



FOREWORD

Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), whom Alexander Whyte hailed as the greatest pulpit expositor of Paul that ever was, is usually bracketed with John Owen and Richard Baxter as one of Puritanism's top three mighty men – and with good reason. Though he is the least well known of the three, his quality fully matches that of his two great peers.

If Owen's stately, exact and exhaustive expositions of the trinitarian teamwork whereby we sinners are saved, and specifically of the person, place and performance of the Son and the Spirit within the team, be thought incomparable, it should be noted at once that Goodwin's more leisurely devotional and doxological declarations of the same truths do in fact match Owen all the way. If Baxter's high-powered homiletics concerning conversion, discipleship, and gospel ministry be viewed as uniquely thorough and powerful in their challenge to the conscience, it needs to be observed that Goodwin's broad-based surveys of the life of grace and faith probe the conscience just as deeply, often in a more directly Christ-centered way, and without Baxter's occasional oddities. If Owen is the cool, concentrated communicator, laying out massive, brass-bound presentations of the doctrines of grace and of ordered response to them, and if Baxter is the hot, sharp communicator,



firing off salvos of evangelical shells to stir sluggish hearts, Goodwin is the engaging, expansive, sometimes roundabout communicator who takes time to show where each focal fact fits in the landscape of God's love in and through Christ. Each of the great three has his distinct personal style; each is supremely learned, supremely clear-headed, supremely Christ-centered, and supremely practical and pastoral in his concerns; and for each, whose legacy we are privileged to inherit, we should be very, very thankful.

Who was Goodwin? Born of Puritan stock, he entered Christ's College, Cambridge, at the age of thirteen, graduated B.A. at sixteen and M.A. at twenty, and was immediately appointed lecturer and fellow of St. Catherine's Hall. In that same year, having all along taken for granted that he was a real Christian, he underwent a sudden and profound conversion experience which anchored him decisively in the heritage of Puritan godliness and made him for ever after the devoted follower of Richard Sibbes and John Preston. In the mid-1630s, influenced by John Cotton, he became a convert to, and spokesman for, Independent church government, and left Cambridge for London. From 1639 to 1641 he was in Holland, where he linked up with the pietistic leadership of the *Nadere Reformatie* (Further Reformation) movement: Dutch Puritanism, as it may well be called. In 1643 he was appointed a member of the officially Presbyterian Westminster Assembly, where as one of the five 'Dissenting Brethren' (Independents) he was constantly making his mark. (The Assembly minutes record 357 contributions by him from the floor.) In 1650 he was appointed President of Oxford's Magdalen College. He became a close advisor to Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector (who was, of course, an Independent himself), and ministered to him at the time of his death in 1658. Thereafter Goodwin preached, pastored and wrote in London, where in his eightieth year he died. His works filled five folio volumes, and were reprinted in twelve volumes of standard size by James Nichol between 1861 and 1866.

It was Goodwin's joy to write about Christ, with whom he communed constantly, and the two items reprinted here are among his best treatments of the Saviour's love and service to us. Reformed Christology in the seventeenth century, as since, was subtle and deep, and Mark Jones' excellent analytical essay will be found helpful at this point. To whet your appetite, now, for what you are going



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to discover I cite as I close some words of Alexander Whyte, to whom I referred at the start of this Foreword:

Goodwin is always an interpreter [of Scripture], and one of a thousand ... Full as Goodwin always is of the ripest scriptural and Reformation scholarship, full as he always is of the best theological and philosophical learning of his own day and of all foregoing days; full, also, as he always is of the deepest spiritual experience – all the same, he is also so clear, so direct, so untechnical, so personal, and so pastoral ... - *Thirteen Appreciations* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1913), 158ff.

Yes! Taste and see.

J. I. Packer

