

# *The Gospel Standard Baptist Library*

Newsletter Number 5

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## Introduction

As we have looked at Scottish, Welsh and Irish authors in the previous issues, we should now turn to English authors. However, this category includes the vast majority of books in the Library. We have therefore decided to limit ourselves in this newsletter to highlighting some lesser known writings of well respected English authors, John Bunyan and Thomas Goodwin. We continue our series on specific doctrines by looking at some books which deal with aspects of the doctrine of the Church.

## John Bunyan

Some people become widely known for a single book that they wrote. This is almost the case with John Bunyan, whose fame in the wider world hangs on his writing *The Pilgrims Progress*, almost to the exclusion of all else. It is encouraging to see that the book still has wide reception amongst the unbelieving world too, although viewed mainly as a work of literature. Amongst the Lord's people this and a few of his other books are also fairly well read. These include *The Holy War* and his inimitable autobiography, *Grace Abounding*. However, Bunyan wrote many other valuable works, books which deserve to be better known. We would particularly recommend his book *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, which was especially blessed to Mr John H. Gosden, as recorded in his *Memoir*. Along similar lines, he wrote *The Jerusalem Sinner Saved*, which traces that there is salvation for the worst of sinners in a very encouraging way. Another of his books *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, an exposition of "the broken heart and contrite spirit" which the Lord will not despise, was widely circulated amongst the Gospel Standard churches in the past, but is now again perhaps forgotten. Other choice works include: *The Pharisee and the Publican*, *The Water of Life*, *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate*, *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized* and *All Loves Excelling*. In fact, so voluminous are Bunyan's works, that collected together they comprise a set of three large volumes. Also included in his works, and published separately under the title *Divine Emblems*, are some instructive verses giving spiritual lessons from nature aimed at the young. While the poetry is poor and dated, they may provide a useful resource for Sabbath School teachers. The library have copies of all these works mentioned.

Of course, in the Library there are also a number of excellent biographies of Bunyan, a history of his church at Bedford (and a published transcript of the church book during his time as pastor), and some books on Bunyan country and the places he mentions in his works. One of the rare oddities the Library possesses is an "Elstow" edition of *The Pilgrim's*



John Bunyan

*Progress*, published in 1881 and bound in wood taken from Elstow church, where Bunyan had worshipped in his youth, prior to its restoration in 1880.

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## Thomas Goodwin

Thomas Goodwin was a Puritan, contemporary with John Owen. He was an Independent minister and a member of the Westminster Assembly. For the writings of Thomas Goodwin, J. C. Philpot had words of warm commendation. While he felt Owen was the Prince amongst the Puritans, there were points, especially the eternal union of Christ and his church, in which he felt Goodwin was pre-eminent. It has been said that while Owen had the clearest views of the Apostle Paul's theology, Goodwin saw most clearly into the Apostle's heart. Recently several of Goodwin's works have been reprinted, and received warm reviews in *The Gospel Standard*. We would particularly commend to you *A Child of Light walking in Darkness* (on Isaiah 50:10-11) and *The Return of Prayers* (on discerning answers to prayer). Perhaps Goodwin is at his best in his



Thomas Goodwin

works on the Person of the Lord Jesus (recently reprinted): *Christ the Mediator* (on his substitutionary work of salvation); *Christ Set Forth* (on the exaltation of Christ in Glory); and *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth* (this shows the tender compassion the exalted Christ still has for his people on earth today; it is a most comforting book). Of a more challenging nature, his work *The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith*, is still regarded as a standard work on the nature of true faith. While some of these are only available in the 12 volume set of his works, the recent reprints are all of pocket book size.

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## Doctrine: the Church

The doctrine of the Church has perhaps not always enjoyed the prominence that it should amongst our churches. We are Independent churches, and sometimes fiercely so, but we fear with often little backing beyond tradition, and a desire to do things our own way. Scripture is however not silent on how the Church should be ordered or function. The Church is representative of the Bride of Christ, and chaos in the local church brings dishonour upon the name of the Lord. This is therefore a solemn and important point of doctrine. We should all be willing to examine Scripture as to what it says on these matters. Many godly men have done so, and left writings on the subject. Some would be in agreement with the Independent church government amongst our churches, others strongly opposed. Where there is a spirit that would search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so or no, we believe there will be profit in reading books on all sides in this matter.

From our own position, there are a series of pieces written by Mr Gosden in the 1976 *Gospel Standard*, dealing with the doctrine of the Church, and the gospel ordinances. These have recently been reprinted by the GS Trust as a booklet entitled *The Gospel Church*. There is also a little booklet written by Mr B.A. Ramsbottom: *New Testament Church Order*. A scholarly, but brief and very readable treatment of the doctrine of the Church can be found in Charles Breed's book, *The Church*.

Outside the Independent system, the Library has books such as James Bannerman's work on *The Church of Christ*. Bannerman was a Presbyterian, but his work surveys all types of church government. John Owen and Thomas Goodwin both wrote on the Church, as did many other divines when writing their systematic studies of theology. Perhaps most importantly for a Baptist, John Gill devotes a large portion of his *Body of Divinity* to the practical aspects of the doctrine of the Church, her officers, ordinances and worship.

On worship, the Library has several pamphlets defending our practise of singing hymns (there are also works on Psalm singing, e.g. Romaine's *Essay on Psalmody*), and on the use of musical instruments in worship (taking both sides of the argument). There are pamphlets defending our retention of "Thee" and "Thou" in prayer, and some interesting books on prayer, and especially public prayer, for example, Isaac Watt's *Guide to Prayer*.

The doctrine of the Church also touches on the offices of the Church. Dealing first with the diaconate, there is sadly little written on the subject. There is an excellent sermon by John Brine preached at the ordination of deacons, and this was republished in the *Gospel Standard* for 1965. On the office of the ministry there are a number of works. We think of Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*; Charles Brown, *The Ministry*; and John Newton's booklet *Ministry on my Mind*. Amongst more popular works. From our own background, there are William Huntington's *Letters on Ministerial Qualifications*; Bernard Gilpin's *Sermon on the Ministry* and perhaps pre-eminently, J. C. Philpot's *Meditations on the Ministry of the Gospel*.

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## Sermons of Commentators

There are men who are known for their sermons as George Whitfield, Joseph Irons, J. J. West, J. C. Philpot, J. K. Popham, down to our present editor published as monthly sermons under the title of *Bethel Pulpit*. What perhaps is not so well known is that many men who we know as Bible commentators also had sermons printed which are very edifying and some, easier to read than their commentaries or works. The Library has volumes of sermons by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Owen, John Gill, Thomas Manton, Matthew Henry, and Robert Hawker. Of course, many men's commentaries began life as a series of sermons preached to their congregations. Perhaps one of the most famous example is the voluminous commentary on Job, by the Puritan Joseph Caryl. In 12 volumes, it consists of sermons on every verse in the book of Job. Another outstanding puritan commentary of the same proportions is that of Jacomb on the opening verses of Romans 8 (he never got any further than the first few verses). It is from this commentary that selections were taken for the recent book on the Person of Christ published by the GS Trust.

## Spiritual Poetry

Leaving aside hymns, many of our older ministers used to quote poetry from the pulpit. These included things such as “The Shepherd’s Song” from *The Pilgrim’s Progress*: “He that is down need fear no fall, etc.” Perhaps one of the most quoted poets amongst our circles is Ralph Erskine. Erskine wrote a book entitled *Gospel Sonnets* which is a collection of experimental poetry concerning the work of grace in the soul. A few pieces from this, adapted by other authors, are actually found in Gadsby’s Hymns. It is well worth reading, even if you would not normally read poetry. Two commonly quoted verses are:

“Sin for my good shall work and win,  
But ’tis not good for me to sin.”

“Dost mind the place, the spot of land, Where Jesus did thee meet?  
And how he got thy heart and hand? Thy Husband then was sweet.”

A similar book is Francis Quarles’ *Divine Emblems*. Quarles lived during the 1600s and his Emblems, or poetry are based on Scripture. Other poets represented in the Library include Joseph Swain (the hymn writer, but he also wrote some particularly choice poetry, e.g. his poem on Redemption) and William Cowper (actually more widely known for his poetry than his hymns). Amongst our own circles, several of our ministers have written excellent poetry, these include books of poems by Fred Windridge (Ponsard Road, London), Frederick Marshall (Clifton), Henry Fowler (his poems are always accompanied by a short prose meditation, hence the quaint title *Sighs and Songs*), Alexander B. Taylor (Manchester) and William Brown (Godmanchester). Of course both William Gadsby and William Huntington also wrote some lengthy spiritual poems which are included in their collected works. Finally, some outstanding poets have been women. These include Anne Dutton, Caroline Spire (her poetry was so good, J. C. Philpot thought she had stolen it from other authors), and more recently in our circles, Mrs M. A. Chaplain, whose poetry used to appear in both *The Cheering Words* and *The Friendly Companion* magazines, and Mrs Elizabeth Jempson, who attended Rye chapel, from whose pen came at least one hymn in the *Young People’s Hymnbook*.

### How to Use the Library

**Borrowing Books:** To borrow any of the books mentioned in this newsletter, you do not have to visit the Library, or become a subscriber. Simply phone or email the librarian (contact details below) with the book title you wish to borrow and your address. The book will be posted to you free of charge. Return postage is paid and you have three months to read the book. Similarly, you can borrow any book from the catalogue (except those marked as being in the reserved collection); the catalogue is available on the website.

**Surplus Books:** The Library regularly receives books surplus to requirements and these are sold to raise money for the maintenance and expansion of the Library’s collection and general upkeep. A catalogue is regularly produced.

**5 HOVE PARK GARDENS, HOVE, E. SUSSEX. BN3 6HN.**

Telephone: 01273 559813 E-Mail: [gsblibrary@talktalk.net](mailto:gsblibrary@talktalk.net)

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