

David Culy Short Biographical Sketch

David Culy was a native of Guyhirn, a small village near the town of Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. He was converted, according to his own account, {in the year 1687,} under the ministry of Francis Holcroft {essentially the harbinger of Nonconformity in Cambridgeshire, and dubbed 'the apostle of Cambridgeshire'} whose preaching was blessed "to my conversion, though very dark at the first." About a year after his conversion to Christ, the "Lord sent me out to preach the Gospel of his Son, whose voice I obeyed." Thus his ministry {though somewhat unofficially} began at his own sister's house at Guyhirn, {being a widow,} "to whom the Lord blessed my ministry, along with many others of my relations." After gathering a small number of such, according to Divine Appointment, "as should be saved," {Acts 2:47,} it was his desire that they should be joined to some assembly of like-minded brethren, and thus he went up to Cambridge, "thinking to join myself to a church there in being." After he "spoke his experience," and the church {probably the Green Street Meeting, one of Holcroft's Congregations, or the Cambridge 'Great Meeting' at Hog Hill, formed in 1687, and which was to become the church over which Joseph Hussey took oversight in 1691,} there validating his testimony of the grace of God, with an open hand of fellowship in the Gospel of Christ; the Lord, as it would so be determined, ordered his path elsewhere, for his heart was "drawn away from that church." At that time, knowing no other church, but a "Baptist Church, and that I could not join," {probably, the so-called Particular Baptist Church at Wisbech, pastored by William Rix, who was thought to have preached on occasion amongst the General Baptists in that region, thus unveiling his compromised position,} and being brought under great turmoil of mind on this account, the Lord brought his attention to his unalterable Truth as found in Job, "but he is in one mind, and who can turn him; and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth," {23:13,} revitalizing his assurance in those grand truths of God's sovereignty, and the fact that the Lord was working all things in accordance with his purpose and grace.

"A very short time after it pleased the Lord to send Mr. Richard Davis, {pastor of the Independent Church at Rothwell, and a man of remarkable energy and zeal for the cause of the Gospel; establishing several congregations, amongst them the Church at Guyhirn, where Culy was to minister,} and some others of the same, to visit us, to whom the Lord knit my heart immediately. So myself, and a few others, {Culy and five others from the region were received into membership in September of 1691,} went up to Rothwell the next church meeting, and were taken into fellowship." He continues, "not long after, the church of Christ at Rothwell had meetings at Guyhirn where we lived, and many were added to the church. In some time the church chose me as an Elder {this was in 1692} to help rule {a ruling Elder, over the newly gathered congregation} in that capacity; and soon after the Lord cast me by his providence to preach about Thetford where some of the members of the same church lay. So those at Guyhirn and those at Thetford consulted together and agreed to break off from the church at Rothwell to 'inchurch' together by themselves; and so we wrote to the church for our demission, to which the church willingly granted, {this was in July of 1693,} and sent their pastor and others, to see us sit down together in Gospel Order demanding of us whether we were all seated together in the same faith and order which we covenanted with them. We all answered in the same, and so gave up ourselves to the Lord and to one another in a covenant witnessing of it, by the lifting up of our hands."

The "covenant" referenced was no doubt the "Church Covenant" of the Rothwell Assembly, which was drawn up by Mr. Davis himself, a few years prior; from which church compact we extract the following lengthy paragraph, to perhaps shed a bit of light, {obviously, apart from the efficacious work of the LORD himself in separating them from all idolatry, &c.,} upon the principles of separation which would distinguish these followers of Christ, for many years to follow. The church covenant towards its conclusion reads as follows: "We do also resolve as a Royal Priesthood in our Profession, Ordinances, Walk and Conversation, with the loss of our Names, Lives and Liberties, our Reputations and Estates, and everything that is dear unto us; to bear our Testimony against all false Churches and Worship whatsoever. Namely; against the Mother of Harlots and all her Daughters; and we likewise protest against Idolatry, Superstition, Imposition and Persecution, wherever and whatsoever; and in love to

Him, and Honor of His Crown, who first loved us, we resolve and engage by the assistance of the Grace that is in Him, to have nothing to do, nor go near their false Worship, unless it be to testify against them, that we will withdraw from them, and that we will not join with those that join with them, who are confederates against Christ. And this Testimony we engage in Christ's Presence to bear every way, and in every place whatever, even in Courts of Judicature, and at the Place of Execution if called thereto."

Oddly enough, it would appear that there was some sort of a 'falling out' amongst Davis and Culy, in the years which followed, for which Culy was brought to contrition, and an acknowledgement of his error before the Lord. In the book, A VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION AND UNION BEFORE FAITH, published by Davis in 1698, we find these interesting words, "surely he {a Mr. Coleman who was slandering the ministry of Davis} had no cause to make any reflections, or to take up a reproach against the Church at Rowell, and me, because of the offensive, unsound and exorbitant expressions of the said David Culy, forasmuch as we testified against them, and faithfully admonished and reprov'd him for them, which it pleased the Lord graciously to succeed unto his conviction and repentance, so that he openly retracted them, and declared his sorrow and contrition for them." Whatever this was in reference to, it's remarkable to find him humbled under the mighty hand of the Lord, to an open acknowledgement of his own transgression, and an acknowledgement of the truth as it is in Jesus. {Eph.4:21}

Like his predecessor before him, Culy was fervently engaged in proclaiming the precious truths of an accomplished Salvation in Christ, and was instrumental in establishing a number of churches in the area; and so widespread was his influence, that those that were named amongst his 'followers' are said to have styled him the 'Bishop of Guyhirn.' It is said that a vast majority of the inhabitants of Guyhirn became his 'disciples,' as did many persons at Whittlesea, Wisbech, St. Mary's, Outwell, and Upwell, until at length his flock, {from so small beginnings,} was increased to seven or eight hundred. Those in the area even called them 'Culimites,' a term of derision, no doubt.

Of interest is a short excerpt from the British Weekly for April 30th, 1914, where there is an Article by the Editor on "Baptist Country Ministers" in which he refers with some appreciation to David Culy, "we wish we had room to write about David Culy, whose Chapel was at Guyhirn, near Wisbech. Mr. Culy was the son of one of those who helped to drain the Fen country. He wrote a book giving his theological views, which was very widely circulated, and he gathered a church which he served as pastor. He became the head of a sect long known as Culimites, which continued for about a hundred years after his decease. The doctrine and practice of the Culimites are said to have resembled those of the High Calvinistic Baptists who were very numerous in Fenland."

Towards the conclusion of his earthly pilgrimage, Culy moved to Billingham to live out his remaining years. Culy died about the year 1725; and tradition says that he was buried in an obscure corner of the village graveyard. Shortly after his death, there appeared a book entitled, "The Works of Mr. David Culy, in Three Parts. I. The Glory of the Two Crowned Heads; Adam and Christ, Unveiled or the Mystery of the New Testament opened. II. Letters and Answers to and from several Ministers of Divers Persuasions, on various subjects. III. Above forty Hymns composed. The first part of the book {Glory of the Two Crowned Heads} was reprinted in 1800, by Samuel Reece, of Plymouth Dock, to which were added his own notes, critical and explanatory; and also a letter by Martin Luther on the topic of Predestination.