

The Gospel Standard Baptist Library

Newsletter Number 11

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Introduction

This issue of the Newsletter is largely given over to highlighting several new titles that the library has purchased or been given since the last newsletter. An update on the project to digitalise and make available our typescript sermon collection on the internet is provided. However, we open with a call to our churches to seek to re-cultivate the habit of reading. Many commentators agree that generally people do not read as was the case in the past. It is a source of concern.

The Importance of Reading

Mr J. K. Popham (1847-1937), the pastor at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, was a great reader. He realised that books have traditionally been the means by which the learning of previous generations is passed on to the present. We stand on the shoulders of giants (as the saying goes—you will find these words round the edge of the £2 coin). It is very proud to assume that we know better than all the godly men and women that have lived in the past, and therefore ignore their writings and testimony as something worthless. It is folly to be ignorant of the past and not read history, because that leaves us open to fall into the same traps, having not learnt the lessons of history. Above all else, the doctrines of the Word of God are ‘truth unchanged, unchanging.’ It must be so, because their author, the eternal Word, is the same yesterday, today and forever. Our needs as sinners have not changed, the means of salvation have not altered, and the working of the Spirit continues the same generation to generation. Therefore if we are spiritually hungry, and exercised in the things of truth, there should be a desire to read. Firstly the Word of God, which should be read daily, and in its entirety from Genesis to Revelation (and for personal reading, ideally consecutively). Then secondly, books which teach the doctrines of the Bible, and that faithfully describe the Lord’s dealings with his church and people in the past.



J. K. Popham

Having proved the worth of good books, Mr Popham often quoted from them in preaching, recommended books in his letters, and encouraged the young people of his congregation to read. We believe this had remarkable fruit. Firstly, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit resting on a ministry that was the product of reading and study, and the personal reading Mr Popham encouraged amongst his hearers at home, his congregation came to appreciate the deep mysteries of godliness.

Secondly, the three ministers who sat under his ministry (Mr John H. Gosden, Mr Frank L. Gosden, and Mr Jesse Delves) were marked out as being particularly eminent

servants of God, principally because they rightly divided the Word of Truth. We venture that, under the Holy Spirit, this was the product of the teaching of a well read ministry, and the encouragement of their pastor to cultivate the habit of reading. Many were blessed under their ministry, and we still reap the fruits of it today.

Thirdly, two young men in his congregation, who were encouraged to read by their pastor, would later go on to form two of the greatest, publicly accessible libraries of free grace literature in the UK. Mr Geoffrey Williams, who was converted from the world under Mr Popham's ministry, formed the Beddington Free Grace Library (now known as The Evangelical Library) and Mr Sydney F. Paul began the Gospel Standard Baptist Library.

We fear our churches are poorer today for the lack of personal reading. Many people's houses appear virtually devoid of books. We are spiritually weak because of a lack of knowledge of the truth, and a shallowness in understanding when it comes to spiritual things. Reading alone will not fix this, but it is a means God has given to the church to its edification. If the Apostle Paul could not do without his books, and he was inspired, how can we ever think we can get by without the resource God has given us—a weighty blessing—good books for our strengthening and instruction.

We would seek to encourage all pastors, deacons, church members and parents to promote the habit of personal reading, and to advocate reading to our young people. If you are looking for material the library catalogue is a good place to start, or even better, consider making a visit with the family to the library to find some of the treasures that are stored on its shelves. We believe there is something in the library for everyone who genuinely comes looking for a good book to read.

'Cultivate the habit of reading while you are young. Later in life you may find less leisure for so delightful an occupation and recreation.' (J. K. Popham)



Mr S. F. Paul

Notable New Books

At the annual trustee meeting in February, a list of new books to purchase for the library was agreed and we bring some of these to your attention.

A lot of effort is being made by publishers to make the Puritans more accessible for today's readers. We have purchased several volumes in a series of modernised Puritan reprints. These include: *The Blessed and Boundless God* by George Swinnock, *Faith Seeking Assurance* by Anthony Burgess, *Gospel Evidences of Saving Faith* by John Owen, and *Rules for Walking in Fellowship* by John Owen. The subjects of assurance (or lack of it) and true marks of real religion are ones people often ask about. Two of these books deal with these important subjects.

Several other Puritan works have been added to the library. A short and very

readable book on justification, *The Lord our Righteousness* by Obadiah Grew, who came from Coventry, is really worth reading. The sermons of James Durham have just been collected together and published for the first time in the USA. This volume has been purchased for the library. Durham is well known for his commentary on Song of Solomon and his book on Isaiah 53: *Christ Crucified*. Also a commentary by Alexander Nisbet on 1 and 2 Peter. Nisbet was a Scottish Puritan. This commentary was part of a series of devotional commentaries written for the common people, and are therefore simple, devotional and easy to read. The library possesses several others volumes in the series, including David Dickson on Psalms, Matthew and Hebrews, James Fergusson on the Epistles of Paul, George Hutcheson on the Minor Prophets and John, James Durham on Job and the Song of Solomon. All of these are highly recommended. These titles include some of the only commentaries we have ever read cover to cover and really enjoyed doing so!

Two new books from the Banner of Truth were purchased. John Hurrian's *Particular Redemption* (reviewed in *The Gospel Standard* for August) and John Calvin's one volume edition of the *Christian Institutes*. This is a new translation form the original French of Calvin's digest of his larger two volume work. It is easier to read than the two volume set, and contains much valuable material. It is a Christian classic, if we may call it that.

We have purchased four books recently printed by Reformation Press in Scotland. *Conversations with a Dying Man* by Samuel Rutherford, is a rare work by this well known Scots worthy. We live in the face of eternity, yet so often live as though tomorrow is our own. Written to a dying man, this book is calculated to stir us up to consider the weighty matters of death and the judgement to come. In the same series of reprints is a little book entitled *Elders and Deacons* by the Scottish Puritan, James Guthrie. There is little available in print on the office of the deacon so this little book is valuable in this regard. Then two books which record the worthies of the North of Scotland in days gone by. The first, *Revivals in the Highlands* by Angus MacGillivray covers an earlier period. The second, *Witnesses of the Far North* is comprised of obituaries collected out of the early issues of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Both have a spiritual warmth about them that commends them to the reader.

Then one quite different book: *God's Ambassadors* by Chad van Dixhoorn. This is a recent book looking at a forgotten work of the Westminster Assembly. We mentioned the work of the Assembly in the last newsletter. What most people don't realise is, the Assembly was convened to reform the English Church. In particular, the Divines were concerned about the standard of pulpit preaching. They vetted every minister then preaching to ensure they had a call and gifts for preaching. We don't think there has ever been a day when preaching in our nation was brought up to such a high standard. We are badly in need of such a reformation today. This book considers the Divines' debates around core issues involved in preaching—what is preaching? What constitutes a call to the ministry? Does the minister require gifts to preach? It is a searching read for any minister, but it is a vital subject and deserves to be widely read, and read by all gospel ministers.

Finally, we have purchased two recent books for children, one on Martin Luther, the other on John Knox. These are attractively produced with many illustrations and

aimed at upper junior, or lower secondary level. We hope to add other titles in the series and hope they will prove useful to our young people. We also hope to purchase in the near future some translations of Dutch biographies of J.C. Philpot and John Warburton aimed at teenagers.

The library has received a number of books gifted to them over the last few months. These include (highlights): *The Gospel Pointing to the Person of Christ* by Andrew Bonar—this little, and rather rare book, is a beautiful look at the most blessed of subjects, Jesus Christ. What more can we say? A recently published volume of sermons by John Murray (the well known Scottish theologian of the twentieth century), *O Death where is thy Sting?* A very interesting book on the early church by Thomas Lindsay, entitled *The Church and Ministry in the Early Ages*. Closely allied to this, a useful introduction to the New Testament by Gresham Machen, which gives a brief background to each of the books and their authors, this might be especially appreciated by our teenage readers. Also a biography for teenagers of Adoniram Judson, the Baptist missionary to Burma—*To the Golden Shore*. Finally, a recently produced volume of Sermons by Mr Herbert Dawson of Bethersden. This includes 50 sermons and would be very useful material for any deacon having to find sermons to read in Chapel services.

Scanned Sermons

Since our last newsletter we have been able to scan all the typescript sermons held by the library of the following ministers: Mr J. K. Popham, Mr J. H. Gosden, Mr F. L. Gosden and Mr J. Delves. Well in excess of 1000 sermons. There is a link to these sermons on the library webpage and they can be freely downloaded for personal use. They are scans of the typescripts and have not been edited in any way, so they will also carry any imperfections of the original typescript. We hope this will be a useful resource for our churches. If anybody has collections of typescript sermons which they would be willing to make available for scanning, please do let us know. The Library has a large collection, but it is by no means exhaustive.

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.

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