

Articles and Sermons :: Jame Guthrie -Scottich Martyr (MUST READ)!!!**Jame Guthrie -Scottich Martyr (MUST READ)!!!, on: 2010/3/30 13:53**

NOT MANY POSTS CAN RIGHTFULLY EARN THE TITLE "MUST-READ" BUT THIS IS DEFINNATELY ONE OF THE FEW.

An Outline Of Scottish 'Covenant History' In The 17th Century**From Jock Purves' book Fair Sunshine**

Some of our Zaccheus-like men, as full of faith and as unerring in aim as David, have, like him, been slayers of giants. James Guthrie was one of them He and Cromwell knew each other, and the mighty Puritan referred to him as 'the short little man who could not bow.' Covenanter and Puritan! Shall we ever see their like again? What a glorious heritage they have left to us, though somewhat now 'the wild boar from the wood doth waste it.'

As Joses, by the generosity of his character, won the name of Barnabas, Son of Consolation, so James Guthrie, by the stability of his character, earned the name of Sickerfoot . And such indeed was he until he mounted the ladder to the scaffold, where he spoke for an hour, surefooted on the Rock, dying firm in his Covenanting principles. In life and death, he fulfilled the Scripture, 'steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.'

One day a friend would have had him compromise a little. Said he, 'Mr Guthrie, we have an old Scots proverb, "Jouk th at the wave may gang oure ye! Will ye nae jouk a wee bit" ' And gravely Guthrie replied, 'There is nae jouncing in the Cause of Christ!' And so it was. That unbending, surefooted, non-ducking soldier of God held his head high until it was taken from him, and shamefully set aloft upon a pike above the thronging Netherbow Port of Edinburgh. There it bleached for twenty-seven years, till lover of the free Gospel Sandie Hamilton, a student for the Covenanting ministry, climbed the sombre Port at the risk of his life, and taking down the skull, buried it reverently away.

James Guthrie had much whereof he might have trusted in the flesh, amongst which was a very liberal education, given not with the object of making him a Covenanting minister. But, meeting with 'yours in his sweet Lord Jesus, Samuel Ruth erford,' all he had learned against the non-conforming Presbyterians vanished forever, and among them he became a preacher of the Gospel in 1638, the year when the National Covenant was signed. His name, too, is set there on that great spiritual Magna Charta. While on his way to pen his name, he met the hangman. This moved him somewhat, and, feeling that it was prophetic, it made him walk up and down a little before he went forward. But his signature is there in martyr lustre with the honoured names of those thousands of others on that great parchment of deerskin, 'the holiest thing in all Scotland, a vow registered in Heaven.' Two months before he died, he boldly confessed to the Parliament, 'I am not ashamed to give God the glory that until 1638 I was treading other steps.'

The last twelve years of his life were spent in Stirling, the grey fortress town whose castled rock is ever a symbol of him. Here he lived and devotedly wrought for Christ and His Kirk. Steady in temper, he believed in the loosening up of the knots of any argument before engaging in further reasoning. Fervent in spirit, and not slothful in business, he was careful, loving and true. An undaunted fighter in a worthwhile cause, and a hater of everything lower than true godliness, such as he was soon, and always, in conflict with the loose-living King Charles Stuart and his like Committees. He utterly refused such a profane ruler any authority in the affairs of the Church. Although dismissed after one big trial, his refusal to allow the king any power over the conscience of a Christian was made much of against him in his last trials, ten years later.

He helped to write the searching pamphlet, The Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland, and this paper was the principal pretext for his condemnation and execution. It had the honour of being put on a par with Lex Rex by Samuel Ruth erford, and copies of both books were publicly burned by the common hangman. To hold a copy of either work was treason against King and government. The purpose of these writings was said to be 'to corrupt the minds of his majesty's loyal subjects, to alienate and withdraw them from that duty of love and obedience that they owe unto his sacred person and greatness, stirring them up against his majesty and kingly government, and containing many things injurious to the king's majesty's person and authority.' But, above all that base slander, the principles they taught are those upon which the true British Constitution is based. It was a noxious doctrine that Erastus taught when he averred that a king was sovereign and supreme in all matters temporal and spiritual, and that if a Church exercised powers of government and discipline in her own lawful sphere, it broke in on the authority of the magistrate. Every page of the proscribed books is for the Crown

Rights of the Redeemer In His Church, the freedom of the conscience, and against the so-called Divine Right of Kings.

The wordy indictment set forth against James Guthrie gives some vivid idea of his amazing activity. 'He did contrive, contrive, contrive, counsel, consult, draw up, frame, invent, spread abroad or disperse - speak, preach, declaim or utter divers and sundry vile seditions and reasonable remonstrances, declarations, petitions, instructions letters, speeches, preachings, declamations and other expressions tending to the vilifying and contemning, slander and reproach of His Majesty, his progenitors, his person, majesty, dignity, authority, prerogative royal, and government'

Shortly after the Restoration of Charles II, in 1660 Guthrie, with others, was apprehended and cast into prison. In February of 1661, he was tried, and in April of that year he made a defence before the well-named Drunken Parliament. It concludes with these words, 'My Lord, my conscience I cannot submit But this old crazy body and mortal flesh I do submit, to do with it whatsoever ye will, whether by death, or banishment, or imprisonment, or anything else; only I beseech you to ponder well what profit there is in my blood. It is not the extinguishing of me or of many others that will extinguish the Covenant or work of the Reformation since 1638. My blood, bondage or banishment will contribute more for the propagation of these things than my life in liberty would do, though I should live many years.' At the close of this speech, some members withdrew, saying that they would have no part in his death, and one made a strong appeal urging banishment But his judges were baying for his blood, and he, with Captain William Govan, a fit companion, was sentenced to be hanged at Edinburgh Cross on 1 June 1661. The head of Guthrie was to be stuck on a pike high above the Netherbow Port, his estate confiscated, and his family arms torn. The head of Govan, pike-stuck, was likewise to be high up on the West Port. On receiving this sentence, Guthrie said to the members of the Drunken Parliament, 'My Lords, let never this sentence affect you more than it does me, and let never my blood be required from the King's family.' But it was required, with the blood of many others, in the fullness of time.

While lying in the Tolbooth, he saw Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyle, 'not afraid,' as Argyle said, 'to be surprised by fear,' going forth with Christian dignity to his martyrdom. Said Guthrie, 'Such is my respect for your Lordship that were I not under sentence of death myself I could cheerfully die for your Lordship.' There was but a week between their meeting and their parting. He told his wife, 'I am more fortunate than the Great Marquis, for my Lord was beheaded, but I am to be hanged on a tree as my Saviour was.' His wife wept sorely when for the last time she parted from him. 'I do but trouble you,' she said. 'I must now part from you.' And he replied, 'Henceforth I know no man after the flesh'

James Cowie, his dear friend and manservant, was with him in the Tolbooth, and he tells us that James Guthrie ever kept through his busy life his own personal fellowship with Christ, in the fresh joyous bloom of his new birth, as if he had been but a young convert; and thus it wondrously was till his last day on earth dawned, and the summer sun streamed in through the iron bars of his cell windows. Sure-of-Foot arose at about four o'clock for worship, and was asked by Cowie how he was. 'Very well,' said Guthrie. 'This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.' Soon was to be fulfilled the prophecy of his godly cousin, William Guthrie, of Fenwick, author of the spiritual classic, *The Christian's Great Interest*. He had said, 'Ye will have the advantage of me, James, for ye will die honourably before many witnesses with a rope about your neck, and I shall die whinging upon a wee pickle straw. ' This was the day and the Lord had made it, and his confessed desire - called by him a lust - that he should die for his Saviour, was to be granted.

His two little children, Sophia and William, came to see him. Taking five-year-old William on his knee, he said to him, 'Willie, the day will come when they will cast up to you that your father was hanged. But be not thou ashamed, lad. It is in a good cause.' Little Sophia and her mother were banished from the country, and part of the savage sentence was that the children and their posterity should be beggars forever - which was to reckon without Him who takes beggars from the dunghill and sets them among princes, and who will not see the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. On that fatal afternoon of the day of his father's death, while children more knowing were running at the sound of the drum's frightening tattoo, it was with difficulty that little Willie Guthrie was restrained by James Cowie from playing in the streets.

With hands tied together, James Guthrie walked slowly up the High Street to the city cross. Broad-shouldered William Govan kept pace beside him. The one was nearly fifty, the other not yet out of his thirties. Greatheart and Valiant for Truth were to be seen once again upon the human scene. Soon they were upon the scaffold above the serried rows of glittering steel, and Sickerfoot, who had been offered a bishopric and had refused it, stepped forward with loving zeal to give his last message. The great crowd stood hushed to hear him say, 'I take God to record upon my soul, I would not exchange this scaffold with the palace and mitre of the greatest prelate in Britain. Blessed be God who has shown mercy to me such a wretch, and has revealed His Son in me, and made me a minister of the everlasting Gospel, and that He hath deigned, in the midst of much contradiction from Satan, and the world, to seal my ministry upon the hearts of not a few of His people, and especially in the station where I was last, I mean the congregation and presbytery of Stirling. Jesus Christ is my Life and my Light, my Righteousness, my strength, and my Salvation and all my desire. Him! O Him, I do with all the

strength of my soul commend to you. Bless Him, O my soul, from henceforth even forever. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' A copy of his last testimony was handed by him to a friend, for his son William when he should come to years. Then further up the ladder of death he went, exclaiming, 'Art not Thou from everlasting, O Lord my God. I shall not die but live.' And in the last seconds before he was with Christ, Mr Sickerfoot, as sure of foot and as full of faith as Joshua, lifted the napkin from his face, crying, 'The Covenants! The Covenants! They shall yet be Scotland's reviving.'

Captain William Govan, intently watching, stood by. His martial shoulders were squared. Gazing lovingly at the dangling dead minister of Christ, he thought of Calvary's Tree. 'It is sweet! It is sweet!' he cried, 'otherwise how durst I look with courage upon the corpse of him who hangs there, and smile upon these sticks and that gibbet as the very Gates of Heaven.' The hangman had him prepared. The brave soldier taking a ring from a finger, gave it to a friend, asking him to carry it to his wife, and to tell her that he died in humble confidence and found the Cross of Christ sweet, and that Christ had done all for him, and that it was by Him alone that he was justified. Someone called to him to look up to the Lord Jesus, and he smilingly said, 'He looks down and smiles at me.' As he ascended the ladder there rang out from him across the crowds these words: 'Dear friends, pledge this cup of suffering as I have done before you sin, for sin and suffering have been presented to me and I have chosen the suffering part.' The rope adjusted, he ended his witness with, 'Praise and glory be to Christ forever.' A little pause, a little prayer, the signal given, and all was over, and he too swung in the fresh summer air. Another who had magnified Christ in life, had magnified Him also in death.

Later, friends came for the bodies from which the heads had been removed. They were lovingly laid out and arranged for burial, while the heads were put up in grisly fashion above the Netherbow and West Ports.

Day by day, week by week, little feet pattered over the cobbles to the Netherbow, and young pained wondering eyes looked up at the head high above them, and returning to what home he had, little Willie Guthrie would hide himself away for hours, saying, when found, 'I've seen my faither's heid! I've seen my faither's heid!' In childhood, boyhood, and youth, in summer suns and winter storms, he saw the head that was given for Christ: 'my faither's heid!' He, too, was for Christ Jesus and the Covenants, spending much time alone in prayer, a serious seeker after God.' He became a scholar of excellent promise, and bent his steps after his father to a suffering ministry. But he sickened and died, and his young head was laid in the earth while the bleached skull of his father still witnessed high above the Netherbow Port of Edinburgh.

William Guthrie of Fenwick endeavoured to go to the execution of his valued cousin, but he was prevented from doing so by fellow-believers. They feared for his life. This truly wonderful man of God, banished from his church, died a few years later 'whinging upon a wee pickle straw.' He had a complication of diseases, and passed away in great agonies, but was uncomplaining in his suffering. He said, 'The Lord has been kind to me, notwithstanding all the evils I have done, and, I am assured, that though I should die mad, I shall die in the Lord. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord at all times; but more especially when a flood of errors, snares, and judgements are beginning or coming on a nation, church or people.' A student under Samuel Rutherford, he received through him his call to the ministry in something of the fear and terror of the Lord. This turned to a joy and peace in believing which thrilled and filled him to the end. Only forty five when he died, he was accounted in Scotland the greatest preacher of his day. He was the means of bringing thousands to Christ, and of establishing thousands in Christ. His lasting monument is his book, *The Christian's Great Interest*, a true spiritual classic. On this we have the word of John Owen, 'and, for a divine, that author I take to be one of the greatest divine s that ever wrote. It is my vade mecum; I carry it and the Sedan New Testament still about me. I have written several folios, but there is more divinity in it than in them all.' The famous Welsh-English Puritan, in lowliness of mind, was esteeming another better than himself. But what a commendation, to get such a word from John Owen, 'a scribe every-way instructed in the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; in conversation he held up to many, in his public discourses to more, in his publications from the press to all, who were set out for the celestial Zion, the effulgent lamp of evangelical truth to guide their steps to immortal glory.'

Re: Jame Guthrie -Scottich Martyr (MUST READ)!!!, on: 2010/3/30 17:54

Please don't let this just get pushed down. Read it!

Re: - posted by osandoval, on: 2010/3/30 18:14

Thank you for this post brother. what are these "coventanting principles" referred to in the article. Today when you menti on "Covenant Theology" it has to do with the issue of Israel and the Church. But I'm sure that's not what this article is ref erring to. Can you inform me a little brother?

Oracio

Re: , on: 2010/3/31 2:55

Brother Oracio!

It has nothing to do with "Covenant Theology".

To put it most simply, the Scottish Covenanters were to Scotland exactly what the Puritans were to England.

They experienced glory days of revivals and dark clouds of intense persecution, and many great preachers and theologi ans were in their number, whose ministries and theologies were birthed in the fire of adversity and in the face of death. Many of the Puritans of England were good friends with the Covenanters of Scotland. They were both "non-conformists" in that they accepted no earthly authority as the head of the Church, but Christ alone, rejecting the idea that the State rul es over the Church, appealing to the Word and to their consciences. Though they respected earthly authorities as ordain ed by God and obeyed them as far as their conscience allowed, they refused to allow the wicked king of Scotland be the king of the church or the lord of their conscience and convictions, and for that they suffered intensely. That is the "jist" of the struggle in the 17th Century. All they wanted was freedom of religion, to worship God without the State telling them h ow to or meddling its corrupt affairs into the government of the church -that God ordains preachers and not the immoral King of Scotland, etc. Many shed their blood to die for the truth that they are to obey Christ rather than men.

When put out of their churches for not conforming to the State's religious rules and Anglicanism, many of the covenanter s turned to preaching in the open air, but that soon became punishable by death. So they were forced to continue their ministries in the heat of persecution of wave after wave. But here we find open air preachers a century before Whitefield stepped on the scene. In fact, Whitefield went back in history and read of them, and from them found encouragement to preach in the open fields.

The main "covenant" in view was a statement that made it clear that they will die before they allow the king of Scotland b e the lord over their faith or the king of the church. They banned together and signed it, many in their own blood, petitioni ng it to the authorities with the hope to secure religious freedom.

Of course, not every professing "covenanter" was truly of God, as there was a mixture of carnal men among their followe rs, just as their was in the Reformation a century prior, leading to bloody rebellions and wars. But many were truly Godly men, such as James and William Guthrie, with many preachers, who resisted corrupt religious rule peacefully, using onl y the sword of the Word to battle, and constantly blessing their enemies and persecutors and forgiving them openly.

Re: - posted by osandoval, on: 2010/3/31 11:04

Awesome! thanks for the clear explanation.