

Peace — Truth

The Magazine of the Sovereign Grace Union

2015:3

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AGM

Book Reviews

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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

We live in an age of confusion in many ways. A philosophy known as Postmodernism, which is in fact a sort of intellectual solvent, has become dominant in the halls of academia, in the wider society, and even in the Church. This is not because people in the Churches are reading weighty philosophical tomes on Postmodernism produced by the likes of Jaques Derrida (in fact quite a lot are not reading at all), but because Postmodernism has become as it were a 'tone' of thought, spread by popular media. In name of tolerance, one of the supreme virtues in Postmodernism, rigorous thought, especially on religious matters, is treated with intense suspicion, and those who dare to suggest that there is such a thing as heresy are treated with the utmost intolerance, a fact that is highly ironic when one comes to think about it!

The Sovereign Grace Union, standing as it does for that unfashionable and old-fashioned idea that there is such a thing as divine revelation and therefore absolute truth that can be known, stands against the prevailing spirit of the age, and that is quite deliberate. We cannot take our cues from society, because of the great truth that God has spoken. It is not our place to devise new ideas and philosophies, nor to listen to the world and follow its ways, but to listen to the revelation of God that he has given in his Holy Scriptures. We take our stand upon them, because there is no other solid ground on which we can take a stand. As the hymn-writer says,

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand
All other ground is sinking sand.

Therefore, though Peace and Truth now has a new editor, the editorial policy has not changed, and it cannot be changed, because Jesus Christ remains "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Both as the incoming editor and on behalf of the committee of thee Sovereign Grace Union, I must record thanks to John Brentnall, who for many years has worked to make this an excellent and commendable magazine of high quality committed to the teaching of the historic Reformed faith. His work has always been highly appreciated, and your incoming editor has large shoes to fill. I covet your prayers for this endeavour, feeling with the Apostle the force of those words, "who is sufficient for these things?" There is none who is naturally sufficient for the work of the Christian ministry, "for our sufficiency is of God."

So back to our present age. The Church is called indeed "to serve the present age", but that requires her not to imitate the age, but to stand as a city that is set on a hill, over and against the corruption of the age, whether that corruption is in thought, word, or deed, pointing to the eternal verities of Christ. We have a Gospel to proclaim, and a view of the world that is entirely at odds with the philosophies of our age. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof," says the Apostle John, and so the Church that tries to echo the present falsehoods of this world sets herself up for failure; the quest for a misunderstood and shallow relevance is in fact the guarantee of irrelevance. But the Apostle goes on to say, "but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." And so here we stand, on the firm rock of God's will, trusting in him who is able to do abundantly more than all that we ask or imagine. And, God helping us, here we shall continue to stand.

And so may all the glory be to our sovereign and Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen, so let it be.

.....

"The person and work of Christ, as the outward object of our faith, - the ground of our confidence before God outside of us and apart from us, - the true Spirit of God will ever magnify and glorify. He will not consent to substitute for that any inward experience, however heavenly, as superseding it or setting it aside."

- Robert Candlish

Augustine and the City of God

Introduction

Augustine of Hippo is without doubt one of the most significant figures of the early Church, and perhaps the most important of all those to write in Latin. It has been said that, “Apart from the Scriptural authors, no other figure had a greater impact on Christian life and thought up to the time of the Reformation.” No less a figure than B.B. Warfield wrote that Augustine, “not merely created an epoch in the history of the Church, but has determined the course of its history in the West up to the present day.” Of all of his many writings, it is his book *The City of God* that is widely agreed to be his greatest.

The Making of the Man

To understand *The City of God*, it is necessary to know something of the life and times of its author; thankfully Augustine himself has ensured that we know more about him than we do about any of his contemporaries, as he wrote his own spiritual autobiography, the *Confessions*, which has been read with great appreciation ever since its first publication. Of it 'Rabbi' Duncan said, “There are three biographies of which I never tire: Augustine's, Bunyan's and Halyburton's.” Augustine was born in the town of Thagaste in the Roman province of Numidia on November 13th 354, into a lower middle class family. His father, Patricius, was a junior municipal civil servant and a small property owner; while he was a pagan, his wife Monica was a Christian. Her influence on her famous son has ensured that she is one of the most famous mothers in history.

Augustine was born into the last age of the Western Roman Empire, a bright, brittle age in which paganism and Christianity managed an often uneasy coexistence. Barbarians threatened the frontiers of the empire, yet as with Edwardian Britain, there was no sense of living at the end of the age. The Empire was, and as far as the man on the street was concerned, the Empire had always been, therefore the Empire would continue to exist, despite its troubles.

There had been struggles and crises before, even decades in which rival emperors struggled for control of the throne, and the Empire had survived.

The Empire, like all such great empires, depended on a massive bureaucracy, and so an education was seen as a valuable possession, and no-where was this perception greater than on Roman Africa.

Augustine was an intelligent man and, though his father's means were limited, sufficient funds were scraped together to send him to the local university, in Carthage. Once at university the young man acted as many students, past and present, have done, he determined to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh. He enjoyed the coarse, bawdy theatre of the day, in which crudely sexual comedy and savage violence provided spectacle for the crowds, he joined a group of wild and rebellious young men who delighted in their nickname of the Eversores, the "Smashers", and he took a concubine.

We must not fall into the trap of assuming that Augustine let his mental talents go to waste; like many a talented student, he contrived to combine a wild lifestyle with dedicated study and actual hard work, delighting his worldly father in both of these things, but in his lifestyle horrifying his godly mother. He took to the Latin philosophers whose works were studied at Carthage as a duck to water, and was in particular inspired by the philosopher Cicero to embark upon a quest for the truth. Like many intellectuals since his day, Augustine came to despise Christianity. The old Latin Bible, translated by men of relatively humble circumstances into the common speech of the people rather than the refined Latin of literary men, a couple of centuries before him, was in his eyes worthy only of contempt. He saw simple Christians like his own mother as sincerely deluded, idiots without the mental ability to see things as they really were. Truth, then, he thought must be found elsewhere, and so the young Augustine gave no real consideration to the claims of Christ. Instead he was persuaded to join the sect of the Manicheans, a group of Gnostic dualists whose religion originated in Persia. Mani, the founder of the sect, taught that the universe could be explained by a conflict between eternal and equal principles of good and evil.

Eventually, however, Manicheanism did not satisfy his mind, and after one of their most respected leaders, Faustus, was unable to answer the questions that perplexed Augustine, he moved into an attitude of philosophical scepticism.

In 383, still outwardly a Manichean, Augustine moved to the city of Rome. There, in the ancient heart of the Empire (though by now forsaken by the Imperial court), he hoped to make money teaching rhetoric, the art of public speaking. In fact everything went wrong for him there, and he soon left, moving to Milan where he hoped to obtain a Chair at the university. It was there that he once again began to attend Church, not out of any change of opinion, but simply to hear the preaching of the brilliant and pious Bishop Ambrose, which he had heard was a model of good rhetoric. In God's providence this former civil servant's preaching led Augustine to reconsider his attitude towards Christianity, for Ambrose made it clear it was not the ignorant, inelegant thing he had supposed it to be. Where the Manichean Faustus had failed to answer his questions, Ambrose listened and pointed the young intellectual to Christ; Augustine, for his part, heard Ambrose gladly.

His journey towards faith was no an easy one; he came under deep conviction of sin as he considered the course of his past life, and struggled with the question of whether God would ever hear him. It was in August 386, while in the garden of his house, half-made with conviction, that he heard, "the sound, as it might be, of a boy or a girl repeating in a sing-song voice a refrain unknown to me: 'Pick it up and read it, pick it up and read it.'" Taking the words as a divine command, he picked up a copy of Paul's writings that he had to hand and opened on Romans 13:13-14, "Not in riotousness and drunkenness, not in lewdness and wantonness, not in strife and rivalry; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh and its lusts." It reached him, a great peace came into his heart, and he turned wholeheartedly to the God of Monica and of Ambrose, whom he now recognised as the God of the whole earth.

Following his conversion Augustine was baptised by Ambrose in the Cathedral of Milan, and returned to Africa to found a community of Christian scholars and live in seclusion, but God had other plans for him. In 391 he was forcibly ordained elder in the Church at Hippo Regius. In 395 he became the Bishop of that same Church, where he remained until his death on August 28th 430. To the end he taught Christ, and was found often in the cathedral, teaching the people.

The Writer

Augustine was a prolific writer, indeed, we have more works from the pen of Augustine than we have from any other Church Father. Many of his writings, as might be expected of a man known as a preacher, are based on the sermons, or homilies, that he preached at Hippo Regius from Biblical texts, including a monumental *Exposition of the Psalms*, and sermons on the writings of the Apostle John. He also published works on pastoral theology, and on such important subjects as the Trinity and the Pelagian controversy. Out of all that he wrote, Augustine's best-known works are his *Confessions* and *The City of God*. The *Confessions* is read for its vivid description of Augustine's conversion and its deep understanding of the human mind; while *The City of God* is less well known, it is perhaps the most significant of all the books he ever wrote.

Just as the Epistles of the New Testament were occasional writings, so *The City of God* was occasioned by the sack of Rome in 410 AD by the Visigoths in a dispute over payment for Visigothic mercenaries. Though they were not pagans, the Visigoths were not Christian either – they were Arian heretics. The City of Rome had long since lost its political and economic significance for the Empire, but it still held a great symbolic and psychological importance; Rome was “the Eternal City”, described by the poet Claudian as “Coeval with the universe and secure while the laws of nature held.” Its sack sent shockwaves rippling throughout the Empire, and as often happens in times of crisis, people looked for someone to blame.

The Pagans fixed upon the Christians as their target; Rome had fallen, so they argued, because the worship of the old gods had been abandoned and the pagan religion had been disestablished. The gods had, they said, retaliated by withdrawing their protection from those who no longer worshipped them. Many Christians reacted with stunned despair, reasoning that if Rome had fallen, the end of the world was at hand.

Augustine's reaction was different, the calm response of faith. He set to answering the objections of the pagans and calming the fears of the Christians. Instead of panicking, the Christian philosopher's mind was stimulated to investigate the very nature of history itself. He cut Rome down to size; far from being the ideal, the final state, it was another empire like any other, and as earlier empires had so too Rome itself might pass away, it was neither unique nor irreplaceable. While others idealised Rome, he called for a healthy realism where all human institutions were concerned.

Though it was called forth by the sack of Rome, *The City of God* was in many ways merely a development of concepts that already existed in Augustine's own thought and in the era in which he lived; the very title itself was probably derived from a writer called Tyconius, a Donatist theologian who also lived in north Africa, something of an irony given that Augustine was an opponent of the Donatists. The thought of this man was dominated by the Church; the great theme of all history was, to Tyconius, the destinies of the City of God. Thus Augustine took a theme that his contemporaries were already familiar with, and from it developed a complete philosophy of history, a thing never before attempted.

History was a neglected discipline in the later Roman Empire; the great historians of the past, Tacitus and Herodotus, were neglected, their writings used only as quarries for illustrations by the rhetoricians. The philosophy of the age was anti-historical, as if the end of history had arrived. But Augustine had a greater influence that overpowered the thought of the age around him, the Christian conviction that God works in history.

“The incarnation of the Word in space and time makes Christianity an historical religion and, as such, a daily invitation to the study of history.” Augustine took up the invitation with all the zeal with which he had previously taken up secular philosophy. While his book was to be an apologetic defending Christianity against the slanders of the pagans, it was to become far more than that, it was to be an exposition of a Christian philosophy of history – indeed, of the first philosophy of history ever formulated.

Augustine's Philosophy of History

As a Christian, not a pagan, Augustine saw that history is not a random process, nor is it controlled by blind, uncaring fate. While the pagan gods and goddesses were a part of history, ruled by fate just as mortals were, the Bible reveals a God who is the almighty ruler of history. To quote J.S. Burleigh again, “If the beginning of history is seen to be the Creative Act of God, and its end the completion of man's redemption, history becomes real, earnest and meaningful” (*The City of God: A Study of St. Augustine's Philosophy* [London, Nisbet, 1949], P. 206). Christianity redeemed history and made it meaningful, for it was in history that God had worked out the redemption of his people. While some pagan philosophers posited an eternal universe in which history was a never-ending cycle, so that all had happened before and all would happen again, Augustine found in the Bible that history is a line, from God and to God, in which two strands wound around each other from a definite beginning to an equally definite end in which they would finally be separated.

History was, Augustine explained, 'a tale of two cities', the City of God and the Earthly City, which “Two states are intimately connected and promiscuously blended with one another in this life until they are separated by the final judgement” (Book I.12) Cain and Abel were the archetypes of the two cities, Cain the founder of the earthly city, Abel a citizen of the Eternal.

"These two states have been created by two different sets of affections, the earthly by the love of self to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God to the contempt of self. That one glories in self; this one in God" (XIV.28) the City of God is a stranger in the world, it is not Rome, and it is to be identified with no human city, state or system; its founder is God himself. It is that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," for which the patriarchs looked (Hebrews 11:10).

Though he formulated this philosophy of history, Augustine did not attempt to write a 'universal history'; the historical books of *The City of God* are incomplete, fragmentary suggestions rather than finished pieces, and made up mostly of accounts of Biblical history rather than interpretations of history outside of Scripture. This is probably all for the best, for it would have swelled the *City of God* beyond its already extended limits. So Augustine left the Church with "His conception of the world's history as a scene of divine permission and purpose" (Robert Rainy, *The Ancient Catholic Church* [Edinburgh, 1902], P. 465).

Whilst his influence in the west has been considerable, Augustine had little if any influence on the thinking of the Eastern Churches (indeed there are those in the Eastern Orthodox churches who regard him as the great corrupter of the West). Constantinople, the 'New Rome' that had been the capital of the Eastern Empire, did not finally fall until 1453, and in Constantinople the City of God and the earthly city were not separated until the Turks, in the slaughter that followed their entry into the Imperial City, did so forcibly. In the West, on the other hand, Rome continued to decline and finally the Empire crumbled away completely. Augustine profoundly influenced the Western Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, though he was not always truly understood. In the Middle Ages The City of God became a part of the basis for the Medieval doctrine of the Papacy. After all, had not Augustine identified the Church with the Kingdom of God, and should not that Kingdom be over the kingdoms of the world? Well, actually Augustine's theology was considerably more sophisticated than that.

Whilst it is true that Augustine did not in *The City of God* observe as strictly as he ought to have the distinction between the Church as an organisation and the Church as the Elect people of God, there are many indications in the book that Augustine did not regard the Church, at least primarily, in terms of an organised hierarchical body. He writes, for example, of, "The Church predestined and elected before the foundation of the world, the Church of which it is said, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His'" (XX.8). There is no clear distinction made in Augustine between the visible and the invisible Church, as in later Reformed writers, but the germ of the idea is there, waiting to be developed by the Reformers. It is certain that Augustine himself did not regard the Bishop of Rome as the earthly head of the City of God, and it was pure abuse of his writings to use them to argue such a thing.

At the Reformation Protestants discarded this illegitimate abuse of Augustine's philosophy of history, and recovered Augustine's true teaching, guided by his correct understanding of the doctrine of grace. The Church was once again seen as more than simply the official clergy, and the vision of the City of God as a pilgrim city in a strange land once again was heard from pulpits and professorial desks. In England and in Germany state establishments once again fettered the Church to the state, and it was left to persecuted groups to protest that this ought not to be so. John Calvin and his circle saw a better way, a Church that was not a creature of the state, nor a tyrant over the state, but separate from the state, yet old habits die hard, and the two cities have often been confused in the centuries between the Reformation and today, both by those who believed in a state Church and those who repudiated such a belief.

So why is *The City of God* still important to us? It is not too much to say that a recovery of Augustine's Christian philosophy of history is one of the greatest needs of the Church in our day and age. The British Empire has crumbled away, and 'Christendom' is rapidly decaying as mosques replace churches and chapels on the streets on British cities, sometimes literally.

As Rudyard Kipling wrote in his poem *Recessional*, it has come to pass,

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire,
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre.

As we look around, there is the temptation to despair, to equate either consciously or otherwise the United Kingdom with the City of God even as the Romans equated Rome with it. We see the decay of our culture and react as if ours of all cultures was the one that would not decay or fall until the end, and its decay necessarily means that the end of history is at hand. Augustine warns us that such thinking is erroneous; all man's empires pass away, and ours is no different; the decay of one civilization is not necessarily the end of the age. We must again realise that the City of God is a pilgrim people, and no matter what may befall our land, our land is not God's abiding kingdom. Nor should we fall into the trap of looking to some other land, whether it is the United States of America, or Russia, or some other state, as though that were the City of God from which our salvation shall come and by allegiance to which we must be saved.

Not only must the Church realise that she is a band of pilgrims in the midst of a hostile world, but we must also realise more fully than we have the great fact that history is meaningful. History is a God-directed process, no matter what secularism, atheism and postmodernism may say as they attempt once more to make the world view history as pointless and ultimately irrelevant. The Church must reclaim history, and that means that we must know it, own it and celebrate it. When far too many congregations sing nothing that was not written within the last forty years, we have a Church that has followed the world in the side-lining of history, and that is a tragedy. The Church must rather reclaim history.

The teaching that history is the story of two cities co-existing until the end of time must also alert the Church in the West to the very real possibility of renewed persecution, even as it alerted Augustine in Christian North Africa to that same possibility. Earlier historians such as Eusebius of Caesarea had identified ten persecutions in the early Church, and this number suggested that there were no more to come until the final persecution. Thus the sack of Christian Rome led to fears and speculation that the final persecution of the Church was upon the empire, even as we find people today saying the same thing. Which is not to say that the current situation may not be the prelude to the end of the age, but rather to say that it may not be the prelude to the end of the age, and we ought not to count on it being so. We need to heed Augustine's caution, "It does not seem to me that the number of persecutions through which the Church is to be tried can be definitely stated" (XVIII.52) But also we need to set our hopes where they always ought to have been, on that city that has foundations, rather than on any earthly city, which must crumble away.

And though they take our life,
Goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small;
These things shall vanish all;
The City of God remaineth.

- Martin Luther

Sola Fide: Faith Alone

[A sermon by Dr. David Allen preached at the Annual General Meeting of the Sovereign Grace Union, 2014.]

The first aim of the SGU is To further the proclamation and defence of the doctrines of Free and Sovereign Grace. ‘*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*’ - Ephesians 2:8

The crucial question of the Reformation was the age-old cry arising from the soul of sinful man: ‘How can a man be justified with God?’ - Job 25:4. The doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone in Christ Alone has been described as the heartbeat of the New Covenant; the cutting edge of the Sword of the Spirit.

‘*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*’ - Romans 5:1

We shall consider:

1. Rome's Teaching of the Doctrine
2. Rediscovery of the Doctrine
3. Reformers' Understanding of the Doctrine
4. Root of the Doctrine
5. Rejoicing in this Doctrine

1. The Romish Understanding of the Doctrine

The sixth aim of the SGU is “To raise a testimony against the evils of the Priestcraft, Popery, Ritualism, Arminianism,, Rationalism, Liberalism, and Higher Criticism.”

According to Roman Catholic dogma, “The instrumental cause [of justification] is the sacrament of baptism,” and “through observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith co-operating with good works...” enables people to be “further justified.” Thus Rome taught that justification was through sacraments, through good works, and that there were degrees of justification.

Rome taught and *still teaches*, that God can pronounce or declare a person to be righteous, only if that person first becomes and is actually righteous!

The Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is complex: according to Rome, justification begins with Baptism. Baptism is the instrumental cause of justification. By this sacrament the grace of Christ's righteousness is infused into the soul. The baptised infant is cleansed from original sin, and is now in a state of grace. Ah, but if the child baptised is in a state of grace it creates a problem for the harlot church. So in order to increase their coffers, they invented the concept of mortal sin. Mortal Sin can destroy that grace, and therefore the sacrament of penance is necessary to restore a soul to grace. Penance is therefore the "second plank" of justification [the Roman Church calls Penance "The second plank" of salvation "after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1446, quoting Tertullian, *On Repentance*, 4.2. This is the result of Rome lacking a distinction between the categories of repentance, a spiritual act, and of penance, which is an ecclesiastical rite. Trent pronounces an anathema on all who say that "Penance is not rightly called a second plank after shipwreck." First Canon on Penance - editor]: confession to a priest, then an act of contrition prescribed by the priest; priestly absolution, and then the performing of works of satisfaction in order to be restored to a state of grace.

[Editor's note: Dr. Allen's opinion as to the origin of Penance as being in a rapacious desire for financial gain does not hold up, not least because at no point has financial contribution been necessary for absolution. Rather, Penance seems to have originated in ecclesiastical penalties prescribed for certain public sins. Over time, the distinction between these ecclesiastical penalties and the condemnation of God became confused, so that the Church came to be seen as possessing, in its priests, the power to absolve from sin through the sacrament of penance. By the time of the Reformation, corruption within the Western Church had led to the peddling of pardons, but this was the result and not the cause of the system of penance.]

It was these works of satisfaction that lay behind the controversy of the 16th century, the earning of Congruous Merit.

[Editor's note: This refers to a distinction made by Thomas Aquinas, that while we cannot merit anything from God in a strict (condign) sense, there is a lesser sort of merit, which he called "Congruous Merit". Condign Merit deserves as a matter of strict equality to be rewarded, while (to quote the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* entry on 'Merit', "Congruous merit, owing to its inadequacy and the lack of intrinsic proportion between the service and the recompense, claims a reward only on the ground of equity." It is also said that while Condign Merit deserves reward as a matter of justice, Congruous merit is rewarded merely as a matter of honour.]

Luther declared this to be the "Foundation of the papacy... this is what every monk imagines: By observing the sacred rules of my order I can earn the grace of congruence, but by the works I do after I have received this grace I can accumulate a merit so great that it will not only be enough to bring me eternal life, but enough to sell and give to others" (Ewald Plass [ed.]: *What Luther Says: an Anthology* [St. Louis, 1959], Vol. 2 P. 921).

Rome taught that grace was not sufficient. Merit must be added to grace. Works and faith! Rome was right in insisting that a justified person must possess righteousness. Rome taught that righteousness is infused into the soul by means of the sacraments. The question is, How does the sinner acquire this righteousness? That is the heart of the Reformation. Missing from the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification is the word Alone. Faith is always required, but it is not sufficient.

How can a man be justified with God? How can a hell-deserving sinner ever withstand the judgement of a holy and just God? "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?" - Psalm 130:3. The Bible declares, "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." - Romans 3:28. Rome teaches that the cause of justification is baptism; the reformers insisted the cause is Faith alone in Christ alone.

This doctrine of justification by Faith alone in Christ alone is the central truth of Christianity. And this was one of the central watchwords of the Reformation.

2. The Rediscovery of the Doctrine

On November 10th 1483 there came into the world the son of a miner. “Blessed was that day above all days in that century, for he became the monk that shook the world.” He was born into a world of medieval Romanism, where the vast, teeming multitudes throughout Europe were in spiritual darkness; held captive by an ignorant priesthood; and a chained Bible. Whilst studying in the monastery library at Erfut, he came across that verse in the prophet Habbakkuk, “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by faith.” - Hab 2:4. That verse laid hold upon that Augustinian Friar, Martin Luther. He could find no peace in his religious profession and monastic habit; though he continued in penances, mortifications, and flagellations until he fainted through exhaustion. He subjected his body to extremes of privations and pain, till he was on the verge of death itself.

It was then that Martin Luther made the long journey to Rome, for there he hoped to gain the pardon off sins. He dreamed of entering the most holy city upon the face of the earth; a veritable heaven upon earth; but alas, he found it a haunt of hypocrites and den of iniquity! But still, Luther believed in the Pope's holiness and supremacy; so he continued with his penances and flagellations, seeking peace with God, but finding none. Whilst in Rome he made a pilgrimage to the Sancta Scala (supposed to be the actual staircase the our Lord descended when He left Pilate's Judgement Hall after the scourging at the hands of brutal Roman soldiers. Rome declares that certain steps are marked with the very blood of Jesus. Moreover, this staircase mysteriously and miraculously transported itself to Rome, stopping off at Constantinople on the way!). Luther went to the Sancta Scala, in one last, desperate attempt to earn the peace that he had long sought.

Surely, if he climbed the Sancta Scala on his knees, till the blood flowed, surely that would enable him to find peace with a Holy God! And so he knelt down, and began to climb on his knees, till the blood flowed, and as he climbed in such excruciating agony, the text which had been burning upon his heart, thundered through his soul like a thunderclap, “The just shall live by his faith”, “The just shall live by his faith”, “The just shall live by his faith.” Habakkuk 2:4. He rose from his prostration, and walked down the steps, never to grovel again. The Lord had graciously delivered him from a religion of works and Romish superstition.

Luther saw at once that it was not by priests and priestcraft, nor through penances, nor by anything that man could do, but The just shall live by his faith. Luther was standing before one of the most crucial statements that is to be found anywhere in Scripture. Luther was born again by the Spirit of God. He was a new creature in Christ Jesus, and immediately he began to stand against the evils of Romanism. Tetzel was selling indulgences throughout lower Saxony, in order to raise money for St. Peter's in Rome. Tetzel declared, “As soon as your money hits the bottom of the drum, your sins are forgiven.” Luther was indignant, and his heart burned with righteous anger, and he exclaimed, “I will make a hole in his drum.” That he did, when he nailed his 95 theses on the door of Wittenburg Castle Church on the 31st October 1517.

Luther boldly proclaimed pardon for sin by faith in Christ alone. Pardon of sin without money and without price. The just shall live by faith alone in Christ alone. Luther raised his voice:

“I, Martin Luther, an unworthy preacher of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, thus profess and believe; that this article, that faith alone, without works, can justify before God, shall never be overthrown... This is the true Gospel... This is the doctrine I shall teach; and this the Holy Spirit and the Church of the faithful has delivered. In this I will abide. AMEN.”

The Reformers' Declaration of the Doctrine.

We shall see that the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith is entirely Christ-centred. It is not faith in isolation, but faith directed upon Christ, and particularly upon Christ's substitutionary and atoning death.

First, Martin Luther, “This doctrine is the head and cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves and defends the Church of God; and without it the Church of God cannot exist for on hour... The article of justification is the master and prince, the lord, the ruler, and the judge, over all kinds of doctrines... without this... the world is utter death and darkness.” (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 2, P. 704)

Second, John Calvin, “We explain justification to be an acceptance, by which God receives us unto his favour, and esteems us righteous persons; and we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ... Justification, therefore, is the acquittal from guilt of him who was accused, as though his innocence has been proved... So that we, who are unrighteous in ourselves, are considered as righteous in Christ... Justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.” (*Institutes*, III, xi.)

Third, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, 1643, asks, “What is justification? Answer: Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth their persons righteous in his sight; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.” (Question 33)

Fourth, Hugh Latimer writes, “Catch thou hold of our Saviour, believe in him, be assured in thy heart that he with his sufferings took away all thy sins... When we believe in him it is like as if we had no sins. For he exchangeth with us; he taketh our sins and

wickedness from us, and giveth unto us his holiness, righteousness, Justice, fulfilling the law, and so, consequently, everlasting life; so that we be like as if we had done no sin at all; for his righteousness standeth us in good stead, as though we our own selves had fulfilled the law to the uttermost... Such a friend is our Saviour. He hath paid our debts and set us at liberty; else we should have been damned world without end, in everlasting prison and darkness." (Works [Parker Society] Vol. 1, P. 329f.)

Fifth, listen to William Tyndale, "When I say, God justifieth us, understanding thereby that God for Christ's sake, merits, and deservings only, receiveth us unto his mercy, favour and grace, and forgiveth us our sins. And when I say, Christ justifieth us, understand thereby that Christ only hath redeemed us, bought us, and delivered us out of the wrath of God and damnation, and hath with his works only purchased us the mercy, the favour, and grace of God, and the forgiveness of ours sins... Faith only justifieth. For if this be true, that Christ only redeemed us, Christ only bare our sins, made satisfaction for them, and purchased for us the favour of God; then must it needs be true that trust only in Christ, doth alone quiet the conscience and certify thy sins are forgiven." (Works [Parker Society] Vol. 1, P. 509

Sixth, listen to the 11th article of the Church of England, "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings: wherefore we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine."

Seventh, listen to Archbishop Cranmer, "[We] ascribe the merit and deserving of our justification unto Christ only and his most precious blood-shedding... This doctrine advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and suppresseth the vain-glory of man... Justification is the office [work] of God only, and it is not a thing we render unto him, but which we take from him, by his free mercy, and by the only merits of his most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer, Saviour, and Justifier, Jesus Christ... And therefore we must trust only in God's mercy, and in that sacrifice which our High Priest and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, once offered upon

the cross, to obtain thereby God's grace and remission, as well of our original sin... as of all actual sin." (Works [Parker Society] Vol. 2, Pp. 131f.)

The Root of the Doctrine

Turn with me please to Paul's letter to the Romans and Chapter 5 and verse 1, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And look at verses 7 and 8! "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

How can a vile, sinful wretch of humanity, deserving of hell, be justified before a thrice-holy God? But God commendeth his love. There's the answer, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!" The Father himself is the root, the source of our justification. The Father's everlasting love. Justification is rooted in the everlasting love of the Father's heart. Christ died for the ungodly (verse 6). Here is the root of the matter. Here we are told how God can be both just and yet justify the sinner. This is how a sinful worm can be reconciled to his Holy Maker. Here we see how the Justice of God and the mercy of God are reconciled. When we were without strength; unable to help ourselves, then, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Christ died "In behalf of/instead of" the ungodly. This is the doctrine of Substitution/ One who is sinless dying in the place of one who is full of sin. He had lived the life that we ought to have lived, but he dies the death we deserved to die!

Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die,
Another's life, another's death,
I cast my all, eternally.

- Horatius Bonar

Christ bled for the ungodly (verse 9): “Much more then being Justified by his blood.” He not only died, he shed his precious blood His blood was shed, and by that blood he offered one sacrifice for sin for ever. Away, ye priests of Rome and your blasphemous mass! Christ has by one sacrifice, put away sin for ever!

“The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin” - 1 John 1:7. Our sins, our iniquities, our transgressions, were laid upon him, the sinless, spotless, Son of God. Christ died for the ungodly. But then his righteousness, his godly obedience to the Law, his sinless life, is laid upon us. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” - 2 Corinthians 5:21. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” - Isaiah 61:10.

Our sins imputed to his account; his righteousness imputed to our account.

“Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.”

- Count Zinzendorf, trans. John Wesley

The Rejoicing in the Doctrine

Luther's heart rejoiced when he discovered the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. And so we should likewise rejoice.

Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. - Hebrews 9:26

The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. - 1 John 1:7

Here is a doctrine for us to rejoice in! All who come to Christ by faith and trust in Christ's finished work alone; all their sins are cleansed, pardoned, and wiped out! They are blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. They are sunk in the depths of the sea, they are cast behind God's back, they are searched for, even by Satan, and cannot be found! They are remembered no more. Though they have been like scarlet, they are become white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they are as wool.

His debts are all paid; the demands of the Law have been fully satisfied; The punishment has been borne. The Father, from the High Court of Heaven, declares, Not Guilty! The sinner's sins placed upon Christ, and the Saviour's sinlessness placed upon us! Christ condemned for the sinner's sake, the sinner acquitted for Christ's sake. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." - Jeremiah 50:20

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." - Hebrews 8:12. "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." - Hebrews 10:17. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." - Jeremiah 31:34. "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." - Isaiah 38:17. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." - Psalm 103:12.

"And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me." - Jeremiah 33:8

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." - Micah 7:18-19

And all this by Faith Alone in Christ Alone.

Faith is the hand of the soul that reaches out like a drowning man and lays hold on Christ.

Faith is the eye of the soul that looks to Christ alone, just as Israel looked to the brazen serpent in the wilderness. There is life for a look at the Crucified One.

Faith is the mouth of the soul, which feeds on Christ alone, the Bread of Life.

Faith is the foot of the soul that flees to Christ alone for refuge.

Have you laid hold of Christ? Have you looked to Christ, who says, "Look unto me and be ye saved?" Have you fed upon Him the bread of life? Have you fled to Christ?

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

David Allen

The Sinfulness of Sin

"We hold it of prime importance that we should have deep and adequate notions of the guilt and depravity of man; for just in proportion to our sense of the virulence of the disease will be our sense of the value of the remedy, will be the value that we set both on the sacrifice that atones, and on the Spirit that sanctifies. A meagre and superficial imagination of human guilt lies at the bottom of all meagre and superficial views of Christianity. Extenuate this, and everything else is reduced and extenuated in proportion.

- Thomas Chalmers

Great Providence of Heaven:

David Charles of Carmarthen

Introduction

Thomas Charles of Bala (1755-1814), remains one of the great figures in the history of Christianity in England and Wales, remembered especially for his work for the Bible Society and Sunday schools in Wales. A clergyman of the Church of England, he was one of the leading figures in the emergence of the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales as a separate denomination. Less well-known is his younger brother, David (1762-1834), many of whose hymns passed into common use among the Welsh Methodists, and several of which, in translation, feature in the widely used Christian Hymns. Called to walk a very different path from that of his brother, the life of David Charles speaks to us of how the Lord may call ‘two of a family’, yet mean them for very different work in His vineyard.

Early Life

David Charles was born on 11 October 1762, at the family farm of Pant-dwfn, near St. Clears, Carmarthenshire. His father, Rees Charles, was a tenant farmer of some substance, for the house was one of the largest in the neighbourhood and David’s mother, Jael, daughter of a one-time Sheriff of the county. It was a highly literate family, Thomas Charles was sent up to Oxford and his brother, David, was thought likely to follow in due course, his father once commenting ‘I do not know what to make of David, unless I bring him up a parson, as he is always in some corner poking over a book’.¹ Before David could follow his brother to Oxford, however, catastrophe struck; ill-advised expansion led to Rees Charles’ failure in business. The extensive house and farm had to be given up for more modest accommodation in 1778, and all thoughts of sending David to university had to be abandoned. The bookish younger son would have to follow a trade, rather than his heart.

1. H. Hughes, ‘Memoir’, in H. Hughes (ed.), *Sermons by the Late Rev. David Charles of Carmarthen* (London, 1846), p.5.

David Charles was apprenticed to a flax-dresser and rope-maker in Carmarthen shortly after his parents' forced removal from Pant-dwfn. Reading was not given up, and he devoted his evenings to study and sermon reading. It was through this, rather than the services of the parish church, that David's thoughts were led to his solemn state by nature. The sermons of Ralph Erskine were particularly blessed to him, and shortly after his nineteenth birthday his brother, Thomas, now a clergyman in the Established Church, wrote of David's being 'truly in earnest about his soul'.¹ Writing to a family friend, Thomas Charles described his younger brother's state:

It afforded me great comfort to find him seemingly in earnest about his soul. As it is not a sudden thing but has been coming on gradually for years, I am in good hopes he has got the root of the matter within him; which will endure storms of temptations and afflictions, nor will be scorched and withered by ye sun of prosperity shd yt be his lot.²

We have no clear record of when David Charles came to a saving knowledge of the Gospel, but Thomas' prayers for his younger brother were abundantly answered, and when David moved to Bristol in order to learn more of his trade, he scorned the idle play of other apprentices, joining with a few like-minded young men for prayer and Bible study after their work was done. His fellows from that period remembered David Charles as a young man possessed of a sound understanding of the doctrines of grace, and a practical knowledge of them in his heart.

David did not allow his reading and spiritual work to become an excuse for sloth in his employment. Indeed, such was his character that, after his master died, David was promoted to the position of manager of the rope-works by his master's widow. On returning to Carmarthen in 1890, David Charles set up in business for himself, and soon possessed enough resources to branch out into paper-

1. D. E. Jenkins, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Charles, B.A. of Bala* (Denbigh, 1908), vol. I, p.302.

2. *Ibid.*, p.307.

Making.¹ At the same time, he married Sarah, daughter of Samuel Levi Phillips, a Jewish convert to Christianity and friend of Rowland Hill, who came at times to Carmarthen, due to her presence, and through whose agency the English-language work in that town commenced.² David Charles would often preach for and with Rowland Hill in Gloucestershire, and in London.³

Soon after his move to the town, David Charles was chosen a deacon of the Calvinistic Methodist Society meeting at Water-Street, Carmarthen. Although nominally part of the Church of England, the Welsh Methodists, dissatisfied with the lukewarm ministry of most of the parish clergy, met together for worship and mutual support both during the week and one the Lord's Day. As deacon of the Society meeting at Carmarthen, and brother to one of the leading clerical Methodists, David Charles emerged as an outstanding representative of Calvinistic Methodism in the county. His literary studies and sanctified understanding were coupled with a mature wisdom which caused many to look to him as a leader. His experience as an employer gave him a tact in managing disputes and cases of church discipline which many of his contemporaries lacked, and soon he was acting as Chairman of the quarterly meetings of the county association, in addition to his work leading Bible classes and experience meetings.⁴

David Charles would quite happily have continued as a well-respected deacon at Water Street, but in 1807, the members of the Society became convinced that the Lord meant their deacon for the ministry of the word, and in 1808, aged forty-six, he was sent out to preach as an exhorter, or lay-preacher, despite his many objections. David paid his own expenses, believing that the Lord had prospered him for this very purpose.

On one occasion, David was due to preach away from home when a paper-mill and other buildings he owned on the river front at Carmarthen took fire on Saturday. After making sure that the fire

1. Jenkins, Thomas Charles, ii, p.75.

2. Hughes, 'Memoir', pp.6-7.

3. H. Elvet Lewis, *The Sweet Singers of Wales* (London, n.d.), p.89.

4. Ibid., pp.7-8. The meetings of the Welsh Methodists for sharing religious experience were closed to all but members and were particularly blessed of God.

was under control, David Charles set off for his engagement as usual , a distance of twenty miles. He preached three times, with great power. Only later did the churches to whom he had ministered learn of the preacher's loss, greeting this with incredulity – his mind had been so on heavenly things that his earthly loss had not been evident.¹ David Charles never accepted a fee for preaching, but, like most of the early Calvinistic Methodist preachers, supported himself by his own industry, with the result that much of his wealth went on the Lord's work.

David Charles' sermons are plain and Christ-exalting. Preaching on Titus 2:14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works', David Charles traced the majesty of the text:

Who gave himself for us. He gave not his authority to reign over us, and his power to act for us; nor his influence to plead for us; but HIMSELF a sacrifice for us; a Surety to stand in our law-place, not to obey alone but also to suffer. In all places, and situations, and circumstances, wherein he appeared upon earth, he was there 'for us'. He was in the manger for us; in the wilderness for us; and in the presence, and under a degree of the power of the devil for us; he was weary and without a place to lay his head, despised and rejected of men, smitten of God and afflicted, for us, and in our stead. He was in the garden, and on the cross for us. The chastisement of our peace was upon him.²

At the same time that the Evangelical Revival was drawing people to Christ, the Presbyterian churches which had been founded by those who had left the Established Church in 1662 were drifting towards Unitarianism, via Arminianism, especially in Carmarthenshire and the neighbouring county of Cardiganshire. Answering the bold propagators of this heresy, David Charles declared:

1. Hughes, 'Memoir', pp.8-9.

2. David Charles, 'Who Gave Himself for Us', in H. Hughes (ed.), Sermons by the Late Rev. David Charles of Carmarthen, pp.189-90.

There is no worshipping God without worshipping the Father; and there is no way of access unto the Father, nor acceptance with him, but through the Son; and there is no ability with the man without the Spirit. There is no possibility of applying the truth of the Scriptures, in what is essential to salvation, without the practical use of the doctrine of the Trinity. To worship God otherwise than as he exists, in three Divine Persons, is a thing unknown to the Bible.¹

It was not only as a preacher that David Charles served the denomination. A lover of poetry and hymns, he composed a number of hymns himself. Although he wrote a few hymns in English, the majority of his compositions were in Welsh, and thus familiar to English readers only in translation. Among these are ‘Great Providence of Heaven’² and the hymn beginning ‘From Heavenly Jerusalem’s Towers’ in the translation by Lewis Edwards.³ The Welsh original ‘O fryniau Caersalem’, which speaks of the bliss of the redeemed when in heaven, is one of the best-loved Welsh hymns, and often sung at funerals.⁴

As an exhorter, David Charles had, at this point, to confine his ministrations to the private meetings of the Methodist Societies. Although they met separately, and had their own preachers and deacons, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists were still formally private religious societies within the Church of England, and their meetings merely private gatherings. Men like David Charles could preach, but were unable to administer the ordinances of the Lord’s Supper or Baptism. For these, members of the Methodist Societies were either reliant upon a few sympathetic clergymen, or forced to attend the parish church. For some of these devout souls, it was a heavy trial to receive Communion from a notorious drunkard or leader of persecutors. A few Methodist Societies, such as that at Groes-Wen, near Caerphilly, had solved the problem by becoming Independent churches, and calling their exhorters as ministers. Yet there were

1. David Charles, ‘Access Unto the Father’, in Hughes (ed.), *Sermons by the Late Rev. David Charles of Carmarthen*, pp.278-9.

2. Hymn 87 in *Christian Hymns*.

3. Hymn 811 in *Christian Hymns*.

4. H. Elvet Lewis, *The Sweet Singers of Wales* (London, n.d.), p.89. Page 29

Yet there were those who did not want to do this, , and some of the Methodist clergy, proud of the prominence their status as ordained clergymen gave them, were unwilling to see them take this step. Even Thomas Charles of Bala, who had found himself forced out of several charges for his Methodist views, hesitated on the brink of separation.

Although David Charles tried to soothe the feelings of the more ardent of his brother exhorters, he was at last convinced of the folly of halting between two opinions, and on 30 December, 1810, he baptised the child of two members of the Water Street Society, the first exhorter to administer the ordinance.¹ It was utterly irregular, but it forced the hands of the Calvinistic Methodists. In June 1811, twenty-two men were solemnly set apart to the ministry of word and sacrament. Thomas Charles questioned the men on the fundamentals of the Christian Faith before their commissioning. Among the eleven ordained in South Wales was David Charles. At last, it seemed, his father's prediction that David would 'become a parson' was fulfilled.

David Charles' conduct as a minister was sufficient to convince doubters that God had ordained him to the ministry before ever man had pronounced him so ordained. The manner in which he administered the Lord's Supper was made a comfort to many of the Lord's family. Mrs Lloyd, a woman of substance who maintained a chapel close by her mansion of Bronwydd, Cardiganshire, preferred David Charles above every other minister in Wales when the time came for the monthly administration of the ordinance.² On another occasion, at Llandovery, David Charles' words at the communion, in which he spoke of Christ's death in the sinner's place was peculiarly applied to the soul of a young man called Thomas Phillips, who received assurance of salvation there, going on to become a noted minister among the Calvinistic Methodists.³

1. Jenkins, Thomas Charles, iii, p.272.

2. Hughes, 'Memoir', pp.17-19.

3.Goronwy Prys Owen, 'Worship and Spiritual Life', in J. Gwynfor Jones (ed.), The History of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, Vol. 3: Growth and Consolidation (Cardiff, 2013), pp.62-3.

The death of his elder brother in 1814 came as a severe blow to David. Friends as well as brothers, Thomas and David Charles had spent much energy in seeking to bring the Word of God to the people of Wales, David lending his material resources and acting as agent for the Bible Society, distributing Bibles and copies of Thomas Charles' Bible Dictionary in South Wales.

David Charles exercised an extensive itinerant ministry among the Calvinistic Methodist churches of South Wales, preaching in Welsh and English. Lady Barham, who owned an estate on the Gower peninsular, near Swansea, invited him to preach to her tenants and their neighbours. In 1814, and again in 1827, David Charles was asked to supply at the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist cause in London, on the latter occasion preaching also at Surrey Chapel for Rowland Hill, and at the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel, Spa Fields. One clergyman of the Church of England was so taken with the eloquence of the Calvinistic Methodist that he told David Charles' daughter 'if I could, I would make your father a Bishop'.

At the time of this second visit to London, however, it was plain that David Charles' labours would not be long continued. Although supported by the Lord in preaching, outside the pulpit his health was clearly in danger of giving way, but after an operation, he seemed to regain a little of his former strength.

Among the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, David Charles had emerged as one of the most prominent of the men ordained in 1811, together with John Elias of Anglesey. When, in 1821, it was decided to draft a proper Confession of Faith for the denomination, which had been using an edited version of the Church of England's Thirty-nine Articles, David Charles, with John Elias, argued strongly for the inclusion of a strong statement of Particular Redemption, aware that some in the denomination were leaning towards Amyraldian views.⁴ The Confession of Faith of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists adopted by the denomination in 1823 ruled out any suggestion that Christ stood in the room and stead of any but His elect.

Whilst working to ensure that the church stood for the faith once delivered to the saints, David Charles was no autocrat. When the proposal to grant Roman Catholics the vote was before Parliament in 1827, he stood firmly against the proposal to send petitions against the Bill to Parliament in the name of the denomination. Whilst opposed to the theological errors of the Church of Rome, David Charles felt that to pass such resolutions would be for the Calvinistic Methodists to assume the same sort of control over their adherents as claimed by the Pope himself!

Shortly after this, David Charles was called to head up the home missionary efforts of the Calvinistic Methodists, causing many to predict a wider sphere of ministry for him. This was not to be, however. In July 1828, he suffered a stroke which left him a paralysed invalid for the remaining eight years of his life, dependent of family and friends. His public ministry over, David Charles remained close to the God he had so long served. When able to sit up, he continued to read; otherwise he would have others read to him. He continued to hold daily devotions at home, in which a portion of the scriptures was read, and hymns sung. When necessary, he himself would lead the worship from his chair, whilst his family knelt round him. At times, the preacher's voice was confused, even unintelligible, yet still he prayed, the sight solemnly impressing visitors to his home. Even a simple giving thanks at table contained such a wealth of experience and humble submission to reduce guests to tears. He remained conscious almost to the end of his life, which came on 2 September 1834.

Assessment

David Charles of Carmarthen was called on to walk a path very different from that of his well-known elder brother. Both men, however, were called by grace, both to partake of the saving grace of God, and to serve the church of Christ in a public capacity. Thomas was to be one of the last Calvinistic Methodist ministers from the ministry of the Church of England. David

would be one of the first men ordained by the Methodists in their separation from the Establishment. His life is a reminder that, when God begins with a person, that person has a peculiar path to walk out, distinct even from those members of their family the Lord may also call. Where Thomas Charles passed from school to university and from there to the ministry, David Charles was to have the fair dreams of boyhood dashed, passing not to college, but to the world of work. Yet it was there that he was led to a saving knowledge of the truth, and as a leader of Bible studies, not as a minister of the established Church did David Charles learn ‘the cure of souls’. The Lord prospered him, allowing David to set up on his own account, and be raised to a position of responsibility among the Methodists of Carmarthen, his experience of business and depth of spiritual life making him a trusted counsellor.

It was only at the comparatively late age of forty-six that David Charles was called to preach, long after his childhood thoughts of being a parson had been forgotten, a reminder that God will have His will in His time. Once called to preach, David Charles found himself caught up in the events surrounding the first ministerial ordinations of the Calvinistic Methodists, and their subsequent organisation as an independent denomination. After twenty years of serving the churches as a preacher, David Charles’ voice was suddenly silenced, and he spent the final years of his life as an example of patient endurance.

David Charles was a man who lived his theology. Despite the hardness of his early life, the disappointments he suffered in business and the collapse of his health at a period when the churches seemed to need him more than ever, David Charles’ manner was one of cheerful acceptance of his Father’s will. The failure of the family farm had taught David Charles not to look on the things which are seen, but on things unseen:

“If Christ is in all, then the way to encounter all, and pass through all without harm, is to go to him. Joseph was all in Egypt once, and the first point was to gain his favour; and so it is with us; the great

question is, how do matters stand between us and Christ? The answer to this is an answer to all inferior inquiries. What is there is providence that affects us? Nothing but what he who loves you has appointed – seek to discern him in all things; seek faith, and he will be seen as he is in all."¹

David Charles had so learned himself and so learned Christ that he was truly able to account the world and all that is in it ‘these inferior things’ beside Christ. Elvet Lewis, a notable Welsh minister of a later generation, reading ‘O Fryniau Caersalem’, was moved to declare: “The poet has heard ‘the shout of them that triumph’, and he was no longer afraid of the weariness and perplexity of his pilgrimage in the desert. Some day he would reach the cloudless hills of Zion, and look back on the meanderings of the journey, to find that it was the nearest way home.”²

David Charles’ hymns, like his sadly-neglected sermons, speak to the heart of the tried believer because here is a man who has himself been tried ‘in the furnace of affliction.’ The rope-maker of Carmarthen could write of the turnings of providence with feeling because he had himself experienced them, but do so with the confident wonder of a man whose heart is stayed upon his God. The two verse translation of David Charles’ greatest hymn expresses perfectly the hope of the tried believer. The Christian called to walk an uncertain and tried pathway is made to take their eye of the perplexing wilderness journey which is their lot, and meditate on the end of the journey, where all rough places will be made smooth, and all crooked places will be made straight, and where ‘All the affliction they suffered redounds to the glory of grace’.³

In this vale of tears, where disappointment and trial are often the believer’s lot, and where even a seemingly productive career may be suddenly cut short by illness, the life and example of David Charles

1. David Charles, ‘Christ all, and in All’, in H. Hughes (ed.), *Sermons by the Late Rev. David Charles of Carmarthen*, p.335.

2. H. Elvet Lewis, *The Sweet Singers of Wales* (London, n.d.), p.89.

3. David Charles (tr. Lewis Edwards), hymn 811, *Christian Hymns*.

of Carmarthen stand as an instance of the way the Lord God often brings His feelingly blind people ‘by a way that they knew not’, through trials and afflictions, though a waste, howling wilderness. Yet David Charles found, wonderfully, that providence’s winding paths, his solitary way, so very different from that of his brother (which was, in its own way, no less tried), was ‘the right way’, leading at last to that city of habitation which is ‘Jerusalem, home of the blest’.

- Gerard Charmley

.....

From heavenly Jerusalem’s towers,
The path through the desert they trace:
And every affliction they suffered
Redounds to the glory of grace.
Their look they cast back on the tempests,
On fears, on grim death and the grave,
Rejoicing that now they’re in safety
Through Him that is mighty to save.

And we, from the wilds of the desert,
Shall flee to the land of the blest;
Life’s tears shall be changed to rejoicing,
Its labours and toil into rest:
There we shall find refuge eternal,
From sin, from affliction, from pain,
And in the sweet love of the Saviour,
A joy without end shall attain.

David Charles (tr. Lewis Edwards)

Evangelicals and Homosexuality

Kevin DeYoung: *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* 158 Pp. Pbk, £7.99 ISBN 9781783592876

Ed Shaw: *The Plausibility Problem* 174 Pp. Pbk, £8.99 ISBN 9781783592067. Both from Inter-Varsity Press

Homosexuality is the hot topic of the day and age in which we live. After the recent Irish referendum on so-called same-sex marriage, the Roman Catholic church in that nation spoke about having to “reflect” on the result. Now we have no objections to people, even Christian people, reflecting on such things, provided that they do so in the light of the Bible. The problem is that even in evangelical circles there is a growing pressure for the church to conform to the world's standards on this matter, even as there was a generation ago for the ordination of women as pastors. It would be ironic, if it were not so serious, that we now have evangelical pastors and theologians calling for the Church to accept homosexuality as a good gift from God. The call to “reflect”, among evangelicals as well as Roman Catholics, is too often a disguised call for the Church to change its message and make it more palatable to a godless world in the misguided idea that this is going to help to "win souls" to Christ.

In the light of all this, we welcome these two works, each different in its own way, that come to us from IVP, both upholding the historic and Biblical teaching of the Church on human sexuality. The first, by Kevin DeYoung, is very much an exploration of the Bible's teaching on human sexuality, the second, by Ed Shaw, deals more with the cultural challenges that face us as Bible-believing Christians. The two books, as one might expect seeing that they are from the same publisher at the same time, complement each other rather than going over the same ground.

Since DeYoung's book deals with the Biblical basis for our thinking, we must begin with What Does the Really Bible Teach about Homosexuality? In an insightful move, DeYoung does not jump directly into his subject, but takes a step back to examine the Bible's

Teaching as a whole. "What does the Bible teach about everything?" must be our first question; we approach the Bible as a whole, not as a collection of texts that may be dismembered. And when we do that, we shall discover that the reason why people come up with different answers to the question asked in the title of the book is that they have very different views of what the Bible is, and what its main purpose and message are.

Unless we understand, he points out, that the Bible is a book about sin and redemption, and that we live in a fallen and cursed world, we shall never understand either it, or the world in which we live. It is precisely because the Western world has no doctrine of the fall that it can regard the way things are as the way things ought to be. The Bible's Gospel message is one of forgiveness of sins, not of acceptance of people as they are. And that is precisely where the Bible and Western culture are so far apart today; Western culture does not believe in the forgiveness of sins, but calls for the acceptance of homosexuality as good. The Gospel has been subtly but ruinously redefined as acceptance of what the culture accepts, not the forgiveness of sinners who have offended against a holy God. "For two millennia the church has focused on worshipping a Christ who saves, a Christ who cleanses, a Christ who challenges and changes us, a Christ who convicts and converts us, a Christ who is coming again,"¹ But this is precisely what the liberals, whether Modernist or Postmodernist, deny. H. Richard Niebuhr's description of the Modernists of his day still applies to their postmodernist heirs, they teach, "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross."² The very category of sin itself is very largely rejected, and what is left is a shifting set of culturally determined norms. Anyone who has watched the culture over the last few decades knows how those norms can shift, and the man who believes that the Church should shift with them is frankly a fool.

1. *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* P. 14

2. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (Middletown, CT, 1988, P. 193

Quite rightly, both DeYoung and Shaw write for Christians; you cannot build a Christian argument on pagan foundations, and the sooner the Church stops trying to, the better. “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” asked the early apologist Tertullian in his *Prescription against Heretics*, and the question must be asked again and again. The question that we must ask, DeYoung points out, is a simple one, does the Bible teach that homosexuality is a sin? If it does, then as Christians we must go with Scripture against the world; there is no way that we can both affirm Scripture and homosexuality. And he does not pretend to begin from an agnostic standpoint as to the Bible's teaching, but from the historic standpoint of the Church. This too is good; there is no reason to pretend to some false neutrality. In an age where people, even some conservative evangelicals, tend to accord the place of ultimate authority to personal experience, DeYoung writes, “As painful as it can be, we must interpret our experiences through the Word of God, rather than let our experiences dictate what the Bible can and cannot mean.”¹

When we address questions of human sexuality, we must begin with the norm established by God in the creation, in Genesis 1 and 2, before the fall. Only then can we address the texts that specifically reference homosexual behaviour. Drawing on a wide range of sources, DeYoung explains that the texts do indeed say what Christians for the last two thousand years thought they said, and shows why attempted revisionist understandings of the texts simply do not work. He then works his way through a series of common objections, showing that none of them is in fact sufficient for evangelicals to change their position on the Bible's teaching.

The second book, *The Plausibility Problem*, deals with deeper problems, how worldly thinking has infiltrated the Church, and therefore made the historic Christian position seem, even within the Church, to lack plausibility; not because in fact it does, but because what has too often been communicated is less than a fully Christian

1. Pp. 21-22

position on human sexuality based on the full Biblical teaching

about man and God, what has been taught has simply been a superficial tidying-up of the spirit of the age.

For too long, Shaw writes, the message of the Evangelical Church to those experiencing a sexual attraction to a member of the same sex has been a variation on the theme of "Just say no." While this is true enough in its way, it is inadequate, a response that fails to tackle deep-seated issues with our contemporary Western society and its obsession with sex. We need to go "back to basics", as it were, and address the underlying issues of how we think.

We have, Shaw writes, too often placed our identity in something other than Christ. The Christian is, as Paul expresses it, "a man in Christ". "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," (Galatians 2:20) is how Paul speaks of himself. The Christian does not therefore identify himself primarily by anything other than his position in Christ, and it is this position that is the basis for all the moral exhortations in the New Testament; first of all the writer tells Christians who they are by virtue of the Gospel, and then he says, in effect, "Now, be what you are." To find our identity outside of Christ is pagan, not Christian. The fact that there are those who profess to be evangelicals who find their identity primarily in their sexuality is a sign that something is terribly wrong with the evangelical churches.

In total, Shaw identifies nine areas in which the evangelical churches have by and large capitulated to worldly thinking. Though his focus is of course the Church's dealing with those like himself who experience same-sex attraction, the "missteps" that he identifies are broad in their implications. They amount to a wholesale surrender to the surrounding culture, and are founded in a doctrine of Original Sin that is inadequate at best and non-existent at worst. The result of this is that the claim, "If you're born that way, it can't be wrong" is accepted as almost axiomatic by evangelicals today, despite the Bible's insistence that we are all

born in sin! Rather than viewing all men as sinners who need to be saved, a significant portion of modern (or perhaps we should say postmodern) evangelicalism is functionally Pelagian, or at best semi-Pelagian. “We need to stop trusting in ourselves and in our natural instincts,” Shaw warns.

Ours is a hedonistic culture; for the most part desires are regarded as intrinsically good and things that should be indulged. The Bible, however, stands opposed to such a view; there are good desires, but there are also evil desires. The call of Christ, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,” stands as opposed to ours culture as it did to that of Rome in the first century. The culture of duty and self-denial is dead outside of the Church, and the culture of self-indulgence has found its way into the Church. Thus postmodern evangelicalism has bought into the culture's teaching that, to deliberately parody the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “The chief end of man is to glorify himself and enjoy himself.” That means that there is no adequate doctrine of self-denial; our personal happiness becomes all. Yet the Westminster Divines were quite right to phrase their summary of the “Chief end of man” as they did, “To glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” It is only this Biblical vision that can sustain the Church. Ultimately the cause of “the plausibility problem” is that Western culture has become so deeply antichristian that its categories and ours are incompatible, and that far too many in the Church, rather than resisting the spirit of the age, have tried to compromise with it in some way, at times consciously, but also unconsciously.

Too often has it been forgotten that “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,” and men have tried to persuade the natural man, rather than seeking his conversion, which is quite another thing. The result in the Church has been a doctrine of the Christian life that is utterly anaemic and provides no help at all for the Christian who struggles with sin. But the Bible exhorts us to, “Mortify therefore your

members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Shaw’s book, calling for a return to such Biblical teaching, is a breath of fresh air that is much needed in all areas and not just the issue he is addressing. Ultimately, the book is a clarion call to serious Biblical thinking, and to the recovery of a truly Christian view of God, of man, and of the world.

Both of these books point out that there is so often lacking, even in evangelical Churches, today a sense of the “big picture” of Scripture. This is one effect of a creeping Postmodernism with its suspicion of “metanarratives” (big pictures), and its effect is disastrous. Instead of seeing ourselves as being part of God’s big story, we have been encouraged to “invite God into” our little stories; and while God’s big story is all about his glory, our little stories are about our comfort and enjoyment – and, yes, our glory! When so much of evangelicalism is talking about “your best life now”, should we be surprised that teaching on self-denial is almost completely lacking? When the demands of Christ are minimised and the Gospel is assumed more than it is taught, of course there is a “plausibility problem” - because all that is sub-Christian!

We would dearly love not to have to deal with the issues addressed in these books, but the fact of the matter is that we have to deal with them – the culture forces us to. The abject spinelessness of some evangelical voices on the issue and the complete surrender of others to the culture of pleasure and death reminds us why we cannot avoid these things. Both of these books call us back to the Bible, because that is the only firm foundation we can have. We welcome both of them and warmly recommend them to all those trying to deal with the present cultural confusion, both outside and inside of the Churches.

Book Reviews

Gospel Standard Trust Publications

Pastoral Counsel by George Rose Pp. 145, Pbk, ISBN: 9781897837535, £5

This is a truly fascinating little book, one to be dipped into as well as read through. Each of the short chapters was originally the Pastor's message in the Monthly Circular issued by Tamworth Road Baptist Chapel in Croydon during the eighteen years of Mr. Rose's ministry. The subjects are as varied as might be expected, from 'Practical Godliness' to 'The Doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of Christ', from 'The Two Advents' to 'Christians and the Nation'. Written in the period leading up to the Second World War, they speak not only to their own times, but to ours. George Rose was a man of great grace, and the fact comes over clearly in these messages. Short and simple, yet deeply profound, each is a sermon in miniature. This is a book that every Christian will gain from reading, it deserves a wide circulation.

-G.N.C.

Evangelical Press

Thomas Chalmers by Sandy Finlayson. 152pp. Pbk. £7.99. ISBN: 978-1-78397-072-8.

Thomas Chalmers (1780 - 1847) was a leading Evangelical figure during a turbulent period of Scottish history. A man of remarkable intellectual ability, he held at various times several senior university posts while still 'holding forth the Word of Life' as a pastor. However, he was no 'ivory tower' man. He believed that the Biblical gospel, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, was essential if society was to be reformed, if the poor were to be freed from despair, if education was to be available to all, and so on. He was also deeply concerned for foreign missions, as well as for the spiritual success of the Church of Scotland within Scotland itself.

His name is chiefly linked to the 1843 ‘Disruption’ in the Church of Scotland, which saw the emergence of the Free Church. The author of this book is careful to explain the various strands of thought which led to the Disruption, and to do so in an easy style which throws much light on this important event. - John Manton

Psalms: From Suffering to Glory by Philip Eveson. 2 Volumes, Pp. 461 & 524. £11.99 each. ISBN: 9781783970209 (Vol. 1), 9781783970216 (vol. 2)

We have long regarded Philip Eveson as among the foremost Old Testament expositors of the present age, and this commentary on the Psalms further establishes that opinion. There is the expected combination of rigorous scholarship and warm application, with Christ proclaimed fully as the one whom all of Scripture is centred on, and to whom it points. Doctrine and experience come together in the Psalms, and we know of no expositor better qualified to do this combination justice than Philip Eveson. At the same time he also combines profundity and simplicity, so that every reader will profit from this work.

- G.N.C.

Christian Focus

Confident: Why we can Trust the Bible by Daniel Strange and Michael Ovey 151pp. £7.99. Pbk. ISBN 9781781915547.

In this slim volume, two theologians give a simple outline of why we should trust the Bible, and what that looks like. The first part of the book, “A Word for Them”, deals with the objections that an unbelieving world has to not just the Bible, but the very idea of external authority. Part two, “A Word for Us”, deals with the challenges to Biblical authority that have arisen within the Churches, even within broader evangelicalism, and appeals for Christians to have the same view of the Bible that Jesus has. It is truly refreshing to read such a book that does not compromise one bit on the historic Christian view of the Scriptures as the Word of God. Too often today preachers seem to apologise for the Bible, Strange and Ovey do no such thing. There is no compromising with postmodernism, just a straightforward presentation of why the Bible

is the Word of God and what that means for us. This book would make a perfect gift for a young person going to university in the autumn, and it is written at a level that is accessible to anyone willing to invest a little thought into a vital subject. - G.N.C.

Reformation Heritage Books

Riots, Revolutions, and the Scottish Covenanters by L. Charles Jackson. 304pp. Hdbk. \$23.00. (Amazon £19.65). ISBN 9781601783738

This attractively-presented volume is a major scholarly assessment of the work of Alexander Henderson, one of the most significant leaders in the early phase of the Covenanter struggles in Scotland, bring the whole period under examination. The 17th century is one of the formative times in the history of the Reformed Churches, and the Scots Covenanters are among the most significant groups in that era. A book such as this one, combining scholarly rigour with theological insight, is therefore most welcome. It is deliberately scholarly, seeking to understand Henderson and his thought in his times. Henderson's role as a key maker of the Covenanter narrative is carefully laid out, and the role of both preaching and publishing in spreading this narrative and thus accomplishing the victory of the Covenanter party in the 1638 Glasgow General Assembly is explored in detail. This is a book about theology in action, and theologians in politics. The student of the 17th Century will find much to help in this work, and may we also suggest that those interested in the relations of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, both past and present, will also find it of interest.

- G.N.C.

Banner of Truth Trust

The Korean Pentecost - W Blair & B Hunt 200pp paperback - £6.25
ISBN: 9780851512440

The Banner of Truth has done the 21st Century a great service by republishing this little work. The first section, by William Blair, initially written for private use within his Missionary society, details the events of the Korean revival of 1907. That said, perhaps the most moving part of his writing is that which records the coming of the Gospel to Korea in the Nineteenth Century and the heart-rending tale

of the early missionary Robert Thomas - who died pressing Christian books and pamphlets on those who took his life. The second section of the book, by Blair's son-in-law, details the subsequent sufferings of the church in Korea - firstly under the Japanese, followed by the Communist persecutions. He details the martyrdom of many people he had known personally.

Although the book ends in the 1960's, and may feel slightly dated as a result, it is a most moving and helpful volume. One doesn't want to give away too many of the stories in a review! This is highly recommended.

- Malcolm Lowrie

Christ set forth – Thomas Goodwin, 264p, £5.75 pbk.
ISBN 978-1-84871-558-5

Many good works are available in the Banner of Truth's Puritan Paperbacks series; it is good to see this excellent volume added to them. Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) was one of the most famous of the Puritans, a member of the Westminster Assembly and a chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, a man with a rich understanding of Scripture and a deep pastoral heart. This book, first published in 1642, is an exposition of Romans 8.34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Its full title is, "Christ set forth as the cause of justification and as the source of justifying faith". He explains in his introduction his reason for writing: he wishes to correct the tendency of some Christians then (as now) to rely more on inward evidence of grace than on Christ himself.

"The minds of many are so wholly taken up with their own hearts that... Christ is scarce in all their thoughts." With the characteristic thoroughness of the Puritans he examines his text, clause by clause, showing what powerful grounds for confidence the believer has in the death, resurrection, ascension and intercession of Christ.

Readers unfamiliar with the Puritans might find the style daunting at first (this is a reprint not an abridgement or a modernisation, apart from a few modernised spellings and editorial footnotes) but it will well repay the effort. Among many striking thoughts, we might mention this, on the ascension: "Faith upon these wings may

not only fly above the gunshot of all accusations and condemners, but even clean out of their sight.” His exposition is particularly full on the high-priestly intercession of Christ, a theme comparatively neglected today. There is no more edifying subject for the Christian than Christ himself, and this book does exactly what the title promises: it sets forth Christ. Anyone reading it will be uplifted by it.

- Robert Dale

Amy Carmichael - ‘Beauty for Ashes’. A Biography. Iain H. Murray, 168 pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84871-552-3.

Born into an Ulster family in 1867, Amy Carmichael was to spend half a century of her life, until her death in 1951, at the Dohnavur settlement in Southern India, never once returning home.

The main focus of her life was the rescue of girls from a life of degradation as temple prostitutes, never losing sight, however, of their need of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Something of the sheer size of the work is indicated by the following quotation: ‘By the 1940s there were some 900 children and grown-ups, including between 40 and 50 helpers. The hospital work grew to such an extent that a medical superintendent was needed, as well as three doctors.’ Iain Murray states that the work continues to this day and remains faithful to its Biblical and Evangelical principles.

There are fascinating comments, from a Reformed standpoint, on such matters as Amy Carmichael’s view of guidance; her refusal to accept anyone as a helper who did not hold a fully Evangelical view of Scripture; the widespread circulation of the many books, including books of poetry, which were published during and after her life, and so on. The tone of this biography is gracious and gentle throughout, and is warmly recommended. - John Manton

Day One Publications:

Opening Up Revelation - Roger Ellsworth 160pp paperback - £6.00
ISBN: 978 1 84625 409 3

This is a most helpful short study guide on the book of Revelation. It is ideally suited both for personal use and for group study - each

chapter ends with helpful discussion questions and suggested further reading Ellsworth begins with a very helpful section of overview, background and summary - which allows the reader to quickly grasp both the structure of Revelation and the approach being taken by the author.

Each chapter runs to between 6-9 pages, with each maintaining a very clear focus and always being rooted and kept close to the actual text of revelation rather than speculative theory.

As with many writers on Revelation, Ellsworth makes clear his debt to William Hendrickson's 'More than Conquerors'. However, this is not simply a reduction of another work!

This is a very useful - and inexpensive - little volume.

- Malcolm Lowrie

ELISHA - Man of mission, Man of miracles, by John Cheeseman. 96 pp. Pbk. £6 ISBN 978-1-84625-436-9.

The life of the Old Testament prophet Elisha (I Kings 19 to II Kings 13) is here broken down into 18 brief chapters, the text commented on being the English Standard Version. The author's style is refreshingly straightforward, and he is concerned not only to bring out the meaning of the text but also to show its relevance for today.

Perhaps even more importantly, he is not afraid to link the Old Covenant to the New without becoming fanciful and strained.

Just occasionally he lapses into a semi-colloquial style which would have been better avoided. But he clearly believes in the absolute reliability of Scripture, and brings out the truth in the book's title:

Man of mission, Man of miracles. - John Manton

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Will all students for the ministry who wish to receive help from the BOOK FUND please contact our Treasurer, whose name and address is inside the front cover of the magazine.

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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
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THE GOSPEL OF SOVEREIGN GRACE

by HENRY ATHERTON

*Sermons and addresses by the first Secretary of the Sovereign Grace Union
Copies are available from:*

The Secretary, SGU, 43 Warwick Road, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 8PQ

East Anglia Auxiliary

July 16th, Thursday 7.30pm

Salhouse Baptist Chapel, Salhouse, Norfolk NR13 6RA

Speaker: Pastor Jared Smith (Kensington Baptist Church, London).

November 2nd, Monday 7.30pm

Zoar Baptist Chapel, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 2LH

Speaker: Revd. Brian Green (Calvary Free Grace Baptist Church, Feltham, Middlesex).

Surrey Auxiliary

July 15th, Wednesday, 7:30 PM

Hope Baptist Chapel, 20 Lower Street, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2NX

Speaker: Mr. Henry Sant

September 24th, Thursday, 7:15 PM

Tamworth Road Baptist Chapel, Croydon CR0 1XW

Speaker: Mr. Sam Mackay

Kent Auxiliary

July 8th, Wednesday, 7:30 PM

Grace Chapel, Folkestone, CT20 1HE

Speaker: Ian Jemmett(Bethersden)

October 15th, Thursday, 7:30 PM

Enon Baptist Church, Chatham ME45RF

Speaker: Timothy Reynolds (Borough Green)

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.