

COVENANTING WORTHIES

Covenanter Witness

In the recent series on Notable Anniversaries reference was made to several outstanding Covenanters. It has been suggested that more specific attention might be given to some of the other stalwarts of the Covenant and I trust that while these brief biographical sketches may be familiar to some of our readers, others, especially our younger people, may be greatly encouraged in their testimony "For Christ's Crown and Covenant" and that we all may be helped in our devotion to and service for the Lord.

A traveller, recently returned to London from Scotland about 1641 was asked by some friends what news he had brought. "Good news", was his reply, and he proceeded to show what his real interests were. "First", he said, "I heard a tall well-favoured man preach, and he showed me the majesty of God. Then I went to St. Andrews, where I heard a small fair man, and he showed me the loveliness of Christ. Finally, I heard an old and proper man, and he showed me all my heart." it was preaching at its best, for he had heard Robert Blair, Samuel Rutherford and David Dickson in that order. It is with the second of these that we are now concerned.

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1. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

Samuel Rutherford was born of farming stock at Nisbet in Roxburghshire in 1600- He gave evidence of grace in boyhood and his mind was always sensitive to spiritual impressions. He entered the University at Edinburgh in 1617, graduated M.A. in 1621, and in 1623, after a competitive examination, was appointed Professor of Latin in the University. Unpleasant relations with some of his colleagues that may have resulted from a rather unhappy marriage led him to resign the chair. Having studied Theology, he was ordained at Anwoth in Kirkcudbrightshire in 1627 and exercised a fruitful ministry there until 1636 when he was deposed from office for non-conformity and ordered to be "detained in prison at Aberdeen during the King's pleasure.

From his prison cell came his famous Letters; 365 classics in the field of devotional literature written to friends and former parishioners at Anwoth. Released from prison in 1638 he returned to Anwoth for 18 months before being appointed Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews. A widower since 1629, he now married a lady of great piety and worth.

In 1643 he went to London as one of the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly of Divines. His insight and devotion made a specific impact on the Confession and the Catechisms. The death of two children during his four years in London enriched his compassion for the sorrowing. As a writer, his outstanding work was "Lex Rex" or "The Law and The Prince; A Dispute for the Just Prerogatives of King and People".

It is still a monumental work on Political Science and its principles of constitutional government were embodied in the Revolution Settlement of 1690.

In 1647 Rutherford was appointed Principal of New College at St. Andrews and later became Rector of the University. He was well known on the Continent as in Scotland for scholarship and leadership and In 1648 and 1651 he declined appointments to Dutch

Universities. At the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 he was removed from office, but an early death on March 29th, 1661, spared him the full fury of the storm of persecution.

Let us take a fragment of one letter from the 365 to illustrate Rutherford's spirituality and piety and deep pastoral concern for souls. It was written from prison \n 1637 to John Gordon of Rusco, a warm-hearted Covenanter in Kirkcudbright.

"Dear Brother, i earnestly desire to know the case of your soul, and to understand that ye have made sure work of heaven and salvation.

1. Remember, salvation is one of Christ's dainties He giveth but to a few.
2. That it is violent sweating and striving that taketh heaven.
3. That it cost Christ's blood to purchase that house to sinners and to set mankind down as Christ's free tenants and freeholders.
4. That many make a start toward heaven who fall on their back and win not to the top of the mount. It piucketh heart and legs from them and they sit down and give it over, because the devil setteth a sweet-smelled flower to their nose wherewith they are bewitched and so forget or refuse to go forward.
5. Remember, many go far on and reform many things, and can find tears as Esau did; and suffer hunger for truth, as Judas did; and wish and desire the end of the righteous as Balaam did; and profess fair and fight for the Lord, as Saul did; and desire the saints to pray for them, as Pharaoh and Simon Magus did; and prophesy and speak of Christ, as Caiaphas did; and walk softly and mourn for fear of judgments, as Ahab did; and put away gross sins and idolatry, as Jehu did; and hear the word gladly and reform many things according to the Word, as Herod did; ... And yet all these are but like gold in clink and colour, and watered brass and base metal. These are written that we should try ourselves, and not rest till we be a step nearer Christ than sunburnt and withering professors can come".

A soul-stirring and heart-searching word like this requires no comment. I hope that it may compel you to give fresh thought to the tieep things of God and drive you ever nearer to our wonderful Saviour.

Mrs. A. R. Cousin, wife of the Free Church of Scotland minister at Melrose has woven into a delightful poem many of Rutherford's best-loved sayings as wel.l as his familiar deathbed words. From a poem of nineteen verses we close by quoting the last two, which, though perhaps lesser known, summarise his reaction to imprisonment and his anticipation of the Glory.

"I have borne scorn and hatred, I have borne wrong and shame, Earth's proud ones have reproach'd me, For Christ's thrice blessed name : Where God His seal set fairest They've stamped their foulest brand; But judgment shines like noonday In Immanuel's land. They've summoned me before them, But there I may not come,— My Lord says, 'Come up hither', My Lord says, 'Welcome Home!' My kingly King, at His white throne, My presence doth commaird, Where glory—glory dwelleth In Immanuel's land."

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2. ALEXANDER HENDERSON

Ratcliffe Barnett, a noted Scottish writer, calls Alexander Henderson the Maker of Covenants and Captain of the Kirk, and groups him with John Knox and Andrew Melville as the three men who laid their hands on the helm of the Presbyterian Kirk, and having laid a straight course for conscience, piloted her between the two sunken rocks—the interfering king and the timeserving bishops.

Alexander Henderson came late on the scene for leadership. He was minister of a quiet parish at Leuchars in Fife till he was fifty-two years of age and was comparatively unknown in the realm. Into the last nine years of his life he crowded a ministry of leadership in Church and Nation in addition to the pastorate of the High Kirk in Edinburgh that marks him down as an outstanding Covenanting Worthy.

He was born in 1583 of humble parentage at Fordel in Fifeshire, and in due course educated at the University of St. Andrews. His feelings in favour of Episcopacy were strong and he was admitted to the parish of Leuchars by the Archbishop of St. Andrews against the wishes of the people who had locked the church doors and made it necessary for Henderson and his supporters to enter by a window. As yet he was a stranger to grace and, disturbed by conscience, he went secretly to a neighbouring church at a Communion season to hear one of Scotland's noted preachers, Robert Bruce. He was shaken when the text was announced from John 10:1, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." It was God's word, spoken to the soul by a preacher who knew nothing of Henderson's presence or circumstances. His heart was searched and humbled, and he came away from the service a new man in Christ Jesus.

His service for Christ and for the Church in Scotland fell into three separate spheres. He was primarily the architect of the two great Covenants that arrested the downgrade in the Church and established the work of the second Reformation. When the crisis was reaching a climax after Laud had attempted to enforce his Liturgy on an unwilling people, he was one of a number of noblemen and ministers who formed a Committee known as the Tables to consider the next step. And the statesmanlike step that Henderson helped them to take was the drafting and later the signing of the National Covenant of 1638. Five years later at Westminster he was again the master hand that drafted the Solemn League and Covenant. The dream of his life was to receive true religion in the three kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland. But he was doomed to disappointment for England, ever hostile to Presbytery, accepted the bond as a simple political expedient soon to be repudiated.

The second sphere of his leadership was in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. There had been no meeting for a number of years, but it was a proper consequence of the commitment of the Scottish nation to God in the National Covenant that there should be freedom of Assembly. The great Assembly met at Glasgow Cathedral on the 21st November, 1638, and chose Alexander Henderson as its Moderator. It was a wise and worthy choice. The King's commissioner, the Marquis of Hamilton, did his

utmost to intimidate the Assembly and, declaring it dissolved in the King's name, he intimated his intention of leaving—assuming that his departure would bring the proceedings to an end, Alexander Henderson, small of stature, but full of courage and grace, addressed him : "Then sir, if you must leave, we have no choice but to sit on and do our duty." It was a bold repudiation of erastian interference.

The third sphere where his influence was signally felt was In the Westminster Assembly of Divines. His ripe scholarship and wise judgment made a valuable contribution to the Assembly's work. He did not live to see the masterly work at Westminster come to fruition, for right in the middle of the assignment his health gave way and he died on the 18th August, 1646. He was buried in the Churchyard of St. Giles in the heart of Edinburgh, but when this was later converted into Parliamentary Square, his remains were removed and reburied in Greyfriars Churchyard where a suitable monument pays a fine tribute to his gifts and graces.

Alexander Henderson's death was a tragic blow to the work of the second reformation in Scotland. It is granted that the work continued, but his calm spirit and guiding hand were sorely missed and the fact that he was specially acceptable to Charles for whom he acted for a time as royal chaplain might have helped to mitigate in some measure the fury of the tragedy that followed in Scotland. He was without a trace of self-seeking and it is on record that every word and action of his life bore the mark of Jesus Christ. There could be no finer tribute than that. —A.L.

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3. JOHNSTON OF WARISTON

The Scriptures remind us that two are better than one and this fact has been proved in partnerships that God has blessed in His service. 'Alexander Henderson and Archibald Johnston, Lord Wariston, were such a distinguished partnership. Henderson was the gracious gifted architect of Covenants; Johnston was the skilful legal adviser that gave substance and authority to them. Henderson was twenty-five years older than his friend. His ripe experience provided strength and stability in the movement; the younger man added the zest and the enthusiasm. He may not have possessed the commanding genius or personal magnetism of a Knox or a Melville, but he rendered a notable service to the cause of Christ in Scotland.

Archibald Johnston was born in March, 1611, the year in which the Authorised Version of the Bible was first published. His family background was as distinguished as his personal achievements and having regard to the academic gifts and notable piety of his parents and grandparents, it is not surprising that he became both a lawyer and a Covenanter. Educated at the University of Glasgow he began his work as an advocate in Edinburgh in 1633. These were stirring days in Scotland and the spiritual leaders in their warfare against ecclesiastical and civil tyranny were glad to welcome to their ranks this clear-minded and high-souled young man.

When the crisis of 1638 approached, it was he who joined forces with Alexander

Henderson to prepare the National Covenant of Scotland. Let him tell in his own words how that famous document was received. "Upon Wednesday, 28th February, that glorious marriage of the kingdom of God. I was at forenoon with the commissioners of the barons. The noblemen appointed the body of gentry to meet at two hours to hear the Covenant read and to answer objections. I resolved to read and did read the parchment itself publicly, and after a prayer most fit for the time and the present purpose, made by Mr. Alexander Henderson, the Covenant was subscribed." A poet has summed up Johnston's reading of the Covenant in these words :

"And now, with tone distinct and clear, as one whose word is power, Johnston of Wariston stood forth—God's gift in danger's hour."

In the subsequent confrontation with Charles I, it was Johnston who was the courageous and outspoken leader of the deputation that endeavoured to bring the king to terms. The king was outmatched by his skill and threatened to break off negotiations, but there was neither compromise nor cowardice in the lawyer of the Covenant. He was knighted in 1641 and became a Lord of Session in the Scottish Courts. When the General Assembly of the Church met in Glasgow in November 1641, he was the unanimous choice as Clerk, thereby resuming his historic association with Alexander Henderson, who had been appointed Moderator. It was feared that precious documents had been lost in the years of upheaval from 1618, but Johnston, to the great joy of the members, produced five closely written folios that were examined and accepted as the true registers of the Kirk.

In 1643, as a highly respected elder, he was one of Scotland's eight representatives at the Westminster Assembly of Divines. Though less conspicuous than Gillespie or Rutherford, it was reported that he advanced the business of the Assembly "by the sharp point of his manifold arguments". Once, in March, 1646, he summed up in a notable speech the basic principles of spiritual liberty. The Parliament had proposed a civil tribunal to revise the verdicts of Church Courts. Archibald Johnston, in the Assembly's name, declared that "there must be no headship over the spiritual realm bequeathed to Pope or King or Parliament. We must not edge away a hem of Christ's robe royal". This was the true answer to erastian interference and a worthy statement of Christian liberty. When Charles II was restored to the throne of Britain, Archibald Johnston's days were numbered. He was a marked man, not only for his devotion to the cause of the Covenant but for his service to Oliver Cromwell as one of seven judges he had appointed to supervise the administration of law in Scotland. On the 14th July, 1660 he narrowly avoided arrest and for a time found refuge on the Continent in Hamburg. During an illness there he was deliberately maltreated by a physician friend of Charles. When he was later arrested in 1663 it was as an enfeebled invalid that he faced the rigours of trial and martyrdom. A petition from his wife and children that he be released on account of his frailty was rejected by Lauderdale, and on the 22nd July, 1663, he courageously finished his course at the Mercat Cross in Edinburgh. In his dying hour some of his old strength and vigour returned to him and he was able to address the assembled people clearly and passionately. His tones were the tones of an advocate and of a patriot, but most of all of a sincere and humble Christian. He regretted the brevity of his address as he pleaded for

loyalty and courage from the people of Scotland : "I beseech you all who are the people of God, not to scar at sufferings for the interests of Christ; for I assure you, in the name of the Lord that He will bear your charges".

A.L.

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4. GEORGE GILLESPIE

Among the many stars that shone brightly in the early Covenanting movement none was more distinguished than the youthful George Gillespie. Men called him 'the prince of disputants' and in his frail body he bore the fire of youth and the wisdom of age. Robert Baillie, his Scots colleague at Westminster for the historic Assembly, was deeply impressed by him. "In my poor judgment", he said, "there is not one who speaks more rationally and to the point than that grave youth".

He was born at Kirkcaldy in 1613, the son of a worthy minister, John Gillespie. After early local schooling, he completed his university training at St. Andrews with great 'distinction and was licensed to preach the Gospel in 1634. These were stern and difficult days for probationers when the shadow of Archbishop Laud fell darkly upon Scotland and, as was common practice at the time, he accepted a tutor's post with the standing of domestic chaplain in the family of Viscount Kenmure. At this period his skill as a controversialist was evident and his publication of "A Dispute against the English Popish Ceremonies" gave great offence to the episcopal party in Scotland and as John Bowie reminds us, could not be digested by the weak stomachs of the bishops.

On the 26th April, 1638, with the National Covenant but two months old, he was ordained minister of Wemyss in Fife, and was the first minister of that period to be Presbyterially ordained. He now began to exert himself prominently in defence of Presbyterianism, and it was not without good reason that he was asked to preach the sermon at the opening of the famous Glasgow Assembly in November of the same year. His text was the words of Proverbs 21 :1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will." His outspoken exposure of the limits to royal prerogative shook even some of his friends but he left the Assembly in no doubt about the perils of erastian interference in the spiritual sphere.

He was the youngest of the commissioners from Scotland to the Westminster Assembly — a bare thirty years of age — but with ability and leadership far beyond his years. Two glimpses of his contribution to the work of the Assembly are on record. The first concerns his capacity for assessing a situation quickly and giving a forceful devastating reply. The parliament and the Assembly were in session when a lengthy speech was made in favour of erastian principles. None of his colleagues seemed willing to reply and as he had appeared to take full notes of the address, his Scottish friends urged him to give an answer. This he did in a most masterly fashion, quoting from the speech and refuting each section of it in detail. Those sitting next to him were emphatic in declaring that he had made no note of the details of the speech he had refuted and that the only words on his note pad were a few petitions in Latin which meant, "Lord, send light; Lord defend Thy

cause".

The authentic nature of the second story has been called in question, but it is not only characteristic but well supported by good tradition. The Assembly had difficulty in framing an answer to the Catechism Question, "What is God"? and asked that George Gillespie should lead them in prayer for divine wisdom. His words in addressing the Almighty were so full of dignity and majesty and so comprehensive that they were noted by the Clerk and form the basis of the answer in our Catechism to this day.

On his return from London he had a brief ministry in the New Kirk of Edinburgh but he died at Kirkcaldy in 1648 in his 36th year. A fitting memorial stone was erected but this was subjected to a typical act of vandalism at the instigation of the notorious Archbishop Sharp. The stone was later replaced by the efforts of his grandson, the Rev. George Gillespie of Strathmiglo.

Apart from a number of sermons, the greater part of the nine volumes that came from Gillespie's pen were in defence of the Presbyterian form of Church government. One published in 1644 is the substance of a controversy with the great champion of Independency, Thomas Goodwin. The first two volumes of *The Presbyterian Armoury*, published in Edinburgh in 1846 contain the most part of his writings. He is said to have surpassed even Rutherford in the graciousness of tone and the generosity of spirit that characterised his controversial writings. When challenged that the Covenants were not according to the Scriptures his reply was pointed and relevant "The Covenant is a right rule, though the Scriptures alone be the rule of right" . A.L.

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5. THE MARQUIS OF ARGYLL

The strength of the Covenanting movement was noteworthy because the movement claimed the attention and support of men of every rank. The bonds of faith united the labourer and the laird. The nobles and the common folk were one in Christ and one in the cause of Christ.

One of the most illustrious of the faithful band of martyrs was Archibald Campbell, the first and only Marquis of Argyll (or Argyle). He was indeed the first to suffer in the tragic reign of terror that ravaged Scotland from 1660 to 1688. He was in some respects a late comer to the cause, not having signed the National Covenant. In fact he was at first a critic of the Covenant, but before the year's end he had come under the gracious influence of Alexander Henderson. Woodrow tells us that he owed his soul to this man of God. "During the Assembly at Glasgow, Mr. Henderson and other ministers spent many nights in prayer with the Marquis of Argyll; and he dated either his conversion, or the knowledge of it from these times". From that point he never wavered in his loyalty. No finer tribute could be paid to any man than that from the pen of John Howie, the illustrious author of *Scots Worthies*. "Archibald Campbell," said John Howie, "had piety for a Christian, sense for a counsellor, courage for a martyr, and a soul for a king." His life both illustrated and adorned these gracious words.

The Marquis of Argyll was born in 1607. His father was ever a waverer and died a Roman Catholic with the host on his Sips. But the son, at thirty-one, not only came new to his title, but, from that great Assembly of December, 1638 when the principles of Presbyterianism were placed on a solid footing, he was drawn more and more closely to a presbyterian and covenanted point of view. As the most powerful nobleman in Scotland, he was ever a target for criticism. His virtues were attractive, his failings were real, and he poses many a problem by his enigmatic characteristics. Men called him a coward, for he had no heart for a fight and when the Bishops War was at its height, he slipped down Lochfyne to Roseneath to avoid a confrontation with Montrose when he harried the Campbell territory. But this same man who never drew sword in his own defence courageously compounded for all his weaknesses when on the 27th day of May, 1661, he walked without a tremor to claim a martyr's crown.

He had a passion for royalty in his blood. When Charles I was beheaded at Whitehall in 1649 it was Argyll who placed the crown on the head of his faithless son at Scone on the 1st January 1651. It was a calculated risk and he lost friends for his loyalty.

But the king was generous with his praise and with his promises and Argyll faced the wrath of Cromwell for his devotion to the king, though later, in the interests mainly of his tenants, he acknowledged the Protector's rule. Charles was in sore need of friends and professed a deep regard for the Marquis. A letter signed by the royal hand on the 24th September, 1650, paid tribute to the courage and faithfulness of Argyll and promised him a dukedom when better days would come. The letter ended with the words : "I do further promise to hearken to his counsel whenever it shall please God to restore me to my just rights in England. I shall see him paid the forty thousand pounds sterling which are due to him. All which I do promise to make good upon the word of a king." They were false words from a false heart.

A short time after Charles's restoration to the throne of Britain in 1660 the Marquis went to London to offer his congratulations and to plead with the king to remember the promises he had made regarding the cause of the Covenant. His friends warned him of the danger he was facing, but he trusted his king and went on his way. It was vain confidence. Instead of a kindly kingly welcome he was treated with disdain and lodged in the Tower for most part of a year. In due course he was sent to Scotland for a trial that was to last four months. The verdict was a foregone conclusion, as most verdicts were in days when any pretext was good enough to rid the land of those who stood firmly by covenant obligations. He accepted the death sentence calmly with the noble comment on the perfidy of Charles : "I had the honour to place the crown on the king's head; now he hastens me to a better crown than his own".
A.L.

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6. JAMES GUTHRIE

The death of the Marquis of Argyle gave the enemies of Christ in Scotland a thirst for blood. The man who spoke words of assurance and comfort in the ear of the gallant marquis at the scaffold was soon to follow his friend to glory. He was James Guthrie of the indomitable will and the unflinching courage who earned the honourable title, "the short man who could not bow". It was Oliver Cromwell no less who gave him that nickname and while they had gifts and graces in common, they were poles apart in their views of the Kirk and her government and even those who had a warm admiration for Cromwell were bound to admit that on the two occasions when he and Guthrie met, the doughty Scotsman was more than a match for the illustrious Protector.

Alexander Smellie says that James Guthrie was Mr. Steadfast's counterpart among the Covenanters. He might have taken an easy courtly road for in his youth he was ceremonial associated with Episcopacy and was in good standing in many noble houses in that land. But God had a work to do and when the clear call of grace came to him and identification with the people of God became a necessary step, he never wavered in his devotion to duty.

James Guthrie's background was one of Scotland's noblest families. The son of the Laird of Guthrie¹¹: Forfarshire, he attended Grammar School in Brechin from which moved in due course to the University of St. Andrews. He gained a reputation for sound scholarship and having graduated with distinction he was at once appointed professor of Philosophy. A cloistered life in the old grey town was a distinct possibility, but a warm friendship with Samuel Rutherford awakened in his soul a deep concern for the well-being of Christ's Church in Scotland. He left the University and spent the remaining years of his life in the ministry of the gospel, dividing the twenty-three years from 1638 to 1661 almost equally between the parishes of Lauder and Stirling.

Just before his ordination he cast in his lot with the Covenant folk. He looked on his signing of the National Covenant as one of the most momentous steps in his life. An incident connected with the signing made a deep impression upon him. On his way to the place where signatures were being taken he met the city's hangman. There was a momentary hesitation as he considered the possible significance of his action. But he faced the issue and, as Smellie says, "With a vision of death in his eyes, he wrote his autograph."

His life in the community and his testimony in the pulpit made a deep impression on all who knew him. It was said of him that he kept his personal religion as newborn as if he had been but a young convert. His prayers so exposed and condemned secret sins that hearers were led to ask him wherein they had grieved him. It was not their sins, but the sins of his own heart that he was searching out as a master in the art of self-examination. During a period of severe illness he was greatly comforted by the assurance of sovereign mercy in words from the ninth of Romans : "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy", and declared "I have nothing else to listen to" (nothing else to lean upon). His writings were as clear and forthright as his preaching. He issued a strongly worded

pamphlet on "The Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland" in which he listed fourteen reasons connected mainly with disloyalty to Covenant obligations. The authorities were angry and vowed vengeance on the man who had so ruthlessly exposed their compromising spirit. Their opportunity came with the restoration of Charles II in 1660. They arrested Guthrie, tried him for high treason and condemned him to be hanged at the Cross of Edinburgh on the 1st June, 1661. On two occasions he presented a defence before the Drunken Parliament that condemned him. His closing words on the second occasion show us the measure of the man. "Throughout the whole course of my life I have studied to be serious, and not to deal with a slack hand in what I did look upon as my duty. My Lord, my conscience I cannot submit; but this old crazy body and mortal flesh I do submit, to do with it whatsoever you will, whether by death or banishment or imprisonment or anything else". As Smellie puts it: "My conscience I cannot submit: It is the creed in five words of all good soldiers of Jesus Christ, the Iliad of the martyrs in a nutshell".

When the death sentence was pronounced those near him said that he had a sort of majesty about him and his features shone as Stephen's did when the Pharisees stoned him. He told his wife that he was more fortunate than the Marquis of Argyll, "for my lord was beheaded, but I am to be hanged on a tree as my Saviour was". His testimony from the scaffold was touching and impressive. His morning pronouncement to his friend James Cowie was in the words of the 118th Psalm, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice in it". As the end approached, he spoke two striking sentences : "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? I shall not die" and "The Covenants, The Covenants shall yet be Scotland's reviving". This was to prove the rallying call for Covenanters in their darkest days; an unfulfilled prophecy that we, his heirs and successors do well to remember.

—A.L.

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7. WILLIAM GUTHRIE

To win a martyr's crown is to enjoy undying fame. The name of James Guthrie is held in honour wherever in the world the story of the Covenants is told. But worthy of no less fame and honour is the name of William Guthrie, who, by the grace of God and the intervention of influential friends, was not advanced to glory by way of the scaffold, but entered into the joy of his Lord quietly and peacefully after a distinguished ministry by the spoken and written word in a lifetime that was short but momentous.

William Guthrie may well have been overshadowed by his redoubtable and illustrious cousin, James. But he made his mark in the Scotland of Covenant days and still exercises a unique influence in spiritual life and character through the medium of his remarkable book, "The Christian's Great Interest". Published first in 1658 this classic work has searched the hearts of readers of succeeding generations and has the distinction of having been reprinted more than eighty times. John Owen enhanced its reputation and undoubtedly increased its circulation by the warmhearted tribute that he paid to it. Asked if he had ever heard of Guthrie and his book he replied : "I take that author to have been

one of the greatest divines that ever wrote, and that little book of his is my vade mecum; there is more theology in it than in all the folios that I have written."

Having spoken first of the book rather than the man, let us give readers an indication of its contents. The first of its two parts is a thoughtful, Scriptural examination and explanation of the nature of saving faith in Christ. A man's interest in Christ may be known, and it is a matter of importance to him that he should know it. Solemn warnings are given on the perils of hypocrisy and of the danger of trying to standardise the experience of salvation. Distinctions between true and false faith are clearly drawn and the positive marks of regeneration plainly outlined.

The second part of the book deals with the question : How to attain a saving interest in Christ and what it means to close with what he calls God's Device for Saving Sinners by Christ Jesus. The blessings of true believing are set forth and in a few closing pages the arguments are summed up and enforced in a series of questions and answers. The book has been described as "Apples of Gold in Baskets of Silver". Alexander Smellie fittingly remarks : "From its opening to its ending the little book is fashioned of the fine gold of the heavenly country; and its value is not impaired nor its lustre dimmed because three centuries have gone past since the cunning hand and the gracious heart of the craftsman moulded it into shape."

But we must now turn to the man himself. William Guthrie was born in 1620 at Pitforthly, near the old town of Brechin in Angus. There can have been few homes in Scotland that did so much for the cause of Christ's Crown and Covenant as the Guthrie home. Four of the five sons became Covenanting ministers. William at St. Andrews was deeply influenced by two men. His cousin James was regent, or assistant professor of Philosophy at the University and, William and he shared rooms. Their friendship was a precious one for both and William was sore of heart when James fought his last fight at Edinburgh Cross in June, 1661. When he entered the Divinity School it was his delight to sit at the feet of the saintly Samuel Rutherford of whom one of the students wrote that "God did so singularly second his indefatigable pains that the University forthwith became a Lebano, out of which were taken cedars for the building of the house of the Lord through the whole land." William Guthrie was one of those cedars. It was through Rutherford that the Holy Spirit spoke with great power to the young student, and so clearly was he committed to Christ that he surrendered the right of succession to the Pitforthly estate in order that nothing might deflect his mind and heart from the duties of his high calling.

In due course he became the minister of Fenwick in Ayrshire, and never changed nor wished to change his place. The Church became a birthplace of souls and the churchyard holds the dust of many who heard him preach and were drawn to Christ and the Covenant through his ministry. We find martyr names [ike Robert Buntine, George Woodburn and John Fergushiil, James Blackwood and Peter Gemmill. Among his better known hearers were the Howies of Lochgoin and Captain John Paton of Meadow-head.

William Guthrie had a very happy home life. His wife, Agnes Campbell, was a woman of

rare piety and singular charm. She had her anxious moments, especially when her husband's loyalty to Christ was in conflict with the demands of the State and he was unlawfully forbidden to exercise his lawful ministry. But there are those who assert that it was her family ties with men of standing that kept him from the gallows. His temperament was a strange mixture of melancholy and merriment. At times he expressed regret for his hours of fun, but he need not have grieved, for his frame of mind was ever in subjection to the law of Christ. Woodrow, the historian, commented that : "Let Mr. Guthrie be never so merry, he was presently fit for the most spiritual duty, and the only account I can give of it is that he acted from spiritual principles in all he did, even in his relaxations".

In 1665 he went north to Pitforthly to attend to some matters following his brother's death. He was taken ill and died at Brechin on October 10th, at the early age of forty-five. A prince and a great man had fallen in Israel. —A.L.

COVENANTING WORTHIES

8. DONALD CARGILL

Donald Cargill, often referred to as 'that blest singular Christian', was one of the mightiest and most winsome preachers of the Covenant. It was with difficulty that he was constrained to be a preacher at all. Born about 1610 in the parish of Rattray in Perthshire, he went to school at Aberdeen and to the University at St. Andrews where he graduated in philosophy. It was his father's wish that he should study divinity and become a minister, but he declined on the grounds that the burden of preaching was too great for his shoulders. On further pressure from his father, he agreed to spend a day in prayer and fasting to consider the matter. While thus engaged, the Lord brought to his mind the words from Ezekiel, "Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." It was the Lord's direction for his life and from that moment he gave himself without reserve to the work of the gospel ministry.

In 1655 he succeeded Zachary Boyd as minister of the Barony Church in Glasgow that worshipped then in the crypt of the Cathedral. The promising ministry was terminated by the infamous Glasgow Act of 1662 that drove faithful men from their pulpits. To this trial was added a much sorer and more personal one when his young wife died a year and a day after their marriage. This combination of circumstances coupled with freedom from family ties enabled him to throw in his lot more fully with the hunted hill folk and make his home with them.

There was a striking gentleness and a strange fearlessness in the character of Donald Cargill. A lamb where his own interests were at stake, he was bold as a lion where the cause of Christ was dishonoured. In a prophetic outburst on the day when Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, he denounced the royal tyrant and declared that the return of the king was "the woefullest sight that ever the poor church in Scotland saw. Woe, woe, woe to him; his name shall stink while the world stands for treachery, tyranny and lechery."

It was Cargill who in 1680 drew up the Queensferry Paper that contained a solemn Confession of Faith, an unqualified rejection of the Government, and a bold declaration in favour of a Republic. This was the forerunner of the more famous Sanquhar Declaration issued by Richard Cameron that led to the battle of Ayrsmoss and the death of the Lion of the Covenant. Cargill from that moment was a man with a price upon his head, marked down for death. We find¹ him addressing his people at Torwood, near Falkirk, on the words from Ezekiel 21:25, 26; "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown." At the close of the sermon he solemnly excommunicated the King, the Duke of York, the Dukes of Mon-mouth, Rothes and Lauderdale, Sir George McKenzie and Sir Thomas Dalziel of Binns. It was a bold step, but Donald Cargill brooked no half measures and no defection.

But for all his relentless pursuit of evil and harassment of Christ's enemies, he was tenderhearted towards the erring and the wayward and ever sought to pour oil on troubled waters in the covenant movement. One of his most determined and abortive efforts was to seek out and plead earnestly with a band of extremists known as The Sweet Singers, led by a Bo'ness sailor John Gibb. Their excesses were outrageous. A company of twenty-six women and four men, they had forsaken home and friends and wandered on the hills singing and praying, cursing and vowing vengeance on all who did not agree with them. They repudiated the Metrical Version of the Psalms, the Confession of Faith, the Covenants and every Document or Creed they thought to be the work of human hands. But not even the gracious and gentle persuasions of Donald Cargill could wean them from their delusions and they came to a sad end with imprisonment and flogging.

Donald Cargill preached his last sermon at Dunsyre Common. His text was Isaiah 26 : 20; "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself as it were but a little moment until the indignation be overpast." Patrick Walker heard the sermon and puts on record its appealing application : "He insisted what kind of chambers these were of protection and safety, and exhorted us all earnestly to dwell in the cliffs of the rock, to hide ourselves in the wounds of Christ, and to wrap ourselves in the believing application of the promises flowing therefrom : and to make our refuge under the shadow of His wings, until these sad calamities pass over, and the dove come back with the olive leaf in her mouth. These were the last words of his last sermon."

He was arrested next morning at Covington Mill on the information of a spy named James Irving, who was singularly cruel to his prisoner on the way to the trial. Rothes, whom Cargill had excommunicated, was a member of the Council that met to condemn him. He threatened his prisoner with special tortures, but Cargill answered him : "Forbear to threaten me, for die what death I will, your eyes will not see it." It was a prophetic word fulfilled when Rothes died during the trial. When the death sentence was passed his courage did not fail. At the scaffold he said : "God knows I go up this ladder with less fear, confusion and perturbation of mind than ever I entered a pulpit to preach." They fixed his head on a spike at the Netherbow Port next to that of Richard Cameron. The young lion and the aged saint were united in the reproach they bore for the cause of

Christ.

—A.L.

COVENANTING WORTHIES

9. SOLDIERS OF THE COVENANT

The Covenanting movement in Scotland had the support of many of the noble families and of the distinguished ministers in the land. It was also enriched and furthered by the devotion and courage of many of Scotland's finest soldiers. We would pay our tribute to four of these notable and stalwart warriors.

The first to claim our attention is Colonel James Wallace. He was a gallant leader in that spontaneous and unpremeditated revolt known as the Pentland Rising in 1666. He was not involved at the outset when only four Covenanters were in conflict with a platoon of soldiers in Galloway, but when support was forthcoming for their resistance, they found a leader in Colonel Wallace who joined them at Ayr on their march to Edinburgh in an attempt to have their grievances resolved. He had gained his experience as a soldier with the Parliamentary army in the Civil War. The failure of the expedition and the subsequent rout at Bullion Green have been dealt with in an earlier study. (Nov. 1971). The Colonel's skilful leadership and gallant spirit enabled the Covenanters to resist bravely in spite of their small numbers and poor equipment. He escaped death and arrest and fled to Holland where he ended his days in exile. He had this testimony that he was "a most faithful, compassionate, diligent and indefatigable elder in the work of the Lord."

On Sabbath mornings at Fenwick, in Ayrshire, the Patons of Meadowhead were regular worshippers, delighting in the excellent ministry of William Guthrie. Captain John Paton had already resisted the Stuart tyranny as an officer with the Parliamentary Army in England. He now joined forces with Colonel Wallace and the Covenanters of Galloway on their march to Edinburgh. At Bullion Green he displayed great valour and lived to fight another day. That day came 13 years later in the unhappy disaster for the Covenanters at Bothwell Brig. Weakened by dissension and compromise the victors of Drumclog three weeks before fell easy prey to Monmouth's disciplined army. Again John Paton escaped with his life. When it seemed as though he would end his days peacefully in his native Ayrshire he was apprehended at Kilmarnock in August, 1683. His trial at Edinburgh by the Privy Council was delayed till the following April, and though sentenced to be hanged at the Grassmarket, there was a delay before he was finally executed on the 9th May, 1684. His testimony from the scaffold breathes the spirit of his well-loved minister: "There is no safety but at Christ's back; and I beseech you, improve the time, for ye know not when the Master calleth, at midnight or at cock-crowing. Seek pardon freely, and then He will come with peace. Seek all the graces of His Spirit — the grace of love, the grace of holy fear and humility."

David Hackston of Rathillet and John Balfour of Kinloch were brothers-in-law. Their careers were strangely intermingled though they had little in common as far as character was concerned. Hackston was gracious, gentle, considerate and generous to a fault, though full of courage and determination. Balfour, sometimes referred to as Balfour of Burleigh, was ruthless, quicktempered and inclined to see himself as the divinely appointed instrument of justice and vengeance. Burleigh does not represent a location but

is said to be a corruption of the word 'Burley' that indicated the broad sturdy physique of the man.

The two men were partners in the infamous deed that has been used by critics to besmirch the fair name of the Covenanters —the murder of Archbishop James Sharp on Magus Muir in 1679. It is fair to say they had planned no ill to the Archbishop. They and ten others had agreed to waylay and chastise William Carmichael, a drunken magistrate whom Sharp had used to mete out savage brutal treatment to the Covenanters of Fife. As they awaited the coming of Carmichael near Cupar, they were astonished to learn that not he, but the Archbishop, was soon to pass by. Balfour argued that this was no coincidence or accident, but that God had placed their enemy in their hands and it was their duty to rid the world of such a pest. They chose David Hackston as their leader, but he declined saying : "The Lord is my witness that I am willing to venture all I have for the cause of Christ; yet I dare not lead you on to this action. For there is a known private quarrel between the Archbishop and me so that what I would do would be imputed to my personal revenge and would mar my testimony." Balfour assumed leadership without any scruples and in spite of the pleadings of the Archbishop's daughter Isabel and the humane intercession of Rathillet, the murder was carried out in cold blood.

Both Balfour and Hackston fought bravely at Drumclog. Balfour escaped to Holland and died on board ship on his way back to England to stand by William of Orange in his fight for the throne. Hackston was a valiant soldier at Bothwell Brig and at Ayrsmoss. He was captured there shortly after Cameron fell and eight days later done to -death in Edinburgh in a fiendish programme of indescribable cruelty. The Scots Worthies put on record a testimony that has few equals for graciousness and spirituality. It was not allowed to be spoken publicly but was sent in the form of a letter to a friend, He was a model of courage, constancy and faithfulness; a worthy champion in the cause of Christ. —A.L.

COVENANTING WORTHIES

10. JOHN BROWN OF PRIESTHILL

Our series of studies has brought to our notice a variety of godly men. Some were drawn from the ancient and noble families; others were men of academic gifts and culture. None adorned the doctrine of Christ more fully and enriched the covenanting heritage more graciously than John Brown, the humble crofter and carrier from Priesthill. In him God had chosen one of the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and his steadfastness of purpose and integrity of character mark him out as one of Scotland's greatest worthies.

His date of birth is not on record, but it appears to have been about 1650. The ejection of ministers from their pulpits in 1662 made a profound impression on him and he set his heart on becoming a minister of the gospel. From the banished ministers he received an excellent training, but he never fulfilled his ambition as he was handicapped by an impediment in his speech, which however, did not affect him in the exercise of public prayer. Though he never preached, his education was not lost and he rendered a notable service to the cause of Christ. Each Monday evening in his home he gathered the young

people of the neighbourhood and expounded to them the Scriptures with great insight and unction.

John Brown's home at Priesthill in the South East corner of Ayrshire was in one of the most remote parts of the country. Even today the traveller is impressed by its isolation and inaccessibility for it calls for a walk of about two miles from the Muirkirk road before the memorial on the site of his home is reached. In days of persecution it was an ideal hiding place for the people of God, and many a preacher of the Covenant claimed refuge there and had his claims allowed. One of the more frequent visitors was Alexander Peden who found the peace and quietness of Priesthill an oasis of blessing in a desert of tribulation. He brought comfort to the young man when his first wife died and he officiated at the marriage service when he chose Isabel Weir to be his bride. Peden's words were prophetic and indicated the value he placed on John Brown's life and testimony. "Isabel," he said, "You have got a good husband, but you will not enjoy him long. Prize his company, and keep linen by you to be his winding sheet, for you will need it when you are not looking for it, and it will be a bloody one."

The words were fulfilled at the end of three short years. The death of John Brown and especially the manner of it has been an embarrassment to many a writer who has sought to extol the virtues of men like John Graham of Claverhouse. Some have even denied the existence of John Brown; others have told the story in a manner that sought to present Claverhouse as the gentleman and Brown as a stubborn ignorant rebel who got his just deserts. But the facts are plain for all to see and no less a person than the biographer of Claverhouse admits the positive action he took in the execution of John Brown.

It was the first of May, 1685. Alexander Peden had spent the night with the family at Priesthill, but left at first light before the morning mist had cleared, and with a sense of foreboding that disaster was soon to strike the family he loved.

At family worship the 27th Psalm was sung and its words of promise brought reassurance. In due course John went to the hill to cut peats. In the swirling mist he failed to see the approach of a troop of dragoons and he was seized and taken to his home for interrogation and execution. The crime allege'd was his befriending banished ministers and his attachment to the cause of the Covenanters. The death sentence was passed. The time allowed him for prayer and preparation was rudely interrupted by an impatient and perhaps embarrassed Claverhouse who obviously wanted to carry out the execution as quickly as possible. Reports vary on the details of the execution, but Claverhouse's personal account states: "I did cause shoot him dead, which he suffered very unconcernedly."

What followed the execution showed the true nature of Claverhouse to be something far different from the gallant cavalier of Professor Aytoun or the 'Bonnie Dundee' of the well-known song. Turning to the young widow with a babe in her arms anti a stepdaughter by her side he shouted : "and what think you of your husband now?" Calmly she answered him : "I ever thought much of him, but more now than ever before." "It were but justice to

lay you beside him," said Claverhouse. "If you were permitted," she said, "I have no doubt but that your cruelty woul'd go that length; but how will you answer for this morning's work." He answered with contempt: "To man I can be answerable, and for God, I will take Him in my own hands". James Hyslop concludes his poem, "The Covenanter Vision" with the lines:

"Thy name shall be Claver'se, the blood-thirsty Scot, The godly, the guiltless, the grey-haired, who shot. Round my Brown's bloody brow glory's garlands shall wave, When the muse marketh 'Murderer' over thy grave!"

—A.L.