

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW HENRY

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PRAYER

[Almighty and Gracious God], let those who in Christ's name are to preach repentance and remission of sins, be endued with power from on high;...and make them good ministers of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine.¹ Amen.

INTRODUCTION

En route from Chester to Hackney (where he ministered for the final two years of his life), Matthew Henry died at Nantwich on 22 June 1714 after a riding accident. His praise continues to be in Bible-believing churches. His *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* remains an honoured and useful tool for pastors and Bible students. Nineteenth-century C. H. Spurgeon regarded Henry's *Exposition* as 'first among the mighty for general usefulness'. The eighteenth-century Methodist evangelist George Whitefield - who was born six months after Henry's death - testified that 'Henry's *Expositions* were of admirable use to lead me into all Gospel truths'.²

As his biographer, J. B. Williams makes clear, the famous Bible commentator was an ardent admirer of the seventeenth-century 'Apostle of Kidderminster' Richard Baxter (1615-91), famous for his

¹ Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer with Scripture Expressions* (London: R. Cruttenden and T. Cox, 1718), 144.

² For Spurgeon and Whitefield details, see the 'blurb' for J. B. Williams, *Memoir of the Life, Character and Writings of the Revd Matthew Henry* (1828; fac. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974).

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occupation of the theological middle ground between sub-orthodox Arminianism and ultra-orthodox Owenism: 'The practical works of Mr Baxter, especially, occupied a very exalted place in his esteem; they are more frequently cited in his manuscripts than the productions of any other author; and he caught, in a happy measure, the holy flame by which they were animated'.³

Committed as he was to doctrinal and practical godliness, it is hardly surprising to find Henry sharing Baxter's strong aversion for antinomianism. That said, in the face of undeniable evidence supplied by himself, Williams labours unconvincingly to insist that Henry did not embrace Baxter's so-called 'neonomianism' - the idea that the Gospel is a [new] 'remedial law'.⁴ Of arguably equal importance, Williams says nothing of Henry's views on the nature and extent of the atonement. On this issue too, Henry reflected the influence of Baxter's books, both the 'practical' and 'controversial' works.

This claim is evident in his *A Scripture Catechism, in the Method of the Assembly's* (1702), a work mentioned but not discussed by Williams.⁵ Recent biographies by Allan M. Harman and Philip H. Eveson also fail to acknowledge Henry's 'Baxterian/Amyraldian' view of the Gospel. The latter seems determined to present him as an 'Owenite', which is simply untrue.⁶

Judging by his *Scripture Catechism*, there can be no doubt that

³ *Memoir of ... the Revd Matthew Henry*, 221.

⁴ As quoted by Williams (ibid. 241), Henry states that 'the gospel of Christ is a remedial law, and you hope to have a remedy by it. It is a charter of privileges, and you hope to be privileged by it; but how can you expect either remedy or privilege by it, if you will not observe its precepts, nor come up to its conditions? The gospel will never save you if it shall not rule you' (*A Scripture Catechism, in the Method of the Assembly's* (1702), *The Complete Works of Matthew Henry - Treatises, Sermons, and Tracts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), i. 106). He further states that, in order to be saved, sinners 'must, therefore, take the benefit of a covenant of grace, must submit to a remedial law; and *this* is it - repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ' (Comment on Mark 1: 15 in *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (London: James Nisbet, 1886), vii. 453).

⁵ Ibid. 225.

⁶ See Allan M. Harman, *Matthew Henry: His Life and Influence* (Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2012), 71; Philip H. Eveson, *Matthew Henry* (Darlington: EP Books, 2012), 43, 89.

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Presbyterian Matthew Henry was not comfortable with the strict 'Owenism' of the Westminster Standards. David P. Field writes that 'Despite the studied practicality of Matthew Henry's writings, [his] Neonomian and Amyraldian tone is to be discerned - even in his catechism, based on the Westminster Assembly's catechisms, and contrary to the claim of his biographer [J. B. Williams], this does constitute sufficient evidence to number Matthew Henry with the moderate Presbyterians in point of theology'.⁷ In this respect, he was one of a sizable cluster of 'Baxterians' including Dr William Bates (1625-99), John Howe (1630-1705), Dr Daniel Williams (1643-1716), Dr Edmund Calamy (1671-1732), Dr Philip Doddridge (1702-51) and others⁸ including lesser writers like Dr Abraham Clifford (1628-75)⁹ and Samuel Clifford (1630-99).¹⁰ Rather than the ambiguous label 'Moderate Calvinists', a good case may be made for calling them 'authentic Calvinists', judging by the explicit views of John Calvin.¹¹

Two examples may be cited. A great admirer of Baxter,¹² and untroubled in believing that Christ died for his hearers indiscriminately, John Howe's sublime evangelistic pleadings have a distinct Baxterian flavour:

God so loved the world, &c. (John 3: 16), and what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love?... And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart, and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the

⁷ *Rigide Calvinisme in a Softer Dress: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe, 1630-1705* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2004), 174.

⁸ *Ibid.* 167-79.

⁹ *Ibid.* 170.

¹⁰ See Samuel Clifford, *An Account of the Judgement of the Late Reverend Mr Baxter* (London: 1701).

¹¹ See Alan C. Clifford, *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism, A Clarification* (Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 1995/2007).

¹² Howe wrote warmly of Baxter's books. He insisted that 'however about Redemption Davenant and Amyraldus may have spoken many of your thoughts, yet their books do not commonly fall into hands of young scholars (whose minds while such are least prepossessed & almost *rasa tabula*) as yours are like to do' (N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall (eds), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), i. 295, *Letter* 436).

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cross for thee? They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn, Zech. 12: 10. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me; by which our Lord said, signifying what death he should die, by being lift up on the cross, John, 12: 32, 33. Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee?¹³

In his justly-celebrated work, *The Redeemer's Tears Wept over Lost Souls*, Howe's tender portrayal of the love of Jesus towards even those who reject Him reveals his convictions over the availability of the atonement:

Thou dost not perish unlamented, even with the purest heavenly pity,...¹⁴

Our second example comes from Dr Edmund Calamy, a personal acquaintance of Matthew Henry. Concerned that we grasp a proper view of the Gospel, Baxter's champion presents the issues with perfect Baxterian balance:

Let us put things together, and take notice, that general grace and special are very reconcilable;...The Scripture appears clear as to both; and where's the inconsistency? Why must we deny general grace to exalt that which is special [as John Gill did later]? Or deny and depress special grace, to advance that which is general [as John Wesley did later]?...And is not this very consistent with our owning that 'God so loved the world' in general, as 'that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, might not perish, but might have everlasting life'? And on the other side, is not general grace sufficiently secured by our maintaining God's love to the world, and His willing the salvation of all men, on condition they turn to Him?...and why then should we go about to dash these truths against each other which are fairly consistent, and agree well together? Let us beware of extremes: and stand upon our guard, lest for fear of one error, we fall into another.¹⁵

Calamy's explanation correlates with the Amyraldian view that a 'dualistic' or two-fold intention features in the Divine redemptive purpose.¹⁶

¹³ 'Man's Enmity to God and Reconciliation between God and Man' in *Works of the English Puritan Divines: John Howe* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1846), 285.

¹⁴ Ibid. 65.

¹⁵ *Divine Mercy Exalted: or Free Grace in its Glory* (London, 1703), 44-54. Parenthetic remarks mine!

¹⁶ See Alan C. Clifford, *Amyraut Affirmed* (Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing,

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While Richard Baxter was the ever-brilliant master and passionate communicator, his 'dualistic' stance is also clear:

For all the wonderful love and mercy that God hath manifested in giving his Son to be the Redeemer of the world, and which the Son hath manifested in redeeming them by his blood; for all his full preparation by being a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all; for all his personal excellencies, and that full and glorious salvation that he hath procured; and for all his free offers of these, and frequent and earnest invitation of sinners; yet many do make light of all this, and prefer their worldly enjoyments before it. The ordinary treatment of all these offers, invitations, and benefits, is by contempt. Not that all, do so, or that all continue to do so, who were once guilty of it; for God hath his chosen whom he will compel to come in. But till the Spirit of grace overpower the dead and obstinate hearts of men, they hear the gospel as a common story, and the great matters contained in it go not to the heart.¹⁷

Baxter's words regarding perspicuous Scripture sum up the convictions of these men:

When God saith so expressly that Christ died for all [2 Cor. 5: 14-15], and tasted death for every man [Heb. 2: 9], and is the ransom for all [1 Tim. 2: 6], and the propitiation for the sins of the whole world [1 Jn. 2: 2], it beseems every Christian rather to explain in what sense Christ died for all, than flatly to deny it.¹⁸

Returning to 'authentic Calvinist' Matthew Henry, his exposition of the atonement takes him beyond the confines of 'limited atonement'; but - to make an observation of immense significance - *not beyond the plain language of Holy Scripture*. Henry obviously shared Baxter's preference for directly-derived Bible-based language instead of the formulations of 'confessional correctness'.¹⁹ In the 'Introduction' to the *Scripture Catechism*, he states this as his hermeneutical priority:

2004), 18, 49-50.

¹⁷ *Making Light of Christ* (Norwich: Charenton reformed Publishing, 2010), 18-19.

¹⁸ *The Universal Redemption of Mankind* (London, 1694), 286.

¹⁹ See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965), 121-2.

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But another thing I aimed at, (and indeed the chief,) is to promote the knowledge of the Scriptures. Divine truths, methinks, sound best in divine language; and the things which God has revealed to us by his Spirit, cannot be conveyed in a more safe and proper vehicle, than by the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, (1 Cor. ii. 10, 13)...²⁰

What this boils down to is that if a 'Confession of Faith' was to be drawn up using strictly biblical terminology, it is impossible to formulate an 'Owenite' article on 'limited atonement', viz, that 'Christ died for the elect *alone*'.

Agreeing with Baxter rather than Owen, Henry states that

God chose [Christ] to be the Saviour of poor sinners, and would have him to save them in this way, by bearing their sins and the punishment of them; not the *idem* - the same that we should have suffered, but the *tantundem* - that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world.²¹

This extract from the well-known *Commentary* provides a rare example of non-biblical, scholastic terminology.²² While its significance would be lost on most of his readers, it shows Henry's debt to Baxter's discussions about the nature of the atonement.

In his debates with John Owen, Baxter insisted that our Saviour Christ's satisfaction for sin did *not* involve the 'same' payment our sins deserve but a 'substituted' payment.²³ Since our sins are threatened

²⁰ A *Scripture Catechism, in the Method of the Assembly's* (1702), *The Complete Works of Matthew Henry*, ii. 174.

²¹ Comment on Isaiah 53: 6 in *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, v. 304). See also Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790 - An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990/2002), 128ff.

²² The *idem-tantundem* distinction is also maintained in *Matthew Henry's Unpublished Sermons on the Covenant of Grace*, ed. Allan Harman (Fearn, Tain, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 30.

²³ Owen insisted that God's justice was only satisfied by Christ's payment of the same penalty or debt owed by the elect to God on account of their sins - the *solutio ejusdem*. Richard Baxter argued that, in virtue of the differences (in detail and duration) between Christ's sufferings and the actual sufferings of the lost, Christ only paid an equivalent debt - the *solutio tantidem*. Since the penalty of the law threatens eternal punishment to impenitent offenders, Christ clearly did not suffer the identical punishment, for his resurrection terminated his banishment. God therefore relaxed the law both with regard to the persons who should suffer (a fact

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with eternal punishment, Christ would be in hell if He paid the same satisfaction. In short, a proper biblical doctrine of penal substitution means that *both* Christ *and* His sufferings were ‘in the place’ of all we deserve. Defending John Owen in a recently-published ‘heavyweight tome’ on ‘definite atonement’, Dr Gary Williams insists that the exact penal nature of the atonement necessarily points to a limited or ‘definite’ atonement.²⁴ Regarded as two ‘clinching’ contributions by the editors,²⁵ Dr Williams fails to grasp the cogency of Baxter’s case that there is nothing in the nature of Christ’s satisfaction to threaten the atonement’s universality. Dr Williams also fails to detect Owen’s flawed reliance on Aristotelian metaphysics in arguing for his ‘*idem*’

Owen obviously agreed with) and the penalty suffered. Clearly, there was not the ‘sameness’ Owen pleads for. The *idem-tantundem* distinction automatically answers Owen’s objection that if any suffer eternally for whom Christ died, then ‘double-payment’ is being demanded. But there is no duplication of payment. Those who reject the gospel do not suffer again what Christ has suffered for them. He ‘paid’ the *tantundem* or equivalent penalty; they will ‘pay’ the *idem* or exact price. Baxter was surely correct to state that both Christ *and* his sufferings were inseparably substituted for the law’s strict demands. Had the law not been relaxed with regard to the offender, none would be saved; had it not been relaxed with regard to the penalty, Christ himself would have suffered ‘the everlasting torments of hell’ (*Catholick Theologie* (1675), I. ii. 40) Baxter’s argument is irrefutable when he observes that the law did not permit the punishment of a substitute in the place of an offender: ‘For the law made it due to the sinner himself. And another’s suffering for him fulleth not the law (which never said, Either thou or another for thee shalt die) But [Christ’s death] satisfied the Law-giver as he is above his own law, and could dispense with it, his justice being satisfied and saved’ (ibid. 50). In other words, coupled with the infinite dignity of the suffering Saviour, his sufferings were accepted as a satisfactory equivalent for all that is deserved by mankind.

²⁴ See Gary J. Williams, ‘The Definite Intent of Penal Substitutionary Atonement’ and ‘Punishment God Cannot Twice Inflict’ in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Perspective*, eds. David & Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013), 461-515.

²⁵ See the review feature ‘Definite atonement’ in *Evangelicals Now*, March 2014, p. 15).

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view.²⁶ Even if there is no necessary connection between Owen's strictly-commercialistic view of the atonement and his exact payment idea, Gary Williams also fails to see how Owen's commercial theory actually negates the idea of the atonement's universal sufficiency.²⁷ The 'over-orthodox doctor' (as Baxter called him)²⁸ really paid little more than lip-service to the time-honoured 'sufficient for all-efficient for the elect' distinction.²⁹ In other words, if the atonement is strictly

²⁶ The mammoth Crossway publication fails to vindicate the Owenite doctrine of 'limited atonement'. Owen clearly saw that his doctrine of limited atonement hung on the 'sameness' between Christ's sufferings and those deserved by the elect. However, he could only argue his case with the aid of Aristotle's metaphysics. His very language betrays him: 'When I say the same, I mean *essentially* the same in weight and pressure, though not in all the *accidents* of duration and the like; for it was impossible that he should be detained by death' (*Death of Death, The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold (London, 1850-55), x. 269-70). Owen therefore resorts to Aristotle's dubious essence/accidents theory to prove his point. In Baxter's view, even this statement 'yieldeth the cause' (Appendix to *Aphorismes of Justification* (London, 1649), 138) but after learning of Baxter's criticism, Owen then granted that 'There is a sameness in Christ's sufferings with that in the obligation in respect of essence, and equivalency in respect of attendencies' (*Of the Death of Christ, the Price He Paid, Works*, x. 448). But Owen's employment of this philosophical distinction simply obscures the fact that there is a real difference between Christ's temporary sufferings and the eternal sufferings deserved by the elect. He cannot establish his concept of 'sameness' without philosophical double-talk. If he is prepared to grant an equivalence in either respect, then he is forced to concede that there is only a similarity, and not a sameness at all. Clearly, Aristotle's metaphysical formula (see *Metaphysics*, tr. J. Warrington (London, 1956), 173, 46) only serves to permit unreal and meaningless distinctions. Despite Dr Carl Truman's unconvincing attempt to laugh off the point, philosopher Bertrand Russell was correct to describe this as a 'muddle-headed notion, incapable of precision' (*History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), 177). For Truman, see *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 216.

²⁷ *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, 482. Dr Williams is surely correct to rescue Grotius *vis-à-vis* Socinus from the charge that his 'Governmental' theory of the atonement excludes the idea of God's retribution for sin (ibid, 490-2). Clearly, Baxter was aware of the Dutchman's exact teaching: 'Yet did [Christ] in the person of a mediator...suffer the penalty, *nostro loco*, in our stead...to satisfy God's wisdom, truth and justice, and to procure pardon and life for sinners...The perfection of Christ's satisfaction consisteth not in its being instead of all the sufferings due to all for whom he died, but...in its full sufficiency to those ends for which it was designed by the Father and Son...' (*Catholick Theologie*, I. ii. 39).

²⁸ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), ii. 199.

²⁹ Making the sufferings of Christ commensurate with the sins of the elect in a quantitative, commercialistic sense explains why Owen modified the sufficiency/efficiency distinction. His deliberate redefinition of it means that the atonement is only sufficient for whom it is efficient: '...it is denied that the blood of Christ was a sufficient price and ransom for all and everyone...' (*Death of Death*, 296). Christ's sacrifice would have been a sufficient ransom 'if it had pleased the

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limited, then the 'credit facilities' of the gospel are only sufficient for the elect. In short, it is only sufficient for whom it is efficient. Undoubtedly, on issues of such fundamental importance, Matthew Henry was persuaded by Baxter rather than Owen.

Just as Baxter's theology satisfied neither Arminians nor the over-orthodox 'High Calvinist Owenites', his 'disciple' Matthew Henry has not been to everyone's liking. J. B. Williams rightly concludes that, 'As a natural consequence, [Henry] has been sometimes claimed by Calvinists; at others by Arminians; and often rejected by both'.³⁰ The causes of their respective hesitations are evident in the *Scripture Catechism*.³¹ In short, he believes the Bible teaches the kind of 'dual-aspect' view of the atonement found in Calvin, Amyraut, Baxter and numerous other divines in the Medieval and Reformed traditions, from Augustine to Ryle. While he clearly affirmed the 'special' efficacious salvation of the elect, Henry - like Baxter - acknowledged a 'general' universal dimension to the atonement, usually 'explained away' by those who take a strictly-exclusive particularist position.

Is Jesus Christ the Redeemer? Yes: there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. ii. 5. Is he the only Redeemer? Yes: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 12. Is he a universal Redeemer? Yes: he gave himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. ii. 6. Did he die to purchase a general offer? Yes: the Son of man was lifted up, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, John iii. 14, 15. Is all the world the better for Christ's mediation? Yes: for by him all things consist, Col. i. 17. Is it long of Christ then that so many perish? No: I would have gathered you, and you would not, Matt. xxiii. 37.³²

Lord to employ it to that purpose;...' (ibid., 295). Baxter writes: '...they cannot without absurdity be interpreted to mean, that his death is sufficient for all if it had been a price for them; and not a sufficient price for them; For that were to contradict themselves...' (*Universal Redemption of Mankind*, 59).

³⁰ *Memoir of ... the Revd Matthew Henry*, 242.

³¹ See the Appendix.

³² *A Scripture Catechism*, 192. Elsewhere Henry affirms: 'The sacrifices of atonement were instituted only for Israel, but Christ being come he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2: 2). The Gospel excludes none that do not by their own unbelief and impenitency exclude themselves' (*Matthew Henry's Unpublished Sermons on the Covenant of Grace*, 42).

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Notwithstanding the wonderful fruitfulness of their ministries, it would have been an antidote to their exaggerated orthodoxy and a basis for theological harmony had Whitefield (in opposition to the Wesleys³³) and Spurgeon (in opposition to Dr John Clifford³⁴) followed Matthew Henry more closely. Whether or not they were ever acquainted with Henry's *Scripture Catechism*, they could have detected his soteriological stance in his expositions of Isaiah 53, John 3: 16 and other texts. Indeed, the biblical balance evident therein is a rebuke to the schemes of both Arminius and John Owen, so justly criticised by J. C. Ryle in his own comments on John 3: 16: 'I have long come to the conclusion that men may be more systematic in their statements than the Bible, and may be led into grave error by idolatrous veneration of a system'.³⁵ Albert Barnes rightly affirmed that 'The fact that Christ died for all, and that all may be saved, should be a fixed and standing point in all systems of theology, and should be allowed to shape every other opinion, and to shed its influence over every other view of truth'.³⁶ Such was undoubtedly the opinion of Matthew Henry. He remains a sure guide for our understanding and experience of the glorious universal sufficiency of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The laying of our sins upon Christ implies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law if we submit to the grace of the gospel...It was the iniquity of us all that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for the salvation of all, and a serious offer made of that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves.³⁷

³³ John Wesley's commendation of Matthew Henry's *Exposition* is remarkably positive and extensive, despite misgivings over the latter's teachings on predestination and particular redemption. Sadly, the assumption is that Henry endorses the ultra-orthodoxy of John Owen, which is simply not the case. Henry's teaching on universal redemption *a la* Baxter is ubiquitous in his writings. See the Preface to John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* in *Works of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: John Mason, 1842), xiv. 236-40.

³⁴ See James Marchant, *Dr John Clifford, CH - Life, Letters and Reminiscences* (London: Cassell and Company, 1924), 166.

³⁵ See *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: John, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, rep. 1999), 159. See also *Ryle on Redemption: The Gospel According to John Charles Ryle*, ed. Dr Alan C. Clifford (Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 2014), 13.

³⁶ Albert Barnes, *A Popular Family Commentary on the New Testament* (London: Blackie & Son, 1850), vi. 139.

³⁷ Comment on Isaiah 53: 6 in *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (London: James Nisbet, 1886), v. 305.

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In short, for Henry as for Baxter, after all the theological jousting is over, the Bible rules. This is well illustrated by an exchange between Spurgeon and Clifford. Referring to his own Calvinistic beliefs, Spurgeon said to his London Baptist colleague, "I cannot imagine, Clifford, why you do not come to my way of thinking." Clifford replied, "I only see you about once a month, but I read my Bible every day."³⁸

Among others who shared Matthew Henry's view of the Gospel, none perhaps had a greater impact in the 19th century than the seraphic Calvinistic Methodist preacher, John Jones, Talsarn. This 'Welsh Baxter' learned his theology from the writings of another much-neglected admirer of Matthew Henry, the Congregationalist Dr Edward Williams of Rotherham.³⁹ Rescuing the Gospel from the cramping tendencies of John Elias's Owenism and soul-destroying antinomian fatalism, John Jones, Talsarn preached in a manner that would have delighted Matthew Henry. On a notable occasion in 1835 during the Bala Methodist Association, he thus lifted up his voice before a large open-air crowd:

God in the Gospel calls upon you to repent, to believe, and to lead a pious and godly life. But He does not mean that you should do all this of your own individual resources. No; He intends that you should put yourselves as you are under the operation of the mighty forces of the Gospel; that you should faithfully employ the means which He has commanded. Turn the prow of your little vessel to the deep; let it sail upon the wide ocean of Christ's Atonement; spread the sails, and steer it on by the guidance of the Word of God. The winds will blow, the mighty forces of redemption will play upon your vessel; the tides will carry it, and you shall find your little bark one day in the haven of eternal rest. You have, my friends, something yourselves to do, and it is of no use at all to expect the operations of the Spirit of God, while we ourselves neglect our duty. 'But what can I do?' Can you not read? Open your Bible; look at it, read it; bring your mind into contact with the great saving forces, and wait for help from above. 'But I cannot pray.' Can you not try? Can you not bend your knee, and put it down on the ground? 'But I must pray from the heart, and this I cannot do.' Would you give Him your heart? Give Him your body, give Him your tongue; and if you cannot say a word, there is One up there who can open His lips to intercede for

³⁸ Cited in Iain H. Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966, rep. 1994), 187.

³⁹ See W. T. Owen, *Edward Williams, DD - His Life, Thought and Influence* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963), 20.

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you. Try fairly; do your best for your own salvation. Do not, at least, rush headlong into perdition. I, indeed, have made up my mind long ago that I shall not go there so. If I must go to hell at all, I shall not go there straight along. No; I shall loiter a good deal about the Garden of Gethsemane; I shall go many a round about the hill of Calvary; I shall bend my knees daily at the throne of grace. I shall be good enough for hell, if I have to go there, after all these efforts. But, blessed be the name of God, we have every reason to believe that this is the high road to heaven, and that no one ever went to hell in that way, and that no one ever will.⁴⁰

APPENDIX

Q. 20 Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

... Go preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned, Mark xvi. 15, 16. Is this good news to fallen man? Yes: Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men, Luke ii. 14. Does this covenant exclude any that do not exclude themselves? No: Whosoever will let him come, and take of the water of life freely, Rev. xxii. 17.

Q. 21. Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

A. The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man; and so was, and continues to be, God and Man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever.

1. Did mankind need a Redeemer? Yes: for by our iniquities we had sold ourselves, Isa. 1. 1. Did the elect themselves need a Redeemer? Yes: for we ourselves also were sometimes disobedient, Tit. iii. 3. Would there have been a Redeemer if Adam had not sinned? No: for they that be whole need not a physician, Matt. ix. 12. Could an angel have been our Redeemer? No: for his angels he charged with folly, Job iv. 18.

2. Is Jesus Christ the Redeemer? Yes: there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. ii. 5. Is he the only Redeemer? Yes: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 12. Is he a universal Redeemer? Yes: he gave himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. ii. 6. Did he die to purchase a general offer? Yes: the Son of man was lifted up, that whosoever believes in him should not perish,

⁴⁰ Cited in Alan C. Clifford, *John Jones Talsarn - Pregethwr Y Bobl/The People's Preacher* (Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing, 2013), 71-2.

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John iii. 14, 15. Is all the world the better for Christ's mediation? Yes: for by him all things consist, Col. i. 17. Is it long of Christ then that so many perish? No: I would have gathered you, and you would not, Matt. xxiii. 37.

3. Is Christ in a special manner the Redeemer of God's elect? Yes: I lay down my life for the sheep, John x. 15. Was their salvation particularly designed in Christ's undertaking? Yes: Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him John xvii. 2...⁴¹

Q. 25 How does Christ execute the office of a Priest?...

... Did Christ [offer his sacrifice] for the purchase of our pardon? Yes: for when he did it, he said, Father forgive them, Luke xxiii. 34. Was it designed to save us from ruin? Yes: he gave his life a ransom for many, Matt. xx. 28. And to reconcile us to God? Yes: for he made peace through the blood of his cross, Col. i. 20. Is this our plea for peace and pardon? Yes: Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, Rom. viii. 34. Is Christ then the great propitiation? Yes: he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world, 1 John ii. 2. And have we hereby access to God? Yes: he suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. And had the Old Testament saints the benefit of this sacrifice? Yes: for he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. xiii. 8.⁴²

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

1. Is redemption purchased by Christ? Yes: he Obtained eternal redemption for us, Heb. ix. 12. Is he then the Author of it? Yes: he became the Author of salvation, Heb. v. 9. Is it redemption by price? Yes: Ye are bought with a price, 1 Cor. vi. 20. Is it a redemption by power? Yes: for he hath led captivity captive, Ps. lxxviii. 18. Is this redemption offered to all? Yes: he hath proclaimed liberty to the captives, Isa. lxi. 1. May all that will take the benefit of it? Yes: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, Isa. lv. 1. Have all the world therefore some benefit by it? Yes: Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, Mark xvi. 15. But have all the world a like benefit by it? No: Thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world, John xiv. 22.

2. Is it enough for us that there is a redemption purchased? No: for there are those who deny the Lord who bought them, 2 Pet ii. 1. Is it enough to hear of it? No: for to some it is a savour of death unto death, 2 Cor. ii. 16. Is

⁴¹ *Scripture Catechism*, 192.

⁴² *Ibid.* 196-7.

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it enough to have a name among the redeemed? No: Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead, Rev. iii. 1. Is it necessary therefore that we be partakers of the redemption? Yes: that we may say, Who loved me, and gave himself for me, Gal. ii. 20...⁴³

⁴³ Ibid. 203.