

Peace & Truth

The Magazine of the Sovereign Grace Union

2014:2

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Peace & Truth

The Magazine of the Sovereign Grace Union

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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.

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

As we continue to give thanks for God's goodness to us as a union, in this issue we will enlist, alongside recent articles, more labours of love from founder-members and their colleagues, friends and successors. In this connection, we wish to place on record our appreciation of their solid determination to continue the witness of the Union through the terrible years of World War I and the subsequent period of severe economic depression. Neither did World War II prevent the truths of free and sovereign grace going forward. Since then, we have seen a rapid deterioration in national morality, coupled with the invasion of numerous virulent heresies in the churches. Nevertheless, by the upholding and energizing grace of God, the witness continues.

May He whose patience has been stretched for generations now, but who is still "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," powerfully draw us to an unshakable determination to follow in the footsteps of former 'stalwarts of the faith,' in an age that seems determined to contradict Him in every way possible.

In so doing, we may find ourselves sighing: "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought." (Isaiah 49.4) These despondent words were first spoken prophetically by Messiah Himself; they suggest that "although no effort has been spared . . . nothing has been achieved." (Alec Motyer)

"But this is only the first thought, not the last." The Spirit of Christ in the prophet draws our attention to a contrary truth, to convey the thought that it is not for the servant, but for the Lord to decide what reward He should receive for His labour. "Yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God." (Isaiah 49.4) Christ has been faithful; His Father will bring what fruit He will out of it all. Tried as we are, may we take heart from this.

The Absolute Sufficiency of Holy Scripture For All Matters of Faith and Practice (2)

*by
Leonard Atherton*

So far the testimony has been largely on the negative side. We have had to give our reasons for not accepting tradition, but we also have to state why we accept the Scriptures. In dealing with our subject from the positive side, we shall hope to show, as against the Sacerdotalists, the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and as against the Modernists, the necessity of all and every part of the books of the Bible to form a complete Rule of Faith.

We begin by giving the general reasons why we accept the books of the Old and New Testaments. The Jews were chosen by God out of all nations to maintain the testimony of the one true God against universal polytheism. To guard them against their natural propensities God gave to them His Word. To them were committed the oracles of God. (Romans 3.2) The oracles consisted of the books of the Old Testament as we have them in our bibles. The books of the Apocrypha were not included. The Jews did not, and do not accept the Apocrypha as part of the canon of the Old Testament. Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ recognized the books of the Old Testament, and following Him the Church of Christ has received them as being the Word of God. The books comprising the New Testament, it is true, were not all accepted at the first. So careful were the early Christians that only those books which bore evidence of either apostolic authority or sanction were admitted into the canon of Scripture. But when the canon was completed, apparently at the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D., the mind of believers everywhere was accurately interpreted, and the New Testament was given to us exactly as we have it now.

Mention must be made of the testimony of the Scriptures themselves. The strongest evidence of the authenticity of the Word

of God lies within itself. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1.21) The Greek word translated ‘moved’ means ‘borne along;’ it is the same word as is rendered ‘driven’ in Acts 27.17. Men did not write because they were self-prompted, but because they were borne along by a power outside themselves, that power being the Third Person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Hence we read so frequently in the Old Testament: “Thus saith the Lord.” In the prophecy of Jeremiah we have the phrase: “the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah” occurring over forty times. Similar testimony might be adduced from other Old Testament books, to show that the writers realized that the word they wrote were the words of God.

Turning to the New Testament we have evidence that is equally as strong. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Word of God (John 1.1) and He spake the words of God. “He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.” (John 3.34) The writers of the Old Testament had the Spirit in measure; Christ possessed the Spirit in fullness. But up to His going away Christ only ‘began’ to speak the words of God: “of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up.” (Acts 1.1) The words that He began to speak in the flesh He completed in the dispensation of the Spirit through His apostles. Had He not said: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come.” (John 16.13) So it came to pass: the Spirit was given, the apostles wrote the words given them, and the Scriptures of the New Testament are the result. All are “the words of the Lord.”

The Pentateuch is the most hotly assailed portion of the Old Testament. We are told by the critics that it is the work of various writers (all unknown), and that the so-called Mosaic legislation only came into being after the return from the exile. The outstanding figure of the Old Testament is Moses. God made a

covenant with him and with Israel (Exodus 24.27) and commanded Moses to write the words which God spake. Reference is made throughout the Old Testament to this fact. Thus, when David bare the ark of the Lord into its place, “the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders . . . as Moses commanded according to the word of the Lord.” (1 Chronicles 15.15) When about to die, he charged Solomon to “observe to do the statutes and the judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel.” (1 Chronicles 22.13) The revival under Jehoshaphat was mainly by “the law of the Lord.” (2 Chronicles 17.9) Hezekiah “clave to the Lord and kept His commandments which God commanded Moses.” (2 Kings 18.6) Manasseh’s cup of wickedness was filled in his leading the people to refuse to do “according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.” (2 Kings 21.8) On the other hand, Josiah “turned to the Lord with all his heart . . . according to all the laws of Moses.” (2 Kings 23.25)

In post-exilic days we have the same testimony. We read of the recognition of “the book of the law” (Nehemiah 8.18), “the law of the Lord” and “the book of Moses.” (Ezra 7.10; 6.18) The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are one long testimony to the existence of the law of Moses and to the people’s recognition of its authority. Yet the critics would have us believe that there was no Mosaic legislation, and that a fraud was palmed off upon the people by Ezra and his friends!

This long line of testimony is continued to the end of the Old Testament; for Malachi, giving the last inspired message to Israel, says: “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and judgments.” (Malachi 4.4) So from Exodus to Malachi we have a chain of evidence to the antiquity of the law and to the fact of a written revelation by the hand of Moses.

The testimony is continued in the New Testament. “The law was given by Moses.” (John 1.17) Our Lord asks the Jews: “Did not

Moses give you the law?” (John 7.19) Stephen, in his address to the Sanhedrin, declared: “This is he (Moses) that was in the Church in the wilderness with the angel which spake unto him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the living oracles to give unto us.” (Acts 7.38) The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, referring to the priests who offer gifts according to the law, says: “who serve that which is a copy of heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle; for see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount.” (Hebrews 8.5)

Thus we find that reference is made to the law of Moses practically to the end of the Bible. Moses is mentioned in the last book of all, for we read of the singing of “the song of Moses and of the Lamb.” (Revelation 15.3)

The great reason, however, why we accept the whole of the Scriptures as absolutely sufficient for all matters of faith and practice is because Christ Himself is the subject from beginning to end. He is set forth in type, symbol and prophecy.

Glance at prophecy for a moment. The one who is to bruise the serpent’s head is to be the Seed of the woman. (Genesis 3.15) This was fulfilled in Christ. (Galatians 4.4) The Messiah, or Coming One, is to spring from the stock of Abraham, and in his seed all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. (Genesis 22.18; Galatians 3.8) He is the prophet whom God will raise up, to whom all must give ear (Deuteronomy 18.18; Acts 3.22); the Son of David, yet David’s Lord (Isaiah 11.1; Psalm 110.1; Matthew 22.41-45); a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110.4; Hebrews 7.1-3). In the prophets He is depicted as “Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9.6) He is to be born of the virgin by a miraculous conception, for when born He is “Immanuel, God with us.” (Isaiah 7.14; Matthew 1.23) He is the Servant of Jehovah, sent by Jehovah. (Isaiah 42.1; 52.13) As His people’s Surety and Representative, God bruises Him, puts Him to grief, and causes their iniquity to meet upon

Him. (Isaiah 53.1-10; Acts 8.30-35) He is to enter Jerusalem riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass. (Zechariah 9.9; Matthew 21.5) In the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets we find Christ foretold; in the Gospels we find the prophecies fulfilled.

It is, however, as the Lamb that Christ in His atoning death is presented. We begin at Genesis. There seems to be nothing against the assumption that the animals slain in Eden were lambs. Abel offered the firstlings of his flock. (Genesis 4.4) Abraham declared to Isaac that God would provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, and after the lamb had been marvelously provided, called the name of the place 'Jehovah-Jireh' = 'the Lord will provide.' (Genesis 22.14)

When God brings Israel out of Egypt, He gives Moses commands concerning the Passover. The Israelites are sheltered from the destroying angel under the sprinkled blood of the lamb, and the Passover Feast is made binding on Israel for all time. Lambs are offered morning and evening, first in the tabernacle and afterwards in the temple.

When Christ enters upon His official work, John the Baptist proclaims: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1.29) The lamb that is dumb before its shearers mentioned in Isaiah 53 is said by Philip to be Christ. (Acts 8.32) Peter says we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1.19)

The apostle John is taught by the Spirit of inspiration to emphasize this great characteristic of our Lord and His work in the last book of the Bible. He hears a voice saying that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book." He turns at the sound of the voice, and sees "a Lamb as it had been slain." (Revelation 5.5-6) The angels, the living creatures, and the elders, say: "Worthy is the Lamb." (Revelation 5.12) The Lamb opens the book. (Revelation 6.1) The enemies of God cry to the rocks to hide them from "the wrath of the Lamb." (Revelation 6.16) It is the Lamb

that is in the midst of the throne (Revelation 7.17), that stands on Mount Zion. (Revelation 14.1) The foes of God make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb overcomes them. (Revelation 17.14) The redeemed overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12.11), and sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. (Revelation 15.3) The Church is the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Revelation 21.9), and when the nuptial feast is spread, it is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. (Revelation 19.7, 9) The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of the New Jerusalem and the Lamb is the light of it. (Revelation 21.22-23) Only they whose names are written in the Lamb's book are allowed to enter its gates. (Revelation 21.27) The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and the throne of God and of the Lamb is to stand forever. (Revelation 22.1, 3) This is the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world in the purpose of God to redeem His elect people. (Revelation 13.8)

Christ in His Person and in His atoning work is seen from Genesis to Revelation. He Himself declared that Moses wrote of Him (John 5.46), and after His resurrection, when no limits (such as some suppose to have been on Him before His death) could have been His, He declared that the things that had befallen Him were foretold in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms. (Luke 24.44)

Christ in Himself unifies all the Scriptures. This being so, we need all the books and every part of each book. We cannot let go one letter.

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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.

Richard Sibbes and the Mercy of God

Introduction

“When through the blood of the everlasting covenant we children of the shadows reach at last our home in the light, we shall have a thousand strings to our harps, but the sweetest may well be the one tuned to sound forth most perfectly the mercy of God.” This thought of A. W. Tozer’s is eminently true; for we have no natural right to be with God in heaven; we were numbered among the rebels who in the days before our new birth sinfully banished God from our lives; and we have chosen to go our own way times without number since the day God adopted us into his family. Let us not fool ourselves, we do not deserve the least mercy from God; and as Spurgeon says: “all more than hell is mercy.” We must therefore acknowledge with Toplady:

‘A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing.’

The wonder is, that though the Almighty has us all in his power, and we have not the slightest claim on his mercy, his goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life. As we come up out of the wilderness of this world leaning upon our Beloved, God has shown himself to be a God of mercy, rich in mercy, plenteous in mercy, delighting in mercy. No-one would bear and forbear as he has done with us his sinful children. Truly, as the Puritan Thomas Goodwin says: “All God’s children are be-merciéd!”

In this article, we shall briefly consider how Goodwin’s fellow Puritan Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) experienced and preached on the mercy of God. Without entering into the details of his fruitful Christian life and ministry, we simply record Isaak Walton’s touching testimony to his spirituality:

‘Of this blest man, let this just praise be given,
Heaven was in him, before he was in heaven.’

Trinitarian Mercy

“Our redemption,” writes Sibbes, “is founded upon the joint agreement of all three persons of the Trinity.” (*Works*. Edinburgh. 1.43) God the Father is the fountain of mercy; God the Son is the channel of mercy; and God the Spirit is the stream of mercy. From all three, therefore, mercy is conveyed into the souls of the redeemed. (3.49; 4.293)

The Father: Fountain of Mercy

Consistent with Biblical usage, Sibbes often refers the term ‘God’ to the Father. He is merciful by nature, inclined to pity anyone in misery. (3.28) Our misery is the magnet that draws his mercy. (3.42) Despite all his august majesty, he abounds in mercy. (2.292) Mercy “is his nature; it is himself.” (3.28) As the prophet Micah says (7.18): “he delighteth in mercy.” (3.35) Indeed, mercy is such a sweet attribute in God that all his other attributes would be a terror to us without it. (2.292) It is therefore his great purpose to “be glorified in showing mercy.” (3.29-30) Everything he does, in both creation and redemption, is “all for the glory of his mercy.” (3.31) This, concludes Sibbes, is “the true reality of fatherhood,” the true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. Whatever, therefore, we may lawfully expect from an earthly father, “we may expect from God our Father, and infinite[ly] more,” (6.451) for he looks on us, his adopted children, with the same “eternal sweet tenderness” as he does on his natural Son. (6.461)

The Son: the Channel of Mercy

Yet because God is “the God and Father of Christ first,” he becomes the Father of mercy to us only through him. “Christ hath all first, and we have all from him: he is the first Son, and we are [later] sons; he is the first beloved of God, and we are beloved in him.” Whatever mercy we receive, therefore, we must receive it “in Christ, and through Christ, and from Christ.” (3.27)

As Mediator between God and us, Christ reveals the mercy of God in a unique way. Because “we cannot endure the brightness of the majesty of the Father,” he chose his dear Son to be our Mediator,

and chose us in him to become his sons and daughters. As our Surety-Substitute, who satisfied every demand of his holy justice when he suffered on the cross for our sins, Christ makes God “our Father . . . the Father of mercies.” (3.28) This is why the Lord Jesus told his disciples: “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” (John 20.17) This too is why Christ now calls us his brethren: he is our Elder Brother, and we are brothers and sisters in his Father’s family. (6.450) Surely, Sibbes adds with evident satisfaction, he who chose us in Christ in eternity past will glorify us with Christ in eternity future. (4.32; 6.453) Let us then realize that a “greater glory of mercy . . . shines forth to fallen man in Christ” than ever shone on Adam in innocence. (*Glorious Freedom*. Edinburgh. 2000. 75)

To rest in God’s mercy, therefore, is to rest in the gospel of Christ, which brings that mercy to us. “When faith considers God pictured out in the gospel, it sees him the Father of Christ, and our Father, and the Father of mercies and God of comforts; faith seeing infinite mercy in an infinite God.” (3.37) This is how we should look on God at all times – in Christ. When our conscience speaks to us of sin, when Satan seeks to disturb our peace, when we are engaged in spiritual conflict, and when we come to die, we must look on him as reconciled to us in Christ. Then, and only then, shall we enjoy peace, for it flows down to us in the same channel as his mercy and grace. (3.21)

Here is a safe haven into which we may flee under the sense of God’s wrath. So, Sibbes tenderly exhorts us: “Despair not, thou drooping soul, whosoever thou art under the guilt of sin; come to the Father of mercies, cast thyself into this sea of mercy.” To give us double assurance, he adds winsomely: “There is mercy for thee if thou wilt come in.” (3.31) When by grace we do gain access, all our sins disappear like a spark that falls into the ocean. (3.35)

Should we waver or doubt the sincerity of the invitation, Sibbes reassures us that God in Christ “is more willing to pardon” than we are “to ask mercy.” (3.36) Just as the father in the parable ran and

embraced his prodigal son, so God “will come and meet you, and kiss you,” when you fall “at the feet of his mercy,” and cast yourself into “the arms of his mercy.” (3.40) Once we are reconciled to him in Christ, he will as soon “cease to love his Son as cease to love us.” (6.641)

In sum, all God’s saving mercies reach us only through his dear Son Christ, who is “the great ordinance of God for our salvation.” He is the treasury in which God stores up for us all his “grace and love and mercy.” The ministry of the gospel opens that treasury to us. (*Glorious Freedom*. Edinburgh. 2000. 84)

The Spirit: the Stream of Mercy

The last link in our enjoyment of the mercy of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. He who actually conveys God’s mercy into our hearts is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. In the covenanted purpose of God, his special role is to dispense the mercy the Father has been pleased to bestow and the Son has purchased with his own precious blood. Consequently, all life, truth, grace, peace, joy, holiness and comfort are from him. (*Glorious Freedom*. 6-26) He who first filled the human nature of Christ without measure now fills his people with all saving and sanctifying grace.

Even the glorious gospel will be ineffectual without his ministrations. But “having by his death and sufferings reconciled us to his Father and purchased the Spirit *for* us,” Christ now gives “his Spirit *to* us.” As there was at first nothing to hinder the gift of the Spirit to the human nature of Christ, so now there is “nothing to hinder the blessed gift of the Spirit” to us his children. Indeed, “Christ does his church more good now that he is in heaven, from where he sends the Spirit, than he could do if he were here below, because though his human nature is confined in heaven, his [divine] person is everywhere. And being ‘ascended now far above all heavens,’ he gives gifts more liberally and plentifully, inasmuch as he fills all things (Ephesians 4.10)” (*Glorious Freedom*. 11, 13, 14)

From this special ministry of the Holy Spirit, Sibbes draws a much needed lesson. “The most powerful means that ever was ordained for our good will be dead and heartless if he [Christ] is not there by his Spirit to put life into it . . . We should therefore desire that Christ would join his Spirit to all the ordinances of God and make them effectual.” It is “the sin of this age,” he laments, that through “dead formality” professed worshippers of God “will hear a sermon now and then, look at a book, and perhaps pray morning and evening, but never look up to the living and quickening Spirit.” Consequently, “all they do is dead and loathsome, like salt that has no savour.” So whenever we hear a sermon or read the Bible, “we should lift up our eyes and hearts and voices to heaven and say: ‘Lord, join thy Spirit, be present with us . . .’” (*Glorious Freedom*. 16, 17)

But when by the Spirit’s regenerating work and the exercise of saving faith we are joined to Jesus, all God’s mercy becomes ours. Our union with Christ as Mediator by the Holy Spirit is therefore “the ground of all comfort,” for by his mediation all the mercy that lies deep in God’s merciful nature flows out of him into us. (3.27) “Along with the ministry” of the gospel, “he gives us his Holy Spirit.” The Spirit knocks at our hearts, attracts us to Christ, and persuades and enables us to embrace him. This is how “God descends” to our mean and miserable level, with “Christ, and grace, the gospel, the ministry, the Spirit, all by way of love to us.” (*Glorious Freedom*. 84)

Experiencing God’s Mercy

While acknowledging both God’s absolute sovereignty in dispensing his mercy and our dependence on his mercy at all times, Sibbes fastens on two particular times when his saints taste that mercy in all its sweetness.

The first is when he pardons our sins. He shows himself to be merciful “in pardoning sin freely, in pardoning all sin, the punishment and the guilt [i.e. liability to punishment] and all.”

(3.30) Nothing tastes sweeter to the poor and needy believer than pardoning mercy.

The second is when we find ourselves “bruised and broken” by the Fall. At such times, we are so pre-occupied with our distress that we “dare not claim any present interest of mercy.” Our doubts and fears make us like a smoking flax – grace seems to be almost dead in us. Seeing us in this sad plight, our merciful God gives us “some hope of mercy from the promise, and examples of those that have obtained mercy” before us. This goads us to “hunger and thirst after it.” In his own good time, God sends us his Spirit, who makes way for himself into our heart, and brings deliverance and relief. (*The Bruised Reed*. Edinburgh. 2008. 4) The wonder of mercy is that Christ will never break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. (Isaiah 42.1-3; Matthew 12.18-20)

Sibbes naturally extends the saints’ experience of God’s mercy to all the chastisements and corrections they receive at their heavenly Father’s hands. These, he says, are always seasoned with comforts, as Lamentations 3.22-23 leads us to expect. In fact, he concludes, everything that “comes from God to his children” in this present life is “dipped in mercy.” (3.30)

Practical Lessons

In true Puritan fashion, Sibbes draws a number of practical lessons from his meditations on God’s mercy. We mention four of them.

The first is that while in the past God showed mercy to his chosen [such as Moses, David, Manasseh and Paul, as Sibbes’ contemporary Jeremy Taylor pointed out to encourage his people], we must believe that it is available to us now. Precisely because he is merciful by nature, and because his mercy lives forever as a boundless store of pity and compassion, we should seek to enjoy his mercy, not through mystical visions, but simply by looking by faith on God in Christ. This alone will banish our terrors and bring us real comfort. (3.53) Coming to him in this way will enable us to

find him “a Father in covenant; not only a Friend, but a Father, a gracious Father.” (6.398)

Secondly, once we have “tasted the sweet mercy” of God in Christ, we should “break forth” in praise and thanksgiving, as naturally as birds sing in Spring. (3.22-23) With reverent love, we should glory in his sheer unmerited goodness to us. (6.452)

Third, we should be merciful to others; for “all the sons of this Father . . . are merciful,” like their Father in heaven. (3.40)

Fourthly, whatever depths of misery we may find ourselves in, we should follow the example of King David in Psalm 130.1 and cry to God out of our depths. Realize, Sibbes urges, that “his mercy is deeper than our misery.” (3.36) Even though we may lose father and mother, or our nearest and dearest friends, we still have “a Father of mercy” whose mercies, like himself, can never die. (3.42) One day, he will in mercy wipe away every tear from our eyes. (2.482)

Afternote

It is worth pointing out that not only are both Testaments of Holy Scripture full of the mercy of God, every Christian writer of note (like the poor tax collector who cried: “God be merciful to me, a sinner”) casts himself or herself on that mercy. Augustine calls on the Lord as “My God, my Mercy.” The most deeply-felt aria in J. S. Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* is “Have mercy, Lord, on me.” The Arminian Charles Wesley cries out in wonder at the possibility of mercy for himself: “Depth of mercy! Can there be Mercy still reserved for me?” Henry Francis Lyte prays: “God of mercy, God of grace, Show the brightness of thy face.” Even Shakespeare, no Christian, eulogizes this glorious attribute in Portia’s speech: “The quality of mercy is not strained, It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven,” calling it “an attribute of God himself.”

Now, we believe, the heavenly-minded Sibbes basks in that mercy in the immediate presence of his God and Saviour. Do we ever pray: “O that we were there! O that we were there!”?

The Church of God
by
J. C. Martin
(From 'Peace and Truth,' July 1921)

There is but *one* Church of which the Apostle Paul said, when speaking to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus: “Feed the *Church of God* which He hath purchased with His own blood.” And it would be sad if, at any time, any section of Christendom, or any denomination of Christians, should introduce any point beside what is mentioned in the Word of God as essential to constitute the one Church of God on earth.

Christ – The Rallying Point

The rallying point must be *Christ Himself*, and *Christ only*, as the Alpha and Omega of all; and neither Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Independent, nor indeed any other phase of Christendom, has a right to introduce any other centre of unity, be it baptism of water, the Lord’s Supper, instead of Christ Himself – the grand centre of the whole Church. By the one baptism alone of the Holy Spirit are we made members of His one Body, with one life and vein of sympathy thrilling each heart; and by His power alone can we walk together for the glory of God and the welfare of His people.

The Justification of the Church

This is the position, and in a sense the attitude of the Church of God – saved by grace, ransomed according to His purpose. If we leave out this distinctive element there will be no backbone to Christianity. It is because God’s children have found these grand truths, not only in the Word of God, but also interwoven in their own experience, substantial and a reality in their respective trials, that they rejoice as the called of God, according to His eternal purpose, backed by the Covenant and Oath of God, which nothing can alter or reverse.

I noticed a lady weeping when the verse of the hymn was sung: “Oft I walk beneath a cloud.” The circumstance brought vividly before me my own experience of some thirty-five years since, when, like many others, I was looking within for comfort as the ground of assurance of interest in Christ. Thank God, His children are taught that the anchor must be outside the ship, and not within; and one special reason why so many of God’s own do not possess assurance is because they are looking *within*, instead of to the Lord Jesus and His finished work.

Experience

There must be, of course, the quickening power of the Holy Spirit and grace of God within, by which the new life is evidenced – the consciousness, too, of being lost, undone and ruined without Christ; and an equal consciousness of entire helplessness in the matter of salvation. And if in this condition there is a panting and yearning for and looking to Christ on His promise, to such *there* is safety. The manifestation of God enjoyed within gives the comfort, no doubt; but the safety is quite independent of the comfort, for the great Teacher says: “No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” And again: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Am I a coming sinner? I am drawn to God. Am I drawn? I am given to Christ. I am loved with an everlasting love. My name is in the Lamb’s Book of Life. This, brethren, is the only stable Scriptural assurance; and if any other element be mixed up with this stable rest on the Word of God, no wonder that many walk in bondage; and I pray God that some before me who have been hitherto looking to and relying on their own feelings, may look more to the presence and faithfulness of God, who cannot deny Himself.

The Attitude of the Church

The attitude of the Church of God, then, is that of one “**saved by grace**” – brought into the family of God with all its privileges – and embraced and comprehended by the eternal covenant in all its realities, “ordered in all things and sure,” brought “from darkness

to light” and “from the power of Satan unto God.” The attitude is one still of conscious sinfulness in self – and with an ever-deepening knowledge of this there is, thank God, an ever-deepening consciousness of the infinite merits and perfections of Jesus, on whom the believer stands, and in whose merits he is seen, so that he says with Luther: “Besides my Christ I will see nothing, I will hear nothing;” perfection is alone in Him, and total imperfection in self.

The Church’s attitude is also one of **increasingly conscious weakness in self**. But parallel with this there is a growing assurance of strength in God “made perfect in weakness,” like Jacob of old when touched by the Angel, and his thigh was out of joint. From sheer necessity he was compelled to fall on the neck of Him who wrestled with him. “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince thou hast power with God and with man, and hast prevailed.” There is a mine of deep teaching in being brought down to know what we are, that we may prove what the power of God can effect.

There is also the attitude of **prayer**. I think there is much misunderstanding as to what prayer really is. It is not the eloquence of words; very often the best and most effective and efficacious prayers are in mere broken words, the inward sigh and the silent groan, whether in the workshop, by the wayside, in the office, or on the exchange; and these are known to God; and, as by His own inditing and breathing within, are registered in heaven, and shall have in God’s own way and time the answer of peace.

Once more, the attitude of the Church is one of **waiting**. This is not easy in times of painful anxiety and trial, to “be still, and know that He is God;” and yet we read of the experience of the saints of old who said: “Truly, my soul waiteth upon God;” “My soul, wait thou upon God, for my expectation is from Him;” ”Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth;” “I will hear what God the Lord will speak.”

John Knox and Reformation: A Commemoration

[As the biographical details of John Knox (1514-1572) are readily available, in this commemorative article we shall merely place the Scottish Reformer in his historical context and mention his importance to the Reformation. Ed.]

Introduction

It is fashionable today to adopt one of two approaches to the Reformation: either to denounce it as the greatest schism in the history of the Church or to view it as simply one of many valid movements within the universal Body of Christ. The first approach is Romish, the second Ecumenical. Protestants reject both, as the following references indicate:

‘The Reformation was the triumph of truth over error.’ (Thomas M’Crie)

‘The Reformation . . . was a fresh outpouring of the very life that Christianity had brought into the world. It was the triumph of the greatest of doctrines . . . the doctrine of grace.’ (Merle D’Aubigné)

‘The Reformation of the sixteenth century must be owned as perhaps the greatest and most glorious revolution in the history of the human race.’ (Alexander Mitchell)

Knox himself describes it as a narrative of ‘the manner and by what persons the Light of Christ’s Evangel hath been manifested into this Realm, after that horrible and universal defection from the Truth which has come by the means of that Roman Antichrist.’

David Hay Fleming describes the Reformation in Scotland as thorough. ‘Its thoroughness was at once its chief characteristic and its glory . . . It was not only in doctrine and in the administration of the sacraments that the Scottish Church forsook the ‘foot-steppis of Antichrist’ and rid itself of the ‘dreggis of Papistrie.’ Its leaders wished ‘Christ’s religion to be restored to the originall puritie’, so that ‘the grave and godlie face of the primitive church’ might be restored, ignorance expelled, and true doctrine and good manners appear again ‘in the Church of this realme.’

The Need for Reform

It is impossible to calculate the evil from which the Reformation delivered the Scottish people. The reign of Rome had been a heavy yoke from the days of Queen Margaret in the 12th century, when it crushed the old Celtic Church. By the dawn of the 16th century, the apostasy and corruption of the late Mediaeval Church cried out for reformation in four major areas:

(1) Doctrine

While Rome remained orthodox on the Trinity and Person of Christ, it introduced so many fables that the truth as it is in Jesus was almost entirely subverted. Such lying vanities as belief in the efficacy of saints' righteousness, purgatory-pence, priestly *hocus pocus* and papal pronouncements deceived the people and led them far away from the Scriptural doctrines of grace.

(2) Worship

Ritualism, Auricular Confession and attendance at Mass characterised the worship of both priests and people. The Bible and the catechisms of the age were in Latin, an alien language, while preaching dwelt lavishly on the legends of the saints. Pilgrimages, processions and the celebration of Saints-Days did duty for prayer, sung praise and the reading and preaching of the Word of God. The Bishop of Dunkeld epitomized the prevailing attitude and practices when he rebuked the vicar of Dollar for preaching the Gospel to his parishioners instead of taking their cow and cloth, 'which thing is very prejudicial to the church men,' he added craftily. 'In so doing you make the people think that we should preach likewise.' Clerical ignorance and superstition simply reflected itself in the worship of the people.

(3) Church Government

Centralisation and lust for power were leading marks of the Romish Antichrist. Imperial rule was claimed by the Bishop of Rome not only over the church but also over the world. Papal agents, ecclesiastical and political, wielded great influence in the remote Scottish kingdom. The records of appeals to Rome remind us of Scotland's dependence in the realm of conscience, while the vast number of 'annates' sent abroad indicate just how grievously this gigantic parasite sapped away the nation's financial resources.

Priestly immunity from the common law of the land merely encouraged widespread rapacity.

(4) Practice

Moral conduct is the acid test of every church's profession. From popes to altar boys, the record of Rome is disgraceful. Pope Alexander VI and Cardinal Beaton lived such scandalous lives that their entire profession was incredible. The moral corruption of the clergy was proverbial. Archbishop Hamilton was known everywhere for his adulterous relationships and numerous bastards. Archibald Hay, a scholarly Romanist of the period, wrote: 'I am ashamed to review the lives of the common and even of certain other priests, obscured all around with the darkness of ignorance . . . Priests come to that heavenly table who have not slept off yesterday's debauch . . . there is no greater danger to be feared from the most noxious animals than from this off-scouring of most abandoned men.' Little wonder that the people followed their example. 'If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.' (Matthew 15.14) And no sooner did anyone protest against this dreadful state of affairs than they were silenced. In the 31 years before 1559, 21 pre-Reformation Protestants were put to death. Clearly, those who could suppress the truth in this way, while continuing to glut their appetite for sensuality, constituted a synagogue of Satan, not the pure Bride of Christ.

Causes of the Scottish Reformation

At this point we shall briefly consider some of the causes of the Scottish Reformation before 1560, the year of its official adoption.

The most influential causes were as follows:

(1) A supernatural work of God through the revival of the doctrines of grace and true religion in the hearts and lives of the Scottish people. 'The Reformation was the triumph of Truth over error. It was the preaching of the pure Gospel by the Reformers, and especially the great doctrine of justification by faith through the righteousness of Christ that gave its death-blow to the Papal system.'(Fraser Macdonald)

- (2) The influx of first Lutheran and later Calvinistic influences on educated men, both lairds and priests.
- (3) The secret circulation of Lollard bibles and Tyndale's translation of the New Testament throughout the southern and central parts of Scotland.
- (4) The simple, bold and affectionate preaching of the Gospel ('the Evangel', as Knox called it) by such faithful servants of God as Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart and Knox himself.
- (5) The sight of the sincerity, constancy, courage and love for their enemies of the Scottish martyrs. Helen Stark and Walter Mill are two examples of such faithfulness unto death.
- (6) The opening of the nation's eyes to the detestable depravity of the Church professing to be the pure Bride of Christ. God permitted her to pursue her lust for power and pleasure as far as she could before exposing her to the gaze of the people. In this way He ensured her ruin.
- (7) The ruthless persecution of believers by Romish church leaders. The merciless wickedness of first James Beaton, Archbishop of St Andrews, then his nephew, Cardinal David Beaton, to Reformed doctrine was typical.

The Turn of the Tide

From 1528 to 1540, martyrs of the calibre of Hamilton, Straiton and Kennedy showed the nation the utter futility of seeking to suppress the work of God. 'The reek of Patrick Hamilton's pile', it was said, 'infected all it blew upon.' That is, after his death, many began to ask why such a cultured and gentle nobleman was burnt at the stake. The tide turned when the blood-thirsty cardinal sought to have 360 of the nation's other noblemen put to death for heresy, but was prevented by the providential discovery of the forged evidence, and Arran, friendly towards the Reformation, was elected governor of the kingdom.

The cruel judicial murder of the 80-year-old Walter Mill in 1558 sealed the doom of popery. 'I trust in God,' said the venerable martyr, 'I shall be the last that shall suffer death in Scotland for this cause.' And so he was. 'His death', observed Spottiswoode, 'was the death of Popery in this realm.'

Mill's barbarous execution roused the nation's horror to a pitch of godly resolve. Led by their nobility and gentry, who drew up 'godly bands' or covenants pledging to throw off the tyrant usurper and secure the nation's liberty, the people clamoured for true Gospel preaching.

Knox and Reformation

When God intends to deliver a people, He usually combines nature, grace and providence to raise up the most suitable instruments for His purpose. This was the case in the Scottish Reformation. On Knox and his brethren God bestowed intellectual gifts of no common order, crowned them with sanctifying grace, and opened up in providence ample opportunities to exercise their unquestioned qualities of leadership.

Following a brilliant academic career at Glasgow and St Andrews Universities, John Knox disappeared from public view. He surfaced as the sword-bearing bodyguard of George Wishart at the time of the latter's arrest. He would have followed Wishart to the stake, but was sent away by the martyr's charge: 'Return to your bairns, and God bless you. One is sufficient for a sacrifice.'

From that time he was a marked man. Imprisoned in St Andrews castle besieged by the French fleet, Knox received a memorable call to the ministry through John Rough on behalf of the congregation. At first he declined the call, and burst into tears under its weight, but later consented, with far-reaching consequences. His view of preaching came out later in an interview with Mary, Queen of Scots. 'Madam,' he said, 'I am not master of myself, but must obey Him who commands me to speak plainly, and to flatter no flesh upon the face of the earth.' After the surrender of the garrison, Knox and his fellow-prisoners spent 18 months as French galley-slaves. Here he learned to suffer affliction gladly for Christ's sake and to pray: 'Lord, give me Scotland, or I die.' A notable episode is worth recording. During a visit of the French galleys to the off-shore vicinity of St Andrews, Knox, too weak to stand, was lifted up by his fellowmen and asked if he recognised the place. 'I know it well,' he replied, 'for I see

the steeple of that place where God first in public opened my mouth to His glory; and I am fully persuaded, how weak soever I now appear, that I shall not depart this life till my tongue shall glorify His name in the same place.’

Through the exertions of his young friend, King Edward VI of England, Knox was released, and preached often at Berwick and Newcastle as one of six royal preachers. He was offered the bishopric of Rochester, but refused it, explaining that there were ‘no bishops in presbytery.’ On the early death of Edward, Knox fled to the continent, first to Frankfurt, where he disputed with the Anglican Cox, then to Geneva, where he pastored the English congregation. Friendship with Calvin and acquaintance with the Reformed city merely deepened his longing to return to Scotland and be a means of implementing similar reforms. Meanwhile he had acquired a working knowledge of Latin, Hebrew, Greek, French and German.

At the call of the Scottish ‘lords of the congregation’, Knox was given his desire in 1559. From that time till his death in 1572 he was God’s chief instrument in moulding the most Scripturally Reformed Church in nominal Christendom. Through Knox’s remonstrations with the Queen Regent, the people openly repudiated popery, refused to attend Mass, and gathered in private houses for the pure worship of God and reception of the Supper. A riot following a sermon by Knox in Perth drove the local priest from the town, and through the friendly aid of Elizabeth I’s English troops, the Queen Regent’s French allies were expelled, leaving the nation to assemble its own free parliament, officially abolish Popery and replace it with a Protestant Reformed Church operating through its own elected Assembly.

Clearly, the Scottish Reformation was no mere social upheaval or political revolution. It was a revival of true Biblical religion in the hearts of the people.

As for Knox, his entire life was a sacrifice to God. His will was inflexible in adhering to the truth and in taking action. As a preacher he was vibrant with spiritual energy and vehement

against idolatry. As a pastor he was tender-hearted and comforting. As a reformer he was thorough.

Two pictures of Knox are indelible: first, of his preaching. From the pulpit of St Giles, Edinburgh, he spent half-an-hour opening up the text. Then for the next hour he waxed so warm against all ‘papistrie and idolatrie that he was likely to ding the pulpit to blads.’ The second takes us to his death-bed. ‘Read where I first cast my anchor,’ he told his wife, who then read the 17th of John.

Thomas M’Crie’s *Life of Knox* is a worthy tribute to this great man of God. Principal John Macleod claims with good reason that the Scottish Reformation might have become Lutheran or Anglican were it not for Knox’s vigorous and uncompromising ministry. The 1560 *Scots Confession*, formulated in only five days by Knox and several of his brethren, is a fine testimony to the Reformers’ unambiguous adherence to the Word of God and marked opposition to Romanism.

The following brief extract from Knox’s *Admonition to England* gives us some idea of the fervour and earnestness of his ministry:

“*The eyes of the Lord are upon every sinful nation, to root it out of the earth.*” (Amos 9)

“For thy unthankfulness, O England, he suffereth false teachers to be a burden unto thee, whom if thou dost receive and allow their doctrine, be thou well assured his great wrath cometh shortly after to thy destruction.

This is the accustomed order of God when he is minded to destroy. First he sendeth lying spirits in the mouths of their priests or prophets, which delighted in lies, then suffereth he them to be deceived by the same to their destruction, as he did with Ahab.

O England! now is God’s wrath kindled against thee, now hath he begun to punish, as he hath threatened a long while, by his true prophets and messengers; he hath taken from thee the crown of thy glory, and hath left thee without honour, as a body without a head; and this appears to be only the beginning of sorrows, which appear to increase; for I perceive that the heart, the tongue and the hand of one Englishman is bent against another, and division to be in the whole realm, which is an assured sign of desolation to come.”

An Abiding Message
by
William Sinden
(from the January 1926 issue
of 'Peace and Truth')

“Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.”
1 Peter 5.7

“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death’s sting? Where, grace, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.”

It is the privilege and opportunity of the saints to embrace the dawn of another year as a period to testify afresh of the mercy and goodness of the Lord. What the world ascribes to fortune, luck, or chance, the saints know by a blessed experience that in providence and grace their pathway has been guided and established by the God of their salvation, and in a review of the past they are constrained to say: “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

The modernist would leave us on the ocean waves of time without an anchor, without a pilot, without a port of refuge; and if we may not depend upon the Word of Christ as of first and final authority, we are already as shipwrecked mariners without hope in the day of trouble.

There is, however, no real problem here, for the question resolves itself when we compare our Lord with His critics. We are

convinced that “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.” We are further persuaded of the truth that “no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” Hence the infallible voice of all the ages, spoken by men or angels, is the Word, concerning which the apostle Peter said: “And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

What an awful presumption on the part of the so-called scholar to dispute His claim to accuracy concerning the will of His Father. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” The aim and design of the modern sceptic is in agreement with the heresy of Arianism and the Socinian doctrine concerning the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. [Both these heresies denied the natural and essential Deity of Christ. They are still with us, cunningly disguised by Jehovah’s Witnesses and Liberal Modernists, to name no others. Ed.] If He can be dethroned, then the authority of the Word must cease.

If there were no other, the Gospel of John the apostle would at once furnish a difficulty [for the critics]; for from its beginning to its end it is one long record of the mystery of godliness, “God manifest in the flesh.” The conclusions of human thought and carnal reasoning, which lie at the source of all attempts to overthrow the authority of the Scriptures of Truth, have failed hitherto, for the reason that spiritual truths are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2.14) “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6.3); and when the day of grace dawns over the heart of a poor sinner, and his sins and iniquities press him sore, it is then and there that the Gospel record becomes the only saving message that can meet his case; and having found in our crucified Lord the way of life, where “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” his

hope is founded, not upon the shifting sands of man's opinion, but upon the Rock of Truth, in which the gracious discovery is made how God can be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. The apostle John writes at large concerning this; he warns the Church to beware of the seductive character of the teaching prevalent at that time, and demonstrates the nature of the work and influence of the Holy Spirit, and says: "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him. [margin: abide in it]"

Dear reader, this anointing is the seal of sonship, and the assurance that God will perform the mercy He has promised to His children; and all true believers may await the issue of every trial with confidence; for He who redeemed Israel from Egypt carried them all the days of old. The wilderness through which they passed to their Canaan home was in itself rough, solitary and barren; but it was the "right way," for it was God's way, and it is the way in which He will lead us.

The text is therefore a call to deliver into His hands the problems and perplexities of this life, an invitation to trust Him to bring His people home to glory, and a special message for the New Year concerning all the trials of pilgrimage. We would remember His word of grace regarding our fears and forebodings in temporal things: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows."

In the great storm on the lake they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and Peter said: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water; and He said, 'Come.'" Having so simple and clear a message from the Lord, he ventures forth upon the restless waters, to go to Jesus. With so definite a word, and the Master so near at hand, surely this enterprise must succeed! But alas, the conduct of

Peter serves to illustrate the divided vision so common in the case of the Lord's people when bringing their cares, sorrows and needs before Him. Faith is indeed a precious grace wherever it is bestowed, but through infirmity of the flesh, when the wind is boisterous, how often the misgivings of our heart cause us to sink in feeling! This is no proof that our faith has perished, but rather a call that our own sense of weakness may drive us to Him with the cry: "Lord, save me!" It is a feature of the divine life that all who are quickened by the Holy Spirit seek a solid and immovable foundation on which to cast their anchor of hope. To them the Word becomes a precious book, as they are led into its truths concerning the everlasting love and purpose of God the Father in the gift of His dear Son. The man described in the Gospel ceased not to dig till he had found the rock on which he could safely build – the great sub-strata of eternal truth – standing steady and unaffected by the storms of the wilderness; giving assurance that "the Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet."

It must have been some such sight of the covenant of eternal mercy that led the poet to say:

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said;
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled."

Does our faith concentrate here? Is it not a true record of the abiding grace of the Lord Jesus, in whom all the promises are yea and amen? If so, what have we to fear in entering another year? There is a completeness, a finality, in the care He takes of His people . . . They lie very near His heart, and all their concerns are His. For "He careth for you," and is both able and willing to faithfully perform His Word towards us in all our trials during this earthly pilgrimage.

In infinite wisdom, the day of our departure is hidden from us. This may be the last year that will dawn upon us; but neither death

nor life can render void that love which was with the Father, and is revealed in the promise of eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. The waiting Church, born to this inheritance, shall not wait in vain, for He has expressed His purpose and desire in that memorable prayer: "Father, I *will* that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."

With this prospect alive in our hearts, by the faith of Him, the one thing we most need is a more intimate acquaintance with our risen and glorified Redeemer; for He has said: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

We are also reminded that the throne of grace is a daily refuge for the saints, rendered free through the sacrificial atonement wrought on Calvary, and the abiding gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. By His benign influence we are humbled, cheered and comforted, and our faith and hope are made strong in the day of battle. He inspired the written Word, for "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Hence our guarantee concerning its faithfulness in all its revelations of the Father's will, purpose and grace. His indwelling as the Spirit of prayer is the mighty weapon in all the warfare yet awaiting us. Let us carry into the New Year the knowledge that it is by faith we stand, for "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

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Notice

Your editor has in stock a large number of S.G.U. pamphlets: 'An Accomplished Redemption' by W. J. Grier, and a series of meditations on our Lord and Saviour, 'Behold Me, Behold Me.' These are free on request, though I would appreciate any contribution to postage costs. Ed.

A Commemoration: George Whitefield (1714-1770)

Introduction

This year marks the tercentenary of the birth of George Whitefield. Described by Bishop J. C. Ryle as a man who lived for only one thing, “to preach Christ,” Whitefield was a decided Calvinist. Yet he told correspondents that he never learned “the Calvinistic scheme” from the Geneva Reformer, but from Christ and His apostles. For this reason he preferred the term “doctrines of grace.” In our commemoration of him, we shall sketch a portrait of his character and list the main aspects of his preaching.

His Character

In the first place, Whitefield was “a singularly transparent man,” whose faults and virtues were both obvious to all.

He was also a man of “deep and unfeigned humility.” At the height of his popularity he spoke of himself as a “sluggish, lukewarm, unprofitable worm,” “viler than the vilest.” This was no mere affectation. He was candidly realistic in condemning his sins: “I can truly say I was forward from my mother’s womb . . . Lying, filthy talking and foolish jesting I was much addicted to.” To such sins he added cursing, stealing from his mother with no conscience of sin, Sabbath-breaking, irreverence in public worship, and wasting money on theatrical plays. “Cards and reading romances were” also “my heart’s delight.”

Thirdly, Whitefield was filled with “burning love to our Lord Jesus Christ.” Like fragrant ointment, His Name imparted a sweet savour to all his conversation and correspondence. “His love, His atonement, His precious blood, His righteousness, His readiness to receive sinners, His patience and tender dealing with saints,” were themes always before his eyes. He once said: “Let the name of George Whitefield perish, so long as Christ is exalted.”

Moreover, he was a man of “unwearied diligence” and self-denial in his divine Master’s service. He literally spent himself preaching, teaching, praying and praising. Moderate in food and drink, he never pocketed donations to his orphanage for himself, and spent whole nights in reading, prayer and Christian fellowship. His emaciated figure preached to hearers in the room below as he climbed the stairs to the bedroom in which he died.

Despite all the hardships he endured, Whitefield was a man of “a singularly happy and cheerful spirit.” God gave him both a natural resilience and a gracious joy in fulfilling his divine calling.

He was, too, remarkably impartial, single-minded and catholic-spirited in his relationships with others. Unwilling to preach exclusively for the Erskines in Scotland, to form societies bearing his own name or to court fame and fortune, he was a complete stranger to that narrow party spirit that confines fellowship only to its own church or denomination. He loved all who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and had compassion on all who did not. “To this catholicity of spirit he adhered all his days.” If others slandered him, he forgave them; if they refused to work with them, he still loved them. Nothing proves this more than his request that John Wesley, his Arminian opponent, should preach his funeral sermon. When asked by a partisan follower whether he thought they would see Wesley in heaven, he replied: “I fear not. He will be so near the throne that we shall hardly get a sight of him.”

To this attractive portrait, Ryle adds a few of Whitefield’s blemishes. Sometimes he acted as if providential appearances, and not Scripture, were his rule. At other times, he mistook his own ‘hunches’ for the leading of the Spirit. On at least one occasion he was hastily critical of others. We read too that he saw nothing wrong with the slave trade. Such faults, wrote a contemporary, “were like spots on the sun.” He was “in the main an eminently holy, self-denying and consistent” Christian.” (Ryle) How we need men of his arvelo today!

His Preaching

In the first place, Whitefield preached the pure Gospel of the Bible, the Reformers and the Puritans. His leading themes were God's electing grace, the imputed righteousness of Christ, the new birth, justification through faith alone, repentance and the necessity of holiness. "The doctrines of our election and free justification in Christ Jesus," he testified, "fill my soul with a holy fire." "Oh, the righteousness of Jesus Christ," he exclaimed, "I must be excused if I mention it in almost all my sermons." In short, he preached the Gospel of free and sovereign grace from its foundation to its topmost stone. "I bless God," he said, "His Spirit has convinced me of our eternal election by the Father through the Son, of our free justification through faith in His blood, of our sanctification as a consequence of that, and of our final perseverance and glorification as the result of all."

In this connection we note his complete deliverance from the legalistic austerities of the Holy Club, which had once cost him his health and almost his sanity. God showed him through reading Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* that for all his church-going, saying of prayers, and receiving bread and wine at the Lord's Table, he was not a Christian, and could still be damned. "Not till then," he confessed, "did I know that I must become a new creature." This explains why, when asked why he preached so often on the text: 'Ye must be born again,' he replied emphatically: "Because YE MUST be born again!"

Secondly, Whitefield preached with deep compassion for the lost. His *Journal* repeatedly records such sentiments as the following: "My heart was full of love, and people were so melted down on every side." This was not emotional manipulation. He felt intensely the awful plight of the thousands who hung over the pit of hell as the Spirit cut deep grooves into their hearts. One man confessed to him: "I came to hear you with my pocket full of stones, intending to break your head; but your sermon got the better of me, and broke my heart." Precious immortal souls were clearly a burden to him, and they felt that burden themselves.

Thirdly, Whitefield's preaching was plain and direct. Rejecting all show of learning, he spoke the language of the people (without their vulgarity) aiming at their hearts and consciences rather than their reason. "He never shot above their heads." (Ryle) Consequently, no-one went away mystified or confused.

Fourthly, Whitefield's preaching was very bold. Though privately quiet, on a platform or in a pulpit "he preached like a lion."

Lastly, Whitefield's preaching contained powerful illustrations that left an indelible impression on his hearers. One such graphic picture – of a blind beggar pitching helplessly on a dark night towards the edge of a precipice – led Lord Chesterfield to leap out of his seat exclaiming: "He is gone! He is gone!" Whitefield never relied on such powerful imagery to produce natural effects, nor did they obscure the Gospel. Instead, in the hands of the Spirit they made visible the awful reality of the awakening truths he preached.

Though important as ancillaries, Whitefield's powerful voice, graceful manner and rhetorical fluency were not the cause of his success in winning souls, but God formed and used them to extend His kingdom. Unlike modern 'televangelists,' he never used his 'charisma' and persuasive eloquence to produce psychological conversions that have no spiritual substance.

Conclusion

Whitefield's relationship to the doctrines of grace was experiential rather than scholarly. His deep sense of human depravity was joined to an even greater sense of the riches of God's grace. After reviewing the former in self-examination, he wrote: "This, however, is my comfort: Jesus Christ . . . saw me from all eternity; He gave me being; He called me in time; He has freely justified me through faith in His blood; He has in part sanctified me by His Spirit; He will preserve me . . . till time shall be no more. Oh the blessedness of these evangelical truths!" Dear friends, this is the kind of knowledge of the doctrines of grace that we should seek.

An Open Letter to the Citizens of Zion
(From the April 1923 issue of
'Peace and Truth')

[Although we have printed this letter in a previous issue of Peace and Truth, we think it appropriate to include it again, for its message is timeless and fully in keeping with the Union's principles and aims. Ed.]

MY BRETHREN AND SISTERS IN THE FAITH OF GOD'S ELECT,

I am writing these few lines to you who are favoured to dwell beneath the shadow of the Almighty, and who are walking in that narrow way that leads to the celestial city.

And how good it is when in our journeying we can walk together with the love and unity of the Gospel and fulfil the exhortation given by Jacob of old: "See that ye fall not out by the way." As I pass along life's journey my heart is often grieved to see how few there be that walk in love, but rather seem to prefer to contend and strive about words to no profit.

The apostle writes to his spiritual children and admonishes them to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, Mark well his theme – the faith, not my sect. Not my personal views of worshipping God, but the faith of God's elect. This was the great central theme of the apostles' teaching – Christ in you the hope of glory. And if Christ be in you, brethren, why do you rend and tear those who love our Lord and Saviour, and are earnestly desirous of spreading forth the glories of electing love which are treasured up in Christ, and who wish to walk in peace with all men, especially with those who love our Lord and Saviour in sincerity and truth? Some say: "I am of Paul;" others: "I am of Apollos;" others: "I am of Christ." My brethren, read what James says [in] chapter three [of his epistle.] How circumspectly we ought to walk. "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," says the Word. John

says: “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.” Therefore, let us walk as dear children, by the precious grace of Christ, showing an ungodly world that the love of Christ dwelleth in us, and as disciples of our great Emmanuel walking together in love, “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

And “may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.”

Yours in the Gospel,

A LOVER OF THE S.G.U. AND A STRICT BAPTIST.

Afternote

[The editor in 1923 was William Sinden. He expresses his gladness at receiving the above letter, noting its “most charitable spirit” to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He concludes his note of appreciation with the reminder: “This is undoubtedly the sum and substance of the basis of our Union in experimental truth.” Sadly, such a spirit is largely lacking in our churches today. Many are fond of their own local church members and activities, but seem to forget that they belong to the universal Body of Christ. It is our desire to see this spirit abound again, so that all may sincerely say:

“Names and sects and parties fall;
Thou, O Christ, art all in all.”]

.....
“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” (Psalm 133)

A Manifesto for Christian Parents and Teachers

The following manifesto was sent to Michael Gove, Minister for Education, by your editor. Please feel free to copy and circulate it if you think it might be useful to others, such as parents, home-schoolers and teachers.

‘Many of us can recall the time when the primary and secondary school day began with prayer, praise and a Bible reading. Every teacher and pupil was expected to attend morning assembly and to behave in accordance with its principles. School uniform gave identity to pupils, sports days drew out their healthy competitive instincts, and courteous greetings between teacher and pupil at the commencement of each lesson maintained mutual respect.

The fruits of these practices were high educational standards, respect for authority, an accepted Christian moral ethos, punishment for breaking school rules, and a general sense of wellbeing and achievement. Freed from the trammels of bureaucracy, and with discipline in the hands of a responsible head, teachers were free to teach and pupils were keen to learn. Conscious of the privilege of being taught, and of having reasonable boundaries set to their conduct, pupils were eager to make progress till they could enter college or university, or become apprentices in a useful trade or industry. There were few schoolgirl pregnancies, no drug addiction, no tolerated loutish behaviour, and any bullying was summarily dealt with by corporal punishment.

Tragically, all this has changed. Aggressive secular humanist ‘free expression’ policies soon removed the Bible, Christian worship and respectful behaviour from the school arena, leaving a ‘blackboard jungle’ and a litter of staff resignations or nervous breakdowns. The absurd over-emphasis on educational method over content has produced millions of illiterate children who are

ignorant of facts but very forward to offer their opinions. The notion that learning facts is drudgery has encouraged children to think for themselves with nothing but an empty mind.

Furthermore, we have given our young folk a technical education that has wholly destroyed their spiritual and moral sense. Without Biblical guidelines, a technical education produces only computer-mad pagans, with no conscience about blaspheming the name of God, fouling the air with abusive filthy language, beating up old men and women, stealing whatever they can lay their hands on, and lying through their teeth. That the most formative years of many of our children's lives have been ruined is clear for all to see. The harmful effects of these policies are incalculable.

The notion of uniformity lurks behind this trend. The State, claim the policy-makers, is the one powerful agent with the right and means to control every aspect of national life. Nothing could be further from the truth. God has given no human institution absolute rights over our minds.

Besides, diversity in unity, not uniformity, has always characterized the best educational systems, as it does the whole creation. Uniformity is not unity, and enforced uniformity is nothing but tyranny.

The only remedy for this deplorable state is the re-introduction of Christian education. Parents, teachers and pupils all need to acknowledge the authority of God and His Word over their lives, their dependence on Him for every good gift, and their debt to Him for the blessings they receive.

We offer five reasons for this call to return to Christian standards:

1. The supremacy of God must be acknowledged in national life. As Augustine says: "When God commands a thing to be done, it must be done."

2. Only a distinctive Christian education can replace our obsession with creature comforts with absolute spiritual and moral standards.

3. The souls of our children are too precious to hand over to ruthless humanists who do not believe in God, salvation, and the value of a soul.

4. Society needs the ‘salt’ and ‘light’ that Christians can give it, both to preserve it from corruption and to set examples to others. Its future spiritual and moral health depends on the ‘leaven’ of God-fearing, conscientious, diligent and upright citizens.

5. A non-Christian or anti-Christian monopolistic educational system controlled by State ‘thought police’ is one of the most crushing forms of tyranny. Schools permeated by Christian standards are our only preservative against such tyranny. They would contend for the right of parents to raise their children according to the will of God, not the will of the State. Besides, parents and teachers working in cooperation, not government inspectors and policy-makers, are the best qualified people to decide on the education of our children.

What, then, do we propose?

First, all education must be built on the Bible. As the Word of the only true and living God, it should regulate every aspect of school life. The daily curriculum should draw its motives, principles and practices from Holy Scripture. Where this takes place, teaching and learning are permeated by reverence for God, delight in knowledge, and care for everyone involved in the educational process.

Second, we need to give priority to the core beliefs of our Christian Faith. These will equip our children for a responsible and constructive role in society, and enable them to make sense of both their faith and the world they live in.

Third, all those who run such schools should seek the personal conversion to Christ of every pupil, grounding their efforts on the three Rs – Revelation, Redemption, Regeneration, and look for fruit in Christian character and conduct devoted first to God, then to others, thirdly to themselves.

Fourth, we need to encourage our children to cultivate true Christian attitudes to their studies; their teachers; themselves; their stewardship of time, energy and money; their friendships; their families; other human relations; and society at large.

The school curriculum would look something like the following:

SPECIAL REVELATION: Bible Study and Christian Theology.

GENERAL REVELATION: Mathematics and the Natural Sciences (Chemistry, Physics, Biology, with their various branches of special study at the higher level).

CULTURE: Languages, Social and Communication Skills, The Arts (Music, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Graphics, Photography, etc), Geography, History, Aesthetics (the study of beauty).

HEALTH: Spiritual, Moral, Mental, Emotional, Physical.

OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS: The Protestant Work Ethic in Home, School, College and University, Workplace.

Using every lawful tool God has given us, we must consciously seek His blessing on every aspect of school life, and thank Him for all that we are enabled to do.’

Yours sincerely,
John M. Brentnall

On God Becoming Man

[The author of this poem is Douglas Higgins, whose hundredth birthday falls in this year. Douglas is better known for his superb portrait of John Calvin on the front cover of W. J. Grier's *The Life of John Calvin* (Banner of Truth). Ed.]

'Come join all creation this mystery to sound,
For behold in a manger the I AM is found;
In the arms of the virgin Eternal Life sleeps,
Who yet in existence the universe keeps.

Such condescension whoever heard tell?
Astounding all Heaven, affrighting all Hell.
Stand in awe, the Creator a creature becomes,
Immortality here mortal nature assumes.

Flesh of our flesh, yet begotten of God,
Embodiment of His invincible Word,
God's heir to inherit and govern all things,
As Lord of all lords and the King of all kings.

God who commanded His worship alone
Bids the angels in worship His birth to make known;
For here lies the Saviour to whom power is given,
To reconcile all things in earth and in heaven.

Dominion o'er all things to Adam was given,
But his disobedience offended all heaven,
The angels, defending the honour of God,
Against us, His enemies, wielded their sword.

But Christ as our Surety, God's Servant became,
And by perfect obedience He honoured God's name;
Divine justice, appeased, no longer would frown,
But commanded the angels their swords to lay down.

But now those same angels commandment receive
To minister blessings to all who believe,
For as joint heirs with Jesus, God's well-beloved Son,
In His glory resplendent we shall shine as the sun.

Christian Loses His Burden

Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. (Isaiah 26.1) Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart: "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." Then he stood still awhile, to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. (Zechariah 12.10) Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold, three Shining Ones came to him, and saluted him with: "Peace be to thee." So the first said to him: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," (Mark 2.5); the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment, (Zechariah 3.4); the third also set a mark on his forehead, (Ephesians 1.13), and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate: so they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing:

'Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither. What a place is this!

Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?
Blest cross! Blest sepulchre! Blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!' John Bunyan

The Authority of Holy Scripture

‘Let others be wise to their own destruction; let them establish their own imaginations for the Word of God and rule of their faith; but hold you fast what you have received, and contend earnestly for it. Add nothing, and diminish nothing; let this lamp shine till the day dawn, till the morning of the resurrection, and walk ye in the light of it, and do not kindle any other sparkles, else ye shall lie down in the grave in sorrow, and rise in sorrow. Take the Word of God as the only rule, and the perfect rule, a rule for all your actions, civil, natural and religious, for all must be done to His glory, and His Word teacheth how to attain to this end. Let not your imaginations, let not others’ example, let not the preaching of men, let not the conclusions and acts of assemblies be your rule, but in as far as you find them agreeing with the perfect rule of God’s Holy Word. All other rules are *regulae regulatae*, they are but like publications and intimations of the rule itself . . . the Scripture is a *regula regulans*, a ruling rule.’

(Hugh Binning: Works. 1839. I. 36-37)

The Authority of God

‘When God commands a thing to be done, against the customs or compact of any people, though it was never done by them before, it is to be done; and if intermitted, it is to be restored; and if never ordained, is now to be ordained . . . For as among the powers in man’s society the greater authority is obeyed in preference to the lesser, so must God be obeyed above all.’

(Augustine: Confessions. III. 15)

Book Reviews

Christian Focus Publications

Glory in the Glen – Tom Lennie. 512pp. £11.99. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84550-377-2.

This updated and revised history of evangelical revivals in Scotland between 1880 and 1940 comes as a surprise to those of us who never heard of most of these ‘surprising works of God.’ Dotted with maps and old black-and-white photographs, the narrative thrills the soul with what the Lord was pleased to do in the past, and makes us plead with Him to come again in reviving grace and power. It is sad that the Bible version used is the N.I.V., which never existed when these revivals occurred. Despite this drawback, I recommend this well-documented, well-written and often graphic story. Some Highland- and Islanders might question the authenticity of some of the events claimed as revivals; the author offers his own evaluation. At least, he clearly distinguishes revival from ‘revivalism,’ a recent and spurious import. He also notices the link between longing prayer for revival and the granting of that desire in genuine works of the Holy Spirit. How we need to plead with Him to revive us again, before we sink into the deepest atheism. J.M.B.

Miracles from Mayhem – Irene Howat with May Nicholson. 155pp. £5.99. Pbk. ISBN 9781-85792-897-6.

This short and easily read book tells the life story of May Nicholson. May was born and brought up in Paisley, part of a large and poor family. She began drinking in her teens, and her life soon spiralled out of control. But God changed her life and used her to touch many other lives in poor areas of Paisley, Dundee and Glasgow. She speaks honestly about her problems and faults, but does not dwell on the negative. The account includes stories from people who worked with her and those who were helped through her ministry. This is a challenging and encouraging book, reminding us that God can save people whom the world dismisses.

Miriam Lowrie

God's Incredible Word. Answers in Genesis. 32pp. N.P. Pbk. ISBN 9781-60092-505-4.

This is a very bright and attractive look at God's creation of the world, ideally suited to 6-9 year olds. It takes children through the six literal days of creation in a lively and stimulating way, encouraging their natural sense of wonder and curiosity with 'Did You Know?' boxes that trace God's hand in the scientific details. The Bible is presented as the ultimate source of truth about the world. The book goes on to explain man's fall into sin, gives a brief outline of salvation through the death of Jesus, and looks forward to the new creation. The pictures are cartoon style, but not babyish; occasionally the tone is humorous. All in all, this is a super little book.

Miriam Lowrie

Living by Revealed Truth: The Life and Pastoral Theology of Charles Haddon Spurgeon – Tom Nettles. 684pp. £29.99. ISBN 978-1-78191-122-8.

This monumental work presents us with a portrait of Spurgeon's outer life and inner thought that with God's blessing could be of great value to pastors, elders and seminary lecturers. It combines the best features of a Christian biography and a pastor's manual in an eminently readable style, with meticulous attention to detail. Here are the old familiar themes so dear to Reformed believers: the inerrancy of Scripture, the sovereignty of God, the inimitable work of Christ, total dependence on the Holy Spirit, a thirst for the salvation of souls, and a firm but gracious rebuttal of false doctrine and liberal 'Christianity.' Impossible to summarize, it neither glorifies the man nor understates his contribution to the temporal and eternal well-being of his fellow-men. One is left with two major impressions: the loveliness of his regenerate nature and, underlying all, the sheer greatness of the God he served. J.M.B.

Banner of Truth Trust

Practical Religion – J. C. Ryle. 462pp. £15.00. Hdbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-224-9.

This re-typeset edition of one of Ryle's finest works should be read by all, believer and unbeliever alike. Its godly outspoken author describes its contents as "plain papers on the daily duties,

experience, dangers and privileges of professing Christians.” In a day when millions are avoiding every challenge to conscience in relation to prayer, Bible-reading, worldliness, the state of their families and the Day of Judgment, this series of studies is calculated in the hand of the Holy Spirit to alarm and goad the careless reader before it is too late. Searching, instructive yet comforting in its presentation of timeless truth, it speaks with a manly directness from which many in our soft and pulpy society may shrink, but which they sorely need. After all, our Lord and His apostles did not mince matters when it came to addressing men on the value of their souls. The chapters on Sickness and Reality alone are worth more than libraries of slushy romantic novels and lurid ‘crime thrillers’ that even professing Christians have no qualms about reading.

J.M.B.

The Atonement – Hugh Martin. 236pp. £14.00. Hdbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-291-1.

The devout and highly-gifted author of *Shadow of Calvary*, *Christ For Us*, *The Abiding Presence* and *Commentary on Jonah* offers us here a profound study in that wonder of wonders, the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Unlike other treatments of this subject, Martin does not detach the atonement from other areas of theology, but places it in the context of the Covenant of Grace, Christ’s Priesthood and Intercession. Combining mathematical precision with ardent devotion, his approach represents the Lord as standing at the door of the covenant and calling all who are outside to come in and receive its gracious benefits. Indeed, Martin relates every aspect of redemption, both impetrated and applied, to the eternal covenant of grace. In passing, he deals telling blows at theological philosophizing as well as Arminian Universalism, both of which rob the atoning work of Christ of its distinctive efficacy and particular application to the elect. The author’s rigorous arguments have a cumulative effect, designed to convince the reader of the Biblical nature of the Reformed view of the most solemn transaction this world has ever seen. This scholarly yet readable treatise deserves to be pondered and prayed over for maximum benefit.

J.M.B.

Scottish Reformation Society

Samuel Rutherford: An Introduction to his Theology. Ed. Matthew Vogan. 354pp. £10.95. Strong Pbk. ISBN 978-0-9500319-7-2.

Wisely resisting the temptation to systematize Rutherford's theology (which would have resembled an attempt to contain a clambering wild rose within cellophane wrappers) this compilation of scholarly essays treats various selected aspects of his teaching. Drawing on such lesser known works as *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself* and *The Covenant of Life Opened*, the contributors offer a colourful tapestry of Rutherford's astonishing breadth of learning, accurate grasp of the most intricate issues and uncompromising devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Among the welcome topics are discussions of Rutherford's "affectionate" theology, polemics against Antinomian and Anabaptist 'sectaries,' political theories as enshrined in *Lex Rex (Law is King)*, thoughts on Liberty of Conscience and relation to English Puritanism's 'half reformation.'

Lovers of Rutherford's *Letters, Trial and Triumph of Faith, Quaint Sermons* and *Communion Sermons* will find this collection both a spiritual feast and an intellectual 'tour-de-force.' J.M.B.

Reformation Heritage Books

The Holy Spirit and Reformed Spirituality – edited by Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas. 236pp. \$15.00. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-60178-270-0.

This book is a collection of essays brought together as a 'Festschrift' to Geoff Thomas, minister of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth. The eighteen authors come from a wide range of backgrounds, giving the book a truly international flavour. Part 1 provides a biographical appreciation of Dr. Thomas. Part 2 is entitled 'Salvation and the Spirit of Christ.' Part 3 deals with Growth and the Spirit of Holiness. Part 4 considers the Spirit's power in ministry.

As expected from a compilation of this kind, the quality of the essays is high throughout, and with few intellectually challenging items, is spiritually rewarding. Robert Dale

CDs of SGU addresses

The Imputation of Adam's sin to us - Geoffrey Thomas, Aberystwyth
The Imputation of our sin to Christ - Geoffrey Thomas
The Imputation of Christ's righteousness to us - Geoffrey Thomas
The Person, Priesthood and Protection of Jesus Christ (John 18)
- Abraham Thomas
The Life and Work of John Calvin by Gervase Charmley
The Meaning of "All Israel" by Don Underwood of London
Such A Great Salvation by Winston Saunders of Selhurst
What Christ will do - and how by Neil Pfeiffer
Omnipresence and You, by Keith Hoare of Herne Bay
Omniscience, by Paul Relf of Chatham
Omnipotence - Something Understood, by Graham Thrussell of West Sussex
Jacob's Ladder - Dafydd Morris of Wales
God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility - Gary Brady of London
God's Full Sovereignty, our Full Salvation - Timothy Burden of Eastbourne
The Unchanging Gospel - Jeremy Walker of Crawley
John 1:17 - John Saunders of Chichester (AGM 2009 Evening Sermon)
Our Reasonable Service, Romans 12:1 by Alun Higham of Cardiff
Romans 16 by John Saunders of Chichester
The Flood: The creation of a New world by Stephen Lloyd of Gravesend

The Inspiration of Scripture by Christopher Buss
The Authority of Scripture by Leslie Jarvis
The Inerrancy of Scripture by Andrew Coats
The Sufficiency of Scripture by David Levell
Romans 8:1-8 by Fred Rainsford
The Spirit and the Believer by Alun Higham
Grace Alone by Timothy Burden
Faith Alone by Jeremy Walker
Christ Alone - by John Cheeseman
To the Glory of God Alone by Graham Trice
The Freewill Controversy by Clifford Parsons
Faith and Saving Faith by Tim Martin
Romans 8:28 by Alun Higham

Tapes previously advertised are still available on request from:-

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£2.50 + 50p each cheques payable to "Sovereign Grace Union"

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Kent Auxiliary

April 9th, Wednesday 7.30pm, Union Chapel, Bethersden TN26 3AD

Speaker: Daniel Hawkes (Rainham). *Subject:* 'The Grace of God in the Life of Silas'

May 6th, Tuesday 7.30pm, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Ashford TN24 8JX

Speaker: Jonathan Northern (Baldoek). *Subject:* 'The Grace of God in the Life of Elisha'

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.