

## James Durham: A New Biography, Part Two

By Chris Coldwell

### JAMES DURHAM THE PREACHER<sup>1</sup>

Durham clearly worked hard, but what kind of preacher was he? As already described, Durham had a rather awe inspiring bearing about him, and appeared far older and commanding of immediate respect than his actual age. “He was a most grave man as one could look upon; his very look and countenance would have made a person stand in awe of him, when they looked to him.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, as noted, this was the reaction of the King and his court who seemed to have held Durham in some regard, though he viewed it as grievous service because the King was not rather in awe of the Word of God. An anecdote which is preserved by Robert Wodrow sheds some light on Durham’s serious frame.

Mr. Durham was a person of the outmost composure and gravity, and it was much made him smile. In some gentleman’s house, Mr. William Guthry and he wer together at dinner; and Mr. Guthry was exceeding merry, and made Mr. Durham smile, yea, laugh out, with his pleasant facetious conversation. It was the ordinary of the family to pray after dinner; and immediately after their mirth, it’s put upon Mr. Guthry to pray; and, as he was wont, he fell immediately to the greatest measure of seriousness and fervency, to the astonishment and moving of all present. When they rose from prayer, Mr. Durham came to him and embraced him, and said, “O! Will, you are a happy man! If I had been so daft as you have been, I could not have been serious, nor in any frame for forty-eight hours!”<sup>3</sup>

This bearing also impacted Durham’s preaching and he took the duty of the pulpit very seriously, to the point it affected his health.

He was wonderfully exercised, and much concerned before he went out to preach his sermons. He told his

cousin, Mr. John Maul, late Minister of Renfrew, who told to a Minister that told me, that his very concernedness about his public preaching would have wrought upon his very body, and made him purge several times as if it had been a potion of physic.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. James Stirling tells me, he hears that Mr. Durham kept two days a week for fasting and prayer, for discovering of the Lord’s mind when he was writing on the Revelation; and it was thought that, with his close study and thought, cast him into that decay, whereof he died. He was a man that was very much in meditation. He usually said very little to persons that came to propose their cases to him, but heard them; but next day he preached, he was sure to handle them.<sup>5</sup>

As to content, Durham was said to have excelled in “case” or “casuistic” divinity, or “cases of conscience.” In a letter dated May 21, 1653, Baillie writes, “I have desired him to write case-Divinity, wherein he is excellent, and daily grows.”<sup>6</sup> Several of his published sermon

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1. This new biography of James Durham continues from part one in *The Confessional Presbyterian* 18. The full biography first appeared in James Durham, *Commentary upon Revelation*, vol. 3 (Naphtali Press & Reformation Heritage Books, 2022).

2. Wodrow, *Analec̄ta*, 1.105–106.

3. Wodrow, *Analec̄ta*, 2.140.

4. Wodrow, *Analec̄ta*, 3.106. “It was thought that his great study and labour upon the Revelation hastened him to his end, and that he thought he was much the worse of night-reading. When he was writing or lecturing on the Revelation, he kept two or three days in the week for fasting and prayer in secret, to get the mind of God made known to him in that mysterious book. He had a great memory and vast judgment given him, but a bad hand of write [writing].”

5. Wodrow, *Analec̄ta*, 1.321.

6. Baillie, *Letters & Journals*, 3.222.

collections have “conscience” or “cases of conscience” as part of their titles. The first week or weeks of his ministry in Glasgow, Durham began a series of sermons on Matthew 16:24 for his assigned weekday of Tuesday. These were later published as *The Great Corruption Of Subtile Self* (1686). *The Great Gain of Contenting Godliness* published with it may reasonably be assumed to date to the same time.

Christie provides a modern (circa 1930) assessment of Durham’s preaching, which seems only partially fair and accurate.

Durham lacked imagination, that is clear; his sermons have no sparkle in them, little of illustration or incident, nothing personal or moving. Very rarely does one feel any thrill of eloquence. Even his perorations are dull, unless hell’s horrors are his theme, yet there is a depth of spirituality and a loftiness of Christian feeling, a skilful probing of motive and analysis in temper, which excite thought and aspiration. His preparation of mind and spirit was perfect—the stream is pure and strong, straight and deep, if without ripple and light—and his matter was read and re-read for generations. “He liked not to soar and hide himself from the Hearers in a cloud of words,” *i.e.* he was not a “popular preacher.” He was a weighty preacher—possibly a heavy one—and had he been able to combine grace with his gifts, attractive and pungent presentation of the truth with seriousness and strength, he would have been “a very rare and singular man” in his generation. Extremely modest and humble, he never strove for plaudits or praise by fine phrase or by playing upon the emotions; intent upon the matter, he left style alone.<sup>7</sup>

Christie knew enough of his subject to have been affected by his depth, but Durham is no more eloquent on hell than he is on the freeness of God’s grace and when extolling Christ. It is true he was not a popular preacher in both senses of that term. Durham was rather awkward in his speech. He does not show a poetic imagination like Samuel Rutherford’s, nor does he exhibit a gift for short and memorable statements, such as had his mentor and teacher David Dickson. He often

7. Christie, p. 77.

8. In the second of apparently three sermons which John Carstairs preached upon Durham’s death, in application, he preached, “I have heard this faithful servant of God, He hath now translated to heaven, complain often that when he came to preach in his own church, he saw not the face of a congregation, and that he came seldom to the pulpit, but he feared some tumult among the people in running away from him.” *Life*, 61 Sermons, p. 24.

9. “Life,” in 72 Sermons on Isaiah 53, p. 36.

feared he would have no one attending sermon or that all would flee once he began to speak!<sup>8</sup>

Two anecdotes, perhaps pertaining to the same occasion, perhaps not, illustrate that Durham was indeed not so popular, but also that he was by no means an ineffectual preacher. The first story preserved in the 1739 biography relates a conversation between Durham, who was to preach in the Inner Kirk, and the younger Andrew Gray who was to preach in the Outer Kirk.

In the whole of his ministry, he was a burning and shining light; he shined in all Christian and ministerial gifts and graces, and particularly, he did exemplarily shine in humility and self-denial. One instance of many was this: Upon a certain day, when Mr. Andrew Gray and he were to preach, as they were walking together, Mr. Durham observing multitudes thronging into that church where Mr. Andrew Gray was to preach, said to Mr. Gray: ‘Brother, I perceive you are likely to have a throng church this day.’ To which Mr. Gray answered: ‘Truly, brother, they are fools to leave you and come to me.’ To which Mr. Durham replied, ‘Not so, dear brother, for a minister can receive no such honor and success in his ministry, except it be given him from heaven. I rejoice that Christ is preached, and that his kingdom and interest is getting ground, and that his honor and esteem does increase, though my esteem in people’s hearts should decrease, and be diminished; for I am content to be anything, so that Christ may be all in all.’<sup>9</sup>

Despite this humble self-assessment and the aforementioned lack of style or polished expression, the second anecdote preserved by Wodrow shows that Durham nevertheless could make a deep impression. He could affect and move the audience that attended the Inner Kirk where he preached, even if at times many were forced to be there due to overcrowding in the Outer Kirk!

Sometime after Mr. Andrew Gray was settled at Glasgow, he was exceedingly followed, and had for his helper Mr. William Guthrie and some others of the most popular preachers. On the Communion Sabbath, the Outer Church was so throng[ed] that there was no getting near the door; and within, the confusion was so great, [that] several persons were brought out sick and fainting. Through necessity, not choice, the person went into the Inner Church, where the thinness was as remarkable. However, by the time when Mr. Durham came into the pulpit, the Inner Church was pretty full by the people who could not get in to the Outer Church. He began with the greatest seriousness, and

grew wonderfully. His text was the known one, Matthew 22:5<sup>10</sup> [but they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise], and all through the work there was a remarkable divine presence; and many were converted, and far more edified, and that was one of the greatest days of power ever the relater saw.<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not Durham's ineloquence was an impediment, once removed from the delivery he felt made him unappealing, his printed words were republished repeatedly. He may not have impressed the "room," but his fellow ministers, who could see past the niceties of verbal delivery, knew what they had in their fellow preacher. Carstairs described Durham's preaching thus:<sup>12</sup>

Was he not a very seasonable and judicious speaker? Did not God give him *the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the faint and weary soul* [Isa. 50:4]? How seasonable and pertinent were the ordinary subjects of his sermons? And did he not also pitch upon the most suitable and proper subjects of evangelical preaching, upon fast days,<sup>13</sup> and at the solemn celebration of the Lord's supper? Was he not also a very candid and searching preacher? He would have been, in an instant, in the inmost corners of your bosoms, with the out-most caution and meekness, without giving any of his hearers the smallest ground to fret and repine at his freedom in dealing with them.

David Dickson "had a wonderful opinion of great and worthy Mr. Durham. . . . He said somewhat to this purpose of Mr. Durham, that 'He was like a great bottle full of excellent good wine, that when it did go to come out, it could not well come out, but it played buck, buck!—so Mr. Durham had little expression, but much good and great matter.'<sup>14</sup>

#### JAMES DURHAM THE PEACEMAKER

In addition to his preaching, Durham's renewed ministry in Glasgow began just as the Protester-Resolutioner schism was exploding in the Church of Scotland, and this took up some of his time for a few years. To review and summarize what has already been said, this controversy was an

internecine feud which divided the hitherto unified Covenanting movement during the Cromwellian invasion and occupation of Scotland, 1650–60. During the English invasion of Scotland in 1650, incipient divisions within the kirk erupted as the moderate and radical

Covenanters divided over the reception of Charles II as king and the passing of the Public Resolutions, which allowed "malignant" royalists into the army and state. When the 1651 General Assembly approved the Resolutions, the schism was institutionalized and the kirk divided into two factions: the Resolutioners, who supported the king and government, and the Protesters, who disavowed the authority of both. After the English conquest in late 1651, these divisions were internalized as both factions engaged in numerous (albeit unsuccessful) attempts to gain ascendancy in the kirk.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, there were also movements, most often led by Durham and Robert Blair, to bring the two sides together and heal the division. This activity centered in the Synod of Glasgow, the only area of the country where Protesters were in the majority. In September and early October of 1651, Durham had attended

10. Durham's preparation sermon, preached before this communion, would seem to be the one on Matthew 5:2–4 in his communion sermons. Cf. *61 Sermons*, pp. 464–485. There are apparently three known manuscripts of this sermon, one undated, one dated only Thursday, and one dated July 15, 1655, which was a Thursday. To date no manuscript is known to survive of the communion sermon on verse 5 which had such a powerful effect on Durham's audience. There were only three communion seasons during the entire decade of Durham's ministry in Glasgow, one in October of 1656, two consecutive Lord's Days the last of April in 1657 and one in July of 1655. See *61 Sermons*, p. [430]; see "Antiquary: The James Durham MSS Held by Glasgow University Library," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 5 (2009): 305–307; Part II, volume 7 (2011): 230–231.

11. *Analecta*, volume 2 (1842), p. 364. Andrew Gray died in February of 1656, so the only communion service he could have preached in Glasgow was the one held on July 15, 1655 (see previous note). There is a fragment of his exhortation prior to the sacrament at Glasgow in his works. Gray's sermon is not identified; but due to some phrases such as "Christ is gone" and "sad evidence," it may be that Sermon III was preached in a Saturday preparation service, which was not uncommon, and Sermon IV on the Lord's Day prior to the exhortation. Neither sermon has a date or place attribution. This is speculation however, and the sermon may remain in manuscripts yet to be found. See *The Works of the Reverend and Pious Andrew Gray* (Aberdeen: George King, 1839), pp. 481–483, 415–423. Manuscript notations indicate Gray preached Saturday preparation sermons at a communion at Bodell. See "Sermons [manuscript], ca. 1655–ca. 1665," Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a.415 (formerly MS Add 389), contents in hand in front.

12. "Life," 19–20.

13. It is not clear how many providentially called fasts were held and at this date only the manuscript lecture and sermon prior to battle with Cromwell are known (see Durham, *Commentary on Revelation*, 3:578). There surely was a fast held due to the Great Fire, but from Baillie's account, even then the Resolutioners and Protesters were contentious over the reasons for such a fast. Baillie, 3:10.

14. Wodrow, *Analecta*, 3:10.

15. Holfelder, "Factionalism," Abstract.

two meetings at Edinburgh, where he took the lead in the latter in confession of sin for what had come upon church and the land. The next April in 1652, Durham drafted and with Robert Blair presented to the Glasgow Synod some overtures for union.

Being still more and more convinced of the necessity of Union among the Ministers of this Church, be the many evils that accompany these differences, [the Synod] doe therefore think it expedient, to endeavor some way of healing, at least of preventing the growing, of the same. And though they neither intend hereby judicially to condemn or reflect on any acts or proceedings of any of them, either on the one side or the other, preceding this time, (but to leave both sides without prejudice by this agreement,) yet for the ends foresaid, they doe voluntarily condescend mutually in the things controverted, in as far as concerns their practice for the interim, as follows:

1. That they shall eschew all public wakening or lengthening these debates by preaching or spreading papers, either in favours of the one side or the other.
2. That they shall forbear the practising, executing or pressing of all acts concluded in the last Assembly at St. Andrewes and Dundee, and also the pressing or spreading appeals, declinators or protestations against the same; and that both these foresaids, together with any sentence intended or followed thereupon, shall be for the time, (as to practise and our use-making of them in any thing) as though they had not been; this being always so understood as inferring no actual condemning of either of them, as is said.
3. That none of those be to any, whatsoever rank, minister or elder or expectant, a ground or aggravation of challenge or censure, or of exception against their being admitted to office, they being in other things found qualified.
4. That some be named as correspondents who may carry these Overtures to be conferred of with and recommended unto brethren of other Synods; who are to

be written unto to send some of their number to meet at ane convenient time and place for that end.

5. Likeas it is their purpose, if God shall give a free General Assembly, to endeavour for a full and judicial settling and oblivion of the foresaid differences, and all consequences that has followed on them; and, in the meantime, to proceed in all affaires according to the uncontroverted rules and acts of our Church.

This Agreement may be drawn to the laying aside of all the present controversy, the matter being, for the particulars, removed but by the Assemblie itselfe and submission of men censured; else no Assembly firm hereafter: And with cautions against feared domination, and a due processing of novelties tending to separate congregations, Why should an oblivion of Malignants, the King and they having satisfied, be granted also? Why not deposed ministers and elders, for no other scandal, on submission, made capable? What Union else firm?<sup>16</sup>

Robert Baillie was as keen a partisan on the Resolutioner side as men such as Samuel Rutherford and Archibald Johnson were on the side of the Protesters. Baillie convinced the Synod to postpone consideration of Durham's overtures to the June meeting, but he had no intention of allowing them to ever come up again and was instrumental in raising opposition against the plan in other parts of the church where the Resolutioners were the majority. The Protesters, in the one thing apparently agreed upon by both sides, worked equally against Durham's overtures.<sup>17</sup>

At a conference about union in May, the Resolutioners enraged the Protester minority with their proposal for union that was a far cry from what Durham and Blair proposed. The Resolutioners had set the stage nationally to discipline Protesters unless they repented and ceased their separate "anti-judicatories"<sup>18</sup> and recognized the General Assembly's authority without question (controlled by the Resolutioners). Thus by the time the Glasgow synod was set to meet in June, political calculations about local control in presbyteries and delegates to the upcoming General Assembly were in view and not union. The two sides met apart in separate meetings and both chose Durham as moderator, who refused until the two sides came together to meet.<sup>19</sup> This does not seem to have been from some humbled change of heart, as both sides then used the meeting to put forward their respective plans.<sup>20</sup> Baillie characterized the June meeting of the Glasgow Synod as two days of "bickering." After detailing some of the disputes

16. Baillie, 3.185–186.

17. Baillie, 3.176ff. Holfelder, p. 165.

18. Holfelder, p. 167.

19. "Life," p. 39.

20. See Holfelder's description of the battles in the presbyteries of Glasgow Synod and the Synod itself, p. 168. See Baillie, 3.186–190, 193–195, 562–566.

over approving some ministers and other matters, he complains in a postscript to a letter to James Wood, "In the end of our Synod, Mr. Patrick with Sir John, with consent of our Moderator, obtained an act for keeping our Synod book from going back to the next Assembly; against which we protested."<sup>21</sup> In the letter he also warned Wood to "beware" the counsel of "neuters." This was Baillie's disparaging term for those striving for peace, such as Durham and Blair.

In the middle of this bitter contention amongst the members of Glasgow synod and Durham's and Blair's attempts to bring peace, the Lord in His providence sent significant destruction on the City of Glasgow by means of the Great Fire that commenced on Thursday, June 17, 1652. A third of the city was burned, many killed, and a thousand left homeless. On the subsequent Lord's Day, June 20, between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, a secondary fire started and did more damage.<sup>22</sup> The city instructed the churches to keep their doors open so the homeless had places to resort for their devotions. The city sought relief from both the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and Cromwell's government in London, while the city ministers preached that the fire was God's judgment for consorting with the English sectaries.<sup>23</sup>

Durham apparently presented a paper calling for a fast to the Glasgow Resolutioners, to which Baillie records a reply of July 8, 1652. While this likely related to the attempt for peace, the call to fast appears to be related to the fire, though it is difficult to confirm without Durham's original paper, and the response never mentions the fire specifically; neither is it clear if Durham presented the paper calling for a fast to the Protesters of the city.<sup>24</sup> The Resolutioners and Protesters had each been holding their own separate fasts since the eruption of the divide in 1650, the former on Saturdays and the latter on week days. As far as this particular call, the responding challenges from the Resolutioners would seem to indicate it went nowhere, though some fast must have certainly been held in the city.<sup>25</sup>

The Glasgow Synod minutes apparently do not exist from this period,<sup>26</sup> but in addition to his 18th century biographer's account of this, it can be deduced that Durham was moderator at the June meeting, because he preached the customary retiring moderator's sermon at the next meeting in October. While there are no minutes, we do have one account of this October meeting. Nicoll records the following entry in his diary.

The Synod of Glasgow having met at their ordinary time, the first Tuesday of October 1652, there was much

controversy amongst them, and with great difficulty could a Moderator be chosen by reason of the differences amongst them; so that two days and almost a great part of the night was spent in this election. So they dissolved the second day about 11 hours at night, doing nothing save only that the Moderator was chosen, calling Mr. James Fergusson.<sup>27</sup>

That the Synod at least got to the point of electing a new moderator indicates that Durham actually preached his sermon before the Glasgow Synod. A remarkably full text of this long sermon by Durham stands, survives in manuscript, and the content presaged the larger treatise he would complete on his deathbed as his dying testament.<sup>28</sup> The title of this sermon is "5 October

21. Baillie, 3:187–188.

22. George MacGregor, *The History of Glasgow: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Glasgow: Morison, 1881), pp. 231–232.

23. Bulstrode Whitelock, *Memorials of the English affairs*, vol. 3 (1732; Oxford, 1853), p. 433. Wariston opined that it was God's judgment on Malignants (royalists) in that the rich part of the city burned according to the accounts he received. *Diary*, vol. II, Scottish History Society, Second Series, Vol. XVIII, ed. David Hay Fleming (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1919), pp. 175, 176. That many merchants were ruined appears to be true. MacGregor, p. 232.

24. Durham may have presented this paper calling for a fast to Baillie or some few first and the reply concludes by asking him not to present it yet publicly in session or to a committee. Baillie, 3:193. Lange gives no comment at all on this paper as to what it was.

25. Baillie, 3:10. "Having looked upon together the causes of the fast communicated to us, we have thought meet to acquaint you with these our thoughts thereof, in private, to receive your brotherly advice and direction thereupon, as God shall put it in your mind. We have been earnest of a long time to have had public and solemn fastings, for many most important causes, both to the land [Scotland] and this place [Glasgow]; but have always been peremptorily refused all concurrence therein [by the Protesters], unless we would make our duties sins, and other men's sins our duties. When the Lord's strange judgments on us has put us now once again to fast together, upon causes uncontroverted [likely the Great Fire], we are very willing and desirous to continue this gracious and very necessary exercise upon any causes we know, or which, beside our present knowledge, we shall be instructed in, by you or any. As for this paper..." For Mr. James Durham. July 8th 1652. Baillie, 3:190.

26. Minutes do exist for the Protester half of the Glasgow Synod for 1654–55 during the time the Synod actually divided into a Protester synod and a Resolutioner synod (Holfelder, 14); but Holfelder does not cite minutes for these earlier synod meetings. Given his extensive research this may indicate they do not exist. While the folios have not been physically checked, a review of the National Library of Scotland finding aids and indices for the Wodrow collection seems to confirm this. My thanks to Matthew A. Vogan for aid in this regard.

27. John Nicoll, *A Diary of Public Transactions and other occurrences, chiefly in Scotland, From January 1650 to June 1667* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1836), p. 102.

28. For history and background to the sermon and a straight transcription, see "Antiquary: James Durham's 1652 Sermon on Ephesians

1652 Ephes. 4 11. 12. For the edefieing of the bodie of Christ A Sermon taught before the Synod assembled in Glasgow by Mr. Ja: Durhame.”<sup>29</sup>

As a good puritan preacher, Durham began his sermon by briefly opening up the scope of the text, which is “how precious a point unity is, and how it tends to the purpose of edifying the church.” He then pursues three doctrines.

Doctrine I. The great purpose for which God has appointed a ministry, which is the edification of the body of Christ. Three uses or applications about the ministry followed.

Doctrine II. In reference to the scope, ministers should study and promote unity as a main part of edifying the body of Christ, which he instances: 1. In the frame of their spirits. 2. In respect to their fellowship. 3. In their doctrine and discipline. And 4. He asks his audience to consider the bitter end of their divisions.

Doctrine III. Here Durham got to the heart of the matter in addressing their divisions with the linking of unity and edification; they relate to and infer each other. Durham briefly states the doctrine, and after waiving off what was not at issue, states wherein their division consisted. It was whether this particular assembly or another was the rightly constituted one whose determinations should have been followed. He applies the doctrine to this question, maintaining the whole matter should be waived for the sake of unity and edification. This refusal to take a side he clears from the appearance of lukewarmness: 1. From the greater consequences that follow upon their continued division. 2. Because of the clear exhortations in Scripture to avoid strife and contention. 3. The consistent opposition to schism and division by fathers of the faith, counsels and the practice in Scripture, and law of nature.

Durham then continues by dealing particularly with

what may promote edification and union, drawing some rules from two points concerning their division. 1. If union is the necessary step to edification, as dissension and strife are the avenue that led to division, separation cannot be the remedy.<sup>30</sup> He asked, “if ever we will find a means as division and separation commended and approved of Christ for edifying of the body?”<sup>31</sup> He opposed a division as a scriptural remedy of division (and while he never mentions their separate fasts specifically, in his later reflection on the strife, he stressed to avoid separate meetings and separate fasts<sup>32</sup>). 2. Union must be attained by that which edifies, not by that which destroys. 3. Durham draws rules from the second point: 1. The destruction of one side or the other will not be for the edification of the church. 2. No violent authoritative way will heal their division. 3. If edifying union is a necessity, then the kindest and quickest manner of healing is needed.

The question is adduced and answered, wherein may they agree? He answers: 1. As they have a difference of judgment, affection and practice, at least agree to not let things get worse. 2. Agree where they can, if they cannot have the same judgment, at least maintain affection and practice.

While he was not sanguine about the reception of his advice, Durham then addressed several objections that stood in the way of their union. It is questioned, shall they sin in order to have peace, by dismissing ordinances and papering over the controversy? This he answers in six considerations. He then answers two other questions together regarding practices which stood in the way of union, one side objecting that if they overlooked the question of the division, there would never be another assembly, and the other objecting that if they overlooked faults, there would be no stemming of corruption. Durham then closed the sermon with some words of direction to ministers and church members.<sup>33</sup>

And the last word shall be to all that hear me, people as well as ministers. If a ministry be given for their edification, let not people stumble at them for any fault or infirmity they apprehend to be in them; but seeing instrumentally their edification and salvation depends much on them, be earnest with God that they may be brought to promote that end, and that all things may be laid aside that may hinder it. The ministry is the means whereby Christ brings in and furthers these that are brought in, in the faith; therefore, stumble not to your own prejudice for anything that is among us. There is no expectation of your being above ordinances as long as you are in this life; and how tasteless so ever ministers

4:11–12 Taught before the Synod of Glasgow: A Transcription from Manuscript,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 12 (2016). A refined text edited for easier reading appears in *Collected Sermons: 61 Sermons* (2017), pp. 906–940.

29. Sermons preached before the Synodal Assembly in Glasgow [manuscript], 1652, 1658. Sermons on 1 Corinthians 1, v.10, by James Fergusson April 5, 1658, and on Ephesians 4, v.11 and 12, by Mr. James Durham, October 5, 1652. Folger Shakespeare Library, X.d.424, MS Add. 257.

30. This is an important observation and it should be something on the order of stating the obvious. However, for modern (faithful, not apostate) Presbyterians, accustomed to their divisions, it may be stunning in its implications.

31. *Collected Sermons: 61 Sermons*, p. 934.

32. *Concerning Scandal* (1990), p. 292.

33. *Collected Sermons: 61 Sermons*, p. 940.

be, they are Christ's gifts that He has given to you for your edifying, and you would pray that the gift may be blessed to you for that end. And who knows but the little praying that has been among people for ministers may have had a hand in our emptiness and other ills that are amongst us? Would to the Lord both you and we could be humbled for these things: and let us all and every one not set ourselves any longer to uphold division; but by earnest prayer wrestle with God for removing of them, and to bestow upon us unity and peace for the edification of the body of His Son.

This remarkably frank sermon to parties at even greater loggerheads since June and after more contentions and a walk out of the Protesters from the July meeting of General Assembly, clearly did not have any immediate effect, as shown by Nicoll's account of it. However, Durham perhaps sowed some seeds which had a short positive impact in November of 1652.

In November, Robert Blair and a convocation of centrist ministers, met at Edinburgh and attempted to negotiate a union between the Protesters and Resolutioners, both of whom were about to meet in their respective Commissions. In an unprecedented turn of events, these centrists were able to persuade the Protesters to suspend all their polemical activities pending the outcome of a new attempt at union. Remarkably, they also prevailed upon the Protesters to write a letter to the Resolutioners in which they offered to forbear acting as the 1650 Commission "as long as endeavours and conferences for union shall continue," providing the Resolutioners would agree to suspend their activities as the 1652 Commission and refrain from executing the acts of the controverted General Assemblies.<sup>34</sup>

Sadly, as Holfelder goes on to note, the Resolutioners derailed the talks. "Unfortunately, the centrists' mediatorial efforts with the Resolutioners were less effective and they responded to the Protesters overture for union with a strange mixture of contempt and compliance."<sup>35</sup> Durham with Blair and others made another attempt on May 27–28, 1653 in the rival commissioners' meetings held prior to the opening of the General Assembly on July 20, 1653.

Before the Commission adjourned, the leading centrists, James Durham and Robert Blair, engaged in a last ditch attempt to negotiate an agreement between the factions and prevent another disastrous General Assembly. Unfortunately, their pleas for "peace and union" fell on deaf

ears as both parties refused to cooperate in any union which involved compromise on their part. They were, however, able to secure a grudging promise from both factions that they would meet prior to the Assembly for one last attempt to compose their differences.<sup>36</sup>

Both sides remained entrenched, and the promised union meeting "shortly before" the assembly turned out merely to be a face saving move by both sides so that neither would be seen as unwilling to make the attempt.<sup>37</sup> The General Assembly meeting itself was broken up during the roll call by Cromwell's troops, who also broke up the Protester meeting the next day and ordered ministers out of the city.<sup>38</sup> No meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland would meet for thirty-seven years. Things did not improve the next year as both sides began actively seeking advantage over each other by courting favor from the English.

In 1654, the Protester Patrick Gillespie attempted to break the resultant stalemate when he sought and obtained an ordinance from the English government establishing a system of "triers," which superseded the authority of the kirk's presbyterian courts. In doing this, Gillespie broke the factions' official policy of non-cooperation with the English and ushered in a period during which both factions courted the favour of the Cromwellian regime in an attempt to gain an advantage over their rival. From this point on, the fortunes of the factions became linked inextricably with the ebb and flow of English politics, the Protesters allying themselves with the radical officers of the English army and the Resolutioners with the conservative forces of parliament. The benefits of such alliances, however, proved transitory, serving only to intensify the factions' animosity. By the eve of the Restoration in 1660, the schism had

34. Holfelder, pp. 179–180.

35. Holfelder, pp. 179–180.

36. Holfelder, pp. 189. Holfelder cites *The Diary of Alexander Brodie of Brodie* ([1863]), pp. 43–4, and National Library of Scotland, Wodrow MS Folio, no. 35, ff. 123r–124r, and *The Records of the Commissions of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, 3 vols., ed. A. F. Mitchell and J. Christie (1892–1909), 3:556. Durham was likely not a commissioner as he is not recorded as officially attending the Resolutioner's meetings, though Blair is. Bodie implies by "we" that Durham was still present on the 28th when he was also appointed along with others to confer with brethren returned from London on how to reach a union, who were then to meet later in the house of Robert Douglas (*Records*, 3:549; Brodie, p. 44).

37. Holfelder, 190.

38. *Life of Blair*, p. 308. *The Diary of Mr. John Lamont of Newton 1649–1671* (1830), pp. 56–57.

not been remedied and the divided kirk proved an easy prey to its adversaries.<sup>39</sup>

Durham and Blair made another attempt in June of 1655, but the Resolutioners were again unwilling to compromise,<sup>40</sup> and a more promising attempt in November the same year also failed. As Holfelder notes, the two sides had become politically entrenched, each seeking Cromwell's support to get dominance over the other. Durham would save any further pleas for his *Dying Testimony*. He had plenty of work to keep himself busy. He married again in 1654, taking to wife the widow of Zachary Boyd, Margaret Mure, and more children filled the Durham home. Margaret was the sister of John Carstares' wife, his partner in the Glasgow ministry. Mrs. Durham and Carstares would partner in bringing most of Durham's lectures and sermons to print.

#### THE DEATH OF JAMES DEATH

As the division proved incurable and Protesters and Resolutioners alike were content to fight a continuous battle for domination, Durham appears to retire from the controversy, and "moves off the stage and becomes an onlooker: his ministerial work comes first, his study,

his pulpit, his visitation, his writing, and the weakness of body which first threatened during his chaplaincy, made retirement increasingly necessary."<sup>41</sup>

Christie writes that "his health gave way in the most alarming manner, aggravated by 'a great burden of continually preaching,' due to the absence of some of his brethren from the city, and the correction and revision of these Lectures [on Revelation] put a great strain upon him."<sup>42</sup> Writing to his cousin about the time Durham died, Baillie remarks: "Our friends in town are all well. Only good Mr. Durham has kept his chamber above these four months, and his bed more than this month, of a lent fever and defluention, that puts his life in great hazard. In the absence of Mr. Patrick Gillespie more than a year, and Mr. Robert M'Quare [MacWard] seeking his health in London, a great burden of continual preaching lay on him, and perfecting of his work on the Revelation for the press was very heavy. It were a great pity of the man; albeit I have my own differences with him, and sharp reckonings sometimes, yet I love him dearly, and counts him one of the best and ablest men in Britain." In a postscript he adds, "Mr. Durham yet continues extremely sick, much regretted by all: no man looks for his life."<sup>43</sup>

Shortly before taking sick Durham had decided his ministry in Glasgow was over; indeed, he had been thinking of another call. It is recorded,

That a little before he sickened, there came a call to him from Aberdeen; and, jesting with his wife, he says, "My dear, will you go with me to [New Town,] Aberdeen?" She surprised, and said he needed not to doubt she would go where he went; but what meant he by that? "Truly," said he, "I think I must go either to Aberdeen or my grave: There is certainly somewhat before me; for my work is done in Glasgow; I cannot get a text to preach to them." And with[in] a little time he sickened and died.<sup>44</sup>

While the call from Aberdeen (issued on December 23) was not objected to by the Glasgow assembly, it is not clear if Durham actually accepted it or if the whole matter was rendered moot upon his taking ill.<sup>45</sup> He was still uncertain and considering it, even though he knew the seriousness of his condition and unsure he had "anie mor lyf," in a February 15, 1658 letter to David Dickson, which he wrote seeking advice as to whether he should entertain accepting the call under the circumstances. Dickson had been primarily responsible for Durham's entering the ministry and it was fitting he sought his advice at the end of it.<sup>46</sup>

39. Holfelder, "Factionalism," Abstract.

40. Holfelder, p. 212.

41. Christie, p. 75.

42. Christie, p. 78.

43. Baillie, 3.368, 373. Baillie comments on the death of Lord Balcolmy, who Laing notes died on 26 June, a day after Durham died. This dates the letter to about the time of his death, though there must be some mistake in the reckoning as it does not seem possible Baillie would have remarked on Lord Balcolmy's sudden death the paragraph before this, which happened after Durham's death, and not remark on Durham's passing on the 25 June.

44. *Analecta*, 2.140. Cf. *Analecta*, 3.107. Wodrow also records Mr. Simson (Patrick Simpson) as saying, that after Durham had finished preaching through the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, that "he could not get a text, save that, 'Martha, Martha,' etc., and he looked on his commission to Glasgow as at an end." *Analecta*, pp. 167-168. This is a reference to Luke 10:41-42. This may place the eight sermons he is said to have preached on "The One Thing Needful," after the Isaiah 53 series, of which one is known and published. 61 *Sermons* (2018), p. 887.

45. *Selections from the Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, ed. John Stuart (Aberdeen: Spalding Club, 1846), pp. 145, 247. Cf. *Diary of Alexander Jaffray* (1833; Aberdeen: G. & R. King, 1856), 118.

46. This letter is in the secretary hand, and is not as clear, perhaps due to his health, as the letter to Douglas about the chaplaincy. A first time partial transcription was given in "Antiquary: The James Durham MS III: James Durham's 228 Sermons on Song of Solomon 2-8," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 13 (2017). My thanks to Mark Koller for providing the above refined text and a transcription as follows: Number 26 (51) Right Reverend, | I have beine put not manie weeks

Feb. 15, 1658  
Right Reverend,

I have been put not many weeks since, to give myself to the Lord's good will whether I should have any more life or not. Now he hath tried with another exercise, when yet I have not had access to be in public (it's likely you heard of it) it's writt[en] by a motion from Aberdeen. I know there is not much depending on my being, or not being anywhere; yet considering some circumstances of the thing, and time we are casten in, I thought it duty to communicate it with you; you, all most all, have had a main hand in God's providence, in ordering all my stations hitherto; yea, and in my first entry to my ministry, Therefore, I hope you will not shun to help me with your advice in the whole matter, and this, as a piece of service to our common master, I beg from you: I can say little more for your information, save that I profess I have no discontent to persuade a change, nor any other desire in this, but to do what may be most edifying, which I entreat you singly, without respect to my inclination to consider: and stand not on generals, for I desire for satisfaction only to put you to this trouble. My infirmity makes me to write to you all jointly,<sup>47</sup> which I beg you will not mistake.

From Your loving brother and servant in the Lord,  
James Durhame

Durham may have believed himself a failure. His great grandfather, grandfather, and father had served kings, but he could not endure the "grievous burden" of being chaplain to Charles II. He was denied many times the opportunity to be a professor of theology for which he believed he was most suited, by both friends and foes alike. His heartfelt principled position to plead for church unity was a failure and one side disparaged him as a "neuter," and the other proclaimed that it was God's justice that he not obtain the ministry he sought in Glasgow. He knew he was far from eloquent and of his own initiative never ventured to put anything to the press, and only from importunity of friends labored to try to bring his lectures on Revelation to some form to be published, and while doing that craft his work on Scandal as a dying testament. He took the responsibility of preaching the Word so seriously as to put himself in physical agony, and his constant study, prayer and fasting to prepare for that tremendous duty appears to have put him in constant ill health, which contemporaries believed caused his final decline and death. With only ten years in the ministry, he would have otherwise

had plenty of time for a second career in Aberdeen, but an early death was closing that door.

Durham seems to have been accepting of his illness and likely death and the apparent end of his usefulness to the ministry, as is clear from his February letter to David Dickson. This acceptance continued late into his illness once he was confined to his bed in the last month of his life.

Mr. John Hunter tells me, that Mr. Patrick Adair came into Mr. James Durham when he was on his death-bed; and, speaking to him, said, he did not question but he was ready, and had nothing to do but to die. He blessed God that had made him ready, adding, that he had scarce that to do, viz. to dye; for, besides that God had long taught him to die daily, he had brought death upon him so gradually and insensibly, by his lingering distemper, that he believed death would be very easy; and he was gradually and very softly dissolving."<sup>48</sup>

However, as death drew near, there then began a great struggle, and he who had preached the need for

since, to give | my selfe to the Lords good will wh[e]ther I should have | anie mor lyf or not. now he hath tryed with ane[other] | other exercise, [whe]n yet I have not had access to be | in publick (its lyk you /heard of it) its writt by a motion | from Aberdeen. I know ther is not much depending | on my being, or not being anie [whe]re; yet [con]sidering | some circumstances of the thing, and tyme we are | casten in, I thought it dutie to communicatt | it with you; you, all most all, have had a main | hand in Gods providence, in ordering all my sta | tions hitherto; yea, and in my first enterie to | my ministerie, Therfor I hop you will not | shune to helpe me with your advice in the whole | matter, and this, as a peece of service to our com | mon master, I begge from you: I can say little | mor for your informatione, save that I professe I | have no discontent to persuad a change, nor ane | other desire in this, but to doe [wha]t may be most | edifeing, [whi]ch I intreat you singly, without respect | to my inclination to consider: and stand not on | generalls, for I desir for satisfaction only | to putt you to this trouble. my infirmete maks | me to writ to you all ?jointly, [whi]ch I bege you | will not mistak, from | feb 15 | 1658 Your loving brother and | servant in the | lord | Ja: durhame." James Durham to David Dickson, February 15, 1658, NLS, Wodrow MSS Folio XV, Number 26 (51).

47. Though mainly addressed to Dickson, it appears Durham wrote a group letter due to his illness. The Edinburgh ministers were tending to work and correspond as a group at this time and Durham may be including any or all of the following: Dickson, Robert Douglas, Mungo Law, James Hamilton, John Smith, George Hutcheson, Robert Lawrie, Hugh MacKale, Thomas Garven. These names are from the fullest jointly signed letter at this time addressed to some Englishmen including Thomas Manton, dated September 3, 1657. See Scottish History Society, third series, volume 16, *Register of the Consultations of the Ministers of Edinburgh and some other brethren of the ministry, 1657-1660* (Edinburgh: Printed on the University Press by T. and A. Constable, Ltd., 1930), p. 114.

48. *Analecta*, 3.297.

assurance of salvation in Christ so strongly,<sup>49</sup> struggled with doubts at the end of his life. There are several brief accounts of this recorded by Wodrow and others.

When on death-bed, he was under considerable darkness about his state, and said to Mr. John Carstairs, “Brother, for all that I have preached and written, there is but one scripture I can remember or dare grip unto it; tell me, if I dare lay the weight of my salvation upon it, *Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no ways cast out.*” Mr. Carstairs answered him, “You may depend on it, though you had a thousand’s salvation at hazard.”<sup>50</sup>

Howie records,

When he was drawing near his departure, and in a great conflict and agony, though finding some difficulty, yet, through the strength of God’s grace, he triumphantly overcame; and cried in a rapture of holy joy, some little

49. “If we have been convinced and made sensible of sin, and of our lost condition by nature; if we have not smothered that conviction, but cherished it; if we have not run to this or that duty for satisfying of divine justice, and for making of our peace thereby, but were necessitated to betake ourselves to Jesus Christ made offer of in the gospel for the salvation of sinners; and if we have closed with him as he was offered —if we have done so, we may thence conclude that he had loved us and given himself to save us because he has humbled me for sin (may the serious soul say) and given me this faith to believe in him; and this is his promise which I rest upon, that I shall be saved.” *Collected Sermons: 72 Sermons on Isaiah 53*, Sermon 20, p. 278.

50. “Life,” in *72 Sermons*, p. 39. This is taken from Wodrow’s first account in *Analecta*, 1.136.

51. John Howie, *Lives of the Scottish Covenanters*, ed. William McGavin (1858; Greenville, SC: A Press, 1981), p. 216.

52. Wodrow then adds, “But after that he got his cloud dispelled.” *Analecta*, 3.106.

53. *Analecta*, 1.215.

54. Jacob Koelman greatly admired James Durham and generally in his work on Revelation follows the views of Durham. “Schatplichtig weet Koelman zich zoals gezegd met name aan de Schot J. Durham, voor wie hij grote bewondering koeſterde. Hij neemt diens eschatologische opvattingen in grote lijnen over.” Mathijs van Campen, „Gans Israël, Voetiaanse en coccejaanse visies op de joden gedurende de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw,” P.h.D.diss., Leiden (2006), p. 188.

55. At the Restoration, many of those who had been in the Protester party in Scotland were either executed or banished. The latter included Robert MacWard and John Brown of Wamphray. “In exile MacWard, Brown and other militant presbyterian ministers drew close to the *Nadere Reformatiorie* or ‘Further Reformation’ movement within the Dutch Calvinist Church. Among their close contacts were several leading lights of the *Nadere Reformatiorie*, such as Jacob Koelman, James Borſtius and professors at the University of Utrecht, such as Gisbert Voetius.” Mark Jardine, “The United Societies: Militancy, Martyrdom and the Presbyterian Movement in Late-Restoration Scotland, 1679–1688,” University of Edinburgh, PhD Thesis (2009), pp. 16–17.

time before he committed his soul to God, “Is not the Lord good? Is he not infinitely good? See how he smiles! I do say it, and I do proclaim it.”<sup>51</sup>

James Stirling’s account recorded by Wodrow is,

He had a great struggle at his death, and was in a great agony. A little before he died, he cried out, “A great sinner I have been! O! a whole world for the least hope of heaven! Of all that he has given me he has lost nothing, but that him that cometh unto me I will in no ways cast out. O may I lippen [trust confidently] to that brother?”—said he to Mr. John Carstairs. To which Mr. Carstairs replied, “If ye had ten thousand souls, ye may hang them all safely on that pin! I suppose, brother, it is not for yourself you are meeting with such a dark cloud, but for the sake of others, viz. of some of us that are now made to hear you!”<sup>52</sup>

And there is another account by a near relation recorded by Wodrow saying,

That that great man, when upon his death-bed, was under deep and sore exercise as to his soul’s case and state; and when his colleague, Mr. Carstairs, came in one day to see him, he asked him how he was? He answered, “Very low. There is but one promise in all the Scripture that I dare look to, ‘Come unto me all ye that are weary,’ Math. xi. 28. “May I venture my salvation upon it?” “Yes,” said Mr. Carstairs. “If you had a thousand souls, you might venture them on it!”<sup>53</sup>

#### ROBERT MACWARD’S ACCOUNT OF DURHAM’S DEATH

These accounts are brief and leave one wanting to know more. Happily, we are indebted to Jacob Koelman,<sup>54</sup> the translator of Rutherford’s Letters and of Durham’s lectures on Song of Solomon into Dutch, for preserving a longer account from the words of a letter he had in his possession. The letter was written by Robert MacWard<sup>55</sup> to a Scottish woman to comfort her upon her own approaching death. MacWard gives a significantly longer and very stirring account of the death of James Durham, along with an assessment of his ministry. Even though this appeared early in print, only twenty years after Durham’s death, it remained generally unknown outside of those knowing the Dutch language. This is the first translation of the text into the English language, and this writer is happy and it is fitting to include it in this updated biography. The following is translated from

Koelman's preface to the first Dutch edition of *Clavis Cantici*.<sup>56</sup> He begins by writing,

But above all I shall put the judicious and Christian reader in hand a more express and extensive narrative of this great minister and his labors, of his life and of his death, as I have found it inserted in an elaborate letter, written three years<sup>57</sup> ago to some Scottish lady by Mr. Robert MacWard<sup>58</sup> (a faithful and brave professor and witness of Jesus Christ for His truth and government against the apostate in Scotland, formerly minister in the same church of Glasgow where Mr. Durham was before him).<sup>59</sup> This letter has not even appeared in print in English. However, I have noted down the following from his original. I shall relate Mr. MacWard's own express words. He speaks thus of that 'great and gracious writer', of that 'great interpreter of Scripture', as he calls him:

Koelman goes on to cite a lengthy passage from MacWard's letter.

*Firstly.* In his call to the work of the ministry there were not a few extraordinary things. Many things there were in his first thrusting forth to labor in the vineyard which are not found in the sending forth of other even faithful laborers, who nevertheless obtain mercy to be serious laborers together with God [1 Cor. 3:9].<sup>60</sup> This

particularity predicted and promised a special and proportioned presence of God, and that his Master would be with him, and hold his hand, and put him forth in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ [Rom. 15:29]; and many experienced it thus.

*Secondly.* As there were many uncommon things in his first sending out, so also his qualifications and abilities

*Religion* (1678), [William] Guthrie's *The Christian's Great Interest* (1680) and others works by James Durham and David Dickson, often seeking biographical details or introductions from MacWard in Utrecht. In return, Koelman was of tremendous help to MacWard and Brown in their correspondence with the States General when they were threatened with extradition to Scotland 1677. He worked closely with Brown, often translating his manuscripts into Dutch and disseminating them across Holland before their publication in English, and he translated MacWard's collection of Rutherford's letters, *Joshua Redivivus*, in 1672, which proved so popular that it ran through five further Dutch editions prior to 1688." Jardine, *ibid.*, p. 17.

58. Koelman spells MacWard and Rutherford as Macwair and Rectorfort, and these have been changed without notice to the current English Spelling.

59. Koelman may be referring to Robert MacWard's several tracts in English, for which see *A Collection of Tracts, Containing, I. Banders disbanded. II. The poor man's cup of cold water. III. A testimony against paying of cess to the persecutors, in a letter to a friend* (Dalry: John Gemmill, 1805). However, it may rather be the case that he is drawing from the only work by MacWard that had appeared in Dutch prior to this, which was a translation of a letter (again), preserved in MS but never published in English. *De wekker der leeraaren. In tijden van verval met aanwijzing van den plicht der vroomen, ten goede van haer leeraars. Voorgesteld in een brief, eerst in't Engels beschreven, door een yveraar Gods*, trans. Jacobus Koelman (Vlissingen: Abraham van Laren, 1674). The manuscript is "A solemn & necessary warning especially to those in the holy office of the ministry." New College Library, Edinburgh, MSS MacWard, U.S.II.4.8a. Koelman learned of and obtained the text from a devout lady of Utrecht (possibly Maria van der Voort, who befriended both MacWard and Brown of Wamphray), and was so taken by it that he translated and published it. The text in Dutch is not attributed and it appears that Koelman did not know the author to credit until he met MacWard as early as the next year (1675). Editions after 1700 attribute it to MacWard. The work is quite critical of the conforming clergy in Scotland. In one way, at least for Koelman, it was too harsh in saying read prayers flowed from Satan (read prayers were common Dutch practice, see *De wekker der leeraaren*, page \*3r), and he tempers and explains that MacWard's severity was due to the situation of the church in Scotland. For background he refers to the Dutch translation by his friend Jacobus Borstius, of James Stewart's and James Stirling's *Naphtali, or The Wrestlings of the Church of Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ* (1667; Dutch, Rotterdam: Borstius, 1668), See L. J. van Valen, "In God verbonden: De gereformeerde vroomheidsbetrekkingen tussen Schotland en de Nederlanden in de zeventiende eeuw, met name in de periode na de Restauratie (1660-1700)," PhD Thesis, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam (2019), pp. 302-306.

60. All Scripture references have been deduced and supplied by the translator. While MacWard is not explicit, this at the least must allude to Durham's conversion and then later escape from death at Marston Moor.

56. This text was translated by Ruth Pieterman in August, 2021, from *De Sleutel of Verklaaring Van 't Hooglied Salomons, Beschreven door Mr. Jacobus Durham ... Vertaelt door Jacobus Koelman* (Utrecht: Willem Clerck, 1681), pp. 48-58. From pages 42-48, Koelman rehearses facts and assessments of Durham taken from Carstares' and Baillie's prefaces to the Revelation lectures, and Owen's and Jenkyn's prefaces and Carstares' letter to the reader affixed to the lectures on the Ten Commandments. The MacWard letter appears to be the only unique manuscript material he adduces. Allusions to and citations of Scripture were supplied by the translator.

57. Koelman was a student of Gisbertus Voetius, and became minister of the congregation at Sluis in Staats-Vlaanderen from 1662-1674, when he was ejected by the magistrates. The life of Durham is not dated, but Koelman's dedication is dated 17 Januari 1681. If the "three years" is more or less precise, this dates the letter to about the last months of 1678 or the beginning of 1679. The dedication is to Koelman's own congregation in Sluis. "Jacob Koelman had been ejected from his charge in Flanders for 'refusing to observe the festival days and formularies of the Dutch Church.' He was noted for favouring stricter churches, and gave considerable help to the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam, including participating in Richard Cameron's ordination..." "The Societies would look to Koelman not only as a 'great witness against corruptions' in Holland, but as 'a great sympathizer with the afflicted contenders against defections' in Scotland. From the Restoration onwards, Koelman had specialised in translating Protestant Presbyterian divines, such as Hugh Binning's *Principles of Christian*

were uncommon. He was the man, of any I knew, whose natural and acquired abilities made him very able for such an undertaking to open up that deep Scripture, Revelation. Such a treasure and multitude of eminent gifts, such foreseeing and penetrating discernment of spirit, such firmness and solidness of judgment; in a word, such rich and rare combination of requirements to qualify a person to such a work is hardly to be found in a whole age.

*Thirdly.* I must tell you, though He who had sent him forth to the work of the ministry, also with a strong hand [cf. Isa. 8:11] pressed on his soul to enter upon this work of the exposition of Revelation, and moved him to dive into this deep, nevertheless such was his gracious humility (for with such is the secret of the Lord [Ps. 25:14]) and so low was his esteem of the rich treasure wherewith his Master had provided him, that he regarded what he had as bearing no proportion at all to that wherewith he was occupied. He thought that his abilities would mean little to open up the mysteries which are enveloped in that book, unless the Spirit of wisdom and revelation worked together with an extraordinary assistance, guided him into the truth in the search, and discovered to him those deep things out of the darkness [Eph. 1:17; John 16:13; Job 12:22]. And therefore, under this right and happy conviction of his inability to these things, in spite of all his abilities, he did that which I do not know could be said of any other exposition of Scripture which is in print. Namely, he never studied nor tried to study any lesson or sermon in that book until he first had given himself to fasting and prayer, to the end he might be helped to find out the meaning and sense of the Spirit and to unfold that mystery, and afterwards he went to work in faith and dependence. This on the whole testifies that his Master took him alone and expounded to him all those things which for others would have been as parables and dark sayings. So that the things which this Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God [Mark 4:34; Ps. 78:2; 2 Chron. 26:5], has written (without deducting anything from other worthy and great men) seems to be more truthfully a Revelation of Revelation than anything else which the world has ever yet seen about that portion of Scripture.

*Fourthly.* During all the time of his ministry in his sermons and persuadings he so constantly filled the field with Jesus Christ and with faith in His blood, that none excelled him in this. What God made His Christ for poor sinners, and what he himself had found Him to

be (for he believed, and the Spirit of faith had been given him, and therefore he spoke [2 Cor. 4:13]), was Mr. Durham's constant subject. How seriously and urgently he most closely followed up that great gospel design, so that the soul might embrace Jesus Christ unto righteousness! His sermons always showed that he had determined not to know anything among the people than Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And though he disdained that showiness and vain floweriness of the enticing words of man's wisdom in proclaiming the testimony of God, yet he spoke as being moved by the Holy Spirit. And the movements of the hearts of his hearers on the moving of his lips were a testimony that his speech and his preaching was in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power [1 Cor. 2:2; 1 Cor. 2:4].

And thus this was always his advice to the students of theology that they would clearly present Jesus Christ as crucified before the eyes of the people for the obedience of faith [Rom. 1:5; 16:26]. And that they would make it their work, on the one hand, to discover the people to themselves, and the wrath of God against all unrighteousness, until they were brought to that question of the jailor: 'What shall we do to be saved?' And on the other hand, to point to the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, and to preach the marrow of the gospel wherein, unto the sinner's salvation, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith [Acts 16:30; John 1:29; Rom. 1:17].

And here I must tell you what you should especially observe, that he by this way of preaching (whereby he occupied the hearers about their own hearts and about the body of death that was in them, to the end that this might always be to them a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners [1 Tim. 1:15]) became the happy instrument of establishing and grounding his hearers in the firm truths of the gospel. For though there were more professors in Glasgow than in any other place of that nation which was not more populous, yet during all the time of the stay of the English among them, the former did not persuade one soul into their sentiments; yes, many of the English heard him constantly with great edification and benefit.

He judged, as a wise physician, that no way was so safe—not only to prevent people's falling into the freneticism of the papal bewitchment (though I admit that the devil indeed was wiser than on that time to have presented the papal abominations in their natural shape,

well knowing how greatly these, thus being displayed, would have been detested; nevertheless this seer [1 Sam. 9:9] observed that that mystery of iniquity wrought then, and foreseeing what is now carried on in Britain [2 Thess. 2:7], he made it part of his work to give the souls of his hearers an antidote to the venom of Rome), but also to oppose those light opinions which were ready to commend themselves to the less steadfast and less approved people under the color of high attainments, meanwhile insensibly consuming the lively practices of godliness and stopping the lively exercises of religion, putting a dry skeleton of sapless and windy concepts in the place of sweet communion with God and of the serious striving for conformity to His image—I say, he judged no way so suitable and proper (and the outcome showed that he had the mind of Christ) to prevent those deadly evils than that of teaching the people to keep their finger on their sore in order that their eye might always be on their remedy, and to keep their wounds bleeding for Christ until He would bind them up. He sought to make them have a right knowledge of the plague of their own heart [1 Kings 8:38] and to make them know that nothing could heal their disease than a plaster of the blood of Christ, applied by faith.

*Fifthly.* Let me tell you (which can be of special use for you before you die and at your death) yet a little of his soul's exercise on the last day of his life, where I myself was present and of which I must say that it was the most edifying sight that I ever saw on earth. And perhaps God made me a witness of it to this end, among others, that I at this time and occasion might give you a narrative of it to your edification.

When he was drawing near to his end and I alone, except for his own family, was present, he turned away from us with his face to the wall and thus was lying still for a considerable time. We judged that he was asleep, but from the narrative that we afterwards got from himself, we found that he refreshed his soul in the begun enjoyments of God, having got his head laid on the bosom of his Master and satisfying himself with the first fruits and with the blessed anticipations and foretastes of the glory which was now to be revealed. For these were his words: "I turned to the wall, and I thought of Hezekiah's posture, and I had a good hour."

But as soon as he turned himself to us again, we at once observed such a change that presently his friends were sent for to see him giving up the ghost (little thinking that they would have to be witnesses of one of the most

remarkable soul-battles of which anyone of them, all things well-considered, had ever been a witness). Immediately after this glorious enjoyment it pleased the Lord to draw a shutter between the eye of His servant and His own face, and by a dark cloud to eclipse the light of His countenance, which just now had shone upon his soul; and at the same time to let loose the tempter upon him, whereby an unexpected storm was raised in his soul.

My pen almost drops out of my hand while I am writing this, when I remember the anguish and distress of his soul in that battle. His heaviness was so great that he in his wrestling, as not far from being overcome (yet he could not be overcome and sink because everlasting arms were underneath [Deut. 33:27]; thus a sustaining influence was more present than he felt at that time), burst forth into this expression: "Lord, has ever a work like this fallen out badly in Thy hand?" (Oh, "in Thy hand," a remarkable word, as knowing to Whom he had committed the keeping of his soul [1 Peter 4:19]). Yet the storm increased and after a long continuation in this sharp conflict, he again burst forth into this expression: "Lord, if ever I have found grace in Thy sight, let me alone" [Exod. 33:13; 34:9; Judges 6:17; Job 7:16,19; 10:20].

This battle continued from six o'clock in the morning unto at noon, in which time he as it were had to pass through again all the several stages of Christianity, from the first touching of a soul which is made sensible of its lost state to its admission into glory. During this time the poorest burdened maidservant, ignorant of the way of making peace with God and being pursued with the terrors of the law, never listened with greater eagerness and attention to grasp something from the narrative of a Savior and of a city of refuge, than this great preacher of faith listened to a word of faith in Christ Jesus, by whomsoever it was spoken. And when that other great gospel preacher who oftentimes had been a comfort to him, Mr. Carstairs (a happy pair of colleagues, and a blessed people among whom such fellow laborers and fellow workers are laboring unto the kingdom of God [Col. 4:11]), said something to him that amounted to these words: "My Sir, it is becoming that you should be put in this exercise, and that you, being driven away from all other refuges, should make use of the shield of faith therewith to quench all the fiery darts which are thrown at you in this furious attack [Eph. 6:16]—you who were so often helped to preach the nature, the necessity, the excellency, the use, and the end of faith in Christ Jesus, in order that we, by your making use of

this shield before our eyes and by practicing thy teaching in this duel, may now strive for that steadfastness in the faith whereby alone we are to be enabled to resist the roaring lion [1 Peter 5:8–9], and in order that we may see it is a lighter matter to preach, profess, and speak of the faith in Jesus Christ, than to practice and use that precious faith as a shield and buckler.”

On hearing this he burst forth into this expression: “Oh, how true is the thing you say! In this day I bear witness to that truth, that it is one thing to preach and persuade concerning the faith in Christ Jesus, and another thing to put it into practice.”

When it had been twelve o'clock, all those present were requested to move to another room; only Mr. Carstairs and I stayed with him. Then, after a deep comfortless silence, he suddenly cast an eye on us shining with that joy unspeakable and full of glory which is in believing [1 Peter 1:8], and with a brightness and transport of soul as of one who is taken up on the mount or who at once enters into the immediate enjoyment of God, he said: “Oh, how lovely He is looking! Does anyone of you know Him! He condescends to satisfy me, ungrateful me!”

After this time he was so taken up with that new sight of that blessed object, God in Christ reconciling the sinners unto Himself [2 Cor. 5:19], and so enraptured with that sight of his face, and his uplifted thoughts were so arrested in these raptures, that he being thus absorbed, could no longer endure to speak with us. Only we saw that his soul was bathed in pure delight and immersed in the depth of wonder. Hereby it was given us to understand a little bit of what will be the eternal exercise of the souls which are admitted into the immediate sight of God, when in all the ages of eternity the soul will be so occupied by Him that it will never endure to look to anything else. Nothing but God will have access to look into the soul, for He will be all in all, all that is seen, all that is known, all that is beheld or loved, and all that is enjoyed; and the soul will not look for another object, having now in possession everything it desires.

Thus we saw that good soldier of Jesus Christ entering the battle [2 Tim. 2:3].

Thus we saw him being pursued.

Thus we saw him pleading and presenting Jesus Christ and His righteousness as his only protection.

Thus we saw him being absolved and acquitted.

Thus we saw him fighting and conquering.

Thus we saw him putting Christ between him and everything from which he could not otherwise be justified [Acts 13:39].

Thus we saw the God of peace bruising Satan under his feet [Rom. 16:20]; and this was the victory whereby he overcame, even his faith in His blood [1 John 5:4].

Thus we saw him dying while kissing the wounds of a slain Savior.

And thus we saw his Master kissing those lips which by kissing His wounds were like a scarlet thread.

And in these mutual embraces we saw his Master carrying him off the stage to receive the immortal crown.

So that great request which he had made (which a few days before on his special order had been written down and has been printed at the end of his book, summarizing all the desires and longings of his blessed soul; Oh, noble frame, to depart out of this world panting to have possession of God, breathing out his soul in the bosom of Jesus Christ, dying because he could no longer live in the body, in this respect that while he was at home in the body, he was absent from the Lord! [2 Corinthians 5:6, 8]) was granted him in a full measure, heaped up, shaken together and running over [Luke 6:38]. And thus, being filled with all the fullness of God [Eph. 3:19], he was set down to sing among those glorious choristers above.

Thus he lived unto God.

Thus he believed.

Thus he walked.

Thus he wrote.

Thus he preached.

Thus he wrestled.

Thus he fought the good fight of faith [2 Tim. 4:7].

Thus he died more than conqueror through Him who loved him [Rom. 8:37].

Thus he departed out of this life.

And thus we saw an entrance was ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [2 Peter 1:11].

Koelman then concludes, “So far Mr. MacWard,” and adds,

Here I shall yet add two things. Firstly, Mr. MacWard says towards the end that to Mr. Durham his request was granted which he had made to be noted down at the back of his book, but he does not mention what it was. Therefore, the reader should know that the following words are at the end of Mr. Durham’s book of the exposition on Revelation:<sup>61</sup> “The worthy and pious author of this treatise (whose communication {communication to others} was habitually good for the use of edifying, and such as did minister grace to the hearers, being about to leave this world [Eph. 4:29], to which he was dead when alive, while all that were about him did see him panting {panting and thirsting} for God, for the living God, as the hart does after the water brooks [Ps. 42:1]), a little before he fell asleep, desired one of them who stood by to write for a close to this commentary of Revelation these following words (worthy to be graven {to be written} with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever), *And now, O my soul, when all says ‘Come’ and concurs in a sweet harmony, seeing thou hast heard and doest hear the call {the voice} of the gospel, say with the bride and with the Spirit, ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly’*” [Job 19:24; Rev. 22:17, 20].

Secondly, I cited in the preface to the Letters of Mr. Rutherford by occasion that an eminent well-exercised Christian in Scotland,<sup>62</sup> perceiving that many were of a very sorrowful spirit upon the removal and death of that glorious, burning and shining light [John 5:35], Mr. Durham, used this word of comfort and encouragement (wherewith at the same time he expressed his esteem of him).<sup>63</sup> “Turn your tears and sighs for this loss, though it seems to you {seems to be} almost irreparable (an age hardly producing such another) into songs of praises, and do not so indulge your sorrow, because the Master hath called home an ambassador who did so faithfully and successfully negotiate for him, as ye {that you would} forget in the meantime to praise the Lord of the harvest who thrust forth such a laborer into

His vineyard. Let not the greatness of your grief make you forget the riches of His goodness to the Church of Christ in Scotland, in that there was a Mr. Durham to die out of it.”

Thus far the remarkable account of the death of James Durham from Robert MacWard via the preserving hand of Jacob Koelman. Shortly before he died, Durham received a letter from Samuel Rutherford,

Sir, I would ere now have written to you, had I not known that your health, weaker and weaker, could scarce permit you to hear or read. I need not speak much. The Way ye know, and have preached to others the skill of the Guide, and the glory of the home beyond death. And when He saith, “Come and see,” it will be your gain to obey, and go out and meet the Bridegroom. What accession is made to the higher house of His kingdom should not be our loss, though it be real loss to the church of God. But we count one way, and the Lord counteth another way. He is infallible, and the only wise God, and needeth none of us. Had he needed the staying in body of Moses and the prophets, He could have taken another way. Who dare bid you cast your thoughts back on wife or children, when He hath said, “Leave them to Me, and come up hither”? Or who can persuade you to die or live, as if that were arbitrary to us, and not His alone who hath determined the number of your months? If so it seem good to Him, follow your Forerunner and Guide. It is an unknown land to you, who were never there before; but the land is good, and the company before the throne desirable, and He who sitteth on the throne is His lone a sufficient heaven.

Grace, grace be with you.

Yours in the Lord,

S. R. St. Andrews, June 15, 1658.<sup>64</sup>

61. The text from the end of the Revelation lectures is inserted here. The words in braces are translations of the Dutch Koelman made from the original English text into Dutch.

62. Sadly, the writer is not identified.

63. See in English, *Joshua redivivus, or, Mr. Rutherford’s letters divided into two parts*, ed. Robert MacWard (Rotterdam?, 1664), Christian Reader, p. [c6 recto], and in Dutch, *Het tweede deel der brieven van Mr. Samuel Rhetorfort. Professor, en predikant wel eer in de Academy, en kerk van St. Andries, in Schotlandt*, translated by Jacob Koelman (Tot Amsterdam: By Gerardus Borstius, boekverkoper, aan den Dam, op den hoek van de Nieuwendijk, 1679).

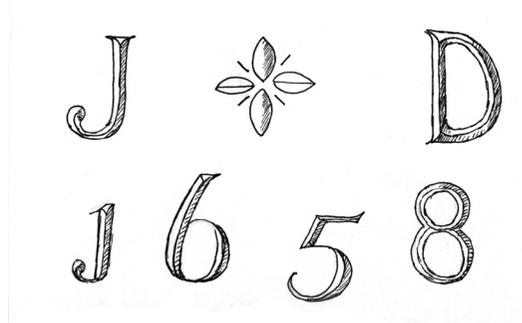
64. *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, ed. Andrew Bonar, fourth edition (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1890), Letter CCCLI, To Mr. James Durham, p. 685.

James Durham entered glory ten days later on the 25th of June, 1658, in the thirty-sixth year of his age. He was interred in Blacader's (Blackadder's) Aisle in the cathedral, which was "formally set apart for the city clergy" on November 30, 1648. There would have been no funeral in keeping with the then general practice, and there is no obvious memorial, but only the bare initials and dates of the many ministers buried since are crudely carved

65. The Durham initials were still visible in 1823 and in 1898. James Cleland, *Statistical Tables Relative to the City of Glasgow*, third ed. (Glasgow: James Lumesden and Son, 1823), p. 178. George Eyre-Todd, *The Book of Glasgow Cathedral: A History and Description* (Glasgow: Morison Brothers, 1898), p. 201, 418. Unfortunately, no photographs antique or modern were discovered that display these initials clearly. The aisle has been whitewashed, heavily it seems, more than once after it was set aside as a place for worship in 1937 through funds raised by Friends of Glasgow Cathedral (Andrew G. Ralston, *Nevile Davidson: A Life to Be Lived* [Wipf & Stock, 2019], p. 40). Ongoing restoration work and the setting aside of the aisle for worship services has rendered it off limits to the general public, and due to Covid restrictions it was with a great deal of difficulty that Durham's and Gray's initials were confirmed to be still visible and present. While Durham's initials and date are visible to the naked eye, Gray's are harder to see, and neither could be photographed well due to the whitewash, and a more professional attempt could not be undertaken under the restrictions and publication time constraints. Other 17th century initials may still be present under all the whitewashing, but only Durham's and Gray's could be detected. My profuse thanks are due Jess Lydon, Steward, Glasgow Cathedral, with Historic Environment Scotland, who on my query investigated this and provided some photographs and details on the location of the Durham and Gray memorial initials. Through some AI the Durham initials were raised enough to make the above artist's conception rendering. My thanks go to the artist, J. David Gillespie, Stonecutter, South Carolina.

66. There were excavations in 1992–93 at the cathedral to install new and updated heating and electrical systems under the floors. There were 84 burials excavated from throughout the cathedral, of which 79 skeletons were in such condition as to enable removal for analysis. However, according to Dr. Stephen T. Driscoll (Correspondence, August 2, 2021), the excavations of 1903 were relied upon for the installations in the aisle. The charts of the 1992–93 work do indicate a dozen excavations around the interior perimeter walls and three areas in the middle of the room. Presumably, then, these were already disturbed in 1903. Dr. Driscoll thought facts about this would be in some archive, but there is nothing at the Mitchell Library and neither could Historic Scotland find records relating to this (Correspondence with Dr. Driscoll; Correspondence with Jess Lydon, Historic Environment Scotland; Correspondence with Joe Waterfield, HEC, Archives, Heritage Directorate). See Stephen T. Driscoll, "Excavations at Glasgow Cathedral: A Preliminary Report on the Archaeological Discoveries made in 1992–93," Fig. 2. Location Plan, *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, 17 #1 (1991–1992): 66. The remains removed in 1992–93 from other places in the cathedral were to be reburied at some point (Stephen T. Driscoll, et al., *Excavations at Glasgow Cathedral 1988–1997*, The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monographs, Book 18 [Oxford: Routledge, 2002]). However, it could not be verified if this has yet been done. It is less likely as much care was taken in the 1903 excavations, but it remains unknown if burials were disturbed.

into the wall, and even these are practically forgotten and covered over with multiple coats of whitewash.<sup>65</sup> In addition to this indignity, more significant disturbing of Durham's resting place may have occurred in 1903, but no details of the excavation work done for heating ducts in the floor at that time could be found as to whether burials were disturbed or not.<sup>66</sup> However, while the grand memorial crypt in St. Rule's Monifieth erected by his grandfather for the Durham's of Pitkerro has long since been carelessly eradicated, as one steps down into that cathedral aisle, on the right at the first bay may be found the initials of a son of Durham who left the life of the country gentry for the gospel ministry: "M", "J.D." 1658." And next to those are the initials of Andrew Gray,<sup>67</sup> whose more popular ministry was cut short two years earlier.



#### THE LEGACY OF JAMES DURHAM

For all his sharp opposition to Durham's peacemaking found in his then private writings, Robert Baillie chose to say publicly in his preface to Durham's lectures on Revelation,

The Epistle [to the Reader] speaks to the man. I shall add but this one word, that from the day I was employed by the Presbytery to preach and pray and to impose, with others, hands upon him for the Ministry at Glasgow, I did live to the very last with him in great and uninterrupted love, and in a high estimation of his egregious

67. It has been said that Durham was the first to be buried in the aisle. James Cleland, *Statistical Tables Relative to the City of Glasgow*, third ed. (Glasgow: James Lumesden and Son, 1823), p. 178. However, the initials A. G. and 1656 would indicate that Andrew Gray was the first. There is something fitting to the fact the two, at least memorials, are next two each other (Durham first from the entry, though apparently the second buried).

[remarkable] enduements [accomplishments], which made him to me precious among the most excellent divines I have been acquainted with in the whole Isle.”<sup>68</sup>

The early eighteenth century author of Durham’s life, writes,

His death was the more to be lamented, that he died thus in the very flower and vigor of his grace, gifts and age. Mr. John Carstairs, his colleague in the Inner-kirk, preached next Sabbath upon Isaiah 57:1. “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering, that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come.” Where he gave him a large character, and represented the great loss of such an eminent man.<sup>69</sup>

In his second of apparently three sermons on the occasion of Durham’s death, John Carstairs preached to the congregation,

And we may thankfully declare, as an eminent instance of God’s goodness to this city of Glasgow, that we have been kept in the most wonderful calm, and lived in great amity and peace there eight years by-past, when he was with us, though we were as much predisposed, and in danger of being consumed by these woeful fires of division and strife that were burning our church, as any other Christians were. And if we can commend any proper mean of healing such distempers, or promoting peace and unity among all ranks, we cannot sufficiently extol and celebrate his incomparable moderation, prudence, meekness, lowliness, and integrity. It will be a signal mercy if we be kept so long again from some kind of reeling, confusion, and schism; and if ever we see again these woeful days, we will bemoan the want of one of his cementing, peaceable, and healing spirit. Was he not, in a word, a merchy [marrowy; pithy] and substantial preacher, who gave us the marrow, yea, the very pith and kernel of the gospel; he delivered very much sound divinity in little bounds, and in few words. Ye that are the common people, are deprived by his death of a plain and easily understood preacher. Ye that are sore troubled in spirit, and exercised, ye want a very tender and sympathizing guide. Ye that are learned and wise, want a learned minister, who was well instructed in the mysteries and laws of Christianity, the most valuable learning I know. Ye that are proud, covetous, or wicked, now want [lack] a teacher that would have exposed your corruptions, and might have been a blessed mean of reforming you, and reclaiming you

from your dangerous mistakes and errors, without fretting and irritating you.”<sup>70</sup>

Even though in his lifetime he never thought to send anything to print on his own initiative, at the end of his life at the entreaty of Baillie and others, Durham spent the remaining months of his life preparing his lectures on the Revelation of John for publication, and when confined to his deathbed, he finalized a manuscript for others to prepare for the press. This was his *Dying Man’s Testament to the Church of Scotland*, a theological treatise against offenses and division in the church. These appeared after his death, as all of his books did. While the ministry of James Durham as preacher of the Word in Glasgow was brief, yet, no doubt contrary to his own expectations, the result of those six years of preaching and teaching have continued to instruct and spiritually nurture the church.

The writings of ‘Judicious Durham’ claim a place in Scottish Bibliography simply owing to their great popularity. His books were constantly read for almost two centuries. Twenty-six printing-presses in eight towns of Scotland, England, and Holland were occupied with them; in each decade between his death and the beginning of the nineteenth century at least one of his books was printed. . . . Not one of them, however, was published during his lifetime . . . it was through the loving care of his widow and her brother-in-law, Mr. John Carstairs of Glasgow, that his Sermons and Expositions were edited and published.<sup>71</sup>■

68. *Commentary upon the Book of Revelation*, vol. 1 (2020), p. 24.

69. “Life,” p. 41. These sermons existed at the time of the publication of the lectures on the Book of Job in 1759, as the prefacer cites them extensively. See *61 Sermons* (2017), pp. 18–25.

70. “Life,” p. 21.

71. Christie, “James Durham as Courtier and Preacher,” p. 35. See the *Annotated Bibliography* of Durham’s works in James Durham, *Commentary upon Revelation*, vol. 3. Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2022.

*In Brief: The PCA and The Federal Vision.* From Charles Stover, “RC Sproul at the PCA’s 35th General Assembly,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Jg4eIiRQzY>, and “The PCA’s Nine Declarations Against The Federal Vision (PCA GA Minutes [2007], pp. 566–567).”

In 2007 the Presbyterian Church in America voted to receive the report of the ad interim study committee on Federal Vision [FV] and the New Perspective on Paul [NPP] and Auburn Avenue theology. This committee was asked to study the soteriology of the [NPP] and [FV] and report back to the General Assembly [GA]. The committee constructed a marvelous document outlining the teaching of the Westminster Standards on election and covenant, justification and Union with Christ, perseverance, apostasy, and assurance. The report also set forth nine areas in which the [NPP] and [FV] teaching was at odds with the Westminster Standards. The report was accepted by the 2007 [GA], but not without considerable debate. Before voting on the report a debate was had on a motion ... to add two ministers sympathetic to the [FV] and the [NPP] to the committee, and to revise their work with their perspectives represented fairly. ... It was during this debate that Pastor R.C. Sproul went to the microphone.

“(mic. #12). RC Sproul, Central Florida Presbytery. Speaking against the motion. I think we’re all aware of Luther’s evaluation of the doctrine of justification where he said that it was the article upon which the church stands or falls. Calvin added to that it is the hinge upon which everything turns. And in our day we’ve had an unprecedented attack on the Reformation understanding of solo fide, particularly at the point of the denial of imputation, which if you look at the declarations, you see is front and center of this report.

And I believe, Fathers and Brethren, that the kingdom of God is not at stake here. But I think the purity of the PCA is. And I don’t understand; I just can’t fathom the hesitancy about this matter. Too much [is] at stake. This is the gospel that we’re talking about, gentlemen, and that the Westminster Confession does not already give us a faithful exposition of the Gospel, at what point can we trust our confession, and it seems to me to add those people to the committee whom our previous committee, fulfilling their mandate to examine whether their views weren’t conforming to our confession—it’s like asking in a courtroom to have the accused become members of the jury. It doesn’t make any sense to me, and [loud applause]

[gentlemen, moderator speaking] Shame on you fathers and brothers you’re not allowed to do what you just did so. [what he said, moderator speaking] I apologize for that outburst of unseemly but righteous applause.”

#### The PCA’s Nine Declarations Against The Federal Vision

1. The view that rejects the bi-covenantal structure of Scripture

as represented in the Westminster Standards (i.e., views which do not merely take issue with the terminology, but the essence of the first/second covenant framework) is contrary to those Standards. 2. The view that an individual is “elect” by virtue of his membership in the visible church; and that this “election” includes justification, adoption and sanctification; but that this individual could lose his “election” if he forsakes the visible church, is contrary to the Westminster Standards. 3. The view that Christ does not stand as a representative head whose perfect obedience and satisfaction is imputed to individuals who believe in him is contrary to the Westminster Standards. 4. The view that strikes the language of “merit” from our theological vocabulary so that the claim is made that Christ’s merits are not imputed to his people is contrary to the Westminster Standards. 5. The view that “union with Christ” renders imputation redundant because it subsumes all of Christ’s benefits (including justification) under this doctrinal heading is contrary to the Westminster Standards. 6. The view that water baptism effects a “covenantal union” with Christ through which each baptized person receives the saving benefits of Christ’s mediation, including regeneration, justification, and sanctification, thus creating a parallel soteriological system to the decretal system of the Westminster Standards, is contrary to the Westminster Standards. 7. The view that one can be “united to Christ” and not receive all the benefits of Christ’s mediation, including perseverance, in that effectual union is contrary to the Westminster Standards. 8. The view that some can receive saving benefits of Christ’s mediation, such as regeneration and justification, and yet not persevere in those benefits is contrary to the Westminster Standards. 9. The view that justification is in any way based on our works, or that the so-called “final verdict of justification” is based on anything other than the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ received through faith alone, is contrary to the Westminster Standards. ■



Picture: Dr. R. C. Sproul speaking at microphone 12 at the 2007 35th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. With permission/Source: [kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/the-latest-post/2007/6/13/pca-general-assembly-vote-on-nppfv.html](http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/the-latest-post/2007/6/13/pca-general-assembly-vote-on-nppfv.html)