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Keep a Close Watch



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“Keep a close watch
on yourself
and on the teaching”

CONTRIBUTORS:

Dr Roger D. Duke is Assistant Professor of Religion at the Baptist College of Health Sciences, Memphis, TN.

Jay Keywood is an MDiv student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. He is from Hazelhurst, MS.

Dr Tom J. Nettles is Professor of Historical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

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Editor: Thomas K. Ascol

Associate Editor: Tom J. Nettles

Design Editor: Kenneth A. Puls

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The Alignment of Experience and Truth: *Perennial Difficulty of the Church and the Minister*

Tom J. Nettles

“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching,” (1 Timothy 4:16, ESV) Paul told Timothy, thus making imperative a delicate and difficult calling. This “watch” characterizes both personal and corporate life. Its relevance extends from ecclesiology through evangelism and into the quest for assurance of salvation. The relation between freeness of forgiveness and evidences of possession engages an area of divinity about which Spurgeon said, “This is a narrow path which the eagle’s eye has not seen, and the lion’s whelp has not trodden” [*MTP* 17 (1871): 135]. Some would be insulted at the suggestion of self-examination as an evidence of unbelief. Others would think that confidence in the grace of God amounts to arrogant presumption. Some have never even thought of the possible struggle involved in the Newton hymn,

‘Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?

This issue of the *Founders Journal* examines three men very familiar with this dynamic. John Gano, the fascinating 18th century Baptist, served as a pastor, a church planter, an itinerant preacher, a polemicist and a chaplain in the Revolutionary War. He did all this as an expression of his commitment to a finely-tuned confessional commitment to Baptist Calvinism. He knew both the power of the gospel and the subtle deceitfulness of the human heart; had confidence in the one and was deeply suspicious of the other. Roger Duke gives us a charming look at Gano’s efforts in the Revolutionary War as a chaplain to find ways to place the gospel before the troops. By both life and teaching, Gano tied barbs to his gospel arrows that they might hold and eventually diffuse their saving power into the heart.

Jonathan Edwards probably gave more intellectual energy to the relation of doctrine and experience than any other American theologian. Although resident in all his works and sermons, he pulled back layer upon layer of this difficult question in a most compelling way in *Religious Affections*. Jay Keywood, in an assignment for an MDiv class on Jonathan Edwards, gives an insightful interaction with that work, showing some very pertinent applications to present-day church life. His summary and application show two things (at least). One, the nature of true conversion sometimes is exceedingly difficult to discern. Mistakes here can cost both the church and the individual dearly. Massive problems and disruption occur when merely natural men gain positions of influence in the church simply on the

basis of natural ability. Everyone suffers when such is the case. Two, Keywood's article shows that a careful reading of good literature from experienced and serious men can give its student insight and wisdom beyond the limits of personal experience. Corporate experience through the ages becomes our own. Paul told Timothy, "Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it" (2 Timothy 3:14, ESV).

The article on Spurgeon points to his lifelong insistence on developing a comprehensive theology to be preached in all of its connections for the benefit of all God's elect. He gave special emphasis to the issue of assurance and how that great Christian treasure related to the supra-historical aspect of salvation, i.e. election by the Father *ante nos*, the objective side of salvation, i.e. the work of Christ *extra nos*, and the subjective side of salvation, i.e. the operations of the Spirit *intra nos*. Perhaps he knew of the great difficulties that a book like *Religious Affections* could cause very sensitive souls and so he wanted to point them to the surety of the covenant in Christ's substitution. His knowledge of the internal struggles generated often by hyper-Calvinist preaching sensitized him to that. But he also knew many whose superficial experience made them view "godly fear and careful walking" as superfluities if not "actually an offence against the gospel" (*MTP*, 17:134) A failure to grasp the proper connection between the *extra* and the *intra* caused contorted individual experience and led to gross misapplications of the *ante*.

We pray that this volume may help us all connect the dots appropriately between action, examination and confidence. ☺

New from Founders Press Summer 2011

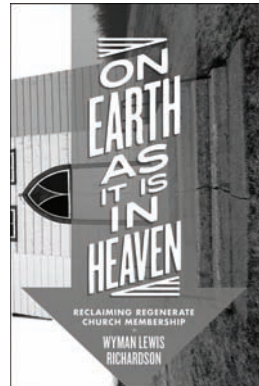
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“First in War, First in Peace...”¹

*One Baptist Chaplain of the America Revolution*²

Roger D. Duke

“Light Horse Harry Lee ha[s] famously eulogized his friend Gen. George Washington as ‘first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.’”³ This bromide might also be attributed to our Baptist chaplains, especially in the founding of the American Republic as she was being forged through the crucible of war.

From the time of the Protestant Reformation through present Baptist history, the military chaplain has played an integral role in times of war, national emergencies, as well as in times of peace. From their common deaths on the battlefield, men such as Ulrich Zwingli to Dale Goetz have given that “last full measure of devotion” to the cause of Christ and His church. All the while, they attended to the spiritual needs of the soldiers who had also gone into “harm’s way.”

Consider the Swiss Reformer:

Zwingli himself died on the battlefield, in the prime of manhood, aged forty-seven years.... He made no use of his weapons, but contended himself with cheering the soldiers.... Soon after the battle [of Kappel] had begun, he stooped down to console a dying soldier, when a stone was hurled against his head by one of the Waldstatters and prostrated him on the ground. Rising again, he received several other blows, and a thrust from a lance. Once more he lifted his head, and, looking at the blood trickling from his wounds, he exclaimed: “What matters this misfortune? They may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul.” These were his last words.⁴

In memory of his contribution to the Reformation, “Zwingli[’s]... statue, with a sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, stands near the municipal library at Zurich.”⁵ “Ministers of the Gospel have always played an important role in history. Of particular interest... [are the] chaplains in the United States.”⁶

One such chaplain posed a most relevant question: “Have you ever had something that you were so devoted to that you would be willing to die for it?”⁷ Baptist Pastor and U.S. Army Chaplain Dale Goetz answered in the affirmative. Goetz was the first U. S. Army chaplain to be killed in action since the Vietnam War.⁸ He was a chaplain but had also served as pastor of the First Baptist Church of White, South Dakota from 2000 to 2003. “His short pastoral ministry in White... brought him joy, but he longed for a ministry that would allow him to do disciple-making in a setting more suited to his gifting,”⁹ observed Stuart Schwenke, friend, colleague and fellow Baptist pastor. He was killed in action after having been deployed in Afghanistan for less than a month. One observer of his death recounted that:

Captain... Goetz, 43, was killed in action on Aug. 30 [2010] near Khan-dahar Province, Afghanistan, when an improvised explosive device [IED] struck his convoy.... [S]oldiers in a Humvee ahead of Goetz were struck by an IED. When Goetz was getting out of his vehicle to assist them, a second IED device exploded. Four other soldiers were also killed [with him].¹⁰

Previously Goetz had declared in an editorial: “Our freedom is worth dying for and many have gone before us to preserve this freedom.”¹¹ He then asked the ultimate ironical question: “Some love their spouse or kids enough that they would die for them. Do you love anything that much?”¹² These two Christian testimonies of Zwingli and Goetz epitomize the spirit and commitment of all military chaplains—especially those of the Baptist tradition.

Baptist Chaplains of the American Revolution

The first Baptist to become a chaplain in the Continental Army “was the Reverend David Jones, who in 1776 was appointed to serve Colonel St. Clair’s regiment.”¹³ He was also the first Baptist missionary in Ohio to the Indians and did two extended tours that lasted more than a year. When the Continental Congress first called for a “day of fasting and prayer,” Jones preached to the army regiment a sermon entitled: “Defensive War in a Just Cause Sinless.”¹⁴ “Chaplain Jones was also called upon to use his medical skills as well and removed bullets and even performed amputations, although he lacked the benefit of anesthetic.”¹⁵ He also “carried a pistol or musket and was not unwilling to use... [either] in battle.”¹⁶ Jones was “highly trusted by Gen. Washington and preached to the troops at Valley Forge.”¹⁷ It was said of him that, “In danger he knew no fear, in fervent patriotism he had no superior and few equals, in the Revolutionary struggle he was a tower of strength.... He was a Christian without reproach.”¹⁸ Chaplain Jones was at the Battles of Ticonderoga, Morristown, and Brandywine. “He was [also] present for the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.”¹⁹

Leading up to the Revolution was one Rev. William McClannahan. McClannahan was known for his boldness and enterprising spirit as one of the early Baptist preachers in Virginia.²⁰ “He was the first Baptist to preach the Gospel of God’s grace in the lower counties of the Northern Neck [of Virginia].”²¹ It was reported that:

Captain Mc Clannahan raised one of the companies of the Culpepper minutemen for the Revolutionary Army. He led them not only into battle but also in prayer, preaching to them regularly. His troops were principally Baptists, who were among the most strenuous supporters of liberty. The price of liberty was paid for... on the battlefields by men like... Mc Clannahan.²²

Another worth considering was a young man by the name of Thomas B. Montayne who was converted under the influence of the Rev. John Gano. He then baptized Montayne into the fellowship of the First Baptist Church of New York City.²³ His sister was also converted and baptized upon her profession of faith. “The result of the conversion of these [two] youths to the Baptist persuasion forced” their father, the elder “Montayne to a new examination of baptism in the New Testament, and in time he too was immersed and became a Baptist.”²⁴

Later, “When the War of 1812 broke out with Great Britain; Montayne received a chaplain’s commission.”²⁵ At one particular juncture, “a general drill and review of the army had been ordered for the morning of the Sabbath, at the same hour when preaching had thitherto been the ‘order of the day.’”²⁶ So Montayne immediately proceeded

to the quarters of the general in command and stated to him, in a dignified and courteous manner, that he held a commission from his country, and also from his God; that, by virtue of his latter commission, he was superior in command on the Sabbath to any of the military; that the general order for a review would interfere with orders from a higher source, and that, consequently, the review could not and must not take place.²⁷

Rev. David Jones, Rev. William McClanahan, Rev. Thomas B. Montayne, and Rev. John Gano were all Baptist pastors, preachers, missionaries, and shepherds of men’s souls—even under fire. All were deeply committed to bringing Christ’s Word of spiritual liberty to those who fought for political liberty and against tyranny. Their ministry and service procured the respect of even Gen. George Washington who testified that, “Baptist chaplains were the most prominent and useful in the army.”²⁸

A Case Study: The Rev. John Gano

Gen. Washington insisted on procuring the best chaplains for his troops. He also desired them to be adequately paid and “[to have] them diligently attend to their religious work”²⁹ to the soldiers under his command. “His ‘Orderly Book’ shows an example order issued July 9, 1776[:]”³⁰

The honorable Continental Congress having been pleased to allow a chaplain to each regiment, with the pay of thirty-three dollars and one third per month, the colonels or commanding officers of each are directed to procure chaplains accordingly, persons of good character and exemplary lives, and to see that all inferior officers and soldiers pay them a suitable respect. The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary, but especially so in times of public distress and danger. The Gen. hopes and trusts, that every officer and man will endeavor to so live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest liberties and rites of his country.³¹

From the very beginning of the armed conflict, the spiritual needs of the men were considered to be one of highest priority by those in the highest places. Even before the outbreak of hostilities between the Colonials and Great Britain,

[T]he Baptists increased on every side; if one preacher was imprisoned, ten arose to take his place; if one congregation was dispersed, a larger assembled on the next opportunity. The influence of the denomination was strong among the common people, and was beginning to be felt in high places. In two points they were distinguished: *first* in their love of freedom; and, *secondly*, in their hatred of the *church establishment* [emphasis added].³²

Because of persecution, belief in personal liberty, and freedom of conscience, the Baptists assumed a major role in all causes of the armed conflict. Further, “The Revolution was fought in two stages,”³³ and the Baptists were at the forefront of both. “There was a military war for political independence; and there was a spiritual war for religious independence.”³⁴ An argument can be made that: “Those two stages began in the same place—Rhode Island.”³⁵ And that “They ended in the same place—Virginia.”³⁶

Although their numbers were rapidly growing, “The Baptists... [were] not so imposing a denomination in numbers at the time of the revolution.”³⁷ “[N]evertheless [they] threw the weight of their influence, whatever it might be, on the side of the colonies”³⁸ and liberty. As early as 1775 they declared openly:

[T]hat however distinguished from the body of their countrymen by appellation and sentiments of a religious nature, and embarked in the same common cause; that, alarmed at the oppression which hangs over America, they had considered what part it would be proper to take in the unhappy contest, and had determined that they ought to make a military resistance against Great Britain in her unjust invasion, tyrannical oppression, and repeated hostilities.³⁹

Because of the political and spiritual needs of the country, the Baptists “left their church members to enlist, and asked that four of their ministers, whom they had selected, might be allowed to preach to the troops during the campaign with the same freedom as chaplains of the established [or Anglican] Church.”⁴⁰ At this opportune time, “The most distinguished clergyman of the denomination... was Rev. John Gano.”⁴¹ One of the many legacies Gano left us was, “When the Revolutionary War began he would lead the charge of the baptized believers in the cause of liberty.”⁴² Gano “served as chaplain in Gen. George Washington’s army, where he maintained the same purity of character and the same zeal and energy in the cause of Christ that he exhibited on the mission field and in the pastoral office.”⁴³ While serving as “a Revolutionary War chaplain,” he was attached to, and “served as chaplain to Gen. Clinton’s New York Brigade.”⁴⁴

Chaplain Gano's Experiences

Under Fire

The British occupied New York City at the outbreak of the war. Gano, concerned for his family's safety, was forced to abandon his pastoral charge at the Baptist church there.⁴⁵ "With no church to serve, he took a Congressional commission to serve as chaplain"⁴⁶ with the Colonials. At this particular point in Baptist development Gano was one of "the most distinguished clergyman of his denomination."⁴⁷

Originally Col. Charles Webb of Stamford and Lt. Col. Hall invited him to serve as Chaplain, but he initially declined. They proposed that Gano come and preach to their regiment, which was only a short distance from the New York City. He accepted their invitation, and agreed to preach on the next Lord's Day.⁴⁸

Eventually by providential circumstances, Gano entered into the chaplain service of the Continental Army. He was, even early on, "In the fierce conflict... and under fire... his cool and quiet courage... fearlessly expos[ed] himself [and] was afterwards commented on in the most glowing terms by the officers who stood near him."⁴⁹ Gano personally testified:

My station in time of actions I knew to be among the surgeons; but in this battle [Chatterton's hill,] I somehow got in front of the regiment, yet I durst not quit my place for fear of dampening the spirits of the soldiers, or of bringing on me an imputation of cowardice. Rather than do either, I chose to risk my fate. This circumstance, gave an opportunity to the young officers of talking; and I believe it has good effect upon some of them.⁵⁰

Joel Taylor Headley observes concerning this incident that,

One can not [sic] repress a smile at this account of himself in the front of battle. When a soldier, whose appropriate place is there, finds himself in the rear, we sometimes hear some such lame excuse as "that *somehow* he got there," but for one to use it for being under the enemy's fire when his appointed place is elsewhere, is both novel and amusing [emphasis added].⁵¹

If "the impulses of his noble... [and] patriotic nature"⁵² had been better personally analyzed by the chaplain, "he would have found that the reasons for *staying* under fire were really the ones that *brought* him under it."⁵³

This must have been something for the ordinary soldier to behold indeed! In another battle, "It was on such a sight as this the fearless chaplain gazed with a bursting heart"⁵⁴ upon the troops. One witness recalls:

As he saw more than half the army fleeing from the sound of cannon—others abandoning their pieces [places] without firing a shot, and a brave band of only six hundred manfully sustaining the whole conflict, he forgot

himself, and distressed the cowardice of his countrymen, and filled the chivalrous and patriotic sympathy for the little band that scorned to fly, he could not resist the strong desire to share the perils, and eagerly get involved yet involuntarily pushed forward to the front. This is the true explanation of the “*somehow*” he got out of his place in the rear, and “found himself in front of the regiment,” just as it is the reason that he would not retire though cannon balls were crashing around him. A truly brave man can never refrain from stepping to the side of brave men when, overpowered by numbers, they still make a gallant and desperate stand for the right.⁵⁵

Rev. “Gano was [always] in the midst of the melee” it seems.⁵⁶ On another occasion, “[W]ith his accustomed indifference to danger, [he] walked the breastworks,⁵⁷ viewing... [the British] approach till the whole space around... Fort was red with the scarlet uniforms.”⁵⁸ The Colonials were in dire straits at this particular point. Captain Moody of the Fort gave them a “charge of grape shot, which threw them into great confusion.”⁵⁹ This dispersed the British for a spell. But,

At sunset a couple of flags were sent demanding the immediate surrender of the Fort, and threatening in case of refusal to put the garrison to the sword. The two brothers, Clintons, commanding in the two Forts, sent the same answer to the summons, viz., that they chose the latter alternative. On the return of the flags the firing recommenced, and for two hours it flamed and thundered in the darkness, and then came the final assault. The drums beat a hurried charge, and the overwhelming mass of the enemy poured in one wild torrent over the feeble defenses, and by mere weight of numbers crushed down the little handful that had stood so bravely [kept them] at bay.⁶⁰

The Colonials made break over the parapets and escaped down the cliffs to the river when the Fort was overrun by the British.⁶¹ This is an example of how Gano, as chaplain, was always in the midst of the action, not in the rear with the surgeons, as a chaplain ought to be.

Another time, Gano, upon returning from a much-needed furlough at home, found his unit had removed. He “Ascertain[ed] that the regiment to which he belonged was with Gen. Lee, so he hastened forward to join it.”⁶² They were to join the main army at the banks of the Delaware River. It was at this time when “Gano... accompanied the division which marched rapidly forward to join [Gen.] Washington. He crossed the wintry Delaware with the army when it made its fearful midnight march on Trenton, and shared in the dangers of the battle that followed.”⁶³ Chaplain Gano considered being at the front part of his duty too. He well understood that if the common soldier saw the chaplain as a man of courage—this could possibly spur them on to bravery too.

Amongst the Troops

There is no doubt that Gano was an inspiration “under fire.” His main focus, however, was the care of souls: “In all his intercourse with the troops he kept in view the duties of his station, and never suffered an opportunity to pass in which he could rebuke sin or put in a word of admonition.”⁶⁴ For instance, early one morning, he made his way to the regimental prayer service. Passing by a group of officers, one who did not see him swore rather profanely. All of the others saluted Gano. But

... when the profane lieutenant turning quickly round saw him, and checking himself, said, “Good morning, doctor.” “Good morning,” replied Gano, “I see you pray early.” The abashed [and embarrassed] officer colored and stammered out, “I beg your pardon, sir.” “Oh,” replied the chaplain, passing on, “I cannot pardon you; you must carry your case to God.”⁶⁵

Another time, he was in the proximity of a group of soldiers who were disputing whose turn it might be to cut the day’s allotment of firewood. One grumbling soldier

... exclaimed in an angry manner, “I’ll be d___d if I will do it.” Soon after finding he must, he took up the axe to perform it. Gano immediately stepped forward, and reaching out his hand said, “Give me the axe.” “Oh no,” replied the soldier, “the chaplain shan’t cut the wood.” “Yes, but I *must*.” “Why?” said the soldier in surprise. “Because I just heard you say you would be d___d if you would cut it, and I had rather do it for you than that you should be made miserable forever.”⁶⁶

As Preacher

Gano, not only known for his patriotic courage, quick wit, and to rebuke or admonish the soldier’s ways, was ever-ready with a timely, impromptu sermon in the field.

Once a request came to have Gano “go and spend a little time with them”⁶⁷ at Canajoharie. Gen. Clinton gave him leave to go. When he arrived the men “wished... [he] would dwell a little more on politics... [than he] commonly did.”⁶⁸ Instead of politics, he took the opportunity to give them a Gospel sermon. He most assuredly realized some were about “to meet their maker” in battle and needed the message of salvation more than a political address. He took his sermon from “the words of Moses to his father-in-law[:]”⁶⁹ “Come, go thou with us, and we will do thee good; for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life, but with us thou shalt be in safeguard.”⁷⁰

Once, Gano’s regiment was “encamped at Otesgo, for five or six weeks, previous to... receiving orders for marching.”⁷¹ Their bivouac fell on the Fourth of July. The “officers insisted on... [Gano] preaching.”⁷² His thoughtful text was “This day shall be a memorial unto you throughout your generations.”⁷³ About this same

time “The Gen. informed... [him] that he had received orders to move the regiment, and that he should do it on the next Monday.” He requested the Chaplain to keep the orders quiet “till after service the next day, which was Sunday.” Gano’s timely and appropriate text was: “Being ready to depart on the morrow.”⁷⁴ Immediately after the sermon the general gave orders to break camp and move out.⁷⁵

In Sum

Let us remember well John Gano, Chaplain to The Continental Army of Gen. George Washington, as an early Baptist example of one who was a faithful minister in the name of our Lord Christ. Richard Furman commented on his influence as a Baptist minister, as well as his contributions to the spiritual needs of the troops. Furman observed concerning Gano:

He believed, and therefore spake. Having discerned the excellence of Gospel truths, and the importance of eternal realities, he felt their power on his own soul, and accordingly, he inculcated and urged them on the minds of his hearers, with persuasive eloquence and force. He was not deficient in doctrinal discussion, or what rhetoricians style the demonstrative character of a discourse; but he excelled in the pathetic,—in pungent, forcible addresses to the heart and conscience. The careless and irreverent were suddenly arrested, and stood awed before him; and the insensible were made to feel, while he asserted and maintained the honour of God, explained the meaning of the Divine law,—showing its purity and justice,—exposed the sinner’s guilt,—proved him to be miserable, ruined and inexcusable, and called him to unfeigned, immediate repentance. But he was not less a son of consolation to the mourning sinner, who lamented his offences committed against God,—who felt the plague of a corrupt heart, and longed for salvation; nor did he fail to speak a word of direction, support, and comfort, in due season, to the tried, tempted believer. He knew how to publish the glad tidings of salvation in the Redeemer’s name, for the consolation of all who believed in Him, or had discovered their need of his mediation and grace; and to him this was a delightful employment. Success attended his ministrations, and many owned him for their father in the Gospel....

His attachment to his country, as a citizen, was unshaken, in the times which tried men’s souls; and as a Chaplain in the army for a term of years, while excluded from his church and home, he rendered it essential service. Preserving his moral dignity with the purity which becomes a Gospel minister, he commanded respect from the officers, inspiring them, by his example, with his own courage and firmness, while toiling with them through military scenes of hardship and danger.⁷⁶

Most succinctly, William Cathcart may have captured the essence of Gano’s influence as chaplain: “His love for his country’s cause made the humblest soldier

a brother; his genial manners and fearless daring made him the special friend of offices of all ranks: while the spirit of the Saviour so completely controlled his entire conduct that his influence over his military charge was unbounded.”⁷⁷ ☹

Notes:

¹ See the article: “Henry Lee,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Internet source, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/334542/Henry-Lee> (accessed April 18, 2011). The article states in part: “He was the father of Robert E. Lee and the author of the resolution passed by Congress upon the death of George Washington containing the celebrated apothegm ‘first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.’”

² The author would like to thank Rev. Mike Collins, of the South Woods Baptist Church and PhD student at Mid America Baptist Theological Seminary and Mr. Drew Harris of the South Woods Baptist Church and a Master of Divinity student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, for their personal encouragement and editorial help in this project.

³ Quoted in: H. W. Crocker, III, *Robert E. Lee on Leadership: Executive Lessons in Character, Courage, and Vision* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 47.

⁴ Phillip Schaff, “Zwingli,” *The History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8: *Modern Christianity. The Swiss Reformation*. Internet source, http://www.whitehorsemedia.com/docs/HISTORY_OF_THE_CHRISTIAN_CHURCH_08.pdf (accessed April 8, 2011).

⁵ See: “Ulrich Zwingli: Catholic Information” article. Internet source, <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txc/zwingli.htm>. (accessed April 10, 2011).

⁶ “U.S. Chaplains Brief History,” *American Christian Heritage Group Blog*, Internet source, <http://acheritagegroup.org/blog/?p=574> (accessed April 10, 2011).

⁷ *Baptist Bulletin*, “Baptist Chaplain Killed in Afghanistan,” Internet source, <http://baptistbulletin.org/?p=10579> (accessed April 9, 2011).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ David L. Cummins, “America’s First Chaplain,” in *This Day in Baptist History*, E. Wayne Thompson and David L. Cummins, co-writers (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1993), 49.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ William Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopedia*, ed. Louis H. Everts (Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 1:611; Quoted in Cummins, “America’s First Chaplain,” 50.

¹⁹ Cummins, “America’s First Chaplain,” 49.

²⁰ E. Wayne Thompson, “Wars Waged from Prison to Revolutionary Battlefields,” in *This Day in Baptist History*, 344–345.

²¹ Ibid., 345.

²² Lewis Peyton Little, *Imprisoned Preachers and Religious Liberty in Virginia* (Lynchburg, VA: J.P. Bell Co., 1938), 368; Quoted in E. Wayne Thompson, “Wars Waged from Prison to Revolutionary Battlefields,” 345.

²³ David L. Cummins, "A Chaplain Challenges the Command," in *This Day in Baptist History*, 221–222.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York, NY: Robert Carter and Bros., 1865), 6:266; Quoted in David L. Cummins, "A Chaplain Challenges the Command," 221–222.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 221–222.

²⁸ William Cathcart, ed., "John Gano," *Baptist Encyclopedia: A Dictionary of The Doctrines, Ordinances, Usages, Confessions of Faith, Sufferings, Labors and Successes, and of the Gen. History of the Baptist Denominations in All Lands with Numerous Biographical Sketches of Distinguished American and Foreign Baptists, and a Supplement* (Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881; reprint, Paris, AR.: *The Baptist Standard Bearer*, 1988), 434.

²⁹ Lemuel Call Barnes, *Was Gen. George Washington Baptized by Chaplain John Gano?* From the Papers of Lemuel Call Barnes, The Archives of the American Baptist Samuel Colgate Historical Library, Rochester, NY; quoted in James R. Beller, *America in Crimson Red: The Baptist History of America* (Arnold, MO: Prairie Fire Press, 2004), 263.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Joel Tyler Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, (New York, NY: Charles Scribner, 1867); reprint, Filiquarian Pub., LLC. *High Quality Paperback Series*, n.d.), 66.

³² William Cathcart, "Introductory Remarks to Chapter Eleven;" quoted in Beller, "The Forging of [a] Baptist Nation," *America in Crimson Red*, 253.

³³ Beller, "The Forging of [a] Baptist Nation," *America in Crimson Red*, 256.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Headley, *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, 250.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Quoted in Headley, "John Gano," *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, 250–251.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Beller, "Who Hath Believed Our Report?" *America in Crimson Red*, 210.

⁴³ E. Wayne Thompson, "A City Pastor, a Revolutionary Chaplain, a Wilderness Preacher," in *This Day in Baptist History*, 327–328.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Phil A. Newton, "John Gano and Issac Backus: Eighteenth Century American Baptist Models for Contemporary Training of Church Planters and Church Revitalizers" (Unpublished PhD paper for the seminar 9945 Missions & Ministries of the Church, Submitted to Drs. Alvin Reid & J.D. Greear, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring 2011), 13. Requests can be made to the South Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, @ <http://www.southwoodsbc.org/>.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Headley, "John Gano," *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, 251.

⁴⁸ John Gano, *Biographical Memoirs of the Late John Gano of Frankfort Kentucky Formerly of New York City: Written Principally by Himself* (New York, NY: Printed by Southwick and Hardcastle for John Tiebout, 1806; Google internet digitized source, http://www.5thny.org/Biographical_Memoirs_of_the_Late_Rev__Jo%5B1%5D.pdf), 93.

⁴⁹ Headley, “John Gano,” *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, 255.

⁵⁰ John Gano, *Biographical Memoirs*, 94.

⁵¹ Headley, “John Gano,” *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, 255.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 255–256.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁵⁴ Headley, “John Gano,” *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, 257.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 257–258.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁵⁷ Breastworks are a temporary breast high fortification, sometime called a parapet.

Internet source, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/breastworks> (accessed May 4, 2011).

⁵⁸ Headley, “John Gano,” *The Chaplains and Clergy of the Revolution*, 261.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 261–262.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 258.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 258–259.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 264–265.

⁶⁷ John Gano, *Biographical Memoirs*, 10.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 102–103. (This is reference to Numbers 10:29).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.* (This is a reference to Exodus 12:14 concerning the Passover).

⁷⁴ Terry Wolever, *The Life and Ministry of John Gano, 1727–1804*, Volume 1, *The Philadelphia Association Series* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 87. (This is a reference to Acts 20:7).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Richard Furman, “Personal Letter to Charles S. Todd Concerning the Character and Ministry of Rev. John Gano;” quoted in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit, or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of Various Denominations from the Early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty Five; With Historical Introductions* (New York, NY: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 65–67. Richard Furman recounts his remembrance of John Gano in a letter to Charles S. Todd, Ambassador from the United States to Russia, Shelbyville, KY., June 9, 1857. The Ambassador writes in response to a request concerning Gano and says: “I feel so inadequate to do any thing [sic] like justice to his [Gano’s] memory that, instead of attempting to embody any recollections and impressions of my own, I take liberty to transcribe the following account of him [Gano] from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Furman of Charleston, S.C., who had every opportunity of forming a correct judgment of his character and standing;” For this quote see same source in this notation, 65.

⁷⁷ William Cathcart, *Baptist and Revolution*, 41–42; quoted in William P. Grady, *How Satan Turned America Against God*, vol. 1, *Understanding the Times Series* (Knoxville, TN, Grady Publications, 2005), 145. (See Grady note, 934. For more information on Gano from Cathcart see: William Cathcart, ed., “John Gano,” *Baptist Encyclopedia*, 433–434.

Jonathan Edwards' *Religious Affections* And True Religion in the Local Church

Jay Keyword

Editor's note: Internal pagination references in the section summarizing *Religious Affections* are from the Banner of Truth edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, volume 1.

The young pastor smiles with joy as he looks out at the pews crowded with a rainbow of pastel-colored button-ups and Easter dresses. He is encouraged to speak to a packed audience and hopes to preach the gospel to the several unbelievers who were invited by a few faithful church members. However, the large majority of new faces are members of the church, many of whom are unregenerate, attending only a few times a year to meet their self-prescribed church quota. The pastor delivers a warm, hope-filled message about how Christ ransomed them at Easter, and the mixed congregation disperses happily convinced that they are all children of God.

Is there a difference between those born of the will of man and those born of God? Scripture teaches that there is a solemn distinction between those who are called into the kingdom of God's Beloved Son and those who remain in the dominion of darkness. Confusing this is a source of the confusion between those inside and outside of the church, forcing us to settle for far less than that to which the Bible calls. This is why Jonathan Edwards' *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* is a helpful guide for us in this uncertainty, for in it Edwards sets forth what religious activities are virtuous before God. The devil has twisted the doctrine of conversion to blind the eyes of sinners to their terrible destination and to change the aim of the church. However, there is a biblically prescribed, discernible division between believers and unbelievers, sheep and goats, wheat and tares, deeply embedded in the affections.

Summary of *Religious Affections*

In Part I, Edwards pours a foundation for the treatise by explaining the "nature of the affections and their importance in religion" (236) from 1 Peter 1:8, which describes believers as having been refined as gold by tribulation, producing glorious rejoicing in Christ and love to Christ. Thus he derives the thesis: "True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections" (237). He defines affections as "the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination of the will of the soul" (237). The human soul has two principal faculties: the understanding and the will. With the understanding, a person perceives and digests information. With the

will, a person approves or disapproves that information in degree and kind. Being connected with the affections, the will never goes any further than the level to which it is affected.

Denying the importance of the affections denies the foundational essence of biblical Christianity. Edwards explains, “That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes, raising us but a little above a state of indifference” (237). God’s commandments towards men in their devotion and service to Him are commandments on the affections. Holy religion is the fervent and vigorous approval of good and hatred towards wickedness. Without these things, religion is viewed as cold, dead, and in God’s eyes, unacceptable (238).

The affections are the motivation for “all of man’s pursuits” (238). A man conducts his entire life by what he loves or hates. “I am bold to assert, that there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any person, by any thing of a religious nature that ever he read, heard, or saw, who had not his affections moved,” says Edwards (238). For someone to be brought into and sustained in religion, he must have raised affections for the holiness of God and the beauty of the gospel. Some examples of affections in religion are fear of God, hope in God, love to Christ, desire and longings for holiness, delight in the law, sorrow for sin, and compassion for the poor. The chief of all affection is love, since the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37).

Saints of the Bible such as David and Paul demonstrate holy affections in their “pantings for God” (Psalm 42:1) and “unceasing anguish” towards the unsaved (Romans 9:2). Jesus Christ, who zealously clears the Temple, passionately preaches the gospel, and earnestly prays to God, shows perfectly raised affections. Furthermore, religion in heaven consists in “holy love” and “holy joy” (242) in God’s excellencies, particularly displayed in His work of redemption. In Scripture, God pronounces judgment on those who are hardened to positive affections towards God.

By true religion consisting *in great part* in the affections, Edwards means that though religion must have good deeds attending the affections, “there can be no true religion without [the affections]” (244). Therefore, if a person has an unaffected will, he can do all the external showings of religion while remaining dead in his sins.

Having laid the groundwork for the treatise, Edwards spends Part II explaining negative signs of truly gracious affections. If one confuses the signs, he may suppose he is saved when he is not. Highly raised affections are no sign that someone has saving grace, as the same chapter of Scripture that describes Paul as being provoked in spirit at the idolatry of the Athenians also describes the unbelieving Jews becoming jealous to the point of forming a mob and arresting Jason (Acts 17). The same crowd that cries “Hosanna in the highest” later cries, “Crucify him!” (246). Bodily effects such as weeping are also a negative sign, as one person may weep for holiness while another weeps because of a great loss of money. Talking

much about religion is no sign of grace, as there is such a thing as “religion of the tongue” (247). Edwards’ explanation of this is heightened when he says that praising and glorifying God is no sure sign, as many in Scripture praise Christ for the miracles He did, yet only for that (Matthew 9:8).

A sudden, unexplainable feeling in one’s mind and heart, even if it is accompanied by a text of Scripture, does not mean that it is divine. “There seems to be nothing in this which exceeds the power of Satan,” Edwards says. The Scripture can be manipulated to give false assurance. Conviction for one’s sins is another negative sign that can arise from nothing more than a natural, self-preserving fear of hell, instead of a respect for God’s holiness (253). This person will do anything to get out of hell, even if it means believing in a God whose holiness is nauseating to him (254). On the contrary, having confidence and assurance in one’s state before God does not mean that one is saved (256). Edwards writes, “The devil does not assault the hope of a hypocrite, as he does the hope of a true saint” (257). He contrasts a gracious trust in Christ with trusting in one’s assurance (259). Lastly, an appearance of Christian love, accompanied by other affections does not prove anything about one’s eternal destiny (250). Therefore, if a person is convicted of sins, but hears the song “I am a Friend of God,” he may be elated with joy and thankfulness to an imaginary redeemer for giving him an imaginary redemption (251).

Departing from negative signs, in Part III Edwards expounds on those things that are positive signs of true grace. They are not meant to infallibly label someone as a Christian or to comfort stubbornly disobedient Christians, but rather to serve as tests to make our calling and election sure and to work out our salvation in fear and trembling.

The foundation of gracious affections is that they “arise from those influences and operations on the heart, which are spiritual, supernatural, and divine” (264). God gives the Holy Spirit to Christians “as his proper lasting abode” “to influence their hearts, as a principle of new nature, or as a divine supernatural spring of life and action” (265). The Spirit is an “indwelling principle” that cannot be generated by a natural man (265). Edwards writes, “This new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of the understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul” (266).

The love of God’s moral excellency in itself is the “spring of all holy affections” (274, 278). Edwards argues that it is gracious only when a person loves God’s infinite glory as it is in itself, without the person receiving any benefit. He explains, “A natural principle of self-love may be the foundation of great affections towards God and Christ, without seeing any thing of the beauty and glory of the divine nature” (275). If someone first loves God for what He does for him or her, then they “begin at the wrong end,” and only love God for their personal interest (275). “In the love of the true saint, God is the lowest foundation; the love of the excellency of his nature is the foundation of all the affections which come afterwards, wherein self-love is concerned as a handmaid” (276). The foundation of Christian praise is the adoration of God’s holiness in the plan of redemption and the holi-

ness of the blood of Christ, whereas a hypocrite “puts their experiences in the place of Christ, his beauty and fullness” (277).

Gracious affections do not arise from mythical experiences without mental activity (281), but come from the conviction of the reality of Scriptural truths. When the truths of Scripture are presented to the mind, the new sense in the heart “sees a beauty in it, and so inclines to it, and closes with it” (286). This is what the Scripture means by being led by the Spirit—the person is attracted to the same things to which the Spirit is attracted. A true Christian clings to every part of the gospel as present heart-felt reality, as opposed to distant intellectual propositions (291).

Gracious affections are characterized by evangelical humiliation, as opposed to legal humiliation. The legally humiliated may strongly deny works-based salvation and exalt free grace, yet remain an enemy to God in his heart by making the amount of humiliation a basis for his own righteousness. The evangelically humbled will never be comfortable with their indwelling pride and look to Christ as their Mediator instead of floundering in their own self-abasement (298). The true Christian’s pride appears great to him, not his humility (300). Christians cannot backslide forever, as their new nature is attended with a lifelong growth in holy love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy (303). “The Scripture knows no true Christians, of a sordid, selfish, cross, and contentious spirit,” says Edwards, especially that which is disguised as “zeal” (307). In all of these qualities, Christians demonstrate beauty and symmetry—meaning that if there was a grace in Christ, the same grace is present in every Christian (309). They do not show zeal without gentleness, or compassion without justice, whereas hypocritical affections are “blown like violent, uncontrolled winds” (311). For all these affections that are given, the Christian is never content with himself and longs for more holiness (312).

Good deeds display gracious affections and signify both to one’s neighbors and to one’s own conscience that he is saved. “There is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature [than true grace],” says Edwards (318). One’s confession is to be tested by his behavior, as actions are the best interpreter of the heart (322). In acts of the will, the desires of a person’s heart are put on trial, and one should look no further than to his present obedience to gain assurance (326). “Holy practice under trials is the highest evidence of the sincerity of professors to their own consciences” (328). Therefore, truly gracious affections are wrought by the Spirit of God to give a supernatural sense of the beauty and certainty of divine things revealed in Scripture, to promote God-exalting humility and Christ-like characteristics, and to produce good deeds to display one’s faith to the world and to one’s own conscience.

True Religion and the Local Church

Edwards’ insights in *A Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections* are a window into the experiences of Christians in the life of the church for all times. Many

of our waking hours are spent milling over questions such as who we will date and marry, where our children will go to college, or how much money we have in our retirement fund. Though these questions certainly deserve our keen attention, the most important question is how sinful humanity deserving of suffering, death and eternal hell, are made right with their holy, righteous and sin-hating Creator. If God is holy, how can a sinner please Him? Indeed, if we paid more attention to the eternal state of our souls instead of other less pending questions, our personal lives and the lives of our churches would be drastically different. It is the business of the church to faithfully emphasize the distinction between believers and unbelievers, as failing to do so forfeits the church's identity and mission.

It is built within the human conscience that certain actions are praiseworthy or blameworthy. Those who fall short of God's holy standard deserve hell and those who do not go to heaven. Though we all have fallen infinitely short of His glory, God procured redemption for us by sending His Son Christ to die on the cross for sinners, and it is only through Him that we are reconciled with God. To many in our churches, the conversion division lies at a "personal relationship with Jesus," "accepting Jesus' gift of forgiveness," or "confessing that Jesus is Lord." But much difficulty comes in qualifying this phraseology. What is this relationship and who is this Jesus? What does "accepting a gift of forgiveness" look like? Is confessing that Jesus is Lord the same as confessing that Barack Obama is President? Leaving these questions with loose answers is one of the devil's greatest tools against the church. If he can tweak the meaning of just one of these words, it will cause us to build the wall between the converted and the unconverted in the wrong place. Persons will begin to think they are Christians when they are not and the church will encourage church members into a deeper hole of false assurance. Therefore, it is important for us to examine the following within the context of the local church: The mistaken indicators of converted affections; the effects on the life of the church; and the root of truly gracious affections.

Just as Jonathan Edwards begins *Religious Affections* by outlining negative signs—that is, those that are falsely supposed to indicate saving grace—I will also start there in order to clear away confusion and to pave the way for true indicators of Christian grace. Just as the church in Edwards' day had their own false tests, every age of the age has their own areas of conversion confusion. These are particular actions, mindsets, activities, sets of knowledge, statements of belief, etc., that are mistaken as tests to discern whether a person is saved. Before listing several of these tests particular to our church, there are three overarching characteristics of all of these negative signs.

First, they tend to be increasingly easy and pleasing to the mind set on the flesh. When the rich young ruler approaches Christ to ask him what he must do to inherit eternal life, Christ tells him that beyond these laws that he has kept, he must sell all he has and give it to the poor. Jesus says that it is more difficult for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle (Matthew 19). Nicodemus marvels that one must be born of God to enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3). In fact, though Jesus' burden is easy and his yolk

is light, He repeatedly challenges people, telling them that only those who want to go to heaven will go there—only those who are willing to sell everything they have, forsaking mother and father and children and lands for the sake of the kingdom. Any test of a true follower of Christ should not lessen the demands of Christ Himself.

The second characteristic of false tests is that they lean towards external actions that require no change of heart motives. As Paul instructs the believers in Colossae, “let no one disqualify you regarding food or drink...” to contend with a sect who regarded external rules above the affections (Colossians 2). False signs are often characterized by having their foundation in some external activity.

A third overarching characteristic of the negative signs is that they often rely much on internal swaying of the emotions in opposition to external action, making assurance grounded upon warm, comfortable feelings, or even deserted, melancholy feelings. Any supposed sign of grace that is based in swaying emotions resulting in complacency that falls short of repentance and seeking Christ are false.

Now let us point *Affections* at ourselves to examine whether we have adopted some false signs to discern truly gracious affections in the life of the church. To begin, it is no sign of grace if one is a well-rounded citizen in our communities by being a good employee, participating in community events, fulfilling one’s civic duty, etc. This even goes for serving in the military, being a social worker, or a police officer. That is, being a good citizen does not equal being a regenerate citizen. Whereas I believe Christians are to contribute to the public good by voting, running for public office, and so forth, this is nothing beyond the power natural man has in his flesh. Prior to his conversion, Paul contributed greatly to the public order and was viewed as a law-abiding citizen, yet remained without God in his heart; Pharaoh contributed greatly to building Egypt as a kingdom, yet was a vessel of destruction. One can be involved in every matter of public order in this small town society, yet have no grace in his or her heart.

To attend church, Sunday School, become a church member, walk an aisle, fill out a card, raise a hand, pray a prayer, or talk with a pastor are other false tests. An assurance that is based upon a recollection of a past subjective experience is upon unstable ground. One should not look to these as guides for testing whether one is converted or not. Jesus’ words that not everyone who cries “Lord, Lord!” will be saved on the last day should alarm us to realize that even a public confession can be mimicked by the devil (Matthew 7:21).

Participating in the life of the church, by teaching Sunday School, maintaining the church grounds, organizing potluck dinners, competing in Bible Drills, changing diapers in the nursery, etc., are not signs of gracious affections. Judas Iscariot, chosen as treasurer among Jesus’ disciples, was really a thief (John 12:6). It is my fear that many in our churches base their salvation in what they do for the church instead of what Christ has done for them on the cross.

What do you think when you see someone with a tattered Bible—worn pages and full church bulletins with underlined passages and notes in the margin? These

are not necessarily signs of gracious affections. Extensive study and knowledge of the Bible, reciting and recalling applicable Scriptures in certain situations, or arguing extensively, powerfully, intellectually, and passionately for biblical doctrine is nothing beyond the power of normal human intellect. Someone can know all the truth of the Bible yet have an unaffected heart, studying the Scriptures for no greater reason than to confirm himself in his own self-righteousness.

Serving in ministry leadership as a pastor/preacher or as a missionary has nothing inherent in it that makes it move any further than what natural man can perform on his own strength. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13 that there is a way that one can give up everything he has, even his own life, performing all religious devotional duties impressing all who would see it, and fail to act virtuously before God, because the heart is on vacation. Being active in evangelism, even overseas evangelism and church planting—one of the highest activities of sainthood in our eyes, should not be a test to determine whether one is regenerate. A man can sell all he has and move to a country whose government is hostile towards Christianity in order to plant churches; or he can study the Scriptures daily and attend the newest conferences to improve his ministry; yet at the bottom of his heart be doing this all for the sake of his own personal reputation or to establish his own righteous record before God.

There is nothing inherent in singing praise songs to God that is gracious. For one to desire to recognize God's complete control of the world, His power, His majesty, so much that he will join the choir to lead the church is no sure sign of saving grace. One can voice praise, thanks, and even count all of the blessings that God has given him, yet love these gifts rather than God. Praising and thanking God for His gifts as the foundation of that love is not virtuous in God's eyes.

These are I think the most prominent mistaken accompaniments of truly gracious religious affections. In summary, if someone who is not a Christian can perform something in the same manner, appearance, producing the same effects, then we are not looking to the heart of where true saving grace lies. This is a hard habit to break, to reason, "His Bible is worn out. Therefore, he has true affections for Christ." A worn Bible can belong to those who try to disprove it with all their might, just as some of the loudest singers in church are those who love God only for what they get out of Him. There will be many who lament at the Day of Judgment because they tried to please God with their actions while harboring dead affections for Him.

We have looked at a few false indicators of truly gracious affections. Since "true religion, in great part, consists in holy affections," and the business of the church is to propagate the true religion among all peoples of the earth, mistaking gracious affections chokes life out of the church by confusing her identity and mission. Though the extent of the effects on the church is too vast to cover here, I will try to condense them into three areas.

First, mistaking truly gracious affections preaches a false gospel to sinners. It does this first by lessening the demands of God's law, which is summed up in loving the Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving our

neighbor as ourselves. God's first and greatest commandment is for us to have a heightened affection towards Him. If we reduce this to external actions without touching the heart, we have only reached a small area of the law. Therefore, a person can refrain from drunkenness, adultery, murder, gluttony and sloth, yet break God's laws because his affections are indifferent towards God and he operates from a self-centered fear of hell. If a person does not recognize that their sin disease is one of the affections, then they will prescribe the wrong remedy—instead of one that aims at the affections for God, it will result only in empty moral reform. Christ came to die to set sinners free from their bondage to sinful, deadened, rebellious affections towards the Father.

Second, mistaking truly gracious affections deadens the church's worship. Worship with indifferent affections is like an egg with no yolk in it—it is just lip service to God. In Hosea 6:6, the Lord says, "I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice," teaching that our affections during worship are the foundation of acceptable worship. Again, Psalm 63 shows that the heart of David's worship was in contemplating the glory of God. And in Psalm 51, he desires a contrite heart before God before he makes burnt offerings. The holy affections of the saints are a sweet fragrance to God.

And third, mistaking truly gracious affections defiles the purity of the church. The church is described as a "spiritual house" and a "royal priesthood," that is, the church is essentially a body of members who are in spiritual union with Jesus Christ, those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells, who are called out of the kingdom of darkness into God's marvelous light (1 Peter 2:5, 9). God sent Christ to purify consciences from dead works to serve the living God. With what we have seen, what are dead works but those things that we do that boast the appearance of goodness to cover up indifferent affections towards God Himself? Though weeds grow among the wheat as false brothers and sisters enter the fellowship, it does not follow that the church, a beacon of true religion in a dark world, should intentionally defile herself with them, as the Scripture says that it is the enemy who distributes the weeds (Matthew 13:25). As such, church discipline in essence is to place the affections on trial: "Do you love your sin more than the Christ you profess?" Her concern for the holiness of God displayed through her members shines forth as a light to those who remain devoted to sin.

The affections have been neglected as absolutely essential to true religion. In many churches, the criteria for religious virtue are nothing beyond what natural man can perform apart from the gracious influence of God's Spirit. The truth is that there is something in the Christian that is of a wholly different nature from a non-Christian. The non-Christian by nature is a child of wrath, enslaved to his vice. He gives whole-hearted energy, attention and devotion to worldly pursuits, yet he is cold towards Christ. He then mimics the outward manifestations of true Christianity by praying, singing hymns, tithing, helping the poor, or studying theology, in order to convince others as well as his own conscience that he is justified. In the new birth, God gives to us Christ-ward affections—a taste for Christ's holy excellence, unblemished sufficiency and glorious beauty. Christ moves beyond a

list of facts to be remembered to a Savior to be savored. True religion cannot be segregated into one part of our existence since we receive from God all of our existence. When we dissolve the affections, our Christianity becomes nothing more than empty Sunday-morning tradition, half-hearted worship, and self-seeking service that will blow away like chaff. When a person has holy affections, though drought, scorching heat, and fire devour the stock, still a living root remains, and in God's time, it will sprout green leaves. Edwards' *Religious Affections* points us to what our hearts need, raised affections for the certainty of the divine truths of Scripture centered in the person and work of Christ, motivating us unto self-sacrificing spiritual worship for His name's sake. ☹️

Spurgeon, the Pastor/Theologian

Tom J. Nettles

Whatever else he was, Spurgeon was a Christian theologian, preeminently a "Pastor/Theologian." He wanted to see the gospel preached and presented in light of a full grasp of the biblical revelation. Whether in apologetics or preaching, Spurgeon looked for fullness, proportion, symmetry and uncompromised clarity as hallmarks of a faithful presentation of God's gospel.

Don't Stop Short

Spurgeon saw no half-way house to the gospel. For him the only true theology was a fully Christian theology and any attempt to gain a hearing by stopping short of a fully evangelical presentation of the gospel, even in apologetic situations, was a betrayal of the call of the Christian. "That department of polite literature called Natural Religion leads nowhere and profiteth nothing," Spurgeon maintained. An apologetic attempt by R. A. Redford in *The Christian's Pleas Against Modern Unbelief* failed in the lead task of making a truly Christian plea, Spurgeon pointed out. Redford made a noble attempt to create a neutral intellectual position by breaking down the citadel of objections in order to show that theism, the possibility of revelation, the existence of the miraculous, and other foundational issues were not irrational positions. "Our author imagines," Spurgeon observed, "that *simple theism* may become an adytum to the inner sanctuary of more select evidences."¹ In his attempt to tear down the *negative* he has made a fundamental error by omitting an aggressive proposal of the *positive*. Spurgeon believed this approach mistakenly assumes that the philosophical argument for *possibilities* creates *receptivity*. Spurgeon was skeptical of the method and felt that best approach was always an insistence on the full package of the gospel.

Bare theism and natural theology filled the air “with volatile sentiment, and expresses itself in lackadaisical phrases about ‘the benevolence of the Creator,’ ‘the beauty of his works,’ or ‘the traces of design that are scattered through the universe.’” Such affirmations are a “paltry subterfuge” when what such poor souls need is saving faith; no good comes from dalliance with their prejudices. Spurgeon, therefore, believing that it was preposterous for a Christian minister to plead with an infidel to become a theist, proposed a more robust and aggressive approach to dealing with “Modern Unbelief.” His first postulate was, “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” The second was, “He that believeth in God must accept Christ as a mediator.” The third continued, “He that accepteth the one mediator between God and men must receive the atonement.” Any method that encourages less leaves a person with no reason to rejoice in God or sing praises to him with spirit and understanding. Apologetic methods that focused on creating neutrality and failed to embrace the full presentation of the gospel would be like trying to solve a crime problem by “intreating burglars not to carry fire-arms.”²

Spurgeon wanted no theology or apologetic that was not fully Christian and eschewed any method of presentation intended to bring unbelievers only half way to truth. Such methods tended toward the opinion that openness to theism constituted right standing before God. The cure for limp and languid convictions on theology was a good soaking in the reality of one’s own sin, a perception of the “sovereignty of divine grace, a participation in the renewing work of the Holy Ghost, and an abundant entrance into that life which deals with spiritual and eternal verities.” Theology was not just a right head, much less a half-right head, but a healed heart. Without that, “savage orthodoxy usually begets a frivolous unbelief.”³

He was fully in favor, therefore, of apologetic works that aimed at disproving the validity of attacks, either direct or indirect, on the inspiration of Scripture. All parts of the Bible had been “vigourously assailed” at some time, but great powers of faith and ability had come to its defence and “left it more confirmed than before.” Luthardt’s defense of the Johannine authorship of the fourth gospel was worthy of the immense labor it involved in its establishment of the authenticity of the history of that book. All biblical students should be grateful to such defenders of the faith for “an attack upon the outworks of inspiration is aimed in reality at the citadel itself.” Zeal for one must accompany zeal for the other.⁴

Spurgeon advocated a pure Biblicism for theological construction. He believed, confirming the position of Robert Rainey, that the Scripture contained a perfect system “gradually developed in the Old Testament, and speedily completed in the New.” When Rainey, however, filled out this biblical system with doctrinal developments in church history and the discoveries of modern times, and pointed to the “corporate teaching capacity” of the church, Spurgeon resisted. He knew of no corporate church and thus of no such teaching capacity. We may gain assistance through others that interpret Scripture doctrines, but no addition to the doctrines themselves may be allowed. “Development of Christian doctrine

in the Scriptures is one thing, and the development of those doctrines after the completion of the Scriptures is another.”⁵

These things should not be confounded. Christian Doctrine, to the degree that God wants us to know, has mature development in Scripture and the church may not add to, diminish, amend, or dilute by false synthesis any assertion of the biblical text. We may find a way to give clear teaching on a variety of subjects and seek to show their mature biblical development and relations, and we may surely benefit from the way Christians through the ages have formulated these biblical truths and their practical applications, but any effort to go beyond the biblical text and its own internal development perverts the truth.

The way Spurgeon related these ideas served as a foundation for his criticism of R. W. Dale’s *Laws of Christ for Common Life*. Spurgeon questioned, if not the candor, at least the relevancy of Dale’s approach in his statement, “A man may believe in the Nicene Creed, and in the Creed attributed to Athanasius, or in the confession of Augsburg, or the confession of the Westminster divines; but if he does not believe in the Sermon of the Mount—believe it seriously as containing the laws which must govern his own life—he has denied the faith, and is in revolt against Christ.”⁶ Spurgeon considered such paragraphs to assert a “vicious irrelevancy,” of the nature of asking if a person preferred Jotham’s parable in the book of Judges to Calvin’s *Institutes*. The inferences that underlie the comparison amounts to a discrediting of the “choicest standards of orthodoxy.” Spurgeon asked pointedly if Dale were revolting against all creeds including those “ancient Catholic Creeds, which sound Protestants, with one consent, were willing to accept.” As for his own part Spurgeon was jealous for such ancient landmarks, and believed that Dale’s resistance to the imposition of any creed on the ministers or members of the Congregational churches could only lead to fragmentation and eventual decline as a force for truth and godliness. “What can you expect if you lack any element of cohesion.” How all of this confessional concern relates to biblical authority Spurgeon revealed when he put forward another inquiry that he felt equally pertinent to Dale’s strange proposition. “Why put forward an early discourse of our blessed Redeemer before he had set forth the full purpose of Redemption,” Spurgeon queried, “or ever he said, ‘The good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep’—as if the Sermon on the Mount is to be accounted a complete body of divinity?”⁷

Dale’s failure at the confessional level extended from an interpretive method that pushed him into misapplication and disfigurement of biblical truth. If one does not see the moral teaching of Christ in light of his redemptive work and his own humanity’s dependence on divine grace, then his supposed preference of the words of Christ to the words of a creed is not that at all—rather, it amounts to a preference of one’s own narrow idiosyncratic creed to the confession of the church at large through the centuries. Which of these actually presents the greatest faithfulness to the Bible?

Find the Center

Spurgeon, therefore, looked at the meaning of all texts as expressive as one part of the larger biblical synthesis of meaning. The synthesis that satisfied Spurgeon's overall grasp of biblical teaching was covenant theology. "The subject is the basis of all theology, and ought to be a chief point of study among believers," he contended.⁸ This idea he found perhaps the single most encouraging concept in the Bible. He began a sermon entitled "The Wondrous Covenant" with the words, "The doctrine of the divine covenant lies at the root of all true theology."⁹ A preacher who grasps and maintains clarity on the distinctions within the covenant is a master of divinity. "I am persuaded," he affirmed, "that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and of grace."¹⁰

In "The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant," Spurgeon asserted that every relation we have with God has a covenant character and "that he will not deal with us except through a covenant, nor can we deal with him except in the same manner."¹¹ He described the covenant of grace as "made before the foundation of the world between God the Father, and God the Son; or to put it in a yet more scriptural light, it was made mutually between the three divine persons of the adorable Trinity." In this covenant "Christ stood... as man's representative." Though individual men would benefit personally from this arrangement, no individual man stood as a party to the arrangement. "It was a covenant between God with Christ, and through Christ indirectly with all the blood-bought seed who were loved of Christ from the foundation of the world."¹² The power of Spurgeon's theological conceptions and the joy of preaching consisted in grasping and conveying a clear vision of this divine initiative.

It is a noble and glorious thought, the very poetry of that old Calvinistic doctrine which we teach, that long ere the day-star knew its place, before God had spoken existence out of nothing, before angel's wing had stirred the unnavigated ether, before a solitary song had distributed the solemnity of the silence in which God reigned supreme, he had entered into solemn council with himself, with his Son, and with his Spirit, and had in that council decreed, determined, proposed, and predestinated the salvation of his people. He had, moreover, in the covenant arranged the ways and means, and fixed and settled everything which should work together for the effecting of the purpose and the decree.¹³

Within the framework of the covenant Spurgeon found his only source for the encouragement of Christians; his understanding of the gospel was built on covenant theology; all of God's actions toward creation, sin, redemption, providence, and final consummation were built on the covenant; his own exhilarating spiritual experiences flowed from lengthy meditation on the eternal and sure provisions of the covenant. "My soul flies back now, winged by imagination and by faith, and looks into that mysterious council-chamber, and by faith I behold the

Father pledging himself to the Son, and the Son pledging himself to the Father, while the Spirit gives his pledge to both, and thus that divine compact, long to be hidden in darkness, is completed and settled—the covenant which in these latter days has been read in the light of heaven, and has become the joy, and hope, and boast of all the saints.”¹⁴

The sweetest consolation for the despondent saint comes in reflection on the everlasting covenant, an understanding of “what God did for us in past times.” Nothing can give joy to the spirit and steel to the soul like a song of “electing love and covenanted mercies.” When you are low, Spurgeon advised, it is well to sing of “the fountain-head of mercy,” the “blessed decree wherein thou wast ordained to eternal life, and of that glorious Man who undertook thy redemption.”¹⁵ To see the “solemn covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well” reflecting that one is an object of eternal electing love is a “charming means of giving thee songs in the night.”¹⁶

For the sake of planting the reality of the covenant firmly in the minds of his people, he loved to set it forth as a discussion between the persons of the triune God, though he knew clearly that he could not tell it “in the glorious celestial tongue in which it was written” but would “bring it down to the speech which suiteth to the ear of flesh, and to the heart of a mortal.”¹⁷ The substance was the same in each successive libretto though the exact words differed in accordance with context. In “The Gracious Lips of Jesus,” a sermon preached around 1857, Spurgeon said, “When God the Father originally made the covenant, it stood somewhat in this form.”¹⁸

My Son, thou desirest, and I agree with thee, to save a number, that no man can number, whom I have elected in thee. But in order to their salvation, that I may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly, it is necessary that some one should be their representative, to stand responsible for their obedience to my laws and their substitute to suffer whatever penalties they incur. If thou, my Son, wilt stipulate to bear their punishment, and endure the penalty of their crimes, I on my part will stipulate that thou shalt see thy seed, shalt prolong they days, and that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in thy hands. If thou to-day art prepared to promise that thou wilt bear the exact punishment of all the people whom thou wouldst save, I on my part am prepared to swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater, that all for whom thou shalt atone shall infallibly be delivered from death and hell, and that all for whom thou bearest the punishment shall hence go free, nor shall my wrath rise against them, however great may be their sins.¹⁹

The conversation continued with an appropriately worded response from the Son in scriptural language, “I delight to do thy will, O my God.” On the basis of that covenantal arrangement all the saints were justified in the mind of God prior to the shedding of one drop of the Redeemer’s blood. “The surety’s oath was quite enough; in the Father’s ears there needed no other confirmation,” for by his Son’s

oath, the Father's heart was satisfied. His Son had sworn to his own hurt and would not change.²⁰

Another of these dialogues constructed by Spurgeon included the stipulations made by the Spirit, as well as the agreement entered into by Father and Son. The Father and the Spirit carried one side of the covenant, and the Son the other. The Son carried the side that related to man while the Father and Spirit, in ways appropriate to each, pledged to honor the work of the Son on behalf of man. He imagined the Father speaking thus,:

I, the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto my only begotten and well-beloved Son, a people, countless beyond the number of stars, who shall be by him washed from sin, by him preserved, and kept, and led, and by him, at last, presented before my throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. I covenant by oath, and swear by myself, because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be for ever the objects of my eternal love. Them I will forgive through the merit of the blood. To these will I give a perfect righteousness; these will I adopt and make my sons and daughters, and these shall reign with me through Christ eternally.

In the same vein he envisioned the Spirit in viewing how the Father had given a people to the Son joined in full harmony with the words,

I hereby covenant that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken. I will show them their need of redemption; I will cut off from them all groundless hope, and destroy their refuges of lies. I will bring them to the blood of sprinkling; I will give them faith whereby this blood shall be applied to them, I will work in them every grace; I will keep their faith alive; I will cleanse them and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented at last spotless and faultless.

That pledge in the covenant presently is operative, being scrupulously kept. Christ Himself then took the other side as the representative of the people, and covenanted with His Father.

My Father, on my part I covenant that in the fullness of time I will become man. I will take upon myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world, and for my people I will keep the law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of thy just and holy law. In due time I will bear the sins of all my people. Thou shalt exact their debts on me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and by my stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. I will magnify thy law, and make it honourable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of thy law, and all the vials of thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon my head. I will then rise again; I will ascend into heaven; I will intercede for them at

thy right hand; and I will make myself responsible for every one of them, that not one of those whom thou hast given me shall ever be lost, but I will bring all my sheep of whom, by thy blood, thou hast constituted me the shepherd—I will bring every one safe to thee at last.²¹

On the side of the Son, the covenant is perfectly fulfilled. Only now he continues to intercede to bring all his blood-bought ones safely to glory.

Given the reality that all things are included in this covenant, should a sinner come to be sure of just one part of it, then he may assume that all of it is his. All parts of it stand or fall together, for the one true God, the triune Jehovah has pledged as a manifestation of His own glory, faithfulness, and truth to accomplish every part of it—nothing of all events and things can be omitted from the provisions of this covenant for creations, providence and redemption all serve its end. Thus if the most lowly and meek of sinners can be assured of forgiveness, he can be denied nothing from the eternal bounties of divine mercies or the temporal goodness of his providence. “When I know I am pardoned, then I can say all things are mine.”²² Spurgeon exuded an exhausting amount of spiritual energy on this point and stretched his gifts to the limit in emphasizing it.

I can look back to the dark past—all things are mine there! I can look at the present—all things are mine here! I can look into the deep future—all things are mine there! Back in eternity, I see God unrolling the mighty volume, and lo! In that volume I read my name. It must be there, for I am pardoned; for whom he calls, he had first predestinated, and whom he pardons, he had first elected. When I see that covenant roll, I say It is mine! And all the great books of eternal purposes and infinite decrees, are mine! And what Christ did upon the cross is mine!²³

Spurgeon continued in an unrestrained accounting of all the things that the pardoned person could count as his on the basis of the unity and immutability of the covenant. On he went through the list with some indication as to the purpose of each gift contained in the covenant of grace. All the wheels and circumstances of Providence, afflictions, prosperity, all the promises of the Bible, the future of the earth’s dissolving in a great conflagration, the great judgment, the river of death, the resurrection, and heaven—all belong to the pardoned sinner. “What though there be palaces there of crystal and of gold, that sparkle so as to dim mortal eyes; what though there be delights above even the dream of the voluptuary; what though there be pleasures which heart and flesh could not conceive, and which even spirit itself can not fully enjoy the very intoxication of bliss; what though there be sublimities unlawful for us to utter, and wonders which mortal men can not grasp; what though the Divinity hath spent itself in heaven, and doth unravel his glory to make his people blessed—all is mine!”²⁴ The covenant not only served as the basis for coherent theological construction, but embraced every point of the shield of faith wherewith one could quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.

In his devotional study *Morning and Evening* the covenantal arrangements of the triune God consistently make their way into the text. For example, on December 26 for the morning Spurgeon wrote:

Jesus is the federal head of his elect. As in Adam, every heir of flesh and blood has a personal interest, because he is the covenant head and representative of the race as considered under the law of works; so under the law of grace, every redeemed soul is one with the Lord from heaven, since he is the Second Adam, the Sponsor and Substitute of the elect in the new covenant of love. The apostle Paul declares that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedek met him: it is a certain truth that the believer was in the loins of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, when in old eternity the covenant settlements of grace were decreed, ratified, and made sure forever. Thus, whatever Christ hath done, he hath wrought for the whole body of his Church. We were crucified in him and buried with him, and to make it still more wonderful, we are risen with him and even ascended with him to the seats on high. It is thus that the Church has fulfilled the law, and is “accepted *in the beloved*.” It is thus that she is regarded with complacency by the just Jehovah, for he views her in Jesus, and does not look upon her as separate from her covenant head. As the Anointed Redeemer of Israel, Christ Jesus has nothing distinct from his Church, but all that he has he holds for her. Adam’s righteousness was ours so long as he maintained it, and his sin was ours the moment that he committed it; and in the same manner, all that the Second Adam is or does, is ours as well as his, seeing that he is our representative. Here is the foundation of the covenant of grace. This gracious system of representation and substitution, which moved Justin Martyr to cry out, “O blessed change, O sweet permutation!” this is the very groundwork of the gospel of our salvation, and is to be received with strong faith and rapturous joy.

The theme occupied his thoughts again on the morning of August 26, when he commented on Psalm 111:9, “He hath commanded his covenant forever.”

The Lord’s people delight in the covenant itself. It is an unailing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them into its banqueting house and waves its banner of love. They delight to contemplate *the antiquity* of that covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember *the sureness* of the covenant, while meditating upon “the sure mercies of David.” They delight to celebrate it as “signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well.” It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its *immutability*, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, shall ever be able to violate—a covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of ages. They rejoice also to feast upon *the fulness*

of this covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them. God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their Comforter, earth their lodge, and heaven their home. They see in it an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul possessing an interest in its ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible; but oh! how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman, that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God's people to contemplate *the graciousness* of this covenant. They see that the law was made void because it was a covenant of works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because grace is the basis, grace the condition, grace the strain, grace the bulwark, grace the foundation, grace the top-stone. The covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a storehouse of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy.

During the year Spurgeon encouraged spiritual growth by meditation on the covenant in 72 different devotions. March contained only one that spoke of the covenant while December had nine. The least amount, other than March, was four in June and August.

Sermons regularly employed the covenantal arrangement of salvation as a vital part of his proclamation. The covenant of works made with all mankind through Adam posited life, corporate life, on the basis of obedience, but death for the whole on the occurrence of disobedience. When he fell, we all fell and became inheritors of sin and heirs of wrath, bound to sin and subject to misery. Though the covenant of redemption was made before creation within the eternal will of God appropriate to the distinct operations of each person of the Trinity, Spurgeon viewed its effectuality as dependent most significantly on the Son. In "Christ in the Covenant," he dealt with the place of Christ in the "covenant of eternal salvation" under the assumption that "Christ is the *Sum and substance* of the covenant."²⁵ He then summarized His attributes as eternal God and perfect man, His offices as prophet, priest and king both in His humiliation and His exaltation, all the works of Christ that He did in our stead, all the fullness of the godhead in bodily form put in motion for empty sinners, the life of Christ in whom His people are hid, and the very person of Christ in His glorious, ravishing, delightful, endearing presence that contains all these other gifts and transcends them by taking us into the depths of pleasure that only may be found at His feet. Consistent with but beyond all the offices and descriptions of attributes, "the person of Christ is the covenant conveyed to you."²⁶

Work for Symmetry

Such a lofty center of theology some would convert into an excuse for passivity and pessimism. Not Spurgeon. He saw reason for action and great hope. Scripture was filled with ideas, doctrines and motives to drive us to make our calling, and thus, our election, sure. The Covenant embodied all of divinity in its

rich fullness and perfect symmetry—God and man, sin, judgment, and salvation, faith and action, heaven and hell. None need overstep the established boundaries of revelation or understate the things surely revealed. If we know that where sin abounded grace abounded all the more, we need not conclude that we magnify grace by pursuing sin. Spurgeon discovered as one of the treasures of divine revelation its power to halt the fallacious journeys of our sophomoric and sinful logic.

In a sermon on Deuteronomy 22:8, entitled “Battlements,” Spurgeon expressed his view of the expositor’s task in deriving theological ideas from Scripture. Battlements were placed around the rooves of houses to protect children, or inattentive adults, from falling off the roof to their death. While this implies, from the practical side, our obligation to do what we can for the temporal safety and well-being of our fellow man, its more profound application is that we not overstep designated boundaries for the spiritual and eternal safety of our own souls and the souls of others.

Spurgeon affirmed that none need fear the “most high and sublime doctrines” of divine revelation, for God had “battlemented” it. No one need fear the doctrines of election, eternal and immutable love, or any point of revelation concerning the covenant of grace. It is a high and glorious truth, a truth of clear revelation, that “God hath from the beginning chosen his people unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth.” Many simpletons, however, have perverted this doctrine, perhaps some purposefully, into antinomianism, leaping over the battlements God has placed around it. Not only does God have a chosen people, but those will be known by the fruits of holiness, and their zeal for good works; not only will they be forgiven of sin, but purged from sin. The same holds true for the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints—“A housetop doctrine indeed!”—in that while it holds great promise and comfort for the believer, yet battlements are in place to prevent its abuse. Spurgeon quoted Hebrews 6 and other warnings as applicable to Christians in order to show that “if the first salvation could have spent itself unavailingly, there would be no alternative, but a certain looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.”²⁷ Even so, in the doctrine of justification, the free, unmerited declaration of righteousness by which God pronounces the ungodly forgiven and esteemed as law-keepers, if no sanctification follows, then the presence of justifying faith is dubious. “Where faith is genuine, through the Holy Spirit’s power, it works a cleansing from sin, a hatred of evil, an anxious desire after holiness, and it leads the soul to aspire after the image of God.”²⁸ Paul and James cooperate in making sure both tower and battlement are in place. “Thus is each doctrine balanced, bulwarked, and guarded.”²⁹

He explained the necessity of seeking such biblically integrated doctrinal fullness as a special stewardship for the preacher. Expounding the subject of faith and regeneration in 1871, Spurgeon gave insight into the dangers and difficulties involved in this pastoral delicacy. In making “full proof of his ministry” a pastor requires much divine teaching, not only in the manner and spirit of his ministry, but also much in the matter of his ministry. “One point of difficulty,” Spurgeon advised, “will be to preach the whole truth in fair proportion, never exaggerating

one doctrine, never enforcing one point, at the expense of another, never keeping back any part, nor yet allowing it undue prominence." Practical result depends on an equal balance, (symmetry and proportion as Jonathan Edwards would say), and a right dividing of the Word. One vital doctrinal area where much depends on such proper relationship is in the positioning of the work of Christ for us, and outside of us, and the operations of the Spirit within us. "Justification by faith is a matter about which there must be no obscurity, much less equivocation; and at the same time we must distinctly and determinately insist upon it that regeneration is necessary to every soul that shall enter heaven," for Christ himself has made it essential. Spurgeon feared that "Some zealous brethren have preached the doctrine of justification by faith not only so boldly and so plainly, but also so baldly and so out of all connection with other truth, that they have led men into presumptuous confidences, and have appeared to lend their countenance to a species of Antinomianism." A dead, inoperative faith should be dreaded and special attention must be given to avoiding it. To stand and proclaim, "Believe, believe, believe," without explanation as to the nature of faith, "to lay the whole stress of salvation upon faith without explaining what salvation is, and showing that it means deliverance from the power as well as from the guilt of sin, may seem to a fervent revivalist to be the proper thing for the occasion, but those who have watched the result of such teaching have had grave cause to question whether as much hurt may not be done by it as good."³⁰

At the same time, Spurgeon saw an equal danger in the other extreme. While the emphasis on the new creature as necessary to salvation is clearly biblical, "some have seen so clearly the importance of this truth that they are for ever and always dwelling upon the great change of conversion, and its fruits, and its consequences, and they hardly appear to remember the glad tidings that whosoever believeth on Christ Jesus hath everlasting life."³¹ Some have set so high a standard of experience and have been so "exacting as to the marks and signs of a true born child of God, that they greatly discourage sincere seekers, and fall into a species of legality" that is just as necessary to be avoided as antinomian fideism. The sinner, deeply aware of his damnable failings, must never receive the impression that he is to look within for the ground of his acceptance before God, but must see clearly "the undoubted truth that true faith in Jesus Christ saves the soul, for if we do not we shall hold in legal bondage many who ought long ago to have enjoyed peace, and to have entered into the liberty of the children of God."³²

Spurgeon proposed that the perfect balance in the connection of these doctrines appears in the third chapter of John where both the necessity and secret sovereignty of the Spirit is taught along with the powers of simple faith in Christ. "So, too, in the chapter before us," Spurgeon said in calling his congregation's attention to John 3, "he insists upon a man's being born of God; he brings that up again and again, but evermore does he ascribe wondrous efficacy to faith; he mentions faith as the index of our being born again, faith as overcoming the world, faith as possessing the inward witness, faith as having eternal life—indeed, he seems as if he could not heap honour enough upon believing, while at the same time he in-

sists upon the grave importance of the inward experience connected with the new birth.”³³ As a true Pastor/Theologian, Spurgeon insisted, “I earnestly long that these two doctrines may be well balanced in your souls.”³⁴

Conclusion

Like Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon saw a coherent biblically induced, systematically arranged theology as foundational, not only the Christian ministry, but to a healthy Christian life. The theme that most naturally embraced all the doctrines of Scripture and from which they radiate in perfect symmetry is the eternal covenant of redemption. In explicating this covenant faithfully, giving due attention to all its truths in their proper relation to each other and to the central purpose of the covenant, the minister will give opportunity for the right integration of truth in the spiritual formation on His sheep—repentance and faith, fear and hope, examination and confidence, justification by imputation and sanctification by the renewing of the mind, rest in Christ’s perfect work and pursuit of Christ-likeness. Pastors, arise! Be theologians that our churches may be inhabited by Christians indeed that know the hope of their calling and desire to walk worthy of that calling. 🍀

Notes:

¹ *The Sword and the Trowel* [S&T], November 1881, 582.

² Ibid.

³ S&T, January 1883, 28.

⁴ S&T, January 1876, 44.

⁵ S&T, January 1876, 44.

⁶ S&T, May 1885, 238.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ S&T, June 1878, 312

⁹ *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, [SEE] 5:449.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ CHS, “The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant,” in *Revival Year Sermons*, 36; *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, [SS] 6:212. Spurgeon’s Sermons consists of twenty volumes published in America by Funk & Wagnall beginning in 1857. The last volume [20] consisted of a biography by G. Holden Pike, who eventually wrote a six volume biography of Spurgeon.

¹² SS, 6:215.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ SS, 2:173.

¹⁶ SS, 2:173–74.

¹⁷ SS, 6:216.

¹⁸ SS, 4:97.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ SS, 4:98.

²¹ *New Park Street Pulpit*, 1859, 417ff.; SS, 1:216–17.

²² SS, 4:65.

²³ SS, 4:65.

²⁴ SS, 4:67.

²⁵ SS, 2: 395.

²⁶ SS, 2:402.

²⁷ S&T August 1865, 351.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 352.

³⁰ *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, [MTP] 1871, 133f.

³¹ MTP, 1871:134.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 135.

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