indeed, it appears that personal covenanting was a constant habit of Elizabeth’s. Once, in late summer of 1698, having retired after a Communion at Largo to “a secret place,” she was deeply distressed by “deadness . . . atheism” and a terrible temptation to “self murder.” After a fellow sufferer (whose conversation and prayers had helped to dispel the clouds) had left her, she “remained the most part of that night in the same place, where,” she relates with relish, “I got my communion indeed . . . which place was a Bethel to me, or rather I may call it a nook of heaven, it being a ridge of corn near Lundie Mill . . . In this place I renewed my covenant.”

New Year’s Day 1699 also provided her with a further opportunity to renew her covenant vows. Setting it apart “for fasting and prayer,” and to bring herself “of new fastened to the Lord,” she spent the whole day in “Resignation” and “Supplication,” “in which duties” she gave herself up “to the Lord in covenant.” Recalling James Kirkton’s exhortation: “In your covenanting make it as sure as you can: think it, write it, speak it and pray it” (based on Nehemiah 9.38), Elizabeth “made an entire resignation” of herself to Christ and His service.

Such personal covenanting with God was seen too as a particular application of the principle of national covenanting, described in Joshua 24. This is why we frequently find Elizabeth bewailing the absence of mourning for national sin and apostasy, especially “the breach of covenant and solemn vows made between God and the land.” (The reference is to the Scottish National Covenants of 1581 and 1638). Accordingly we view her on a cold, frosty, winter morning in 1701 alone in the College Kirkyard before sermon,

grieving over a broken covenant, for “this,” she explains, “was our glory above other nations.”

Elizabeth encapsulates the whole business of personal covenanting in her notes of John Anderson’s sermon on Ezekiel 16.8, delivered in August 1702. She describes God’s terms as:

1. Making over Himself and all that is His for His people.
2. Taking up His dwelling in them.
3. Defending them from all their spiritual enemies.

The believer’s terms are:

1. Receiving Christ Jesus as Lord.
2. Renouncing “all other lovers.”
3. Resigning all to Him and subjecting herself “to His holy will for evermore.”

Subsequently she would plead with Him to stand to His part of the “godly bargain” and to enable her to keep her part. The whole exercise was so delightful to her that she wrote afterwards: “I thought I would never weary of this sweet subject.”

2. Prayer Beginnings

Even before Christ had “won her heart to Himself by love,” Elizabeth found her heart inclined to seek Him through prayer. As a child, she tried to pay her way into heaven by repeating a form of prayer; but when God “was pleased to send the Gospel among us at the Revolution” (ie. the bloodless Revolution of 1688), she abandoned this practice in favour of “another way” which she thought “would please God better.” Under William Erskine’s savoury ministry at the Tron Kirk, she enjoyed the Word so much that she “durst not neglect secret prayer.” Yet all this, she confesses, was nothing but “seeking justification by works.” However, by the time Erskine’s successor, George Meldrum, told his congregation in 1694 that God rejected their prayers “unless they were at first put into the hand of Jesus Christ,” Elizabeth had already begun to pray from a new heart. After this, everything she did was suffused with prayer.

Occasions for Prayer

The occasions prompting her to pray were countless. A fire in the Canongate led her to ask God to make it “a means of conversion to someone or other.” Her employers’ change of residence drove her to the Lord “for counsel and direction.” Parliamentary debates on Prelacy sent her on “many errands to the throne of grace.” A journey to Melliston with the Jerviswoods brought her “about the middle of the day” to “retire . . . to the fields secretly.” The calling for a National Fast by the Queen rather than by the General Assembly made her pose the Lord with the dilemma: should she observe it or not? The dangerous illness of a child sent her pleading for “his life submissively, his salvation” and her own sanctification “peremptorily.” A new appointment as Mistress of the Trades’ Hospital was a call to observe regular “family prayer” with the children there.

She prayed before, during and after church services. She prayed at the Lord’s Table. She prayed in the churchyard between the serving of each table. She prayed in the street with a friend. She prayed every Wednesday afternoon in “sweet fellowship meetings” with spiritual “comrades.” She prayed at home in her room. She prayed at night in the fields. In short, she prayed whenever she found an opportunity or could create one. Truly, her life was made up of prayer.

Freedom and Simplicity

Elizabeth’s prayers are characterized by a winsome, child-like freedom and simplicity. For example, she once asked the Lord not to be angry with her for writing down her prayer. (The Scottish version of the Anglican Prayer Book was anathema to Presbyterians). At another time she told Him that nothing was so “loading” or burdensome to her as His absence. When tempted to atheism, she asked Him: “What will I do? . . . I am in a great strait about Thy Being!” While pleading for the salvation of her dying father, she cried: “O Lord, in the days of Thy flesh, some came to Thee for their servant, some for their son, some for their daughter,

some for themselves, and they got all good answers. Now, I come for my father. O deny me not, for Thine own Name's sake!"

Elizabeth was driven to prayer even more by a sense of inward need than by outward providential occurrences. When she feared "an absent God" in a time of trial she besought Him to keep her from "going away sorrowful," like the rich young ruler. When "the plague of her heart" forced itself on her "more dreadfully than ever before," she prayed against it more vehemently than ever before. When the spirit of apostasy made her conscience "hell upon earth" she cried out in agony: "O that I knew where I might find Him!" Whenever the ministers and members of the "poor Church of Scotland" were threatened by enemies she "held up their cases to the Lord" in prayer.

Nights of Prayer

A notable feature of Elizabeth's prayer life was her frequent spending of whole nights in prayer. Following a challenging sermon from William Wisheart she resolved to "give her eyes no sleep" till she found her heart retrieved from "other things" back to her Saviour. "A glorious night this was to me," she reflects, "it being wholly spent in prayer." Significantly, after four hours at the throne of grace she had not sought anything for herself, "the case of others lay so heavy on me." She prayed for every believer she knew, every congregation in Edinburgh, and every church at home and abroad. Such times, she recalls, were "very pleasant and desirable to me."

Confessions

Most of Elizabeth's prayers are confessions and petitions. On National Fast Days she shared with others the blame for national judgments: "Great Lord, though Thou make me perish in the common calamity, I must acknowledge Thou art right, for I have sinned." She deprecates as sins the absence of family worship in her parents' home; the nation's "breach of solemn covenant;" the government's recent "shedding the blood of the saints;" the "pride, passion, worldly-mindedness, selfishness, division and many other

evils” of the “real godly;” besides her own “body of sin and death” or “sinful, selfish nature.”

Accordingly she begs God to turn away such threatened judgments as famine, war and disease, and to fit His people for them, should He decide to send them. Let “Thy sore judgments,” she pleads, “be mixed with mercy.” Most pathetically of all, she cries: “If I should fall in the common calamity, yet let my soul be united to Thee in peace! Keep my faith, and do not suffer me to flinch from the least article of Thy truths, but speak Thou for me when I shall be called to own Thee publicly before the enemy.” Finally, she begs that any judgments brought on “this sinful church and nation” would serve only to purify “both ministers and people, that they may come out of the furnace all glorious, that other nations may see Thou lovest to dwell in Thy covenanted Scotland.” Such submissive yet heroic and sanctified patriotism places Elizabeth West in true succession to the martyred Covenanters of the post-Restoration years (1660-88).

Petitions

Among her many personal petitions we find requests for “an inhabitation of the Holy Spirit,” “the same mind that was in Christ Jesus,” “the same spirit of faith, instead of unbelief and atheism; the spirit of wisdom, instead of ignorance; and sanctification and holiness, instead of corruptions.” She cries often and ardently for a heart and mind set on things above, instead of “carnality, and wanderings on the mountains of vanity,” and especially for the Presence of her “sweet Advocate” in “every step . . . through this weary wilderness . . . O let me not be left alone,” she pleads, “but charge everything that is mine to be Thine.”

The petitions she offered at the Lord’s Table include “that the Lord would continue His Gospel in Scotland for ever; and that He would abide with His servants the ministers, and make the Gospel thrive under their hands; pardon their sins and ours,” and not charge “a broken covenant against us, which we are all guilty of.” She begs that her “poor father” would be taken “into the bond of

the covenant,” that everything that hindered her mother “from closing with Christ in the Gospel” would be removed, and that her brother would not be deceived by “this world’s trash.”

Her Spirit in Prayer

The final feature we notice about Elizabeth’s prayer life is the humble, broken spirit in which she prayed. “I always reckoned myself,” she confesses, “a poor, sottish, simple creature. I never thought I could do anything like another body.” And so she writes: “I come to supplicate the throne of grace as a poor, needy beggar, all made up of wants.” Just one example may be taken as representing the rest: “I this day request for more light in reading Thy holy Word, for as yet it is the darkest book I ever read upon.” Yet it was as a queen that she approached her beloved King’s throne. When a minister at a communion table spoke on ‘What is thy request, Queen Esther?’ she immediately replied: “My request is that the Bridegroom’s image may be stamped on my heart . . . Come, Lord, here is a temple for Thee to dwell in, such as it is . . . Whip out all buyers and sellers and everything that defileth it . . . O make me more holy than ever I was before.”

Perhaps the whole of Elizabeth’s prayer life is summed up in one brief note of hers: “I get nothing but what He makes me first cry to Him for by prayer, and then in His own time and way He answers and performs what He hath made me believe. O, happy are they who have so good a God to trust in!”

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Book Allocation

In keeping with the stated aims of the Union, the Committee has agreed to allocate books setting forth the doctrines of grace to students who are being called to minister to the churches. Already several batches of books have been distributed both at home and abroad. Anyone wishing to benefit by this grant of books should apply in writing or e-mail to the Treasurer, whose name and address may be found inside the front cover of Peace and Truth.

Five Ages of Man *(Part Five. Conclusion)*

The Age of Hatred

The frustrated optimism of the Age of Romance was bound to suffer a reaction. This reaction found expression in a deep-seated *pessimism*. After a century beneath its baneful power, we find it hard to imagine the swaggering belief that the actual world - in this case, the world of Victorian and Edwardian England, Tsarist Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Hapsburg Empire - was, to adopt Leibnitz's catchy phrase, the "best of all possible worlds." Many throughout Europe were disposed to hope for the best, however wretched their circumstances.

But deep stirrings beneath the surface soon dispelled the notion. Several national revolutions, two world wars and a spate of ethically motivated conflicts have confirmed that the future of man was not bright after all. Professor Joad admitted to having been forced to abandon his optimistic view of human nature after witnessing the horrors of modern war. J. I. Packer describes the last hundred years in these words: "The century witnessed global barbarism in two World Wars and in the careers of power-crazy, money-mad tribalists and the genocidal doings of dictators; we cringed to see profiteering of the world's big businesses as they polluted and raped the environment; and we mourned the Western drift from Christian and moral moorings into relativism, pluralism, secularism, and hedonism. There were escalations of the armaments race and the ability to devastate the world with nuclear weapons."

So, there is a force much deeper than pessimism, a force that actually produces it. That force is *hatred*: hatred of God, hatred of others, hatred even of self. John 'Rabbi' Duncan foresaw its growth as he contemplated the European scene of the mid-nineteenth century: "It is a world of hateful haters", he said, "a world of hateful haters." Virulent anti-Semitism, repeated attempts

at ethnic cleansing, national and international disruption, sheer unprovoked aggression, revolutionary slaughter, fanatical terrorism, urban and even rural violence, have all confirmed the observation. While hatred of God and man has always been present since the Fall, the twentieth century was notoriously, as Neil Ferguson's *Wars of the World* reveals, an Age of Hatred.

It reminds us forcibly of the days immediately before the Flood. Then, God saw lust for power producing violence, rape, scorn for others, and men's imaginations full of nothing but evil continually. As John Calvin crisply comments: "Mere lust reigned." Among the innumerable kinds of corruption that filled the earth, one in particular is highlighted: "giants practiced great violence and tyranny." And did not political and military 'giants' do the same throughout the last century, in Russia, Italy, Germany, China, Kenya, Romania, Iraq, Zimbabwe and elsewhere?

The philosophy of hatred found expression in Nihilism. "First popularized by the Russian novelist Turgenev, Nihilism signified total rejection of tradition, morality, authority, and the social order that enshrined them. [The slogan] 'What can be smashed should be smashed . . .' (Pisarev) expresses its anarchic, revolutionary application" (R.E.O. White). This is hatred with a vengeance.

The impact of this diabolical teaching on several European nations has been catastrophic. It has made theological statements meaningless. Since brute, hateful feeling decides all, there can be no such thing as truth or error. And if there is no truth or error, there can be no right or wrong. As Dostoevsky perceptively said: "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." The only meaningful reality left is personal licence, and "its supreme expression suicide." In short, our choices are motiveless, our sense of responsibility is nil, and our lives are nothing but a succession of robot-like, indifferent actions, relieved only by entertainment and artificial stimulants. Since nothing has any meaning, nothing needs to be explained. The 'theatre of the absurd' is a microcosm of the world.

One spearhead of nihilistic hatred was the writer Albert Camus, who wrote a novel, *The Plague*, in which a Jesuit priest blames God for the suffering of a child and the ‘unfair’ distribution of suffering in general. Thousands of his readers have sucked in the poison. Another was the philosopher Bertrand Russell, with his doctrine of ‘free love’ [i.e. promiscuous lust]. Breaking free from all restraints, Russell pitted his formidable but hateful intellect against the Almighty whenever he could. He has gone to face his Judge. Yet his legacy is now current practice in the west. Sexual promiscuity is the norm, and serial monogamy is the outlook governing it. In judgment, God has withdrawn former restraints and given up many to their own vile lusts.

All this widespread advocacy of hatred is already rearing a generation of callous, self-centred individuals who care for nothing but the great idol SELF.

What does Holy Scripture say on the matter? “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart” (Leviticus 19.17); “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Titus 3.3); “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22.37,39). Since, as Jonathan Edwards reminds us, heaven is a world of love, let us seek grace to love both God and one another with a pure heart fervently.

Conclusion

In trying to seize on certain main ideals in each century since 1500, we realize that there have been counter currents at work. The kingdom of God and Satan, the seed of the woman and the serpent are always at war. There were many unreformed elements in the Age of Reformation, many unorthodox views in the Age of Orthodoxy, many irrational notions in the Age of Reason, many unromantic moments in the Age of Romance, and many expressions of love in the Age of Hatred. No generalization can be

wholly accurate. But the verdicts of Scripture are final. If our sketch helps others a little to understand where we are and how we got here, we shall be thankful.

As the third millennium unfolds, hardly anyone expects that the lust for power of politicians and generals, or the lust for profit of business tycoons will generate global peace. All who hope for anything from the ways of the world are doomed to disappointment.

But remember: over all is the holy, wise and inscrutable providence of God, slowly but surely fulfilling His eternal and unshakable purpose. One day that purpose shall reach its climax. Our hope is in Him alone.

May we all seek grace to be right with God through faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and so be in a position to look forward to another age, the Age of Glory, when sin, suffering and sorrow shall be no more, but when for the people of God all will be righteousness, peace, love, joy and praise to our God for ever.

.....

Harold Crowter (1924-2011)

Though Harold himself would never have said so, it is our loss and heaven's gain that his spirit is now with the Saviour. Yet the memory of the just is blessed, and shall be blessed to us who remain in this vale of tears. The last time your editor met him, the first thing Harold said was: "John, I would not live always." (Job 7.16) Our dear friend's desire is now fulfilled.

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Grace in the Shorter Catechism

Introduction

Students of the Westminster *Shorter Catechism* will not have failed to notice how often the term ‘grace’ appears in it. This is because it sets forth a salvation that is exclusively by free and sovereign grace. We read, for example, that we are not left to perish in our state of sin and misery for no other reason than that God chose to deliver us from it by “a **covenant** of grace.” (A 20) We read, too, that “**Justification** is an act of God’s free grace,” that “**Adoption** is an act of God’s free grace,” and that “**Sanctification** is the work of God’s free grace.” (A 33,34,35) All this is in full accord with the Word of God. Explains the Puritan Thomas Goodwin from Romans 3.24 – ‘being justified freely by his grace’ – “The word *freely* is to show that it is merely grace; it is without cause; it is grace dyed in grace, as I used to say, gracious grace.”

In this article we shall consider grace, not as the fruit it produces in Christian experience (such as faith, repentance, obedience to the will of God, and willingness to forgive others – see Answers 86,87,103,105 of the Catechism) but as that undeserved blessing to salvation that God freely bestows on His elect.

Grace in the Covenant

In answer to the question: “Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?” the *Catechism* answers: “God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, **did enter into a covenant of grace**, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.” (Q and A 20)

Says Goodwin again: “We have already sailed over one sea, that of man’s corruption, a dead sea, as I may call it; and we are now entering into another, a far vaster and deeper, of God’s love and free grace.” Holy Scripture always traces up salvation to the

sovereign grace of God. It was in the eternal covenant of grace that Christ our Redeemer agreed to merit the salvation of all whom God had given Him, by keeping God's law perfectly in heart and life on their behalf, and by suffering the penalty of death for their failure to keep it. Comments Goodwin again: "the Holy Ghost calls that blessedness of the old covenant of works *life*, but never *salvation*, for you are saved by grace."

Consequently, God's unmerited favour, mercy and love, can flow in only one direction – downwards, from heaven to earth, from God to man, from eternity into time. Hence, says Thomas Boston, in the covenant of grace "all is to be had freely," for it is such a covenant from which only poor sinners (who can do nothing for themselves) can benefit. Asks Thomas Vincent: "Why is the covenant with the elect called the covenant of grace?" He replies: "Because not only the things promised to the elect are grace, or the free gifts of God, which they do not in the least deserve; but also because faith (whereby the promises are made theirs) is God's gift and work, wrought in them by His Spirit." (See Ephesians 2.8 and Colossians 2.12). James Fisher concurs: it is called a covenant of grace, he says, "because it is a covenant of eternal life and salvation to sinners, to be given them in a way of free grace and mercy. (Jeremiah 31.33-34)"

Salvation by a covenant of free and sovereign grace is known in church history as "Pauline, Augustinian, or Calvinistic." It is "repudiated by the Church of Rome in the Council of Trent . . . adopted by all the Reformers, incorporated by all the creeds of the Protestant churches of Switzerland, France, Holland, England, and Scotland, and unfolded in the standards of the Westminster Assembly." (Charles Hodge)

Let us never forget that God was not obliged to enter into a covenant of grace, to redeem and deliver us. He did so simply because it pleased Him to do so. Thus His sovereignty determines our salvation. It is solely by virtue of the covenant of grace that the elect are saved.

How we who believe should glory in a salvation that is wholly of free and sovereign grace! Says Jonathan Edwards: “The doctrines of God’s absolute sovereignty and free grace in showing mercy on whom He would show mercy . . . have very often appeared to me as sweet and most glorious doctrines. These doctrines have been made my delight . . . The way of salvation by Christ has appeared most glorious and excellent, most pleasant and most beautiful. It has often seemed to me that it would in a great measure spoil heaven to receive it in any other way.” May we also find it so.

Grace in Justification

The *Shorter Catechism* defines Justification as “**an act of God’s free grace**, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” (A 33)

We will not err on this momentous subject if we keep in mind that our justification before God rests entirely on the ground of divine law. As His creatures, we are at all times and in all respects under law to God. This law has sanctions – rewards for obedience, and punishments for disobedience. We are not, then, to understand justification as ‘to **make** just or righteous.’ In Holy Scripture it means ‘to **reckon** and **pronounce** just or righteous.’ In justification, God treats the sinner as a just or righteous person before His law. It is the antithesis of condemnation. (Romans 8.1,33,34) Just as condemnation is the act of a judge, so is justification. So, says John Brown of Haddington, in reply to the question: “What in general is meant by Justification? Not the making of our natures holy, but the holding and declaring of our persons righteous in law.”

Moreover, it is not a **work**, but an **act**. A judge’s sentence is not a work, but an act; and God’s act in justifying the ungodly is His sentence as Judge of all the earth. As John Willison of Dundee writes: “Q. Why do you call justification an act and not a work? A. Because it is a thing done all at once, as the sentence or declaration

of a judge; and not a work of time, carried on by degrees, as effectual calling and sanctification are.”

Now, the redemption that is in Christ (the only Redeemer of God’s elect) “is the channel through which justifying grace freely flows to us. It was free grace that provided a Saviour . . . To the Saviour Himself, it is indeed an act of strict justice that His people should be justified, since He has paid the full price of it. But to His people who receive the benefits of redemption, it is grace from the foundation to the keystone.” (William Henry Green)

From His judicial throne in heaven, God pronounces the ungodly but believing sinner pardoned and righteous in His court of law. Christ has met all the demands of divine law, which we have transgressed, and has suffered the punishment that our transgressions deserve. His obedience unto death is righteousness before God. And since it was wrought out on behalf of God’s elect, it is freely reckoned to their account, as if they had earned it themselves. And this constitutes their justification. What pains the apostle Paul took to teach it, and to rebuke false teachers who tried to undermine it! When we place ourselves before God’s tribunal, says John Owen, free and sovereign grace is the only place where we can find rest for our guilty conscience. May we receive it by faith and be zealous to uphold it against all comers!

Grace in Adoption

“Adoption is **an act of God’s free grace**, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.” (A 34) Just as justification is an act of God’s free grace, so is adoption. When a couple take into their family one who is not originally a member of it, they give him or her the standing, privileges and responsibilities of their own children.

The Scriptures make use of this human transaction to describe the wonderful relationship into which God brings His chosen, who are by nature aliens. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” (1

John 3.1) How ardently the apostle breaks forth into admiration of this grace! “It is wonderful condescending love of the eternal Father, that such as we should be made and called His sons. Strange, that the holy God is not ashamed to be called our Father, and to call us His sons!” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary*)

The Catechism expresses this marvellous act of grace in accordance with both legal and domestic usage. What a wonder to be “received into the number” and to enjoy full legal right to all the privileges of God’s children! It might seem strange to claim that a sinner can have any rights before God. But both Scripture and the Catechism assert it: a right in law can be established on proof of adoption as much as on natural descent. Not the least of these rights and privileges is that every believer, by adoption, becomes a joint heir with Christ of the kingdom of heaven. Meanwhile, on his journey there, he has the Spirit of adoption, whereby he cries ‘Abba, Father,’ freedom from bondage to the law, the assurance of his predestination to this privilege, and the glorious hope of seeing even his body redeemed from sin and death. (Romans 8.15; Galatians 4.5; Ephesians 1.5; Romans 8.23)

When all is said and done, the fact that God adopts us into His family, not because we are attractive (as Calvin says), nor because we have done something to deserve this promotion, nor because we have avoided certain sins and done no harm to anyone, but solely according to His sovereign will in Christ, places our adoption on the secure footing of free grace. “Men adopt,” says John Brown, “because they want [or lack] children, or see something lovely in the adopted; but it is not so with God.” As Peter H. Davids says: “Adoption is a free grant to undeserving people solely from God’s grace.” May we pray for grace to cherish this privilege, and to live as children of God.

Grace in Sanctification

In distinction from Justification and Adoption, which are both **acts** of God’s free grace, “Sanctification is **the work of God’s free grace**, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image

of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” (A 35) Among the many differences between God’s acts and His work, Thomas Vincent mentions three: “1. Justification and adoption are acts of God without us; sanctification is a work of God within us. 2. Justification and adoption make only a relative change [i.e. a change in our relationship to God]; sanctification doth make in us a real change. 3. Justification and adoption are perfect at first; sanctification is carried on by degrees unto perfection.”

When we consider that none of us (not even Noah, or Abraham, or Moses, or David, or Peter, or Paul) deserve to be sanctified, but to be left to perish forever in our guilt and depravity (Psalm 14.3; Romans 3.10-13), we may see how our sanctification or holiness is wholly of grace. “What moves God to sanctify a sinner?” asks James Fisher. “His own free grace and good pleasure,” he replies.

Furthermore, sanctification by free grace destroys all notions of self-sanctification. Asks John Brown: “Cannot believers, who have received grace, sanctify themselves?” “No!” he replies: “Without Christ they can do nothing.” Not even their good works merit God’s sanctifying grace, because at the end of the day they will all say: “we are unprofitable servants.” (Luke 17.10) It is “His own free grace, reigning through the righteousness of Christ,” that moves God to make us holy. (Titus 3.5; Romans 5.21) In every battle with temptation and sin, and in every use of the means of grace, it is God’s grace that moves us to fight the good fight of faith. We are sanctified by grace.

Conclusion

In concluding these few thoughts on grace from the *Shorter Catechism*, let us remind ourselves of the wondrous promise enshrined in Psalm 84.11 – “the Lord will give grace and glory.” As long as we are burdened with a body of sin and death, the Lord will give upholding grace; and when our warfare is over, He will give glory – “grace in this life, and glory after it, without fail.” (David Dickson)

Calvinism and Humanism

Introduction

Calvinism is the religion of humble trust in the only true and living God, seeking by His grace to do and suffer all things for His glory. By contrast, Humanism is the ‘religion’ of proud dependence on man. There can be no compromise between these two. Tragically, and despite all the good that it has done in the world, Calvinism (or full-orbed Biblical Christianity) has been largely rejected as the hope of mankind, whereas Humanism is thrust on us in every shape and form. Readers of *Peace and Truth* will know what Calvinism is. Let us briefly consider what Humanism is.

Definition

Humanism, as the term implies, is the system of thought and life that concerns itself exclusively with human interests. That is, it is pursued without reference to God or official ‘religion.’ Not to be confused with humanitarianism, or concern for the welfare of our fellow men, it puts man at the centre and thrusts God either out to the ‘irrelevant’ circumference, or down into ‘the ground of our being.’ It is thus wholly man-centred. The world has seen many varieties of Humanism, but they all have one thing in common, the notion that “man is the measure of all things” (Protagoras), or that “nothing is more wonderful than man.” (Sophocles)

History

Modern Humanism sprang into being as a re-action against mediaeval Romanism, which kept man’s thought in blinkers and his life in bondage. The intellectual Renaissance threw off this Roman yoke by reviving ancient Greek culture, which (as our quotations from Protagoras and Sophocles show) was humanistic, or man-centred. The religious Reformation (triggered off by such spiritual giants as Wycliffe, Huss and Luther) broke its chains by reviving Biblical faith and godliness, which is theistic, or God-centred. But after assisting the Reformation by pointing men back ‘to the sources’, the Renaissance pursued its own path, leading to

the three main forms of Humanism that we recognize today: Philosophic, Scientific and Religious. The details of this three-headed hydra need not detain us here. But we do need to understand its leading ideas.

Philosophic Humanism

Perhaps the best representative of this form of Humanism was Immanuel Kant. Anxious to retain some notion of God, he formulated the idea of the ‘categorical imperative.’ That is, man is morally obliged to treat his fellow men well. This truth he encapsulated in the dictum: “So act as to treat humanity . . . in every case, as an end . . . never as means only.” Thus, man’s chief end ceased to be ‘to glorify and enjoy God’, and became ‘to do right to man.’

Scientific Humanism

Parallel with this philosophic change ran a scientific one. Based on the idea that only scientific method can demonstrate the truth of anything, this form of Humanism arrogantly claims that as nature is all we can investigate, anything above nature (if there is anything above nature) can never be explained or known for certain.

And so we find believers in Scientific Humanism pontificating in such ridiculous ways as these:

“Man is a noble animal.” (Sir Thomas Browne)

“Man is a tool-using animal.” (Thomas Carlyle)

Man’s ancestor was “a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in its habits.” (Charles Darwin)

“If we find the answer to that [why we and the universe exist] it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason.” (Stephen Hawking)

“Science offers the best answers to the meaning of life.” (Richard Dawkins)

As there is nothing scientific about any of these statements, and since nothing could be more opposed to Biblical Calvinism, further comment is needless.

Religious Humanism

‘Christianity’, so-called, reeled under the onslaught of Philosophic and Scientific Humanism. Instead of boldly fighting them off with a supernatural, authoritative: “Thus saith the Lord”, it tamely retreated into man’s inner being, only to emerge with a thoroughly man-centred ‘Theology of Religious Experience.’

This retreat was initiated by Friedrich Schleiermacher. What man must do, he said in effect, is to stop asking what God has said in the Bible, and start asking what man’s experience says from within. For whatever man has not experienced has no right to be received. Man’s conscience, man’s feelings, must decide all. [Mysticism had been saying something similar for centuries.] Thus, at one blow we lose the great truths of the Trinity, Predestination, Creation, Providence, the Incarnation, Redemption and Eternal Glory. Perhaps Alfred, Lord Tennyson, best expressed this Religious Humanism when he wrote: “Man’s word is God in man.” There it is in a nutshell.

In the light of this movement, are we surprised that the last hundred years have been called ‘The Century of the Common Man’? that Aaron Copland wrote a ‘Fanfare for the Common Man’? that one of the greatest political forces of our time is ‘people power’? and that church leaders are so often found ‘seeking a consensus’?

Yet religious humanists feel the need in some way to salvage ‘God.’ So He is blasphemously brought back in to show by the cross just how much He sympathizes with man in his desperate plight. That is, Jesus on the cross shows us God entering into mankind’s experience of suffering. And this is all He can do. The rest is up to us. But with ‘Jesus’ as our ideal and model, we are sure to attain our ‘true self’ and reach our ‘true goal.’ In this way Christianity is travestied into a vague, comfortless but aspiring Humanism.

Dear friends, let us seek grace to resist Humanism in all its forms. Can we bear to see man placed where our God should be? not merely our God, but the only true and living God? Can we stand by while poor, proud man deludes himself by devising ever new but futile ways of saving himself? Can we keep silent while he thrashes aimlessly around in his search for identity and meaning? Can we be unfaithful to our God-given trust and with-hold from him the knowledge of God's purpose, plan and will, while he speeds on in his mad, rootless way towards the pit of destruction? Can we listen to his clamorous cries for 'human rights' while our God is denied *His* rights?

Let us go forth wielding the same old weapons that have always laid proud man in the dust and exalted our glorious God. Let us thrust man through with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God written, whether he hears or whether he forbears. Let us tell him of his lostness, helplessness and despair without the sovereign, saving grace of God. Let us point him to Christ and His unique work of reconciliation on the cross. Let us urge him to close with Christ, who ever lives to intercede for all those who come to God by Him. Let us warn him of the awful consequence of unbelief, and of the wrath of God that already lies heavily on him for not believing on the name of His only-begotten Son. And let us resist with all our might the smooth, oily, false religion of Humanism that calls us to leave people as they are, give them what they want, and accept as 'true for them' what they already believe. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14.12) "For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 21-22) Without Him we can do nothing.

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Crime and Punishment In the Writings of Augustine

Introduction

The ‘Church Father’ Augustine of Hippo (354-430) has been a major figure in Western thought ever since his death. Furthermore, after the apostle Paul, he has exercised the deepest influence on the theology of the Christian Church. For these reasons alone, but especially in view of the widespread disregard of Biblical principles of conduct and justice in our day, what he has to say about crime and its punishment deserves our serious attention.

Foundations

a. Sovereign Authority

The foundations of Augustine’s thinking on the topic lie in the character of God as an authoritative sovereign. In majestic vein he states: “When God commands a thing to be done, against the customs or compact of any people, though it were never by them done heretofore, it is to be done; and if intermitted, it is to be restored; and if never ordained, is now to be ordained . . . For as among the powers in man’s society the greater authority is obeyed in preference to the lesser, so must God [be obeyed] above all.” (*Confessions* 3.8.15.) This absolute dominion of His should make every one of us tremble and fear to offend Him.

b. Justice

Moreover, His sovereign authority is always just. As Augustine cogitates on the wretchedness of those who hate their fellow men more than solecisms in grammar, he reflects on God’s punishment of them: “How deep are Thy ways, O God, Thou only great, that sittest silent on high, and by an unwearied law dispensing *penal blindness* to *lawless desires*.” (*Confessions* 1.18.29.) Repeatedly in his unique autobiography Augustine acknowledges that he too was *justly* punished, both as a schoolboy and as a man, for his lawless, anti-authoritarian behaviour. “For where doth he [the offender] not

find Thy law in his own punishment?” (*Confessions* 1.10.16; 1.12.19; 2.2.3; 4.9.14.) God’s penalties are always just.

c. The Law of Love

This attribute of justice finds its clearest and deepest expression in the moral law. That law enjoins the love that is due to God and our neighbour. (*On Eighty-three Varied Questions* 61.4.) This double commandment stipulates that we give both God and our neighbour their due, according to the ruling of Christ in Matthew 22.40. (*On the Trinity* 8.10.) We are to love God because He is supremely good. (*Confessions* 1.4.4; 1.5.5.) We are to love our neighbour because God commands us, according to Romans 13.8. (*On the Trinity* 8.9-10; *Exposition of the Psalms* 83.11)

d. Order

Justice operates in conjunction with order, especially the order of love. This order is laid down by God in a hierarchy of objects that He requires us to love. At the summit stands God Himself, the supreme object of desire and delight. Below Him comes everyone and everything else according to the order of nature. (*Eighty-three Questions* 36.1-3; *Confessions* 13.9.10) In this hierarchy justice, conceived as well-ordered love, finds vent in a series of right relationships that escalate in value in proportion to the revealed will of God. Immediately below God are other human beings; beneath them are “those things subject to human beings.” (*On the Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life* 1.25.)

e. Righteousness

This sense of right relationships leads in turn to the apostle Paul’s teaching on righteousness. Particularly important, he claims, is Paul’s Letter to the Romans, in which God is said to reward or punish according to people’s deserts, as righteous or unrighteous. (Romans 2.6) When He converts a soul from the error of his way, God frees the will formerly enchained by sin; this freedom in turn “brings the love of righteousness, and the love of righteousness fulfils the law.” (*On the Spirit and the Letter* 52.) It thereafter regulates the convert’s attitude to crime and its punishment.

f. Mercy

Augustine further notes that, although we humans are justly condemned for disobedience to God's revealed will (Romans 3.23), yet God restores His people to a right relationship with Himself and each other by justifying them freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3.24; 5.1.) We do not merit this act of grace, but are given it freely. (*On the Trinity* 13.13-17.) As we shall see, Augustine holds most firmly that mercy must play a part in the administration of justice in our dealings with others.

g. Holy Scripture

All these foundational elements rest on the deeper foundation of Holy Scripture. "One of the most remarkable features of Augustine's *Confessions* is the role which this strikingly original work gives to the Word of God, the Scriptures." (Thomas F. Martin) Whoever reads Augustine may clearly see the foundational place that Scripture has in his reaching, understanding, teaching and living out the Christian life. It is God's book of rules, road map, love letter, contract, testament, pharmacy, and medicine for us poor sinners to live by.

Summary Conclusion

When all these factors are applied to the subject of human crime and punishment, not only is God our model in administering justice to criminals; it is in fact *His justice* that is being administered through the human agents He employs in every just judicial system, however imperfectly managed. (*City of God* 19.21; 17.4; 5.19.)

"What is it we love," then, he asks, "when we love justice?" It is, he replies, the unchangeable standard or measure that accords with God's mind by which just judgments are made in everyday life and relationships. (*On the Trinity* 8.9-13; *Eighty-three Questions* 46.) Even non-Christians recognize this because the divine image in which we are all created is not entirely destroyed, but only deformed. (*On the Spirit and the Letter* 27.48-28.48.)

Yet we will *practice* justice only insofar as we love it. And we will love it only as we know it as love to God and our neighbour according to the teaching and example of Christ. (*On True Religion* 3.3-4.) This, in sum, is how Augustine lays the justice of God as the foundation of the punishment of crime.

Crime and Punishment

Let us next consider what he means by crime and punishment. Crime, he says, is wrongdoing against legal sanctions. Punishment is the penalty assessed, decreed and imposed on that wrongdoing. Because God is the One against whom we ultimately do wrong, crime is therefore sin, both original and actual.

Its punishment is first and foremost **retributive**; that is, repayment, recompense or requital for the evil done. It is not personal retaliation by the One offended, but repayment for crime committed against His infinite justice. Thus in Romans 1.27 Paul writes of God dispensing to idolaters “that recompense of their error which was meet (commensurate or appropriate).” Robert Haldane well expresses Augustine’s outlook when he comments: “As the impiety of the Pagans respecting God reached even to madness, it was also just that God should permit their corruption to recoil upon themselves.” Thus they received “a proportionate and retributive recompense.” (*Commentary in loc.*) Augustine himself repeatedly says as much in his monumental treatise *The City of God*.

For Augustine punishment is imposed on three levels: (1) In God’s dealings with men and nations; (2) In parental or brotherly correction; (3) In the execution of civil law. Let us consider these distinctly. All three are germane to our purpose, since the last two are based on the first.

(1) In **God’s dealings with men and nations** death (spiritual, physical and eternal) is the consequence of Adam’s first disobedience. Our suffering in this life springs from our natural link to Adam’s original sin and our own specific sins. In the

righteous judgment of God, each sin produces its own punishment, and may bring on us further punishment. Punishment, then, is both a consequence of and a punishment for crime against God. (*Letters* 189; 138; 220; 57.5; *City of God* 21.14; 22.22.)

This cycle of crime – punishment – crime – punishment – is endless, unless grace interposes, for if indulged, crime leads to greater crime and thus to greater punishment. (*Against Adimantus* 17.) While God punishes some sins in this life, others are punished both now and after death; still others in the endless spiritual and physical pains of hell. (*City of God* 21.9.) In God’s ordered universe, temporal and eternal punishments are both necessary and appropriate. When He inflicts them, God neither consults man nor offers an explanation of His actions to man. Yet in each and every case they are just.

(2) **Parental and brotherly corrections** are punishments that satisfy the demands of domestic and communal justice, for they aim at the restoration of the offender, not his destruction. In these spheres parents correct their children, presbyters correct their brethren, and friends correct each other. These kinds of punishment should be accompanied by prayer and instruction, and may include even corporal punishment (inconsistently enough, except for the ‘clergy’), because they take place within special communal bonds. (*Letters* 63; 153.10.)

(3) **Punishment under civil law**, by contrast, is inflicted solely to satisfy justice in the civil sphere. If the law instructs everyone how to live aright, it must exact retribution when its directives or sanctions are contravened. In this case, appropriate criminal legal penalties are fines, confiscation of property, imprisonment, moderate corporal punishment, and execution (for capital crimes). (*On Free Will* 1.15.)

While such punishments aim solely at retribution, they may yield the important side effects of deterring people from committing crimes, for fear of the consequences; benefiting the community, by

leading to reconciliation between criminal and victim, and restitution of stolen or damaged goods. They may even be blessed to the criminal's soul. (*Letters* 153; 185; 134.) But such benefits are only incidental, and, strictly speaking, form no part of the punishment of crime.

Augustine too recognizes that not all crime in human society is punishable, because it may never be detected.

Of perennial relevance is his teaching on war as a form of just civil punishment. When one nation wages war in order to prevent another nation's criminal conduct in disrupting world peace and the order of society, then it is carrying justice into the sphere of international relations. (*City of God* 19.7.)

On the other hand, a nation may suffer war as God's providential punishment for its sins. (*Questions on the Heptateuch* 6.10; *City of God* 1.21.)

A necessary feature of Augustine's teaching on the civil punishment of crime is his insistence that it must adhere to correct legal procedure, since all civil authority is itself subject to law, and ultimately to God. (*Letters* 114.1; *To Cresconius* 3.47.51-3.48.52.) Indeed, he coins the phrase, referring to the city administration of his day: "The condemned man's punishment is the city's ornament." (*Sermons* 125.5.)

This last requisite – correct legal procedure – is especially necessary with regard to capital offences. For Augustine, capital punishment is the imposition of the death penalty by a legitimate authority through a legal process. He finds his endorsement of capital punishment, lawfully carried out, in Holy Scripture, namely Genesis 9.5-6 and Romans 13.1-7. According to its ruling, properly constituted civil authority has the right to kill (both by execution or in a just war); yet the application of this right must always be confined to crimes that deserve the death penalty, while the punishment itself must be proportioned to the heinousness of

the crime. (*Letters* 134, 152, 153.) When it is carried out, capital punishment must be executed impersonally or dispassionately, because civil authority is acting not for its own sake, but on behalf of others.

The office of public executioner, however repugnant to natural feelings, is necessary in a well-ordered society. (*On Order* 2.8.25.) His power to kill on behalf of the state is grounded in divine authority, not human. Power to give and take away life belongs to God alone, and is delegated to his earthly ministers acting by lawful authority. (*On the Nature of the Good* 9.)

It is true, Augustine concedes, that a fallible earthly judge may condemn an innocent man to death. (*City of God* 19.6.) But he should not be blamed when he acts according to law, in ignorance of all the facts in a case.

Significantly, both on humane grounds and because of the possibility of miscarriages of justice, Augustine urges Christian judges to exercise clemency in capital cases. He also forbids Christian ministers to prosecute for capital offences. Instead, they should plead with sentencing judges for mercy to convicted offenders, not to set aside their sentence, but to ensure that mercy might be joined to justice in order to fulfil the law of love. (*Letters* 153.3-8.)

As for the convicted criminal, fear of death may lead to the salvation of his soul; but execution leaves no room for repentance. (*Sermons* 13.8; *Letters* 10.) Mercy never sets aside justice.

Unlawful killing, or murder, is not only criminal, but also a usurping of God's sole authority over all life and death. In no circumstances does Augustine condone 'lynch law' or the unwarranted actions of vigilantes. He forbids all private retribution. (*Letters* 47; *City of God* 1.21; *On Free Will* 1.5.11-12; *Against Faustus* 22.70-75.)

Conclusion

While Augustine's teaching on crime and punishment has been diabolically misapplied, as in the Roman Catholic Inquisition's torture and burning of Christian believers and such 'heretics' as the Cathars, today in the West it is largely replaced by a pragmatic and utilitarian philosophy.

His main contention, that punishment is retributive, needs to be restored to our legislature, judiciary and executive, recognizing that (as the late Lord Denning reminded us) justice takes precedence over every man-made law, for we are all ultimately acting on behalf of, and are accountable to, God in the punishment of crime.

[Much of the above article is a re-vamping and enlargement of Todd Breyfogle's entry entitled PUNISHMENT in the encyclopedia *Augustine through the Ages*. Eerdmans. 1999. 688-690. We are both privileged and grateful to possess his lucid and comprehensive summary of Augustine's thoughts on the subject. Having heard a summary of Theresa May's speech on crime and punishment at the Conservative Party Conference, I sent the article to her, urging her to implement its teaching. Ed.]

Notices

1. The Central Committee of the S.G.U. was encouraged recently by a request to be associated with us on a more tangible basis, and possibly to form an Auxiliary. Should any others wish to do the same, we invite them to contact the Secretary.
2. A long-standing member of the Sovereign Grace Union has collected many writings of Henry Atherton, the founder of the Union in its present form, into a booklet of 120 pages length. With an updated history of the Union, this has been proposed as a commemorative issue to be published in 2014. We invite our readers to respond to the proposal, sending your response to the Secretary at 43 Warwick Road, Rayleigh. Essex. SS6 8PQ.

Book Reviews

Christian Focus Publications

The Purpose of God: Ephesians – R.C.Sproul. 174pp. £9.99. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84550-638-4.

This is a reprint of a book first published in 1994. Its author, an American professor in the Reformed tradition, has taught Systematic Theology for many years. Though one might expect this commentary to be more in depth, it is within the grasp of every Christian to understand. Each of its ten chapters is followed by some simple questions to answer; these will test the reader's grasp of the fundamental truths expressed.

Beginning with praise to the Father for the manifold spiritual blessings we have in Christ, it proceeds to deal with the first of Paul's two prayers in the epistle, then emphasizes the importance of grace and salvation by faith alone as gifts of God.

The unity of the Church, including both Jew and Gentile, is linked to Paul's special mission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Here Sproul points out the difference between the visible church, apparently fractured into endless groups and denominations, and the invisible church made into one body, building and bride, and which includes all who are truly united to Christ, having one God, one Lord, one faith and one baptism.

After dealing with the outworking of this unity in daily Christian living, R.C. handles the subject of submission, both in general and in particular with regard to marriage. Paul's teaching is not the opinion of a bigoted chauvinist, but is the inspired Word of God, and is of great relevance to our day. The relative roles of husband and wife, father, mother and children, are dealt with Scripturally. Leadership and authority are not to be expressed in a harsh, domineering way; and Christ is the example to both wives in submission and husbands in loving. The subject of slaves and masters is presented as relevant today insofar as we are to serve the Lord diligently in our work, whether or not we are being watched.

The subject of spiritual warfare is dealt with in a way that excludes the excesses of much that has been popular in recent years in some quarters of the Church. The emphasis is where Paul lays it, in the individual responsibility of every Christian to put on the armour of God so as to be able to stand in the evil day.

In sum, this commentary is an excellent study guide for Christians of all ages and stages of maturity.

David Perry

Unity and Diversity – Sandy Finlayson. 310pp. £8.99. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84550-550-9.

This fascinating study consists of cameos of ten founders of the 1843 Disruption Free Church of Scotland. As we stroll through the gallery of the author's chosen subjects, we discover their distinctive contributions to the denomination's testimony: e.g. Chalmers' far-seeing benevolent reforms, Cunningham's massive theological input, Duncan's eccentric but profound scholarly influence, Duff's noble missionary ventures and Kennedy's powerful preaching and confessional stance. A final chapter evaluates the Free Church witness in the present century. To lovers of the work of God in Scotland, this survey is both a stimulus to maintain the faith and a warning against defection from the testimony bequeathed to us.

J.M.B.

The Shoes That Love Made - Lucille Travis. 160pp. £5.99. Pbk. ISBN 97818-455-0630-8.

This is a superb addition to the *Trailblazers* series of biographies for 10-14 year olds. The stories from Brand's childhood, from climbing trees in the Indian mountains to climbing lamp-posts in England, will appeal to children. His medical and missionary work is also portrayed in an engaging way. There is a strong theme of God's sovereign plan for each of His people, and His compassion for the lost and the needy. The book is well written, and the 'shoe' idea works well to tie it all together. Highly recommended.

Miriam Lowrie

Banner of Truth Trust

Smooth Stones from Ancient Brooks – C. H. Spurgeon. 216pp. £5.75. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-113-6.

The Puritan Thomas Brooks need no commendation from us. His fame is in all good churches. The compiler of these pithy sayings of his describes them as gold dust, scattered with both hands. And so they are. The only misgiving I have with the collection is that it lacks both topical arrangement and index. Surely, with modern digital technology at our disposal, someone could have provided these. This criticism apart, I find some of the quotations exquisite; for example: “God’s very service is wages;” “Grace does not destroy nature, but rather perfect it;” “Till we have sinned, Satan is a parasite; when we have sinned, he is a tyrant.”

J.M.B.

Gospel Basics – Andrew A. Bonar. 160pp. £6.50. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-123-5.

First published in 1878 as *Gospel Truths*, this re-arranged edition presents a varied selection of once separate papers in sixteen short chapters. They cover such themes as ‘The Cup of Wrath,’ ‘Coming to Christ,’ ‘The Holy Spirit,’ ‘What Gives Assurance,’ and ‘Greater Holiness.’ In Spurgeon’s commendatory phrase, “life and sweetness” pervade the collection. D.M. McIntyre’s introductory essay on Bonar’s preaching is enlightening, as it fixes on certain characteristics that are notably absent from many present-day sermons. It would seem that the Spirit who imparted so much unction to the ministries of the two Bonars and Robert Murray M’Cheyne has withdrawn many of His influences, leaving preachers to themselves. It is good to see in these papers a fine blend of solemn warning, safe guidance and edifying exhortation. May the Lord speak to their readers so as to provoke earnest prayer for the kind of Christianity Bonar represents.

J.M.B.

Select Practical Writings of John Knox. 295pp. £16.00. Hdbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-102-0.

This welcome reprint of the 1845 edition reveals the tender-hearted Reformer at his best, especially in his *Treatise on Prayer*, *Exposition of Psalm 6*, and pastoral letters to his downcast mother-in-law. This aspect of his ministry in no way detracts from his vigorous and well-reasoned counsels to his fellow Scotsmen to continue steadfast in their newly found faith. Read these items alongside Knox’s rugged and forthright *History of the Reformation*

in Scotland, and you will get some idea of the kind of man God raises up and uses to effect national reform. J.M.B.

One Lord, One Plan, One People – Rodger Crook. 467pp. £8.50. Pbk. ISBN 97818-4871-137-2.

Understanding the Bible is vital for the Christian life, and the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is the Word of God. Yet many Christians struggle with the Bible, and seldom venture beyond their comfort zone of familiar readings. This book attempts to help such people. It gives a brief overview of every book of the Bible, and traces the grand themes that run through the Bible. Challenging the post-modern idea that there is no ‘meta-narrative’ the author shows how the whole Bible points to Christ and the redemption of God’s people. Originating in a series of sermons at Belvoir Presbyterian Church, Belfast, it allots one sermon to each book, resulting in chapters 6-7 pages each. The shorter books contain more detail than the larger ones. However, valuable insights appear in every chapter. For example, the author notes the ‘covenant’ structure of many of Paul’s epistles, similar to Exodus 20, where the Lord first reminds Israel of what He has done for them before giving them commands as to what they must do. The author avoids controversy, but his own conservative theological position is evident throughout. Bible passages are referred to rather than quoted, so the issue of translations does not arise. The style is accessible, but no attempt is made to ‘dumb down’ the message, and the reader must be prepared to think! This would be a useful addition to any Christian bookshelf. Robert Dale

[NOTE: Your editor has written to the Banner of Truth complaining about certain details of the author, a supporter of Manchester United and the Irish cricket and rugby teams, asking how these worldly enthusiasms qualify him to write the book. To date I have received no reply.]

Reformation Heritage Books

The Beauty and Glory of Christ – ed. Joel R. Beeke. 241pp. N.P. Hdbk. ISBN 978-1-60178-142-0.

This symposium contains the addresses delivered at the Puritan Reformed Theological Conference at Grand Rapids in 2010. It is

full of good things: the Lord Jesus is unambiguously identified as the Servant in Isaiah and the King in the Song of Songs. (Certain liberal ‘scholars’ are blind to His beauty in both books.) The glory of His incarnation, parables and death shines forth clearly also. Two unusual but relevant pastoral messages present the Saviour as Master of Storms and of Stress. Other topics are His imputed righteousness and His compassionate heart for sinners. Marrow Theology is given a brief airing. ‘Calvin, Kuyper and Politics’ too finds a place. Readers are challenged to live Christ-(Chris Banks while the series concludes with exhilarating calls to Christ’s glorious exaltation, investiture as the Lamb in the midst of God’s throne, and as the focal point of all the doxologies in heaven and earth. If the Spirit of God attended the spoken addresses as He attends their printed form, the conference must have been a feast of fat things. Warmly recommended. J.M.B.

Published Privately

Ezekiel – Philip R. Kinderman. 440pp. £9.00. Pbk. No ISBN. Obtainable from Miss M. R. Stonelake, Flint Cottage, Church Lane. Hellingly. Hailsham. East Sussex. BN27 4HA.

We are privileged to receive a series of 48 sermons (one for each chapter) on Ezekiel by our late brother, former pastor of Mayfield Baptist Chapel and a member of the S.G.U. Central Committee. Avoiding detail, Philip fastens onto the central thought of each chapter, expounding and applying it simply and perceptively, relating its message to the glorious Gospel of sovereign grace. These sermons contain a sweet savour of Christ, and are so edited that those who knew him can hear Philip’s voice addressing us through them. May the “things new and old” he brought out of God’s treasury find their way into readers’ hearts by the same Spirit who taught its beloved author. J.M.B.

[We regret that reviews of some titles sent us (e.g. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on John 1, Richard Sibbes’ *Josiah’s Reformation* and Charles Hodge’s *Princeton Sermons*) will have to appear in our next issue, the Lord willing. Ed.]

Tapes and CD's of SGU addresses

may be obtained from Mr T. Field, 34 Pembury Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2HX
£2.50 + 50p each cheques payable to "Sovereign Grace Union"

Christ Alone - Charles Sleeman. Haslemere

Particular Redemption - Malcolm Watts

*The Imputation of Adam's sin to us - Geoffrey Thomas, Aberystwyth

*The Imputation of our sin to Christ - Geoffrey Thomas

The Imputation of Christ's righteousness to us - Geoffrey Thomas

*The Person, Priesthood and Protection of Jesus Christ (John 18)
- Abraham Thomas

The Blessed Consequences of Justification by Faith
- Malcolm Jones., Maescymmer

Adoption – Robert Oliver (Bradford on Avon)

Romans 9 by Clifford Parsons of Portsmouth

*The Life and Work of John Calvin by Gervase Charmley

*The Meaning of "All Israel" by Don Underwood of London

*Such A Great Salvation by Winston Saunders of Selhurst

*What Christ will do - and how by Neil Pfeiffer

'A Chosen People' – Chosen in love, Chosen with Purpose & Chosen in Christ, -3 tapes
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Sanctification: Romans 6 – Austin Walker, Crawley

God our Hope: Jeremiah 14: 1-9 – Malcolm Watts, Salisbury

The Rock Christ Jesus: Isaiah 28 – Ian Densham, Hemel Hempstead

Amazing Grace by Abraham Thomas of Halland

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*Omniscience, by Paul Relf of Chatham

*Omnipotence - Something Understood, by Graham Thrussell of West Sussex

*Jacob's Ladder - Dafydd Morris of Wales

*God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility - Gary Brady of London

*God's Full Sovereignty, our Full Salvation - Timothy Burden of Eastbourne

*The Unchanging Gospel - Jeremy Walker of Crawley

*John 1:17 - John Saunders of Chichester (AGM 2009 Evening Sermon)

*Our Reasonable Service, Romans 12:1 by Alun Higham of Cardiff

*Romans 16 by John Saunders of Chichester

*The Flood: The creation of a New world by Stephen Lloyd of Gravesend

Tapes previously advertised are still available. Addresses marked* are also available on CD