

*Servants of the
Living God*

GRAHAM CHEWTER



Servants of The Living God

by

Graham Chewter

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Publisher's Note: The Gospel Standard Trust issues this book with the hope that it might be spiritually profitable. Although we only issue books we feel set forth a Scriptural standard, there will be differences in opinion and interpretation, and the most gracious of men still have to say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." We trust our readers will prayerfully "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good," whilst bearing in meekness with any imperfections.

*This book is dedicated to Lynn,
my wife of nearly 39 years,
who has willingly given me up
to the Lord's work.*

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I must also thank my fellow-labourer in the gospel, Tim Martin for prompting me to write occasionally for the *Gospel Advocate* magazine. Without his encouragement I do not suppose this book would have been compiled. Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to the Gospel Standard Trust Publications committee and staff for their work in formatting and publishing this volume.

Foreword

Graham Chewter has been blessed with the ability to make his writings accurate – full of variety – of spiritual profit – and interesting: a rare combination.

So here we have the well-known John Warburton and Eli Ashdown; also the lesser-known William Cowper (a remarkable man indeed, but not to be confused with the poet of the same name). Lord Wharton will be new to many, while the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers has already aroused much interest. To close the book, George Rose is well-loved and remembered by many, although some will not know of his stand in “the God-honouring movement” controversy (though there were many godly ministers who took a different view).

This is the type of book which is needed at present, suitable for young and old, and we feel very suitable for older teenagers.

May God’s blessing rest on *Servants of the Living God*. There could be no more appropriate title.

B.A. Ramsbottom

Former Editor, *Gospel Standard*

Introduction

The wise man, Solomon reminds us that “of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” Rather than weary the reader, it is my hope that the contents of this book will be both profitable and glorifying to God.

Each of the chapters are intended to serve as testimonies demonstrating the power of God’s saving grace, beginning in the early seventeenth century through to the twentieth. In a wide variety of ways, we find the truth exemplified - “but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and shall do exploits,” (Dan. 11:32) as we observe humble, and godly people constrained by God-given faith. For this reason, the title *Servants of the Living God* is used in its broadest sense - to include, not only those who exercised a fruitful pulpit ministry, but the gracious aristocrat Lord Wharton, and the Pilgrim Fathers, many of whom were not called to preach; nevertheless, they were used of the Lord for the furtherance of the gospel.

These articles are published in much the same form as they first appeared in the *Gospel Advocate* magazine from 2011 onwards, apart from the final chapter which has been considerably enlarged to cover George Rose’s three pastorates in more detail.

I hope that these brief accounts will serve as “tasters,” awakening a desire to find out more. To this end, further reading is suggested in the Bibliography at the end of the book.

Every learner-driver is instructed to frequently check the rear-view mirror as forward progress is made. Likewise, we do well, from time to time, to look back to the lives of those who proved the faithfulness of God, that by these records of grace we might be encouraged to serve the Lord in our generation.

Graham Chewter

1. Possessing the Land by Faith

The Pilgrim Fathers and their Bible

Men and women of courage and conviction, despite numerous setbacks and deep sorrows, in answer to earnest prayer were led in 1620 to make a new home across the Atlantic. The official motto printed on every American dollar today was certainly true of the Pilgrim Fathers – “In God We Trust.”

With deep interest many look back some four hundred years to one of history’s most famous journeys – the epic voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers to the New World. It is easy to romanticise such events and overlook the trials and hardships endured before and after. However, their journey of faith and endurance gave birth to the richest country in the world and today’s greatest superpower – the United States of America.

Upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, King James VI of Scotland was crowned James I of England. Many of the Puritans, who believed the Reformation had not gone far enough, hoped the new King’s arrival would mark better days and the English Church would be more fully conformed to the Word of God. In this they were to be disappointed. James believed in the “divine right of kings” and considered himself above the law, and demanded complete conformity to the Established Church, else he would “harry them out the Land.”

Around the country, especially in London and the Eastern Counties, God-fearing men and women, finding they could not in good conscience conform, secretly met for

worship for the “godly and comfortable exercise of prayer and hearing the Word of God.” One of these “Separatist” groups meeting in the home of William Brewster (later regarded as the father of New England) at Scrooby Manor in Nottinghamshire was pastored by Richard Clyfton, (deprived of his living at Babworth) and had John Robinson as their Teacher, two most godly men. Through their ministries the people’s hearts were touched with heavenly zeal for the truth. Robinson having been educated at Cambridge began his ministry at St Andrews, Norwich, but as he was later to describe it “the call to separate was a fire shut up in his bones.” This led him to cast himself upon the providence of God, and with his people made a covenant before God, “to walk in all God’s ways made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.” Interestingly, sixteen-year-old William Bradford, in spite of the loud objections and scoffs of relatives and neighbours joined them for worship. The two Williams – Brewster and Bradford were later to play a key role in the settlement in New England both in a civic capacity and as ministers of the gospel.

Scrooby Manor was now under close scrutiny, and government spies travelling the Great North Road soon learnt of the illegal meetings from local informers. Fines were imposed, some subjected to imprisonment and their houses destroyed. Longing for freedom to worship, and acting upon the Saviour’s words, “When they persecute you in one city, flee to another,” they set eyes upon Holland, and after much prayer agreed upon plans to depart the country unnoticed. In 1607 Robinson’s members secretly packed their belongings, and set out on foot the sixty-mile

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journey to the seaport town of Boston. Awaiting them was a sea captain, who for a large sum of money had agreed to smuggle them out of the country. But, before they arrived at Boston, he betrayed them to the authorities. They were searched, (even to the point of immodesty), their money taken, and their belongings ransacked. They were put on display for the crowds, and their leaders confined in the harsh stone cells of the Boston Guildhall. This aroused an interest in their faith and the principles that motivated them.



Figure 1 - Scrooby Manor

A second attempt involved furtively making their way to Immingham, where a ship was anchored in a creek near to the Humber's estuary. By means of a long boat some of the men boarded the ship to ensure all was in order intending to speedily return for the women and children. But the Dutch captain, already nervous about taking these refugees, seeing a great army of English soldiers approaching weighed anchor and set sail. Women and children were now separated from husbands and fathers. A fearful storm raged

almost sinking the ship. With water running into the sailor's mouths and ears they cried "We sink, we sink." Much prayer went up and remarkably the vessel was saved. The ferocious storm had driven the ship far to the north, off the coast of Norway. William Bradford with the other passengers had nothing but the clothes on their backs. Meanwhile, John Robinson, William Brewster and Richard Clyfton were with the terrified children and distressed mothers. The authorities hardly knowing what to do with them, Bradford later explains they

"were glad to be rid of them in the end upon any terms, for all were wearied and tired with them ... and in the end, notwithstanding all these storms of opposition, they all gat over at length, some at one time and some at another."

With much rejoicing, eventually all of them were reunited in the Dutch capital Amsterdam.

Proceeding some months later to the heavily populated city of Leyden, they purchased a suitable building for 8000 guilders providing first-storey accommodation for John Robinson who now shepherded the flock; Richard Clyfton, due to his age having remained at Amsterdam. Here he had freedom to minister to his people in the ground floor rooms. In time, as many as two to three-hundred gathered, delighting to hear the Word of truth from his lips. Years later, William Bradford in looking back in affectionate remembrance of Robinson could say,

"It was hard to judge whether he delighted more in having such people, or they in having such a pastor. They continued many years in a comfortable condition, enjoying much sweet and delightful society and spiritual comfort together in the ways of God. So, as they grew in knowledge

and other gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, and lived together in peace and love and holiness, many came from divers parts of England, so they grew a great congregation. If at any time differences arose, as differences will arise, they were so met with and nipped in the head betimes, or otherwise so well composed that love, peace, and communion were still continued. I know not but it may be spoken to the honour of God, and without prejudice to any, that such was the true piety, the humble zeal and fervent love of this people towards God and His ways, and the single-heartedness and sincere affection one towards another, that they came as near the primitive pattern of the first Churches as any other Church of these latter times have done according to their rank and quality.”

In this they stood conspicuous as a striking contrast to some separatist meetings which were in a state of deep unrest over doctrine and practice.

But all was not easy: they were strangers in a strange land and obliged to learn a new language; and many, formerly having only known agricultural labour, found new skills must be learnt, equipping them to become wool combers, hat-makers, tailors and glovers, as well as masons, carpenters, cabinet makers and stocking weavers.

Now fresh concerns exercised their minds. Even here they were distressed by the King of England’s attempts to interfere with their liberties. In addition, the city people showed scant regard for the Sabbath, and to the grief of many, some of their young people were drawn into sinful ways. Although they found fellowship among Dutch believers, the churches in Holland were in a state of ferment. Was salvation obtained by man’s free will, as some taught, or was it entirely through God’s free and sovereign

grace? To settle the matter the famous Synod of Dort (Dordrecht) sat in session for six months until May 1619. Such was the high regard for John Robinson, it is believed he was invited to participate, or at least, sit-in on the sessions. Formulating the famous 'Five points of Calvinism' the Synod believed it was accurately reflecting the teaching of Holy Scripture and provided a rebuttal to the Remonstrants who had swerved from the truth.

However, dangers arose for the pilgrim church. The emotion of theological controversy spilled into the streets. One day the sixty-three-year-old James Chilton¹ and his daughter Isabella, for not worshipping in any of the recognised churches were mistaken for the resented Remonstrants. Being surrounded by twenty youths they were pelted with cobble stones. James was knocked to the ground and received a near fatal blow to the head.

Could it be the Lord had somewhere better for them, they wondered? With exercised hearts they prayed and fasted, earnestly seeking the Lord's guidance. Some were for starting anew in the West Indies, others had thoughts of Guyana; but at last it was agreed to seek permission of His Majesty King James to establish a colony in the New World. No formal grant of liberty to worship could be obtained from King or Bishop but reading between the lines they concluded that if they conducted themselves peaceably the King would connive at their proceedings.

¹ My wife's paternal grandmother was a Chilton before she married. There is a strong family tradition that she descended from James Chilton's son (also James), who didn't sail with the Pilgrim Fathers, but appears to have remained in Holland or perhaps returned to England.

With the outbreak of another war between the Spanish and the Dutch in 1620 it was agreed that arrangements should be made for, at least, some to depart and others to follow later. The *Speedwell* (believed to have been part of Sir Francis Drake's fleet that defeated the Spanish Armada thirty-two years earlier) was purchased intending to use it upon arrival in the New World as a trading vessel. After a feast of goose and pudding, and a day of humiliation and prayer, they parted with much emotion, casting themselves entirely upon the providence of God. With a fair wind they hoisted sail and crossed to Southampton. The *Mayflower* had preceded them from London carrying the English portion of the emigrants. Journeying on together, unfortunately, the *Speedwell* started to take on water and had to put into harbour for repairs. Having set sail again the passengers were dismayed to discover another serious leak obliging them all to wait at Plymouth for another repair. Was this sabotage, they wondered? A few decided to remain in England, so it was reluctantly agreed to sell the *Speedwell* and some of their supplies, whilst those who were resolved to emigrate joined the *Mayflower* company, which finally set sail on 6th September.

Summer was over. Now much later in the year than originally planned they were at greater risk from the elements. It has been reckoned that in those days their three-thousand-mile journey was as dangerous as flying to the moon! Mid-Atlantic terrific storms arose. Being a merchant cargo ship the conditions were not conducive to comfort, and for safety's sake they must remain in the cramped and unhygienic conditions below deck. One of their number, John Howland, later to rise to a high position both in the Church and community, venturing above deck

was immediately washed over-board. Desperately grasping a sail rope trailing in the water he was hauled back on-board more dead than alive. Despite this ordeal he was to live on till 1673, the last man left of those that went over on the *Mayflower*. Today, two and a half million people can claim descent from this godly man. If he had died there would have been no Franklin Roosevelt, neither George Bush (father and son) as Presidents of the USA.

Such adverse conditions reduced their speed to an average of less than two miles per hour, but after sixty-six trying days, land having been sighted, anchor was dropped at Provincetown Harbour, Cape Cod. Out of the one-hundred-and-two passengers one had died, and one born to the Hopkins family, appropriately named Oceanus. Bradford tells us that

“they fell on their knees and blessed the God of heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean and delivered them from all its perils and miseries.”

Before leaving Holland, John Robinson had wisely suggested the need for a written agreement. Being now in danger of mutiny from “strangers” – probably hired labourers, who were claiming an end of all authority, the leaders seeing the peril and seeking to quell the unrest called all the adult males into the ship’s cabin, and a solemn Compact was drawn up which became the basis of the constitution for the infant colony and the first American charter of self-government.

“In y^e name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, the loyall subjects of our dread sovereigne Lord, King James, by y^e grace of God, of Great Britaine, France and Ireland, King, defender of y^e faith, having

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undertaken for y^e glory of God and advancement of y^e Christian faith, and honour of King and country, a voyage to plant y^e first colonie in ye Northern parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly and mutually in y^e presence of God, and of one another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civill body politick, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of y^e ends aforesaid; and by virtue hearof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equall lawes, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meete and convenient for y^e generall good of y^e Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In Witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cap-Codd y^e 11 November, in y^e year of y^e raigne of our soveraigne Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland y^e eighteenth, and of Scotland y^e fiftie fourth, Ano. Dom, 1620.”



Figure 2 - The Mayflower Compact

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All forty-one men having signed, indicating that each person would submit to majority rule, the first subscriber, John Carver, “a man godly and well approved among them” was appointed first colonial governor.

William Bradford, after Carver’s much-lamented death in 1621 was elected Governor. Reflecting in after days on their near-desperate conditions he reminds us that there were:

“No friends to welcome them, nor inns to entertain or refresh their weather-beaten bodies, no houses ... to repair to ... Whichever way they turned their eyes (save upwards to the heavens) they could have little solace ... For summer being done, all things stand upon them...and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue. If they looked behind them, there was the mighty ocean ... What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace?”

In bitterly cold weather, so cold that their clothes froze upon them, an exploration party of thirty-four men set out in a shallop (a light open boat for shallow water) and a long boat to “spy out” the land, seeking to determine the most suitable place to settle. Upon their return the *Mayflower* crossed the bay where the Pilgrims disembarked. Old James Chilton had very recently died but, tradition has it that his daughter Mary was the first female to set foot on Plymouth Rock.

However, their trials were not over. Although the work to build a meeting house and private dwellings began in real earnest, the unhealthy conditions they had been subjected to on board ship began to take its toll. Over the next few months half of their number died, mainly through

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malnutrition, or scurvy as it was then known. There was also fear of wolves, a plague of mosquitos and rattlesnakes, and worse still the threat of massacre by the native Wampanoag Indians. Yet the Lord was with them as “they sought to reproduce in the New World what was best in the Old.”



Figure 3 - The Mayflower

Some of the Indians showed themselves friendly, instructing them when and how to grow Indian corn and other crops using fish as a fertiliser. Imbued with what is sometimes called the Protestant work ethic, whatsoever their hands found to do, they did it with their might. With thankful hearts they praised the God of all grace for providing an excellent harvest, holding a Thanksgiving Day in November 1621 at which the fifty Pilgrims were joined by ninety native people.

Here then were a people who loved God and His Word and had gone to great lengths to find freedom of worship as directed by the Holy Scriptures. Believing in the

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priesthood of all believers, every family had a copy of the Geneva Bible, which was read daily in family worship, fathers taking seriously their responsibility to minister to their own families. They had embraced the confidence of their Pastor back in Holland, (who, sadly, died before being able to join them) that “God had more light and more truth to break forth from His Word.”



Figure 4 - The Plymouth Plantation

The Geneva translation was the great Puritan Bible, and the translation that the famous bard Shakespeare often alluded to. During Mary Tudor’s cruel reign of 1553-1558 some hundreds of well-educated Puritan preachers fled from England to the continent, some settling in the “The holy city of the Alps” – the free city of Geneva, the home of John Calvin. Here the great Reformer encouraged his brother-in-law William Whittingham to unite with Miles Coverdale, John Knox, William Kethe (composer of the tune Old Hundredth), and others to produce the first complete English Bible translated in its entirety from the original tongues, Hebrew and Greek.



Figure 5 - The First Thanksgiving

About twenty years earlier Tyndale was put to death at Vilvorde having persevered, despite numerous difficulties, in publishing the New Testament and had translated part of the Old. Coverdale, Tyndale's friend proceeded to complete the Old Testament, but not being familiar with Hebrew he translated into masterful English from Luther's German Bible and the Latin Old Testament. The Geneva Scholars therefore sought to make improvement on these great endeavours and provide a rendering that conformed more closely to the very words the Holy Spirit had inspired. The Geneva New Testament was issued in 1557, the Psalms in 1559, and the whole Bible rolled off the press just a year later. It was an instant success. Nicknamed, the "Breeches Bible" for its quaint translation of Genesis 3:7 ("Aprons" AV), it was the first Bible printed in easy-to-read Roman type. To assist the reader in identifying specific passages, it contained not only chapter divisions but verses as well. This was supplemented with numerous helpful marginal annotations, some carried forward from Tyndale, others supplied by Calvin and Beza, as well as the translators

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themselves. The result was a real study Bible with maps and charts, and thousands of cross-references to help the diligent student; and printed and leather-bound in *quarto* (just ten inches by eight inches) it was easy to carry. In all, one hundred and forty-four print runs were produced over the next several decades before being eventually displaced by the increasingly popular Authorised Version of 1611. The language was terse and accurate, but occasionally pedantic and lacking in musical flow, such as the rather staccato sounding translation of John 14:6, “I am that way, and that trueth, and that life.” However, it had set a high standard of accuracy and faithfulness and was relied upon heavily as one of the many former translations diligently compared by the King James translators in 1604-11. So, where necessary the lumps and bumps were “ironed” out, giving the Authorised Version its beautiful rhythmic language and poetic pulse.

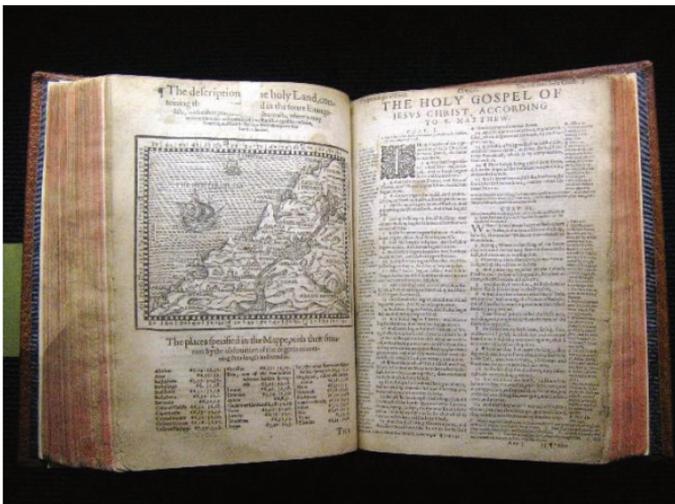


Figure 6 - A Geneva Bible

Interestingly, John Alden the ship's carpenter on the *Mayflower* had brought his brand new 1620 edition of the King James Bible with him, which today can be seen on display at Pilgrim Hall Museum, Massachusetts.

Armed with their much-loved Geneva Bible each family would gather for public worship whatever the weather. One visitor to Plymouth in 1627 penned the following description of the Pilgrim's place of worship and assembling:

“Upon the hill they had a large square house (the Fort) ... the lower part they use for their church, where they preach on Sundays and the usual holidays. They assemble by beat of a drum, each with his musket or firelock, in front of the captain's door; they have their cloaks on, and place themselves in order, three abreast and are led by a sergeant. Behind comes the Governor, in a long robe; beside him on the right hand comes the preacher with his cloak on, and on the left hand the captain with his side arms and cloak on, and with a small cane in his hand; and so they march in good order, and each sets his arms down near him. Thus they enter their place of worship, constantly on their guard night and day.”

Here they sat on rough-hewn log benches whilst Elder Brewster preached “powerfully and profitably.” In the winter the women would bring their foot stoves – a receptacle in which hot coals were placed – providing at least some warmth in the pew. At times such were the conditions that the Communion bread froze, and as it was broken fell with a clatter onto the plates. Their services were some hours in length, and if any began to show signs of sleepiness, they would be given a poke with the verger's wand.



Figure 7 - A Foot Stove as used by the Pilgrim Fathers

One memorable trial and deliverance that was experienced in 1623 has been preserved to us. Drought came as the burning summer sun scorched the earth, withering the crops. Each were exhorted to privately examine their spiritual state between God and their conscience, and solemnly gathering at the Fort, humbled themselves before the Lord by fasting and prayer. For some eight or nine hours they continued, and recalling the promises of God, wrestled with him in prayer. Being a Wednesday, upon arriving, the native Indians were puzzled as to why the Pilgrims were not at their usual employ and looked askance at them on their bended knees. But though they met in the morning under a cloudless sky, as they

wended their way down the hill toward their homes, signs of deliverance were clear. Gathering clouds soon dropped down long refreshing showers, prompting the natives to exclaim, "Their God can not only send rain, but *gentle* rain that doesn't harm the crops!"

Not only was this a wonderful interposition of Providence for their good but served as a sure sign to the Indians that God was with his people, and no doubt assisted the Pilgrim's endeavours to reach these people with the gospel. One of their great ambitions in their bold adventure to the New World was the propagation of the gospel, or least to be as a "stepping-stone" for others. This desire was indeed fulfilled. In 1631 John Eliot "the Apostle of the Indians" arrived from England with a deep, prayerful burden for natives, longing they might be delivered from their superstitious darkness by the light of Christ. He learnt their language and gathered a church of converted Indians in 1651 and gave them the Bible in their own tongue. By 1687 there were no fewer than six churches of baptised Indians plus eighteen gatherings of those seeking instruction, ministered to by as many as twenty-four native preachers helping four English missionaries.

Within twenty years after the Pilgrims arrival many others followed, some twenty-six thousand. Charles I having succeeded his father King James in 1625 appointed the cruel and heartless Archbishop William Laud. Suspected by many as a "closet papist" and seen as an "evil genius" he relentlessly pursued those who could not in good conscience conform to practices of the Established Church, in some cases ordering their ears to be lopped off or their noses slit. To avoid these horrors, sometimes whole churches emigrated, like the congregation which

worshipped at St Botolph's Church, Boston (the famous Boston Stump) under John Cotton, their minister, thereby originating Boston, New England. Many more, especially from the eastern counties, fled the country. It is of no surprise therefore that the first three counties in New England were named Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. A brief glance of a map reveals numerous place names carried over, such as Haverhill, Braintree, Dedham, Cambridge, Chatham, as well as Chester, Leicester and Truro, etc. Today as many as thirty-five million people world-wide claim descent from the Pilgrim Fathers. In addition to the American Presidents already mentioned we could add, James Garfield, John Adams and Zachary Taylor. Also, George Eastman who founded the Eastman Kodak company, well-known for its photographic film. But of particular interest to Christians – the famous and prolific blind hymnwriter Fanny Crosby, author of “Safe in the arms of Jesus” and “Pass me not, O gracious Saviour.”

Over the past four centuries the light of the gospel has spread to all parts of America, and from that vast country to all parts of the globe. We must let the highly esteemed William Bradford, Plymouth Governor from 1621 until his death in 1657, have the last word:

“As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation; let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise.”

2. Good Lord Wharton and his Bible Charity

Philip, Lord Wharton, the Fourth Baron 1613-1695

Born into an aristocratic family – fought in the Civil War - a friend of Oliver Cromwell – for a time locked up in the Tower of London – founded a scheme to provide Bibles for young people which continues to this day – as a philanthropist Lord Wharton’s long and eventful life glorified his Saviour as he used his considerable influence and assets to support gospel ministers and to promote many good causes.

His Life and Times

The seventeenth century was one of the most turbulent periods in British history, both politically and religiously – this included the breakdown between Crown and Parliament, Civil War, execution of the King, formation of a republic for eleven years, the ejection of two thousand Anglican ministers from their livings, the Great Fire of London, and the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

It was at the beginning of this century, on April 18th, 1613, that Philip Wharton was born at Aske Hall, Richmond, North Yorkshire, the eldest son of Thomas and Philadelphia. Interestingly, just two years before his birth, a new revision of the Holy Bible in English was published, which was to gain widespread acceptance – the King James translation or Authorised Version. This is particularly significant, for this little boy, Philip Wharton, was to

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become a distinctly zealous promoter of God's precious Word.



Figure 8 - Philip, Lord Wharton

His father was a Member of Parliament for Westmoreland and exhibited strong sympathies with the principles and practices of the Puritans who believed the reforms in the Church of England were not sufficiently far-reaching. Sadly, the Puritans have often been caricatured as

kill-joys, who lived a dull and very sombre existence. However, the truth is, they emphasised the importance of delighting in God – His Word influencing every aspect of life, personal faith and practice, family life and church life, as well as the conduct of the nation.

Together with his wife, described as noble and virtuous, Thomas and Philadelphia sought to bring up this new-born child (and subsequently another son, Thomas) in the fear and admonition of the Lord. In common with other Puritans their home was distinguished by the doctrines of the Reformation and personal piety. It was into this home that King James I was welcomed for a night on his way north to his native country, Scotland in 1617; no doubt a memorable experience for the four-year-old Philip.

The happiness of this home was disrupted by the early death of his godly father, when he was only a lad. Bryan Dale, one of Lord Wharton's biographers explains:

When only nine he lost his devout father. He had, however, the benefit of the example and counsel of an excellent mother, for whom he always cherished a reverent and tender affection. From a child he knew the (holy) Scriptures, and the faith of his mother dwelt in him also. He was distinguished, as was said by one of his admiring friends, by "the morning star of early piety."²

The Wharton family history can be traced back to a period sometime before the Norman Conquest of 1066, when several branches of the family settled in North Lancashire and Westmoreland. Later, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the family home, Wharton Hall, was

² *The Life of Good Lord Wharton* by Bryan Dale. p61.

built in the parish of Kirkby Stephen, Westmoreland (now Cumbria), and was described as “a fair Lordship on the banks of the river Eden”. The Eden shares the same source as the Yorkshire river Swale, flowing on down through the stunningly beautiful Swaledale.

Philip’s great, great grandfather Thomas, the First Lord Wharton, a somewhat overbearing and ambitious man, was a close ally of Henry VIII. It is reported that:

his chief interest in the Reformation, like his royal Master was personal and political; and in his religion advanced no further than the King, who prided himself on being “the defender of the faith,” hanging Roman Catholics who denied his supremacy, and burning Protestants who rejected the Roman Catholic doctrines he enjoined.³

He served in Henry’s Parliament as Member for Appleby and was made Sheriff of Cumberland in 1529. It is reported that he did the king great service by his wise counsel and experience acting as visitor of the monasteries in Cumberland, Westmoreland and Northumberland. During Henry’s reign the dissolution of monasteries put an end to most of these corrupt and idle institutions, their great wealth being coveted by the King and some of his courtiers.

The Second Lord Wharton, also named Thomas, like his father was Sheriff of Cumberland; he represented the county in Parliament and was knighted in 1545. Sadly, he had no sympathy with the progress of the Reformation under Edward VI, being a decided Roman Catholic. When

³ Ibid. p13.

Elizabeth became Queen, he was committed to the Tower for having celebrated Mass at Newhall. During this period of incarceration, he lost his wife and was given a compassionate release.

The Third Lord Wharton, Philip; born in 1555, served as Justice of the Peace for Cumberland and several other counties. After attaining his majority he took his place in the House of Lords which, as far as he was concerned, was rather uneventful, attending debates for forty years without ever taking part! He experienced a great sorrow when His eldest son George, who was heir to the title and estates, was killed. A description of this sad event (with original spellings retained) states:

Nov 11, 1609. On Thursday last, in the afternoon, here fell a very ill accident. Sir Gerge Wharton and Sir James Steward ... rode into the fieldes at Islington; there fought with rapier and dagger, and both are slayne deade at the instant. The quarrel happened the night before at cardes in Whitehall ... They are both buried privately by the King's commandment in the church at Islington, and in one grave together.⁴

The line of succession then led to George's brother Thomas, the father of Philip, the subject of this brief biography. Thomas, as we have seen already, married Philadelphia, daughter of the 1st Earl of Monmouth. Both were blessed with the distinguishing grace of God and sought to nurture their family by godly example and precept. Philip's father died in the full assurance of faith in 1622. When his grandfather also died three years later in 1625, 25th March, two days before the commencement of

⁴ Ibid. p27.

the reign of Charles I, Philip, not quite twelve years of age became the Fourth Lord Wharton, inheriting the title and estates with an income of over £8000 per annum, which would represent some millions of pounds in today's value.

At the early age of thirteen he was sent to Oxford to further his education, entering Exeter College on March 3rd, 1626. It was at this time that one of the godly Puritans, Samuel Wales, minister of Morley, who highly esteemed the boy's father, sought to provide wise advice, counselling the young man in an earnest and tender manner:

Repel with infinite loathing the whispering of those wretches who go about to persuade you that ... forwardness in religion is a stain and blemish to noble blood. Such things are suggested by the father of lies to rob you of true comfort in this life and a crown of glory after death.

As God hath made you heir of your father's greatness, so labour to shew forth an express image of his grace and godly conversation, and think often you hear his voice thus sounding in your ears (for by his life he being dead, yet speaketh) - "my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind."

The Father of mercies enrich with all blessings of heaven and earth the noble and virtuous Philadelphia, your mother; keep your honour from every evil now and ever; season and govern your young years by His Holy Spirit, and as you increase in days and stature, so may you increase in all sanctifying gifts, and in favour with God and man.⁵

Although his youth was somewhat spent in the vanities of the world, Philip Wharton's subsequent adult life and

⁵ Ibid. p61-62.

testimony abundantly demonstrate that this good man's prayerful entreaties were not in vain. One who knew him well wrote:

He was one of the handsomest of men, and the greatest beau of his time; he had particularly fine legs and took great delight to showing them in dancing. I remember to have seen him in his old age, when those fine legs were shrunk almost to the bone, to point to them in that worn and decrepit condition and hear him say, "here are the handsome legs which I was so proud of in my youth. See, what is the beauty of man that he should take pride in it."⁶

Having completed his Oxford education, he obtained a pass from Charles I to travel for three years with his younger brother, Thomas. He journeyed through France and spent time as a volunteer under the Prince of Orange, returning to England in the winter of 1631 having been commanded by the King to attend his annual masquerade.

The following year, aged nineteen, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Wandsford of Pickhill, North Yorkshire. But soon, tragically he was to mourn her loss, for she died, leaving him with two very young daughters.

Upon reaching his twenty-first birthday he was due to take his place in the Lords, but by this time Charles I was ruling without a Parliament. Little by little the scene was being set which ultimately led to the Civil War and the execution of the untrustworthy King in 1649.

About a year after the sad loss of his first wife, Lord Wharton married Jane Goodwin of Winchendon in Buckinghamshire, the only daughter of the Puritan MP for

⁶ Ibid. p62.

Aylesbury, Arthur Goodwin, a man distinguished by piety, wisdom and virtue. Upon his death she inherited the family estate and the Wharton family took up residence at Upper Winchendon Manor.

Lord and Lady Wharton were blessed with twelve children, and experienced deep anxieties and sorrows as well as many joys. Some of their children died in infancy including their third child Arthur. He was laid to rest in the chancel of Wooburn parish church. A memorial brass has the following sobering inscription:

Here lies the body of Arthur Wharton, only son while he lived of Philip Lord Wharton, by Jane his wife, who as borne July 11th, 1641 and departed this life the 15th day March next following.

Nine months wrought me in the wombe,
Nine more brought me to the tombe
Let an infant teach thee, man,
Since this life is but a span,
Use so that thou maist be,
Happy in the next with me.

In addition to this sad loss they passed through deep waters with their eighth child, Goodwin who was both waywardly immoral as well as eccentric; and becoming a spiritualist, professed to be able to contact angels and departed spirits. Furthermore, he regarded whisky as a “sovereign remedy.”⁷ His diary entries at the end of his life hold out some hope that he was brought to repentance.

He was, however, very clever and was recognised as a mechanical genius. In 1676 he patented his design of the

⁷ Ibid. p36.

first effective fire-engine, described as being useful for the “squelching of public fires.”⁸

Soon after the birth of Lady Wharton’s twelfth child she passed away at just forty years of age and was buried at Wooburn. Lord Wharton must have felt this keenly, eulogising her as “a most happy and intelligent woman, in all points most perfect.”⁹

He was to father one more child, William, having married his third wife, Anne Carr, from the Lowlands of Scotland. This son was torn away from them by a sudden and violent death at the early age of 25 having been seriously wounded in a duel; the shock bringing his mother down with sorrow to the grave.

For much of his life Lord Wharton took an active part in public affairs and witnessed the mighty struggle that arose between the Crown and Parliament which culminated in Civil War in 1642. The unwise enforcement of the Book of Common Prayer on the Scots by Charles I served as a catalyst to rouse their Presbyterian zeal.

At the same period Wharton took up the grievances of his native Yorkshiremen, representing them before the King. Charles was so irritated by this that he threatened to hang him if he ever dared meddle again! Despite this threat, Lord Wharton, who had no appetite for war, sought to do all in his power to avert it and supported a petition to the King asking for a treaty with the Scots. A war council was

⁸ Ibid. p36.

⁹ Ibid. p34.

held, and Wharton narrowly escaped being shot as a mover of sedition.

It is evident from his letters that he earnestly desired reconciliation between King and Parliament. He inquires:

Hath all this kingdom no persons prudent enough according to their affection to prevent the ruin coming upon us; or, is it want of industry; or, is it the wantonness of some few interested or incompetent people to pull more down in one day than the rest can build up in years; or, is it a judgement upon us immediately from the hand of God, for which no natural or politic reason can be given?¹⁰



Figure 9 - Swaledale. Lord Wharton owned most of the Yorkshire Dales

When the Scots Regiments entered England to directly challenge the King, Wharton, a close friend of Oliver Cromwell, served as Colonel of a regiment of his own raising and fought in the battle of Edgehill. This proved a

¹⁰ Ibid. p65.

disaster, for his men were soon routed by the Royalist forces. Three or four Regiments ran away, including Lord Wharton's. His opponents claimed that out of cowardice Wharton ran and hid in a sawpit; "Thus started the unpleasant nickname - Sawpit Wharton - which provided his enemies with a taunt for the rest of his life."¹¹ It was soon realised that he was more adapted for war council than active service on the battlefield.

Under Cromwell's leadership, the very disciplined New Model army of Roundheads and Ironsides proved victorious over the Royalist forces, despite their heavy losses, resulting in the imprisonment of the King in Carrisbrooke Castle, on the Isle of Wight in 1648. Once the army became master of Parliament, Wharton withdrew from public life and returned to Buckinghamshire, not wishing to be seen as party to Charles's execution.



Figure 10 - The Battle of Edgehill, 1642

¹¹ *Philip, Lord Wharton – Revolutionary Aristocrat?* p2.

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During this deeply troubled period of English history, one of the most remarkable gatherings of one-hundred and twenty-one ordained ministers and Bible scholars took place, in order to restructure the Church of England – this was the Westminster Assembly of Divines which sat for six years. Lord Wharton, appointed as one of thirty lay Assessors, began with a zealous interest and appeared to support a National Presbyterian Church, but when it was realised that the majority would not allow Independent churches, he supported the dissenting brethren in their contention for more liberty.

Being a warm-hearted Puritan, he recognised the importance of churches having a true God-fearing man as their under-shepherd and was pleased to serve on a committee whose task was to remove scandalous incumbents – those who were inefficient, immoral or decidedly Royalist. He enthusiastically used this opportunity to fill vacant livings with faithful and devoted men. For example, when the living became available at Grinton in Swaledale he wrote to Lord Fairfax expressing his desire that:

An honest, faithful, godly man might be put in who might be of bold spirit and an able body. Most of the Dale, he adds, are in my hands, and I would be exceeding glad therefore ... that it be well supplied.¹²

Over the years he placed Puritans in many of the livings over which he was patron. At his own parish church in Upper Winchendon he appointed the independent minister Thomas Gilbert, while John Gunter, another

¹² *The Life of Good Lord Wharton* by Bryan Dale. p70.

independent was presented with the living at Waddesdon before moving on to the rectory at Bedale in Yorkshire. Whatever sentiments these men held regarding church order and discipline, Wharton, (like Cromwell) was chiefly concerned that they were “able ministers of the New Testament.”

Although heavily involved in public affairs he was very much involved in the guidance and discipline of his children believing that to “spare the rod” was to “spoil the child.” In addition to his wife and family, he took great interest in horticulture and architecture and was especially fond of portraits, gathering a sizable collection of paintings by the Flemish master, Van Dyke and the Dutch artist Sir Peter Lely, which was recognised as the finest collection in England.



Figure 11 - Oliver Cromwell, a Friend of Lord Wharton

At his manor house in Winchendon his close friend Oliver Cromwell occasionally stayed. Cromwell's letters reveal that he took a close interest in the Wharton family. It was even proposed that Cromwell's fourth son, Henry should marry the young Lady Elizabeth Wharton. Although this never materialised due to certain scruples that Elizabeth entertained, this never affected Wharton's friendship with Cromwell – and neither did Wharton's grave misgivings about the execution of the King. They

continued in the bonds of Christian affection, “I know my heart ... I love you in truth,”¹³ Cromwell was to write.

Lord Wharton not only used his close friendship with Cromwell to benefit others in need but used his own considerable wealth, sending money to the Aldermen and Burgesses of Richmond, Yorkshire for the formation of a charity supplying coal for poor families.

Due to the political instability that followed Cromwell’s death, Lord Wharton, with many others, supported the restoration of the monarchy. On his thirtieth birthday, 29th May 1660, Charles II, the “Merrie Monarch,” returned from exile in France. His support of the young King was based on promises of religious toleration in his Declaration from Breda in which it was stated, “No man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion”¹⁴

Despite the promises of liberty to all but Roman Catholics, within two years the Act of Uniformity became law, requiring every minister of the National church to subscribe to all the rites and ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer. The bishops were resolute in enforcing this, resulting in nearly two thousand rectors and vicars, nearly one fifth of the English clergy, leaving the Established church for conscience sake. This Act of Uniformity has been described as a “suicidal Act” for it drove out many of the most learned and godly ministers the Church possessed and began a period of seventy years of spiritual decline.

¹³ Ibid. p72.

¹⁴ Ibid. p77.

Good Lord Wharton and his Bible Charity

Remonstrating with the Bishops, Wharton reported:

During the debate I complained seriously and openly in the House of Lords of the injustice of debarring pastors ordained by the presbytery ... from performing the ministerial office.¹⁵

Furthermore, he did all within his power to support the oppressed and persecuted non-conformists, attending their meetings, paying their fines and receiving them into his home. Many ejected ministers were appointed agents on his estates or managers of the lead mines of Yorkshire.



Figure 12 - Philadelphia and Elizabeth, two of Lord Wharton's Daughters

¹⁵ Ibid. p78.

After some years at Upper Winchendon Manor he moved with his family to Wooburn Manor. It was here he entertained one of the most eminent independent ministers, Dr John Owen, who was then declining in health. Dr Owen wrote to his London congregation; explaining his circumstances, he likened Lord Wharton to Onesiphorus who ministered to the Apostle Paul in his bonds for the sake of the gospel.

With his open support of the non-conformists, good Lord Wharton often stood amazed at the providence of God that allowed him to remain untouched by the authorities. However, he incurred the wrath of the King when he opposed the Declaration of Indulgence. Although this new law would have given more freedom to Dissenters it was strongly suspected that it was intended for the benefit of Roman Catholics. For his opposition to these proposals, Lord Wharton and three others were committed to the Tower of London for high contempt. Having presented a petition to the House of Lords he was released on health grounds after five months.

In 1688 he rejoiced in the arrival of William, Prince of Orange, who had been invited to take the throne with his wife Mary. Both the King and Queen honoured Lord Wharton with a visit to his home at Wooburn. Making good use of the new-found freedoms, he soon registered Wooburn Manor as a meeting house for protestant dissenters, and in his last years continued to support his many friends. He relieved their hardships by paying annual allowances to a number of ejected ministers and provided funds for the erection of meeting houses, including one for his lead mine workers at Melbecks in Yorkshire; he also

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made financial provision for dissenting ministers after his decease.

His closing years were marked by deep family sorrows, but he found consolation in meditating on the Scriptures and dwelling upon the hope of everlasting life. Although suffering from the dropsy, he died comfortably without a groan on February 4th, 1696. "Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright: for the end of *that man is peace*" Psa. 37:37.

His remains were buried within the altar rail of Wooburn Parish Church. A large grey marble monument erected to his memory reads:

In hope of resurrection, here await the second coming of Jesus Christ the remains of Lord Philip Wharton, Baron of Wharton, who, sprung from the noble race of the Whartons in the county of Westmoreland, proved at length their heir and their glory, his honours shedding lustre on his worth ... about three and sixty years he held and graced his place in the House of Lords, was an active supporter of the English constitution, a loyal observer, advocate and patron of the Reformed religion, a model alike of good works and of a true and living faith. His doors stood open to outcast ministers of God's Word, affording them shelter and hospitality; nay more, he dispensed his gifts with liberal hand from year to year to such as toiled in anxiety and want; and setting a noble example of munificence, he directed by his last will that a sufficient share of his estate should be devoted to truly pious uses. Thus he lived, and at length, after manifold troubles endured for God, country and church, he fell peacefully asleep in Christ ... aged about eighty-three.

His Bible Charity

Since the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, Lord Wharton had observed that:

The reading of the Bible had been much neglected, parental teaching and family prayer had fallen into disuse, the practice of public and private catechising had been largely discontinued, owing in part to the repression of Puritan ministers, while many of the conforming clergy “cared for none of these things”; ignorance of the Scriptures abounded, piety declined, and indifference and immorality increased.¹⁶

He was also aware that a significant number of men who applied for ordination were ignorant of a basic knowledge of the Scriptures. Having a great reverence for the Word of God and being persuaded of its truth, excellence and usefulness, Philip Wharton felt burdened to use his financial resources for the promotion of the Word of Life. Today, with the advent of modern printing methods, Bibles are freely available at reasonable prices. By comparison, in the seventeenth century they were very costly.

Beginning about the year 1690, long before Bible Societies had been heard of or Sunday Schools as we know them today, he began his noble work of supplying Bibles for distribution among the poor. Initially eighty Bibles were sent to cities such as York and Leeds for those who had successfully qualified. In 1692, just a few years before he died, he drew up a deed of bequest conveying as many as

¹⁶ Ibid. p112.

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four-hundred and sixty-three acres, subsequently known as “the Bible lands,” at Synithwaite near York to certain Trustees (many of whom were his personal friends) who were to use the income to purchase Bibles.

Children and young people, who wished to receive their free copy of the Scriptures, not only had to be able to read competently, but were required to learn seven of Lord Wharton’s favourite Psalms. These were Psalms 1, 15, 25, 37, 101, 113 and 145, a total of one-hundred and eleven verses. In addition, he was anxious that a younger generation should have a good all-round knowledge of Biblical truth, so he required them to learn the useful Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism.

The selection of Psalms to be memorised is significant.

- Psalm 1 – A clear contrast between the righteous and the wicked.
- Psalm 15 – An emphasis on righteous behaviour and practical godliness.
- Psalm 25 – David’s meditations mingled with prayers, requesting protection, deliverance from enemies and guidance. David prays for release from the guilt of sin.
- Psalm 37 – Encouragement to commit our way to the Lord and to trust in him in the face of evildoers.
- Psalm 101 – A royal code of ethics with a call to faithfulness.
- Psalm 113 – A reminder of the greatness of God and His matchless condescension.