PURITANS VINDICATED

(Puritans’ Progress - Finale)

A 350th Anniversary Commemoration of the Norwich & Norfolk Ministers Ejected from their Churches by the Act of Uniformity, 1662.

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Remember those ... who have spoken the Word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct - Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever.

(Hebrews 13: 7-8)

PURITANISM VINDICATED

Our year of studies in local Puritan history coming to a close, other events have engaged with the nationwide significance of the Great Ejection. If the recent Westminster Conference is anything to go by, the 350th commemoration has not been without controversy. Indeed (and on such grounds I refused to attend), I myself questioned the propriety of inviting two Anglicans to speak, one of them giving the opening paper (see Appendix 1). By all means let Anglicans make their contribution elsewhere, but a conference committed to exploring and perpetuating Puritanism is not the place to justify Anglicanism!
1. GATISS REVISED

The Anglican Director of Church Society, Lee Gatiss gave the opening paper. By all accounts, he commenced with a frivolous episode, designed to disarm any strong-minded Puritan sympathisers who might be uneasy at his presence. Judging by the good-humoured atmosphere generated, he was obviously successful. He then examined the history of the Great Ejection of 1662, agreeing that it was a tragedy for the Church of England. He concluded by justifying evangelical Anglicans for remaining in the established Church of England. The case having been made, the discussion period failed to challenge the speaker’s perspective to any significant degree. One blogger even admitted ‘we were probably too gentle with Lee’. One detail which surprised many was the speaker’s claim that the number of the ejected clergy was in the 900s rather than the traditional c. 2000 region defended by the Dissenting champion Dr Edmund Calamy (who actually argued for a total of 1897). Was this a device to reduce the culpability of the ejecting Anglicans of the Restoration, as well as to discredit Richard Baxter’s estimate of 1800-2000?

Mr Gatiss’s point was that only 936 were actually ejected in 1662, a claim which - though strictly accurate - is confirmed by no less an authority than A. G. Matthews, author of *Calamy Revised*. However, the impression given was false, which e-mail exchanges corrected. The speaker’s picture was simply incomplete, since - as Baxter and Calamy made clear - many Puritans had been silenced prior to 1662. However, for the period 1660-3, Gatiss had already supplied a figure of 1760 being ‘thrust out of the Church of England’ in his book *The Tragedy of 1662*, published in 2007. Even this figure was inaccurate according to Matthews whose investigations confirm a total of 1909 (covering ‘silenced’ as well as ‘ejected’ ministers).

Far more serious than the numbers question is the entire theological assessment of the Great Ejection. In this respect, Lee Gatiss needs a more root-and-branch revision than ever Calamy’s historical writings did. The debate over numbers has tended to sideline theological debates over church order, worship and more fundamental Gospel-related matters. As much as historians delight to trawl through documents and discuss figures, their theological stance is a matter of greater importance. The big problem with Anglican Evangelicalism is that, at best, it only provides a selective submission to Holy Scripture. This lack of *sola scriptura* rigour arguably affects adversely the evaluation of every related issue, including history, a point which Lee Gatiss’s book sadly demonstrates. Instead of a French excursion into the piety of the admittedly-admirable Pascal, had the Westminster Conference included - as a companion item - a paper on the ‘Great Huguenot Ejection’ of the French Reformed churches (1685), Calvin’s superior *sola scriptura* Genevan agenda would have yielded a perfect riposte to Lee Gatiss and his Anglican friends. Bearing in mind his own Huguenot ancestry, such a paper would have validated the essential ‘faith and order’ Presbyterian perspective of Dr Edmund Calamy, a stance which possesses far more biblical integrity than any Anglican critic has ever been able to muster. Even a paper on Congregationalist Samuel Palmer’s *Nonconformist*...
Catechism\textsuperscript{4} - on account of which I left the Church of England fifty years ago - would have secured this stance to a considerable degree, being more appropriate than a further paper by another Anglican, Andrew Atherstone.

\section*{2. MATTHEWS CRITICISED}
The Revd A. G. Matthews, MA (1881-1962) is regarded as the chief authority on this subject. By his own admission he was more at home with history than theology even though he was a Congregational minister.\textsuperscript{5} His prodigious work on Calamy was matched by another on Calamy’s ‘High Church’ Anglican antagonist Dr John Walker who ferociously argued that four or five times as many Anglican clergy compared with the Puritan ejectees were sequestered between 1642 and 1660. Thus Walker Revised appeared in 1948, fourteen years after Calamy Revised (1934). It is my conviction that the theological perspectives of both Gatiss and Matthews have a detrimental effect on their approaches to the Great Ejection. The warning is obvious. However competent academically, historians prove defective when their theology is suspect. For all their apparent objective rigour, they are not agenda-free. It’s all about presuppositional bias. For this reason, ecclesiastical history must not be left in the hands of academics, as surely as hagiographical writing must include objective rigour and honesty.

True, Matthews was no Anglican. He produced an annotated list of the Works of Richard Baxter in 1933 and he was a member of the hymn-book committee for Congregational Praise (1951). Yet his exclusively historical interests compounded by family tragedy had constrained him to take early retirement from pastoral ministry at Oxted, Surrey in 1927 to engage in more historical research. How sad - although a mere academic would fail to see why. Doubtless, his personal grief made it too problematic for a sensitive soul to continue preaching the Gospel, driving him to find solace in scholarship?\textsuperscript{6} How different was Calamy who, despite losing his first wife, sustained a faithful pastoral ministry in the midst of his historical pursuits. Also unlike Calamy, Matthews’s writings reveal not a spark of spirituality. The historian seems uninterested in piety. How disappointing to read a Nonconformist minister being critical of Baxter’s ‘Puritan obsession about sermons’.\textsuperscript{7} Judging by his contemptuous academic dismissal of Samuel Palmer’s The Nonconformist’s Memorial (his 1775 abridgement of Calamy) as being fit for little more than ‘Nonconformist edification’,\textsuperscript{8} he probably wouldn’t have approved of my Westminster Conference programme amendment proposed above. One wonders whether the liberal religious developments of the late 50s/early 60s explain his possibly-excessive ecumenical generosity in bequeathing a quarter of his residuary estate to the fabric of St Mary’s parish church, Oxted.\textsuperscript{9}

All this has a bearing on Matthews’s treatment of Calamy’s publications on Baxter and the ejected clergy (1702, 1713, 1727) and Walker’s An Attempt towards recovering an Account of the Numbers and Sufferings of the Clergy of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{6} See Alan Argent, URCHS Journal, 4. 7 (1990), 418–38.
\bibitem{8} Calamy Revised, p. xxviii.
\bibitem{9} http://www.google.com/search/Surrey+History
\end{thebibliography}
the Church of England (1714). Without doubt, Walker’s work was abusive and vitriolic in the extreme, a fact Matthews does not ignore entirely. Indeed, he describes Walker’s performance as a ‘monumental piece of hate and patience’.

Yet, on the whole, there are grounds to conclude that, historically speaking, Matthews is culpably kinder to Walker than he deserves and more critical of Calamy than is warranted. Is there some Congregational prejudice at work when Calamy is charged with having ‘Presbyterian prejudices’, in the middle of a discussion where, in his list of ejectees, he is taken to task for not distinguishing between Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists? It is sufficient to say that Calamy - not to forget his brotherly disposition - had a justifiable sense of Puritan solidarity, despite not-insignificant differences between the three denominations. Matthews seems chargeable with complacency at best when, despite the constant stream of nauseating scurrility in Walker’s performance, he judges that ‘disconcerting as the faults of the Attempt are, they do not seriously disturb our respect for its more solid merits’.

One simply asks, had a liberal perspective jaundiced Matthews’s assessment, or was Calamy responding to a different book?

When he discusses Calamy’s response to Walker’s claims, The Church and the Dissenters Compared as to Persecution (1719), Matthews rather dismisses the scope and thoroughness of what he calls ‘a pamphlet of 95 pages’. He calls it ‘a series of running comments. In some of these he pointed out obvious errors, but he had not a sufficient knowledge of the other side of the case to make him an effective critic’. This might apply to the first fifty pages, but thereafter - in addition to the solid and significant quality of his ‘running commentary’ - the work is a rigorous, fact-based critique of Walker, comprehensive for all its brevity. However, Matthews nowhere engages with Calamy’s Church and Dissenters. Two citations of it are found in Calamy Revised and only one in Walker Revised. Hence Matthews’s verdict simply does not square with Calamy’s highly-incisive and competent rebuttal of Walker’s ferocious assault on Calamy’s godly heroes. For instance, in terms of factual accuracy, Matthews dubiously says that ‘Walker on the whole comes out well;...[he] contended, and rightly, that the total of deprived loyalists exceeded many times over (four times, perhaps five times, he could not determine) Calamy’s 2,000 Nonconformists’. Such data analysis is rigorously challenged by Calamy, yet Matthews takes no notice of his case against Walker on this and a wide range of related issues. On the numbers question at least, since Calamy Revised runs to 552 pages of biographical data, how is it that Walker Revised only has 400? One would expect at least 2000 - based on a figure of 9000 sequestered clergy recently cited by a Church Society spokesman, despite there being (according to Matthews) only about 2425 out of approximately 8600 livings under

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10 Calamy Revised, p. xxii.
11 Ibid. xlii.
12 Ibid.
13 Walker Revised, p. xiii.
14 Calamy Revised, p. xxiv.
15 Ibid.
16 Walker Revised, pp. xi-xiii.
17 David Meager, E-mail, 18 October 2012.
sequestration!\textsuperscript{18} That said, whatever arithmetical precision is achieved, the theological case for Puritanism \textit{vis-à-vis} Anglicanism is irrefutable. This remains true had the number of silenced Puritans been only a fraction of what is claimed. For Calamy, theology was more of an issue than arithmetic.\textsuperscript{19}

### 3. WALKER PENALIZED

Calamy's case cannot be so easily dismissed. To validate this, I provide a selection of suitably-highlighted facsimiles from Calamy's reply to Walker (see Appendix 2). Not to mention data discrepancy, these extracts relate to the numbers issue, Walker's 'guess-work', the scandal of pluralities and other equally-valid reasons for evicting the Anglican clergy. Matthews rightly states that 'The charges brought against the clergy were directed against their politics, their churchmanship, and their moral character'.\textsuperscript{20} However, the integrity of Calamy’s evidence is discredited when he adds 'As to the charges of immorality, it was then, as for the most part of the world's history, common form to assume that a man whose opinions were wrong must be a man of bad character'.\textsuperscript{21} It should be made clear that Calamy never denied that there were cases of indefensible outrage committed against these men during the Civil War. Remembering the unfortunate political dimension to those troubled times, the Presbyterians - by excessive orthodoxy and intolerant legislation - did a lot to make their cause odious, even in the eyes of other anti-Anglicans. But Calamy insists that the so-called sufferings of the Anglicans do not begin to compare with the virtuous sufferings of 'his saints' (as Matthews disparagingly styles them).\textsuperscript{22}

### 4. CALAMY EULOGIZED

Why was Dr Edmund Calamy driven to defend his literary labours on behalf of the ejected pastors of 1662? Integral with his ministry, Calamy clearly felt called of God to transmit the heroic faith of Baxter and his brethren: “To let the Memory of these Men Dye is injurious to Posterity”.\textsuperscript{23} His \textit{Abridgement} of Baxter and related publications involved great courage, and it provoked a storm. Of surely great significance, while Calamy died in 1732 and Walker in 1747, the latter never published a reply to the former’s challenge. Was this an admission of defeat or simply traditional anti-Puritan Anglican contempt? At a time of continuing Anglican-inspired hostility to the heirs of the Puritans, the noble literary labours of Dr Calamy - pastor and historian - remain an indispensable resource.\textsuperscript{24}

Calamy was sure of his \textit{sola scriptura} ground in all the issues raised by these controversies. Among all the matters of dispute - dating back to the Reformation and succinctly covered in Palmer's \textit{Nonconformist Catechism} - he was aware of the deception resulting from defective translation as it

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\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Calamy Revised}, pp. xli-xlii.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Walker Revised}, p. xxiv.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. p. xxv.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p. ix.


\textsuperscript{24} See my ‘Dr Edmund Calamy: Historian of the Great Ejection’ at www.nrchurch.co.nr
relates to Acts 20: 28. Had the AV men used ‘bishop’ rather than ‘overseer’, the invalid ‘PC’ Episcopalian case would have been exposed, since the Ephesian ‘elders’ (= ‘presbyters’) are therefore ‘bishops’. This is why Presbyterians always opposed Anglican-style bishops. Calamy further demonstrates that, to avoid the irrefutable Presbyterian case, the readings from Acts 20 and 1 Timothy 3 used in the ordination of Priests in the 1552 BCP (also in the 1549 and Queen Elizabeth’s 1559), were confined by the Restoration Anglican churchmen to the ordination of Bishops and Archbishops in the anti-Puritan 1662 Prayer Book. His basic biblical case could not be clearer:

I cannot find that in Scripture the word Bishop ever signifies one that is superior to other ministers in power or jurisdiction, or any way above them, unless when it is applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Bishop of Souls... For which reason, I have often thought it could not be without design that our translators have in my text used the word Overseers rather than Bishops. For had they rendered it as they should have done in this manner: ‘Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Bishops’, these words spoken to Elders or Presbyters, might have filled them with thoughts not very favourable to the Hierarchy...In the sense of Scripture, I can find no difference between Bishops and Presbyters. Our blessed Lord Jesus appears not to have made any difference between them;...nor does St Paul seem to have known any differences between Bishops and Presbyters.25

Endeavouring to downplay the significance of all this, Lee Gatiss states that ‘the old seventeenth century debates over church government or ceremonial may not divide as they once did’, having said in the beginning of the sentence that ‘the established church persists in refusing to recognise non-episcopal ordination and confirmation’.26 This surely means these issues are still alive and highly divisive if Nonconformist ministers are not regarded as true pastors. A Welsh Presbyterian acquaintance of mine (now retired) was always saddened by being made to feel inferior at Anglican-led ecumenical services. It is a fact of no small importance that the Roman Catholic Church does not recognise Anglican orders either! So who decides on the criteria of valid ministry? On this issue, Dr Philip Doddridge - whose eighteenth-century persecution by Anglicans on account of his nonconformist Academy at Northampton27 is totally ignored by Gatiss28 - could not be more emphatic. In fact he cited Calamy’s views on church order in his Family Expositor. Commenting on Acts 20: 25-8 (where Paul calls all the Ephesian elders ‘overseers’ or ‘bishops’), Doddridge remarked:

The late learned, moderate and pious Dr Edmund Calamy observes, that, if the apostles had been used (as some assert) to ordain diocesan bishops in their last visitation, this had been a proper time to do it; or that, if Timothy had been already ordained bishop of Ephesus, Paul, instead of calling them all bishops, would have surely given some hint to enforce Timothy’s authority among them, especially considering what is added, ver. 29, 30 (see Dr

25 Sermon Preached at the Ordination of Mr John Munckley (London: 1717), pp. 18-19 (emphasis mine).
28 The Tragedy of 1662, 51.

Since Dr Calamy’s case is so solidly biblical, that the Bible sets the standard for valid ministry, then neither Roman nor Anglican priests who insist on the fiction of apostolic succession to validate their ordinations are recognised in the sight of our Lord Jesus Christ. This, in fact, is the high theological ground demanded by the Truth of God for which Baxter, Calamy, Doddridge and the ‘noble army of Puritans’ suffered. Such ‘high theological ground’ was derived, not from a pompous state-established religion, but on the soundest-theological and living ontological reality of our Lord Jesus Christ. Calamy’s convictions in this regard were demonstrated in three remarkable sermons in 1715 entitled God’s Concern for His Glory in the British Isles and The Security of Christ’s Church from the Gates of Hell. These sermons include a masterly survey of the church history of the British Isles from the earliest times to the early eighteenth century, with suitable applications to assure believers that ‘an Almighty Jesus has undertaken the conduct of His own Church, and engaged that it shall in the end be victorious over all the designs of its enemies’.

Appendix 1

The Secretary, The Westminster Conference

Dear John, Greetings in the LORD.

I wish to register a protest against what seems an inappropriate choice of speaker for the opening session of this year’s conference.

Having spent many hours this year revisiting the events and heroes of the Great Ejection, I (as an ex-Anglican) consider it an affront to the memory of the ejected brethren that an Anglican is addressing the subject. I have no doubt that Lee Gatiss is an able and charming brother, but as the Director of Church Society and an obviously-committed Anglican, he is hardly in a position to address a conference which, since its inception, has been devoted to the sympathetic study of Puritanism.

In his conference preamble, Mr Gatiss asks if the Ejection ‘was as simple as it is sometimes presented’? Whatever is meant by ‘simple’, the ejected pastors (despite not-insignificant differences) had no doubts that it was a simple matter of faithfulness to the Word of God which led them to act as they did. The entire apparatus of Anglicanism - state church, compulsory liturgy (allowing inadequate time for preaching), diocesan episcopacy, etc - simply forbade conformity. The later conformity of others can only be explained by a questionable acceptance of the dubious ‘triple-source’ Anglican authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason. In this respect, for later Evangelicals, (without questioning the orthodoxy of the doctrinal items among the XXXIX Articles), they were perpetuating a semi-reformed faith within the established church.

In short, the ejected clergy were determined to adhere to a consistently-biblical Reformed Faith and Order. Significantly, while Eighteenth-century English and Welsh Methodism were conceived within the womb of Anglicanism, its half-reformed structure and traditions could not contain them forever. Indeed, their eventual separation from the Church of England vindicated everything the ejected Puritans suffered for. Surely such should be the note sounded at this year’s Westminster Conference!

Thank you for patiently considering the reasons for my complaint. They boil down to this: a convinced Anglican cannot do justice to ‘1662 and All that’ while remaining an Anglican.

Yours faithfully in Christ, Dr Alan C. Clifford

30 God’s Concern for His Glory in the British Isles and The Security of Christ’s Church from the Gates of Hell (London: John Clark, 1715).
31 Ibid. 87.