

# *Peace & Truth*

The Magazine of the Sovereign Grace Union

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**2013:3**

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# Peace & Truth

The Magazine of the Sovereign Grace Union

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*Published quarterly by the Sovereign Grace Union for the proclamation and defence of the Doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace.*

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## **Aims and Objects**

To further the proclamation and defence of the doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace.

To print and reprint literature expounding such doctrines.

To encourage publishers to issue such literature and to help its circulation by purchase and distribution to Clergy, Ministers, Christian Workers, Theological Students, Members of Parliament and others.

To hold Conferences and Meetings to re-affirm the old truths in these days of apostacy and declension.

To circulate tracts, pamphlets and books, maintaining the Doctrines of Grace, which may be presented to the Union for that purpose, and to print and circulate such tracts, etc., for which any person, or Society, undertakes to provide the funds.

To raise a testimony against the evils of Priestcraft, Popery, Ritualism, Arminianism, Rationalism, Liberalism and Higher Criticism.

**Membership** is open to all who are in agreement with the Basis, Aims and Objects of the Union.

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## 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*

Throughout Holy Scripture, hardness of heart is used to denote a spiritual condition in which men refuse to obey the revealed will of God. It describes Pharaoh (Exodus 9.7), the Jews (Mark 3.5), the Gentiles (Romans 2.5), and even the covenanted people of God (Isaiah 63.17). The metaphor is taken from a process of covering with a pōros, or kind of stone. When we become its subjects, we make our hearts callous, or petrified. This is a terrible state to be in, for it indicates God's severe displeasure with us, and cuts us off from all benefit by the means of grace.

How may we know if we are hardening our hearts against Him? There are at least four ways of identifying this dreadful condition:

### **1. Quenching the Holy Spirit.**

When God warns us against sin by His Word and Spirit, we quench His motions, and virtually tell Him to leave us alone. As a result conscience grows dumb. I once asked an inmate of Strangeways prison in Manchester what his conscience was doing while he was stealing regularly from the bank for which he worked. He replied: "The first time I stole, it shouted at me. The second time, its voice was faint. The third time, it was silent." By persisting in his sin, he had quenched the Holy Spirit and provoked Him to strive no longer with him. Instead of resisting the temptation to steal, he gave way to it. And as we know, every sinful act strengthens the habit of sinning, till we are enslaved to it, because our heart is hardened.

### **2. Refusing to embrace Christ in the Gospel.**

Those who sit under what an old divine calls "an entreating Gospel" and refuse God's grace are probably the most hard-hearted of all. Though they hear the most moving pleas to close with Christ, their deadness to God remains, leaving them free to follow their idols. God Himself complains at this refusal: "My people would not hearken to my voice . . . so I gave them up unto

their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels."  
(Psalm 81.11-12)

**3. Worshipping God formally but not in the Spirit.**

This aspect of hard-heartedness is widely complained of by true believers. It is awfully possible to repeat the same words in prayer, preaching and singing without the least affection towards God and others. Such formality is deadly. Is it not also very common? Unless we beg the Holy Spirit to melt our hearts with the love of Christ, renew our wills and enable us to worship God with our whole being, we shall only sink further and further into a concrete-like hardness.

**4. Reproving ourselves without reforming ourselves.**

It is also a sad symptom of hardness of heart when we reprove ourselves for discovered sins, and even resolve to repent of them, but never do anything about them. We may be full of remorse without repenting. At a certain prayer meeting I attended, several members confessed their lightness in joking about the things of God. Only a week later, they fell into the same sin. O, how resistant to correction our hearts can be!

Dear friends, may the Spirit of God Himself convince us of the evil of hard-heartedness, and grant us a broken and contrite heart.

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- ‘Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.’  
(Hebrews 3.7-8)
- ‘Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?’  
(Job 9.4)
- ‘When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart.’  
(Exodus 8.15)
- ‘And the LORD said unto Moses . . . I will harden his heart.’  
(Exodus 4.21)
- ‘He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.’  
(Proverbs 28.14)
- ‘Whom He will He hardeneth.’  
(Romans 9.18)

## *Puritans and Covenanters:*

### *Philip Henry and the Lord Jesus Christ*

#### **Biographical Note**

**Philip Henry** (1631-1696) was one of the most illustrious of the Puritans. That he was known in his day as *Heavenly Henry* is a sufficient tribute to his spirituality. Born into the household of a Whitehall courtier, Henry was surrounded by the trappings of Stuart court life from his youth. Among his playmates were Prince Charles (later Charles II) and the Duke of York (later James II), while he enjoyed the dubitable distinction of being petted by Archbishop William Laud! Providentially, the devotion of his mother, who taught him Scripture and prayed over him, kept him from the snares into which so many of his acquaintances fell.

It was as a pupil at Westminster School that Henry first experienced the saving grace of God. At his mother's request, he was allowed to attend the daily lectures delivered in New Chapel and St. Margaret's by members of the distinguished Westminster Assembly. Here he sat on the pulpit steps and took down every sermon he heard. "If ever any child, such as I then was, between the tenth and fifteenth year of my age, enjoyed line upon line, precept upon precept, I did," he recalled. "My soul rejoiceth, and is glad at the remembrance of it; the Word distilled as the dew, and dropped as the rain. I loved it, and loved the messengers of it." It was through the ministry of one of these messengers, Stephen Marshall, that Henry was "begotten again to a lively hope."

At Christ Church, Oxford, where he proceeded in 1647, Henry's gentle breeding and winsome manners won him several friends, but occasioned a major lapse from his untried faith. The attractions of a local metheglin (a variety of Welsh mead) house and bowling green, and his choice of intellectual rather than godly companions,

combined to draw him away from the pursuit of holiness and hard study.

But though he forsook God, God did not forsake him. “These things are now bitter to me,” he later confessed. “Forever praised be the riches of God’s free grace that He was pleased still to keep His hold of me, and not to let me alone when I was running from Him.”

His recovery deeply affected him with a sense of the durability of grace, and led him to make a personal covenant with God. “Forasmuch as I have by often experience found the treachery and deceitfulness of my own heart . . . I do deliberately, of choice, and unreservedly, take God in Christ to be mine; and give myself to Him, to be His, to love Him, to fear Him, to serve and obey Him; and, renouncing all my sins with hearty sorrow and detestation, I do cast myself wholly upon free grace, through the merits of Christ, for pardon and forgiveness; and do propose, God enabling me, from this day forward, more than ever, to exercise myself unto godliness . . .”

After taking his degrees (B.A. 1651, M.A. 1652) Henry became tutor to Judge Puleston of Emeral Hall in Flintshire, and preached each Lord’s Day at nearby Worthenbury. After a thorough examination by the local presbytery in 1657, he was ordained at Prees, in Shropshire.

Strongly Calvinistic in doctrine, Henry was no Presbyterian, but participated in an association of North Wales ministers drawn from Episcopal, Presbyterian and Independent churches.

Despite his welcoming the Restoration as a “public national mercy,” Henry was ejected from his living for refusing to read the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Meanwhile, he married Katherine Matthews of Broad Oak, Flintshire. Of the six children of this marriage, the commentator Matthew is the best remembered.

Following his ejection, Henry suffered along with other Nonconformists, spending some time in prison, and being fined for holding services in his home.

With the accession of William and Mary and the passing of the Act of Toleration, he resumed his open preaching ministry. But by 1696 his health declined, and he left this world to be with Christ. His last words were: “O death, where is thy sting?”

Henry’s best known work is *Christ All in All*. It is a fitting tribute to the memory of one who wrote to his son Matthew: “See your need of Christ more and more, and live upon Him. No life like it; so sweet, so safe. My Saviour is mine in all things . . . every day, and in everything, He is All in All.”

### **Christ All in All**

The forty-one sermons comprising this title present the Saviour under such similes and metaphors as our light, our fountain, our song, our ladder, our redemption and our ark, as well as under several literal terms such as our hope, our righteousness, our propitiation, our example and our sanctification. The series is rounded off by two summary addresses, one doctrinal, the other practical, on Christ our All. When they were preached is not recorded, but his daughter Mrs Savage selected them from four manuscripts bequeathed to his four daughters in their father’s last will and testament. Based on Colossians 3.11 – “Christ is all and in all,” they were headed: *What Christ is made of God to True Believers in Forty Real Benefits*. Her autobiography appreciatively records: “1697. Sabbath. January 10. This day and the evening before I spent some time in reading my dear father’s sermons on Col. iii. 11, ‘Christ is all and in all.’ With this he concludes that subject which he was so long upon, namely, what Christ is to true

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believers in forty particulars.” She closes the reference: “Blessed be God for these sweet, wholesome truths to be food for my poor soul. He ‘being dead yet speaketh.’ And what is it he says but that which his heart was always full of? Christ – Christ – Christ. Methinks I hear him still: Oh, make Christ your all!”

The manuscript remained unpublished until 1830, when it formed an appendix to the *Miscellaneous Works* of Matthew Henry. It has since been reprinted and read with great spiritual profit by many believers. Within the limited space available to us, we can merely select a few choice extracts to whet our readers’ appetites.

The opening sermon sets the tone for the rest by laying Christ as our foundation and building believers on Him. Typical of Henry’s theology is his recognition that the sole basis for building on Christ is believers’ union with Him; “for both he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one,” *of one piece*, Heb. ii. 11. “Had the apostles and prophets been asked, one by one: Who is your foundation? On whom do you build for life and happiness? They would have said, Jesus Christ. He was their all in all; and therefore should be ours.”

On Christ as the root and believers as the branches, he discerningly remarks: “Elect persons not yet called may be said to have a remote potential union, being in the decree. External visible professors have a kind of seeming union, such as a sprig or branch which is tied to a tree with a string or withes only, may be said to have; which is another sort of union than that of the true branches. The true branches are so in it as to be of it . . . O then see to this,” he urges, “that besides the outward, there be an inward grafting by a true act of faith.”

In handling the topic of Christ our raiment, Henry winsomely describes Him as the believer’s “*best robe* . . . the dearest and most costly garment that ever was,” yet free to all who clothe themselves with Him.

In applying the doctrine, he challenges us again: “Canst thou find in thy heart to part with thy rags . . . the rags of thy sins . . . the rags of thy own righteousness?” Those who find grace to clothe themselves with Him and His righteousness, he assures us quaintly, will also find that “Christ will never put them off that put Him on.”

As the sinner’s refuge, or place of safety and supply, Christ was specially appointed by God, like the cities of refuge, “on purpose for us to fly to,” that our guilt may be put away, our temptations resisted, our troubles relieved, and our dangers averted. In Him we shall find a ready welcome and a safe retreat from all our foes.

With characteristic Puritan thoroughness, Henry describes the paschal lamb of Israel’s exodus in detail, matching each point in the Saviour’s offering of Himself as our Passover. Once the lintels and doorposts of our souls are sprinkled by faith with His blood, he assures us, neither the justice of God, nor the curse of a broken law, nor the divine threats and executioners can touch us. With them all, in words echoed by Toplady, we can “have nothing to do.”

Rare among Puritan writings is Henry’s treatment of Christ as our portion. Contrasting what men say to themselves about their desired portions in this life, he sets Christ before us as the Father’s “comfortable provision” and “competent portion for every child of His.” So rich is the believer that “all that He is, and all that He hath, both as God and as God-man,” is his everlasting portion. He is especially “*the portion of my heart . . . of my spirit, my inner man,*” because He alone can meet the needs, desires and hopes of the soul. Furthermore, not only is He “a suitable portion” for us, He is also “a sure portion,” guaranteed never to be snatched from us. “He is a bottomless mine of merit and spirit, a boundless ocean of righteousness and strength, a full fountain of grace and comfort.” So, he urges us to “make this portion ours . . . by a sincere, hearty, deliberate choice of it. Choose it, and thou shalt have it,” and so sit alongside Mary, who chose that good part that

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shall never be taken from her. (Luke 10.42) So yearning is Henry for the souls of men that towards the close of his sermon he grows quite impassioned: “we must cordially accept of Him upon the terms on which He is offered; come to Him, roll ourselves upon Him, assent and consent to His laws and government, saying, None but Christ, None but Christ. None but Christ, to justify, sanctify, rule, save me. None but Christ, to be my Prophet, my Priest, my King.”

With Christ as our fountain we need neither Jewish “water of purification” nor Popish “holy water: a mere vanity;” His precious blood cleanses us from all sin. He is not a cistern, which may become empty; He is a fountain, both flowing freely and nearby, as we plod through the desert of this life. So, he exclaims: “Lord, give us a fountain;” adding immediately: “Why, blessed be His name, He hath given us one.” In His precious blood all our guilt and defilement is washed away. What else remains, then, but for us to be convinced of our need, then to come and wash away the filth of our soul, mind and conscience. Those who have already washed in this fountain Henry exhorts to keep themselves clean. But should they foul themselves again through sinning, they must resort again to Him, “confessing, bewailing, believing.”

Expounding and applying our Lord’s claim as the Way (John 14.6), Henry states unequivocally: “Our Lord Jesus Christ is our only way to the Father, and besides Him there is no other way.” As sinners, he continues, we need to know the Father, have access to Him, to be accepted by Him, to be reconciled to Him, to be adopted into His family, to receive all His promises and to be admitted into His kingdom. Christ, Henry assures us, is the only way into all these privileges. And so he concludes: “If we are out of Christ, we are out of the way.” To those who are in Him, he says: “as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.”

Henry’s penchant for striking imagery finds expression again in his sermon on Christ as our ensign, based on Isaiah 11.10.

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An ensign, he explains, is a standard, flag or banner, such as both cavalry and infantry have. Among other points, he reminds us that Christ is our rallying point, beneath which both ministers and people, Jews and Gentiles fight the good fight of faith. Until we gather beneath Him as our banner, “our condition is sad and perilous. We are the devil’s soldiers fighting the devil’s battles.” Best of all, He is “an uniting ensign . . . our great centre of unity.” From this latter truth springs a most pertinent lesson: “When I say we ought all to unite in Christ, I mean that all that profess faith in Christ, and obedience to Him, and walk answerable to that profession, ought to be thought meet for our communion in all the ordinances, without laying down other terms of our own devising.” Evidently, proud exclusivism was as rife in Henry’s day as it is in ours. A particularly edifying note is sounded when Henry bids us look up to Christ as “an exalted ensign.” As He is lifted up on the cross, in His resurrection and exaltation, and in the preaching of the gospel, “set forth as the most eligible and desirable,” both in Himself and to us poor sinners, so we should behold Him. Staying with the military imagery, he concludes by asking us whether or not we are enlisted under Him. If not, we should sign up in His service. “Having done so,” we must “keep close to Him,” just as good soldiers keep close to their ensign.

Henry draws again on military imagery in ‘Christ is our Shield,’ and on nature imagery in ‘Christ is our Fountain,’ ‘Christ is our Sun’ and ‘Christ is as the Dew.’

More theologically, he treats the subject of Christ as our Sanctification most discriminatingly. “He is appointed of God,” he says, “to be the author of our sanctification, to work holiness in us for the making of us holy. As He is the efficient cause, He is the Lord our righteousness, to make us righteous by imputation, so He is the Lord our holiness to make us holy by implantation. We are justified, that is, accepted of as righteous in the sight of God through His merit made ours. We are sanctified, that is, actually made holy by His Spirit which is given to us.” So Scripture informs us that we who believe are “justified in the name of the

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Lord Jesus, sanctified by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus.” Along with his Puritan brethren, Henry held to this necessary distinction with tenacity. In the heart of the sermon, he places Christ before our eyes as not merely “the pattern” of our sanctification; for “holiness in us is the copy or transcript of the holiness that is in the Lord Jesus,” but as also the source of all our holiness. His purity flows down to us through His Word and Spirit. We are sanctified “instrumentally by the Word” (John 17.17); for “error never sanctifies.” And we are sanctified “principally by the working of His Spirit and grace” (Titus 3.5-6) Henry does not leave his subject unapplied. “Are ye sanctified?” he searchingly enquires. “Is Jesus Christ made of God sanctification to you?” If so, it will have “become natural to us to walk in all holy obedience to the will of God.” Also, holiness will be “highly prized and dearly loved, and more and more of it earnestly desired.” Finally, we shall acknowledge Christ “as our all in all. The crown is set upon His head . . . To us to live is Christ.” If therefore we intend to “please God in this world” and “enjoy God in the other world,” let us apply by faith and prayer to Him who alone can make us holy.

In the sermons based directly on Old Testament types, such as those on Christ our temple, our ladder, our Passover, our altar and our ark, Henry demonstrates God’s purposeful intention to make them typify the Saviour, though at times he leaves himself open to the charge of fanciful interpretation.

The sermon on Christ our Ladder is perhaps the quaintest, but is full of edifying teaching. It is self-evident, he claims, that “this ladder which Jacob saw was no other than our Lord Jesus Christ . . . . What else should it be?” Developing its properties at some length, Henry quaintly informs us that it is “a long ladder, the longest that ever was, for it reaches from earth to heaven . . . . Hereby were signified His two natures – His divine nature as God; His human nature as man.” This claim produces a mini-theology on His Godhead bringing “virtue and value” to His sufferings as man, along with an explanation as to why a God-man was needed “to bring God and man together.”

Other properties of Christ compare Him to all earthly ladders, which may become so “worm-eaten and rotten” as to be useless. By contrast, He is durable and always at hand for sinners’ use. Henry further enhances the preciousness of Christ by depicting Him as the ladder down which all heavenly treasures are let down to us poor and needy sinners. Neither does he omit the ministerial role of the holy angels, ascending and descending the ladder. They ascend in order to receive “fresh orders” on how to minister to God’s saints; they descend “to execute their orders” in protecting, preserving and providing for them. However suited is this ladder to our needs, he continues, faith is an absolute prerequisite before Christ can be of any use to us. And faith is “the hand by which we take hold of the ladder” and “the foot . . . by which we come to it and climb by it.” The trouble is, by nature we have neither hands nor feet: our “unbelieving soul is a maimed soul, handless and footless, and therefore helpless.” Yet like unbelieving Thomas we must ‘reach hither our hand’ and believe Christ’s “ability and willingness to save.” Near the sermon’s close, Henry condemns all other ladders but Christ, naming especially superstitious papists and self-righteous Protestants. “The papists fancy other ladders to themselves: saints and angels, the Virgin Mary. Are these God?” he asks indignantly. As for “the Protestant pharisaical self-justiciaries,” they “make a ladder of their own righteousness. They hope to work out peace, and pardon, and salvation for themselves by their own performances, as the poor carnal mistaken Jews of old did.” Alas, he sighs, being imperfect and defiled, even the best of them will never take a soul up to heaven. Why not? “They are *duty*, therefore they cannot *merit* anything. Say then, I beseech you, None but Christ.” So then, we must behold Him, “admire and wonder, as oft as we think of Him.” Moreover, we must “behold and bless God for making and rearing this ladder.” Therefore, “when we are doing anything for God . . . when we have done anything against God . . . when distress and trouble and danger are before us . . . [and] when death is about to lay his cold hand upon us,” behold Him.

To culminate and terminate the series, Henry devotes two addresses (really one sermon comprising a summary exposition and application of his text) to Christ as the believer's All in All.

First, Henry explains his topic sentence: "Jesus Christ is a Christian's all, or his all in all" to mean: "He is so to all persons – whether Jew, Greek, Barbarian; no advantage, no disadvantage. Are they in Christ, learned or unlearned, it is all alike." This understanding accords with the immediate context. Then, enumerating the benefits believers receive "from Him, and by Him, and through Him," Henry lists thirteen. Christ is all "in election . . . in creation . . . in providences . . . in redemption . . . in conversion . . . in justification . . . in consolation . . . in preservation . . . in teaching . . . in teaching . . . at death . . . in judgment . . . to eternity." Therefore (in the manner of Isaac Ambrose's *Looking Unto Jesus*) he stakes Christ's claim to be known, chosen, loved, desired, delighted in, trusted, thought on, followed, preached . . . in all the Scriptures . . . in the sacraments . . . in all our Sabbaths . . . in prayer and in praise.

By way of inference from all this, Henry calls us to attend to "solemn and serious self-examination." The main enquiry should be: "Have ye renounced all other things for your all, and have ye received Him to be your all?" The answer may be known by various tests: do we value Christ above all? Are we content with Him as our all? This initial enquiry Henry follows up with a lengthy reproof to several groups of religious professors: the Jews, to whom "to this day Moses is all in all;" Papists, to whom "the church . . . the Virgin Mary" and the pope are all in all; Quakers, to whom the inner light is all in all; moralists, to whom their own righteousness is all in all; hedonists, to whom pleasure is all in all; the covetous, to whom material wealth is all in all; the proud, to whom reputation is all in all; and to the selfish, to whom self is all in all. Finally, he urges us, in true apostolic spirit, to "suffer . . . a serious word of exhortation; it is to you all, without exception . . . make Christ, Christ, I say, and Christ alone, your all in all." This is the best evidence we can have that God has made Him all in all to

us. Then, “walk as those that have made Christ their all;” that is, “circumspectly, watchfully . . . comfortably, cheerfully. There is cause. Thou art a happy man. All is thine if Christ be thy all.” Surprisingly quoting Habbakuk 3.17-18, for final emphasis he repeats his text: “Christ is all, and in all.”

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He values not Christ at all who does not value Christ above all.  
Augustine

Miss Christ and you miss all.  
Thomas Brooks

Christ will be a whole Saviour or none at all.  
John Berridge

Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet.  
Matthew Henry

Love Him and prize Him above all.  
Ralph Robinson

**Some Timely Reminders from a Servant of Christ**

“Christ, by His merits, in the great things that He did and suffered in the world, has purchased grace and holiness for His own people. (John 17.19) [He] redeemed the elect and purchased grace for them . . . to save them from wicked works, that they might be holy and unblameable in their lives.” (Colossians 1.21-22)

“The Christian is what he is as a Christian in no other way than as he is a member of Christ’s body. He receives life and holiness from Him as his Head . . . the believer lives by His life. (Galatians 2.20; Colossians 3.4) Thus, all that the Christian is, he is in and by Christ.”

“There is in Christ quiet rest and sweet refreshment for God’s people, when wearied with the buffetings of Satan . . . Let God’s people therefore . . . make their resort unto Jesus Christ for refuge and rest.”  
Jonathan Edwards

## *Robert Bruce and Preaching*

### **Introduction**

“No man in his time spake with such evidence and power of the Spirit . . . many of his hearers thought no man since the apostles spoke with such power.” (John Livingston) “Whilst he was in the ministry at Edinburgh, he shined as a great light through the whole land, the power and efficacy of the Spirit most sensibly [palpably] accompanying the Word he preached.” (Robert Fleming) “When it was known that Bruce was to preach, the people of the country around would flock together to hear him . . . The popularity of such preaching as his was one thing that helped to originate the great Communion gatherings that came to be such a marked feature of later Scottish religious life . . . Bruce is said to have been the means of converting several thousands of souls.” (Principal John Macleod) These are three typical testimonies to the powerful preaching of Robert Bruce of Kinnaird (1554-1631). Let us try to discover the secret of that power.

### **1. His reverence for God**

The first secret of Robert Bruce’s pulpit power lay in his reverent attitude to the God and Saviour whose Word he was to preach. Robert Fleming noted that Bruce always viewed himself as nothing more, yet nothing less, than “an ambassador of Jesus Christ.” Consequently he always sought “to have his spirit deeply impressed with the majesty of that God of whom he was to speak.” Accordingly, we find Bruce reminding others of what weighed most heavily on his own heart: “The love of God, and the holy fear of his Majesty, should be predominant in thy heart; that, suppose thou have to do with a king or emperor, let not the love and fear of the king prevail in thy heart, but lift up thine eyes to the majesty of God, and rather offend the king a thousand times before ye offend God once.”

Two incidents in Bruce’s ministry exemplify this point. On 25 June 1602 Bruce met King James VI at Perth. “No prince [said

Bruce in unmistakable tones] hath power to give instructions to another prince's ambassador. I am the Son of God's ambassador! Place me where God has placed me [i.e. in the pulpit at St Giles, Edinburgh] and I shall teach fruitful doctrine, as God shall give me grace." A little before James's death Bruce told him: "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah [i.e. Christ] is now roaring, in the voice of His Gospel, and it becomes all the petty kings of the earth to be silent!"

This reverence for the majesty of Christ, imparted to Bruce on his call to the ministry, accompanied him wherever he preached. His abiding sense of whose he was and whom he served invested him with a constant awareness of his own ministerial authority, an authority delegated to him by the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find him exhorting his hearers to "reverence the Word of God" and "the ambassador . . . also."

## **2. The Sincerity of His Aims**

The second factor behind Bruce's pulpit power was the sincerity of his aims in preaching. These aims were two: to be faithful to his Divine Master's Word and to profit the souls of his hearers. "Faith leans upon the Word of God," he affirmed, "and will do nothing till it get a warrant our of His mouth." "I have ever a regard to my warrant," he confessed, "and their profit and amendment to whom I direct it . . . to edify them . . . and if it were possible, that they might be turned to God . . . I speak nothing from a malicious heart, but of love." With such noble aims always before him, Bruce did not fail to leave permanent impressions of his message on others. Once after hearing him, Robert Blair wrote: "his whole sermon did press this truth of the soul's being immortal, a serious impression of it in the heart is something else than a swimming in the head."

When Bruce aimed to bring "assurance and certainty" and "comfort" to God's people, he always directed believers to seek them in the Word. These privileges, he argued, are not engendered in the heart by the words of men or angels, but are "wrought in the

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heart by hearing of the Word of God.” Nor are they given “by hearing of the word of the Law, but by hearing of the word of the promise of mercy, of the glad tidings of mercy and salvation in and through Christ.” “What comfort is there to be found,” he asks, “but it is in the Word? What comfort can a Christian heart wish, but it is in the Word? Yea, I say more . . . the Word is daily and continually sounded; therefore seek to get comfort of the Word in time. Look that ye hear the Word with great reverence, and study to practice it daily more and more in your daily life and conversation.”

### **3. His Method of Preparation**

The third secret of Bruce’s pulpit power lay in his method of preparation for preaching. This contained two factors, diligent study and earnest prayer.

#### **(a) Diligent Study of the Word of God**

Bruce was known, says Robert Fleming, “to take much pains in searching the Scripture, that he might know the mind of the Spirit of God, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and in preparing apposite matter for the edification of his hearers.” He certainly knew the ‘Church Fathers’ and ‘Scholastic Doctors’ intimately, but looked exclusively to Holy Scripture for all his teaching. This he claimed to have studied more closely than any other book. Like John Knox before him, Bruce was a man of one book. His Geneva Bible (his “great house Bible”), his Hebrew and Greek Testaments, and his Septuagint (Greek Old Testament, quoted by our Lord and His apostles), meant far more to him than even Augustine, Tertullian and Chrysostom. A perceptive remark of his opens a window onto Bruce’s view of the Word he preached: “Only the Holy Spirit is the true historiographer, and the Bible the only true history.”

#### **(b) Earnest Prayer for the Presence of God**

Coupled with the deep study of Holy Scripture was Bruce’s earnest prayer for the presence of God in his preaching. “Jesus Christ,” he insisted, “must be present by His Spirit in the heart of the speaker; the speaker must enjoy the presence of Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit.” Like Moses, Bruce could (and probably often

did) say: “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exod 33.15) before he ascended the pulpits of Scotland.

Doubtless it was the conjunction of these two factors – diligent study and earnest prayer – that drew from John Livingston, who heard Bruce often, the priceless observation that “It is most probable that no gift, no pains, a man takes to fit himself for preaching, shall ever do good to the people or himself, except a man labour to have and keep his heart in a spiritual condition before God, depending on Him always for furniture [equipment, preparedness for action] and the blessing. Earnest faith and prayer, a single aim at the glory of God, and good of people, a sanctified heart and carriage [conduct, the way we carry ourselves], shall avail much for right preaching. There is sometime somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to the matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh; but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections, and comes immediately from the Lord. But if there be any way to attain to any such thing, it is by a heavenly disposition of the speaker.”

#### **4. His Keen Sensitivity to Spiritual and Eternal Realities**

The fourth element behind Bruce’s pulpit power was his keen sensitivity to spiritual and eternal realities, and the burning urgency with which he strove to convey those realities into the hearts and consciences of his hearers. According to his biographer, D.C. MacNicol: “Bruce’s secret power in the pulpit is the note of reality and urgency which is ever present in his words. The world at hand has ceased to have any fascination for him, because two other worlds have opened out before his view: hell beneath his feet, but also heaven . . . overhead.” So, he entreats every one: “If it were but once in the day, lift up your hearts to crave eyes of God that ye may see heaven, that ye may see hell, and that He would give you grace to embrace the one and eschew the other.”

In a most searching sermon on conscience, he declared: “When the Lord wakens thy conscience, there is never a sin but it shall start in

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thy memory, and bring such a horror with it that of all pains it is the greatest; yea, the burning of the carcase in hot lead is nothing to the trouble of conscience.” It was by bringing a sense of the torments of hell before his hearers that Bruce sought to dissuade them from living the kind of life that would certainly take them there. For what are those torments chiefly but the eternal gnawing of “a conscience unappeased”? Little wonder, then, that through such penetrating preaching, Bruce “made always an earthquake upon his hearers, and rarely preached but to a weeping auditory.” (James Kirkton)

### **5. His Faith in the Power and Mercy of God**

The sixth reason behind Bruce’s pulpit power was his own faith in the power and mercy of God. To him, God was the living God. When he preached, therefore, he really believed that God would clothe His Word with power and exercise His mercy, so as to attain the chief ends for which He gave it. “God forbid,” he thundered, “that God should forget . . . to accompany His Word with a power to ding down those that will exalt themselves against Him!”

This dynamic view appears in his remarks on creation. It “cost the living God but a word,” he says, to make both this world and the next. Creation shows us “the unspeakable power that is in the mighty and living God, whose Word was so potent.” Just as potent will His Word be when “the time of love” for His elect arrives.

“One of the greatest fishes caught in his net,” comments Robert Wodrow quaintly, “was the excellent Mr Alexander Henderson.” This staunch Episcopalian from Leuchars desired to hear Bruce preach at a communion some distance from his own charge. Here, where few if any knew him, Henderson “placed himself in a corner of the church where nobody should notice him. When Mr Bruce entered the pulpit, and rose up to preach, as his custom was he stood silent for some minutes, which astonished Mr Henderson a little; but he was yet much more moved by the first words he uttered, which were those of our Lord: ‘He that cometh not in by

the door, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber,' which words were powerfully sent home upon his conscience, and by the blessing of God, as he afterwards owned, were the instrument of his first conversion." (Robert Wodrow) Henderson was to become a "most singular ornament" of the Scottish Church during its Second Reformation.

Similarly, Bruce expected God to show mercy to sinners under his preaching. "There is no sin, how heinous soever it be, nor any multitude of sins, how great soever they be in the unrenewed man, that can stay the mercy of God from him from the time he be called to the truth, through the preaching of the Word." God delights to show mercy to the most hardened sinners. Therefore, he urges: "Ye that want [lack] this disposition, despair not, but seek knowledge and feeling," for they shall be given to those "for whom mercy is appointed," when "the time of His appointment [has] come . . . Therefore crave of God that this your hearing may be profitable, that in your souls ye may feel and subscribe this to be true."

## **6. His Holy Character**

The sixth factor contributing to Bruce's pulpit power was his own holy character. As Principal John Macleod wrote: "His influence was that of the holy life and of the spoken Word clothed with power."

Behind Bruce's holy life lay his intimate friendship and close walk with God. This friendship is beautifully seen in his recollections of his banishment from Edinburgh following the Gowrie Plot of 1600, because he refused to hurt his conscience by exonerating King James from all complicity in the affair. "I rode forward," he recalled, "and there was none in company with me except myself . . . and my God. Alone, yet not alone, because the Father is with me."

On his final banishment to Inverness in 1622, having left his ancestral home at Kinnaird, he was accompanied part of the way

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by family, friends and a few ministers. When “he had taken his leave of them, and the whole company were mounting, his horse was brought out last.” Just as he was setting his foot in the stirrup, Bruce “stopped, and stood with his eyes fixed towards heaven, in a muse for nearly a quarter of an hour. The rest . . . rode softly on; and none of the company observed it but an intimate friend of his . . . His friend took the freedom to ask him what he was doing . . . Mr Bruce answered him, ‘I was receiving my commission and charge from my Master to go to Inverness, and He gave it me Himself before I set my foot in the stirrup; and thither I go to sow a seed in Inverness that shall not be rooted out for many ages.’”

Holiness was a distinguishing feature of Bruce’s whole character and ministry. Did not M’Cheyne say that a holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God?

### **7. The Presence of God**

The final explanation of Bruce’s pulpit power, and the one that accounts for the previous six, is that God was with him wherever he preached. As Robert Fleming observed, with Bruce “the success of preaching depended wholly upon the presence of God.”

### **Conclusion**

Each one of these seven explanations of Bruce’s pulpit power has a profound message of its own for our own shallow and powerless age. Cumulatively, they shout into our ears: revere the majesty of God; always be faithful to His Word and profitable to your hearers; prepare your sermons with diligent study and earnest prayer; seek a keen awareness of spiritual and eternal realities; trust the power and mercy of God to be at work while you are preaching; pursue holiness, in both character and life; seek the presence of God, in all you think, feel, speak and do. May Bruce’s God be merciful to us and grant us these gracious privileges, for His name’s sake.

## *Ancient Rome and Modern Britain*

### **Ancient Rome**

In one lurid paragraph (Romans 1.18-32) the apostle Paul describes the pagan Roman Empire of his day, a society sunk in ignorant superstition and hideous vice, especially in the cities. Fatal errors in belief had produced horrible corruption in morals and doleful prospects for the future, amply proving that “the world by wisdom (Greek philosophy and Roman law) knew not God.” Paul’s summary: “having no hope, and without God in the world,” was eminently true of the entire Empire during this period. Engulfed by despair, all classes saw no purpose or meaning in their existence. So they squandered their decadent lives in bitter cynicism or squalid profligacy.

And although they had “gods many and lords many,” they were total strangers to the only true and living God. Writes E. M. Blaiklock: “Anyone who seeks evidence in support of the apostle’s grim description can read Petronius’ *Satiricon*, Seneca’s *Letters*, Juvenal’s *Satires*, Tacitus’ historical works, and Suetonius’ *Lives of the Caesars*.” For further confirmation we may add to this list Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. One student of the period goes so far as to say: “the epoch which witnessed the early growth of Christianity was an epoch of which the horror and degradation have rarely been equalled, and perhaps never exceeded, in the annals of mankind.”

Yet all was concealed behind the most splendid architecture, efficient road- and water-works, a well-administered legal system and mighty military prowess. From the Rhine in the north to the Sahara desert in the south, from the Atlantic in the west to the Black Sea in the east, the Empire seemed on the surface to enjoy a stable peace; but it was a peace enforced by stern military rule, not the peace of God, which passes all understanding.

There is no need to dwell at length on the sordid crimes and retributive misery of the period – its enormous wealth, gross self-indulgence, coarse pleasures, avarice, apathy, cruelty, fear, fatalism, superstition, sadness and sheer weariness. Roman historians, living in the capital, tended to concentrate on Rome itself, on the vices and intrigues of the court; they usually ignored the provinces and proletariat. Yet there is enough evidence to prove that, wherever the influence of the capital took hold, sin was its predominant feature. We will therefore only outline its leading features.

### **The Slaves**

At the lowest end of the social scale were the slaves. These millions had no religion, no rights, and no possessions. They usually passed from a degraded childhood through an adulthood of hardship to an old age of neglect, followed by a hopeless eternity. Many Roman senators openly advocated the brutal law that when a master was murdered, all his slaves should be put to death, so callous were they.

### **The Freeborn**

Only slightly above the slaves were the freeborn. These were native citizens of the Empire, though many of them were beggars and idlers who despised a life of honest work. They spent their mornings lounging about the forum, their afternoons at the public baths, and their evenings at the theatre or sports arena, where gladiators fought to the death and others were eaten by wild beasts. At night, they crept into miserable garrets in the upper storeys of Rome's lodging houses. Their life, as described by their contemporaries, 'was largely made up of squalor, misery, and vice.'

Some however, like the apostle Paul himself before conversion, were well educated and taught a craft. Others toured the Empire's markets, trading their wares. Still others rose to administrative posts or military command. Not all were as degenerate as blanket condemnation would make out.

### **The ‘Noble’ Wealthy**

Served by their slaves were the ‘noble,’ mainly consisting of wealthy families having a long ancestral line. The Juliae (in the north), Romae (at the centre) and Scipiae (in the south) were typical of this hedonistic yet militaristic class. While the rest of the population might be waiting anxiously for the arrival of Alexandrian corn supplies, the Roman nobility were squandering fortunes on lavish banquets, costly ladies’ dresses, showy entertainments and merchants’ ventures, or embarking on some promising military campaign.

### **The Caesar**

Seated at the summit of this decadent hierarchy was the emperor, or caesar. Detested by his senators, living in dread of assassination, autocratic to the point of obsession, he was, in the terrible phrase of Gibbon, at the same time a priest, an atheist and a god.

### **Society in General**

Composed of such elements, Roman society was bound to be degenerate. Family life had once been sacred there, and divorce unknown; but under the Empire marriage was scorned and divorce widespread. To have children was viewed as a misfortune, and infanticide was rife. Sodomy, too, was either openly flouted or cynically winked at.

True, children’s education was left in the hands of accomplished Greek tutors, but parental example of superstition and vice had the greater influence. The teaching of rhetoric, as we learn from Augustine near the demise of the Empire, aimed only at fostering pride, power over others, and flattery of the ‘great.’

Art and sculpture were infected by Greek models, whose ideals of beauty were mainly of elegant murals and nude statues of their idols and fashionable women, reminding worshippers of their mythological cunning, cruelty, pride and sensuality.

And these idols were everywhere, as Paul discovered at Athens (Acts 17.16). The city was filled with images of pagan deities. The Parthenon of Athena overshadowed everything, but in every public square there was a statue to Aphrodite, goddess of beauty, or Ares, god of war, or Artemis, goddess of fertility and wealth, or Hephaestus, god of craftsmanship. Tertullian, writing a century or so later, exclaimed: “Why, even the streets and market places, the baths and taverns, and our very dwelling places, are not altogether free from idols. Satan and his angels have filled the whole world.” Every public festival was inaugurated with pagan adoration and sacrifice to an idol. Membership of trade guilds (with their proud commercial standing and ‘goodwill’ methods) entailed ‘sitting at meat in the idol’s temple.’ People’s very shopping and social visits obliged them to eat food that had been offered to idols.

As for entertainment, it was wholly degenerate. Drama, inherited from the Greeks, was a shameful exhibition of scenic splendour, of man in a predicament, either rescued by a placated god let down on the stage by ingenious machinery or left to poison or slay himself with the sword. Pantomimes, rope dancers, mock battles, magicians, and performing animals were only some of the vanities with which Roman society amused itself. The masses were hardened against human sympathy by the excitement of the circus (chariot races), the atrocities of the amphitheatre (gladiatorial combats and fights with wild animals) and the orgies of the games (nude athletic contests showing superior skill or strength). Caesar Augustus, in a document affixed to his will, claimed to have exhibited 8000 gladiators and 3510 wild beasts!

One writer on the period suggests that the Senate might have been a safe refuge from all this depravity. Yet even it was polluted by servile flattery, empty rhetoric and inhuman laws. Murder was not only common among them; it was even celebrated. They offered thanks to their gods for the worst cruelties. Some of them even knew the implications of accepting the Lord Jesus into their pantheon. When one senator suggested that He be included, and a

statue erected to His honour, another voiced the truth that if He were admitted, the rest must be turned out!

True, there were those who lived more morally upright lives and pursued higher ideals than those around them. Epictetus and Seneca are only two of those who strove to set purer standards of conduct. But the Stoicism on which they rested could offer no hope for deliverance, improvement or eternal life. All it could aim at was an insensibility that crushed but never eradicated vile lusts, and a heartless indifference to the deepest human suffering. Because it entertained no hope beyond the grave, its chief characteristic was a despairing sadness.

Such was Roman society in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. - idolatrous, superstitious, cruel, hedonistic, sensual, cynical, faithless, fearful, despairing.

### **The Effects of the Gospel**

It was into this corrupt mass that God injected His Gospel of grace and power of regeneration.

At various points in his letters to the churches, Paul reminds them that they too were once bemired in this moral cesspit.

“Be not deceived,” he writes to the Corinthians, “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you*; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6.9-11)

To the Ephesian Christians he writes: “you . . . were dead in trespasses and sins . . . ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also *we all had our conversation [or conduct] in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the*

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*mind* . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together [or given us life] with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)” (Ephesians 2.1-5)

All over the Empire, God delivered men, women and little children in this way “from the power of darkness, and translated” them “into the kingdom of His dear Son.” (Colossians 1.13)

And what was the result? They became “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” Their old way of life “passed away”; “all things became new.” (2 Corinthians 5.17) For the first time in their lives they gave themselves to the “work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” (1 Thessalonians 1.3) Sin no longer had dominion over them, for they were no longer under law, but under grace. (Romans 6.14) Such were the people that the Lord had saved.

An anonymous writer later commented on the beneficial way that believers influenced others: “To many whose burdens were heavy, the peace of God, which Christianity announced, brought hope in the room of hopelessness, strength where there was weakness, an attractive influence that lifted them above all misgivings and difficulties, even under the scoffs of philosophers. Intercourse with kindly Christians and glimpses of their quiet domestic virtues, mingled as these were with the courage with which a man like Paul bade defiance to danger, aroused the yearning for God which Christ had implied would appear when the disciples would let their light shine before men. The great proclamation of the Gospel and the powerful religious awakening everywhere consequent, produced the most extraordinary commotion.”

In Jerusalem, thousands embraced the Gospel. In Pisidian Antioch, almost the whole population were drawn to hear Paul. At Ephesus, Jewish and Greek magicians cast their books into the fire. Silversmiths of Diana’s shrine feared the total loss of their trade. The goddess herself was in danger of being deserted. In

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Thessalonica, the cry went up that the apostles had turned the world upside down.

The newborn churches skirting the Mediterranean were very large. The mother church in Jerusalem comprised thousands. In Rome, says Tacitus, the Christians formed a great multitude. Believers were drawn from all classes – the poor and infirm, men of wealth and women of distinction. Truly, the Gospel bore fruit throughout the then-known world.

Even the younger Pliny, proprietor in Bithynia, could write to his emperor Trajan that many in that region, of both sexes, all ages and every rank, were Christians. Their ‘superstition,’ as he terms it, was diffused in rural areas as well as in the cities. Their only ‘crime’ was to meet at sunrise and sing praises to Christ, ‘as to a god.’ By contrast, the temples of the heathen gods were almost forsaken, and sacrificial animals found few purchasers. J. Gresham Machen sums up the great change: “A new face had been put upon life by the blessed thing that God did when He offered up His only begotten Son.”

In short, a new age had dawned for the Roman Empire. With it came the social blessings of the Gospel: marriage, womanhood and children became sacred trusts; luxury was replaced by modesty, even frugality, in living; cruelty ceased among believers; slaves were honoured in the churches along with their masters; the aged and infirm were lovingly cared for; beggars were relieved by Christian charity; honest work was restored to society as a creation ordinance; the gladiatorial combats were shunned; rhetoric was employed for the furtherance of the Gospel; education based on the Bible flourished; trade and commerce were conducted conscientiously; the Christian dead were decently buried, not cremated like the pagans; and Christ’s law of love prevailed instead of raw military power and inexorable Roman law. All this good fruit sprang from the power of God’s grace, exercised through the spread of the Gospel. It transformed Roman society wherever it reached. It was destined to change the world.

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## Modern Britain

Let it be said with gratitude that, though there are many pagan elements in modern Britain, the nation is not nearly as degenerate as pagan Rome. We have so many good laws, so much care for people and the environment, so efficient communications, so much personal freedom, so many trade links, and so many opportunities for doing good, that no-one should complain. This is wholly due to the grace of God, and for the sake of His elect.

There are enough parallels, however, to alarm the people of God. For example, our nation is riddled with idolatry. The perceptive Timothy Keller describes our idols as counterfeit gods. That is, they are a wretched substitute for the only true and living God. We may not find people bowing down in every public place to some statue or other. Yet contemporary society is not fundamentally different from that of ancient Rome.

We have our personal idols – sportsmen, ‘celebrities,’ ‘pop stars,’ physical beauty, sex, affluence, power, success, freedom, self-expression, fulfilment – both hidden in our hearts and blatantly flaunted.

We have our cultural idols – education, technology, economic prosperity, military hardware, Shakespeare, Elizabethan and Georgian country houses, even antiques.

We have our traditional idols – ‘Britannia’ itself, and all who made her ‘great.’

We have our political idols – egalitarianism, an élite society, material prosperity for all.

We have our religious idols – the pope, the essential goodness of human nature, our cathedrals, Celtic nature-worship. Even Christians have their idols – their church, their books, their favourite preachers.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century Scottish minister Andrew Gray summed up our idolatry when he wrote: an idol is whatever we love, trust and obey more than God. By this yardstick, are we not all guilty? Our idol is

anything that is more important to us than God, anything that controls our thoughts and desires more than Him, anything that we seek to give us what only He can give, anything so central or essential to us that, should we lose it, our life would be thoroughly miserable. The pagans of ancient Rome were not fanciful when they depicted virtually everything as a god. Everything that controls our heart and life is our god.

About idolatry, the Puritan David Clarkson says: “Though few will own [admit] it, nothing is more common.” Just think of your soul as a house, he challenges: “idols are set up in every room” [i.e. every faculty - imagination, memory, heart, will]. We prefer our own wisdom to God’s wisdom, our own desires to God’s will, our own reputation to God’s honour, our own satisfaction to God’s glory. So, crowning all is what Samuel Rutherford terms our great idol Self. By nature, we are all idolaters. This being so, we find most people in our society without God, without Christ, without hope, ignorant of God’s Word, and full of selfish ambition, lust after the coarsest pleasures, domestic violence, apathy towards the needs of others, cruelty to children and hospitalized patients, fear of street gangs and rapists, superstition in our cemeteries, sadness through multiple disappointments, sheer weariness with life, abortions by the million and even teenage suicides.

### **Conclusion**

Is this brief survey not a loud call to realize several truths and take appropriate action?

1. There are such things as national sins. Whether sanctioned by political and religious authority or by their prevalence among the people, these sins are all before God’s face, and He holds us guilty and accountable to Him for them.

2. When our nation’s legislature frames ‘mischief by a law’; when its executive power is wielded for personal gain, favouritism or oppression; when its judiciary is corrupt, justifying the guilty and

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condemning the innocent, then judgment is ripe (Psalm 94.20,5,6-7). “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish.”

3. The very sins that brought ruin to pagan Rome threaten to ruin Britain. Those sins were especially idolatry, pride, luxury, idleness, oppression, extortion, cruelty, covetousness, sexual promiscuity, unbelief and despair. To these abominations we as a nation have added rejection of the Gospel. Nothing is more grievous to God. Dr. Gardiner Spring once said: “The character of nations and men is decided by the Gospel. As they fall in with it, or fall out with it, they are saved or lost.” So we may ask: can we harden ourselves against God and prosper?

4. Our present lamentable state leaves us with no alternative. “God calls the whole nation to repentance. The voice of mercy is loud and tender and persuasive . . . Will you renounce every evil way, and believe in Christ? . . . How can you appear at God’s tribunal without an interest in Christ? Be persuaded to lay hold on eternal life. If the nation repents, it will be by each man bewailing his sins, believing in Christ, and so fleeing from the wrath to come. God now commands all men everywhere to repent. Obey, and live.” (William S. Plumer)

5. To this call God appends a most gracious promise. It applies to Britain, a nation once favoured above all others by being brought into covenant with God. It is this: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7.14) What more do we need to constrain us?

6. Let those of us who are called continue to preach the everlasting Gospel, whether folk believe or scoff. God has His own elect in every part of the earth. In His appointed time He will call them effectually by His grace. Should He do this in large numbers, we may yet see “the world turned upside down,” as was ancient Rome.

## ***Total Inability and Efficacious Grace In the Writings of R. A. Finlayson***

### **Introduction**

Judged by the unqualified appeals in much modern ‘evangelism’ to the natural man’s unaided reason, emotions and will, one might conclude that ‘modern man’ is able to respond positively, and that he has no need of God’s efficacious grace. That such presumption is wholly groundless was the firm conviction of the late R. A. Finlayson, Professor of Systematic Theology in the old Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh. In this article we shall summarize his teaching on man’s total inability and God’s efficacious grace.

### **Man’s Total Inability**

Finlayson rightly classifies man’s total inability to save himself, and even to do the least thing towards his salvation, under the heading *The Result of the Fall*. In doing so, he asserts that the fall of mankind in Adam from God into sin is both a historical fact and “a great moral and spiritual reality.” Through “the seduction of Satan,” “the permissive will of God,” and “man’s own wilful act” of disobedience, Adam brought himself and all his natural posterity into a state in which recovery from man’s side is impossible. His resulting depravity extends to “all man’s faculties, moral and spiritual,” and to every member of his body.

That being so, whenever man is confronted with the claims of God, he reacts as one both unable and unwilling to comply. “God approaches the sinner when he is dead in trespasses and sins.” What, then, can he do? “Can he do anything at all?” Clearly, the answer is ‘No’! As fallen, man exists in the state of “living death,” the elements of which leave him without the least “power to heed God’s wooing call.” True, he was originally “endowed with free will,” but by sinning he “has put his will into the power of another, and it is now in bondage.” Whatever freedom it retains is freedom “only to choose the evil and to refuse the good; certainly it is

incapable of exercising its freedom to turn to God.” It resembles a car “whose engine is fixed in reverse gear,” so that whenever God approaches him, man chooses only to depart further and further from Him. His inability to return to God is both wilful and total.

### **God’s Efficacious Grace**

“Thus it is,” Finlayson continues, “that every movement Godwards is of grace from first to last.” God takes the initiative and maintains that initiative in all His saving dealings with the elect.

By His “prevenient grace” He “brought Zacchaeus into the sycamore tree to await the Saviour . . . Lydia to the riverside where she was to hear of the Saviour and have her heart opened,” and “Onesimus to Rome to meet with the messenger of the cross that he might be free for ever.”

By His regenerating grace He creates “a God-ward response to the divine call,” thereby enacting Ezekiel’s “divine surgery” of removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 11.19) In this “first decisive and effective act of saving grace . . . the soul is endowed with spiritual life from God.”

The necessity for such a work of creative power is evident from man’s total inability to regenerate himself. The sin that has “invaded the whole of man’s nature,” leaving no part immune from its paralyzing power, can be countered only by a superior “new governing principle that affects the entire man. This is tantamount to a new creation, for there is implanted a new life . . . animated by” the very “life of God.”

This mysterious act “takes place instantaneously in the hidden depths of the soul,” so that the new-born person himself “is not actually conscious of what has happened.” How long this new life remains dormant we cannot say. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. Others are changed later in life, in God’s appointed time. In their case, “it is at that moment

that the soul hears the call of God and responds to it,” just as the new-born infant responds to its mother’s voice.

“The response is made by faith, the active principle of the new life.” Before efficacious grace made its inroads into the heart, “there was no ear to hear, no eye to see, no hand to accept.” But when the regenerate soul believes on Christ crucified, placed before his mind’s eye in the Gospel, it becomes conscious of having passed from death to life. This is the point that marks “the beginning of our Christian state.”

God’s efficacious grace now moves the new-born soul into conversion. This is “the outer expression of the inner life,” the “act of God by which He causes the regenerate soul, in conscious life, to turn to Him in new obedience.” Conversion is therefore not a process, but a decisive, unrepeatable act. It is the God-given power to will and do His good pleasure.

“Yet in a real sense man is” now “enlisted on the side of God . . . from the very centre of his being,” and so begins to cooperate with the Spirit in every subsequent work of His.

“The two elements in conversion that make room for man’s cooperation are repentance and faith.” These are inseparable, for “there is faith in all true repentance, and there is repentance in all true faith.” Being graces of the Spirit, they are “permanent elements [and not mere once-for-all acts] in the conscious experience of the converted one.” Through their means, the mind is progressively informed, the conscience is regularly convinced, the feelings are repeatedly engaged, and the will makes sanctified decisions; “these four are exercised throughout the whole of the Christians’ life on earth.”

## **Conclusion**

Although “conversion . . . is not an end in itself, as we so often seem to think,” but is merely the commencement of an entire life devoted to God in which grace is constantly operative, it is over

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the great change – from unregeneracy through regeneracy to conversion – that confusion reigns in so many preachers and churches today. When will self-styled ‘evangelists’ learn that man really is unable to convert himself to God, and that he needs God’s efficacious grace to perform the work in him? Until they learn this, they will continue to rob God of the glory of His grace, and produce only spurious conversions that will leave their victims lost for eternity.

And when will their hearers learn that they can no more contribute to their salvation than a corpse lying in a grave can raise itself from death at the bidding of one standing on the turf above it? Oh, how essential is our need to discover that if we are to be saved at all, it will be by God’s efficacious grace alone! Salvation is of the Lord, from its inception to its consummation. Help, Lord, for vain is the help of man!

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### **Book Allocation**

**Students for the Reformed ministry may apply for a grant of books from the Sovereign Grace Union. Please send your letter of application to the Treasurer, whose name and address is on the inside front cover of the magazine.**

### **SGU Tracts**

**Readers who engage in tract distribution may wish to have a supply of SGU tracts. These are brief, and consist entirely of extracts from accredited Reformed writers, such as J.C. Ryle, William Romaine, Thomas Boston, Matthew Henry, Frans Bakker, John Owen, James Smith and Loraine Boettner. Both the Editor and the Secretary have some in stock. Their addresses may be found on the inside cover of the magazine.**

## *Controversy or Compromise?*

### **Introduction**

In a 1935 address to the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, the late S. J. Henman sought to clarify the alternative: Controversy or Compromise? Rather than print the address as recorded in an old magazine, we shall summarize its contents and main thrust for today's readers. The subject is even more pressing today than in 1935, for the state is almost entirely secular, while the church in general is largely apostate.

### **Controversy**

Mr. Henman opens his topic with a definition of the word 'controversy.' Its literal meaning is 'a turning against.' In a simple dispute, someone advances a statement and another turns it back because he does not accept it. In most cases, reasons are given both 'pro' and 'con.' Sometimes the discussion degenerates into an argument. When this occurs, many irrelevant points are introduced that obscure the issue in debate, leaving the antagonists in a war of words. It only needs feelings to run high to cause strife and even separation. This is why so many people cry: "No Controversy!"

But introducing irrelevant matter does not make controversy wrong in itself. Indeed, controversy is necessary to the Christian because there is error in the world as well as truth, and evil as well as good. These can never be reconciled, but are eternally opposed. Everyone must therefore choose to stand on one side or the other.

Henman now reminds us that controversy appears frequently in the Word of God. The LORD Himself has a controversy with both the nations (Jeremiah 25.31) and His own people (Hosea 4.1; Micah 6.2) "These passages show us what true controversy is. It is the opposing of evil and refusing to acknowledge its right, and giving reasons for so doing. God is engaged in a holy controversy with evil in all its forms, and we who profess to be His servants are to let it be known that we are on His side." By the grace of God,

Moses met the challenge of the Golden Calf and Elijah that of the cult of Baal.

Today, Christians are concerned with matters that are vital to the kingdom of God. There are some truths that are in no sense 'indifferent,' such as "the full inspiration and complete authority of the Scriptures, the proper and essential Godhead of our Lord, His atoning and substitutionary work at Calvary, His triumphant resurrection and ascension, the new birth, salvation by grace through faith and not of works, the condemnation of the unbeliever and Christ rejecter. These truths are vital, and there are others, and with all those who deny or distort them God has a controversy; and so have we, His servants, if we are faithful. Where truth is concerned we cannot be neutral or non-committal and loyal at the same time."

Our controversy with evil, however, must "be conducted in harmony with the mind of Christ. He is our pattern in this as in all else." Page after page of the Gospel record are occupied with His controversies against enemies of the truth. Much of His earthly ministry was spent in exposing error and inculcating its opposite truth. His most eminent servants in every age have followed His example. So should we, however unpalatable controversy may be to our nature.

Far from wishing to turn the Fellowship into "a controversial machine," Henman now proceeds to encourage it to be "a fellowship in protest" against evil. "Fellowship in the truth may mean, and must mean sometimes, fellowship against error."

This point leads him to remember just how much "we need very earnestly to seek the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the special guidance of the Holy Spirit." Many rush into controversy with methods that are not of God; these have brought the subject into considerable disrepute. To conduct controversy aright, we need "first of all to have very clear convictions of the truth, and then to examine the matter in dispute, as far as possible, from all sides."

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We need also to search our own hearts to see that there is no selfish interest or desire for self-prominence or advantage of any kind.” Besides this, we need the graces of humility, meekness and gentleness. We should also appreciate any truth in our opponents’ arguments, and be very careful not to impugn ulterior motives to them. Only God can rightly determine these. “In short, controversy, like marriage, is not to be entered into lightly, but prayerfully, in the fear of God and under His guidance, submitting ourselves entirely to His will, remembering that the controversy is really His,” and not ours.

At the same time we must not shrink in pointing out clearly and definitely whatever is contrary to the revealed Word of God. “It is the honour of God that is at stake,” and we must act and speak in a way that glorifies Him. In all the controversies engaged in by both our Lord and His apostle Paul, we see how closely and steadfastly they adhered to the Scriptures, and with what wisdom and grace they answered their opponents. Sometimes they asked questions their opponents could not answer, and made statements they could not contradict. We too should plainly and fearlessly defend the Faith against all those who deny it.

To close this half of his address, Henman reminds us that if the apostle Paul had believed the cry “No Controversy!” he would have said nothing when rulers denied our Lord’s Messiahship, not withstood Peter to the face when he dissembled at Antioch, not have reasoned with those in Corinth who denied the resurrection, and not replied to the Gnostics or Judaisers in Colosse or Galatia. Though controversy is often an unpleasant duty, he concludes, out of its painful experiences “have come some of the most precious manifestations of God’s grace and care.”

### **Compromise**

As with controversy, Henman wisely opens the second half of his address with a definition. The dictionary defines compromise as “placing one’s life, honour or reputation in a position of jeopardy by agreement.” As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must be

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careful not to be betrayed into a position that nullifies our testimony. The Apostle John lays down the inspired rule here: “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds.” (2 John 9-11) The doctrine of Christ is the great fundamental truths taught by the Saviour and recorded in Scripture. It is not always what a man says, but what he does not say, that leads others astray. We must ask in cases like this the reason for the omission. Is it deliberate because the speaker does not believe the doctrines of Christ, or is it because he does not feel the need to mention them at the time, though he may believe them? The answer will determine our approach and course of action.

We may compromise the truth in three ways:

1. By silence when truth demands that we speak.  
There is a dignified silence of disapproval, when a look may convey as much as a word. But a guilty silence fails to speak the truth when needed.
2. By a hasty consent or co-operation.  
This occurs when we do not give time for prayerful thought and for seeking the mind of the Lord.
3. By association.  
This is the most frequent form of compromise. Men holding the fundamental truths of our Faith will associate with those who, while professing to be believers, deny or belittle these truths. “This is compromise of the most insidious and dangerous type.” The honour of God and the integrity of our witness demands non-cooperation from us. Was it not for such a compromise that Jehu rebuked Jehoshaphat? (2 Chronicles 19.2)

Besides, we have a collective responsibility as well as an individual one. Others are influenced by the stand we take, and if we compromise, their moral character is weakened, and truth becomes a matter of opinion rather than of conviction. Moreover,

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as stewards of the mysteries of God, we shall have to give an account of the choices we make.

There are a good number of matters on which believers may conscientiously differ, because of their differing interpretations of Scripture. These may fall under the heading of accommodation. In this connection the Apostle Paul sought to become all things to all men. We should receive one another as Christ receives us. We may agree to differ on such matters without compromise. The bonds of love and peace that unite God's people are sufficiently strong to remain unbroken, and sufficiently elastic to bear the strain of such differences. Here, both frankness and considerateness are called for. Yet even in these cases, we should earnestly seek the special guidance of God.

Here Henman leaves his subject. He has tried to speak, he tells us, based on principles that have guided his own conduct for many years, in experiences both difficult and painful. To this day, he professes: "and herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men."

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Never encourage any degrees of heat without light.

David Brainerd

I have other things to do than be a contentious man.

John Penry

It is madness for a sheep to talk peace with a wolf.

Thomas Fuller

We must eternally bid defiance to that peace with men which is inconsistent with peace with God.

John Owen

Compromise must always be impossible where the truth is essential and fundamental.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

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## *Book Reviews*

### **Banner of Truth**

*The Westminster Confession of Faith.* £10.00. 136pp. Soft Cover Gift Edition. ISBN 978-818487-110-99.

This pocket-sized (14cm × 10cm) edition makes available in portable form a help to our Reformed Christian Faith that has been adopted as a subordinate standard of faith (beneath the Word of God) by churches throughout the world. Its fullness and conciseness, besides its refutation of both ancient and modern heresies, make it a *vade mecum* for the serious student of theology. In an age of relativism such as ours, it expresses truth, unchanged and unchanging, and is not a doctrinal fossil merely expressing the faith of a former generation. Those of us who were reared on its teaching have found it bringing to mind just those particular phrases that meet the needs of today. Buy it, and fill your heart and mind with its superb teaching, and give a copy to a friend. J.M.B. *Sermons of the Great Ejection.* £6.25. 276pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-152-5.

Though concentrated prayerful reading of the Puritans is rare in Christian circles today, few spiritual diets are more nourishing than their devout practical comments on the Word of God. In this valuable selection, preached to many sorrowful hearts when their pastors were forcibly ejected from the national church, we find the kind of conscientious adherence to the only Head of the Church that is so singularly lacking in today's churches. How many today are prepared to suffer the loss of all things in order to keep a good conscience in obedience to Christ? These nine addresses could do much to restore the God-fearing Puritan mentality to our thoroughly worldly nation. Would Calamy, Brooks, Watson and Oldfield recognize us as their descendants? J.M.B.

*Christ is Best* - Richard Sibbes. £3.50. 66 pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-057-3

This small book is a welcome addition to the Banner's Pocket Puritan series. In the foreword Michael Reeves states that if your Christian life has become stale and joyless, then the Puritan Sibbes

is a tonic and this reviewer would echo that statement having read this book. It was originally a sermon preached at a funeral on the Paul's famous words in Philippians 1: 23-24 where he faces the dilemma of desiring to depart and be with Christ which is far better and knowing that for him to abide in the flesh is more needful for the church. Essentially the sermon divides into two parts. The first deals with Paul's desire not just to be in heaven but to be there because that is where Christ is. The second part of the sermon seeks to stir the reader up to living a useful and fruitful life whilst we are in this world. One found the following words to be particularly challenging, "There is no man's soul comes into heaven but his mind is there first. Paul was in heaven when his body was on earth." Oh that that could be said of each of us. At the end of the book is a brief summary of the life of the author.

Chris Banks

*The Life of John Calvin* – W. J. Grier. £6.00. 152pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-181-5.

First appearing as a series in the Banner of Truth magazine, this excellent appreciative biography of the Genevan Reformer needs no wordy recommendation from us. Both subject and author shared the same love of truth and godliness. Mr. Grier's style is clear, succinct and fast-moving. God gave him the ability to say much in few words. This fact greatly enhances the biography's value for present-day readers. It is not so much extensive detail we need in biographies as the right perspective, Biblically-orientated and spiritually savoury. This we have here throughout. J. M. B.

*The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones* – Iain Murray. £11.00. 476pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-180-8.

This one-volume abridgement of the author's previous two-volume biography was made specifically for a generation who never knew 'the Doctor.' It traces Dr. Lloyd-Jones's early family life, experiences in Bart's Hospital under Lord Horder, his conversion, call to the ministry and subsequent usefulness. It also chronicles how 'the Doctor' was greatly used by God for the conversion of the lost and the guidance of both private and ministerial believers. Two of his early remarks summarize his whole approach to the work of the ministry: "My friends, do let us return to the stern

realities of life before it is too late;” “They can heap all the personal abuse they like on me, it will make no difference, but I will not tolerate any misrepresentation of the truth.” While one would have liked to see more of God in this abridgement, we trust it will prompt readers to hear the ‘Doctor’s’ preaching on CD. In this connection, listeners are warned not to try and imitate his preaching style. I have heard more than one preacher copy his nasal ‘twang’ and even preach his sermons. Dear brethren, if you find yourself bound in spirit or at a loss for a subject, cast yourself on the Lord, and launch forth from whatever part of Holy Scripture He gives you. He has been known to bless unpremeditated remarks to the salvation of the lost and the edification of believers. J.M.B.

**Scottish Reformation Society. The Magdalen Chapel. 41 Cowgate. Edinburgh EH1 1JR.** Copies available from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) OR [info@scottishreformationsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@scottishreformationsociety.org.uk) *Historical Journal*. Volume 1:2011; 2:2012; 3:2013. 272, 298, 310pp. Edited by D. W. B. Somerset. ISSN 2045-4570.

These three volumes – attractively presented, strongly bound and clearly printed – represent an enterprise aiming to publish original scholarly articles on Scottish Church history from an evangelical perspective. They bid fair to recover an impartial love of truth in historical writing following the publication of so many biased revisionist reconstructions posing as objective detachment and scholarly progress.

Volume 1 presents a varied selection of topics, ranging through John Knox’s alleged royal chaplaincy, Samuel Rutherford on preaching, the life of A. D. Davidson, the writings of James MacGregor, the anachronistic practice of ‘Giving out the Line,’ that remarkable trophy of grace, ‘Angus of the Hills,’ a certain Miss Rutherford’s time in Ulster, and a biography of the church historian and antiquarian David Hay Fleming.

In Volume 2, James MacGregor appears again, this time in the Robertson-Smith controversy (orthodoxy versus higher criticism). Other edifying articles are on Scottish Reformation principles, the venerable Robert Bruce in exile in Inverness, Walter Ker and the Gibbites or ‘Sweet Singers,’ Alexander Shields and the Revolution

Settlement, the writings of John MacDonald (the ‘Apostle of the North’), the zealous Protestant Robert Shanks of Buckie, Argyllshire resistance to the 1892 Declaratory Act, and a further note on ‘Giving out the Line in English.’

An error appears in the footnote of page 275, stating that Rev. Ewen MacQueen separated himself from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland by a Protest. This is a lie that some Free Presbyterians are keen to perpetuate, in order to conceal their synod’s lawless treatment of alleged troublemakers. The denomination (inconsistently with its avowed Protestant principles) does not allow a protest against its synod’s decisions, and suspends protesting office-bearers from the exercise of their ministry. The effect of this unbiblical, unchristian treatment is tantamount to excommunication, since no efforts are made to retrieve the alleged offenders. This is contrary to Paul’s teaching regarding the purpose, spirit and process of church discipline.

Volume 3 offers studies of John Knox and the Perth disturbances of 1559, the question of coercion or cooperation among the Scots commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, the Scots church in Rotterdam, a continuation of the Alexander Shields article from Volume 2, James Begg and *The Watchword*’s response to the 1872 Education Act, the witness of Kames Free Presbyterian church, 20<sup>th</sup> century Presbyterian ‘movements,’ and the 1883 Sabbath protest at Strome Ferry.

Should this enterprise continue, we would welcome articles on the doctrine and experiential godliness of Scots worthies of the past to accompany studies of biographical, controversial and peripheral aspects of Scottish church history. We have been bequeathed a priceless heritage. Anyone concerned about the state of Christ’s kingdom in Scotland would find these volumes both informative and stimulating. We wish the venture God’s blessing, guidance and protection.

J.M.B.

### **Reformation Heritage Books**

*Building a Godly Home* – William Gouge. N.P. 192pp. Hdbk. ISBN 978-1-60178-226-7.

Never was a practical handbook of family life more needed in our broken, self-centred society than now. This old Puritan's long-forgotten treatise supplies this need. The first of three volumes originally comprising Gouge's *Domestical Duties* (re-titled *Building a Godly Home*), it states Biblically and candidly what family life should be. Viewing the family as "a seminary of the church and nation," Gouge places before us the spiritual and practical ingredients that make up the Christian family. Clearly discriminating between the roles of man and woman, parent and child, the author points us to a workable solution to the problems that beset families today. Those of us who have witnessed the decline of the family sigh as we look around in vain for families living and loving in the fear of God and the service of each other and the community in which God has placed them. Little do godless families realize what blessings they have forfeited by failing to fulfil their God-given calling. Here is a suitable gift for those who profess to honour Christ, yet neglect their family responsibilities. For good measure, Gouge throws in some beautiful sections on Christ's love for His Church and His Church's subjection to her Head. Warmly recommended. J.M.B. *A Puritan Theology* – Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones. \$45.00. 1,100pp. Hdbk. ISBN 978-1-60178-166-6.

This massive tome offers detailed and scholarly treatment of many Reformed doctrines, along with their practical implications for holy Christian living. It represents the breadth of Puritan theology (excepting the doctrine of the relationship between church and the state), laying immense stress on such experiential and practical topics as the sinfulness of sin, justification, adoption, the relation between law and gospel, applying God's promises, the blood of Christ and Puritan piety, the third use of the moral law and world missions. Necessarily selective in its treatment of specific aspects of Puritan thought, it nevertheless opens the door to many unexplored topics that need to see the light after being so long locked away in libraries. Charnock on the Divine Attributes, The Puritans on the Trinity, Anthony Burgess on Christ's Intercession, Thomas Manton on Judgment according to Works, Christopher Love on Heaven and Hell, and the Puritan Practice of Meditation

are merely samples of the good things laid out on this most informative and edifying table. A list of cited works and a very useful index close the volume. J.M.B.

*Encouragement for Today's Pastors: Help From the Puritans* – Joel R. Beeke and Terry D. Slachter, Viii+211pp. N.P. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-60178-220-5

In the introduction to this attractively-produced volume, Beeke and Slachter cite the worrying statistic that many graduates from even conservative Reformed seminaries today spend only a relatively few number of years in the pastoral ministry before “burning out”. They address themselves to the problem by pointing us to the Puritans and in particular to the Puritans as pastors. By any fair measure, the Puritans were giants in the Church. They are well known for their learning and scholarship; readers of this magazine will probably already be familiar with their preaching, an art of which they were masters, and so the idea of modern-day pastors seeking encouragement from these seventeenth century theologians will not be as surprising to them as it might perhaps be to those modern evangelicals, who are all too ready to write off the past as irrelevant because old.

The book is divided into six parts of two to three chapters each. The authors begin with the all-important matter of *piety*, the minister's own devotional life that must be the foundation for everything else. Here they highlight the lessons of Puritan experimental Calvinism; for the Puritans theology was not merely intellectual, but first and foremost it was practical; those doctrines that are so often treated as merely matters for discussion were living realities with them. In Part Two the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is applied as an antidote to the cares of the ministry. Part Three is entitled “Clarity”, and emphasises the importance of the pastor's continuing study of theology throughout his ministry; a pastor who does not continue to read deeply will become shallow and unclear in his preaching. Part Four, “Creativity and Community”, may contain two modern “buzzwords” in its title, but, its subject is the pastor's relation to the Church. Part Five, “Dignity”, deals with the reality of the high calling of the Christian and of the pastor. Finally, Part Six,

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“Eternity”, leaves us with the expectation of glory. The authors have sought to encourage modern pastors with their researches into the Puritans, and it can thankfully be said that they have succeeded.

Gervase N. Charmley

*Suffering and Sovereignty: John Flavel and the Puritans on Afflictive Providence* – Brian H. Cosby. 164pp. N.P. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-60178-197-0.

Drawing almost exclusively on the works of John Flavel, the author traces what he terms a Puritan theology of suffering through its various stages, relating it to the sovereignty of God and believers’ required response to it. Submission to the Lord’s hand and purpose in our suffering, even grateful submission, was the way these noble men of God handled it, and they point the way for us in this age of murmuring and discontent. This study would be a most valuable addition to any Christian library, for it contains more practical wisdom than books twice its size.

J.M.B.

*The Life and Times of Arthur Hildersham* – Lesley A. Rowe. 210pp. N.P. Hdbk. ISBN 978-1-60178-222-9.

Lovers of our spiritual forefathers should welcome this new study of an early, relatively unknown, yet most influential Puritan, without fear of the indiscriminating adulation that often motivates Christian biography. Well-researched, sensitively told and attractively written, Hildersham’s life-story is enhanced by a colour portrait, a family tree, several black-and-white photographs, and a narrative that is both very readable and spiritually edifying. The author applies her professional historical training to her subject without lapsing into scholarly jargon, driving the narrative on to a satisfying conclusion: ‘Ten Lessons from Hildersham for Us Today,’ a guide to people mentioned in the book, a full bibliography and index. We wish it a wide circulation.

J.M.B.

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Regrettably, reviews of the following RHB titles will have to wait until the next issue: *The Gospel’s Power and Message* by Paul Washer, *A Faith Worth Teaching* edited by J. Payne and S. Heck, *Contentment, Prosperity and God’s Glory* by Jeremiah Burroughs,

*The Best Method of Preaching* by Petrus van Mastricht, and *The Practice of Faith, Hope and Love* by Godefridus Udemans.

**Wittenberg Publications. 13 Haswell Street, Eketahuna, New Zealand. E-mail address: [wittenberg.best@gmail.com](mailto:wittenberg.best@gmail.com)**

*The Witness of Christian Love* – Jonathan Edwards. N.P. 22pp.Pbk  
This booklet contains the text of a sermon preached by Edwards in 1738 as part of a series on 1 Corinthians 13. It was on verse 6: “Charity . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” The truth which he seeks to establish is that true Christian love issues in ‘holy practice,’ a phrase which recurs many times throughout the sermon, and corresponds to our phrase ‘godly living.’ The style is, unsurprisingly, very much that of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the content is superb. The careful reader will benefit greatly as numerous strands of Biblical truth are gathered together to teach the vital importance of daily, practical, spiritual living.

John Manton

### **Correction**

In the section contrasting Calvin with Augustine (Peace and Truth 2013:2) I omitted a radical difference between them: Augustine credulously believed in healing through touching the bodies of dead saints (*Confessions* IX.16). Calvin did not. Like his fellow Reformers, he was a secessionist with regard to extraordinary gifts, miraculous healings and alleged direct words and visions from the Lord. He verbally lashed Romanists and Anabaptists alike who claimed to possess them. Ed.

### **A REMINDER TO SUBSCRIBERS**

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### **East Anglian Auxiliary**

June 13th, Thursday 7.30pm, Charsfield Baptist Church, Suffolk IP13 7PU

*Speaker:* Rev. Jeremy Brooks (Welcome Hall Evangelical Church, Catshill, Bromsgrove, Worcs)

July 17th, Wednesday 7.30pm, Brockley Baptist Chapel, Suffolk IP29 4AS.

*Speaker:* Pastor John Saunders (Providence Baptist Chapel, Chichester).

### **Kent Auxiliary**

July 10th, Wednesday 7.30pm, Grace Chapel, Folkestone CT20 1HE

*Speaker:* Paul Harper (Rainham, Kent). *Subject:* 'The Grace of God in the Life of Lydia'

### **Sussex Auxiliary**

June 12th, Wednesday 7.30pm, Hope Chapel, Haslemere.

*Speaker:* Mr. J. North (Totton). *Subject:* 'The Great Commission'

For meetings of the Scottish Auxiliary please ring Rev. Paul Jennings on 01346 582 521

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*As ministers are willing to travel considerable distances to speak at these gatherings, it would be appreciated if friends and supporters of the Union could be present, if at all possible.*

*Leaflets announcing the meetings, for display on Chapel notice boards, etc., will be made available nearer the time of the meetings.*