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EDITORIAL

This edition of the Bulletin includes two articles that relate to Jonathan Edwards's theology. Edwards was one of the most renowned puritan preachers. During his ministry he witnessed a revival, which then faded, but then returned and there was an even more widespread awakening. During this time evangelical Christianity made significant advances in the west.

It cannot be a coincidence that momentous events happened around figures such as Edwards. Psalms 80 and 85, which are concerned with restoration and revival in a broken land, indicate knowledge of God and his past works are keys to recovery. Edwards's command of scripture is readily apparent in his writings. His observations and writings are formed through his understanding of the Bible. He was famous for his devotion to God's word. Crossway recently produced an interleaved edition of the Bible, which follows Edward's practice of inserting a blank page for notes alongside each page of the Bible.¹

Puritans are rightly remembered for applying Christian truth. These preachers were masters of practical theology. Their profound knowledge of God and his works was matched by their ability to apply that knowledge to the hearer. Puritan preachers skilfully applied the gospel, through prayer and study. This was not an easy task! The Westminster Public Directory of Worship identifies sermon application as an especially difficult task for a preacher, 'albeit it prove a work of great difficulty to himself, requiring much prudence, zeal, and meditation'.² Today we still benefit from the labours which produced the spiritual fruit of that time, especially through the puritan writings.

Edwards's *The Religious Affections*, referred to in Fergus Macdonald's article, is one such book. He draws extensively from scripture in order to discern characteristics that belong to a lively Christian faith. His book gathers numerous examples of behaviours evident among biblical characters, providing evidence for what may or may not indicate genuine Christian faith.

When we think of those who skilfully and wisely apply scripture, Christ is pre-eminent. The Lord faithfully applies the word in every circumstance and interaction. That is one reason why the gospels make for such compelling reading. Through observing Christ we learn from his knowledge and application of God's word.

¹ Edwards's notes are available to read online through the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University: <edwards.yale.edu>.

² The Westminster Directory for Public Worship, Sec 6.

After his resurrection, Christ showed from the Law, Prophets and Psalms how he had fulfilled the whole of scripture. He taught his disciples the whole of God's word and gave them comprehensive understanding of its meaning. His knowledge and use of the scriptures formed his disciples.

Christ's influence among his disciples, forming them with scripture, was recently impressed upon me while preaching through the Book of Revelation. John's knowledge of the Bible is evident throughout the text. He is thoroughly familiar with it and it is therefore natural for him to record the vision in biblical terms. He freely draws from the Old Testament in describing what he sees.

The same can be said of the other disciples when we consider their use of scripture in the New Testament. Each page makes use of the Old Testament. Faith in Christ leads to an increase in the knowledge of God (Colossian 1:9-10). Evidently that comes through God's word.

As we learn from Christ, so we also learn from those who have walked most closely to him. So readers of the Bulletin will hopefully be spurred on from the articles here to read Jonathan Edwards. His insights cause us to turn to the Bible and consequently to Christ, to observe God at work in ways we have perhaps not observed before, filling us then with the desire to know more of him and his works. With the Bible open, and with faith in Christ, we can trust a good harvest for him will follow.

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Revd Kapolyo's paper was the Finlayson Memorial Lecture, delivered at the 2018 SETS conference, 'Learning with the Global Church' in Glasgow on 16 April 2018.