

# *The Gospel Standard Baptist Library*

Newsletter Number 18

Summer 2023

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## **Why does the Gospel Standard Baptist Library exist?**

When Mr J H Gosden, Mr F L Gosden, Mr J Delves, Mr J Raven and Mr S F Paul and the other founding Trustees began the Library in 1949, what was the purpose, other than to stop the dispersal of books which form part of our heritage? It is said to this day, we have the Bible, what else do we need to read?

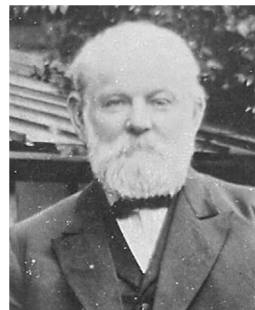
It is indeed the case that the Bible is the most important Book, and ought to be read daily, prayerfully and carefully. If one had no other book to read than this one Book, God's word to man, it would be sufficient. We have an important section in the Library devoted to Bibles, in which there are Tyndale's New Testament of 1526, Coverdale's 1535 Bible, an excellent copy of the Geneva Bible, as well as the King James Version of 1611. There is also the Hexapla, which compares each of these versions of the New Testament with each other and with the Wycliffe and Great Bible translations, verse by verse. Sometimes a comparison of one with the other brings out the meaning of a verse with greater force and clarity. Alongside them is Wigram's *Englishman's Greek Concordance to the New Testament* which takes every word of the Greek original of the New Testament and shows the different ways it has been translated in the King James Version. Thomson's *The Land and the Book*, Fairburn's *Imperial Bible Dictionary*, and Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* give further useful background to the Bible. These and other books are a great help to the diligent and careful student of Scripture. Most of us could not fit these books in our home, so it is useful to have a resource to go to when our daily study of the Bible throws up questions. You may be tempted to turn to the internet, but the issue is, while there is much good available on the internet (many of these books are now available to view online) there is also much bad, and some very inaccurate dis-information. Unless you are able to accurately distinguish these, the carefully curated selection of books in the library provide a safer resource in which to make your studies. That said, the best of men are fallible. Humility and prayer must always be the key starting point for the study of the Word of God.

### **Beyond the Bible and its careful study, what else is of value in the Library?**

The Library is an important and unique collection of Protestant literature, some dating from the time of the Reformation, many covering the Puritan era and the times of the Evangelical Revival, and a great deal of Strict Baptist material from better days than our own. The collection has grown over 72 years as more material has been passed to us for safe keeping. Its value to Strict Baptist churches includes:

1. *A large collection of sermons which are particularly useful for those having to take reading services at chapels struggling to engage ministers.* We have, for example, a very large collection of sermons and prayer meeting addresses of Mr Popham, preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, taken down, and collected into volumes by his affectionate congregation during the last thirty years of his pastorate. Scans of many of these can be accessed remotely on our website.

2. *Biographies written by those who have felt constrained from time-to-time to record the Lord's goodness to them in providence and grace.* Many, in looking back over a lifetime of undeserved mercies have been graciously enabled to humbly commit these to paper in response to the Divine precept to 'tell it to the generation following' (Psalm 48:13; 71:18; 78:6-7). Some of these are well-known, as Bunyan, Huntington, Warburton and Kershaw. Others deserve to be better known, such as Henry Fowler's *Travels in the Wilderness, The Experience of David Fenner* (founder of the church at Hastings/St Leonards), *The Wilderness Journey* by Richard Pratt (a minister and miller from Crowborough), *A Memorial of the tender mercies of God towards the Chief of Sinners* by Arthur Triggs (one time pastor at Gower Street), Joseph F. Burrell's autobiography *The Triumph of Christ* (James Bourne's pastor), Andrew Bool's *Wonders of Providence and Grace* (includes an account of his times as a gold prospector). Sometimes a few fragments is all that has come to us, but the savour attending them has prompted others to republish. Such were the short diary jottings of Mary Tanner (wife of Joseph Tanner of Cirencester), which were found by her granddaughter when emptying a loft. Mr Popham printed them in the *Gospel Standard* and they were subsequently published as a book: *That Better Part*.



Andrew Boos

3. Devotional works written by those who have been more deeply taught on particular matters than most of the Lord's people, and who have been enabled to write for the profit of others. In particular some have had a gift to separate that religion which is of the flesh from that of the Spirit. Bernard Gilpin in his letters (p 222 of his *Memoir*) states that he can trace this in the writings of Romaine, Bunyan, Owen, Calvin and Luther and in many of the Puritan divines. Matthew Mead's *Almost a Christian* is in the Library and deserves to be widely read. It was a series of sermons preached in London in 1661 on King Agrippa's confession, showing the difference between a true and an almost Christian. John Bunyan had a great gift in this line. His short works including: *The Barren Fig Tree, A Treatise on the Fear of God, Prayer, and The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, deserve to be more widely read. Bunyan's ability to write simply and clearly but with the use of forcible illustrations and above all with savour and authority give his writings enduring value. (We currently have two copies of his *Whole Works* for sale for £30 each set.)

4. *History, which when rightly written shows the Lord's wonderful dealings with our nation and others, especially in the era from the Reformation to the Glorious Revolution.* Do we know of the Lord's goodness to our nation at the Reformation and thereafter? Often the course of history like a flood tide seemed to be travelling unquestionably in a certain direction. Then one straw of Divine Providence turned matters right round. This occurred in the book of Esther. 'On that night could not the king sleep.' So too has it been wonderfully seen in the history of England. One of the best history books written outside of Scripture must be John Knox's *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*. The Banner of Truth Trust published an abridged version for the reader with less time, but Knox's full work is well worth a read for anyone interested in God's great deliverances in our land in days gone by.

5. *Letters of counsel and admonition can be of profit.* They have the advantage of being personal, and written often in warmth, zeal and with power and feeling. The letters of Rutherford, written in banishment at Aberdeen to his beloved flock at Anworth are full of his love to Christ and to them. Mr Philpot felt that William Huntington's letters were the best of his writings, 'entering into many minutiae of the divine life, and a drawing forth of many sweet draughts from the deep well of his own gracious leadings and teachings which make them singularly instructive and edifying'. (GS August 1856). John Bradford the martyr is well-known today because of the letters he wrote from prison in the two years before his martyrdom.

6. *Collections of hymns and psalms written by those with a particular talent in reducing doctrine and experience to poetry,* including Watts, Berridge, Hart, Newton, Cowper, Steele, Kent are all to be found in the Library together with details of their lives. Mr Philpot states that to write hymns for the church of God, three qualities are needed: 1. A gracious experience of the truth in his own soul. 2. An imaginative turn of thought. 3. A degree of poetic skill and dexterity, enabling him without apparent effort to clothe his thoughts in a metrical form (GS July 1856). Gadsby's hymn book is a much-used selection of these poets, but the volumes by the individual poets contain a wealth of matter for reading and singing.

7. *Magazines reflecting the life of the churches in better and more prosperous days than these.* Many of the *Gospel Standards* of the 1800's reflect a time when churches were growing and multiplying, chapels were being built and were well filled. The savour of the dealings of God with our churches come across at times when one browses through the pages of these years. The Library has several copies of each year since 1835. However, there are several other good magazines full of spiritual reading available: *Gospel Banner*, *Gospel Magazine*, *The Sower*, *Zion's Witness* especially. Also some very rare magazines: we have recently added a facsimile of *The Alarm*, the magazine produced by Jonathan Ranken Anderson in Scotland. Other magazines in the Library are useful for historical research and often contain details of the founding and building of different chapels.

This is a short summary designed to give a flavour of the usefulness of the Gospel Standard Baptist Library. Please feel free to come and browse.

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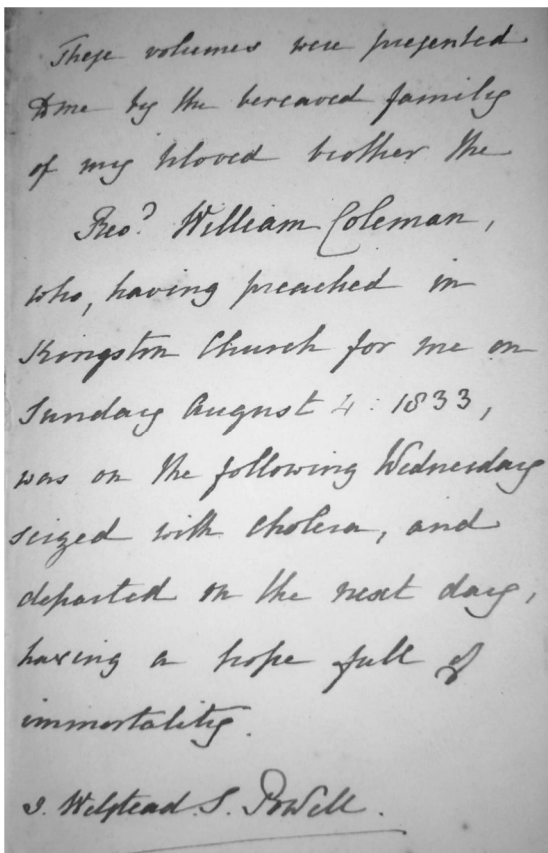
## Cataloguing

We are most grateful for the response in the last newsletter, and for the volunteers who have come forward to help in this large venture. Our aim is to record full titles, authors, editors, size, publisher, etc of every book in the Library. Some books contain several works which we hope to bring to light by listing them individually rather than giving one bland title for a book. The whole will then be uploaded onto a Library system and be fully searchable. At present we are about 80% of the way through the large job of capturing all of these details for every book and pamphlet in the Library. We hope to be through this stage within a further 6 weeks. Then every entry will need to be checked for accuracy and for consistency with the whole and then proof read. Meanwhile we hope to familiarise ourselves with the Library system we have selected for use. The hope is that the new system will be in use by the Autumn of 2023, if the Lord will.

## Interesting finds

While cataloguing we continue to unearth some fascinating notes. In a book by Alexander Keith on prophecy we located the following inscription: "These volumes were presented to me by the bereaved family of my beloved brother the Revd William Coleman, who, having preached in Kingston Church for me on Sunday August 4th, 1833, was the following Wednesday seized with cholera, and departed the next day, having a hope full of immortality." Having just passed through the Covid pandemic, here is a reminder of past epidemics, in this case the cholera outbreaks of the 1830s. "Be ye also ready!"

Notes such as these provide us with tangible connections with the owners and readers of the past. We have also located a number of letters, newspaper clippings about old ministers and services, and photographs, some of which we may share in future newsletters.



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S. Wilthead S. Powell.

## How to Use the Library

**Borrowing Books:** To borrow any of the books mentioned in this newsletter, you do not have to visit the Library, or become a subscriber. Simply phone or email the librarian (contact details below) with the book title you wish to borrow and your address. The book will be posted to you free of charge. Return postage is paid and you have three months to read the book. Similarly, you can borrow any book from the catalogue (except those marked as being in the reserved collection); the catalogue is available on the website.

**Surplus Books:** The Library sells books surplus to requirements to raise money for the maintenance and expansion of the Library's collection and general upkeep. If you wish to receive emails with details of books for sale, please let us know.

**Donations:** Donations towards the library's costs are always appreciated. Our bank account details are: The Gospel Standard Baptist Library Fund, Acc. No. 00333934; SC. 30-98-74. Gift aid forms are available.

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