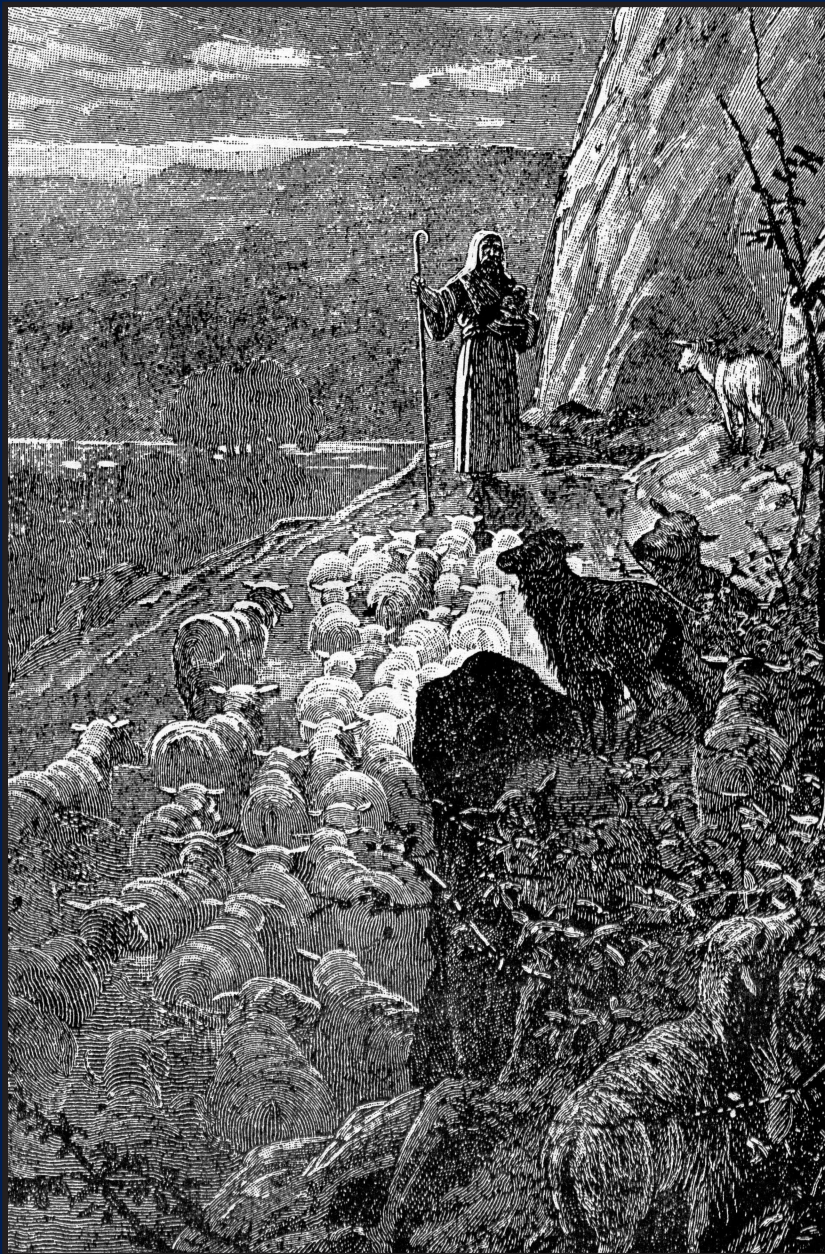
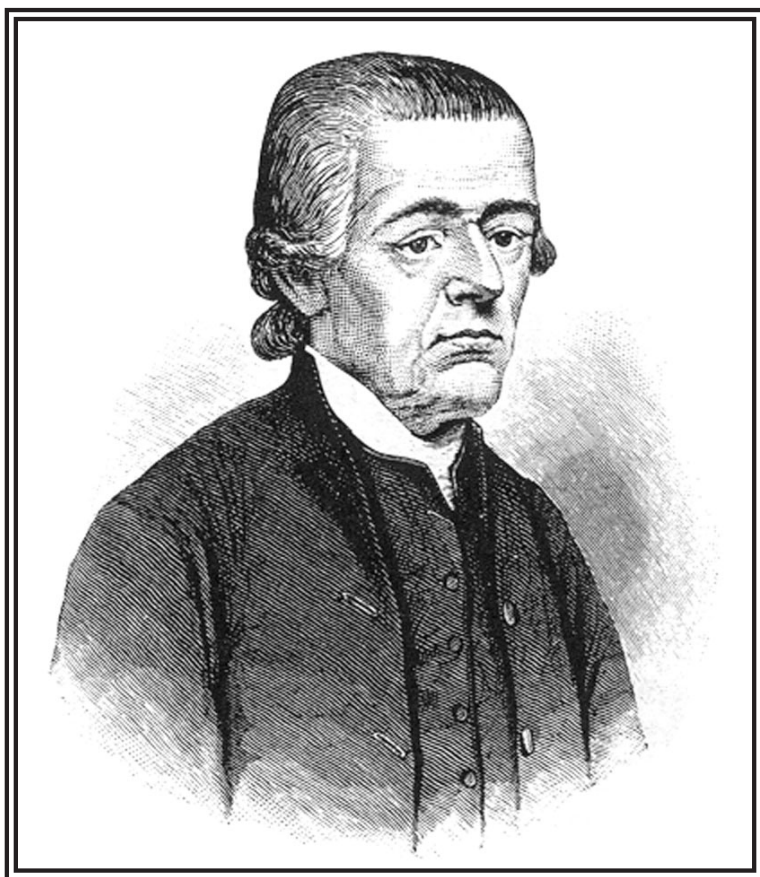


# The Reign of Grace



**Abraham Booth**

THE  
**REIGN OF GRACE,**  
FROM ITS  
*RISE*  
TO ITS  
**CONSUMMATION.**



**ABRAHAM BOOTH**  
1734-1806

THE  
REIGN OF GRACE,  
FROM ITS  
*RISE*  
TO ITS  
CONSUMMATION.

---

BY ABRAHAM BOOTH.

---

A New Edition.

---

WE BELIEVE THAT THROUGH THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS  
CHRIST, WE SHALL BE SAVED. PETER.

GRATIA NON ERIT GRATIA ULLO MODO, NISI SIT GRATUITA OMNI  
MODO SYNOD. DORDRECHT.

---

---

London:

PRINTED FOR RICHARD BAYNES,  
25, IVY LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.  
1818.



**The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.**

NUMBER ONE IRON OAKS DRIVE • PARIS, ARKANSAS 72855

Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth.  
— *Psalms 60:4*

*Reprinted 2006*

*by*

**THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.**

No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive  
Paris, Arkansas 72855  
(479) 963-3831



**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

ISBN# 157978786X

# C O N T E N T S.

---

	Page
<b>MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>CHAP. I.—Concerning the Signification of the term Grace.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>II.—Of Grace, as it reigns in our Salvation in general....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>III.—Of Grace, as it reigns in our Election.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>IV.—Of Grace, as it reigns in our effectual Calling.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>V.—Of Grace, as it reigns in a full, free, and everlasting         Pardon.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>VI.—Of Grace as it reigns in our Justification.....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>VII.—Of Grace, as it reigns in our Adoption.....</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>VIII.—Of Grace, as it reigns in our Sanctification.....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>IX.—Concerning the Necessity and Usefulness of Holiness,         and of Good Works.....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>X.—Of Grace, as it reigns in the Perseverance of the         Saints to eternal Glory.....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>XI.—Concerning the Person of Christ, by whom Grace         reigns.....</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>XII.—Concerning the Work of Christ, through which         Grace reigns.....</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>XIII.—Concerning the Consummation of the Glorious Reign         of Grace.....</b>	<b>268</b>



## MEMOIR.

---

ABRAHAM BOOTH was born at Blackwell, in Derbyshire, on the 20th of May, 1734, old style. In the first year of his life, his parents removed from Blackwell to Annesley Woodhouse, a small hamlet in the parish of Annesley, Nottinghamshire, where they occupied a farm belonging to the Duke of Portland. Of a numerous family of children, Abraham was the oldest, and there the first fifteen or sixteen years of his life were passed, assisting his father as soon as he was able in his agricultural concerns.

The advantages of education, which are of such unspeakable importance to the cultivation of our mental powers, are generally of difficult attainment in villages and the retired districts of the country ; and a century ago they were probably more so than at present. This may help to account for a circumstance which Mr. Booth has often been heard to mention amongst his friends—that until he quitted the farming business, he never spent six months at school. His father taught him to read, making it a general practice to hear his lesson every day after dinner.

It is certainly a very just remark, that there are no characters, however eminent among our species, whose biography is more instructive, or in which we feel more interested, than those which exhibit to our view persevering efforts surmounting formidable obstacles, and dis



tinguished eminence gradually arising out of obscurity and depression. Such is the discipline through which many of the greatest names in the republic of letters have passed ; nor have any of the original favourites of nature or the children of affluence attained a superiority so solid and durable as that which has been acquired by such a course of cultivation.

The energy of young Booth's mind, which appeared so conspicuously throughout the subsequent period of his life, began very early to develop itself. He was indebted almost entirely to his own industry and application for his proficiency in the art of writing, and in the science of arithmetic. And as he grew up, so devoted did he become to his studies, that he cheerfully sacrificed the hours usually allotted to repose and recreation, for the pleasure he found in prosecuting them. When the other members of the family retired to rest, Abraham withdrew to cultivate his mind. The parents of our author were members of the church of England ; and of course trained up their son in a customary reverence for the national establishment of religion. The first direction of his mind towards the dissenters took place when he was about ten years of age ; and was occasioned by the preaching of some plain and illiterate teachers belonging to the denomination of General (or Arminian) Baptists who occasionally visited his neighbourhood. They drew the attention of the family ; and under their discourses our author was first awakened to a concern about the salvation of his soul. His convictions were permanent and increased with his years ; but it is plain from the history of his own mind, that it was long after this ere he attained any just and clear views of the true grace of God, or was enlightened into the important doctrine of accept

ance with God as revealed in the New Testament. He, however, applied to the society of General Baptists to be admitted into their communion, and was accordingly baptized on a profession of his faith, by Mr. Francis Smith, at Barton, in 1755, at which time he was about the age of twenty-one.

Some years previous to this, young Booth had relinquished the farming business ; and, induced probably by the hope of being able to pursue his studies with less interruption, he had applied himself to learn the business of a stocking maker, but was never articled as an apprentice to the trade. He, however, managed to support himself by that means, from the age of sixteen to that of four-and-twenty, at which period he married Miss Elizabeth Bowmar, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, with whom he enjoyed much domestic felicity during more than forty years.

But possessing so vigorous a mind, it was not likely that Mr. Booth should long continue a mechanic. He had now been diligently occupied for several years in the acquisition of useful knowledge ; his capacity had attained to a considerable degree of maturity ; he had entered into an important domestic relation ; and he had before him the prospect of a numerous family for whom he was bound to provide ; and he therefore adopted the resolution of opening a school at Sutton Ashfield, about two miles from Kirby, for the instruction of youth. Mrs. Booth assisted the undertaking by instructing the female pupils in the useful branches of needle-work, for which she had been eminently qualified by her education.

The society of General Baptists, with which Mr. Booth now stood connected, had sufficient discernment to perceive that he possessed abilities which only required

cultivation to mature and raise to excellence. They accordingly invited him to assist occasionally in the public preaching of the word ; and so rapid was his improvement, that in a little time he was considered as a leading person among them. Their profession increased considerably throughout the neighbouring districts ; and our author was frequently at Melbourne, Barton, Loughborough, Diseworth, and other places, at the distance of twenty, thirty, and even forty miles from home, preaching the glad tidings of salvation to his fellow-sinners, according to the views which he then had of divine truth. In the year 1760, it was thought advisable to collect into churches those who had professed the faith and been baptized, and to appoint over them pastors and teachers, after the example of the first churches. The society of Kirby-Woodhouse was accordingly submitted to the superintendence of Mr. Booth, who continued for several years to labour among them in the ministry of the word ; though, for reasons which do not appear, he declined to take upon himself the pastoral office. His preaching is, nevertheless, said to have been with considerable acceptance and success ; and in the regulation of these newly-formed societies he proved highly instrumental. We find him in the same year assisting at the ordination of Mr. F. Smith and Mr. T. Parkins over the General Baptist church at Melbourne, and delivering a solemn charge to them from Acts xx. 28. *Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, &c.*

In this stage of their proceedings, however, a memorable and important change took place in the religious sentiments of Mr. Booth. He had hitherto held the Arminian doctrine, and been a strenuous advocate for the universality of divine grace. He had written and printed

a poem on "Absolute Predestination," in which the fervour of his zeal for what he then esteemed truth, had vented itself in reviling the doctrine of election and particular redemption, in language as replete with contumely and reproach as is to be found in the writings of Wesley or Fletcher. It may indeed be pleaded as some apology for its author, that he wrote it when only twenty years of age ; and it is important, as serving to demonstrate the greatness of the change which afterwards took place in his mind relative to the character of the Supreme Being.

Mr. Booth was fully aware that the change which his sentiments had undergone was of such a nature as to render it utterly impossible for himself and his friends to walk any longer together in a way that would be productive of mutual comfort ; and he had too much integrity to conceal the difference. The change itself was the fruit of deep conviction, and thus at a future period of his life we find his own pen recording it. "The doctrine of sovereign, distinguishing grace, as commonly and justly stated by Calvinists, it must be acknowledged, is too generally exploded. This the writer knows by experience, to his grief and shame. Through the ignorance of his mind, the pride of his heart, and the prejudice of his education, he, in his younger years, often opposed it with much warmth, though with no small weakness ; but after an impartial inquiry, and many prayers, he found reason to alter his judgment ; he found it to be the doctrine of the Bible, and a dictate of the unerring Spirit. Thus patronized, he received the once obnoxious sentiment, under a full conviction of its being a divine truth."

The revolution that had now taken place in his sentiments was soon observed by his friends, and it occasioned considerable uneasiness in their minds. They respected

his character and approved his ministry. Meetings were held for the purpose of investigating the differences which subsisted between them, when each party produced the best arguments they could in behalf of their respective tenets ; but neither party succeeding in convincing the other, they mutually agreed to part. In vindication of the principles of Christian integrity, which on this occasion governed his conduct, Mr. Booth chose as the foundation of his farewell discourse, the parable of the unjust steward, which naturally led him to remark, that fraud and concealment of various kinds may obtain the friendship of men ; that when friendship is obtained by such means, he who gains it, and they who grant it, are chargeable with injustice peculiarly execrable ; and that Scripture, reason, and conscience, unite their authority in recommending universal fidelity to accountable creatures, and especially to the ministers and professors of religion, in the view of the great day of account, when they must all give up their stewardship !

Mr. Booth's separation from the General Baptists suspended for a while his public ministrations ; but in a short time a place was procured at Sutton Ashfield, called Bore's Hall, which was licensed for the purpose, and in which he recommenced his labours as a preacher of the gospel of peace. Here he gathered in process of time a small society of the Calvinistic or Particular Baptist denomination ; and it was at this time that he composed his invaluable treatise, "The Reign of Grace." The substance of that excellent work was originally delivered in a series of discourses at Sutton Ashfield, and afterwards at Nottingham and Chesterfield ; at both of which towns he for several years was in the practice of preaching on alternate Sabbaths.

The exertions of Mr. Booth during this period will, to many, appear to have been truly astonishing. He had to labour throughout the week for the support of a family every year increasing, and even then become numerous. He had frequently to travel the distance of twelve or fifteen miles on the Lord's-day morning, and afterwards to preach twice or thrice during the day, for which the only remuneration he accepted was barely the expense of horse hire, which at no time exceeded ten pounds a year; and it was under these unfavourable circumstances that he wrote *The Reign of Grace*. But to such as have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," the solution of the problem will not be difficult. When we examine his publication, and remark what the subjects are which then occupied his public ministrations, viz. : the nature and properties of divine grace—when we think of him as tracing that grace in all its rich abundings; as reigning in our election—effectual calling—the pardon of sin—justification—adoption—sanctification—perseverance—and at length crowning the sinner with eternal glory, we may safely conclude that "the word of Christ dwelt richly in him," and that he "spake of these things out of the abundance of his heart," bringing forth that which was good to the use of edifying and which ministered grace to the hearers." When the mind is filled with the doctrines of divine grace, it delights to dwell upon so transporting a theme, and the tongue speaks of it with inexpressible pleasure.

When the manuscript of the *Reign of Grace* was completed, it was shown by the author to some of his friends, though probably without any view to immediate publication. He was yet an obscure and unfriended individual, little known even in the circle of his own

denomination ; and he might possibly recollect the maxim of the poet, that

“Slow rises worth by poverty depressed!”—

At any rate we are said to owe its first publication to the following train of circumstances. A friend of Mr. Booth's who had perused the work in manuscript, happening to be at Huddersfield, in Yorkshire, called upon Mr. Henry Venn, a clergyman professing evangelical sentiments, and well known as the author of a popular work, entitled “The Complete Duty of Man,” to whom he mentioned Mr. Booth's intended publication, and gave such an account of it as excited in Mr. Venn an eager desire to see it. The manuscript was accordingly transmitted to him, and so strongly prepossessed was he by a perusal of it, that he took a journey from Huddersfield to Sutton Ashfield, that he might enjoy the pleasure of a personal interview with the author. The result was an acquaintance which ripened into intimacy ; and notwithstanding the dissimilarity of their views respecting the nature, constitution, and order of a Christian church, that intimacy was cemented by the bonds of reciprocal esteem and friendship which continued with unabated ardour through life. Mr. Venn strongly urged upon his friend the publication of his manuscript, and with a view of making it more generally known, wrote a recommendatory preface to the work.

The “Reign of Grace” was first published in April, 1768, and soon attracted pretty general regard. The Particular Baptist Church in Little Prescott Street, Goodman's Fields, London, had recently lost their pastor, Mr. Samuel Burford, and were then looking out for a successor. Some of the members of the church happening to meet with Mr. Booth's book, and approving the per

formance, they came to the resolution of taking a journey into Nottinghamshire, to see the author. The result of this visit was an invitation to our author to supply the church in Goodman's Fields, for a few Sabbaths, to which he consented; and in the month of June following, he arrived in London and preached to them three Lord's days in succession. This led to a second invitation for further assistance, with which also, after visiting his own family, he complied, and preached four Sabbaths more: and in the issue the church unanimously agreed to invite him to become their pastor. By a letter bearing date October 1st, 1768, he signified his acquiescence with their call; and on the sixteenth day of February, 1769, was ordained by prayer and the imposition of hands. On this solemn occasion, he delivered before the church a public and explicit confession of his faith which was afterwards printed.

Mr. Booth's settlement in London forms a new era in the history of his life. He was now called to move in a new circle, and the change which he underwent in being translated from an obscure country village to the metropolis of the kingdom, must have been striking even to his own mind. Instead of preaching to a few plain unlettered people in a barn or humble school-room, he was now to discharge the duties of the pastoral office over one of the most respectable churches amongst the English dissenters. He was doubtless fully impressed with the importance of the trust, and the high responsibility which attached to it: a consideration of which could not fail to stimulate a vigorous mind like his to a sedulous improvement of its powers. Hitherto his acquirements had scarcely carried him beyond the rudiments of English grammar. But he rejoiced that Providence had now



favoured him with auspicious opportunities of increasing his knowledge; and, conscious of his deficiencies, he became insatiable in his thirst after learning. The first object to which he devoted his attention was an acquaintance with the Latin and Greek languages; and in the pursuit of that, his progress was considerably facilitated by the assistance which he derived from an eminent classical scholar, who had formerly been a Roman Catholic priest. Of this gentleman's erudition, Mr. Booth always spoke in terms of high commendation; and thus aided, it is natural to suppose that his improvement would be rapid. The tutor usually came in the morning, and after breakfasting with his pupil, they retired together into the study for business. This was the only assistance worth mentioning with which he was ever favoured; and with that exception, he might be fairly denominated—a self-taught scholar.

In prosecuting his studies, however, Mr. Booth never lost sight of the important ends of his office as a minister of the gospel of Christ. It was no object of his ambition to become a profound metaphysician, or an adept in the higher branches of the mathematics. He made no pretensions to the character of an accomplished Hebrician, nor to any intimate acquaintance with the oriental languages. But a familiar knowledge of the Latin gave him an easy access to the exhaustless stores of theology published upon the continent of Europe, and which are to be met with in the writings of the many eminent professors that have filled the chairs of Foreign Universities among the reformed churches, such as Witsius, Turretine, Stapferus, Vitringa, and Venema. Not many of his cotemporaries were so deeply read in the Popish controversy; and the fruits

of his reading may be found in the adroitness with which he has employed the best arguments by which the reformation was defended, in vindication of his own sentiments as an Antipædobaptist. Ecclesiastical history was a favourite subject with him and the writers of that class, viz. : Dupin, Cave, Bingham, Venema, Spanheim, and the Magdeburg Centuriators were familiar to him ; as were also Lewis, Jennings, Reland, Spencer, Ikenius, Carpzovius, Fabricius of Hamburg, and others on the article of Jewish Antiquities. Among the writers of his own country, there was none that engaged so much of his regard, as Dr. John Owen, to whose evangelical and learned works he has in various ways frequently acknowledged his obligations ; and from whom there will be found more quotations in his writings, than from any other author, ancient or modern, if we except the sacred volume.

It is a true though hackneyed observation, that the history of an author must be found in his works ; and the justice of its application to Mr. Booth will be apparent from the present narrative. We may trace him in his studies and in his labours by means of the press, during almost every successive year, from the time of his removal to London, to the period of his death. In 1770, which was only the first year after his ordination, he published *The Death of Legal Hope, the Life of Evangelical Obedience*, in an Essay on Gal. ii. 19.

The main design of this Essay is to prove that the grace which brings salvation to guilty men, and which “ reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord,” has no tendency to relax their obligations to holiness, but that, on the contrary, it is a doctrine according to godliness.

One of the most pernicious sentiments arising from an abuse of the doctrines of grace, is a denial that the moral law is the rule of life to believers. This unscriptural and absurd principle was probably never more prevalent in England than at that period; and Mr. Booth had to sustain a testimony against it both in his writings and in his personal conduct as the pastor of a Christian church.

About the time Mr. Booth came to settle in London, the question concerning the divinity of Christ was the subject of much controversy in this country. Several respectable clergymen of the established church resigned their benefices, and took their lot among the Socinian dissenters, because they could not conscientiously conform to Trinitarian worship. The dispute was kept in agitation during several years; and certainly a formidable phalanx of talent appeared against this leading article of the Christian faith. It was upon this occasion that Mr. Booth was induced in the year 1777, to present the public with a new edition of a work, entitled, *The Deity of Jesus Christ, essential to the Christian Religion*, written originally in French, by *Dr. James Abaddie*, dean of Killaloe in Ireland. An English translation of it had appeared many years before, but it was greatly improved by our author, who revised, corrected, and by judiciously retrenching it in some parts, concentrated the author's reasoning, and much enhanced its value and usefulness.

In the following year (1778) he published "*An Apology for the Baptists, in which they are vindicated from the imputation of laying an unwarrantable stress on the ordinance of Baptism.*" The object of the publication is to oppose the principle of mixed communion, which had been introduced among some of the Baptist

churches in England, about the middle of the seven-teenth century, and which has more or less prevailed among them to the present time. A consideration of the subject was partly forced upon our author, by one of his brethren in the ministry, who had been invited to take the pastoral care of a society of this mixed kind ; but having scruples in his own mind upon the propriety of this practice, he submitted the thing to the judgment of Mr. Booth, and requested to be favoured with his sentiments upon it. The substance of "The Apology" was consequently transmitted to his friend in a series of letters ; and, in the hope that what was originally intended for the information of an individual, might prove useful to the denomination at large, he was afterwards induced to publish it in its present form.

Mr. Booth was, shortly after this, called to take up his pen in defence of the ordinance of Baptism itself. In the year 1784, he was induced to lay before the public his "*Pædobaptism examined, on the Principles, Concessions, and Reasonings of the most learned Pædobaptists.*" In the preface to that work, he informs us that having observed for a course of years, that many of the most learned and eminent Pædobaptists, when theological subjects are under discussion, frequently argue on such principles, admit such facts, interpret various texts of Scripture in such a manner, and make such concessions, as are greatly in favour of the Baptists ; he extracted a number of passages from their publications, and made many references to others, which he thought might be fairly pleaded against infant sprinkling. On reviewing these quotations and memoranda, he had concluded merely for his own private use, to employ some leisure hours in transcribing and arranging

them under different heads of the Pædobaptist controversy.

He has taken up the subject upon much more general grounds, than that which is occupied by any individual writer that has hitherto appeared on either side of this long litigated question; and his method of discussing the subject is entitled to the full praise of originality. Of the ability displayed by the author in the execution of this work, it is unnecessary in this place to enlarge. The public voice, which is perhaps after all the surest test of criticism, has long ago stamped upon it the sanction of its applause. It may be safely made a question, if the subject was ever handled in a more masterly manner, by any writer in any age or language. He meets his opponents on their own ground, avails himself of their own weapons, and with singular dexterity turns them against themselves. The *Monthly Review* for September, 1784, smartly remarked, that "He sets his opponents together by the ears, and leaves them to overthrow the very cause, in defence of which they professed to take the field." The book was so well received that the whole impression was soon disposed of; and in the year 1787, our author gave to the public the second edition of *Pædobaptism Examined*, now enlarged by additional quotations, illustrations, and remarks, from one to two thick volumes. The performance, in its present state, may, almost without a hyperbole, be said to have exhausted the controversy on the Baptist side of the question; and the simple inquirer after truth who is not convinced by Mr. Booth's volumes can hardly be expected to yield his judgment to any thing that man can say upon this long contested point.

The "*Essay on the Kingdom of Christ*" was first

published in 1788. It relates to a subject of great importance ; for it is evident that just views of it lie at the foundation of all rational principles of dissent from the national religious establishment. Yet it is remarkable that before the publication of this essay, the subject had been very little discussed among the English Nonconformists, though it had been fiercely litigated among the Episcopalians. Mr. Booth's Essay is a scriptural illustration of the subject, designed to show that as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, it must in its nature be different from that of the kingdom of David, and the entire constitution of things under the Jewish theocracy. Hence he justly infers that it is quite absurd to reason from what took place under the Mosaic economy, to the nature of the Christian church, and the rights, privileges, and duties of the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, since these are as different as flesh and spirit, temporal and spiritual. Keeping this distinction in view, he proceeds to elucidate his subject by showing that the gospel church is not of this world in regard to its origin—its subjects—the means of its establishment and support—the laws by which it is governed—that it does not resemble the kingdoms of this world in regard to its splendour—nor in respect of its immunities, riches, and honours. The discussion of these several particulars leads him not only to vindicate his own principles of dissent from the national establishment, but to animadvert with considerable severity on various things among its members which appear to him in the light of political artifices calculated to impeach the dominion of Christ in his own kingdom, or to degrade and corrupt that worship which he requires.

His next publication is entitled "*Glad Tidings to Pe-*

*ishing Sinners ; or, The Genuine Gospel, a complete Warrant for the Ungodly to believe in Jesus Christ ;*" the first edition of which appeared in 1796, and was followed by a second in 1800, with such considerable additions and improvements as almost to constitute a new work. Even among those who admit the truth of the gospel in the most unqualified terms, it has nevertheless been a subject of much debate, "to what description of persons it should be preached ;" though surely, when we consider that it is the command of the Divine Author that it be preached "to every creature," it may justly excite surprise that such a question should ever have been started.

"*The Amen to Social Prayer, illustrated and improved ;*" first published in the year 1800, is a sermon which had previously been delivered at one of the monthly meetings of ministers belonging to the Particular baptist denomination. It having been agreed to preach a series of Discourses on the different branches of the Lord's prayer, Dr. Jenkins commenced with a sermon on the words "Our Father, who art in heaven ;" and it fell to the lot of Mr. Booth to close the whole with a discourse on the word "Amen." As no man was ever more averse than our author to the practice of selecting detached words and phrases, or of choosing any part of Scripture for the base purpose of making it the subject of a trial of skill, with the view of exciting popularity, or of affording amusement to the giddy multitude, it may be readily supposed that the task allotted him on this occasion, of preaching from a single word, would excite no small share of pleasantry among his friends. They could not forbear calling to mind the strong terms in which, in his "Essay on the Kingdom of Christ," he had entered his solemn protest against this practice, condemning it with the most

marked reprobation, as a disgrace to the pulpit, and a profanation of the sacred ministry ; and a general interest was excited to know how the preacher would extricate himself from what was considered a species of dilemma. He even appears to have personally felt the delicacy of his situation : but his good sense and solid judgment extricated him without much difficulty from the embarrassment. In fact, the result was such as to make it rather a matter of regret that he was not oftener placed in circumstances which, like the present, called forth the superior powers of his mind, than that it happened to him on this occasion. It produced a discourse on the subject of prayer, in which the duty and the privileges of it are illustrated in so masterly a manner, and such important instructions are given, both to ministers and people respecting that branch of public worship, that the pastor or private Christian who can peruse it without being both humbled and edified must either have very little experimental acquaintance with these interesting things, or have made an advance in the divine life, far beyond what falls to the generality of professors.

We now arrive at that period of our author's life, when, according to the ordinary course of nature, it might reasonably be expected, that his powers both of body and of mind would be rapidly declining. He had nearly attained the limit commonly allotted to the life of man ; for he was fast advancing upon seventy years of age. But whatever ravages those infirmities of nature which are the usual concomitants of old age had made upon his earthly tabernacle, he gave the most indubitable proof that the powers of his mind had not sustained the smallest diminution. The productions of his pen, which it yet remains for us to notice, under whatever point of view they may



be examined, will be allowed by every competent and impartial judge, not to yield the palm of excellence to the ablest of his former publications.

In the year 1803, at one of the monthly meetings of his Baptist brethren, he delivered a discourse which was soon afterwards published under the title of "*Divine Justice essential to the Divine Character*;" a discourse which, had he left to the world no other fruits of his pen, would alone have been sufficient to stamp his character as one of the closest thinkers, and ablest reasoners, and most judicious divines of the century in which he lived.

In 1805, the last year of his life, he published his "*Pastoral Cautions*," the substance of which he had twenty years before delivered from the pulpit as a charge, at the ordination of Mr. Thomas Hopkins, over the Baptist Church in Eagle Street, Red Lion Square, London. He had now been fifty years engaged in the work of the ministry, and of that period more than thirty-five pastor of the church in Prescott Street. Independent of his native good sense and superior talents, it is natural to conclude that his age and long experience must have eminently qualified him for instructing his younger brethren on a subject of such vital importance to the welfare of the churches, and the honour of the Christian profession. It formed no part of his plan in this publication, to point out the topics which should constitute the subject matter of their ministrations; but to caution them how they should behave themselves in the house of God, in their families, and in the world, so as to exemplify the character of the Christian pastor, and, by a corresponding deportment, adorn the high and honourable office in which they are placed. The discourse is replete with maxims of prudence, and abounds in that wise and salutary counsel

which is the result of mature years and valuable experience in union with disinterested and fervent affection ; which combine in this instance, to administer profitable instruction to the inexperienced. The lessons are such as it became one to deliver, who had grown gray in his Master's service, and who obviously considered himself standing on the brink of the grave : and they are such as it well becomes those who survive him to make familiar, and by them to regulate their conversation in the church and in the world.

Several "*Funeral Sermons*" and "*Addresses*" delivered at the interment of his friends, were also published at different periods of his ministry ; and they are what such compositions ought to be,—simple, chaste, solemn, and pathetic appeals to the living on the uncertainty of human life—the certainty of death—the necessity of being prepared for that event—the folly of trifling with the interests of the immortal soul, and neglecting the things that concern our everlasting peace—the importance of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the one thing needful, as that which alone can give effectual relief to the mind of a sinner under the dread of death and the judgment. They exhibit no high-wrought eulogies on the character of the deceased—no detail of compliments to surviving relatives—no flights of fancy, nothing trifling, nothing extraneous. All is solemn and affecting as the scene before us ; and they may be safely held up as models of address which young ministers would do well in spirit and manner to imitate, when called to officiate on such mournful occasions.

Mr. Booth was indebted to the goodness of God for a sound constitution of body ; and he enjoyed as great a portion of good health as commonly falls to the lot of

man. His frame was muscular, though never inclined to corpulency ; and during the far greater part of his life, he was seldom interrupted by ill-health in the discharge of his pastoral duties. But after he was sixty years old the effects of his intense application to study were very perceptible. He was increasingly afflicted with the asthma, particularly during the winter seasons ; and the last three which he passed were severe and threatening, insomuch that he became impressed with the conviction that the time of his departure was at hand. About four years previous to his own dissolution, he sustained a severe shock in the loss of his dear partner in life ; though his resignation to the will of God under that trying dispensation, appeared truly remarkable.

Some months before his death, having been attending a meeting of his ministering brethren in the city, he was taken suddenly ill on his way home, and from that time was mostly laid aside from his public labours. He was now called, in his own personal experience, to prove the validity of those principles which he had spent his life in recommending to others. His friends had now the satisfaction of seeing that in the immediate prospect of death his mind retained all its wonted calmness and serenity. To their anxious inquiries, his answer uniformly was, " I have no fears about my state"—

"The gospel bears my spirit up ;  
A faithfu! and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation of my hope  
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

Although in a great measure precluded from the discharge of his public official duties for several months before his death, he employed himself in revising and finishing for the press, "*An Essay on the Love of God*

to his chosen People," and another on "*A Conduct and Character formed under the Influence of Evangelical Truth*," which he delivered into the hands of a particular friend just before his death, and by whom they were subsequently published. Nor are those excellent essays the only fruit that remains to us of his departing hours. Only a day or two before he left the world, he gave into the hands of the same friend a manuscript entitled, "*Thoughts on Dr. Edward Williams's Hypothesis relative to the Origin of Moral Evil*." This subject, in itself metaphysical and curious, has always been regarded as one of the most abstruse and difficult that can possibly employ the human intellect; and in the examination of Dr. Williams's "Hypothesis" Mr. Booth has evinced that he was still as competent as ever he had been to exert the powers of a sound and discriminating judgment—to grapple with the unwieldy or to chase the subtle. His manuscript bears internal evidence of having been composed during the last year of his life. Having carefully examined Dr. Williams's theory, and exposed its fallaciousness, Mr. Booth thus terminates the last of his literary labours: "Were my opinion asked respecting the origin of moral evil, the answer would be, I have no opinion upon the subject; nor dare I form conjectures about it. Having long been fully persuaded that a satisfactory solution of the question lies far beyond the reach of human intellect, I consider it as more becoming my feeble reason, and much more respectful to Divine Providence, to exclaim with Paul, 'O the depth!' than to indulge speculation on a subject so mysterious; lest I should fall under the righteous reproof of Jehovah's interrogatory to Job, 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?' Of this, however, I have no doubt, that

the existence and prevalence of moral evil in the rational creation, are completely consistent with all the perfections of God, and with all his eternal decrees; and that under the management of Supreme Wisdom, when the great system of Providence respecting both angels and men is finished, the conduct of God in reference to evil, both moral and natural, will be to the praise of his glory, in the eyes of all holy creatures." What a picture do these few lines exhibit of an humble, ingenuous, and pious mind. What a contrast to that rash and presumptuous spirit of speculation which, vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, scorns to bound its investigations by the limits of revelation, and daringly intrudes into things which God has thought fit to veil from human ken. How expressive also of his reverence for the Supreme Being, his unshaken confidence in his wisdom, his power, his justice, holiness, and truth: how descriptive of the consciousness which possessed him of the very limited extent of his own faculties. The paragraph is worthy to be printed in letters of gold; it is worthy of the pen of Abraham Booth; and in no part of all his valuable writings does his Christian character appear more truly great, than in this concluding sentence of his works.

From the time that he was compelled to give up preaching, to the period of his death, he had many opportunities of evincing to his friends the steadfastness of his faith and hope, as well as the importance which he now attached to those precious doctrines which he had spent his life in publishing among them. "I now live," said he, "upon what I have been teaching others." His experience corresponded to the solid and judicious views of Divine truth, which formed the basis of his public discourses, and that characterize all his writings. He ex-

pressed no enthusiastic raptures ; nor is there any reason to suppose that he was anxious about them. His mind was serene and peaceful ; and with eternity in his immediate view, and considering the time of his departure at hand, he blessed God for a good hope through grace, breathed after heaven and perfect conformity to the image of Christ, and, in patient submission to the will of God, waited for the coming of his Lord and Saviour, to receive him to his kingdom.

On the Saturday preceding his death he requested to see a much esteemed friend, that he might communicate to him his last instructions, to whom, among other things, he said, " I am peaceful but not elevated." The following day, the same gentleman desired his son to inquire after his health. He replied to the inquiry, and then added, " Young man, think of your soul ; if you lose that, you lose all. Be not half a Christian. Some people have just religion enough to make them miserable ; not enough to make them happy. The ways of religion are good ways. I have found them such these sixty years." This was on the Lord's-day, during some part of which he was able to sit up in his study. His friends, however, were apprehensive that his dissolution was near, and several of them went to see him, as they rightly supposed for the last time. Though rendered almost incapable of conversation, he affectionately dropped a word to one and then to another, particularly to his young friends who were anxious to take leave of him. " But a little while " said he to one of them, " and I shall be with your dear father and mother." To another, " I have often borne you on my heart before the Lord ; now you need to pray for me, and you must pray for yourself." To a third, in reference to a well-known Socinian minister, he said with

much solemnity, "Beware of ——'s sentiments." Thus he studied to redeem the few hours yet allotted him, in counselling the young, and establishing them in the ways of the Lord. The evening was spent in the bosom of his endeared family. Two of his daughters and their husbands continued with him, and before their departure one of the latter engaged in family worship, with which he joined. About nine o'clock, he was put to bed, and lay down to rise no more until the resurrection morn! He expired the next day, without a struggle or a sigh; aged seventy-one.

The following extracts from the records of the church in Little Prescot Street, over which Mr. Booth had so long exercised the pastoral office, may here be appropriately inserted:

"By this dispensation of Providence, the church are bereaved of an under shepherd whom they highly valued, in whom there was an union of piety and talent rarely to be met with.

"In the pulpit he was always solemn and devotional; his prayers were the fervent effusions of the heart, and often brought his fellow-worshippers—where he appeared to be—near to the divine footstool. His discourses were solid, judicious, and interesting; nothing fell from his lips but what tended to edification. He aimed to alarm the conscience, and to awaken the heart, with an energy that plainly evinced how deeply he was convinced of the importance of those truths which he preached to others. His doctrinal views of religion were formed upon the closest investigations of Scripture, accompanied with earnest prayer. Doctrinal truth he considered as the only foundation of evangelical obedience; while *notions* of religious truth, however correct, would prove of no

avail, any farther than their sanctifying influence was felt upon the heart, and evidenced by a holy walk and conversation. His own exemplary conduct was a striking comment on the doctrines he believed and preached.

“Integrity and uprightness were prominent traits in his character, acknowledged by all who knew him ; and the pages of this church record-book show with what diligence, fervour, and affection he watched over the spiritual interests of his beloved people.

“To the poor of his flock he was kind and attentive ; they were never neglected by him whilst able to go abroad, and to the lowest among his brethren and sisters, his humility and condescension were manifest. To the chambers of sickness and distress he was ever ready to direct his steps, to pray with, to console, and to advise the afflicted inmate. In every time of need he was a valuable friend, and in his pastoral visits many of us can say that he was frequently instrumental, by his cheerful demeanour and pious conversation, in mitigating our sorrows, and increasing our joys.

“He possessed a noble disinterestedness of spirit ; he sought not ours but us. He was truly the servant of this church for Jesus’ sake. A pastor, in the language of Jeremiah, according to God’s heart, who fed his people with knowledge and understanding. There are, perhaps, but few instances in the church of Christ, of one who has better exemplified the character of a Christian bishop, as drawn by the pen of the apostle Paul. ‘Titus i. 7—9.’”

As a testimony of esteem for this eminent servant of Christ, the church has erected a neat marble tablet, in the chapel in Little Prescot Street, Goodman’s Fields, where he had so long officiated as their pastor ; with the following inscription :



## THIS TABLET

was erected by the Church in grateful Remembrance  
of their beloved and venerable Pastor,

## ABRAHAM BOOTH:

who, with unremitting Fidelity, discharged his ministerial Labours  
in this place, thirty-seven Years.

As a Man, and as a Christian, he was highly and deservedly esteemed;  
As a Minister, he was solemn and devout:

His addresses were perspicuous, energetic, and impressive;  
they were directed to the Understanding, the Conscience, and the Heart  
Profound Knowledge, sound Wisdom, and unaffected Piety  
were strikingly exemplified  
in the Conduct of this excellent Man.

In him the poor have lost a humane and generous Benefactor;  
the Afflicted and the Distressed a wise and sympathetic Counsellor;  
and this Church

a disinterested, affectionate, and faithful Pastor:

nor will his name or writings be forgotten,

while Evangelical truth shall be revered; Genius admired, or Integrity respected.

He departed this Life on the 27th January, 1806,

In the 72d year of his Age.

The following condensed and elaborate view of his character, is from the pen of one of his contemporary ministering brethren, the Rev. Dr. Newman.

*As a Christian*, he was pre-eminent. Called by divine grace when about twelve years of age, he experienced, in the long course of threescore years, many alternations of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, with many changes of trials and temptations. Yet with respect to his personal interest in the divine favour, he seems to have been carried on in an even tenor, without any remarkable elevations or depressions. His common conversation breathed much of a devotional spirit, and discovered the strong sense he had of his own sinfulness

before God and the simplicity of his dependence on the Holy Spirit. Firm in his attachment to his religious principles, he despised the popular cant about charity, and cultivated that genuine candour, which is alike remote from the laxity of latitudinarians, and the censoriousness of bigots. He was conspicuous for self-denial, and contempt of the world, walking humbly with God. His moral character was pure and unblemished. Perhaps there never was a man of more stern, unbending integrity, he would have been admired and revered by *Aristides the Just*. Sincerity clear as crystal, consistency with himself, and unbroken uniformity of conduct were always to be seen by the ten thousand eyes that were continually fixed upon him. He was temperate, even to abstemiousness: in fortitude "bold as a lion." Caution was interwoven with the texture of his mind, yet he would sometimes say, "We have need of caution against caution itself, lest we be over cautious." He once observed that "in morals, integrity holds the first place, benevolence the second, and prudence the third. Where the first is not, the second cannot be; and where the third is not, the other two will be often brought into suspicion." In his attendance on public worship, he was remarkable for an exemplary punctuality, which also extended to all appointments in meetings for business. His manners were simple, grave, and unaffected; frequently enlivened with an agreeable pleasantry. It was edifying and delightful to observe how he perpetually breathed after more conformity to Christ—more heavenly-mindedness. That man must have been extremely wise or extremely foolish, who could spend an hour in his company without being made wiser and better.

*As a Divine*, he was a star of the first magnitude. A

Protestant, and a Protestant Dissenter, on principle, and one of the brightest ornaments of the Baptist denomination to which he belonged. A Calvinist, and in some particulars approaching what is called High-Calvinism; but he has sometimes declared, as many other great men have done, that he never saw any human system which he could fully and entirely adopt. From the pulpit, his sermons were plain and textual, highly instructive, always savoury and acceptable to persons of evangelical taste; for the glory, the government, and the grace of Christ were his favourite themes. He aimed to counteract, with equal care, self-righteous legality on the one hand, and, on the other, Antinomian licentiousness. Such was the excellence of his personal character, that he needed not the arts of the orator and the graces of elocution to gain attention. His audience listened with profound veneration, and hung upon his lips. He had the gift of prayer in a very high degree; and whoever heard him was powerfully impressed with the idea that he was a man who prayed much in secret. From the press, he appeared to the greatest advantage. Nor will it be denied by any, that his writings are very elaborate and exquisitely polished. No bagatelles, no airy speculations—all solid and useful. His "*Reign of Grace*," and indeed all his works, will continue to instruct and delight the Christian world to the end of time.

*As a Christian Pastor*, he shone with distinguished lustre. Every member of the church in which he presided, had a share in his affection. The poor were as welcome to his advice and assistance as the rich: and his faithful reproofs were given, without partiality to either, as occasion required. It was justly remarked at his grave, that he has unintentionally drawn his own picture.

in his sermon entitled "Pastoral Cautions." He was not a lord over God's heritage. It has been said he appeared always willing to give up almost every thing to the decision of the church; and the consequence was, the church gave up almost every thing to *his* decision. His attention to the poor and the afflicted of his congregation was highly exemplary. Nor did he content himself with saying, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled," but liberally contributed to the supply of their wants, according to his ability. The economical system he established at home, furnished him with a considerable fund for charitable uses abroad. His charity was never ostentatious; none but the Omniscient eye knew the extent of it, and therefore it is impossible to say how many of the sons and daughters of affliction have lost, by his death, a most generous benefactor.

*As a literary man*, he was generally acknowledged to belong to the first class among Protestant Dissenters. Without the advantages of a liberal education, he had cut his own way, by the force of a strong, keen mind, through rocks and deserts. His memory was amazingly tenacious; his reasoning powers acute; his apprehension quick; his deliberation cool and patient; his determination slow and decided. His application must have been very intense, to which his vigorous and robust constitution of body was happily subservient. Though he perused a prodigious multitude of books, and respected the opinions of wise and learned men, he ever maintained a sublime independence of mind, and thought for himself. His knowledge of languages was very considerable. Not many of the *literati* of this country have had so intimate an acquaintance with the grace and force of words, or have written with such correctness and energy united

Yet he has been heard to say, that he had a wife and family before he knew any thing of the theory of English grammar. He was not unacquainted with the Greek and Roman classics; they were, however, by no means his favourite authors. It would surprise the public to know what loads of ponderous Latin quartos he read, of French, Dutch, and German divines! The Greek Testament he went through nearly fifty times, by the simple expedient of reading one chapter every morning, the first thing, not so much for the purpose of criticism as of devotion. General science and literature claimed a share of his attention; and every one was astonished to observe the fund of information he possessed on all subjects. In history civil and ecclesiastical; in antiquities, Jewish and Christian; in theological controversy and the creeds of all denominations, he was equalled by few, and excelled by none. It is pleasing to recollect, that all his learning was solemnly consecrated to the cross of Christ; and that, while he was disgusted, as he often was, with the illiteracy and ignorance of books which he perceived even among educated preachers in many instances, he was very far from supposing human literature to be essential to the gospel ministry.

*As a universal friend and counsellor*, he was exceedingly beloved. His extensive and diversified knowledge, his well-tryed integrity, his penetration, prudence, and benevolence, occasioned numberless applications for his counsel, not merely from the Baptists, but from Christians of almost all parties. Difficult texts of Scripture, knotty points of controversy, disputes in churches, and private cases of conscience were laid before him in abundance. Seldom was there an appeal made to the judgment of any other man. It was like "taking counsel at Abel, and so

they ended the matter," Yet he was no dictator. When he had patiently heard the case, and candidly given his opinion, he would usually say, "Consult other friends, and then judge for yourself." Such a degree of majesty attended him, plain as he was in exterior, that if he sat down with you but a few minutes, you could not help feeling that you had a prince or a great man in the house. It would sometimes appear to strangers that he was deficient in that winning grace which accompanies softness and sweetness of manner; but those who were most intimately acquainted with him, are fully prepared to say, there was in general the greatest delicacy of genuine politeness in his conduct. Many young ministers will long deplore their loss. Never surely can they forget how readily he granted them access to him at all times; how kindly he counselled them in their difficulties; how faithfully he warned them of their dangers! With a mournful pleasure they must often recollect his gentleness in correcting their mistakes; his tenderness in imploring the Divine benediction upon them; his cordial congratulations when he witnessed their prosperity!



# P R E F A C E

TO THE

## LAST CORRECTED EDITION

---

I SHALL not offer any apology to the public, on behalf of the ensuing treatise. For if the leading sentiments adopted and defended in it correspond with the unerring oracles, I have no apprehensions from the frowns of men; and if not, it would be impossible, by the most laboured apology, to justify my conduct.

The doctrine of sovereign grace is here maintained and handled in a practical manner. It has been my endeavour, in the following pages, not only to state and defend the capital truths of the gospel, in a doctrinal way; but also to point out their peculiar importance, as happily adapted to awaken the conscience, and comfort the heart; to elevate the affections, and influence the whole conduct in the way of holiness.

To this edition of *The Reign of Grace*, I have made large additions. The principal of which is, an entire chapter upon *Election*; which renders the scheme of doctrines more complete, and the contents of the book more answerable to the title. I also thought it my duty, in a particular manner, to bear a public testimony to that



important part of revealed truth ; having in my younger years greatly opposed it, in a poem *On absolute Predestination*. Which poem, if considered in a critical light, is despicable ; if in a theological view, detestable : as it is an impotent attack on the honour of Divine grace, in regard to its glorious freeness ; and a bold opposition to the sovereignty of God. So I now consider it, and as such I here renounce it.

However the doctrine of Reigning Grace may be decried as licentious, it is that very truth which God in all ages has delighted to honour ; which the Divine Spirit has owned for the information and comfort, for the holiness and happiness of sinful men. Were I not fully persuaded of this, rather than appear as an advocate for it, I would condemn my tongue to everlasting silence, and my pen to perpetual rest.

I have nothing further to add, by way of preface, except my ardent prayers, that a divine blessing may attend every perusal of the following chapters ; so as to make the performance really useful, and cause it to answer some valuable purposes for the great Redeemer's glory.

A. BOOTH

THE  
REIGN OF GRACE

---

INTRODUCTION

THE gospel of Reigning Grace, being a doctrine truly divine, has ever been the object of the world's contempt. It was of old a stumbling-block to the self-righteous Jew, and foolishness to the philosophic Greek. Paul, who was a resolute asserter of the honours of grace, and indefatigable in preaching Christ, found it so by repeated experience; and that not only among the illiterate and profane, but also among the learned and the devout. Nay, he had frequent occasion to observe, that the religious devotees of his age were the first in opposing the doctrine he preached, and the most hardened enemies against the truth of God. The polite, the learned, the religious, were all agreed to load both his character and his doctrine with the foulest reproaches. Nor was this treatment peculiar to Paul, but common to all his contemporaries, who espoused the same glorious cause, and laboured in the same beneficent work. The doctrine they preached was charged with licentiousness. Their enemies boldly affirmed that they said; *Let us do evil that good may come.* Thus were their character and their labours impeached: that, as hateful to God; these, as destructive to man.

But what was the ground of this impious charge? Were they loose in their morals, or scandalous in their lives. No such thing. Had they not as much regard for practical religion and true morality as any of their objectors? More, far more than they all. Did they never mention good works as necessary to answer any

valuable end in the Christian life? They often pressed the performance of them, as absolutely necessary to answer various important purposes, both in the sight of God and man. What then could be the reason of so hateful a charge? Because their doctrine was not in the least adapted to gratify the pride of man. They taught, that without the atonement made on the cross, and the grace revealed in redeeming blood, the state of the best men would have been absolutely desperate—desperate as that of the devils, and of those already damned. And as the apostles were free to declare, that the state of the most respectable part of mankind was evil—dreadfully evil—evil as to those things, for the sake of which they most highly esteemed themselves; so they boldly preached a perfect Saviour, and a finished salvation, to the most worthless and vile.

These primitive teachers and infallible guides were not in the least acquainted with those terms and conditions, prerequisites and qualifications, the performing and attaining of which are, by many, accounted so necessary to acceptance with God. They knew but of one way in which a sinner might be accepted of God, and justified before him; and that was entirely of grace, through the perfect work of Christ alone. The way of justification which they taught is absolutely pure and unmixed. In their doctrine, on this important subject, grace does not only appear; it shines, reigns, triumphs: it is the *only* thing. There is not discernible in it the least tincture of those notions which foster pride, or cherish self-esteem. All those fine distinctions, invented by the proud philosopher, or the self-righteous moralist, which tend in any degree to support the opinion of human worthiness, and to obscure our views of divine grace, are by them entirely set aside, and totally annihilated. The most shining deeds and valuable qualities that can be found among men, though highly useful and truly excellent, when set in their proper places, and referred to suitable ends, are, as to the grand article of justification treated as nonentities. In this respect, the most zealous professor, with all his laboured performances, stands on

a level with the most profane. The apostolic truth addressing all to whom it comes, as guilty, condemned, perishing wretches, leaves no room for preference or boasting in any; that so the whole glory of our salvation may be secured to that grace which is infinitely rich and absolutely free.

At this, the devout Pharisee and the decent moralist are highly offended. Such doctrines being advanced, they think it incumbent upon them to stand up in defence of what they call an holy life: and to support the sinking credit of good works, as having a considerable efficacy in procuring our acceptance with God. This many persons frequently do, much more by talking about their necessity, than by performing them. Now they think it their duty to rail at the preacher as an avowed enemy to holiness; nor will they spare to give him the honourable title of, *A friend of publicans and sinners*. Now innumerable slanders are cast on the doctrine of grace, as being licentious; and on the ministers of it, as opening the flood-gates of all iniquity. For they suppose that every thing bad may be justly expected from those who openly disavow all dependence on their own duties; and whose hope of eternal happiness arises, not from services which they perform, but from grace which the gospel reveals—not from the worth which they possess, but from the work which Christ has wrought. Thus they despise the gospel under the fair pretence of a more than common concern for the interests of holiness.

Nor is this the only offence which the gospel gives. For as it is entirely inconsistent with the natural notions of men concerning acceptance with God, and contrary to every scheme of salvation which human reason suggests; as it will admit of no copartner in relieving a distressed conscience, or in bringing deliverance to a guilty soul, but leaves every one that slights it and seeks for assistance from any other quarter, to perish under an everlasting curse; so the pride of the self-sufficient kindles into resentment against it, as a most uncharitable doctrine and quite unsociable. Nor can the faithful dispensers of sacred truth fail to share in the honour of these reproaches.

For while they dare to affirm that this gospel, so hateful to the sons of pride, exhibits the only way of a sinner's access to his offended Sovereign ; and that all who oppose it, and all who embrace its counterfeit, are left in the hands of divine justice without a Mediator ; they are sure to be accounted persons of contracted minds, and very far from a liberal way of thinking. They are considered as the dupes of bigotry, and little better than the enemies of mankind. He, indeed, who pretends to be a friend to revealed truth, but is cool and indifferent to its honour and interest ; whose extensive charity is such, that he can allow those who widely differ from him in the capital articles of the Christian faith, to be safe in their own way ; may enjoy his peculiar sentiments without much fear of disturbance. But though such conduct may be applauded, under a false notion of Christian candour, and of a catholic spirit ; though it may be the way to maintain a friendly intercourse among multitudes whose leading sentiments are widely different ; yet it will be deemed, by the God of truth, as deserving no better name, than a *joint opposition* to the spirit and design of his gospel. For such a timid and lukewarm profession of truth is little better than a denial of it—than open hostility against it. To seek for peace at the expense of truth, will be found in the end, no other than a wicked conspiracy against both God and man. Such, however, as love the truth, will boldly declare against all its counterfeits, and every deviation from it : and, whatever may be the consequence, they will say with him of old ; *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.*

Thus the genuine gospel will always appear like an insult on the taste of the public. Wherever it comes, if it be not received, it awakens disgust and provokes abhorrence. Nor can it be otherwise. For its principal design is to mortify the pride of man, and to display the glory of grace ; to throw all human excellence down to the dust, and to elevate, even to thrones of glory, the needy and the wretched ; to show that every thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ, is an

abomination in the sight of God ; and that He who is despised of men and abhorred by the nations, is Jehovah's eternal delight.\* The ancient gospel is an unceremonious thing. It pays no respect to the academic because of his profound learning ; nor to the moralist on account of his upright conduct. It has not the least regard to the courtier, because of his pompous honours ; nor to the devotee, for the sake of his zeal or his righteousness. No, the potent prince and the abject slave, the wise philosopher and the ignorant rustic, the virtuous lady and the infamous prostitute, stand on the same level in its comprehensive sight. Its business is with the worthless and the miserable, whomsoever they be. If these be relieved, its end is gained. If these be made happy, its Author is glorified, whatever may become of the rest. Towards these it constantly wears the most friendly aspect, and rejoices to do them good. But the self-sufficient of every rank are treated by it with the utmost reserve, and beheld with a steady contempt. *The hungry it filleth with good things, but the rich it sendeth empty away.*

These considerations may serve to show us the true state of the case, as it stood between Paul and his opponents. The situation of things was much the same between Protestants and Papists, at, and for some time after the Reformation. Nor will the apostolic doctrine ever fail to be attended with strenuous opposition and foul reproaches, while ignorance of its real nature, and legal pride, prevail in the hearts of men. Many, indeed, are the methods that have been devised, to render the unpalatable truth more generally acceptable, and to obviate *the offence of the cross*. But what have been the consequences ? The gospel has been corrupted ; the consciences of awakened sinners have been left to grope in the dark, for that consolation which nothing but the unadulterated truth could give ; and, instead of promoting holiness, the reverse has been awfully manifest. It therefore behoves every lover of sacred truth, to let it stand on

\* Isa. xlix. 7. Matt. iii. 17.

its own basis, and not to tamper with it. To leave all its credit and all its success in the world, to its own intrinsic worth—to that authority with which it is closed, and to the management of that sovereign Being who ordained it for his own glory.

But however the doctrine of reigning grace may be despised by the self-sufficient, it will ever be revered by *the poor in spirit*. For by it they are informed of an honourable way of escape from the wrath to come, which they know they have justly deserved. To the sensible sinner, therefore, it must always be a *joyful sound*. And though such persons as are ignorant of its nature, tendency, and design, are always ready to imagine that it has an unfriendly aspect upon morality and good works, when preached in its glorious freeness; yet we may boldly affirm, that it is the grand instrument ordained by a holy God, for informing the ignorant, comforting the disconsolate, and rescuing the profligate from that worst of vassalage, the servitude of sin, and subjection to Satan. Such is the benign tendency of the glorious gospel! Such is its friendly and sanctifying influence on the hearts of men!

It will indeed be acknowledged that this doctrine may be held in licentiousness by those that profess it. But then it will be as confidently maintained, that whoever holds it in unrighteousness never received the love of that sacred truth, or experienced the power of it. For, to have a bare conviction of divine truth in the mind, and to experience its power on the heart, are very different things. The former may produce an outward profession; the latter will elevate the affections, turn the corrupt bias of the will, and influence the whole conduct. With the steadiest persuasion, therefore, of the holy nature and tendency of the doctrine of divine grace, as it is in itself, and as it operates on the minds and manners of all those who know it in truth; I proceed to give, not a full display, (that is infinitely too high for mortals,) but some brief hints concerning that grace which reigns; and of the way in which it is manifested, so as to demonstrate its power, glory, and majesty, in the salvation of sinners.

This I shall do by endeavouring to illustrate that important and charming passage, recorded in Romans the fifth and twenty-first; **EVEN SO MIGHT GRACE REIGN, THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS, UNTO ETERNAL LIFE, BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.** And while the author, conscious of his own insufficiency, looks up to the Spirit of wisdom for divine illumination, that he may write with all the precision and sanctity of truth, in opening the noble subject of the ensuing treatise; he would entreat the reader to peruse, with candour and impartiality, the contents of the following pages.



"*The Reign of Grace*, first published in 1768, passed through some sixteen editions during the lifetime of the author. It is one of the most eloquent and moving expositions of the subject of divine grace in the English language."

JOHN MURRAY

*Collected Writings of John Murray*  
(Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 3:350.

"There appeared to me in it [*The Reign of Grace*] the marks of a genius, joined with the feelings of a Christian heart; a vigour of style much above what is common in our best religious writers; in his reasoning, clearness and force; and in his doctrine, an apostolic purity."

HENRY VENN

cited in K. F. T. Matrunola, *A Brief Account of the Life and Labours of Abraham Booth (1734-1806)*  
(The Fauconberg Press, 1979), 3.

"He [Abraham Booth] was a man of vast reading in his own language and in Latin, and he was justly reputed one of the most learned men of his day. His friend Dr. Newman says, 'As a divine he was a star of the first magnitude, and one of the brightest ornaments of the Baptist denomination to which he belonged. Firm in his attachment to his religious principles, he despised the popular cant about charity, and cultivated genuine candour, which is alike remote from the laxity of latitudinarians and the censoriousness of bigots.' His *Reign of Grace*, and indeed all his works, will continue to instruct and delight the Christian world till the end of time."

WILLIAM CATHCART

*The Baptist Encyclopedia*  
(Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 114.

---

The Baptist Standard Bearer, Incorporated is a republication society organized in 1984, and is recognized as a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization. It was founded for the primary purpose of republication and preservation of materials reflecting the Baptist heritage.

