



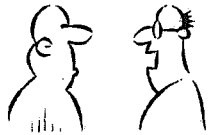
*ADVANCING THE  
CHRISTIAN TRADITION  
IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM*

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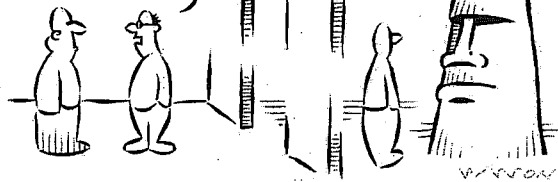
I'M WORRIED ABOUT TOM-  
HE SEEMS TO HAVE A REAL  
PROBLEM WITH IDOLATRY.



OH YEAH? WHAT LIKE  
WEALTH, POSSESSIONS,  
THAT TYPE OF THING?



WELL, NOT REALLY...



## OLIVER HEYWOOD: PURITAN LUMINARY



JOEL R. BEEKE

Oliver Heywood was the third son born to Richard and Alice Heywood in Little Lever, near Bolton, Lancashire, in 1630. His parents brought him up under a continual round of sermon attendance characteristic of the most zealous Puritans and with a library of godly Reformation and Puritan writers. They sent Oliver to Bolton's grammar school to study with William Rathband, the suspended curate at Little Lever, and then with George Rudhall, schoolmaster of Horwich in the adjacent parish of Deane, whose spirituality profoundly impacted him. Heywood matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1647, where he was greatly influenced by the preaching of Samuel Hammond at St. Giles's Church. He also enjoyed spiritual fellowship with other students. He later wrote of his university years, "My time and thoughts were most employed on practical divinity, and experimental truths were most vivifying to my soul: I preferred Perkins, Bolton, Preston, and Sibbes far above Aristotle [and] Plato."

After earning a bachelor of arts degree in 1650, Heywood

began to preach. His uncle, Francis Critchlaw, recommended him as preacher for Coley Chapel, near the village of Northowram, in the parish of Halifax, West Riding. Heywood accepted the position and was ordained at the age of twenty-one at Bury, Lancashire. His younger brother, Nathaniel, was a pastor at Illingworth Chapel, in the same parish of Halifax. The two lived together for about a year.

In 1655, Heywood moved to Northowram after marrying Elizabeth, the daughter of John Angier. She died after giving birth to three sons. One of the sons died as an infant; the other two, John and Ebenezer, became ministers.

Heywood introduced Presbyterian church order to his congregation in 1657, including the setting up of an eldership, church discipline, and monthly communion. That roused considerable opposition, particularly from the more prosperous members of the church who opposed his ministry, but Heywood persevered despite the ensuing split in his congregation.

Heywood was a royalist as well as a Presbyterian. Though he took no part in the insurrection led by George Booth in 1659, Heywood disobeyed the order requiring public thanksgiving for its suppression. Consequently, he was apprehended and threatened with sequestration. Upon hearing the news that General Monck had sided with the king, Heywood privately rejoiced. He wrote a psalm of praise in his diary.

With the Restoration, Heywood's real troubles began. Richard Hooke, the new vicar of Halifax, prohibited baptism in the remote chapels. Heywood continued to baptize, however, hoping to maintain peace by sending periodic gifts to the vicar. On January 23, 1661, authorities stopped his "private fast" against church practices that violated his Presbyterian principles. Stephen Ellis, a wealthy parishioner who, along with others, favored the restoration of the prayer book, laid a copy of the Book of Common Prayer in the pulpit on August 25, 1661. Heywood quietly moved it to one side.

Ellis reported the matter, and Heywood was ordered to report to York on September 13. After several hearings, he was suspended from ministering in the diocese of York. He

continued to preach for some weeks, but within a month of the Act of Uniformity (August 24, 1662), he was excommunicated. That sentence was read publicly in several churches over the following months. Attempts were even made to forbid him from attending church. Meanwhile, Ellis, who served as church warden, demanded that Heywood pay fines for failing to attend services at Coley Chapel.

Though by law Heywood was now a "silenced" minister, he regularly led secret worship services at the houses of Presbyterian landowners and farmers. His sermons drew large crowds, attracting all kinds of people. When the Five Mile Act went into effect, Heywood became an itinerant evangelist in the northern counties. He gave thanks for his new work, believing that the act of forcing ejected ministers into new localities promoted rather than hindered the nonconformist cause.

In 1667, Heywood married Abigail, daughter of James Crompton of Brightmet in the parish of Bolton, Lancashire. Three years later he was arrested after preaching at Little Woodhouse, near Leeds. He was released after two days, but all his goods were seized to meet the fine under the new Conventicle Act.

During his years of roving ministry, Heywood wrote a number of books on practical divinity, which he distributed freely among his friends and wherever he preached. The most important of these were *Heart Treasure* (1667), *Closet Prayer, a Christian Duty* (1671), and *Life in God's Favour* (1679). He also became well known for his pastoral heart and as a man of prayer, all of which is reaffirmed in his diary.

When the royal indulgence of 1672 went into effect, Heywood applied for two licenses as a Presbyterian teacher, one for his own house at Northowram and the other for the house of John Butterworth at Warley, in the parish of Halifax. More than a hundred of his former parishioners entered with him into a church covenant. When the licenses were revoked in 1675, Heywood became an itinerant preacher again.

In 1685, Heywood was fined at the Wakefield sessions for "a riotous assembly" in his house, but he refused to pay the fine. Consequently, he was imprisoned in York Castle for

nearly a year. He approved of King James II's declaration for liberty of conscience in 1687 and immediately built a meetinghouse at Northowram, to which he later added a school.

The agreement between Presbyterians and Congregationalists in London (1691), known as the "happy union," was introduced to Yorkshire mainly through Heywood's influence. On September 2, 1691, Heywood preached at a house in Wakefield to twenty-four preachers of the two denominations, where the agreement was adopted. The meeting was the first of several assemblies of nonconformist divines of West Riding, which granted preaching licenses and arranged ordinations.

For the last ten years of his life, Heywood was greatly distressed by the gradual decline in orthodoxy in some of his colleagues. He kept up his evangelistic work with unimpaired vigor until the end of 1699.

In 1700, Heywood's asthmatic condition worsened, such that his ministry was confined to the area in and around Northowram. Nevertheless, his diary for 1700 records that, in addition to his regular Sabbath ministry, he still managed to preach forty-five weekday sermons, conduct twenty-two fasts, and attend eight ministers' conferences. Near the end of 1701, he noted in his diary that he had to be carried to his meetinghouse in a chair—"as had Calvin." He wrote to a friend:

I have now been above fifty years laboring in the Lord's vineyard, studying, praying, and preaching both at home and abroad, wherever the providence of God called me. I have reached nearly two years beyond the age of man, and am, as may be supposed, incapacitated for traveling. A very sore asthma, or difficulty of breathing, adds considerably to the weight of my other infirmities, so that I am most confined to my own house, and can only study, preach in my chapel, and exercise myself in writing books and sermons for those that desire them.

Heywood died at Northowram on May 4, 1702. He was buried in a chapel of Halifax Church, in his mother's grave. Throughout nearly a half century of ministry, Heywood held

the ministerial office in high esteem. "To be instrumental in converting a sinner is to do more than Alexander did in conquering the world," he said.

Richard Slate compiled Heywood's works in the early-nineteenth century and published them in 1825 in five volumes. While Heywood is not widely known today, he had a solid influence in Lancashire. His diaries, printed in four volumes, offer an excellent account of Lancashire history. They reveal their author to be a man of feeling, depth, and commitment to hard work. Heywood preached 3,027 sermons, kept 1,256 fasts, observed 314 thanksgiving days, and traveled over 31,000 miles during the course of his ministry. Looking back on his own life, Heywood records his indebtedness to God's grace in this way:

That I should be a public preacher above 44 years, have such measure of health, liberty, opportunities, more than most of my brethren, some good success and fruit of my poor labours, marry famous Mr. Angier's daughter, print so many books, enjoy so many comforts of life, bring up two sons to be ministers, build a chapel, help so many ministers and Christians in their necessities by myself and others . . . I record not for ostentation but to set off the riches of grace.

*(The Rev. Oliver Heywood . . . his autobiography, diaries, anecdote and event books, ed. J. H. Turner, 3:297)*

William Sheils concludes:

Heywood's life formed a bridge between the puritan tradition of early and mid-century England, the years following the Restoration when dissent was outlawed and many ministers, Heywood included, suffered imprisonment as a result of their preaching, and the years after the revolution of 1688 when toleration was granted and dissenting ministers could operate from settled congregations with their own chapels.

Throughout these years, Heywood was "the pre-eminent figure in northern nonconformity" (*Oxford DNB*, 26:975).

## AUTHOR

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**A** primary concern of evangelical critics of the New Perspective on Paul (NP) is that the doctrine of justification by faith will be lost, or at least fudged. But to my knowledge, no proponent of an NP reading denies that Paul taught justification by grace through faith in Christ. Likewise, no NP proponent as far as I am aware denies that Paul would also have rejected any notion that a person can earn salvation.

MICHAEL B. THOMPSON