

The Doctrine of the Heavenly Intercession of Christ in the Works of James Durham

By Colin Dow

INTRODUCTION

The heavenly intercession of Christ is a neglected doctrine in our pulpits.¹ Of the consolations and comforts of this doctrine most Christians remain ignorant. It is the unclaimed treasure of the Christian church. James Durham (1622–1668) wrote, “there is no piece of the fulness of our blessed Lord Jesus that is more rich in consolation than His intercession, and yet it is suffered to lie beside even the Believer, not being improved to the excellent use which doth flow from it.”² This article explores features of Durham’s pastoral applications of the doctrine of Christ’s heavenly intercession. These applications were prompted by Durham’s pastoral approach and were therefore presented from the pulpit as a response to questions he had received in the homes of the people he served. The burden of this article is to highlight the pastoral applications of Durham’s doctrine. Differing views of this doctrine (e.g. hypothetical universalism) will only be raised in brief form to both note Durham’s awareness of them and his eagerness to propound solid Westminster theology. This article also suggests some contemporary applications of Durham’s doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ.

THE LIFE OF JAMES DURHAM

James Durham was born of noble stock in 1622 near the Angus village of Monifieth. He was brought up in the Powrie Estate which later became the property of the Wedderburns of Dundee.³ Durham left Powrie to study at St. Andrews University but left before he graduated, instead intent on pursuing the life of a country gentleman. In his early years, he had little interest in spiritual matters. However, over the course of a Communion Weekend in Abercorn, he came under

conviction through the ministry of Ephraim Melville and went forward to the Lord’s Table.

Immediately, Durham devoted himself to study. Howie wrote, “He gave himself much up to reading and meditation; for which purpose that he might be free from all disturbances, he caused a study to be built for himself ... in this place ... he enjoyed much sweet communion with the Lord.”⁴ The formulation of the Doctrine of Christ’s Heavenly Intercession clearly comes from a mind devoted to much study.

His call to the ministry is remarkable. Conscripted as a captain in the Scottish army during the English Civil War, before battle was joined at Marston Moor (July 1644), he led his regiment in prayer. Passing by on his horse, David Dickson, the Professor of Divinity in Glasgow University, heard Durham’s prayer and challenged him that after the war was over, he should

THE AUTHOR: Dr. Colin Dow (BSc Hons and PhD, Aberdeen University; MTheol, Glasgow University; DipTh, Free Church of Scotland College) is Senior Minister at Crow Road Free Church of Scotland in Glasgow where he has served since 2003.

1. The author conducted a survey of fellow ministers in the Free Church of Scotland and discovered that in the last year, only 15% had preached directly on the heavenly priesthood of Christ. Only 35% had even referenced Christ’s continuing high priestly activity in a sermon.

2. James Durham, *A Commentarie upon the Book of the Revelation* (Glasgow: Sanders, 1680), p. 384. Original spellings have been retained in quotations unless otherwise noted.

3. The Wedderburns are famous for the so-called “*Wedderburn Psalms*”, a collection of spiritual songs in broad Scots—“*guid and godlie ballatis*.” See *A Compendious Book of Godly and Spiritual Songs commonly known as “The Gude and Godlie Ballatis”* reprinted from the edition of 1567, edited with introduction notes by A. F. Mitchell, D.D., LL.D., Scottish Text Society (Edinburgh and London: Printed for the Society by William Blackwood and Sons, 1897).

4. John Howie, *The Scots Worthies: containing a brief historical account of the most eminent noblemen, gentlemen, ministers, and others, who testified or suffered for the cause of reformation in Scotland from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the year 1688* (Glasgow: W.R. M’Phun, 1829), p. 211.

pursue a calling to the ministry. During the battle itself, Durham's horse was shot from beneath him and, when asked at sword-point by a soldier, whether he was a priest, admitted, "I am a priest of God". The soldier spared his life and Durham determined, from that moment onward, to repay his gratitude to God by entering into the holy ministry.

He studied under David Dickson in Glasgow and was licensed in 1646 by the Presbytery of Irvine. He was ordained and inducted to be a minister in the Blackfriars church in November 1647. In 1650, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland appointed Durham to attend to the King's family as a chaplain. These were difficult days for the Scottish Church, committed as they were both to the National Covenant but also to the King. George Christie wrote of Durham, "it was no light task to gain the Royal confidence without forfeiting that of the Church, yet that seems to have been the object of his attendance."⁵ It may be that during his time as chaplain to the King, Durham learned many lessons which helped him to understand how, if intercession is made with an earthly monarch, Christ makes intercession for us with the Heavenly King. In 1651 Durham was called to become one of the ministers at Glasgow's Inner-Kirk, a position he held until his early death in 1658. His parish lay on the east of Glasgow and he had nearly 1500 people under his charge. Durham died after a painful illness in 1658.

Charles Spurgeon refers to him as, "a prince among spiritual expositors."⁶ John Owen said of him that he "was one of good learning, sound judgement and every way "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."⁷

5. George Christie, "James Durham as a Courtier and Preacher" George Christie, D.D., "James Durham as Courtier and Preacher," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, IV Part I (1930), p. 70.

6. Quoted in Chris Coldwell, Introduction, in James Durham, *Christ Crucified: or, the Marrow of the Gospel* (Dallas: Naphtali Press & Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), p. 24.

7. Quoted in Donald John Maclean, *James Durham (1622-1658) and the Gospel Offer in its Seventeenth-Century Context* (V&R Academic: Gottingen, 2015), p. 80.

8. See the Appendix to this article, "A short word on "case-divinity" preaching.

9. Howie, p. 214.

10. Durham, *Christ Crucified*, p. 761.

11. John Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1943), p. 85.

12. See "James Durham: A New Biography," in *A Commentary upon the Book of Revelation, A new critical edition with additional material from a 1653 manuscript containing an early form of the lectures*, ed. Chris Coldwell, 3 vols (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2020-2022), 3,15-78, and "A James Durham Bibliography," 3,525-584. See also, "Sermons and Lectures of James Durham, A Chronological Catalog, 1647-1658," 3,503-524.

13. John Macleod, p. 95.

However, what is of interest is Durham's "case-divinity" preaching.⁸ Howie wrote of Durham, "he gave himself much to meditation, and usually said little to persons that came to propose their cases to him, but heard them patiently, and was sure to handle these cases in his sermons."⁹ It is clear from Durham's expositions of the Heavenly Intercession of Christ both in Revelation and Isaiah 53 that "case-divinity" played a large part in application. As a pastor-theologian, he reveled in the doctrine and rejoiced in its application. Many of the comforts and encouragements he presented as applications of the doctrine were directed towards those whom he had personally counselled.

One of the Durham's consolations of the Doctrine of the Heavenly Intercession of Christ is "against the mighty opposition that is made by enemies." He wrote, "but for this there is consolation in Christ's intercession ... He cannot be an intercessor but His enemies must down. For who, I pray, will be able to stand when He gives in His complaint against them? Who will plead Antichrist's and other persecutors cause when He appears against them?"¹⁰ One may almost imagine a member of Durham's congregation privately expressing to him a fear of the opposition the Scottish church faced, only for Durham to use said situation in a "case-divinity" style by addressing it from the pulpit via the Doctrine of the Heavenly Intercession of Christ.

John Macleod wrote, "along with his young friend and ministerial disciple, James Durham, Dickson (David) was also the author of the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, which, though without authority from the Church, has been often printed in the same volume as the Westminster documents. This solid and valuable piece is an expansion of some sermons preached by Dickson at Inverary when he was Argyll's guest there: it was the means of the conversion of the amiable and eminent Robert Murray M^oCheyne."¹¹

A new comprehensive biography and annotated bibliography of Durham's published and manuscript works are given in the third volume of a new critical edition of the commentary on Revelation.¹² With respect to these sermons, they were transcribed by an interested listener at the time and then later collected and compiled into a book by Durham's brother-in-law, John Carstairs. John Macleod wrote, "of his rich exposition of the 53rd of Isaiah, John Duncan said: Read Durham on the 53rd of Isaiah at my request. He has much repetition and you may be disgusted with that. But its repetition of a very fine thing, the eating of Christ's flesh and the drinking of His blood. Well, that's what we must be repeating, in fact, all our life long."¹³

Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ is completed by a digression in his lectures on the book of Revelation. He delivered these lectures to his parishioners every Sunday before the morning service. Carstairs said of his digressions in Revelation that Durham gave them, "to prevent drowning, as it were, in following the series and tract of the story and Commentary, according to the practice of several learned and worthy men in their writings upon this Scripture."¹⁴ Again, his lectures on Revelation were transcribed by one of his hearers.

THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION & THE HEAVENLY INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

As already said, the *Sum of Saving Knowledge* is an expansion of some of David Dickson's sermons. It is a summary of the doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith. We must remember that it was only a couple of years previously, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had agreed to adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith as its subordinate standards. According to Wodrow, "it is said by some that Mr. Dickson and Mr. Durham went sometimes to the Craigs, about the High Kirk of Glasgow, and made that little piece we have called The Sum of Saving Knowledge."¹⁵ Head II of the Sum and Substance contains, "the remedy provided in Jesus Christ for the elect by the covenant of grace."¹⁶ Dickson first coined the phrase "covenant of redemption" in a speech delivered to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1638.¹⁷

The covenant of redemption, as summarized in the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, written by Dickson and Durham, presents the mainstream Scottish Reformed understanding of the covenant made by God the Father and God the Son, in the council of the Trinity, to save sinners.¹⁸ It is separate from the covenant of works and the covenant of grace but is both their foundation and is the ground from which they grow. According to the Covenant of Redemption, Christ fully obeys the Covenant of Works both positively (in fulfilling the demands of the Covenant of Works) and negatively (in bearing the penalty of our broken Covenant of Works). In being appointed as our Mediator according to the Covenant of Redemption, He offers His full obedience to us in the Covenant of Grace through faith in Him.¹⁹ As we shall see, the heavenly intercession of Christ is a vital part of the Covenant of Grace in the application of all the benefits of Christ's work of satisfaction to the elect.

The covenant of redemption was made between Father and Son, in the council of the Trinity, before the world began. Its purpose was God's salvation of the elect and the glory of His name. The *Sum of Saving Knowledge* details the process by which Father and Son, in the council of the Trinity, achieved such a purpose: it was through the appointment of God the Son as Redeemer. As we shall see in a later section, Christ Jesus was "clad" in the three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king. Christ was made a priest "to offer up himself a sacrifice once for them all, and to intercede continually with the Father, for making their persons and services acceptable to Him."²⁰

Consistent with his and Dickson's presentation of the covenant of redemption, in his lecture on the heavenly intercession of Christ in Revelation, Durham wrote, "this Intercession is a Thing of old determined in the Council of God."²¹

In *Christ Crucified*, Durham attempts to establish an exegetical framework for the Covenant of Redemption. Of Isaiah 53 he wrote, "there has been a compendious sum of the covenant of redemption delivered by the prophet in this chapter."²² From verse 12, Durham suggests a division between things promised to the mediator and the conditions the mediator must meet.²³ Concerning the first, Durham summarized them as: "I will divide him a portion with the great" (a glorious victory) and "he shall divide the spoil with the strong" (a rich spoil). Concerning the second, Durham summarized them as: "He hath poured out his soul unto death," "He was numbered with transgressors," "He bare the sins of many," and "He made intercession for transgressors."

The consummate pastor, Durham aimed to apply the certainty of the covenant of redemption to his listeners.

14. John Carstairs, To the Reader, in *A Commentarie upon the Book of the Revelation*, p. iv

15. Robert Wodrow, *Analecra or Materials for a History of Remarkable Providences*, Vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing Company, Printed for the Maitland Club, 1843), p. 10.

16. David Dickson and James Durham, *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* (Inverness: F.P. Publications, 1981), p. x.

17. Alexander Peterkin, ed., *Records of the Kirk of Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Sutherland, 1838), p. 158.

18. For a fascinating discussion of this covenant, read J.V. Fesko, *The Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption* (Mentor: Fearn, 2016).

19. See Guy Richard, "The Covenant of Redemption," *Reformed Faith & Practice*. <https://journal.rts.edu/article/the-covenant-of-redemption/> (accessed August 21, 2023).

20. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, Head II, Section III.

21. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 386.

22. *Christ Crucified*, p. 716.

23. *Christ Crucified*, p. 727.

He wrote, “the greatest monarch on earth has not such ground of assurance for his dinner or supper as the poor believer has for eternal life.”²⁴

However notice the vital place Durham affords the heavenly intercession of Christ. It forms a condition Christ as Mediator must meet. Just as the mediator must die as the sacrifice for transgressors, so he must intercede for them. This posits the heavenly intercession of Christ as an indispensable element of the Covenant of Redemption, the purpose of which was the salvation of the elect and the glory of God’s name.

Durham and Dickson²⁵ were not formulating the doctrine of the Covenant of Redemption in a vacuum.²⁶ As well as referring to the errors of Socinianism, Roman Catholicism, and Arminianism,²⁷ they were also contending with a relatively new problem. In the Saumur Seminary, the Scottish theologian John Cameron (1579–1625), together with Moses Amyraut (1596–1664), developed a system of hypothetical universalism. They were convinced that Calvin’s doctrines had been distorted by his successor Theodore Beza, and by the Synod of Dort in its effort to refute Arminianism. Durham was familiar with the contentions of John Cameron,²⁸ Richard Baxter,²⁹ and William Twisse³⁰ on the issue of the extent of the atonement. Ultimately, as we shall see, Durham, while respecting the theologians involved, believed that hypothetical universalism was both theologically unsustainable and pastorally harmful.

24. *Christ Crucified*, p. 731.

25. For Dickson’s view of the Covenant of Redemption, see David Dickson, *Therapeutica sacra: shewing briefly, the method of healing the diseases of the conscience, concerning regeneration* (Edinburgh: Watson, 1697). Patrick Gillespie (1617–1675), younger brother of George Gillespie and a contemporary of Durham and Dickson, proposed his doctrine of the Covenant of Redemption in the *The Ark of the Covenant Opened, or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption between God and Christ, as the Foundation of the Covenant of Grace* (London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst at the Bible and three Crowns in Cheapside, near Mercers Chappel, 1677), with a preface by none other than John Owen.

26. For a fascinating discussion of the formulations of the *pactum salutis* (another name for the Covenant of Redemption) see Richard Muller, “Toward the Pactum Salutis: Locating the Origins of a Concept,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 18 (2007): 11–65.

27. Dickson’s speech at the 1638 General Assembly where he coined the phrase, “Covenant of Redemption” was aimed as a polemic against Arminianism. Peterkin, p. 158.

28. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 268.

29. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 270.

30. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 270.

31. *Christ Crucified*, p. 742.

32. *Christ Crucified*, p. 742.

33. *Christ Crucified*, p. 742.

THE DEFINITION OF THE HEAVENLY INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

In accordance with the maxim that we must speak not in order to be understood, but in order not to be misunderstood, in *Christ Crucified*, Durham lists what the heavenly intercession is not. It does not involve a humbling of the Mediator, as Christ prayed on earth or as we might intercede with each other. Secondly it is not verbal. Durham wrote, “there is no such language in our Lord’s intercession.”³¹ Thirdly, given that the heavenly intercession of Christ represents an integral role in the fulfilment of His priesthood, it involves no new act of His will. We must not conceive of Christ’s heavenly intercession in terms of Him praying for us in heaven as we pray to God on earth. It is something belonging more to the office of priest. Durham wrote, “His being in heaven and appearing there in our name, is His intercession.”³²

Positively, he defined the heavenly intercession of Christ in this way: “it is our Lord Jesus Christ making effectually forthcoming for the behoove of the people what He has purchased and has engaged to Him in the covenant of redemption, as if He were agenting their cause as an advocate in heaven.”³³ One may notice the following features of this definition: first, His intercession is in heaven. He is our advocate there, where we ourselves remain on earth. It is the task of another article to examine the role of Christ’s intercession on behalf of the heavenly church. Secondly, it is on behalf of “the people.” Later we will examine what Durham meant by “the people,” but suffice to say at this stage that it represents all those for whom Christ has made satisfaction on the Cross. He is “agenting their cause” and is acting on their “behoove.” Thirdly, Christ’s intercession is in an integral element in the covenant of redemption. Fourthly, it involves Christ interceding that what He has purchased for them may be “effectually forthcoming.” It is inextricably linked to His work of satisfaction such that the two cannot be separated. He satisfies so that he may intercede; he intercedes on the ground of His satisfaction.

Later we will examine that for which Christ intercedes, but in this definition Durham opened our horizon to its extent. As we shall see, those for whom Christ intercedes are co-extensive with those for whom He made satisfaction. According to this definition, that for which Christ intercedes is co-extensive with that for which He made satisfaction. He has purchased the fruit for His people on the Cross; He now intercedes for its fruition for them and in them. He purchased their

reconciliation through the Cross; He now intercedes for its effectual forthcoming for them and in them. Every fruit of Christ's work of satisfaction becomes the subject of His work of intercession.

In the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, this is described as "the work of applying actually the purchased benefits of the elect." Satisfaction has to do with *purchasing* benefits for the elect; intercession has to do with *applying* those benefits to the elect. Christ's appearance in heaven in our nature and in our name is His intercession, the Christ who by divine appointment became mediator in our nature and made satisfaction for us on the Cross. To summarize, the intercession of Christ concerns the application of the benefits of redemption. That which He has purchased for His people before God, He now intercedes to be given to His people by God.

Durham acknowledged that "this be a mystery"³⁴ There is no natural corollary and it is difficult to picture. And yet, in accordance with his expository brilliance, Durham asserted what is true and scriptural while refusing to speculate on that which is clouded to us. He defined the heavenly intercession of Christ in a manner which draws us back to the Cross where, by contrast to the mysterious nature of His intercession, we clearly see satisfaction being offered by Him for us. All we need now know as Christians, for whom Christ has died on the Cross, is that the heavenly Christ is now engaged in applying the fruit of that satisfaction for us and in us.

A modern criticism of Durham's view, which is founded on the theology of Dort and Westminster, proposes that it differs from that of John Calvin. R. T. Kendall proposed that Dort and Westminster significantly distorted the view of John Calvin: "According to Kendall, Calvin held that the scope of the death of Christ is different from that of his intercession. He died for all, but intercedes only for the elect."³⁵ The refutation of Kendall's view of Calvin is beyond the scope of this paper.³⁶ What is of importance, however, is that Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ does not admit any bifurcation between those for whom Christ offered satisfaction (those for whom he died) and Christ's heavenly intercession.

John Murray did not like the term "covenant of redemption". While sympathetic to the theology behind it, he wrote, "it may not be remiss to observe that the term "covenant" in Scripture refers to temporal administration, and it is not strictly proper to use a biblical term to designate something to which it is not applied in the Scripture itself. For this reason it is not well, and is liable to be confusing, to speak of this economy in terms of covenant. I prefer some

such designation as the inter-trinitarian economy of salvation."³⁷

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE HEAVENLY INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

The heavenly intercession of Christ may only be understood in terms of His priesthood. In line with Calvin,³⁸ Durham asserted that Christ was clothed with the offices of prophet, priest, and king. The *Sum of Saving Knowledge* describes Christ being made a priest, "to offer up himself a sacrifice once for them all, and to intercede continually with the father, for making their persons and services acceptable to him."³⁹ The priesthood of Christ renders His heavenly intercession intelligible. In *Christ Crucified*, on one of the ways in which Durham illustrated Christ's heavenly intercession is by drawing attention to the activity of Old Testament high priests. These priests served two functions: first, to offer sacrifices and secondly, intercession. Durham wrote, "the high priests went into the most holy once a year and sprinkled blood and prayed for the people; in which time they were standing without, praying in the hope of having their prayers made the more acceptable. This was by God's appointment, typically to prefigure our Lord's intercession in heaven."⁴⁰

Durham called his listeners to imagine themselves standing outside heaven while their great high priest intercedes within. For Old Testament believers, there was uncertainty: would their High Priest perform the ceremony successfully; would the blood He sprinkled be enough to expiate their sins; will that shed blood include every one of them in its atoning sufficiency? By drawing attention to Christ's high priesthood, Durham allayed the fears of his listeners. Christ's intercession is successful for all His people. Those who have rested by faith in the satisfaction of Christ can be assured and need not wait in uncertainty until they appear before God on the Day of Judgment.

In *Christ Crucified*, Durham illustrated the Heavenly Intercession of Christ in three ways. In the first instance, Durham compared making use of His intercession

34. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 384.

35. Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), p. 36.

36. For a refutation of Kendall's view read Helm, pp. 32–50.

37. John Murray, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984), p. 130.

38. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 425.

39. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, Head II, Section III.

40. *Christ Crucified*, p. 776.

with making use of His satisfaction. We make use of His satisfaction when, acknowledging our sinfulness and renouncing any effort to earn salvation, having heard of the satisfaction Christ has made for us and believing that His invitation is for us, we close with God in the covenant. In the same way, we make use of His intercession when, though under a challenge or struggling to approach God because of our sinfulness, hearing that we have an intercessor in heaven who will act on behalf of all those who will make use of Him, we base our confidence upon Him to present our case to God and expect an answer.

Most Christians think first of Christ's satisfaction and only then of His intercession. Using this illustration, Durham made the intercession of Christ accessible even to those who are completely unfamiliar with the doctrine. There is no substantive difference in how we relate to God through satisfaction and intercession—both are through faith in Christ.

Secondly, Durham used the illustration of the Old Testament high priest, which we have already described. Thirdly, Durham used the illustration of human agreements. When two parties are at variance, the party offending dare not approach the party offended without a friendly mediator who will plead his case and has power to prevail. It is by virtue of that friendly mediator the party offending secures a favourable hearing and reconciliation is secured. In the world of the day, such an illustration would have been familiar to Durham's

listeners, providing from daily life a vivid reminder of Christ's heavenly intercession. Likewise, given that Durham served as chaplain to the King's family, he would have been very familiar with parties offending bringing a friendly mediator to approach the King.

We may suppose that many of Durham's contemporaries would have devoted significantly more time to each aspect of these illustrations. One can only imagine Andrew Gray developing the last of these three similes, perhaps even personalizing the parties involved and describing in detail the pleadings of the mediator. Durham and Gray may have held a similar status among the people, but Gray was the greater preacher.⁴¹

In his lectures on Revelation, Durham illustrated Christ's heavenly activity as intercessor using four biblical terms: mediator, intercessor, advocate, and appear. The last of these provides a fascinating insight into Durham's view of Christ's heavenly intercession. He viewed "appearing" as superior to "advocacy." Consistent with his definition of Christ's heavenly intercession, it is Christ's appearance in heaven in our nature and on our behalf which constitutes His intercession for us. It is that appearance which keeps fresh the memory of His blood-bought satisfaction for his people.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE HEAVENLY INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

Durham was a pastor-theologian. His theology was harnessed to his pastoral vocation. It was not enough that Durham was able to state truth; it had to be applied in his case-divinity practice. When it came to the question of the extent of the heavenly intercession of Christ, or for whom does the heavenly Christ intercede, the truth he states is as follows: "(it is of) equal extent to the covenant of redemption."⁴² He continually intercedes for those for whom He made satisfaction in His redemptive death, no more and no less. The priest does not merely offer sacrifices, but continues to intercede on account of those sacrifices.

A careful reading of Heads II and IV of the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*⁴³ defines the subjects of Christ's heavenly intercession as:

- Sinners ... lacking ability or will to save themselves
- Those who have faith in Jesus Christ
- A certain number of lost mankind whom God has freely chosen to life
- Those ransomed and redeemed from sin and death on the cross

41. Wodrow says of him that he did not have "a popular or plausible way of speaking given him" (Analecta 3, p. 108). Christie describes Durham as a "heavy" preacher whose sermons lacked "illustration and ... sparkle". He recounts an occasion when Durham and Gray were walking together to church, Durham noticed the crowds flocking to hear Gray preach compared to the few who were attending upon his ministry (Christie, p. 77). See "Durham the Preacher," in "James Durham: A New Biography," in A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation, Lectures on Chapters 12-22 (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2022), pp. 48-52. Andrew Gray had been ordained to the Outer Kirk of Glasgow Cathedral in 1654. According to Blaikie, 'He (Gray) had a remarkable power of probing the conscience; as James Durham remarked, he could make men's hair stand on end.' He continues, 'thoroughly puritan in his theology, Gray had the courage to speak with more natural freedom and natural life than many of his contemporaries ... often, at the close of his sermons, in warning sinners and exhorting them to accept the offer of Christ, he rises into a strain of impassioned appeal that has been rarely equalled in any age.' Gray died in 1656 at the age of 21, two years after his ordination. William Garden Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland from the Sixth to the Nineteenth Century: Twelfth Series of the Cunningham Lectures* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), pp. 136, 137.

42. *Christ Crucified*, p. 743.

43. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, Heads II & IV.

- Those for whom Christ has purchased righteousness and eternal life
- The people of Christ

In his lecture from Revelation, Durham added, "... all that will make use of Christ and come to God are admitted."⁴⁴

In Christ crucified, Durham summarized his position, "His intercession being grounded on His death and satisfaction, it must be of equal extent therewith and must be of equal extent therewith and must relate to the covenant of redemption, wherein so many were given Him to be redeemed by His death."⁴⁵

As pastor-theologian, Durham expanded on the proper subjects of Christ's heavenly intercession to offer consolation and comfort. "The Lord's intercession gives a fourfold extent of consolation that makes it wonderful."⁴⁶ First, his hearers were to consider the universality of the persons to whom it is extended. Christ's intercession is bound to the elect and yet He does not turn away any who honestly give Him a case to plead. Secondly, he proposed the universality of cases He pleads. Durham wrote, "it secludes no case, though it looked like a lost cause."⁴⁷ Thirdly, he extolled the perfections of the salvation that comes by Christ's intercession. In his commentary on Revelation, Durham wrote, "more cannot be imagined."⁴⁸ In typically Durham-esque language he wrote in *Christ Crucified*, "He shall not leave a tear on the cheek of any of His own, ere all be done."⁴⁹ Lastly, Durham put forth that the extent of the consolation reaches to all times; "there is never an hour nor moment that He has His door shut."⁵⁰

The heavenly intercession of Christ is an untapped source of consolation for the Christian, and so in a later section of *Christ Crucified* Durham listed qualifications for those who may take comfort from this doctrine. First, it is a source of comfort for a person who has betaken himself to Christ's satisfaction. Durham reminded his listeners that Christ's priestly works of satisfaction and intercession cannot be divided. He intercedes with God for those for whom He made satisfaction before God. Secondly, it is a source of comfort for those who are pursuing holiness. They are wrestling with their sin and weakness, and yet pursuing godliness. Thirdly, it is a source of comfort to those who place no weight on the performance of their religious duties, but all on Christ to make it acceptable. Lastly, it is a source of comfort to those who know that the weight of their needs rests only upon Christ's intercession and nowhere else.

Given the range of Durham's listeners and the wide variety of personal, ecclesiastical, and national needs he

encountered, the consolation he offered is impressive. Through his pastoral visitation to rich merchants, poor widows, and influential noblemen, each with his or her own particular anxieties, Durham was able to formulate an all-encompassing, gospel-focused, and theologically consistent application to the question of the heavenly intercession of Christ. Christ intercedes for every sinner for whom He made satisfaction. None are excluded from the privilege of this intercession except those who exclude themselves.

Soon after the Synod of Dort, out of Saumur, Moses Amyraut, inspired by his teacher John Cameron, developed a system of doctrine known as hypothetical universalism. Amyraut gave his name to its variant Amyraldianism. Convinced that Calvin's successor, Theodore Beza, had pushed Calvin's doctrines further than was warranted, Amyraut, according to Maclean, posited, "a double reference in the atonement, where Christ died for both the elect and the reprobate but in different senses, or a hypothetical, conditional redemption of all men."⁵¹ Schaff adds, "Amyraut distinguished between objective grace which is offered to all, and subjective grace in the heart which is offered only to the elect."⁵² Kendall's view, mentioned earlier, falls into the Amyraldian category.

James Durham, while respecting those who held Amyraldian views,⁵³ was resolute in his criticism of them. He devotes an entire excursus in his commentary on Revelation to discussing and refuting their views. Durham believed that Christ intercedes for every sinner for whom He made satisfaction. But for whom did He effect redemption? Durham summarizes three views: He died to make redemption possible (Arminianism); He died to make redemption conditional (Hypothetical Universalism); He died to make redemption absolute (Westminster).⁵⁴ The condition of redemption is faith in Christ. At the 1637 Synod of Alençon, Amyraut said, "those who are called by the preaching of the Gospel to

44. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 387.

45. *Christ Crucified*, p. 743.

46. *Christ Crucified*, p. 753.

47. *Christ Crucified*, p. 755.

48. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 387.

49. *Christ Crucified*, p. 755.

50. *Christ Crucified*, p. 756.

51. Maclean, p. 86.

52. Phillip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, volume 1 (1877; repr. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1878), p. 481.

53. He calls both Richard Baxter and William Twisse "learned." Twisse held to a variant of Amyraldianism limiting hypothetical redemption to members of the visible church.

54. Durham, *Commentarie on Revelation*, p. 264.

participate by faith in the effects and fruits of His death, being invited seriously, and God vouchsafing them all external means needful for their coming to Him, and showing them in good earnest, and with the greatest sincerity by His Word, what would be well-pleasing to Him: if they should not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but perish in their obstinacy and unbelief; this cometh not from any defect or virtue or sufficiency in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, nor yet for want of summons or serious invitation unto faith and repentance, but only from their own fault.”⁵⁵ But for Durham this was theologically problematic given that he held that faith itself was a gift of Christ’s purchase and not a function of the divine decree of election. For Durham, election precedes soteriology—“the Work of Redemption doth presuppose Election to have preceded.”⁵⁶ Maclean writes, “given, then, that the covenant of redemption itself was governed by the prior decree of election and was therefore a discriminatory covenant, it necessary followed that Christ’s death had reference only to a limited number of individuals co-extensive with those given to Christ in the covenant of redemption.”⁵⁷

Out of the many arguments Durham presents against hypothetical universalism, I want to select three: exegetical, theological and pastoral.⁵⁸ Exegetically, Durham examines John 3:16,⁵⁹ which was commonly used to support hypothetical universalism. The “world” in this setting is not to be taken distributively as referring to every person in the world but must be understood in the context of the previous verse.⁶⁰ Durham writes, “God’s end in the giving of His Son, is mentioned to be a ground of quietness to all that should believe, and will bear that Universal well, whoever believeth are redeemed, and may expect the benefits of Christ’s Redemption; because the justifying and saving of such was the end for which God sent His Son.”⁶¹

55. Quoted in *The History of the Free Offer*, Chapter 4, Amyrauldianism, <http://www.prca.org/current/Free%20Offer/chapter4.htm> (accessed, August 21, 2023).

56. Durham, *Commentarie on Revelation*, p. 272.

57. Maclean, p. 118.

58. Maclean contains a summary of Durham’s arguments and should be consulted for a fuller picture. Maclean pp. 117–123.

59. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (ESV).

60. “so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (ESV).

61. Durham, *Commentarie on Revelation*, p. 275.

62. “I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours” (ESV).

63. Durham, *Commentarie on Revelation*, p. 271.

64. *Commentarie on Revelation*, p. 261.

65. St. Gregory Nazianzen, To Cleodnius the Priest against Apollinarius (Ep. CI), *NPNF2*, vol. 7, p. 440. “If anyone has put his trust

Theologically, as well as many other objections, Durham points to the intercession of Christ as being co-extensive with, and regulated by, the satisfaction of Christ in the Covenant of Redemption. From John 17:9⁶² he writes, “he doth not pray for the world which were not given him, but expressly He doth exclude them ... therefore, it must be supposed, that He did no way die for the world, seeing he doth not pray for them, because He did not satisfie for them, because they were not given unto him. And we can no more say that there is a conditional satisfying for, and redeeming of, all, than we can say, that there is a conditional prayer for all; and we cannot say, that there is a conditional intercession for all, seeing he doth so expressly, and absolutely exclude the Reprobate world from His prayers.”⁶³

The consummate pastor, Durham maintained hypothetical universalism threatened the pastoral well-being of God’s people. His excursus on the extent of the atonement comes immediately after his exposition of Revelation 5 with its song of the redeemed. He writes, “if the justification, salvation, etc, of the redeemed be not necessarily and peremptorily knit unto Christ’s laying down of His life for them, then were even their justification and Salvation uncertain, and so none of them could heartily praise for the same, or comfort themselves therein; much lesse could all do this.”⁶⁴ Not only are the praises of God’s people threatened by hypothetical universalism, their assurance of faith is as well. It is of more consolation to the believer to know that Christ’s work makes salvation certain, than makes it possible or conditional. To go back to Durham’s exegesis of John 3:16, God’s purpose in the giving of His Son is to be a ground of quietness to all who believe—their assurance of redemption.

For these and many other reasons listed in his excursus on the extent of the atonement, Durham insists that Christ intercedes for every sinner for whom He made satisfaction.

THE EXTENT OF THE HEAVENLY INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

As we have already seen in our discussion on definition, the satisfaction of Christ is co-extensive with the intercession of Christ. The two cannot be separated. That for which Christ intercedes is co-extensive with that for which He made satisfaction. That which He purchased on the Cross He now applies through His intercession. Everything for which He died is included. Even as Gregory famously said of Christ’s incarnation, “that which is not assumed is not redeemed,”⁶⁵ so

Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ allows us to say that He intercedes for as much as that for which He made satisfaction. Durham described the extent of Christ's heavenly intercession as "being as broad as His purchase."⁶⁶

The *Sum of Saving Knowledge* frames the extent of the heavenly intercession of Christ in terms of "the blessings conveyed . . . to the Lord's elect."⁶⁷ Dickson and Durham insisted that through the outward ordinances, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God "applies to the elect all saving graces purchased to them in the covenant of redemption."⁶⁸ The *Sum* proceeds to list a variety of saving graces purchased by Christ and now that for which He intercedes on behalf of His people. These include repentance, saving faith, justification, adoption and glorification.

In his excursus on Christ's intercession in his *Commentary on Revelation*, Durham approached the issue of extent from the viewpoint of Hebrews 4:16. Durham wrote, "here Grace hath a throne; and he that seeks upon this Account (Christ's Intercession) may expect to find Mercy and Grace as that which aboundeth most under this Dominion and about this Throne."⁶⁹ All the blessings of Christ's work of satisfaction, listed in the *Sum of Saving Knowledge* and also in *Christ Crucified*, are comprehended under these two titles: grace and mercy—that which abound through Christ's work of intercession.

In his summary sermon in *Christ Crucified*, Durham wrote, "He intercedes for everything that is needful and everything promised to them"⁷⁰. He included the following:

- a. That the elect who are not regenerate, may be regenerate and made believers.
- b. That they may be justified, pardoned and received in favour, friendship and fellowship with God.
- c. That they may be kept from temptation.
- d. That temptations may be prevented and they made to persevere.
- e. That Satan may not make their faith to fail.
- f. That they and their prayers and their service may be accepted.
- g. That the supplications that they present and put up in His name, may get a hearing.
- h. That they may be armed against the fear of death.
- i. That they may be carried in the gradual advances of sanctification.
- j. That they may be glorified and be where He is, to behold His glory.

In a later sermon, Durham subsequently wrote, "if you look through them (the following list), you will find that there is nothing that may be useful to a believer either as to a particular or public mercy, but it is knit to Christ's Intercession."⁷¹ The list he provided proves Durham's genius as a case-divinity pastor/preacher. It is both comprehensive and contemporary. He divided those issues for which Christ intercedes under two headings: first, private mercies, and secondly, the public case of God's Church. We may list them all, but under certain items Durham provided memorable quotes which, both in his day and today, provide comfort and assurance to struggling Christians.

Under the heading of private mercies Durham listed the following:

(i) The beginning and growth of our spiritual life—we may ask why a particular person is a Christian. We may attribute their regeneration to God's sovereign work of election, or to their own faith, but for Durham, the heavenly intercession of Christ is an important component. He wrote, "the pouring out of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's Intercession. It is this that procures the first conviction of the Spirit to an elect person laying in nature; it is this that continues these convictions and procures the Spirit's quickening of them."⁷² We may ask what importance we may attach to the heavenly intercession of Christ. Durham emphasized that it is a matter of life and death. We owe our regeneration to His heavenly intercession in pouring out His Spirit into our hearts to convict us and give us new life.

(ii) It is from Christ's intercession that we are kept from many temptations—Durham wrote, "there would be living for us in the multitude of temptations if He were not interceding for us."⁷³ We do not face many of the temptations which, if Christ was not interceding for us, would utterly defeat us.

(iii) The preventing of many judgements temporal and spiritual.

in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved."

66. *Christ Crucified*, p. 744.

67. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, Head IV.

68. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, Head II, Section II.

69. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 387.

70. *Christ Crucified*, Sermon 66, p. 744.

71. *Christ Crucified*, p. 757

72. *Christ Crucified*, p. 758.

73. *Christ Crucified*, p. 758.

(iv) Disposition for duty and help in the name of duty—Durham wrote, “it is His digging and pains that makes the barren tree fruitful.”⁷⁴ The successful completion of our duties as Christians is thanks to Christ’s heavenly intercession on our behalf. We depend on His “digging and pains”—His gracious intercession—for our obedience and sanctification.

(v) Our prayers are heard—our prayers are substandard, and yet, Durham wrote, “it is He that takes the mangled and half prayers of His people and presents them to God.”⁷⁵

(vi) An answer to all our challenges—the challenges to which Durham refers are the accusations of Satan, the world around us and our own guilty consciences. We may not be able or in a fit state to answer these challenges and accusations, but “His intercession is the last defence on which the triumph of faith rises.”⁷⁶

(vii) It takes away the guilt of holy things.

(viii) The strength to bear through under a cross—we lack the strength to overcome the sufferings in life and yet we find it in the Cross. It “comes from Him as intercessor.”⁷⁷

(ix) Our perseverance in and perfect glorification.

We shall examine a particular example of how a believer can use the doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ in a following section. Durham concluded by writing, “now, if all these be put together, besides many more that may be gathered from Scripture, what lacks a believer for his own private and particular consolation which this one word, that Christ is our intercessor, does not answer?”⁷⁸

James Durham lived in difficult days for the church in Scotland. It was beset by restrictions imposed upon it from outside, and by challenges of its own making.

74. *Christ Crucified*, p. 758.

75. *Christ Crucified*, p. 759.

76. *Christ Crucified*, p. 759.

77. *Christ Crucified*, p. 760.

78. *Christ Crucified*, p. 760.

79. The difference between Resolutioner and Protestor parties consisted in their view of the composition of the early 1650’s Scottish army. The Resolutioners (including David Dickson and Robert Baillie) followed the resolve of the General Assembly that anyone (even Episcopalians and those who did not hold to the Covenant) could join the army. The Protesters (including Samuel Rutherford and Patrick Gillespie) protested against the authority of the General Assembly to admit members of the “Malignant Party” to join the Scottish army. The two parties could not be reconciled and held rival assemblies, presbyteries, and even supported rival ministries in the same parish.

80. *Christ Crucified*, p. 761.

81. *Christ Crucified*, p. 762.

Durham was a chaplain to the royal family, and also a peace-maker between Resolutioner and Protestor parties.⁷⁹ He knew more than most the great need of the Scottish church for Christ’s Intercession on her behalf. Under the heading of public and private mercies, Durham highlighted the following areas in which the heavenly Christ intercedes.

(i) The fear of a scarcity or weakness of the public ministry.

(ii) Against the mighty opposition that is made by enemies—the church in Durham’s day faced many opponents, “but for this there is a consolation in Christ’s intercession . . . who will plead Antichrist’s and other persecutor’s case when He appears against them.”⁸⁰

(iii) There is a court in heaven that gives out orders—earthly kings and courts may make legislation, but ultimately the world has no advocate in heaven, whereas the church has Christ interceding for her.

(iv) Offences in herself and the spreading of error—when the devil cannot persecute the church from outside, he changes tactics and introduces error into the church. But the heavenly Christ intercedes for the doctrinal and moral purity of His church.

“What reason for anxiety is there or could there be here if the solid and lively faith of this intercessor and advocate, His being in heaven and thus interceding, were in our hearts?”⁸¹

There is another way to think about these areas Durham emphasized. Rather than view them merely as those things for which Christ intercedes, we place ourselves within them and view them as situations from which we may pray for and in Christ’s intercession. For example, the believer beset by temptation is best placed to call upon Christ’s intercession and be assured that the heavenly Christ is interceding for her. For Durham, these situations become opportunities to reflect upon the privileges of both the satisfaction made upon the Cross and the heavenly intercession of Christ.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST

For Durham, the sympathy of Christ is a vitally important element in His heavenly intercession. Christ intercedes for us as a willing mediator who knows our weaknesses by virtue of His incarnation. In one place, Durham identified the sympathy of Christ as the source of His intercession on our behalf: “the last thing wherein we shall consider the Consolation of this Intercession, is the Sympathy from whence it floweth, and which it

carrieth along with it.”⁸² Durham called this sympathy “humane” to distinguish it from the “figurative” sympathy Christ had for us before His incarnation. He wrote, “the sympathy (of Christ) is the main ground of consolation which doth sweeten all the rest.”⁸³ It forms part of the beauty of His standing before God.

The sympathy of Christ for His people is an indispensable element in His union with them. Durham’s pastoral skill comes to the fore in his discussion of how the sins committed by believers provoke sympathy in the heart of Christ. He is affected not merely by their troubles, but by their transgressions. Durham wrote, “O What a Wonder is this, the more Sin, the more Sympathy! Which ought to make Believers humble, and yet exceedingly to Comfort them under a sinful Condition ... Christ’s Intercession is suited unto, appointed and designed for Sinners.”⁸⁴

In his discourse concerning the Intercession of Christ in his lectures in Revelation, Durham gave some properties of Christ’s sympathy. In the first instance, he called the sympathy of Christ real and humane. By virtue of His incarnation, the sympathy of Christ is that which affects one brother on account of the troubles of another. It is the kind of sympathy a parent has to its child. Durham wrote, “it is the believing of the reality of this humane Sympathy, that openeth the Door to all the following Consolations, to wit, that our Lord Jesus hath a humane Heart stirred and affected in that same Manner ... as ours are towards our Friends, and Children in their Necessities.”⁸⁵

Secondly, the sympathy of Christ is sinless with no bias or mistake. Thirdly the sympathy of Christ is perfect. The purity of Christ’s sympathy while on earth has been glorified. Fourthly, it is the Sympathy of a Man who is God and Man in one Person. Christ knows our necessities even if we do not. Durham wrote of the believer who finds consolation in this, “he also hath a Ground to stay his Faith in diving in these, and comforting himself in these, because they are Bowels of a Person who may be lippedened (*trusted*) to, and rested upon, as no mere Man can be.”⁸⁶ Lastly, the sympathy of Christ is agreeable to His divine will.

For Durham, the sympathy of Christ is the spring of our comfort as Christians. In whatever situation we find ourselves in, or place ourselves in, the heavenly Christ sympathizes with us and His sympathy moves His intercession on our behalf. This is case-divinity at its best in Durham’s writings and ministry. He is a fine example of the historic Scottish Reformed pastor in how he applied the best theology to the individual situations faced by his listeners.

THE USE OF CHRIST’S INTERCESSION

The heavenly intercession of Christ is, even according to Durham, “sublimely spiritual and somewhat tickle (puzzling).”⁸⁷ In another place he wrote, “there is an unsearchableness in the mystery of the Godhead, in the mystery of God’s becoming man and in the mystery of the Mediator taking to Himself these offices to exercise them in our nature.”⁸⁸ Even though it is sublimely spiritual and unsearchable, Durham explained how the believer may use Christ’s intercession, while all the time admitting, “there may be a real making use of Christ’s intercession where there is much indistinctness in the uptaking of it.”⁸⁹

In his writings, Durham described how to use Christ’s intercession in three places: twice in *Christ Crucified* and once in his lectures in Revelation. In so doing he took account of the varying degrees of spiritual maturity among his listeners.

In Sermon 71 of *Christ Crucified*, in answering the doubts of puzzled Christians concerning how to make use of Christ’s intercession, Durham gave four answers: first, make sure you pray to God; secondly, renounce your own righteousness; thirdly, believe that you will be accepted through Jesus Christ, and fourthly, on that account, to put up your prayer to God. Making use of Christ’s intercession, at its most basic level, it is as simple enough for a child to understand.

In Sermon 69 of *Christ Crucified*, Durham went deeper and answered the question of what properly it is to make use of Christ’s intercession. In the first instance, hold onto Christ’s satisfaction for peace with God. Building upon that satisfaction, it is to lay our weight upon the intercession of our mediator and advocate. Secondly, expect God to hear our suit on the basis that Jesus Christ is our intercessor in heaven. Durham offered pastoral insight at this point, “this guards against ... anxiety on one hand and presumption on the other. Against anxiety and fainting, whenas there is not only a proposing of our desire, but an on-waiting for and expectation of a hearing from God; against presumption and turning carnal, when the expectation of a hearing is not founded on our own righteousness, but on the

82. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 388.

83. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 388.

84. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 388.

85. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 388.

86. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 389.

87. *Christ Crucified*, p. 746.

88. *Christ Crucified*, p. 784.

89. *Christ Crucified*, p. 795.

intercession of Christ.”⁹⁰ Thirdly, despite difficulties wait patiently for God’s answer. Again, Durham offers this pastoral insight, “there is a weight laid on Christ’s intercession by faith’s trusting to him, which makes the soul to be without anxiety ... because it lays the weight of its coming speed [having success] with God, not on its own argumenting, but on the Mediator’s intercession.”⁹¹ Lastly, attribute anything obtained not to one’s own praying, but to the virtue and efficacy of Christ’s intercession. This allows us to enjoy that which we have received on the account of His intercession. “The improving of Christ’s intercession thus, would make the thoughts of Christ always fresh and lovely to us.”⁹²

If not in length, the most comprehensive guidance Durham offers in using Christ’s intercession is found in his additional excursus in Revelation. He proposed seven steps.

(i) Men would study to know the fulness that is in Jesus, and that they would rest under the Holy Priest of our profession

(ii) In our addresses to God, faith would be exercised on Jesus Christ, even in respect to this part of his office—“as there is a resting by Faith on Christ’s satisfaction, for attaining of Pardon or what else is needful; so there ought to be a resting on Christ as Intercessor, for the obtaining of what we are petitioning for before the Throne.”⁹³

(iii) Faith would not only respect Christ’s supply as an intercessor, but as an intercessor who is man in our nature—“the neglect of this maketh Christ look like a Stranger and maketh the Soul anxious even its addresses to him.”⁹⁴

(iv) There ought to be access with holy boldness, the heart exulting in its approach to God, that it hath such a new and holy way, as the veil of His flesh, to approach to God—“were this considered, it would banish the drouping (*sic*), heartless approaches that Believers make to God through Christ, as if they were coming to a Stranger rather than a Brother really and

sensibly touched with their Infirmities and affected with them, as any Brother on Earth is with the Infirmities of another.”⁹⁵

(v) “The heart would keep confidence on this Account, as to the Event, however it be for the Time.” In other words, don’t pre-judge Christ’s Intercession by present circumstances; rather, keep praying.

(vi) “Believers should carry in themselves a little copy of that sympathy that is in Jesus Christ,” and ... that by meditating thereon, the heart may be refreshed.” The more we meditate on the sympathy of the Heavenly Christ, the more our hearts will be stirred to persevere in prayer.

(vii) This would be to the believer the last refuge. When all around looks dark, he anchors himself in Christ’s intercession and sympathy—“he sympathizeth with his Church, and every Member of it; it is most fresh in Straits, because then his Bowels are awake, most stirred and warmed; and it is a Fortress against the Terror of Death, seeing he died, and therefore hath the fresher Sympathy in that Choke [shock; critical point].”⁹⁶

Case-divinity was the foundation of Durham’s ministry. It is not merely knowing the doctrine that confers benefit, but applying it in the day-to-day challenges and pressures of the Christian life. He wanted his listeners to make use of Christ’s heavenly intercession because he understood its pastoral advantages in promoting faith and quietening anxiety.

PASTORAL SITUATIONS IN WHICH CHRIST’S HEAVENLY INTERCESSION MAY BE USED

We recall what Howie wrote of Durham, “he gave himself much to meditation, and usually said little to persons that came to propose their cases to him, but heard them patiently, and was sure to handle these cases in his sermons.”⁹⁷ We call this “case-divinity” preaching. Durham was the consummate pastor-theologian who harnessed the theology of the doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ to the needs of his listeners. It reminds me of what my systematic theology professor once said to me in passing, “use every bit of theology you learn for the benefit of your people.”⁹⁸

Referring to Christ as intercessor, Durham wrote, “In this one word there is stored up a treasure of consolation, for all cases that a Christian can be in.”⁹⁹ So eager was Durham to use this doctrine that his sermons in the latter section of *Christ Crucified* were packed with references to the pastoral benefits of Christ’s

90. *Christ Crucified*, p. 773.

91. *Christ Crucified*, p. 774.

92. *Christ Crucified*, p. 775.

93. Concerning Christ’s Intercession, in *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 389.

94. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 389.

95. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 389.

96. *Commentarie in Revelation*, p. 390.

97. Howie, p. 214.

98. Principal Donald Macleod, in private conversation.

99. *Christ Crucified*, p. 783.

heavenly intercession. In what follows, I purpose to draw attention to two of the sermons in which we find these references.

In sermon 68 of *Christ Crucified*, Durham referred to particular times and occasions when the people of God should use this doctrine for consolation and comfort. He listed four: in our languid and lifeless conditions, when challenges are very fresh, under a cross condition, and when we ourselves cannot intercede for ourselves. We shall consider the first and fourth use.

The first time and occasion when the people of God should use the doctrine of Christ's heavenly intercession for consolation and comfort is in our languid and lifeless conditions. He referred to "when the body of death comes in on them ... they ought to comfort themselves in this that they have an intercessor that can rebuke that; when temptation is violent and fears he be undone, he has a grip here to hold himself by ... that man would be desperate if He were not in heaven and interceding, but he gathers confidence from this ground ... a great consolation it is, when the temptation is strong and we weak, when the devil is violent and we are despairing to resist him, that there is a high priest at hand, whose office is to do it"¹⁰⁰ Because he knows that the heavenly Christ is interceding for him, that man is confident as he enters battle with temptation, that he is not fighting alone. Likewise, when a Christian is struggling with his spiritual apathy and lukewarmness, he may look to Christ's heavenly intercession as a warrant for his return and assurance that he shall be accepted.

The fourth time and occasion when the people of God should use the doctrine of Christ's heavenly intercession for consolation and comfort is when we ourselves cannot intercede for ourselves. He wrote, "if on the account of Christ's intercession, a sigh, a groan, a broken word, nay, a breathing will be accepted; the intercessor has His own incense to perfume it with and it is accepted on the weight that it has from Him ... He accepts the prayers of all saints, the weakest as well as the best; for the best goes not up but by His censer and incense and the weakest goes up the same way."¹⁰¹ It is the fervour of Christ's intercession which is crucial because God hears us on account of the worth of Christ's intercession, not ours. Such consolation is unspeakably precious to the the believer struggling with acute problems which may render intelligible prayer virtually impossible. We may think here, for example, of Christians struggling with mental health challenges or with acute grief. In situations like these, a sigh, a groan or a broken word may be all one is capable of, and yet,

Christ's intercession renders it entirely as acceptable to the Father as if one has the liberty of an angel in prayer.

In sermon 70 of *Christ Crucified*, Durham referred to special instances in which the believer is to make use of Christ's interceding for transgressors. He listed four examples: a believer in liberty or in bonds, when we aim to obtain anything or when we have obtained it, both in a most sad and in a most cheerful condition, and, when the believer is under challenges.

The first of these special instances in which the believer is to make use of Christ's heavenly intercession is when he is in liberty or in bonds. The liberty to which Durham referred corresponds to a believer who is thriving in his spiritual condition and receiving answers to his prayers. In such a situation, that believer must remember that first, the liveliness he is enjoying is by virtue of Christ's intercession; and secondly, that without Christ's intercession, his prayers are no more acceptable to God than if had no words to say at all. The bonds to which Durham referred correspond to a believer who is struggling to the extent that he cannot pray and "he scarce has a word to speak to God."¹⁰² This believer must also make use of Christ's intercession lest he becomes weary in prayer, always remembering that "it is especially for such a time and case that He (Christ) is held forth as an intercessor."¹⁰³ In such a situation, the believer can rest quiet because it is the intercession of the Mediator which makes his prayer acceptable and we can expect a hearing on that account alone. Durham wrote, "Hence sometimes looks, sometimes thoughts, sometimes broken words and groans come up before God, are acceptable and get a return; the reason is because, through the intercession of the Mediator, the prayers of all saints are acceptable."¹⁰⁴ Likewise, when the believer in bonds lacks fervency in prayer, he looks to the intercession of Christ. He, "would have an eye to the efficacy of Christ's intercession, that is of continual vigour and efficacy, even when we are very dead, indisposed and lifeless."¹⁰⁵ How precious Durham's application is for Christians who struggle with mental health challenges, spiritual lukewarmness, and grief!

The second of these special instances in which the believer is to make use of Christ's heavenly intercession is when he aims to obtain anything or when he has

100. *Christ Crucified*, p. 763.

101. *Christ Crucified*, p. 764.

102. *Christ Crucified*, p. 779.

103. *Christ Crucified*, p. 779.

104. *Christ Crucified*, p. 780.

105. *Christ Crucified*, p. 780.

obtained it. With respect to the Christian who aims to obtain, Durham insists that our faith of obtaining must be founded upon Christ's intercession and not our own and that "our faith may be stayed and fixed on the expectation of the thing."¹⁰⁶ With respect to the Christian who has obtained that for which he has been praying, he must acknowledge himself to be in debt to Christ's intercession. Durham wrote, "this makes Christians to be humble when they have gotten anything and helps them to a sanctified use of the thing received."¹⁰⁷ This is an interesting application given that it extends the doctrine beyond the strict limits of prayer to the sanctified use of those things received through Christ's heavenly intercession. This speaks powerfully into a Western society where acquisition of possessions and status can become a snare. It reminds us that even our daily bread is God's gracious gift to us.

The third of these special instances in which the believer is to make use of Christ's heavenly intercession is when he is in a sad or a cheerful condition. By a sad condition, Durham spoke of spiritual sadness or a temporal outward disconsolate condition. He wrote, "when we make not use of His intercession in each as it occurs, either anxiety and discouragement grows or we turn to some unwarrantable and crooked means or way for an outgate [deliverance] from such a disconsolate condition."¹⁰⁸ In such a sad condition, the believer improves Christ's intercession in two ways. First, he understands that, however bitter the sadness, "Christ Jesus has the management of its case and cause."¹⁰⁹ Durham reasoned, "although I was unwatchful and this condition came on me unawares and I was surprised with it, yet it is not any surprise to Him. He was not sleeping though I was. He knew what was coming, though I knew not; therefore this will not hurt nor prejudice my main cause because it comes through his hand."¹¹⁰ Secondly, when we remember that "there is a friend at the court of heaven who can order our cause and make such a thing work for our good."¹¹¹ If

our situation is more cheerful, we make use of Christ's intercession by consciously attributing that cheerfulness to him. Durham wrote, "When He is depended upon for the continuance of it and when the praise of it is returned to Him, it sounds the heart that there is no access to grow carnal."¹¹² Would that Christians who find themselves in the position of King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:15-16)¹¹³ take note of Durham's warning!

The fourth of these special instances in which the believer is to make use of Christ's heavenly intercession is when he is under challenges. Durham referred to an attitude of self-accusation. In such a situation, "put the libel in His hand to answer it, which is done by faith's resting on Him as a priest for the obtaining of an absolution from that charge, although we cannot answer it ourselves."¹¹⁴ By contrast, when the believer is calm and tranquil, he must remember that "there cannot be a sanctified calmness, without depending on Him, by virtue of whose satisfaction and procurement we have it and by virtue of whose intercession it is continued."¹¹⁵

The pastoral skill of James Durham shines through all of these examples. Doubtless, if he had more time, he'd have set before his listeners many more occasions when the doctrine of Christ's heavenly intercession would be invaluable to their spiritual health.

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS OF DURHAM'S DOCTRINE OF THE HEAVENLY INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

The doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ is clearly taught in Scripture (e.g. Hebrews 7:25). It is a vital part of Christ's office as priest, laid down as it was, in the covenant of redemption between Father and Son in the council of the Trinity. However, just because the doctrine is clearly taught in Scripture doesn't mean that it is easily visualised and understood. The same might be said of the doctrine of Christ's incarnation and satisfaction. There are depths in these doctrines which finite minds cannot grasp and yet of which may be confident enough to rest upon. Little wonder that Durham spoke of the doctrine of Christ's heavenly intercession as "sublimely spiritual and somewhat tickle."¹¹⁶

Christ stands in heaven for us. His intercession is non-verbal. It consists in the application to us for all He made satisfaction. It is co-extensive with His satisfaction, both in its objects and blessings. There is no exact earthly corollary of the heavenly intercession of Christ and yet it should be understood and experienced as oath relates to promise. It reinforces the blessings of the satisfaction of Christ. Always remembering Durham's words, "In this

106. *Christ Crucified*, p. 781.

107. *Christ Crucified*, p. 781.

108. *Christ Crucified*, p. 781.

109. *Christ Crucified*, p. 782.

110. *Christ Crucified*, p. 782.

111. *Christ Crucified*, p. 782.

112. *Christ Crucified*, p. 782.

113. "And his fame spread far, for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, he grew proud to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God" (ESV).

114. *Christ Crucified*, p. 782.

115. *Christ Crucified*, p. 783.

116. *Christ Crucified*, p. 746.

one word there is stored up a treasure of consolation, for all cases that a Christian can be in,¹¹⁷ there are at least ten situations in which we, as today's pastor/preachers, may apply Durham's development of the doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ. All these applications may equally apply to the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, but we must remember that "the pouring out of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's intercession."¹¹⁸

1. *Assurance to the Doubting.* Many Christians wrestle with the issue of forgiveness. Their past sins haunt them and although intellectually they may acknowledge that Christ has made atonement for them on the Cross, they do not experience the freedom of forgiveness. Such Christians acknowledge the truth of 1 John 1:9,¹¹⁹ but forget what follows in 1 John 2:2¹²⁰. Durham wrote of Christians who feel that the list of their debts is long and large, "though the charge should be given in, what is the matter? There is a way to be freed of it; there is an advocate at the right hand of God in heaven, who became cautioner for and paid the elect's debt and is now interceding for them; and who can lose the case when He pleads it?"¹²¹ Our present experience of forgiveness rests both on Christ's past satisfaction and Christ's present intercession. We must regularly remind ourselves and other Christians of the continuing high priestly work on our behalf. It will bring comfort and assurance of our forgiveness.

2. *Challenge to the Presumptuous.* Especially in the West, although they wouldn't say it publicly, many prosperous Christians believe that they are 'self-made.' Whether it is their health, wealth, status or some other measure, they presume that by their own efforts they have reached distinction. Such beliefs can often lead to spiritual pride and lukewarmness. Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ challenges that presumption by reminding them that they owe everything they have and are to the intercession of Christ. In line with what the apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:7¹²², Durham wrote, "these things wherein others grow carnal, such as health, strength ... are thus made spiritually refreshing to the people of God, because there is an up taking (understanding) of them as coming through Christ's intercession and a returning of thanks to Him for them."¹²³ Far from being the occasion for spiritual pride, understanding that those things which tempt us to presumption come through Christ's intercession for us becomes the occasion of spiritual refreshment.

3. *Hope for the Despairing*—the more a Christian grows in his faith, the more his are grieved by how weak his resistance to temptation and how readily he fall

into sin. This, in itself, is a healthy sign since the Holy Spirit, poured out upon us by virtue of Christ's heavenly intercession, continues to prosecute his work of conviction. However, Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession gives hope to the Christian despairing by his seeming lack of progress against temptation and sin. With regard to temptation, Durham wrote, "there are many temptations that He (Christ) keeps off that they beat not on us ... what strength have weak and witless we to resist temptations? What could we do with the speat (flood) of corruption when it rises like a flood upon ... but there is an intercessor that pleads our cause."¹²⁴ Such knowledge of Christ's intercession on our behalf fosters hope. With regard to sin, Durham wrote, "His (Christ's) digging and pains .. makes the barren fig tree fruitful"¹²⁵, and, "His intercession is the last defence on which the triumph of faith rises."¹²⁶ The battle against sin will not be won without the knowledge and experience of Christ's heavenly intercession for us. Such gives hope to the Christian despairing of his lack of progress in holiness.

4. *Encouragement to the Desperate*—any diligent pastor will be aware of people in his congregation who have been praying for years for some special favour but are growing discouraged and desperate. It may be a parent praying for the conversion of a wayward child, or an elderly member praying for a reverse to the decline in numbers in the church, but they feel as if their prayers are not being heard or answered. The heavenly intercession of Christ does not guarantee that they will be answered according to what they are asking, but it does assure them that their prayers are being heard and that they should persevere. Durham wrote of the heavenly intercession of Christ that, "it quiets and fixes us in expecting of an answer."¹²⁷ The expectation of an answer is not the same thing as the expectation of the granting of the thing asked for, and yet, it relieves our anxious fears that we are not being heard, and it bestows upon us fresh diligence and perseverance in prayer.

117. *Christ Crucified*, p. 783.

118. *Christ Crucified*, p. 758.

119. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (ESV).

120. "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (ESV).

121. *Christ Crucified*, p. 764.

122. "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (ESV).

123. *Christ Crucified*, p. 782.

124. *Christ Crucified*, p. 758.

125. *Christ Crucified*, p. 758.

126. *Christ Crucified*, p. 759.

127. *Christ Crucified*, p. 781.

5. *Joy for the Depressed*—modern churches are full of Christians facing mental health challenges. Be it depression, anxiety, dementia or some other illness, concerning mental health challenges, the church all too often lags behind the medical world in addressing those who struggle in this way. Many Christians with mental health challenges find prayer an extremely difficult discipline in which to engage. By virtue of their illness, they struggle to verbalise their thoughts and, at times, are so taken up with their own mental pain that they have little energy left to think of anything else. This compounds their guilt and can contribute to a further deterioration in their mental health. Durham's presentation of the doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ is of unspeakable comfort to Christians struggling with mental health challenges. It is not the fervency or verbal quality of our prayers which render them acceptable to God, but the strength of Christ's heavenly intercession. Durham wrote, "if on the account of Christ's intercession, a sigh, a groan, a broken word, nay, a breathing will be accepted; the intercessor has his own incense to perfume it with and it is accepted on the weight that it has from Him ... He accepts the prayers of all saints, the weakest as well as the best; for the best goes not up but by His censer and incense and the weakest goes up the same way."¹²⁸ Christians struggling with mental health challenges may be unable to verbalise their prayers, but they can sigh, groan and weep and by virtue of Christ's intercession, it is accepted. To explain that to such a Christian relieves their guilt and may lessen their mental pain. Likewise, the sympathy of the heavenly Christ towards the Christian struggling with depression and anxiety goes beyond any human comfort.

6. *Restoration for the Backslider*—every church is filled both with Christians who are growing in the faith, and with Christians who are either stagnant or backsliding. The latter is a cause of heartbreak for the pastor, especially when he sees those in whom he has invested much time, prayer and energy losing a grip on their faith. Backsliding is rarely due to theological difficulties. Rather, it is most often precipitated by moral pressures. Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ gives hope to heart-broken pastors, but perhaps more importantly, promises restoration to the backslider. No true believer wants to continue in sinful backsliding, but rather feels trapped by the choices they have made and unable to extricate

themselves. Being assured that the heavenly Christ intercedes for them can provide them with both the willingness and ability to repent of their sinful lifestyle and return to a healthy faith. Nothing more (or less) is promised by Christ's intercession than was purchased by His satisfaction. Our perseverance in faith is a priceless purchase of the Cross and is therefore the subject of Christ's intercessory work in heaven. It is one thing for the backslider, upon meeting a church member in the street, to hear them saying, "I am praying for your restoration". It is an altogether more powerful thing to know that the heavenly Christ is interceding for them. Likewise, concerning the sympathy of Christ, Durham wrote, "O What a Wonder is this, the more Sin, the more Sympathy! Which ought to make Believers humble, and yet exceedingly to Comfort them under a sinful Condition ... Christ's Intercession is suited unto, appointed, and designed for Sinners."¹²⁹

7. *Confidence for the Church*—the normal experience for many churches in the West is decline. The preaching of the Word often lacks the unction of the Spirit and the mission of the church yields little results. In Great Britain there is a huge lack of young men offering themselves for the work of the ministry. The church is under attack from secularism and false teaching such that Evangelicalism has almost become a meaningless term. Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ is an unspeakable comfort to the church. Much of what Durham wrote of individual Christians can be applied to the church at large. Yet, for each of our concerns, Durham had an answer. For example, concerning the scarcity of men for the ministry, building upon relevant biblical texts, Durham wrote, "our Lord has ... poured out such gifts on the apostles and others ... what gifts He pleases and sees needful for the church's edification. And that He gives such gifts to men ... whence it is, but from His intercession?"¹³⁰ Again, concerning the opposition faced by the church we remember Durham's words, "here the consolation lies, that there is a court in heaven that gives out orders, where the church has an agent constantly lying (standing) where the devil and the world has none: Jesus Christ is the church's agent and intercessor there."¹³¹ Christ interceding in heaven for his church gives preacher and people confidence in mission and ministry. He who intercedes for them is greater than those who oppose them.

8. *Heavenly Mindedness for the Carnal*—by far the majority of evangelical preaching is focused upon the past work of Christ (e.g. incarnation, satisfaction) and the future work of Christ (e.g. glorification), but not His present work. Unless the present work of Christ is

128. *Christ Crucified*, p. 764.

129. *Commentarie on Revelation*, p. 388.

130. *Christ Crucified*, p. 761.

131. *Christ Crucified*, p. 762.

emphasized, the pastor may find his people conceive of their faith in abstract terms. Encouraged also by a materialistic worldview, this can form a certain kind of carnality within the Christian whereby they forget the great truths of Colossians 3:1–3¹³². They lose their heavenly-mindedness. Durham's presentation of the heavenly intercession of Christ acts as a preventative to this form of carnality. Christ is at work in the present for the believer. He is our great high priest by whose present intercession on our behalf we are kept from many evils and preserved until He comes again. Although it cannot be pictured, the believer is to grasp the reality of the heavenly Christ standing at the right hand of God interceding that all the benefits and blessings purchased at the Cross may be applied to us in our daily lives. Without losing our focus on the past and present work of Christ, if the preacher wants to prevent his people from this form of carnality, he must regularly remind them of the present intercessory work of Christ on their behalf.

9. *Understanding for the Confused*—many Christians are confused by the Levitical regulations and ceremonies of the Old Testament. They wrestle with the sacrificial system and the precision with which the priests activity is ordered. Their confusion is compounded when they try to interpret the priestly references in the Book of Hebrews. They fail to understand that the satisfaction and intercession of Christ is the archetype all these Levitical regulations and ceremonies of the Old Testament prefigure. Durham's doctrine clears the confusion. The Levitical regulations and ceremonies were by "God's appointment, typically to prefigure our Lord's intercession in heaven."¹³³ For the pastor/preacher who is concerned by his people's confusion, Durham's advice would be to begin with the archetype and work back to the prefigurements, and only then to allow the prefigurements to shed deeper light upon the archetype. There is no gospel in Christ-less regulations, sacrifices and ceremonies; but when read through the lens of the satisfaction and intercession of Christ, they come alive and rather than causing confusion, and they then expand the believer's praise of his great high priest.

10. *Expectation for the Exhausted*—many pastors will have heard a dying member of the congregation whisper into their ear, "I'm exhausted. I just want to go home". These precious believers have experienced enough of this world's tears and long for the peace of Christ's closer presence in heaven. Durham's doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ soothes their exhaustion and replaces it with expectation. He wrote, "He (Christ) will not leave a tear on the cheek of any of His own, ere all be done ... He who who has begun

the work will perfect it; and He will not leave it till it be at such a height of perfection as it can be desired to be at no higher."¹³⁴ Such is the sympathy of the heavenly Christ for us, and such is the work of his interceding grace, that ere all is done, all our tears shall be gone and we shall enjoy the highest of perfection.

There are potentially as many contemporary applications of Durham's doctrine of Christ's intercession as there are of His satisfaction, and perhaps also, given that the fruit of Christ's intercessory work is the pouring of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Spirit. But this is a seam which, by study, mediation and prayer, each pastor must work out for himself.

A SHORT WORD ON "CASE-DIVINITY" PREACHING

"Case-divinity" preaching, such as Durham modelled during his ministry, is deeply pastoral and somewhat counter-cultural in today's church. It requires a level of engagement with listeners which goes beyond the normal pastoral practice. Many preachers choose their texts based upon personal interest, time-constraint or sequential ordering. In the Reformed church, consecutive exposition of Bible books is probably the most common practice. From time to time, the preacher may ask his listeners whether there are topics, books or figures about which they would like him to preach. But "case-divinity" is none of the above (although to be fair, in *Christ Crucified*, Durham approached the doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ in a consecutive exposition of Isaiah 53).

The origin of "case-divinity" is not the preacher's study, but his listeners' firesides. In the course of his multiple pastoral visitations, he engages in spiritual conversations which uncover the issues they are facing. He may discover that they wrestle with the experience of forgiveness, that they are struggling with unanswered prayer or that they are backsliding. Through his interactions with them, he realizes that their deepest need is somewhat different from his personal desire to preach his way through the life of Abraham or commence a verse-by-verse exposition of the Book of Ezekiel. He knows that they need to be gently led back to the Cross and Christ's work of satisfaction. He knows his people well enough to discriminate between what they

132. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (ESV).

133. *Christ Crucified*, p. 776.

134. *Christ Crucified*, p. 755.

want to hear and what they need to hear, between what he wants to preach and what they need him to preach.

It is clear that Durham was a conscientious, diligent and meditative pastor. He knew that he had to go deeper than each individual issue he faced in his pastoral visitation; that rather than stopping up the waters of each individual stream, he must find their spring and stop it up instead. In the doctrine of the heavenly intercession of Christ he found the answer to the multiple pastoral needs of his people. Rather than dealing merely with the symptoms of their illness, he dealt with its cause. In so doing, he provides a model for us as pastor/preachers. Do not merely deal with the symptoms of pastoral need, deal with their cause. Do not merely stop the waters of each individual stream, find their spring and stop it up instead. Through meditation, prayer and study, we are to gently lead our listeners to the Cross and Christ's work of satisfaction.

In our case, it may not be preaching through and applying the heavenly intercession of Christ. It may be a different doctrine (or book or life-study) we choose to preach: e.g. adoption, incarnation, eschatology. But rather than begin with our preferences, we begin with the deepest needs of our listeners. If we deal with the cause, their symptoms will lessen and may disappear. If we stop up the spring, the streams will dry up. Throughout our ministries, there will doubtless be many springs which need to be stopped up, but the conscientious, diligent and meditative pastor will, for the sake of Christ and his people, devote himself to that task.

CONCLUSION

James Durham died young, but in his few years he achieved much. From a uniquely Scottish perspective, he explored the high priestly work of Christ from the perspective of the covenant of redemption. Having firmly established its Scriptural basis, avoiding the hazard of over-speculating, Durham laid the groundwork for pastoral applications of the heavenly intercession of Christ which, to this day, have never been built upon by any other Scottish theologian. This is a pity given that, in Durham's words, "there is no piece of the fulness of our blessed Lord Jesus that is more rich in consolation than His intercession, and yet it is suffered to lie beside even the Believer, not being improved to the excellent use which doth flow from it."¹³⁵ If all this paper achieves is to whet the appetite of a superior Scottish theologian than the author to build on Durham's foundation, it will have achieved its purpose. ■

135. *Commentarie on Revelation*, p. 350.

In Brief: "Your Sins Do Not Surprise God." From Collected Sermons of James Durham: Seventy-Two Sermons on Isaiah 53 (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), Sermon 26 on Isaiah 53:6, pp. 339–340.

DOCTRINE FOUR. Considering our sinful way as the occasion of this transaction and of the laying of our iniquities upon Christ as the result of it, we have this sweet observation: *That the elect are considered in the covenant of redemption as foully and vilely sinful and with all the aggravations of their sins and sinful ways; so that they cannot be fouler and more vile in time than they were considered to be, when they were given to Christ to be satisfied for by Him.* How were they then considered? The text tells us, even as *straying sheep*. But that is not all; they are considered as such who have had their own peculiar way of straying from God and have *turned* aside to and run on in their *own* sinful way. Thus the Lord considered the elect in the covenant of redemption, thus Jesus Christ considered them in the undertaking for them, even with all the several aggravations of their sinfulness. So that they are not, nor cannot be worse in time than they were considered to be before time. This is so ordered by the Lord, for these ends...:

(3) It is also ordered so for this end, even to confirm the believer's faith when he comes to take hold of Christ and of the covenant. And when this objection mutters within him, "dare such a sinful wretch as I take hold of Christ, who have been thus and thus polluted with sin?" 'Yes,' says the text, for these sins, so and so aggravated, were not unknown to the Father, nor to the Mediator, when you were bargained about. Nay, these sins, with their aggravations, were expressly considered in the covenant of redemption, and there is no sin already committed or to be committed by you in time that was not considered before time. What was your posture, believers, when God "passed by, and cast the lap or skirt of his love over you?" Were you not "cast out in the open field ... etc. (Ezek. 16:4–6). And wherefore, I pray, is this set down? But as to let you know that you are no worse in time than you were considered to be before you had a being; so to aggregate the love and grace of God in Christ and to draw you in to Him, that since God and Christ the Mediator in the transaction about your redemption, stood not on your sinfulness, you may not stand on it, when seriously taken with, but may submit to His righteousness and say, "be it so, Lord, I am content to take what thou freely offerest." And the more sinful and lost you be in yourselves, when suitably affected therewith, the more wonderful is the grace of God in the plot of your redemption, the more strong is your consolation and the greater ground of believing have you. Your sins do not surprise God, nor the Mediator; the bargain was made before your sins were committed and therefore the price must reach them, even when they are all summed up together. ■