



*A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation*

*Lectures on Chapters 1–3*

*By James Durham*



NAPHTALI PRESS SPECIAL EDITIONS

I

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# A COMMENTARY UPON THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

## LECTURES ON CHAPTERS 1–3

By JAMES DURHAM

*A new critical edition with additional material from a 1653 manuscript,  
containing an early form of the lectures*

Edited by Chris Coldwell

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:16–17. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. Revelation 1:3. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book, Revelation 22:7.*

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## Abbreviations of Common References

- ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by James Donaldson et al. 10 volumes. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1885.
- Bellarmino, *Opera* Roberti Bellarmini, *Opera Omnia*. 12 volumes. Parisiis: Ludovicum Vivès, 1870–1874.
- DSL *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, [www.dsl.ac.uk](http://www.dsl.ac.uk).
- Jamieson John Jamieson, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*. Paisley: Alexander Garner, 1879–82.
- NPNF1 *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, first series*. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 volumes. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1886–1890.
- NPNF2 *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series*. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 volumes. Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1890–1900.
- MSRev2 MS REV2. Commentary on Book of Revelation. 1653. Tooled Leather binding. Prior ownership, Rev. Mr. [Wm?] Brown. 19x15 cm. Pages unnumbered. New College Library Archives and Manuscripts. University of Edinburgh.
- PG *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*. Edited by J. P. Migne. 166 volumes. Petit-Montrouge, Apud J.-P. Migne, 1857–1866.
- PL *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*. Edited by J. P. Migne. 217 volumes. Petit-Montrouge: Apud J.-P. Migne, 1844–1855.
- Trayner John Trayner, *Latin Maxims and Phrases collected from the institutional writers on the Law of Scotland and other sources with translations and illustrations*. Fourth edition. Edinburgh: William Green & Sons, 1894.
- Wright Joseph Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*. 6 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1898–1905.



## EDITOR'S PREFACE

THIS VOLUME of James Durham's lectures upon the Book of the Revelation chapters 1–3, the first of a projected three-volume set, is the opening title to the Naphtali Press Special Editions series inaugural year, 2019–2020. The goal is to produce one to three titles a year depending upon the level of interest and sponsorship, as well as upon the complexity and expense of the title or titles chosen for a series year. It is hoped that many important books, which otherwise would be difficult to undertake, may be published for this series.

The seed concept for Naphtali Press was planted when the editor purchased a 1680 edition of Durham's *Treatise Concerning Scandal* in October of 1983 from the autumn book list of David C. Lachman. Thus began an acquaintance with Dr. Lachman, an interest in Scottish Presbyterian books, and in the works of James Durham in particular. *Concerning Scandal* appeared in 1990, which was followed by *Lectures on Job* (1995), *72 Sermons on Isaiah 53* (2001), and *Lectures on the Ten Commandments* (2002). Given its standing as one of the most reprinted puritan works on Revelation, Naphtali Press first attempted a new edition of the commentary starting at the end of 1994; but this effort did not come to fruition. In 2000 Old Paths Publications produced a large single volume edition based upon the 1658 first edition. In January 2008, Naphtali Press had the opportunity to purchase the rights to this text, with an idea of reissuing it. However, the text proved to be in need of considerable correction, requiring a new full word by word check against the first edition, which having not been anticipated and the work required daunting, other projects were pursued instead. After producing a critical edition of the *Collected Sermons of James Durham* in two volumes (2017) and refined editions of *Lectures on Job* and on *The Ten Commandments* (2018), in order to achieve the goal of producing all of Durham's works in new editions, it was time to move forward with a more critical production of the Revelation commentary as part of this new series of books.

For this edition, the 2000 text was used as a base text and collated anew against the 1658 first printing. A word for word comparison with the 1788 edition was used to check for missing or dissimilar words or phrases. Where issues arose, a collation was made with all prior editions. The text also has been collated against a newly discovered manuscript text. Unique text not appearing in prior printed editions is noted in the text or given in an appendix, including some full lectures that differ significantly from that published. Because the errata given in the first edition was poorly written and often ignored or followed incorrectly by later publishers, these have all been checked in all ten of the prior editions.

The aim of this new edition was to produce as correct a text as possible, which would also be accessible to the twenty-first century reader. To that

end, the text has been revised as far as possible without marring the author's work to reflect contemporary spelling, punctuation, and usage, including paragraph breaks and correction or addition of numbering where needed. Overuse of italics has been removed, limiting it to mostly emphasis and Scripture quotations. Words or insertions supplied by the editor are in [square brackets]. Bracketed words or phrases that are italicized define or replace the preceding archaic or Scottish words or phrases.<sup>1</sup> Most Scottish and archaic words with a simple modern equivalent have been replaced throughout the text without notice (e.g., betwixt/between, sure/surely, anent/about, suppose/suppose, etc.); others are retained and defined to preserve Durham's Scots.

There were no marginal notes in the original text. After the original prefacing material, all footnotes are editorial. These notes comment on historical context possibly raised in the text, or on text variations in prior editions or in the 1653 manuscript text,<sup>2</sup> or are bibliographic in nature. Most if not all of Durham's references to other works have been traced, and further information or clarification provided. Some extraneous phrases or words have been omitted (e.g. "in," with Scripture references, etc.), and some words have been inserted silently as needed, such as "in" or "and," and abbreviations expanded. In some instances of Durham's topsy-turvy syntax, phrases have been reordered within a sentence to clarify the meaning. This is usually done without notice, but if significant, the repositioned words appear between {braces}. Noted differences in the manuscript form of these lectures appear within ↑upper markers↓ or are footnoted (with spelling updated). Text not in the manuscript appears in ↓lower markers↓.

Having produced new editions of almost all of the works of Durham,<sup>3</sup> I am pleased and delighted to offer through Naphtali Press and co-publisher Reformation Heritage Books, this first of a projected three volumes (D. V.), comprising the first third of James Durham's lectures from *A Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation*, as the first title in this Naphtali Press Special Editions series.

1. The sources used for definitions were Jamieson's *Scottish Dictionary* (Jamieson), *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), and the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (DSL) ([www.dsl.ac.uk](http://www.dsl.ac.uk)).

2. A listing of the prior editions is given on the verso of the short title page following the Introduction. The manuscript which the editor confirmed in May 2019 to be Durham, is held by New College Library, Edinburgh. MS Rev 2. "REVELATION, Book of. [Commentary of Revelation ch. I–II.] 4 °. No pagin. [c.400p.] Dated on p. 1: 6<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1653." These pages are refined or "fair copies" made by a hearer or hearers of Durham as he lectured. They reflect the state of the text before Durham edited them for the press. The lectures were copied out by two or more individuals (see note, p. 459), but not enough of the latter part of the volume has been examined yet to deduce what this may mean. My thanks to New College Library for access to the volume and to Matthew Vogan, who brought this manuscript to my attention and who obtained photographs for use in the transcription work.

3. Durham's lectures on the Song of Solomon, often reprinted from the last edition of 1840, remains the only volume of his lectures which has not been issued in a modern critical edition.

## INTRODUCTION

“AFTER ALL THAT has been written, it would not be easy to find a more sensible and instructive work than this old-fashioned exposition. We cannot accept its interpretations of the mysteries, but the mystery of the gospel fills it with sweet savour.” Thus Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his *Commenting and Commentaries*.

Spurgeon also says that “The works upon Revelation are so extremely numerous..., and the views entertained are so many” that after completing his list of them, he decided just to mention a few reputable works. Much is still being written on this book, particularly works of the sort which Spurgeon describes in his day as “prophecys [which] have been disproved by the lapse of time [or which] ... will in due season share their fate.” This surely applies to the majority of books still being written (and widely distributed) well over 100 years later. Perhaps as good a reason as any both to buy and to read Durham is that whatever one’s perspective on the mysteries of Revelation, there is much which will repay careful reading—as opposed to the vast quantity of worthless speculation which has been written on the book and which continues to be written. There are few books on the subject of which this can be said, but Durham’s is clearly one of them.

The book was originally delivered to his Glasgow congregation in the form of weekly lectures, “every Lords-day before Sermon.” His colleague in the ministry and Professor of Divinity at the University of Glasgow, Robert Baillie, commended this work as making “very plain and usefull [to the reader] that [which is] without question hardest of all Scriptures.” Speaking for himself, he said that Durham’s exposition “of the most obscure texts of that holy Book, which I understood little at the beginning of his Lecture, before he closed his Exercise, [was] made to me so clear, that I judged his Exposition might well be acquiesced into without much more debate.”

Moreover, he thought that this commentary fit in well with a series of commentaries designed to cover the whole of Scriptures, book by book. Conceived of by David Dickson (whose commentaries on the Psalms, Matthew, the Pauline epistles and Hebrews are still well known), eminent Scottish ministers would provide the people with plain, straightforward expositions of Scripture; commentaries produced included George Hutcheson on Job, the Minor Prophets, and John, as well as various others, including one by Samuel Rutherford on Isaiah, never published and long since lost. Among these commentaries Durham’s on Revelation occupies a worthy place.

At various relevant points throughout the commentary, 25 excurses are inserted, covering a variety of “Questions and Controversies.” These were not delivered as part of Durham’s weekly lectures but were inserted in the published commentary at the author’s request. This was both as he

thought they would be useful in respect of the passages he was explaining and in order that “they should not altogether perish, there having been no other convenient way for the publishing of them.” Taken as a whole, these theological essays form about a quarter of the book and enable the reader to understand why at 28, Durham, rather than many of his more mature contemporaries, was called to be Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow. Thus, for example, he discusses a calling to the ministry and how it may be discerned clearly, the “nature and difference of common and saving grace” and the constituting of true churches out of those, which are thoroughly, corrupt.

Perhaps two will give a taste of the whole: first, his “generall Observations concerning Preaching, and especially Application”<sup>1</sup> are such as would benefit careful consideration by ministers throughout the church, as much today as in Durham’s time. He first observes that “Ministers in their application, ought to conform themselves to the case of the Church and persons to whom they Preach,” convincing of error, dealing sharply with the secure, and comfortably to the afflicted as exemplified in our Lord’s dealings with the seven churches. Second, he says that ministers ought “to apply themselves to all sorts of persons, . . . to Rulers, and People, to hypocrites, and openly profane, yea, to the good, and these that have most tenderness; reprovng all, convincing all, as there shall be cause. . . . Sometimes, it is more difficult freely and faithfully to reprove one that is Godly, or to withstand one Peter, than to threaten or contend with many that are profane: and yet both are necessary and profitable for edification.”

Third, “This universal application to all sorts, would yet notwithstanding be managed with spiritual wisdom and prudence, so that every one may get their own allowance. Hence the Lord doth threaten the secure and stubborn” in such a way that he excepts from the threatening those “who were not defiled, and so comforteth the faithful, as the profane may not have a ground to take the same consolation with them.”

Doing this, he says, is “a Main qualification of a Minister of the Gospel, rightly to divide the word of Truth,” so there will not be confusion among his hearers as to whom he means to apply what he is saying. This is particularly true in these four ways:

“1. That a tender soul may be so strengthened and confirmed, as a secure person be not more hardened, and that a presumptuous hypocrite, be so stricken at, as an exercised soul be not wounded. 2. When both the good and profane are in one fault, the one is otherwise to be reprovved and restored than the other; and we see *Ephesus* is more tenderly dealt with, than *Laodicea*, according to the rule, Gal. 6.1. 3. The faults of Believers would be so reprovved, [that] . . . what is commendable in their practice, be not condemned and rejected also: but that there be intermixed commendations, or approbations of what is approvable, lest Godliness suffer when the fault of a Godly person

1. See Excursus 13, page 442.

is reprov'd, and lest the sentence go beyond the Master's intent, which is not to condemn the person, but to reprove the fault, as the Lord doth tenderly distinguish these in the case of *Ephesus* and *Pergamos*. 4. Times and cases would be distinguished also: and where outward affliction or inward exercise have seized on a person or people, reproofs would be more sparing and gentle, than when there is outward prosperity and a readiness to settle in a formal discharge of duties, as by comparing the Lord's dealings with the Churches of *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, and *Philadelphia*, and His dealing with *Sardis* and *Laodicea*, is clear."

It is superfluous to transcribe the whole of this valuable section in the introduction, but to draw the whole of it to the reader's attention and particularly to his careful consideration; attention will be given to Durham's concluding points: the preaching and application of the Word ought, he says, to be presented with the authority "of Him in whose Name" the preacher speaks: only with a "Thus saith the Lord" may a Minister speak "boldly and authoritatively." Further, he should bear in mind that "it is the Spirit who speaketh, and who only can make it effectual."

He summarizes by saying "that Application is the life of Preaching; and there is no less studie, skill, wisdom, authority, and plainness necessary in the applying of a point to the Consciences of Hearers, and in the pressing of it home, than there is required in the opening of some profound truth: and therefore Ministers would study the one as well as the other. . . . It is much for Ministers to get the Word leveled at Hearers, so as to make them know that it is they who are reached; and that it is not only these that at first it was written to, or these to whom Christ and the Apostles did immediately Preach that this Word belongeth; but that equally it belongeth to them, even to them who now hear it. Hearers are often ready to shift-by the most particular words, much more when they are more shortly and generally touched. Hence, Preaching is called *persuading, testifying, beseeching, entreating, or requesting, exhorting, &c.*" All this imports a dealing in Application, "which is not only a more particular breaking of the matter, but a directing it to the Consciences of the present Hearers. And in this especially doth the faithfulness, wisdom, and dexterity of the Preacher, and the power and efficacy of the gift appear. This is to fulfill or fully to preach the Word of God. . . ."

He concludes, and the whole is transcribed, as for the most part it is almost entirely lacking in contemporary preaching and is, in substantial part (along with serious doctrinal error), why the church today is, as a whole, as was the church of Laodicea, so weak and unfaithful. "We conceive, therefore, that it would conduce exceedingly to make Application weighty upon the Consciences of the Hearers, if Ministers after the more generall part of their Doctrine, and at their entry to make Application thereof, should pause a little, and by some serious and grave advertisement, put the people in mind, that even this Word so applied, or to be applied, is the Word and Message of God to them in particular, and as necessarily requisite to the office of a Pastor as the former general opening of the truth was: for, Hearers are often

ready to take more liberty in shifting of Application, as if what were even so spoken warrantably, were not equally the Lord's Word with the general truth opened-up. . . . And as it is the main part of a Pastorall gift, dexterously to feed by Application; so are they the most thriving Christians, who, as newborn babes, drink in the Word so applied, and take it home to themselves, and their own Consciences, as they do receive the general truths by their judgements. Which sheweth, that both Ministers and People have the greater cause to be watchfull and solicitous concerning this main mean of edification, to wit, particular Application."

A second and rather different topic is his essay: "Concerning Prophesying."<sup>2</sup> A matter much controverted in our day, Durham presents a series of seven assertions, which are both Scriptural and wise. On the one hand, he asserts that "Prophesie taken for an immediate revealing of Gospe! Truths and mysteries, . . . [which] was frequent in the Apostolic times, is now ceased, and there is neither such a gift nor such an office." Further, "yet if we take *prophesie* for the understanding of God's mind, and for attaining to be well acquainted with the mysteries of God, by a mediate way; yea, and that beyond the applied means, or to have a gift and capacity for discerning of these things with little pains, and that beyond what some others can attain unto by any labour, we conceive that in this sense *Prophesie* and *Prophets* may be said to be continued in the Church; and such God raised up in the time of Reformation, men singularly gifted with a Propheticall Spirit in this sense, . . ." Again, "No gift can warrant one to take on him the office of an authoritative Preacher, even though in some particulars God's mind extraordinarily should be revealed to him; for, it is not the gift that giveth the authority of an office, but God's authoritative mission; otherwise a woman (as *Philip's* daughters) might be an Officer in the Church, and have public access to preach and teach, which yet the New Testament admitteth not, even when it speaketh of this gift of Prophesie, I Cor. 14. and ordereth the practice of extraordinary Prophets."

And yet Durham asserts that it is "not altogether to be denied, but that the Lord may in particulars . . . sometimes reveal himself to some by foretelling events before they come." After giving examples starting in Apostolic times and going through his immediate predecessors in the ministry in Scotland, he continues: "although God hath now closed the Canon of the Scripture, yet that He should be restrained in His freedom, from manifesting of Himself thus, there is no convincing ground to bear it out, especially when experience hath often proven the contrary in the most holy men." He makes it clear that it is not an ordinary thing, but limited to a few times and cases. Nor can such particular revelations be "made use of . . . to press a duty upon others, that would not otherwise be warrantable, although when it concurs with other grounds, it may have

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2. Concerning Prophesying is appended at the end of the lecture on chapter ten and will appear, Lord willing, in the second of the three volumes of Durham on Revelation.

its weight for swaying in lawful things.” Taken as a whole, a more concise Scriptural summary of the matter can scarce be imagined.

In this introduction, I have deliberately not discussed Durham’s interpretation of the mysteries; I would encourage the reader to consider them, but whether or not he finds himself in agreement, I would urge the considerable benefits of the sweet savour of the gospel which permeate the rest of the book.

A brief account of Durham’s life is in order, for those who may have heard of him by reputation, but who know little of him. He was born in 1622, the oldest son of the Laird of Easter Powrie in Angus; after studying at the University of St. Andrews, he left without obtaining a degree, as was then the fashion, in order to pursue the life of a country gentleman. It was not until some time after his marriage that he was converted, and even then, he did not consider studying for the ministry. It was only while he was serving as a Captain in the Scottish Army in the 1640s that he was overheard while praying with his troops by the eminent minister and then chaplain David Dickson. Dickson urged him to enter the ministry and, after due consideration, he studied divinity at Glasgow with Dickson [receiving an M.A. in 1647] and was ordained to the parish of Blackfriars in Glasgow the same year. His ministrations were very favorably received, and in 1650 he was appointed Professor of Divinity at Glasgow (in Dickson’s place). At the same time, he was sent by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to serve as chaplain to King Charles II; he went and served, but while he was very acceptable to the King, after some 6 months he asked to be excused on account of illness and never returned to the duty, which according to Robert Baillie he found to be a “grievous burden.”<sup>3</sup> Although, due to the intricacies of university politics, he never took up the post as Professor of Divinity, he was translated in 1651 to the more important St. Mungo’s parish in Glasgow High Church where he remained until his death at 36, in 1658.

He was highly esteemed throughout the church by men of all parties. He tried to be a peacemaker in the bitter division, which rent the Church of Scotland in the 1650s and was opposed in this by the more extreme of both parties. Robert Baillie, who wrote in such a laudatory way of him after his death (saying that Durham was “precious among the most excellent Divines I have been acquainted with in the whole Isle,” considerable praise from one who was one of the Scottish delegates to the Westminster Assembly of Divines), feared that Durham’s influence might lead to a settlement, and spoke of that influence as being “of exceeding great weight deservedly,” but in the end was able to prevent all attempts at union. Durham’s book, *The Dying man’s Testament to the Church of Scotland: Or, A Treatise concerning Scandal* (Edinburgh, 1659; Dallas, 1990), which was completed on his death bed, is a most useful work in regard to what properly constitutes schism and

3. See Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, edited by David Laing, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1841–1842), 3:150.

under what circumstances union and communion, both in government and worship, is a duty.<sup>4</sup>

All but the last of the rest of his published works were issued under the editorship of his friend and colleague, John Carstairs. They were well received, and most went through several editions over the next 150 years. This reprint of his lectures on Revelation, the tenth and the first since the late 18th century, is the fourth of his works to be issued in recent years: his commentaries on the Song of Solomon and Job, as well as his Treatise on Scandal, have been well received. Hopefully, this, his largest work, will be equally well received and, what is more, beneficial to its readers.<sup>5</sup>

David C. Lachman, Ph.D.  
Wyncote, Pa.

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4. It is also exceedingly beneficial in regard to matters of personal offense.

5. [The editor thanks Dr. Lachman for permission to run this introduction, which first prefaced the 2000 and tenth edition of Durham's lectures in this new eleventh. In the twenty years since then, all the sermons of Durham have appeared in a two-volume collection (2017) and new editions of the *Lectures on Job* and on *The Ten Commandments* have appeared as well (2018). Manuscript material has also been uncovered in recent years. The only work which has not had a modern treatment at this date remains the work on Song of Solomon (1663; 1840). The discovery of 228 sermons on Canticles by Durham would indicate such a volume should wait until these can be investigated more thoroughly or even published. An updated life and bibliography of Durham is planned for the second and third volumes of this new edition, D.V. For more detailed and recently discovered information on James Durham, see his life in John Howie's *Lives of the Scottish Covenanters* (1775; many editions); Dr. Lachman's article on Durham in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (IVP, 1993); "An Account of the Most Memorable Things in the Life of the Reverend Mr. James Durham of Easter Powrie, Minister of the Gospel at Glasgow," in *An Exposition of the Whole Book of Job* (1759); "A Collection of Some Memorable Things in the Author's Life," in *Commentary on Revelation* (1739 ed.), repr. in *Collected Sermons of James Durham: Christ Crucified: or, the Marrow of the Gospel in Seventy-Two Sermons on the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah* (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2017); "Antiquary: James Durham's 1652 Sermon on Ephesians 4:11–12 Taught before the Synod of Glasgow: A Transcription from Manuscript," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 12 (2016); "Antiquary: The James Durham MS III: James Durham's 228 Sermons on Song of Solomon 2–8," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 13 (2017); and Introduction, in *Collected Sermons of James Durham: 61 Sermons* (Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2017). See also George Christie, D.D., "James Durham as Courtier and Preacher," in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, IV, Part I (1930).]



*A COMMENTARY UPON THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION*

*By JAMES DURHAM*

*A Commentarie upon the Book of The Revelation. Wherein the text is explained, the series of the several prophecies contained in the book, deduced according to their order and dependance upon each other; the periods and succession of times, at, or about which, these prophecies, that are already fulfilled, began to be, and were more fully accomplished, fixed and applied according to history; and those that are yet to be fulfilled, modestly, and so far as is warrantable, enquired into. Together with some practical observations, and several digressions, (an Index whereof is prefixed) necessary for vindicating, clearing, and confirming many weighty and important truths. Delivered in several lectures, by that learned, laborious, and faithfull servant of Jesus Christ, Mr. James Durham, Late Minister of the Gospel in Glasgow. To which is affixed a brief Summary of the whole Revelation, with an alphabetical Index of the chief and principal purposes and words contained in this Commentarie.*

#### EDITIONS

1. Edinburgh: Christopher Higgins, 1658 ([8], 787, [17] pp; 29 cm, folio).
2. London: For the Company of Stationers, 1658 (folio).<sup>1</sup>
3. Amsterdam: John Fredericksz Stam, 1660 ([8], 787, [13] pp; 28 cm, folio).<sup>2</sup>
4. Edinburgh: Heir of A. Anderson, 1680 ([8], 507/489, [10]; 24 cm, quarto).<sup>3</sup>
5. Glasgow: Robert Sanders, 1680 ([6], 673, [13] pp; quarto).<sup>4</sup>
6. Glasgow: William Duncan, 1739 (xx, 758, (14), 25 cm, quarto).
7. "A Learned and Complete Commentary upon the Book of the Revelation delivered in several Lectures." Lengthy subtitle omitted. Glasgow: John Brice, 1764 (810, [14] pp, 25 cm., quarto). This seems to have been issued also in Glasgow, Printed by Robert Smith, Junior, for Alexander Ross, printer, and Robert Smith, Junior, bookseller, at Milton's Head, Salt-Mercat, 1764.
8. Title as in 7. Glasgow: David Niven for James Spence, 1788 (828 pp; quarto).<sup>5</sup>
9. "A Complete Commentary upon the book of the Revelation." Falkirk: Robert Renny, 1799 (2 vols., octavo).<sup>6</sup>
10. "A Commentary on Revelation." Full title page of imprint 2 replicated. Willow Street, Pa.: Old Paths Publications, 2000.
11. Dallas, Texas: Naphtali Press Special Editions, vol. 1 of 3 (2019).

(1) "Except imprint, identical with No. 1." George Christie, "A Bibliography of James Durham: 1622–1658," *Papers of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society*, 1918, p. 37. The paginations and sizes provided are variously given by Christie, Worldcat, and Copac. (2) This edition closely follows the Edinburgh edition of 1658 "with slight differences in preliminary and concluding matter" (Christie, 37). (3) Pagination errors: 169–188 omitted; 419–420 repeated (Worldcat.org). (4) "Simultaneous publication in Edinburgh and Glasgow is characteristic of Durham's books" (Christie, 37). (5) "This follows closely the sixth Edition" (Christie, 38) and includes two sermons on Revelation 22:20 (799–810), 11-page index (811–821) and concludes with seven pages of subscribers. The 1788 edition actually follows the 1764 text in its editing and/or errors. (6) Christie relies on Lowndes and speculates this edition was published by Patrick Mair (Christie, 38), but it was printed by Robert Renny in two volumes of 827 and 623 pages respectively.

## TO THE JUDICIOUS & CHRISTIAN READER

THE REVEREND (now triumphing and glorified) author, was so famous and deservedly in very high esteem in our church, both because of the singular and extraordinary way of God's calling him forth to the ministry of the gospel,<sup>1</sup> and also because of his eminent piety, steadfastness, gravity, prudence, moderation, and other great abilities, whereof the venerable general assembly of this church had such persuasion, that they did, in the year 1650, after mature deliberation, very unanimously pitch upon him, though then but about eight and twenty years of age, as amongst the ablest, sickereſt [*most effective*], and most accomplished ministers therein, to attend the King's family. In which station, though the times were most difficult, as abounding with temptations and snares, with jealousies, heart-burnings, emulations and animosities, and flowing with high tides of many various and not a few contrary humors, he did so wisely and faithfully behave and acquit himself, that there was a conviction thereof left upon the consciences of all who observed him, and so as he had peace through Jesus Christ as to that ministrations.

The author, I say, was in these and other respects so famous, that he needs no testimony or epistles of commendation, especially from so obscure and worthless a person, yet being of his particular and very intimate acquaintance, daily conversant with him, and withal his ordinary hearer, being in a good providence colleagued with him in the ministry (though a most unequal yokefellow to so strong a laborer), I thought it my duty to give you some brief hint both of himself (who loved always to be hid, except when it was necessary for him to appear) and of his book, wherein you will find that the spirit of Mr. Durham was not of an ordinary elevation; notwithstanding whereof, as, in preaching the gospel, he liked not to soar and hide himself from the hearers in a cloud of words (it was not in the wisdom of words, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power that he taught). So in his writing, he used the same plainness of speech; yet how low soever his style seems to be, I nothing doubt but that every intelligent reader will find such

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1. Having left the university (wherein I was at the same time a student) before he had finished his course of philosophy, and without any purpose to follow his book [*Studies*], at least in order to such an end, and having lived several years a private gentleman with his wife and children, enjoying a good estate in the country, from which he did, no doubt, to the great dissatisfaction of many of his natural friends, and with not a little prejudice to his outward condition, retire, and (being called thereto) humbly offer himself to trials, far from his own home, in order to his being licentiated to preach the gospel; in the ministry whereof, he was immediately thereafter settled here at Glasgow, where it has not wanted [*lacked*] a seal in the consciences and hearts of his hearers. [Carstares is notorious for his run-on sentences, and some excessively long parenthetical thoughts have been moved to footnotes.]

certainty of truth to satisfy the mind and such sweetness of matter to engage the affections, that he will count the author an interpreter one among a thousand.

And therefore, if at any time you miss, as possibly you may, that comptness [*elegance*] and firmness of phrase, which in this phrasing and wordy age is much in use, know that he had so very sharp and pregnant an engine [*plan*], and so exceeding rich and fruitful an invention, that they ordinarily did outstrip and go beyond his expression and pen, so that these could very hardly and but seldom hold foot with him. Besides, if his expression was such as might make his meaning be conceived by the hearers or readers, he did not at all affect, neither could he stay, being so close in his pursuit of the matter, to chase, or follow after, fine words (so that I may here, without all complement, according to the proverb, say, *Aquila non captat muscas*);<sup>2</sup> yet none of his expressions were base or unsuitable to the matter, but ordinarily very massy [*weighty*], significant and expressive of his meaning, though plain and simple, and, it may be, sometimes not so beautifully situated, nor so adorning and out-setting of it, as possibly some would be at, which the Lord, in the depth of His wisdom, did so order, that, as the author himself might be kept humble (and indeed he did exemplarily shine in humility) so no other should think of him above what was meet.

For it has been thought by some while hearing him discourse, that if he had had such a polished style and so well combed words as several others have, whose matter yet fell exceedingly short of his, he would have been looked upon as a very rare and singular man in his generation, as really he was, and as these same lectures of his upon the Revelation (which he was by many importuned to publish) will readily give ground to think of him. Which, though for substance (except as to these few intermixed solidly, succinctly, and, I hope, satisfyingly discussed questions) they were delivered by him to the people of his charge within a very short time, one of them every Lord's Day before sermon;<sup>3</sup> yet in the whole series and contexture thereof, you will notwithstanding, find as much solidity, sobriety and modesty, much quickness and sagacity, and very much plainness and perspicuity (considering the obscurity, *comparative* I mean, of this Scripture) which is rare, sweetly kissing and embracing each other. So likewise you will discover, besides a clear explication of the text of this book and convincing proofs of the Pope of Rome, his being that Antichrist (a main scope of it), even to the awakening

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2. [Roman proverb: *The eagle does not catch flies*; i.e., the noble do not devote time to unimportant matters.]

3. —when all that time he did also preach twice a week at least, and most ordinarily thrice, beside his daily public lecturing every fifth week according to his course in the city, and all his other ministerial duties of catechizing, visiting of the sick, exhorting of the whole from house to house, and his weekly meetings with the congregational eldership for the exercise of discipline, most dexterously, faithfully, condescendingly and indefatigably discharged by him towards about fifteen hundred souls, of whom he alone as minister had the oversight.

of the lamentably decayed zeal of the people of God against that beast, drunk with the blood of saints, after whom, so considerable a part of the Christian world, and that to the great offense of the Jews, is, alas, still wondering; you will, I say, beside those, discover vast lecture in history, great light in the Scriptures, and very deep reach in the profoundest and most intricate things in theology.<sup>4</sup> But, his work will speak for itself, and praise him in the gate, and, no doubt, provoke the reader, as to bless God for him, so to lament the church's great loss in the removal of such a useful instrument, in the very flower, prime and vigor of his grace, gifts and age, being but about six and thirty years. Which loss is so much the greater, that he was eminently and beyond many, as several other ways so, through the healing disposition, and great moderation of spirit given unto him, fitted to deal in the edification obstructing differences of this poor, torn and divided church as may further afterwards appear by a piece of his *concerning scandal*, shortly, if the Lord will, to be published.<sup>5</sup>

I will not detain you much longer from perusing of this work; only I shall, in short, give you an account (lest his way of writing should be mistaken by any because it differs from that which others, especially of late, have followed to the no small edification of the Church of God) of the reasons inducing the author (as he once passingly showed me upon his deathbed) to insert these questions that are by way of digression more largely handled in this book. 1. The importunity of some friends. 2. His persuasion of the soundness and inoffensiveness of the matter wherein, though he has here and

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4. To a public profession whereof, in this University of Glasgow, he was sometime (to wit, a little before his being appointed to attend the King's Family) by the Commissioners of the General Assembly, authorized for visiting the said university, most unanimously and solemnly designed and called, to the great satisfaction and refreshment of many, and more particularly and especially of famous and worthy Mr. [David] Dickson, to whom the precious author was chosen to succeed in that profession (he being called to a profession of the same nature in the University of Edinburgh) as one of the ablest and best-furnished men (all things being considered) in our Church, that were not already engaged in such employments, and most likely to fill Mr. Dickson's room. [Several words in this section of text were omitted or mistyped in the Old Paths edition, due to the copy running into the margin. These have been corrected without comment.]

[5. Carstares (rarely Carstairs as signed here) refers to the Protester-Resolutioner schism in the Church of Scotland, which took up most of the 1650s. Durham, with others, tried to bring the two sides to reconciliation and heal the divide, but to no avail. This experience informed his work that had a lasting impact on Presbyterian theology, *A Treatise Concerning Scandal* (1659; Naphtali Press, 1990). Early in the division Durham preached a sermon on similar themes, "Ephesians 4:11–12, For the edifying of the body of Christ, A Sermon taught before the Synod assembled in Glasgow, October 5, 1652." See a straight transcript in "Antiquary: A Transcription of James Durham's Sermon on Ephesians 4:11–12, taught before the Synod of Glasgow, October 5, 1652," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 12 (2016): 262–283, and a refined text in *Collected Sermons of James Durham*, vol. 1 (2017), 916–940.]

there differed from some great men; yet has he carried the difference with so much meekness, and so few irritating or reflecting expressions, dealing only by the strength of simple reason, that he has cast a copy worthy to be followed by others in this eristic [*controversial*] age. 3. Some apprehension, that to not a few, that way of touching upon some questions might be more pleasing and taking. 4. To prevent drowning, as it were, in following the series and tract of the story and commentary, according to the practice of several learned and worthy men in their writings upon the Scripture. 5. Because the clearing of some places along the book itself did call for several of them. 6. That if they might any way at all be useful, they should not altogether perish, there having been no other convenient way for the publishing of them. And indeed it had been a pity to have smothered and kept them from seeing the light, for I had sometimes heard him in his sickness profess, that (however feckless [*weak*] they were) as he had peace in his mind, that there was no new, uncouth or strange thing in them, so he could not deny but that sometimes in them and other parts of the book, he had found God sensibly assisting and carrying him through beyond his own expectation.

Now, desiring that these labors of the author, which were intermixed with much prayer to God—for, all the while he was a-lecturing upon this Scripture, and since, there was a considerable part of a day every week extraordinarily set apart for prayer, as for other causes, so, no doubt, for seeking God’s help in that work—desiring, I say, that these prayerful labors of his may be richly blessed of God to you, for making you read the Revelation (which, it may be, has lien by you, for most of it at least, as a sealed book hitherto) with more understanding, edification, and comfort than ever, and desiring withal, that the bright and *Morning Star*, who holds the stars in His right hand, may illuminate and fix many stars of such magnitude, and keep them long brightly shining in the firmament of His Church, for the direction, guidance and comfort thereof in these cloudy and sad times, I am, at least would be, Christian,

Thy servant for Christ’s sake,  
in the work of the gospel,

*Glasgow, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of  
September, 1658  
John Carstairs<sup>6</sup>*

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6. The family name was spelled variously at this time. The son, Principal William, usually spelled his name as Carstairs, while his father John used and is usually designated Carstares (William Ferrie, *Notices of the Life of the Rev. John Carstaires* [1843], I, note). In all other of Durham’s works which he prefaced, he signs either with J.C. or anonymously, due to modesty or because of the danger of the times. See some history of Carstares’ involvement in Durham’s works in the Editor’s Preface to *A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (2018), and the Introduction to *Collected Sermons of James Durham: 61 Sermons* (2017).

## TO THE READER

READER,

Being desired to speak my knowledge of this subsequent work, I acknowledge that I was one who frequently encouraged the author to let it go abroad. For, however, he had no time to polish it, and what is here, almost all, was taken from his mouth by the pen of an ordinary hearer; yet I am assured the matter of it, as I heard it weekly delivered, is so precious as cannot but be very welcome and acceptable to the world of believers. I am confident that the gracious design which some worthy brethren among us have in hand,<sup>1</sup> and have now far advanced to the good satisfaction of all who have tasted of the first fruits of their labors, of making the body of holy Scriptures plain and useful to vulgar capacities, is not a little furthered by this piece. For albeit with greater length (as the nature of the book of necessity did require) than these brethren's design of shortness admits, yet it makes very plain and useful that, without all question, hardest of all Scriptures. This I can say, that diverse of the most obscure texts of that holy book, which I understood little at the beginning of his lecture, before he closed his exercise, were made to me so clear that I judged his exposition might well be acquiesced into without much more debate.

That wit were more than ordinary weak which durst promise from the pen of any man a clear and certain exposition of all the Revelation before the day of performance of these very deep and mysterious prophesies. It was not for naught that most judicious Calvin and acute Bèze, with many other profound divines, would never be moved to attempt any explication of that book. Yet I hope I may make bold to affirm without hazard of any heavy censure, that there is here laid such a bridge over that very deep river, that whoever goes over it, shall have cause to bless God for the author's labor.

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1. Baillie refers to the plan inspired by David Dickson to provide commentaries for the common people on books of the Bible. Durham contributed this commentary on Revelation, and on Song of Solomon. His Lectures on Job may have been envisioned along the same lines, but this was not published until 1759. George Hutcheson published a commentary on Job, and on John, and on the minor prophets. James Ferguson provided commentaries on Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, and Ephesians. Alexander Nisbet wrote on Peter's Epistles and on Ecclesiastes. Dickson also published works on Paul's Epistles, Matthew, Hebrews and the Psalms (Cf. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology*, edited by Nigel M. de S. Cameron, David F. Wright, David C. Lachman, and Donald E. Meek [IVP: 1993] 309–310). Robert Blair left a commentary on Proverbs in manuscript in 1666, and Wodrow records two copies of it existing in 1728 (*Analec̄ta* [1843], 3.484); current whereabouts unknown. Samuel Rutherford wrote on Isaiah, the loss of which M'Ward mourned in an early edition of Rutherford's letters. Robert Douglas was also supposedly assigned to write.]

The epistle [by John Carstairs] speaks to the man. I shall add but this one word, that from the day I was employed by the presbytery to preach and pray and to impose, with others, hands upon him for the ministry at Glasgow, I did live to the very last with him in great and uninterrupted love, and in a high estimation of his egregious [*remarkable*] enduements [*accomplishments*], which made him to me precious among the most excellent divines I have been acquainted with in the whole isle. O if it were the good pleasure of the Master of the vineyard to plant many such noble vines in this land! I hope many more of his labours shall follow this first, and that the more quickly as this receives the due and expected acceptance.

*Thine in the Lord,  
Robert Baillie*



## A BRIEF VIEW OF THE SERIES OF THE WHOLE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

THIS WHOLE BOOK is formed by way of an epistle.<sup>1</sup>

*Chapter 1.* Beside some general circumstances, the matter of the book generally is divided in these two: 1. The things that then were, or the present state of these churches especially. 2. The things that were to come on the church in general, to the end of the world.

*Chapters 2 and 3* contain the first part, the present condition of these seven churches, set out in seven several [*distinct*] epistles, showing their case, and reproving or commending accordingly, as was requisite. And withal, adding directions, warnings, threatenings, and consolations suitable to their respective conditions, which though expressly directed to these, yet are alike useful to all in such cases to the end.

*Chapters 4 and 5* contain the preface introductory to the main and prophetic part of this book: where God the Creator is set on His throne, and His glory as absolute supreme Lord of all is set down, having all events determined in His counsel, as in a book that is sealed, in the which no creature can pry to reveal them, except Jesus Christ, who by the executing of His office of mediatorship, is found worthy to be admitted on God's eternal secrets concerning the church: Who therefore in that fifth chapter receives these as in a book, sealed with seven seals, which he opens distinctly (keeping the same comparison) in the chapters following, which contain three principle and other three explicatory prophesies; the three principle prophesies of seals, trumpets and vials, deducing the events from that time to the end by several steps, and the explicatory prophesies, clearing what was more shortly or obscurely set down in the other, and contemporating [*combining*] with them, or some part of them.

*Chapter 6.* We have the first principle prophesy of the seals, which sets forth the state of the church under its first period, to wit, of heathenish persecution. In it the church is first discovered as flourishing in respect of the gospel's thriving (seal 1); then as bloody in respect of persecution (seal 2); after that, as decaying and losing much of its beauty, not only by the persecution of enemies but by the contests and failings that were in and amongst her friends (seal 3); after which, persecution came to a vehement height as if death had been loosed against the church in the last part of the ten persecutions (seal 4); whereupon the souls cry to God, as being at an

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1. This overview first appeared at the end of the 1658 first edition. Since this edition will present the text in three volumes, D. V., it has been placed at the front of the first volume.