

ANTIQUARY

The James Durham MSS Part II

At one time (some centuries ago now) there was quite a bit of James Durham material known to exist in manuscript. A life of Durham affixed to eighteenth century editions of the Revelation commentary and to the 1740 edition of *Concerning Scandal*, reported the following to have existed in the early eighteenth century.

Besides his works in print, there are still preserved in the hands of the reverend Mr. Robert Wodrow, and some other private persons, his sermons upon the whole book of the Song of Solomon, and upon Eph. 5:15–20; 1 Cor. 9:24; Luke 1:6; Gal. 5:16; Ps. 119:65, 97, 113; 1 Thess. 5:19, 22; 1 Pet. 3:14; Matt. 18:7–9; Luke 10:41–42.

Howie gives a somewhat different listing:

There are a great many of his sermons in manuscript, never yet published, viz. three sermons on resisting the Holy Ghost, from Acts 7:51; eight on quenching the Spirit; five upon grieving the Spirit; thirteen upon trusting and delighting in God; two against immoderate anxiety; eight upon the one thing needful; with a discourse upon prayer; and several sermons and discourses [and the rest of the texts as noted in the Wodrow quotation, except Howie gives Matt. 8:7–9 for Matt. 18:7–9].¹

In the 2009 issue of *The Confessional Presbyterian* I detailed in this space the contents of the Durham manuscript materials held in private hands and by Glasgow University Library. Since then I can report on five additional MSS held by National Library of Scotland, University of Edinburgh Library, Dundee Central Library and the Free Church College Library.

Nathan Holsteen describes three of these as follows:²

1. The discourse on prayer, two on anxiety and one from the eight said to exist on the one thing needful, were appended to the *An Exposition of the Whole Book of Job* (Glasgow: J. Bryce and D. Paterson, 1759).

2. “The Popularization of Federal Theology: Conscience and Covenant in the Theology of David Dickson (1583–1663) and James Durham (1622–1658)” (University of Aberdeen. Dept. of Divinity and Religious Studies, 1996), 217–218. My thanks to D. J. MacLean for this reference.

3. Holsteen notes: “Sermon 33 is dated 27 March 1653, Sermon 36 is dated 17 April 1653, and Sermon 37 is dated May 1653.”

There are several manuscripts of Durham’s work that merit at least a mention in the context of this consideration of his literary output. While none of them affects the shape of Durham’s thought as revealed by the published works already considered, these manuscripts surely deserve some notice.

The first manuscript is a collection of fifty-three sermons by Durham on the Song of Solomon [National Library of Scotland, MS# Wod. Mss. 17]. Dating from 1653, the manuscript appears to differ from Durham’s *An Exposition of the Song of Solomon* [1668] in expression, although the basic thrust of the material seems very similar.³ The manuscript comprises approximately 560 pages, even though the first eight sermons are missing.

The second manuscript is entitled “Conscience Catechism; or a short compend of 22 sermons taught by Mr. James Durham on conscience, drawn out in one hundred questions and answers” [National Library of Scotland, MS Vol. XI, No. 15948, p. 56]. The manuscript comprises forty-eight pages, and is undoubtedly a revision of Durham’s teaching in *Heaven Upon Earth* [1685] since that work comprises twenty-two sermons on conscience. The third manuscript is a very small volume containing seven of Durham’s sermons on Revelation 14:13 [University of Edinburgh Library, Special Collections MS# L.A. III. 124]. The volume is approximately ten centimeters by seven centimeters in size, and is clearly a copy of notes written by someone who heard the sermons that were later published as *The Blessedness of the Death of These that Die in the Lord* [1681].

Of these manuscripts, the sermons on Song of Solomon should be examined thoroughly to ascertain if they contain significantly different material than the published commentary. It seems likely Durham compiled the commentary from his notes from preaching through that book. It is not clear from Holsteen’s description if the “Conscience Catechism” was compiled from notes on Durham’s sermons existing in MS or from the actual published sermons, nor when this compendium was penned. Whatever the case, it does not appear to be a work of Durham’s. However, its length and its being in the form of a catechism, would make it a nice candidate for transcription if the text is wholly or largely legible.

The additional manuscripts are found at Dundee Central Library and the library of the Free Church College.

DUNDEE CENTRAL LIBRARY DURHAM MS

The description of this volume is as follows: “Durham, James (1622–1658) Professor of Divinity, Glasgow University. c1650: MS Sermons. NRA(S)3822. National Register of Archives catalogue reference: NRA 42626 Dundee Central Library. Dark

Contents of Dundee Central Library Durham MS

Sermons by Rev^d. James Durham, M.A. minister of Barony Church, Glasgow [born 1622 died 1658]

I.	On Jeremiah L vers. 4&5. the Perpetual Covenant.	Sermon	1
II.	[On Jeremiah L vers. 4&5. the Perpetual Covenant.	Sermon]	2
III.	[On Jeremiah L vers. 4&5. the Perpetual Covenant.	Sermon]	3
IV.	[On Jeremiah L vers. 4&5. the Perpetual Covenant.	Sermon]	4
		On Communion Sabbath	
V.	[On Jeremiah L vers. 4&5. the Perpetual Covenant.	Sermon]	5
		On Monday after Communion	
VI.	[On] Matthew XXVI. ver. 29. The New Home in the Kingdom [Sermon] on the 2d. Communion Sabbath afternoon		
VII.	[On] Revel. XIV. vers. 13. "Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord." Sermon		1
VIII.	[On Revel. XIV. vers. 13. "Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord." Sermon]		2
IX.	[On Revel. XIV. vers. 13. "Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord." Sermon]		3
X.	[On Revel. XIV. vers. 13. "Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord." Sermon]		4
XI.	[On Revel. XIV. vers. 13. "Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord." Sermon]		5
XII.	[On Revel. XIV. vers. 13. "Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord." Sermon]		6
XIII.	[On Revel. XIV. vers. 13. "Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord." Sermon]		7

green leather bound journal, 15.5cm. x 19.5 cm., water damaged, 246 pages plus contents page. Owned by Alexander Hastie Millar (1847–1927).⁴

This volume contains thirteen sermons, the handwritten contents page is transcribed in the table above.⁵

All of these sermons seem to represent those that were published. However, it is not clear whether or not this MS was a source for John Carstairs, the editor of most of Durham's works. Sermons 1–5 on Jeremiah 50:4–5 appear to be MS of the five that appear in *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (1685). The sixth sermon on Matthew 16:29 appears to be MS of a sermon published in the same volume, which is described as "A Thanksgiving Sermon after the Communion, the last that ever the Author preached on such an occasion, at Glasgow." Sermons 7–13 appear to line up with the seven sermons on Revelation 14:13 published as *The Blessedness of the Death of those that die in the Lord* (1681). This would make a pair of surviving MS of these sermons with that above noted to be at the University of Edinburgh Library.⁶

FREE CHURCH COLLEGE LIBRARY

The library of the Free Church College has a manuscript of Durham sermons, Record, NRA(S)2071, NRA catalogue reference, NRA 23336 Free Church College.⁷

According to the library, this MS only contains sermons on chapter five of Song of Solomon.⁸ At present there is nothing in the volume documenting that the sermons are those of James Durham, so any confirming inscription or notice may have become detached or obscured. The legibility of the text is very poor and the volume was damaged by water at some point in the past. A comparison of any legible text to sermons on chapter five in the NLS volume of 53 sermons may confirm that these were notes of sermons preached by Durham.

There hopefully are other MS surviving to discover, since of the volumes canvassed in this and earlier in the first installment, little has been uncovered of the many sermons noted to have been in MS by Howie in his life of Durham. And given the shape that some of these MS are in at present, we should be very thankful for the labors of John Carstairs, who edited and published so much of Durham's material from manuscripts in his possession in the mid to late seventeenth century.

CHRIS COLDWELL ■

4. Dr. Millar was City Librarian of Dundee, a scholar and writer, having written over 100 entries for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and authored "a large number of works on Scottish history and antiquities." Obituary. *The Times*, Tuesday, Mar 01, 1927; Issue 44518; pg. 9; col c—Dr. A. H. Millar. http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Times/1927/Obituary/Alexander_Hastie_Millar. Accessed October 4, 2011.

5. I thank Eileen Moran, Library & Information Worker and the Dundee Central Library for much of this information and a photo of the contents page transcribed here.

6. The record from the Dundee Central Library catalogue notes that three documents are inserted in this volume. "Loose insert of a 'copie: of a letter [from] Mr. Rutherford (Samuel Rutherford, 1600–1661, principal of St. Mary's College, St Andrews) some few dayes before his death'; also 'Two pious & propheticall Lers of Mr. John Welsh qch hee wrote out of his prison when ye sentence of death was pronounced against him onlie for his testimony against Erastianisme and prelacy, the first to ye Lady Fleeming'; the second is in fact 'George Wishart his prophecy'.

7. I thank Christina MacIver, Assistant Librarian, the Free Church College, for the description of this volume.

8. I would note here, and express my regret, that in my footnote affixed to the life of Durham in the Naphtali Press edition of *Christ Crucified*, I conflated the NLS manuscript of 53 sermons on Song of Solomon and those only on chapter 5 owned by the Free Church College. See John Howie, *Lives of the Scottish Covenanters* (A Press, 1981) page 216; *Christ Crucified: Or the Marrow of the Gospel in Seventy-Two Sermons on Isaiah 53*. (Naphtali Press, 2001; 2007) xxxviii.