



Escape from Kyiv

Orysya Melnyk tells us her personal story

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Boris flip-flops over conversion therapy

By Mike Judge, Editor

In an astonishing period lasting less than 24 hours, Prime Minister Boris Johnson decided to drop a ban on so-called 'conversion therapy', but then he backtracked under pressure from LGBT campaigners.

It was announced there will be a conversion therapy ban after all, but it will only cover homosexuality and not transgenderism.

A group of church leaders then wrote to Boris Johnson to express 'considerable concern' over the government's decision to press ahead with a ban.

They are concerned because a new criminal ban in this area has the potential to limit the freedom to preach, pray, pastor, or parent in line with biblical beliefs about marriage and sexual ethics.

The letter from church ministers – signed by pastors including Ray Brown, Matthew Roberts, and Graham Nicholls – says dropping the ban altogether was 'exactly the right approach'.

They told the prime minister the ban was unnecessary, pointing out that 'coercive and abusive practices are already well covered in UK law'.

The drama began on the evening of 31 March, after the April edition of ET had gone to print. A high-level government document was leaked to ITV's LGBT correspondent, Paul Brand, a leading advocate for the ban.

The document set out plans for how to drop the ban in the least controversial way, and government sources at first confirmed that this was the prime minister's intention.

The government memo – which has since been published in full on the ET website – says that the research basis for a ban is doubtful.

It also estimates that 30 MPs feel strongly against a ban, 30 strongly for it, and most others are 'neutral' or had yet to take a position.

But within hours of this document being leaked, LGBT activists in the media and elsewhere put enormous

pressure on Number 10, and the prime minister speedily backtracked.

So a ban on conversion therapy remains a government proposal, albeit the ban won't cover transgenderism.

A campaign by LGBT activists has started, which aims to get transgenderism included once again in a conversion therapy ban.

Activists decided to boycott the UK's first international LGBT conference, called 'Safe To Be Me', leading to its cancellation.

Meanwhile, Boris Johnson waded into the wider debate about transgenderism, saying trans women shouldn't compete in female sporting events.

And cabinet minister Jacob Rees-Mogg said on LBC Radio, 'The Bible gives the best answer to this, Genesis 1:27, God made man in his own image, he made man, he made woman, he made both of them. I think God making us in his image is quite good enough for me.'

Comment, p.10



Prime Minister Boris Johnson (Credit: Number 10 / Flickr)

Finnish MP wins free speech case

In an important victory for free speech, a politician in Finland has been cleared of all criminal charges after she tweeted a Bible verse. Päivi Räsänen and her co-defendant Bishop Pohjola were charged with hate crimes for sharing their beliefs about marriage and sexual

ethics. In dismissing all the charges, the judge said, 'It is not for the district court to interpret biblical concepts.' The prosecution was ordered to pay more than 60,000 euros in legal costs. They may yet lodge an appeal.

Further coverage, p.8

Ukrainian Evangelical dean killed

The dean of an evangelical seminary in Ukraine has been killed in the country's conflict with Russia. Vitaly Vinogradov was the academic dean of the Kyiv Slavic Evangelical Seminary. He has been confirmed as one of the hundreds found dead in the town

of Bucha. Confirming his death, the seminary said, 'Vitaliy Vinogradov our dear brother and co-worker was found dead in Bucha. There are no words to express the sorrow of our hearts. He will be greatly missed!'

Further coverage, p.9

National News

Abortion 'pills by post' scheme will now be made permanent after MPs voted 215 to 188 in favour

A temporary policy of allowing women to order abortion pills through the post and have an abortion at home will become permanent, after a vote in Parliament.

The scheme was already controversial when it was brought in provisionally to cover the Covid crisis, when lockdown meant women could not get to abortion clinics.

But now MPs have voted to make it permanent, despite concerns about women's safety and the inevitable rise in the number of abortions.

MPs voted 215 to 188 in favour of Baroness Sugg's amendment to the Health and Care Bill.

Over 70 Conservative MPs voted with Labour and other members to ensure that at-home early medical abortion will be maintained.

This is despite several freedom of information reports and medical testimonies as to the unsafe nature of allowing women to perform their own abortions.

In addition, women's rights groups have warned of the lack of safeguarding and protection for mothers who could be coerced into having an abortion.



Pro-life groups, including the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, highlighted the figures since the scheme came into effect.

A statement from SPUC said the government had 'ignored the evidence that 10,000 women have needed further hospital treatment after accessing this service'.

And campaign group Right to Life called this 'the largest change to abortion legislation since 1967'.

It warned the vote 'would likely lead to the loss of many more lives to abortion, along with having a strong negative impact on the physical and emotional health of women'.

Catherine Robinson, spokesperson for the group, said, 'The MPs who have voted for this amendment have voted to remove vital safeguards including an in-person appointment with a medical professional.'

'This will put thousands more women at risk from 'DIY' home abortion services.'

Andrea Williams, chief executive of Christian Concern, said, 'This vote will have dire consequences for women, who will not receive the proper medical support they need and more easily be coerced by partners and family members.'

She added the vote sent 'a message to women in crisis pregnancies that this is the best we can offer you – to have a traumatic and unsafe abortion at home, often alone, without any clinical examination or private in-person conversation'.

The vote means the 1967 Abortion Act will be amended, bringing England into line with Wales, which recently decided to make the scheme permanent. Scotland plans to do the same.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Boris enters trans debate

Prime Minister Boris Johnson jumped into the debate about transgender athletes by saying he doesn't think trans women should be competing in female events. He said, 'I don't think that biological men should be competing in female sporting events.' He also said parents must have 'involvement at the very least' in their child's gender decision.

Warning given over trafficking

Christian campaigners have warned the Scottish government to set out a strategy to protect Ukrainian refugees being exploited and trafficked into the UK. The Scottish government has committed to being a 'super sponsor'. More than 1,000 Ukrainians have applied to seek refuge in Scotland, with no cap on how many can apply.

Internet bill is dangerous

The government's well-meaning Online Safety Bill is 'dangerous' and 'authoritarian', according to former cabinet minister David Davis. Writing in *The Sunday Express* in April, he said that, as it stands, the bill 'could be the biggest accidental curtailment of free speech in modern history'. The censorship of legal content with limited scrutiny is a particular worry.

Anger over BBC 'women' article

BBC News was forced to backtrack after it published an online article about endometriosis referring to people who were 'assigned female at birth' instead of calling them 'women'. But after significant backlash online, and numerous complaints which the BBC refused to elaborate on, the article was changed to include the word 'women'.

'Huge mistake' as 'reckless' quickie divorce law comes into force in England and Wales, breaking up families

New laws allowing for quickie divorce have come into force in England and Wales, but pro-marriage campaigners say it is a 'huge mistake' which will cause more family breakups.

The Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 came into effect on 6 April. Under the new law, couples can divorce in six months without having to give a reason and a spouse cannot contest the decision.

Previously, anyone wanting to divorce their spouse had to prove their marriage had irretrievably broken down through either adultery, unreasonable behaviour, or separation for two years with their spouse's consent, or five years without.

Colin Hart, Chairman of Coalition for Marriage (C4M), said, 'We are extremely disappointed that the Government has ignored all the data and strong arguments against speeding up the process, under the delusion that no-fault divorce will somehow prevent hurt feelings and bad break ups. They will not.'

'What these changes will do is hasten the divorce process, in some cases by many years, leading to a spike in the number of break ups.'

'We suspect these include many of the thousands of divorces a year that were started under the old system but were subsequently abandoned, as couples, given the space and support they needed, realised they were better off staying together.'

'The government is making a huge mistake ploughing on with these reckless changes – a mistake that will be measured not just by cold official statistics, but by broken families and ruined lives. We hope they think again.'

The new law includes a statutory 20-week period that the Ministry of Justice describes as an opportunity for couples 'to reflect and turn back'.

But some divorce lawyers think the new quickie divorce laws are not quick enough, and are calling for further liberalisation.

Katie O'Callaghan, a partner at London-based law firm Boodle Hatfield, claimed



Colin Hart, Coalition For Marriage

the requirement to 'pause for reflection' under the new law was an 'unnecessary' delay which is 'stringing out' the divorce process.

Ciarán Kelly, Deputy Director of The Christian Institute, responded by saying, 'The ink is barely dry on the quickie divorce law and the calls have begun to make divorce faster still.'

'The reflection period for couples in difficulty is already disgracefully short. More

time is needed to help couples reconcile, not less.'

At the same time as quickie divorce is introduced in England and Wales, a major study suggests that divorce has a bigger impact on a child than the death of a parent.

The study, published by Demographic Research and based on data from 17 countries, shows experiencing divorce has a particularly detrimental impact on children of higher-educated parents.

Doctor awaits appeal ruling on whether belief in Genesis 1:27 is compatible with human dignity

A Christian doctor is waiting for the Employment Appeal Tribunal to rule that belief in Genesis 1:27 is compatible with human dignity.

Back in 2019, in a shocking decision, an employment judge ruled that Dr David Mackereth's belief in Genesis 1:27 is 'incompatible with human dignity'.

The case dates back to 2018 when Dr Mackereth – an A&E doctor with 28 years' experience – was sacked as a medical assessor for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) after refusing to identify clients by their chosen gender instead of their biological sex.

He took the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

to court, claiming they had breached his right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

An employment tribunal considered his case in 2019 and heard that Dr Mackereth refused to refer to 'any 6ft-tall bearded man' as 'madam'. But the tribunal dismissed his case, ruling that the DWP had not discriminated against him.

In the 2019 ruling, the employment tribunal stated, 'belief in Genesis 1:27, lack of belief in transgenderism and conscientious objection to transgenderism, in our judgment are incompatible with human dignity and conflict with the fundamental rights of others, specifically here, transgender individuals.'

Genesis 1:27 says, 'So God created man in his own image;

in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'

Dr Mackereth's legal team has now had a hearing at the Employment Appeal Tribunal, following Maya Forstater's landmark win in June 2021 at the same legal stage.

Finding in favour of Forstater, Mr Justice Choudhury ruled that the original tribunal had 'erred in law' when it judged her belief that sex is assigned at birth as 'incompatible with human dignity.'

It is hoped the ruling in the Forstater case will be helpful in the Mackereth appeal.

Speaking ahead of his appeal hearing, Dr Mackereth said, 'My case affects everyone, not just me and Bible-believing Christians, but anyone who is



Dr David Mackereth (Credit: Christian Legal Centre)

concerned by compelled speech and transgender ideology being enforced on the NHS and other public services.

'The judgment from two years ago said to Christians,

"You have to believe in transgender ideology." That is totalitarianism. It made out Christianity to be nothing, the Bible to be nothing. That cannot be allowed to stand.'

Presbyterian Church warns about power grab over sex education in Northern Ireland

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has warned that schools may find their teaching on sex education undermined by the latest political 'power grab' by the Northern Ireland secretary.

The PCI said that Brandon Lewis, the secretary of state for NI, had written a 'blank cheque' from Westminster to overrule and undermine how schools teach sex education.

The 'blank cheque' of which the PCI warned was Lewis's recent move to overrule NI's Executive on abortion.

In 2021, Westminster granted Lewis new powers to force the Stormont Executive to commission abortion services nationwide by 31 March this year.

But in March, Lewis expressed his intention to take further powers, including those relating to sex education in NI.

In an open letter, the PCI wrote, 'We deeply regret the secretary of state's continued and unhelpful intention to take further powers from the NI Assembly in relation to such sensitive issues in our society.'

It called Lewis's move a 'power grab [that] would devalue the Province's purposely balanced system of negotiated government'.

The PCI stated that the powers would allow Mr Lewis to 'take away the right of schools to embrace a particular



Brandon Lewis

ethos with regard to the teaching of relationships and sexuality education, and do so over the heads of school governors, teachers, parents and their locally elected representatives'.

The letter added, 'So far the secretary of state has imposed abortion, stated his desire to enact unacceptable legacy legislation and now his intention to direct what should be taught in classrooms.'

Swindon Evangelical Church welcomes a family of 17 refugees fleeing Ukraine

Swindon Evangelical Church has welcomed a family of 17 refugees fleeing from war-torn Ukraine.

Writing in *Premier Christianity* magazine, associate pastor Brian Whittaker says it is important for the church to be 'a beacon of light for those who most need it'.

He said, 'The family consists of Mum, Dad, and their 13 children, plus Auntie and Grandma. As they are the family of one of our church members, they were able to flee to the UK sooner than most using the Ukraine Family Scheme visa.'

'We prayed through their perilous journey across the border into Poland, and then awaited their visa approval, which required multiple six-hour round trips to the embassy.'

He added, 'They landed on British soil with just the clothes on their back and a small rucksack. They were collected by a

convoy of cars, thankfully equipped with enough car seats for all of the children!'

'The size of the family means that they are unable to stay with the Ukrainian woman in our church. Long-term the council is committed to providing them with accommodation, but in the short-term we face a huge problem.'

'We have had lots of generous offers from the church, but considering all that the family have been through, we didn't want to split them across multiple homes.'

'Thankfully, someone within our congregation has a large home which is used for Christian retreats and can comfortably sleep all 17 members of the family.'

'This is by no means a long-term solution, or even a mid-term one; the retreat is booked out for several weekends, so they need to vacate the property on those dates.'



The family of refugees

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Small but persevering: Solihull church celebrates anniversary



Conrad Pomeroy

By Keith Gunn

In early March it was a real joy to welcome some 50 people from local churches to celebrate the 47th anniversary of the founding of Chelmsley Wood Reformed Baptist Church in Solihull.

Conrad Pomeroy (Dudley Baptist Church) had been booked to speak at our 46th anniversary service in 2021, but that had been prevented by Covid restrictions.

This year's anniversary meeting, however, did go ahead. Conrad's theme for the weekend

was *deliverance*: the need for it, the experience and nature of it, and praying for it.

He said that this subject was most appropriate when one considers the present time. The need was epitomised by the life of Samson, and Conrad drew parallels between the famous judge of Israel and our Lord.

Colossians 1:13-14 was also referenced, which speaks of our experience apart from Christ and the change that is brought through redemption. Finally, we saw the need to pray that God would act in deliverance as we looked at Psalm 68.

We also reflected about our experience over the past year. Restrictions have impacted our work, and 'but for the Lord's mercies we would be consumed'. We are a small and ageing company of the Lord's people (a membership of twenty) but we long for more to join us.

Mention was also made of our first pastor, Alec Taylor, who went to be with his Saviour last November. Currently we are looking for a pastor to teach and guide us, but even in these difficult times the Lord has always provided.

Look, Listen, Learn: 400 attend OMF (UK) National Conference

By Reuben Grace

Over 400 people joined the OMF (UK) National Conference at the Hayes Conference Centre in Derbyshire over the weekend of 11–13 March. The conference took the theme of listening to and learning from the global church.

It was a delight to have Dr Federico ('Rico') G. Villanueva from the Philippines bring the main Bible teaching from Lamentations and the Psalms of lament.

As Langham Publishing Asia Regional Commissioning Editor, and the author of commentaries on Lamentations and the Psalms, Rico was well placed to share on this often-neglected theme. He drew attention to the importance of having a place for lament in our lives and churches.

His messages were powerful and certainly timely, given the Covid pandemic and recent conflict in Ukraine.

Rico also showed how Christians should feel free to manifest their grief and sorrow, and how it can precede hope, release, and deeper intimacy with God.

Turning to the Lord with our sorrows, pain, disappointments, anger, and confusion is not a sign of weakness, but in fact often an appropriate and healthy act of faith. Rico assured delegates that is 'okay not to be okay'.

Alongside seminars covering topics from mission in the workplace, creation care, and the Chinese Church in the UK, we also heard from Steve and Anna Griffiths about their work with OMF in South America, and what the Lord is doing in that part of the world.

We hope the conference brought encouragement, inspiration, and challenge, and look forward to our next National Conference in 2025. Recordings of Rico's talks from the main sessions are at omf.org/uk/looklistenlearn.



Carl Peet third from left

Oldbury Congregational Church, West Midlands, has new pastor

By John Tredgett

In February Carl Peet was inducted to the pastorate of Oldbury Congregational Church in Sandwell, West Midlands.

The position had been previously held for 40 years by Revd Bryan Jones, who retired in June 2020.

Eighteen months of vacancy, the Covid pandemic, and various lockdowns didn't get in the way of the search for a suitable successor to Bryan.

Revd Carl Peet began involvement with the church in November 2021, having served before at an FIEC church in Nottingham.

Around 100 people attended the induction, including representatives from local EFCC (Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches) and FIEC churches.

Opening prayer was led by Steve Horton (EFCC Ministry Coordinator). The background to extending and receiving the call was given by Moses Simms and by Carl, with a clear testimony to God's providence in both regards.

The charge was then brought to the new pastor by Revd Gwynne Evans (Hayes Town Chapel), applying 2 Timothy 4:2: 'Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.'

Gwynne exhorted the new pastor to remain resolute in proclaiming the message of the King.

Revd Matt Jones (Wall Heath Evangelical Free Church) brought a charge to the church from Hebrews 13:1-8, reminding them of their corporate responsibility to remember their leaders, and encouraging both pastor and church to look forward together in faith.

Revd Gwynne Evans asked the standard questions to both pastor and church, before Carl was happily inducted to the pastorate at OCC.

Deacon Moses Simms offered the right hand of fellowship on behalf of the church.

The timely relaxation of Covid restrictions meant all were able to enjoy a time of food and fellowship which concluded a richly-blessed day.



Dr Federico G. Villanueva

Church News

Obituary: Elisa Rodrigues (1963–2021)

By Bob Pritchard

Elisa Rodrigues passed into the presence of the Lord on 13 July 2021 after bravely battling ovarian cancer for four years. She was a godly lady whose love and trust in her Saviour shone throughout her life.

Elisa came from a non-Christian home. She was converted at the age of 17 and was baptised at the Evangelical Church in Feijo, not far from Lisbon in Portugal. At Feijo she met José Rodrigues and they married in 1981.

José desired to serve in Christian ministry, and in 1983 the couple were given the opportunity to come to Waterford House Evangelical Church in Strood for José to train under the guidance of Daniel Webber.

From those early days it was clear that José and Elisa had been wonderfully matched by God for the work that lay ahead of them. Elisa was a very supportive wife to José as



José and Elisa Rodrigues

he began training, and during their time in England their first son Danny was born.

They returned to Portugal in 1985, and in July 1986 began to plant a church which met in their flat in Alto do Moinho.

This was followed by a move to an apartment with a garage

which was soon converted to a meeting place for the church. During this time their second son Filipe was born.

Later the Lord provided them with the opportunity to move into their present premises, a large house over the road. Here the growing

church was able to develop a roomy meeting place on the ground floor, while José, Elisa, and their sons could live on the upper floor.

Elisa was actively involved in the Sunday school and started a women's meeting.

In later years she started a group to support pastors' wives in the Lisbon area. Many benefitted from her wise, godly counselling.

Along with José, Elisa was involved in a Christian old people's home in Lisbon where she was on the managing committee for many years. Her practical abilities were also regularly seen in youth summer camps.

In later years Elisa was very active on social media. As her illness progressed, she used this means as a way of testifying to her confidence in the Lord.

Only eternity will reveal the full extent of how God used her faithful witness to him right up to her last days on this earth.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Leadership conference

The Evangelical Alliance held an online conference in March. The programme consisted of interviews, praise, prayer, and talks, and was hosted by Gavin and Anne Calver. Speakers included Amy Orr-Ewing, Fred Drummond, Preethy Kurian, Kieran Turner, and Carl Trueman. MSP Kate Forbes was also interviewed about living out her faith in public office.

Pilgrims' homes new chairman

Pilgrims' Friends Society, which provides residential care homes with a Christian ethos, appointed Michael Abbott as Chairman of trustees from 1 April. Michael said, 'Our homes are led by very godly Christians and I see myself and fellow trustees as having oversight of a very professional team.' Michael replaces Alan Copeman, who now becomes Vice-Chairman.

100-plus attend TBS Open Day

The Trinitarian Bible Society's London headquarters opened its doors to visitors on Saturday 12 March. Over a hundred attended various events held at William Tyndale House in Morden. Tours of the facility as well as exhibitions were on offer. Presentations were also given regarding ongoing Swahili translation work and Bible distribution in Romania.

Students help with outreach

In March a team of eight students from Capernwray Bible School assisted outreach at Morley Community Church in Leeds. During a week of planned events, the students ran a charity stall for Leeds City Mission and distributed Christian literature to shoppers. They also had opportunity to speak at several primary schools and ran a 'pensioners lunch'.

Wessex Conference encourages Christians to press on with progressive sanctification

By Richard Patten

This year's Wessex Conference was entitled 'Changed from glory into glory: keeping up the progress in our progressive sanctification', and was held on 26 February at Spring Road Evangelical Church, Southampton.

Our featured speaker was Revd Chris Hand (Crich Baptist Church).

The first message was based on 2 Corinthians 3:7–4:6, as Chris showed that we are being transformed into Christ's image. The apostle Paul contrasts the law, which was glorious, with the new covenant, which is deeper, richer, and even more glorious.

Sanctification involves becoming holier, but vestiges of our old ways may cling to us. In Colossians 3 we see that it's not just putting off the wrong ways that matters but putting on the new: our minds need renewing.

Chris showed that a challenge to our progressive sanctification is that we may be drawn aside to look in the wrong places. He explained certain hindrances that are widespread in the contemporary church: false solutions, false guilt, fear, internalised injustice.

This last heading meant that we may hold on to anger and bitterness, perhaps for years, leading us to doubt God's

supreme justice, which will be perfectly fulfilled.

The second message was based on Colossians 3:1-11. We were shown how sanctification is not a matter of simply obeying rules, it is rather the image of Christ being revealed in us.

There's always more to learn of the Saviour, and he is the key. The more clearly we behold him, the more we progress.

What is paramount is making time to pray. No topics should be off-limits in prayer, and we need God's help to know ourselves. He is the physician of souls.

We should be like Christ, not only in avoidance of sin, but in the working out of great virtue. Holiness and love must go together.

Christ loves the unlovely, yet without compromising his holiness. Believers should be like the one who could weep over Jerusalem as today we encounter those seeking to expunge Christianity from the land.

Love for enemies is uniquely Christian, and learning it is part of our sanctification.

Nothing must get in the way of our sanctification. We are helped by the Bible, preachers, and the truest of friends, our Saviour. The world and the church need us to be the best we can be.

The full conference is accessible on the Spring Road Evangelical Church YouTube channel.



Chris Hand

Dewsbury conference considers the providence of God

By **Steven Bowers**

The Connected Conference at Dewsbury Evangelical Church had been planned for 2021 but was postponed due to Covid.

The theme had been agreed and Dr Matt Bingham of Oakhill College had been booked. The theme was 'Not a sparrow falls – living in the light of God's providence'.

With a lingering pandemic delaying the conference by a year, and a war in Ukraine, it was a strikingly providential subject.

Places were limited to 100 and were duly filled – many from northern churches gathered on the day for instruction and fellowship.

There were three main talks. 'Life's little details and the

sovereignty of God' was based on Matthew 10:28-31 and Ephesians 1:11.

'But God meant it for good: evil, suffering, and the sovereignty of God' formed the second address, using Genesis 50:15-21 and Romans 8:28. Not all things are good, but God works for good in all things.

'The Lord establishes your steps: decision-making and the sovereignty of God' was the final message. This was explored using a breadth of Scripture and helpful insights from Reformed confessions and classic writers.

All the talks were delivered with biblical balance, wisdom, and warmth. They afforded a fresh appreciation of the crucial doctrine of providence.

In addition to the main talks, there was an important reporting session as we heard updates from various churches.

These included works in Manchester, Birstall, Boroughbridge, South Craven, Catterick Garrison, and Wakefield. Opportunities and challenges were highlighted, and a spirit of faith and gospel labour was evident.

A brief report was given on the Pilgrim home in Mirfield run by the Pilgrims' Friend Society.

The day concluded with a Q&A session with the speaker, helpfully chaired by Luke Jenner (Grace Church Halifax). The questions reflected the impact of the day and were answered with both theological and pastoral wisdom.



Dr Matt Bingham



Essex Protestant Council holds memory verse rally for children

By **Stephen Toms**

The annual Memory Verse Rally, arranged by the Essex Protestant Council, took place at Rehoboth Strict Baptist Chapel, Sible Hedingham, on 12 March.

Children from Essex, Kent, London, and Suffolk took part, and the passage learned and recited was Psalm 113. This psalm is one of praise, and it starts and ends with the words, 'Praise ye the LORD.'

As usual, there was an extremely high standard of accuracy. Older friends were delighted to hear the Scriptures being recited so well.

Pastor Neil Pfeiffer (Swansea Evangelical Reformed Church) spoke helpfully and interestingly on the various verses in John's Gospel where the Lord Jesus Christ refers to himself as 'I am'.

Christ declares, *I am the bread of life; I am the light of the world; I am the door of the sheep; I am the good shepherd; I am the resurrection and the life; I am the way, the truth, and the life; and I am the true vine.*

Neil linked these references to the way in which God described himself to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3.

Those attending were each presented with the 'Book of Hymns for Infant Minds' by Ann and Jane Taylor. These two sisters, born in the 18th century, lived in Essex for a time and wrote many poems.

Their works are highly instructive on Scriptural subjects, and although the verses were written particularly for the young, they are very suitable for older readers as well. Jane is particularly well known for authoring 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'.

Teenage Bible weekend in Appleby

By **Andrew Walford**

In March over twenty teenagers gathered at Knock Christian Centre near Appleby for a youth weekend that included outdoor activities, indoor team games, and Bible teaching.

For some of the children it was the first time they had been to a youth weekend away. The event was jointly organised by two churches in Carlisle (Carlisle Baptist Church and St James' Parish Church).

Teaching sessions were on some of the Psalms. Attendees were taught how the Bible offers us help and a place to go when we're feeling anxious, lonely, insecure, or if it just seems like no one cares.

The participants were divided into groups and competed to win points for their team in various indoor and outdoor activities. These included

archery, a remote-control car obstacle course, and orienteering. Indoor activities involved various games and intellectual challenges.

There was an opportunity for two of the leaders to share a faithful testimony of being newly married, and their personal walk towards and alongside Jesus.

On the Sunday morning the children went back to their respective churches for the morning service, along with an invitation for their parents to also attend. Talks given at the churches were a continuation of what the children had been learning over the weekend.

Do thank God that the weekend was a success and that everyone was kept safe. Pray that the children will draw closer to God and wish to learn more about the amazing truth and unconditional love that they can discover for themselves when they accept the Saviour into their lives.



International News

Finland: Free speech victory as politician is cleared of criminal charges over Bible tweet, but prosecutors will not let it drop

A politician in Finland who faced up to six years in jail for quoting from the Bible on Twitter has been cleared of all charges.

A judge ruled that Päivi Räsänen was not guilty of hate speech, and the judge said it was 'not for the district court to interpret biblical concepts'.

Co-defendant Bishop Juhana Pohjola was also cleared of hate speech charges relating to him publishing a pamphlet on biblical marriage.

In dismissing the charges, the judge ordered the prosecution to pay more than 60,000 EUR in legal costs.

However, prosecutors say they intend to challenge the ruling in a higher court. They have until the end of April to formally lodge an appeal.

Räsänen is Finland's former minister of the interior, and a member of the Finnish Christian Democrats party.

In 2019 she tweeted a Bible verse describing homosexuality as shameful, and she took part in a radio debate sharing her biblical beliefs about marriage.

She also wrote a pamphlet in 2004 about sexual ethics, which Bishop Juhana Pohjola distributed to his congregation over 17 years ago.

Both Räsänen and the bishop were subsequently charged with hate crimes, punishable by up to six years in prison.

Responding to the victory, Räsänen said, 'I am so grateful the court recognised the threat to free speech and ruled in our favour. I feel a weight has been lifted off my shoulders after being acquitted.'

'Although I am grateful for having had this chance to stand up for freedom of speech, I hope that this ruling will help prevent others from having to go through the same ordeal.'

However, when news came that the prosecutors intended to appeal, she said, 'This case has been hanging over me and my family for almost three years.'

'After my full exoneration in court, I am dismayed that the prosecutor will not let this campaign against me drop.'

'Once again, I am prepared to defend freedom of speech and religion not just for me, but for everyone.'

'I am grateful for all those who have stood by me during this ordeal and ask for their continued support.'

She has been supported by religious liberty legal group ADF International. Spokesman Paul Coleman said, 'We welcome the Helsinki District Court's ruling.'

'This is an important decision, which upholds the fundamental right to freedom of



Päivi Räsänen speaks to journalists

speech in Finland. In a free society, everyone should be allowed to share their beliefs without fear of censorship.

'This is the foundation of every free and democratic society. Criminalising speech through so-called "hate-speech" laws shuts down important public debates and poses a grave threat to our democracies.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chaplains sent to Ukraine war

Chaplains from the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team have been deployed into the middle of the worst-hit zones in Ukraine to offer comfort and prayer and meet people. Chaplain Wil Rosado, who has been ministering at a Samaritan's Purse emergency field hospital in Lviv, said, 'We bring the hope of Christ, which brings peace to people.'

John MacArthur to build schools

Grace Community Church, pastored by John MacArthur, will be launching two primary schools in California later this year. Speaking during the annual Shepherds Conference, Pastor MacArthur said it was time for Christians to 'get serious' about children's education. 'Public schools are dangerous,' he said, adding, 'You can't just throw them to the educational system.'

Iran dismisses call for retrial

An Iranian Christian convert sentenced to 10 years in prison has been denied a retrial. Naser Navard Gol-Tapeh, 60, has served more than four years of his sentence for 'acting against national security with the intention to overthrow the regime'. Naser's lawyer, Iman Soleimani, described the judicial process as 'arbitrary', and a contravention of civil rights.

Maltese MPs' pro-life vow

Malta's Labour Party and Nationalist Party have both made public commitments to ensure continued legal protection for unborn babies. Following a lengthy campaign by the pro-life group Life Network Foundation Malta, the heads of both parties expressed their affirmation to protect unborn children. The parties made their pro-life positions clear ahead of the latest election.

Sahel: African region is the new 'epicentre' of persecution against Christians, according to the Global Terrorism Index

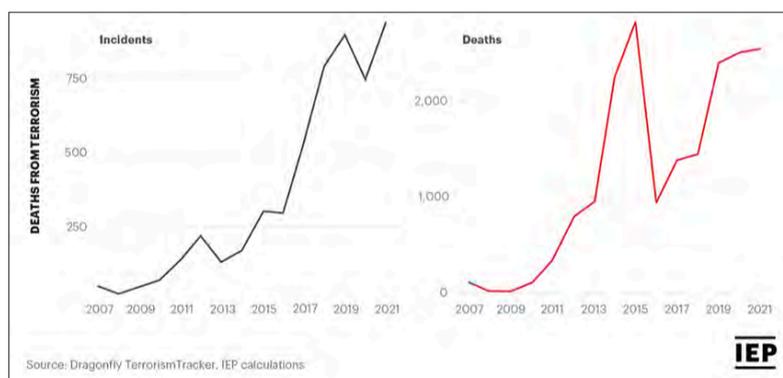
Africa's Sahel region has become the 'new epicentre of terrorism' and persecution against Christians, according to the latest Global Terrorism Index (GTI).

The Index has shown a significant upward trend in persecution of Christians in the Sahel region following a surge in Islamist fundamentalism.

According to the 98-page GTI report from the Institute for Economics and Peace, Islamic State has 'shifted its attention to Sahel', following military defeats in Syria and Iraq.

The GTI believes the prime movers behind the growing conflict include Islamist terror groups Islamic State in West Africa and Jama'at Nasra al-Islam wal Muslimin.

The report said, 'The Sahel has become increasingly more violent over the past 15 years, with deaths rising by more than 1,000 per cent. The increase in violence shows no sign of abating.'



Incidents and deaths from terrorism in the Sahel, 2007–2021 (Credit: Institute for Economics and Peace)

It showed that five of the top 10 deadliest terror attacks in 2021 were in Sahel; the rest were in Afghanistan.

The Sahel region stretches across Africa from west to east, covering parts of countries including central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, the extreme north of Cameroon and the Central African Republic, central and southern Sudan, Eritrea, and the extreme north of Ethiopia, among others.

The situation is becoming worse in Burkina Faso, which

now ranks fourth on the GTI. According to the report, Islamist attacks on Christians there rose to 216 in 2021, with terror groups focusing on the country's borders with Niger and Mali.

In its recent Persecution Trends report, Release International highlighted the region as a hotspot, with Release partners on the ground saying Christians are being executed by armed gangs who target their villages and stop cars and buses on the road.

For example, Mamouna (not her real name), her husband and two small children, aged four and seven, were singled out because of their faith.

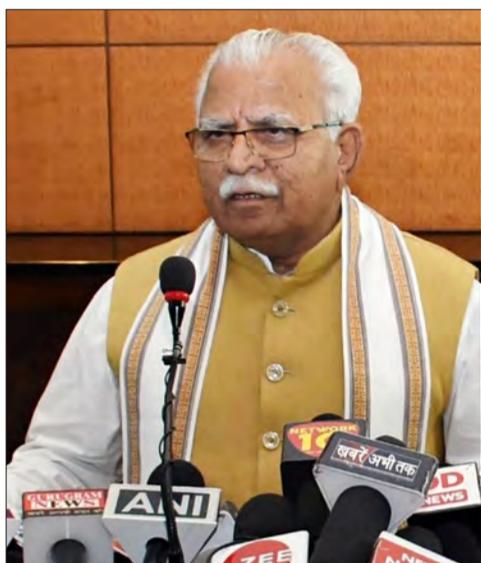
'They targeted the family specifically because they knew they were Christian,' according to Release partner Susanna (not her real name). 'As they ran away, Mamouna's husband was killed.'

Until 2014, Christians and Muslims lived peacefully together side by side. But then heavily armed jihadis began returning from conflicts in Libya and Syria, and by 2019 the violence had spiralled.

Paul Robinson, chief executive of Release International, said, 'The conflict in the Sahel is the forgotten jihad.'

'The religiously motivated violence that has been growing in Nigeria is now being replicated in a much wider region. It is time for the world to sit up and take notice.'

India: Warnings of further crackdowns on Christians sharing their faith



Manohar Lal Khattar (Credit: Twitter)

Another Indian state has passed an anti-conversion law amid growing violence from Hindu extremists.

Ahead of the election process in India – known as the world's largest democracy – the state of Haryana has passed a law that limits the ability of Christians to share their faith.

It also limits the right of Hindus to convert freely, and makes Haryana the 10th state to have passed such a ruling in recent years.

The main target of the law is the attempted conversion of Hindus by Muslims through so-called 'Love Jihad'.

This refers to the practice of taking Hindu girls and forcing them to marry

Muslims, thereby becoming Muslims and going on to raise Muslim children. But many Muslims deny that these practices take place.

But in effect, the law will also target Christians who seek to share the gospel with those of other faiths.

Under the law, anyone accused will have to prove their innocence – rather than be assumed innocent until proven guilty.

The penalty for breaking the state anti-conversion law will be between one and five years' imprisonment and a substantial fine of 100,000 rupees.

A similar bill is poised for final approval in Karnataka; as reported in December 2021's ET, it had been expected that Karnataka would

be the 10th, but the bill had been delayed.

This delay means Karnataka will now be the 11th Indian state out of 28 to crack down on minority religions in the country.

According to reports, Haryana's chief minister, Manohar Lal Khattar (pictured), went on record as saying the law was intended to instill fear in the minds of perpetrators.

Already there has been a 'gradual shut-down' of house churches in the region through threats and violence,' a Haryana pastor told International Christian Concern.

In 2021 there were 486 instances of violence and harassment against Christians – a rise of 74 per cent, according to the United Christian Forum.

Israel: Ancient Hebrew tablet could support the Bible's authenticity

An ancient tablet of lead has been discovered in Israel and is believed to be inscribed with the Hebrew word for God, YHW.

Provisionally, it has been dated between 1200 and 1400 BC. If that is accurate, it could be one of the oldest references to God outside of the Bible.

It may also prove the Israelites were literate when they entered the Holy Land, and able to document biblical events as they happened.

If true, it would undermine liberal critics who say the Hebrew Scriptures were written much later.

However, the findings have not yet been peer reviewed. They are expected to be published academically later this year.



Lead tablet (Credit: biblearchaeology.org)

Photograph by Michael C. Luddeni

Ukraine: Dean of Kyiv Slavic Evangelical Seminary killed in Bucha 'genocide'

The dean of an evangelical seminary in Ukraine has been confirmed as one of the hundreds found dead in the town of Bucha.

The British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said attacks on civilians by Russian forces in Bucha do not 'look far short of genocide'.

Vitaly Vinogradov was the academic dean of the Kyiv Slavic Evangelical Seminary, responsible for the management of the seminary.

Confirming his death, the seminary said, 'Vitaliy Vinogradov our dear brother and co-worker was found dead in Bucha.'

'There are no words to express the sorrow of our hearts. He will be greatly missed!'



Vitaly Vinogradov (Credit: Facebook)

Senior pastor of the seminary, John Byeong Beom Kim, described him as 'a wonderful man and an invaluable employee'.

He said, 'Bright memory to my dear brother and academic dean of the Kiev Slavic Evangelical Seminary!'

'Vinogradov Vitaly Vladimirovich 1974–2022, was killed by the Russian occupiers in his hometown of Bucha.'

'It is a pity, I grieve together with my family, relatives and friends and the whole of Ukraine.'

Australia: Hillsong megachurch scandal leads to calls for greater accountability

The resignation of Brian Houston, senior pastor at Australian megachurch Hillsong, has led to questions internally and more widely about the structure of churches.

In March it became known that Hillsong's founder and global senior pastor had resigned after an internal investigation found he had breached the church's code of conduct twice in 10 years, by behaving inappropriately towards two women.

According to Hillsong, the charges relate to two specific incidents. The first was in 2010, when Houston was found to have sent inappropriate messages to a female staff member.

The second one took place at a conference in 2019, when through an

alleged mixture of medication and alcohol, he ended up in a woman's room at the hotel.

Hillsong said the church board had investigated these and issued apologies to the two women – who remained anonymous.

In a statement, the board of Hillsong Church said it had 'always endeavoured to act biblically and in accordance with good governance. However, we understand there has been a significant breach of trust'.

But according to various news sources, while the investigation was ongoing, further reports revealed that Reed Bogard, former pastor of Hillsong Dallas, was accused of rape.

Bogard was ousted from the church along with his wife last year amid claims

they had been misappropriating church donations to fund their lavish lifestyle.

In an article for the *Christian Post*, Barry Bowen made the point that a church without a membership structure fails to ensure the senior pastor feels accountable to the members. He called it a 'fatal flaw' to structure a church like a limited liability company.

This is a point acknowledged by the Hillsong statement, which also read, 'The board has been seeking external, wise counsel and is reviewing our governance structure and measures to ensure higher levels of accountability across Hillsong Church globally.'

'Like many other churches of its size, Hillsong's governance model has historically placed significant control in the hands of the senior pastor, but we



Brian Houston (Credit: YouTube)

recognise that the way we do things needs to be reviewed.

'We know there are areas on which we can improve, and we will work honestly and transparently to that end.'

Opinion



Guest column:

Yes, we can be both realistic and positive

Positivity is sorely needed among believers today. It's so easy to get sucked into the type of thinking that leaves us dwelling on the negatives.

Negativity can be as much in the pulpit as in the pew. One pastor recently remarked that he'd stopped attending ministers' fraternals as he was hearing such negativity. Not for nothing did James instruct persecuted believers, 'do not grumble' (James 5:9).

But how can we develop positivity without abandoning realism? A permanent show of outward optimism has been somewhat cruelly dubbed 'evangeli-smile' Christianity. People don't want plastic positivity.

Let's begin by recognising negativity for what it is: a demonic attack. Satan cannot stop Christ's victory so he must sap the morale of his army. If Ukraine's soldiers kept fighting when victory seemed unlikely, how much more should we be positive towards the battle, knowing victory is certain?

In each situation each person has a choice: am I going to focus on the positives or the negatives? Which outlook characterises my thinking and my conversations? Am I willing to see things in the light of the power of my victorious king? He gives me a route to positivity: 'Ask the Saviour to help you, comfort, strengthen and keep you; he is willing to aid you, he will carry you through.'

What happens when a church-planting endeavour comes to an end? Let's rejoice that the attempt was made.



By Paul Smith
Full-time elder at
Grace Baptist Church,
Broadstairs, Kent.

Let's give thanks for every person befriended, for every gospel conversation, for every one-to-one Bible study, for every visitor to meetings. Let's give thanks for the positive decision to recognise that God has not fully opened a gospel door there – and get ready to knock on other doors. Let's give thanks for believers who went out in faith, joined in prayer, and reached into their pockets. Let's give thanks for any lessons learned that may help for the future. Let's be willing to try rather than paralysed by fear of failure.

How do we view the older demographic in many of our churches? Let's rejoice in God's keeping power – that even to grey hairs he carries his people. Let's rejoice in opportunities to hear from the wisdom and experiences of seasoned saints. Let's be challenged and encouraged by the way that older saints keep straining every ageing sinew in service. Let's view older remnants as faithful cores to be reinforced.

How do we react to the latest news of a Christian in court regarding their beliefs? Let's be encouraged by their resolute faithfulness. Let's be encouraged by organisations like the Christian Institute and Christian Concern who give believers the support they need in their fight. Let's be encouraged to use every common grace advantage that we have and remain active in the public square.

Let's not whisper the lie that God has withdrawn from this land. Not while people are still being saved – as they are. Not while men are still being raised up to preach the gospel – as they are. Not while many gospel churches remain – as they do. The devil would love us to take chastening to mean abandonment so that we would abandon the fight.

Spurgeon, expounding Isaiah 41, told the story of a miserable Martin Luther finding his wife Katharina in black along with their children. 'Oh, oh!' said Luther, 'who is dead?' 'Why,' said she, 'doctor, have you not heard that God is dead? My husband, Martin Luther, would never be in such a state of mind if he had a living God to trust.'

True positivity can only stem from a big view of God. Times of distress mean that people may be bitter in soul, unable to think straight, turning on others. We are to be like David who strengthened himself in Yahweh his God (1 Samuel 30:6).

How many can we bless by focusing on the positives, trusting in our victorious Saviour?

ET Comment

Society is tying itself in knots

The government has tied itself in knots trying to wriggle out of its ill-judged plan to ban conversion therapy. As the leaked government memo (published in full on the ET website) says, there is no real evidential basis for a ban, and the whole debate surrounding 'conversion therapy' a non-issue for most people.

But it is very much an issue for LGBT campaigners, who want a ban to criminalise anyone who still holds to the Bible's teaching on marriage and sexual ethics. And it is very much an issue for evangelicals, who wish to defend their freedom to preach, pray, pastor, and parent in line with their biblical beliefs.

The church leaders who wrote to the prime minister in the wake of his double U-turn were surely correct to say that dropping a ban was 'exactly the right approach'. Coercive and abusive practices are already well covered in UK law, and rightly so. A ban on conversion therapy will only sow confusion and limit the ordinary and legitimate practices of churches.

The one good thing to come out of the prime minister's flip-flopping is that transgenderism will no longer be covered by a ban on conversion therapy. It would be madness to make it a criminal offence to sit down with someone suffering gender dysphoria and graciously encourage them to see the reality of their biological sex.

On that subject, how refreshing it was to hear cabinet minister, Jacob Rees-Mogg, be unafraid to quote the Bible on LBC Radio. In answering a question about the definition of men and women, he quoted Genesis 1:27, which tells us that God created us male and female.

Yet at the same time, a Christian doctor is awaiting an Employment Appeal Tribunal ruling to discover whether belief in that very same Bible verse is compatible with human dignity (see p.3). It's not just our government that has tied itself in knots over these issues, our whole society has.

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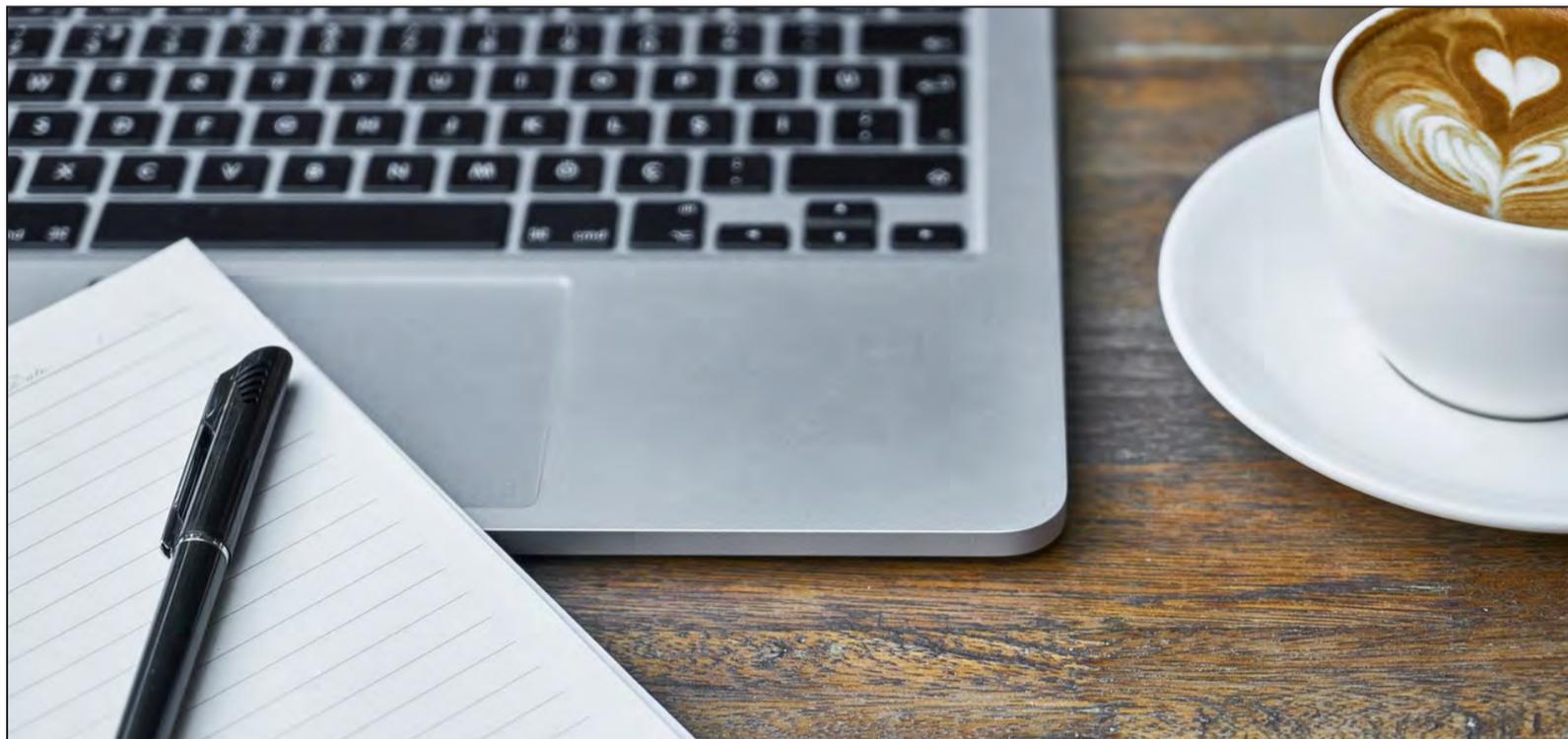
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Letters to the Editor

Please email your letters to
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 Please include your name and address



Ukraine and gender roles

SIR – We have all looked on aghast at the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and in admiration at the response of the Ukrainian people.

The courage shown by the men and women who stood up to defend their homeland, and by the wives and mothers who took their children into their arms to travel thousands of miles into exile and throw themselves on the mercy of strangers, is exemplary.

We look at them and ask ourselves, would we show such strength in the face of such aggression?

We look at the Christian faith that is held by so many Ukrainians and wonder if this is the source of their courage, and we look at our own national apostasy and see how far we have fallen from the faith that sustained our parents in the darkest hours of 1940.

Not only have we uprooted the Christian faith from our national life and all but destroyed the concept of family, but we are challenging the very concepts of what it is to be a man or a woman.

Men standing up to fight and mothers taking their children to safety has been the human response since the dawn of time.

When threats to life are imminent, what matters is the children, the future. Men who have been properly brought up know that we are relatively 'expendable', indeed that there is no way better to use our strength than in sacrifice for the family, the future.

Women who have been properly brought up, full of love, strength, and courage, have no equal when struggling for their children.

Here in the UK we ask ourselves, would our current generation, without faith in Christ, believing that men and women are interchangeable units and that self-expression is all, react as the Ukrainians have done?

Men and women have different bodies, different mentalities, and different roles. Nowhere is that thrown more sharply into relief than in times of war. We are not

interchangeable units but complementary pairs.

That gender and queer ideologies may seek to teach us differently does not make it so. They are just lies, and those that believe those lies will be like houses built on sand that will be washed away when the storm strikes.

It is the church's duty to continue to teach the timeless Christian truths with prayer that God may once more send revival rains upon the nation to save us from our foolishness and rebuild in us the qualities that the Ukrainians are so admirably demonstrating.

Richard Roper
 Weybridge, Surrey

Christian doubts

SIR – I was very moved by Monica's article, 'Facing doubts as a Christian' feature in April's ET.

She has come through a lot and kept the faith. A pastor has helped her, as has our dear brother and ET columnist Stuart Olyott. This is a matter for thanksgiving.

Incidentally, I have a small commentary printed by Day One entitled *Opening up Job*. The object of Job's hope was God himself, and as he exercised faith in the living God, who keeps his promises and cannot deny himself (2 Timothy 2:13), so new hope settled in his heart.

This expectation was a product of his trials. When Job could do nothing else he fell back on the unchanging nature of God.

Job never relinquished his trust in God. In fact, the paradox is this: his faith at the end was stronger and hope was renewed and refreshed.

Remember, although Job had four 'comforters', it was the Word of God that truly comforted him.

Revd Ian S. McNaughton
 Moreton, Wirral

Finnish free speech victory

SIR – It was welcome news when a Finnish Court upheld the right to free speech by dismissing all charges against Finnish MP Paivii Rashanan.

In a unanimous ruling it concluded that, 'It is not for the District Court to interpret biblical concepts.'

This case attracted global coverage due to its crucial status, and the lady's acquittal will be a cause for rejoicing and thanking God for answering prayers.

Closer to home, it was welcome news that at a special hearing at Marylebone Magistrates Court the Crown Prosecution Service dropped their prosecution of Pastor John Sherwood (Pilgrim Tabernacle Church) on an alleged breach of last winter's draconian Covid rules.

David Fleming
 Downham Market

Humanists UK and repentance

SIR – I write with reference to the March ET's article about Humanists UK calling for a ban on calls to repentance.

This is a really worrying development, and all Christians should be praying and working against the recent proposal to ban 'conversion therapy'.

If a bill is passed, it will restrict the freedom of pastors and churches to preach, pray, and minister, especially to gay people, but in fact to anyone.

It will have a chilling effect on religious freedom for all of us. It's a shocking attack on our freedom to call for repentance of sin, which of course is an integral part of Christian conversion.

The response by the humanist organisation shows how hostile they are to our faith and how they want to ban all Christian beliefs and practice.

Don't let this law pass unopposed. We must make our voices heard in opposition to this proposed new law.

Julia Cross
 Southampton

SIR – The notion of banning 'a call to repentance' is no different from banning humanists from 'calling for a ban'.

It's a 'call' to something and nothing more. It's a request,

a suggestion. Do we ban all 'callings'? A call to drink more alcohol by advertisers? Or to go green by environmentalists?

The notion is one of Humanists UK trying to impose a moral code by denying another moral code, based on subjective opinion.

In other words, 'we humanists think we are right and Christians wrong (and immoral)' – but based on what exactly? It's a total nonsense.

James Cullen
 Leicester

Islamic mislabelling?

SIR – In an otherwise informative and challenging update on evangelism at Speakers' Corner in April's ET, I noted that there now appear to be both 'Christian evangelists' and 'Muslim evangelists'.

However unintentional in the original comment, let's confine our clear, honourable, biblical word 'evangelist' to whom it belongs, and never to Islamic men with debating skills intended to catch the unsuspecting for conversion to Islam.

Meanwhile, we can trust that some of these debaters will come to faith in Christ and go on to share the glorious gospel of the grace of God. But until then, let's avoid the mix-up.

Michael Austin
 Newport, Co. Mayo

Thinking it through:

Giving to charities – a word of caution



By Stephen Rees
Pastor of Grace Baptist
Church, Stockport.



Source: Shutterstock

When did you last give to charity? Perhaps it was when you were shopping on the high street. A collector was standing at the shop doorway shaking a box. You dug into your pocket, found a handful of coins, and dropped them in. Or perhaps you opened an envelope that arrived in the post. You scanned the leaflet inside and saw the photos of a child with swollen, reddened eyes. 'A gift of ten pounds could save Jamil's eyesight.' You walked over to the computer and arranged a bank transfer there and then. How could you resist such an appeal?

Maybe you've done more. You've not just given on impulse. You've thought about it carefully and planned how you can raise money for charity. You've taken part in a sponsored event: you've run, you've done a bungee jump, or you've had your head shaved. Your friends have signed the sponsorship forms and afterwards you've been able to send off a very useful sum to the charity of your choice. Or you've made cakes, sold them on a stall at a table-top sale, and given the money to charity.

Maybe you agreed twenty years ago to make a regular gift to a charity. You signed the standing order and the money has gone out each month regular as clockwork. Or maybe you've left a bequest in your will to one charity or another. We're invited, encouraged, urged, persuaded constantly to give money to charities. People are constantly asking us to give and assuring us, 'It's for charity.'

And most of us do. Because we genuinely want to help. And the Bible tells us that we must care for the poor and the

needy. When we give to charity, that's what we're doing. We're helping people 'less fortunate than ourselves'. That's right isn't it?

Well, yes and no. Yes, there are charities that are directly involved in providing help for needy people – or animals. They provide food for starving children. They build hospitals or nursing care for people who are ill. They set up hostels for the homeless. They look after stray animals. And they do a thousand other caring activities.

But no, not all charities are like that. Altogether there are around 170,000 registered charities in England and Wales and the range of their activities is enormous. The word 'charity' in the UK – and internationally – has a very broad meaning. It's used not only for organisations involved in caring work. Rather, it covers all sorts of bodies which are judged by the state to provide public benefit. According to the Charity Commission (the government body responsible for regulating charities in the UK), an organisation can be classed as a charity if it benefits the public in any one of a

'All our money is the Lord's money. We are only stewards.'

multitude of ways – which may include, for example:

The prevention or relief of poverty; the advancement of education; the advancement of religion; the advancement of health or the saving of lives; the advancement of citizenship or community development; the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science; the advancement of amateur sport; the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity...

The list continues.

What's it for?

Some of the activities in that list are indeed about helping the needy. But what about 'the advancement of education'? What that means is that a private boarding school like Eton, attended largely by children from very wealthy families, can be classed as a charity. What about the 'advancement of the arts'? What that means is that the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, can claim to be a charity.

And what about 'the advancement of human

rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity'? What that means is that many organisations campaigning for political goals are also charities. Stonewall is a charity. But what are its 'charitable purposes'? *'Promoting Equality and Human Rights for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People'*.

One of the largest charities in the UK (largest in terms of its income) is the Arts Council of England. It reported a total income of nearly £1.5 billion in the year 2020/21. The National Trust reported a total income of more than £500 million. The Wellcome Trust ('we help everyone get involved with science and health research') received more than £463 million in 2019/20. The International Planned Parenthood Federation – an organisation providing abortion services and campaigning for ever more liberal abortion laws – had an income of £121,518,000 in 2020.

When you are asked to 'give to charity', don't assume that your money will be used directly to relieve human or animal suffering. It may be channelled into supporting ballet companies, or keeping open a stately home, financing scientific research, or providing abortion facilities.

Caring or campaigning?

Perhaps I should add that even charities which are directly involved in helping the needy may be involved in political campaigning on a variety of fronts. Oxfam – thought of by many as a Christian organisation helping famine victims – devotes much of its energy (and funding) to advancing 'abortion rights'. It declares that 'making abortion available, safe, and legal is a significant way of decreasing maternal mortality', and campaigns to that end.

Barnardo's – founded by an evangelical Christian doctor – was involved in the campaign to legalise homosexual marriage. Barnardo's Chief Executive declared, 'Barnardo's

Continued on page 14

Thinking it through

Continued from page 13

believes same-sex couples should have equal rights to legal recognition, and it's time to demonstrate that the law values families headed by same-sex couples just as much as those headed by heterosexual partners...'

If you're asked to give, and you're told that the money is 'going to charity', you should always ask, 'which charity'? Otherwise you may discover later that your money is going to a cause which you never intended or imagined.

Where does the money go?

There are other issues when it comes to giving to charity. Even if you are sure that the work the charity is doing is worthy of your support, it's always worth checking what proportion of the money given will actually reach the people who are in real need. Many charities siphon off a huge proportion of their income for administration, executive salaries, publicity, and further fund-raising.

In 2017 the Charity Commission issued a warning to a Derbyshire based charity – the National Hereditary Breast Cancer Helpline. Apparently the charity had spent a total of £27,000 in the previous year on charitable activities. That amounted to 3% of its income. The remaining 97% had been swallowed up by 'fundraising and other expenses'.

That was an extreme case. But many charities spend more on 'income raising and governance' (i.e. fundraising and management) than they do on any sort of charitable activities. A 2015 investigation reported that '292 charities, with a combined income of £2.4 bn... spent 10% or less on their charitable activities. 1,020 charities, with a combined income of £6bn... spent 50% or less on their charitable activities'. (These included such well-known charities as Age UK, Sue Ryder, and British Heart Foundation).

If you look up any charity based in England or Wales on the Charity Commission website, you can see what proportion of its income actually is channelled into 'charitable activities' and what proportion is swallowed up in 'income raising and governance'.

Many charities pay their executives and managers huge salaries. The Wellcome Trust came top of the league



Source: Shutterstock

in 2020/21: its highest paid employee received more than £4.6 million. In the year ending 31 December 2021, four *Save the Children International* employees received benefits of between £200,000 and £250,000 each. Caudwell Children (which helps 'disabled children reach their full potential through the provision of practical and emotional support') had an income in 2020 of £3.6 million; one employee received benefits of over £250,000. That seems to me rather a high proportion of the charity's income.

I've mentioned Barnardo's. 21 of their employees received benefits of £60,000+. Thirteen Tearfund employees received benefits of £60,000+; one received more than £140,000. That's a moderate reward compared with comparable posts in the public sector, but you may think it's still a lot of money for an organisation working to help the poorest people in the world.

Tearfund is perhaps the best-known charity run by evangelical Christians with the aim of helping the poor across the world. And unlike many charities, it is willing to tell its supporters exactly where the money goes. For every pound that's given to Tearfund, 78p funds hundreds of 'amazing projects' ('anything from an emergency shelter for earthquake survivors, to training that empowers a whole

village to escape poverty'); 11p is invested in fundraising; 11p is used for running and support costs. The charity should be commended for its openness about where money is going. Many charities are harder to pin down.

How well does it work?

Of course, even when a charity has goals that you think are worthy, and is making sure that the funds aren't being misspent on unnecessary overheads or vast salaries, that doesn't mean that the charity is actually doing its work well. It may be so badly run or its workers may be so incompetent that it doesn't actually succeed in helping the people it's supposed to help.

You could have a charity dedicated, for example, to supporting a hospital in some third world country. That's a worthy cause. And maybe it's run by dedicated volunteers who make sure that 98% of money raised actually reaches the hospital. But if the hospital itself is run by people who don't know what they're doing, it may bring very little benefit to anyone. A great deal of money sent by UK charities to other countries finishes up in the hands of corrupt officials or is squandered in other ways.

Do you remember the scandal surrounding Kids Company, the charity founded and run by the flamboyant Camila Batmanghelidjh to

provide support for deprived inner city children? The charity received vast sums of money both from private donors and through government grants. By 2015, it was clear that the charity was in financial crisis and hard questions were being asked about how effectively the charity was working. All sorts of disturbing truths began to come to light – not least that one of the ways that the charity was helping deprived youngsters was by simply handing them large sums of money.

What were the children doing with the money? Anything they wanted. They could spend it on drink, drugs or anything else. No checks were made and nothing was accounted for. Newspaper reporters who turned up at the day centres run by Kids Company were shocked by what they found: 'As part of my research I visited the Kids Company centre in south London. Batmanghelidjh claims 50 or 60 kids a day visit the centre for its nutritious meals, education and Pilates. On my first visit, however, I found just one sulky teenager over whom 10 staff hovered solicitously' (Harriet Sergeant writing in the *Telegraph*).

Youngsters turned up only on the days when they knew there would be cash handouts ranging from £50 to £200 in an envelope. Kids Company collapsed in August 2015. But it

stands as a stark warning that however fine a charity's goals may seem, it may be failing to achieve any of them.

There have been worse cases. Incompetence is one thing. Abuse is another. You will surely remember the shocking revelations that hit the headlines in 2018, initially in relation to Oxfam, but spreading to other charities. It was revealed that Oxfam employees in Haiti had been involved in the sexual exploitation of local girls, bullying, intimidation, and other offences, and that the charity had failed to take appropriate action. Oxfam's deputy chief executive resigned, confessing that she was ashamed of the way the charity had handled the matter, and admitted that the abuse was not limited to Haiti. The repercussions of that scandal are still being felt.

Dubious methods?

One last warning. Charities have been known to use thoroughly unscrupulous methods to raise funds. Back in 2017 the House of Commons Public Administration select committee issued a report on charity fundraising. It named well-known charities such as Oxfam, NSPCC, Save the Children, and the RSPCA which it said used 'exploitative and unethical fundraising methods'. Among the methods condemned, the report cited the employment of investigators to spy on potential donors; the readiness of charities to sell their list of donors to other charities; undue pressure being put on individuals to give.

Since then there have been legal safeguards introduced or strengthened to prevent such abuses. And charities have worked to clean up their act. But there are still many cases where people feel that they have been manipulated or misled.

The Fundraising Regulator is the 'independent regulator of charitable fundraising in England, Wales and Northern Ireland'. In 2020/21 it examined the complaints received by 56 of the UK's largest fundraising charities. They were asked 'to report, via a voluntary survey, how many complaints they have received about a range of fundraising methods and, where possible, the reasons for these complaints'.

These selected charities reported receiving a total

of 17,800 complaints. Of complaints made directly to the Regulator, the 'most common cause of complaint... was misleading information'. Another common cause for complaint, mentioned in the previous year's report was 'applying undue pressure to donate'.

You may be confident in the integrity of a particular charity. But many charities farm out the task of fundraising to agencies which have no other connection with the charity. Some of those agencies may be more principled than others. So be careful in your dealings even with well-known charities. Otherwise you may find that you're left disillusioned and distressed.

So give up on giving?

So should we stop giving?

No, that's not an option for Christians. There is simply too much in the Bible about caring for the poor and needy.

'If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be... For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, "You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land"' (Deuteronomy 15:7-11).

'Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; the LORD protects him and keeps him alive' (Psalm 41:1-2).

'Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever...' (Psalm 112:1, 5, 9)

'Whoever despises his neighbour is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor' (Proverbs 14:21).

'Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered' (Proverbs 21:13).

'Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your



bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?' (Isaiah 58:6-7)

'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' (Matthew 19:21).

'Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise' (Luke 4:11).

'When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind' (Luke 14:13).

'Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world' (James 1:27).

Job's testimony was that 'I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy... I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy...' (Job 29:12-16).

When Zacchaeus was converted, his first declaration was, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor' (Luke 19:8).

Jesus and his disciples had a common fund from which they distributed help to the poor (Luke 12:4-6). And when

Jesus sent Judas Iscariot – who managed the fund – away from the Last Supper, the other disciples assumed that he had been sent to take a gift to the poor (John 13:29). They jumped to that conclusion because they knew that that was just the sort of thing Jesus would do.

So what's the bottom line?

So we must give. The question is how. If you've read what I've written so far, you'll have gathered that I'm wary about giving through any of the well-known mainstream charities. As a church we've tried to channel our giving through people we know personally and whom we trust.

Paul organised a collection for poor believers in Jerusalem, and he encouraged churches throughout Greece and Turkey to donate to it. But he didn't ask them just to take it on trust that their money would be well used. Instead, he appointed men who were already trusted who would visit the churches, convey the gift to Jerusalem, monitor its distribution, and be accountable to the donors.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:14-24 if you want to see how it worked. Paul says (verse 20), 'We take this course so that so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, for we aim at what is honourable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of men...'

Believers who gave to Paul's fund were not handing money over to an anonymous 'charity'. They were entrusting it to men they knew who would render account of how it was used.

Each year the church here takes up an offering at harvest-time and then put it aside to be used for the benefit of needy people elsewhere in the world. We've sent it to various different places. One year we were able to entrust it to a trusted friend who travels regularly into Cambodia and is in contact with churches there. We asked him to pass it on to believers there who would use it to relieve the needs of desperately poor people. Our friend was meticulous about fulfilling that responsibility. He kept a record of exactly how and where the money has been used. We can be sure that 100% of our gift reached the people for whom it was intended.

We've sent gifts to help refugees in Turkey. We've sent gifts to Sri Lanka to help those who are affected by flooding or famine. We've sent gifts to Kenya to help people in places blighted by drought. In each case we've been able to channel our gifts through churches and pastors who know the situation first-hand.

We've sent gifts to the Philippines. I've travelled there myself and seen the awesome work done by Christian Compassion Ministries, the

charity linked with Cubao Reformed Baptist Church in Greater Manila. That charity provides homes for orphans, food for the homeless, education for the destitute. We can be sure that gifts channelled through CCM will genuinely help the people for whom it's intended; we can be sure that none of it is being creamed off to finance jet-set executives; we can be sure that the work is being done in a way that honours the Lord. And we have given not because some fundraising agency has put pressure on us but because we want to give freely as the Lord has given to us.

That surely is the best way for Christians to give. No, it's not wrong to give to any organisation that is seeking to help the needy. The Lord will honour your compassion for the needy and your generosity. But let's be wise. All our money is the Lord's money. We are only stewards. Let's make sure that we're using it in the best way possible, for his glory and out of true compassion for the needy.

All Bible quotations in this article are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, published by HarperCollins Publishers © 2001.

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A shrink thinks...

Psychic pain



By Alan Thomas
Professor and Consultant
in Psychiatry. Elder at
Newcastle Reformed
Evangelical Church.



Last month, when considering Job's experience, we reflected on the difficulty of defining depression. But this is not the difficulty people experiencing depression have. Their problem is explaining their experience to others. I recently received an email from someone who had been through the horrors of severe depressive illness. They wanted others to understand and so with permission and anonymised here it is:

Depression came on so insidiously that it took me a long time to wonder if I might be becoming depressed. Over time I noticed that I felt sad and tearful for no apparent reason. Eventually, with university exams and assignment deadlines looming, I knew I needed help.

I had spent weeks cooped up in the library failing to write my essays or revise for my exams. I simply couldn't concentrate and I didn't know why. In addition I had become so accustomed to battling suicidal thoughts that I no longer thought anything of them. Longing to drown myself in a nearby lake or to buy meds at a local shop for an overdose had become my new normal.

Eventually I plucked up the courage to visit a GP, who told me to return in two weeks. I took this to mean that he thought there was nothing wrong. The Easter holidays came and went; studies became more and more difficult. I stopped eating; started waking early in the morning and was unable to get back to

sleep. Then one day it felt like someone flipped a switch in my brain and my mood plummeted so much that I knew without a shadow of a doubt that this was depression.

This kind of depression is hard to understand if you have never experienced it. In describing such severe depression simply as low mood, the true horror of the condition is not portrayed. It felt like a deep, dark hole. It was a scary and a lonely place to be, but the light of the Lord Jesus Christ gave me a measure of hope in the blackness and despair.

I remember thinking, 'Things can't get any worse than this.' However, a week after being started on antidepressants and a couple of days after returning home, I started having visual hallucinations. First I saw my grandma, and I really thought she was in the room, even though my dad, who was also present, couldn't see her. The next day I saw a couple of friends at the breakfast table and was so convinced that they were there that I went and brought them cereal.

At this point Dad called the crisis team, who admitted me to hospital on the basis that I had become psychotic. After arriving in hospital I had further hallucinations and delusions. I won't bore or upset

'Any suffering I do endure is light and momentary, compared to the eternal weight of glory, which lies ahead of me.'

you with going into too much detail. But to give a flavour of how horrible psychosis can be, I will give one example.

I hallucinated Hitler and SS guards; I believed my shower was a gas chamber and that I would be exterminated or sterilised along with all the mentally ill. To see and believe these things was terrifying and I had frequent panic attacks. By this point I had lost all bearings on what was true or false, what was right and wrong. I knew that suicide was wrong but was desperate to die. I tried to convince myself it was okay, but felt even more keenly that it would be sinful to take my own life.

Depression made me feel completely unlovable, and worse than that, it convinced me that all those I was closest to, my friends and family, were actively seeking to murder me because they were desperate to be rid of me. I believed they poisoned my food to get rid of me. I tied myself up in knots, telling myself that to eat or drink would be suicide because I would be poisoned, so I went five days without fluid until I realised that I had to at least try to drink or I would die. I thought I would die if I did drink and die if I didn't drink!

When I was looking death in the face I was amazed by the calm assurance I enjoyed. Since

about a year after trusting Christ, I had struggled with doubts about whether I was a genuine believer. Yet here in the depths of depression, malnourished and dehydrated, anxious and afraid, I knew that God was good and that he loved me. He had demonstrated that at the cross.

And I knew that he couldn't lie to me or change his character. Therefore his promises must be true. Three in particular came to mind: 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'; 'Whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish but have eternal life'; 'If anyone confesses his sins, God is faithful and just to forgive him and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness'.

Depression was a miry pit, but crucially it was not the bottomless pit (hell), for God's everlasting arms were underneath me, and would carry me safely home to heaven. He is there for me at all times, to cry to, to run to, to turn to. During this time Psalm 13 became very real and precious to me:

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, 'I have prevailed over him', lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Severe depression was sorrow in my heart all day. Psychosis entailed wrestling with my thoughts. Satan and his demons wanted to damn me, and if they had achieved that goal, they would have been jubilant. However, I was (and am) secure in Christ's protection. Our pastor told me, 'The demons' hearts sink as they see me being upheld by my mighty Saviour, who is bringing himself glory through my sore trials.' Any suffering I do endure is light and momentary, compared to the eternal weight of glory, which lies ahead of me.

In the presence of my enemies



By Rosaria Butterfield
Writer, speaker,
homemaker, and former
tenured professor of
English at Syracuse
University.

The table was set with unfussy Corelle dishes, yellow paisley cloth napkins, and water glasses. One of the pastor's sons, a colleague of mine from the university, pulled a gallon plastic jug of water out of the refrigerator and started filling the water glasses. 'It's not filtered water. I just like it cold,' Pastor Ken Smith laughed as he greeted me with a warm handshake and pulled me gently but firmly over the threshold.

This was one of my first experiences of a Christian family feast, one that included the Smith family, other brothers and sisters from the church, and me. The room hummed with grown-up laughter and the sing-song of children's voices. It had been so very long since I had experienced the sound of men's voices laughing and the delight of a child's giggle. While I proclaimed the value of diversity, my community was entirely composed of white thirty-something lesbian PhDs in the humanities.

Children dragged in extra chairs. Bowls were overflowing with Floy Smith's steaming and savoury sweet-and-sour soybeans, and Ken herded us to the table with a gentle but firm touch. When we all sat down and pulled up our mix-and-match chairs to the long family table, no elbow room remained. It was intimate but not stuffy. The conversation was marked with edgy questions of the day (on which I took an opposing side), and Bible verses and principles, some that stood as answers and others that opened more questions.



Source: Shutterstock

Misreading Psalm 23

It seemed to me that Pastor Ken Smith and these other Christians used the Bible both for reference and for lingering long. We ate and talked and laughed. And then we sang Psalm 23. Voices in all four parts to the tune of Crimond rang strong and right as rain. And when we sang, 'A table thou has furnished me in presence of my foes,' I started to lose my sense of which way was up. I started to get all turned around, as if I had absentmindedly taken the wrong path on a well-walked trail.

I was trained to play the part of the victim and to perceive myself as a 'sexual minority,' voiceless among the voiced. As we sang, I said to myself, 'Yes, dear victim, here you are in the presence of your foes, these awful, hateful people who want to trample on your rights.' But even though victimhood served as my catechism, I couldn't make myself believe this while singing Psalm 23. Something wasn't right. And that's when it dawned on me

'If you are in Christ, your enemies are Christ's enemies. And this means we have nothing to fear.'

that I, the English professor, was misreading the text. I wasn't the one dining in the presence of my enemies. I was the enemy.

Dinner concluded with prayer. Prayer was reverent and steady. There were natural pauses and unhurried reflections as these Christians shared their hearts with each other and with God. The unyielding and unanswered questions that had marked the earlier part of this evening were now put into the hand of God. They were neither swept under the rug nor turned into objects of obsession and grief.

I was glad

At the final 'amen' someone said, 'Let's sing Psalm 122.' Most of the people had this one memorised too, but Floy gently touched my arm and placed an open Psalter in my hands. And so with gusto and confidence, voices rose in song once again: 'I was glad to hear them saying *to the Lord's house let us go*. For our feet will soon be standing in your gates, Jerusalem... In your

palaces be safety, for the sake of brothers all, for the sake of my companions, I am saying, *Peace to you!*

At the psalm's conclusion, someone said something that I didn't understand at the time. He said, 'This is my pilgrim's journey.' Although I did not understand this reference, this night marked the beginning of my pilgrim journey. That I was the enemy at this table made little matter to Pastor Ken, for he knew that Christ was not done with me.

That I had mocked Christians, written university policy that extolled hatred for God, taught classes that enlisted others into a worldview that walks only to hell, and sinned against others was not the main thing for this godly pastor and the church that he pastored. The main thing was Christ crucified and risen.

Spiritual hunger

The Christian life goes on regardless of how many enemies are at the table because enemies cannot mar or perjure the main thing of

the Christian life – ‘That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death’ (Philippians 3:10).

That feast and the long family dinner table at the Smith house and my presence at the table were not a one-night event. It was regular and rhythmic. As these Christians folded me, the enemy, into their feasting, I became hungry for more of what they had. I started to read the Bible, no longer to critique it or mock it or despise it but to roll it around in my private dream-talk, to turn the pages of the Bible and the pages of my heart together, to let it wash me and shape me and rebuke me and comfort me.

I remember one day experiencing what happens when the Bible gets to be bigger than my sin and my selfishness. I remember one day realising that I needed to hate my sin without hating myself. And always, in the background of these cataclysmic changes was the feasting at the Smith house. What followed was the sweet washing of repentance, my life commitment to Jesus, and the covenant of church membership. I was no longer the enemy of Jesus but his devoted disciple.

Table time

Today, I get to set our own family dinner table. My greatest honour is being married to my pastor, Kent Butterfield, and together raising and home-schooling our children. Our dining table has been in my husband’s family for five generations. It overfills the dining room and the Lord fills it with brothers and sisters in the Lord and with neighbours.

Some come in grief. Some come in anger. Some come in loneliness. Some come in joy. Like the Smiths, the Butterfields do not throw people away. We gather for feasting, psalm singing, and prayer. We fold in neighbours and our children’s friends. We discuss the pressing questions of our day, and we use the Bible to illuminate the way forward. We include the neighbourhood children. We linger long at the table in the evenings.

Feasting, psalm-singing, gathering others, continuing to gather for Lord’s Day worship during a time of governmental pressure not to worship together, and home-schooling are not to be interpreted as unprecedented or unusual

events. No. God intended it this way. Our faith is meant to flourish in the presence of our enemies. Psalm 110:2 declares: ‘The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty sceptre. Rule in the midst of your enemies!’

Feasting and warring

It is God’s will that we should always be feasting in the presence of our enemies. It is God’s will that Zion (the church) will shine in the midst of enemies. John Calvin put it this way: ‘Doubtless our condition in this world will include many hardships, but God’s will is that Christ’s kingdom should be encompassed with many enemies, his design being to keep us in a state of constant warfare. Therefore it becomes us to exercise patience and meekness, and, assured of God’s aid, boldly to consider the rage of the whole world as nothing.’

We feast in the presence of our enemies not by accident but by design, not for punishment but for blessing. Paul describes the weapons of the warfare in which we are engaged in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: ‘For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.’

The weapons of our warfare cast down atheistic imaginations with pot roast suppers and watermelon, psalm singing and warm mugs of tea, prayer, and repentance. And how do we prepare for such feasts? Know what is true. Let the inerrant and living Word of God commandeer your heart and mind and body. Worship what is true. Give God the holy worship he commands, being ready to join in the fellowship of Christ’s suffering. Repent daily. Be a covenant member of a faithful church. Sing psalms. Feast in the presence of your enemies. If you are in Christ, your enemies are Christ’s enemies. And this means we have nothing to fear.

This article was first published in Tabletalk, the Bible study magazine of Ligonier Ministries. Found out more at TabletalkMagazine.co.uk or try it free for three months today at TryTabletalk.co.uk.



Source: Shutterstock

A walk with Mr O

Christians accused of being atheists!

Mr O, last week I met up with a group of friends, all Christians, and before long we had a strong disagreement about the importance of doctrine. It got a bit out of hand.

Tell me more.

It all began when Nick, one of the group, told us that he was reading a book on systematic theology, that it was as dry as sawdust, that it bored him, and that he just couldn’t see that doctrine mattered that much. Three or four agreed with him, while the rest of us certainly didn’t. Things got quite heated.

Well, I suppose you are asking what line I would have taken, if I had been there. And that is easy to answer.

Go on then, Mr O, tell me.

If I could have got a hearing, I would have reminded everyone that this Western world thinks that doctrine is very important indeed! It churns out its own doctrine every day – on the radio and television, on the social media, all over the internet, in the classroom, in factories and offices, in ordinary conversation, and everywhere else. We can’t get away from it.

Yes, Mr O, but we weren’t discussing the world’s doctrine.

No, but that’s the point. It is because the world is so doctrinal that we have got to be! I’ll give you an example. The unconverted people around us believe that the universe just ‘happened’, that this planet just ‘happened’, and that the human race just ‘happened’. They believe that it all exists without rhyme or reason, that it is meaningless, and that it is up to you and me to give it meaning. Do you believe that?



By Stuart Olyott
Stuart Olyott is an actively retired minister and conference speaker. He preaches most Sunday mornings at Caergwrle Evangelical Church.

No, of course not!

So, from the world’s point of view, you are an unbeliever! Western people have a particular belief system which you don’t accept. When it comes to their ‘theology’, you are an atheist! And by the way, that’s exactly what many unconverted people called Christians in the early centuries of the Christian church.

I didn’t know that. So what you are saying is that unbelievers are actually believers – except that they believe the wrong thing. And we believers are, from the world’s point of view, unbelievers. Is that why the world is so hostile to us?

Yes. We just don’t fit. But let me ask you a further question: if you don’t believe what the world believes about origins, what do you believe? Tell me.

Mr O, you are the man who told me to learn the Shorter Catechism! I believe in creation, and that ‘The work of creation is God’s making all things of nothing, by the word of his

power, in the space of six days, and all very good.’

And that is a doctrinal statement! The world believes its invented doctrine, and we believe God’s revealed doctrine. It is impossible to live a truly Christian life in this world without recognising the importance of doctrine. The clearer we are, the better Christians we will be.

Can you give me another example of what you are saying, so that I can get it all straight in my head?

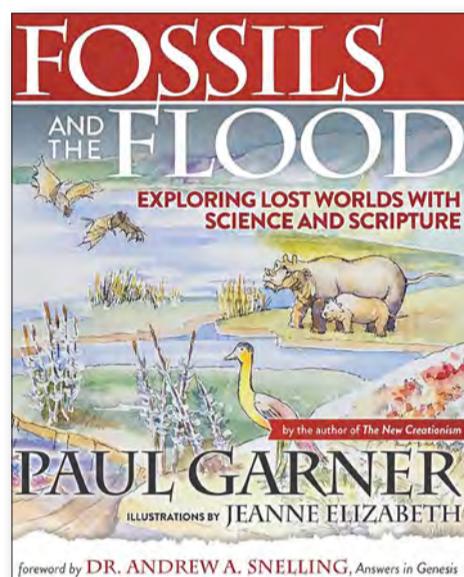
Yes. Let’s consider our Lord Jesus Christ. The world’s doctrine is that he may or may not have existed; he may or may not have done the things which are recorded of him in the Gospels – the likelihood is that he didn’t; he may or may not have been crucified; he probably didn’t rise from the dead; and, apart from some aspects of his supposed teaching, he’s not very relevant to us today.

Whereas we ‘believe in Jesus Christ, his (God’s) only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell (the place of the dead); he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick (living) and the dead’. I get it, Mr O, I get it. The purpose of the Apostles’ Creed and the other great doctrinal statements of history is to define the key points in which our doctrine is different from the world’s doctrine, so that we don’t get swept away by error. Thanks!

Book Reviews

Book Reviews

Fossils and the Flood: Exploring lost worlds with science and Scripture



Paul Garner
New Creation
148 pages; £29.99

As a new believer in my teenage years, the first big challenge to my faith was the differences I saw between what the Bible taught about our origin and what my biology and geography teachers were describing.

Scripture was clear, but my teachers presented a completely different story involving evolution, millions of years, and mass extinctions. What I needed were good quality resources that used God's Word, alongside a biblical worldview, to interpret the data being produced by scientists.

Paul Garner's latest book, *Fossils and the Flood*, is exactly the sort of resource I needed back then; and because our understanding keeps on advancing, it is essential reading for everyone who is interested in creationism today. Beautifully illustrated by Jeanne Elizabeth, this

large hardback focuses on the worldwide flood that took place in the days of Noah.

Starting at the beginning, what we know about the world before the Flood is explored. We are introduced to different biomes, major ecological communities filled with the great diversity of life that God created. Some of these biomes are familiar to us today, while others, such as the enormous floating forest which never recovered after the Flood, provide an insight into another world.

The book moves on to the Flood itself: God's great act of judgment on sin that destroyed the old world. Garner describes the creationist understanding of the mechanism of the global Flood and how it engulfed each biome in turn, resulting in the production of layers of fossil-containing rocks.

After the Flood, the animals and Noah's family emerge into an unfamiliar world where the animals disperse and diversify to populate the environments

'Resources like this help believers to develop that biblical worldview which confidently asserts the truthfulness and authority of all of God's Word.'

we know today. Post-Babel human diversity and the Ice Age are both discussed before more technical matters are considered in the final two sections.

These final sections focus on how fossils form and are classified, before looking at the many different fossil groups. The book concludes with a helpful glossary and a list of recommended resources for those who want to dig a bit deeper.

Fossils and the Flood is a book to cherish. Families will enjoy looking at the rich dioramas that portray the old world, while those engaged in more serious study will be encouraged that it is possible to interpret scientific data in a way that does not contradict Scripture. Resources like this help believers to develop that biblical worldview which confidently asserts the truthfulness and authority of all of God's Word.

Matthew Clay
Tenterden, Kent

Chief Scottish Man: The life and ministry of Thomas Chalmers

Sandy Finlayson
EP Books
179 pages; £8.99

Given his importance in the history of the church in Scotland, it strikes me as surprising that so little has been written about Thomas Chalmers and that so little is known about him by Christians in his home country – never mind elsewhere in the world.

Described by one of his early biographers as 'the chief Scottish man of his time' (hence this biography's title), it is remarkable that he is so largely forgotten and overlooked today.

Sandy Finlayson has written a compelling account of Chalmers's life and ministry, from his humble beginnings on the Fife coast to his prominence as a church statesman, bringing to life a man who was mightily gifted by God.

Indeed, what struck me most as I read this book was the immense variety of ministries and activities in which

Chalmers was engaged throughout his life. He is probably best remembered – where he is remembered at all – as one of the key leaders of the 1843 'Great Disruption' in the Church of Scotland, and the first Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland which emerged from the Disruption. But he was also a parish minister, a brilliant and respected academic, an educationalist, and social reformer. He was also a man of great compassion for the marginalised and poor in society.

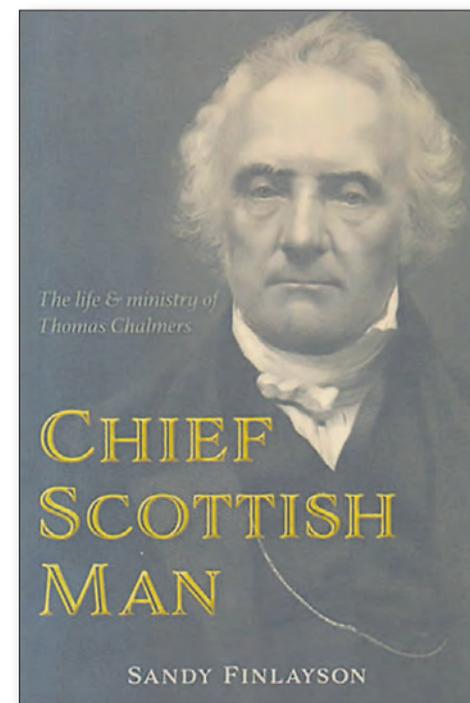
Chalmers's conversion while serving as a parish minister in Kilmany, near St Andrews, changed him and his ministry profoundly. From someone who emphasised moralism in his preaching, he began to appeal to his people to repent and believe in the saving work of Christ. From someone who saw his ministry as a means for gaining popularity and status, he became committed to the cause of the gospel and its needed influence in the world.

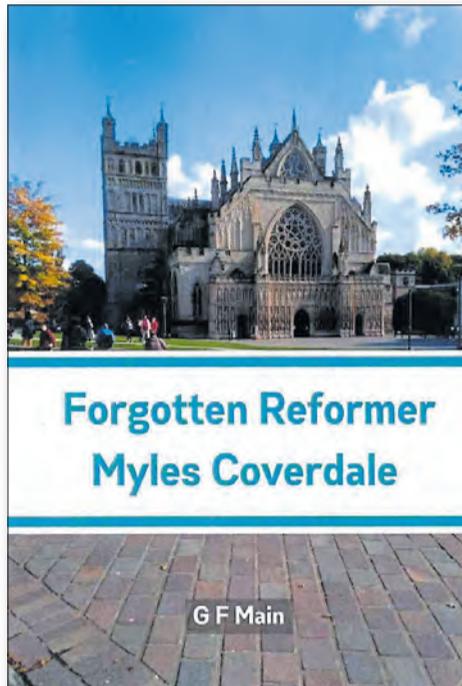
It is also clear that Chalmers would not, at times, have been the easiest man to get on with, especially if you were in disagreement with him! Finlayson doesn't shy away from addressing this aspect of his character, and wonders whether some of the conflict he experienced might have been avoided had he been as good a listener as he was a leader.

But then maybe he wouldn't have accomplished so much for the Kingdom. 'Cometh the hour, cometh the man.' Church history clearly teaches us that there are those that God in his providence raises up to do specific jobs at specific times, and Chalmers was undoubtedly just such a man.

I was both greatly informed and inspired by this account of Chalmers's life, and my only complaint was its relative brevity; but perhaps in our current age publishers are reluctant to produce anything of weight or size.

John Brand
Broxburn, West Lothian





Forgotten Reformer: Myles Coverdale and the first 40 years of the English Reformation

G. F. Main
Independently published
240 pages; £10.00

Geoffrey Main's new biography of one of the most important English reformers is outstanding.

Myles Coverdale is, as the title of this book suggests, almost entirely forgotten, even among those Christians who think most about the recovery of the gospel in the 16th century. Main shows how little we know about the first 38 years of Coverdale's life, and how his glad acceptance of the central ideas of the Protestant Reformation drove him from the Catholic church and into a life of exile, poverty, and frequent danger.

Coverdale worked with William Tyndale in his project to translate the New Testament and large sections of the Old Testament into English. Coverdale completed this project when his work became the first complete English Bible to be printed. Returning from exile, he worked closely with Thomas Cromwell as Henry VIII's reformation cautiously advanced.

When the king began to back off from the cause, Coverdale entered a second period of exile, this time working as a pastor in Germany, using his linguistic gifts to translate works by Luther and other Protestant writers into English.

Returning to England in the reign of Edward,

Coverdale worked as Bishop of Exeter. This ministry was cut short when Mary acceded to the throne, beginning the horrific persecution that led to the execution of almost 300 Protestants during her short but bloody reign. Coverdale's life was saved only when the King of Denmark made a personal appeal for his safety. Fleeing into a third period of exile, he travelled to Geneva, where he worked alongside John Knox in another Bible translation project.

Coverdale returned to England in 1559, the year that the first part of the Geneva Bible was published. In his latter years he became increasingly uneasy with the direction of the English

church and increasingly in favour of what its critics would later describe as Puritanism.

Main's superb new biography is self-published, and may not be widely available in bookshops. But all those committed to the principles of the Reformation should make every effort to obtain it. *Forgotten Reformer* may be one of the most important biographies to have appeared in the past year.

Crawford Gribben
Ballymena, N. Ireland

Forgotten Reformer can be purchased from Ossett Christian Bookshop – www.christianbookshopossett.co.uk

Return to the Promised Land

Paula Hill
Published independently
46 pages; £5.00

Chased across the Alps and nearly annihilated, the Waldensians are a people whose story is dramatic and well worth telling.

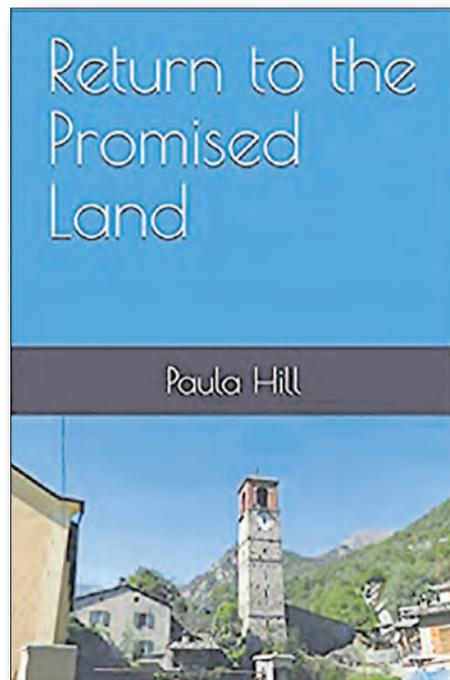
As early as the 12th century, this proto-Protestant community of believers practised a purer form of Christianity than that of wider Roman Catholic Europe. They had established faith communities in the foothills of north-western Italy, far removed from the reach of papal Rome. Or so they thought.

The Waldensians were declared heretics in the 17th century and faced genocide at the hands of the merciless Catholic forces of Savoy. Fleeing north, they found refuge in the Protestant outpost of Geneva.

In 1689, some 900 armed Waldensians regrouped and resolved to trek back to reclaim their homeland. The twists and turns of that 'Glorious Return' are told for us in this engaging narrative by Paula Hill.

The suspense and peril comes across strongly: the Waldensians braved bad weather, food shortages, the Mount Blanc massif, and the pursuit of hostile Savoyard troops.

The author takes time to highlight the protection of God experienced by



the Waldensians during their journeys. A memorable episode sees some providential snowfall and fog come to their aid as they evade slaughter at the hands of papal soldiers hot on their tail.

Another highlight comes at the end of the book, where the author challenges Christian readers: are we prepared to stand as firmly for the faith as these men and women were?

John Tredgett
Carlisle

The Trinity and Us

John D. Legg
Covenant Books UK
126 pages; £5.99

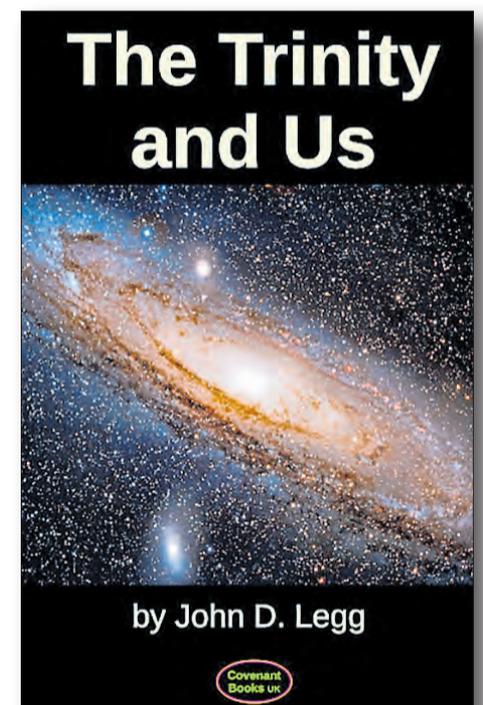
John Legg's desired audience for this book is not only 'theologians, scholars, or preachers... [but] the ordinary Christian, the so-called man or woman in the pew' (p.9).

His focus is on how the doctrine of the Trinity 'should saturate the daily life of the Christian, both individually and in the church' (p.10). Considering a number of Scripture passages, the author shows how this belief encourages us to faith, worship, adoration, and especially practical living in respect to each person of the Trinity.

The first chapter describes our one God in three Persons who share in the divine work, but each with his own special role. Further chapters discuss the differing contributions of each Person in the life of the believer through salvation, the gift of grace, communion, the church, motivation to godliness, and witness.

Legg shows the practical impact which these truths should have on us; for example, the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our salvation should bring strength and comfort in times of persecution (1 Peter 1:1-2).

The book ends with the 'Trinitarian benediction', an assurance from God that as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he will give us all that we need to meet the challenges of the coming days.



This book is very readable, and helpful in applying an important doctrine to our everyday lives. As the chapters were originally sermons, the style is conversational and there is some overlap and repetition. However this does not detract from their important message, which makes for highly recommended reading.

Jan Rhys
South Wales

Neither quietism nor triumphalism: How two-kingdoms doctrine helps political discourse



By David VanDrunen
Professor of Systematic
Theology and Christian
Ethics at Westminster
Seminary, California.

Have you ever read the book of Daniel and marvelled at how four godly Israelites – Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – served effectively in the court of pagan kings? These remarkable men didn't shun civil service in Babylon and Persia, yet they didn't see pagan empires as their true home or lose hope that God would return them to their promised land (Daniel 9).

God has called us to live a similar sort of life in our own societies. As New Testament 'exiles' (1 Peter 2:11), Christians should reject the temptations of both quietism and triumphalism. A two-kingdoms doctrine provides a helpful theological anchor to keep us from falling into either of these extremes. It enables believers to affirm both the goodness of participating in political affairs and their identity as heavenly citizens who are pilgrims in this world.

Two dangers

Quietism is the tendency to dismiss political affairs as thoroughly evil and to avoid participating in them as much as possible. According to quietists, believers should focus their energy on Christian communities and beware of mixing with the world.

The quietist temptation is understandable. Politics is often sordid, governments perpetrate countless evils, and immersion in political affairs carries spiritual dangers. Yet quietism encounters numerous biblical objections. God



Source: Shutterstock

instituted civil government for the *good* of human society, to promote justice and peace (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:2). The New Testament describes several political officials who come to faith (Luke 19:1-10; Acts 10), and the apostles never instructed them to resign their positions.

All earthly activities and institutions are deeply corrupted by sin, but this doesn't make them illegitimate or off-limits for believers. Political affairs are no exception. Christians aren't obligated to be engaged in politics just as Christians aren't obligated to be musicians or scientists. But as being a musician or scientist is an honourable way for a Christian to serve his neighbours, so too is political engagement.

Triumphalism is the tendency to make political affairs central to the Christian life. It's a mindset that views most or all of life through the lens of culture wars – a fight that, according to the triumphalist, God has commissioned Christians to win. Triumphalism views the

church as an agent for uniting and mobilising Christians around a political agenda.

The triumphalist temptation is also understandable. Evil government policies do much harm and dishonour God. Yet triumphalism is fundamentally foreign to New Testament Christianity.

God hasn't called Christians to triumph in *this* life, but in the life to come. Christ calls his people not to exercise dominion over others, but to serve them (Mark 10:42-45). Rather than seeking and anticipating success in this world, Christians should ready themselves for suffering and persecution: the Christian life is one of self-denial and cross-bearing (Matthew 16:24-26).

While Christians may enjoy citizenship in earthly communities, their most precious identity is citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3:20). They're sojourners and exiles in their political societies (1 Peter 2:11), for their true home is elsewhere.

Triumphalism forgets that Jesus's kingdom is not of this world and thus that Christians are in this world but not of it

(John 17:14; 18:36). Christ has established his church not to mobilise believers for political action but to exercise the keys of his heavenly kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19).

Two kingdoms

Rejecting quietism and triumphalism doesn't solve every question about Christianity and politics, but it sets important boundaries for Christian participation in political affairs. A Reformational two-kingdoms doctrine is a biblical and historically rooted way to explain those boundaries.

The doctrine, as expressed by John Calvin and brought to maturity by later European Reformed and Scottish Presbyterian theologians, teaches that God through his Son rules all things, but he rules them in a twofold way. God preserves this fallen world, upholding the natural order and human societies, despite their deep sinfulness. He gives sunshine and rain to all people and raises up civil governments and other human institutions to promote a measure of justice, peace, and prosperity.

But God has also promised and accomplished a way of salvation, calling a chosen people out of their sinful idolatry. He has established the church as the new-covenant community, into which he gathers believers and nourishes them unto everlasting life in the new creation.

Some early Reformed theologians referred to this as a distinction between God's civil and spiritual rule, or between his kingdom of power and kingdom of grace. Another way to think of it is as a distinction between God's common grace (toward all creation) and his special or saving grace (toward his redeemed people).

The distinction reflects the difference between God's faithfulness to his universal promise of preservation in the post-flood covenant with Noah (Genesis 8:21-9:17) and his faithfulness to the promises of the new covenant, by which he gathers Christians unto salvation. While I don't endorse everything the earlier theologians said about the two kingdoms, I believe these basic ideas are profoundly correct.

Contra quietism, two-kingdoms doctrine says political institutions are God-ordained and therefore legitimate. By participating in them, Christians promote God's common-grace preservation of human society. Contra triumphalism, two-kingdoms doctrine says those political institutions are temporal and provisional, meant to serve limited purposes in this present age.

Daniel and his friends sought the peace of Babylon (Jeremiah 29:7), but they never thought they could make Babylon a new Jerusalem. To steer a middle path between quietism and triumphalism today, Christians likewise need to affirm that politics is both legitimate and provisional.

Politics can be important without being of ultimate importance. And, so, Christians' true spiritual unity lies not in national identity or political allegiance, but in their union with Christ and inheritance in a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28).

Escape from Kyiv



By Orysyia Melnyk
Daughter of Anatoly Melnyk, pastor of House of the Gospel in Khmelnytsky, Ukraine.

In the early hours of 24 February, Russian bombs and missiles rained down across the nation of Ukraine. This is 22-year-old Orysyia Melnyk's story of escaping Kyiv, as told to and translated by her sister, Uliana King. They are daughters of Anatoly Melnyk, pastor of House of the Gospel in Khmelnytsky, Ukraine.

For me, it all started at six in the morning on Thursday 24 February, when I somehow woke up without an alarm clock. I saw a light in the hallway and went out to see why it was on. I and two other girls my age were renting an apartment, and one of them was fully dressed and busy packing things.

When I expressed my surprise by her early rise, she simply said, *War!* Not fully understanding the scale of it all, I began my usual morning routine. After a couple of hours I began reading the news. It was shocking. Not only had Russian troops come to 'save' the Ukrainian East, but they were bombing Kyiv and other major cities.

When my other flatmate woke up, we tried to figure out what to do next. The sirens kept going off all morning. Shots were heard every ten minutes. When we went outside, we felt like we were at a train station, only in the open air. Everyone had a suitcase, a backpack.

Some had a child in their arms. There was a lot of noise from the suitcase wheels and people running around. There



Source: Drop of Light / Shutterstock

were dozens of people queueing at the ATMs. There were even longer queues at grocery stores that stretched for several streets.

Daily shelling

On the next day only chocolate, junk food, and fizzy drinks were available in the shops. Having managed to buy cheese and apples, we had to use some pre-war stocks for food. My emotional state was very unstable. At first I felt like I was watching a war movie with 3D effects. A few minutes after reading a warning about potential bombings in the news, I heard explosions in real life.

During the first few days of war I was in a constant state of shock and horror. We looked at people on the street with suspicion; our eyes began to see hostile signs in everything. Due to our proximity to Irpin, Bucha, and Hostomel – the towns near Kyiv which the Russian army desperately wanted to capture – the sound

of fighting could be clearly heard around the clock.

The shelling sounded especially scary at night. It can be compared to thunder, but much louder, longer, and more sudden. On the fourth day of the war, it became a routine for us to wake up at 4 a.m. from the sound of shelling. Sirens were also going off and every day brought new deaths and injuries.

Prayer messages

The only consolation for me then was reading the Bible. I don't know why, but praying in my own words was very difficult. Some girls from the church created a prayer group and since we couldn't have an online prayer meeting, we recorded prayer voice messages. We made several attempts to leave Kyiv, but due to lack of transport (because the subway was used as a bomb shelter), we couldn't get to the evacuation points.

Another reason was that the street that led to the train station was very dangerous

as several cars were fired at when people were trying to flee. On the sixth day of the war, we realized that it was also impossible to stay in Kyiv with dwindling life necessities (such as food and drinking water). At that time we had little money, due to the temporary failure of state pay systems.

Escape

Then God provided a volunteer from Belgium who was sent into our lives to offer us refuge. On a Tuesday at 6 p.m., two hours before the curfew, we prayed and set off to the train station. We would have to walk seven miles to the station.

After 40 minutes of running, we realised that we did not have time to avoid the curfew, and there was therefore a danger of being shot. (Everyone on the street between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. would be considered a separatist saboteur who didn't know the rules and could be shot if they didn't have a permit to be outside.)



Orysyia Melnyk

We prayed again and started to wave to the cars. A couple of men from the Territorial Defence were very kind and picked us up and drove us to the train station. We escaped just in time as on the next day the train station was partially shelled.

There were hundreds of people at the station trying to get on any train, preferably not in the direction of the east. No one announced the exact time that trains would depart, and the lights were turned off for safety.

After an hour of searching, and thanks to God's guidance, we were able to board the train to Lviv, and from there cross the border into Poland. Praise be to God, who turns even evil deeds into good for his glory! One wicked act can give birth to hundreds of good deeds.

The whole world has risen to help Ukraine in such a difficult time, and in these sacrificial deeds the Lord is glorified. Thank you all for your prayers!

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For an informal conversation about the post and job description please contact:

The Minister, Ken McIntosh at ken@horsleyec.org.uk

www.horsleyec.org.uk

Affiliated to the FIEC

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If you would like an informal chat, please contact Eileen Nelson on the above number.

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Scripture's hidden gems: Leviticus



By Alan Hill
Pastor of Lausanne Free
Church, Switzerland.

In this series Alan Hill surveys some of the lesser-known books of Scripture.

The Indian civil rights leader Mahatma Gandhi once read through the Bible. Upon reading Leviticus he said that the book 'appeared to be full of procedures and practices that have nothing to say or do with the church'.

Many think the same way today, and Leviticus remains unread and unstudied by many Christians. However, no book in the Bible contains more of the direct words of God than Leviticus. God himself speaks on almost every page. This alone should captivate our attention.

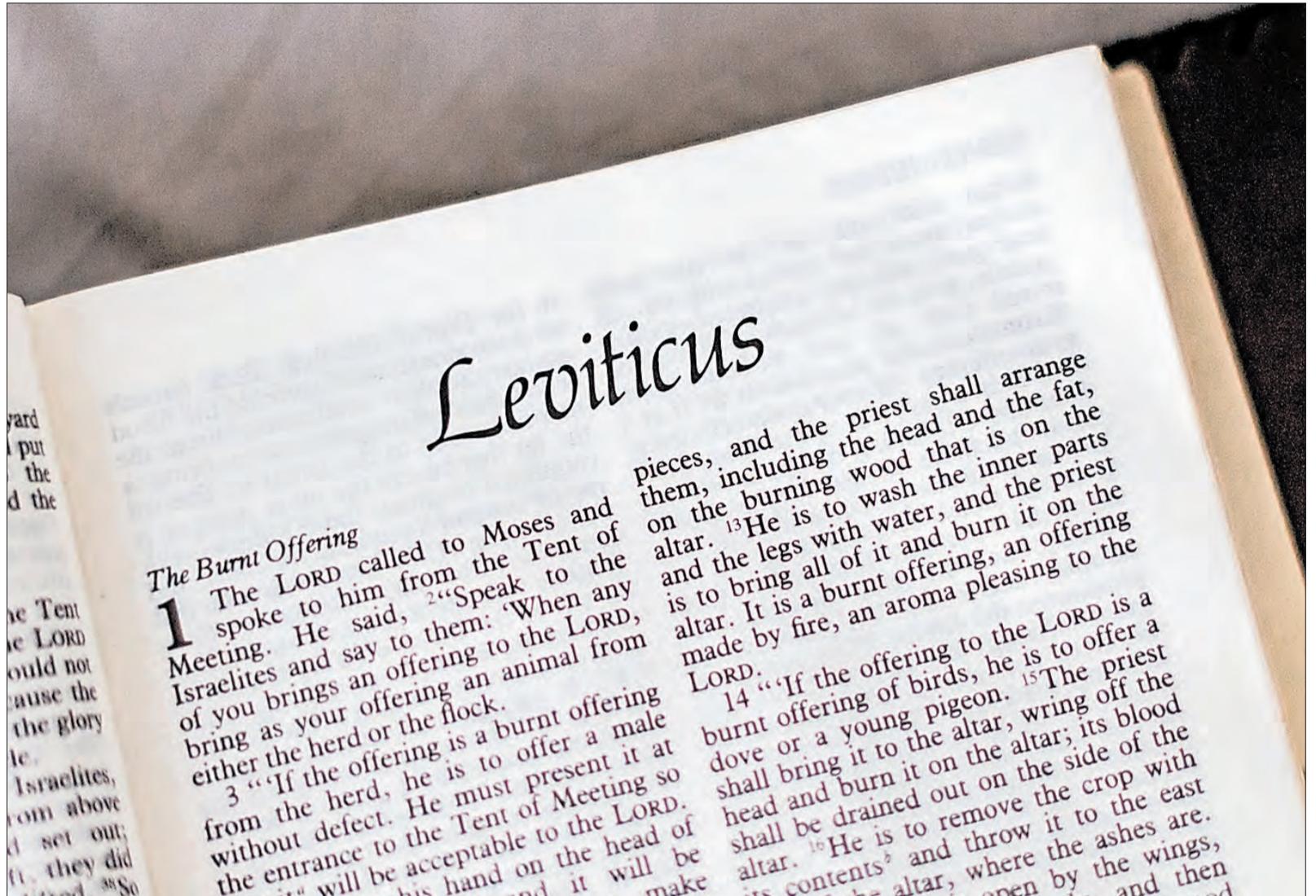
Worship manual

Leviticus is the manual of Old Testament worship given to Moses by God after the Tabernacle had been built. It provides laws about the Israelite priesthood, animal sacrifices, cleanliness, feast days, and holy living.

The New Testament is clear that the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ brought the Old Testament sacrificial system to an end, but that does not render Leviticus redundant for Christians. It holds many lessons for us today.

Leviticus brings us face to face with the sinfulness of man

As we read Leviticus, we may become weighed down by repeated descriptions of bloody sacrifices and strict codes of cleanliness. But this is exactly the purpose of the book. It is meant to weigh us down with a sense of our sin and inability



to keep God's law. On every page, Leviticus intimates to the reader, 'You are a sinner.'

Every day we sin. As I washed this morning, I sinned. As I had my quiet time, I sinned. As I ate breakfast, I sinned. As I read emails and saw the news, I sinned. As I write these words, I will sin. Sin taints all that we are and do, and Leviticus brings us face-to-face with this reality.

Leviticus brings us face-to-face with the need for blood to be shed for forgiveness

Again and again, Leviticus references the blood of creatures being shed: sheep, goats, bulls, birds. Blood was shed in the burnt offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. Blood was also to be shed when priests were consecrated, when individuals were cured of leprosy, and even after childbirth.

Why is this? Leviticus 17:11 tells us. God says, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for

'Leviticus is a blood-stained book because we are a sin-stained people.'

your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.' Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. Without the shedding of blood there is no access to God. Leviticus is a blood-stained book because we are a sin-stained people.

Imagine you had to offer an animal sacrifice every time you sinned. Think how many animals you would have to buy and offer each day! We would have no time for anything else. Soon we would be bankrupted by the expense.

Leviticus brings us face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ

The blood of goats and bulls cannot save us. We need a more royal blood: the blood of the sinless, spotless Son of God. All the Old Testament sacrifices pictured the work of Christ which was still to come. This is explained in the New Testament book of Hebrews:

'Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he

had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified' (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Here the purpose of Leviticus is revealed. God is holy, and we are not. We need a blood sacrifice to approach such a holy God and the sacrifices of animals all point to the sacrifice of Christ.

The burnt offering

Let's look at one particular sacrifice as it is described in the first chapter of Leviticus: the burnt offering. When an Israelite came to worship God he had to bring an animal from his flock (v. 2). The Israelite could never appear empty-handed before God in worship. There needed to be a sacrifice. Indeed, we must never think that we have an inherent right to come before God and worship him. How can we as sinful creatures approach a holy, sin-hating God?

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Features

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After receiving a wedding invitation we soon ponder what to wear. We certainly want to look presentable and at our best. It would be shameful to turn up to a wedding underdressed or without clothing at all. If that is true in terms of coming to a wedding, how much more so when coming into the presence of the living God. As the Israelite had to go to the temple with one of his prize animals with him, so Christians may only be accepted into God's presence if they have the Lord Jesus with them.

Without spot or blemish

The animal brought to the sacrifice had to be male and in perfect condition (v. 3). God is very precise. It had to be the best of your flock, not the worst. Worshipping God was costly. Can you imagine the scene? The father says to his family, 'I am going up to the tabernacle to worship God.' He goes to his herd and picks out the best and most valuable animal he has.

Today, there is only one who is good enough to be our sacrifice: one who is a male, one who is perfect, one who is clean. That one is the Lord Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect, sinless life. Not one false word left his lips, not one wrong thought dwelt in his heart. The New Testament calls him a lamb 'without spot or blemish' – the perfect sacrifice for sinners; the final sacrifice to which all Old Testament sacrifices pointed.

Come willingly

The Israelite had to come freely and willingly. He had to decide to make that journey in order to offer that animal and worship God. God has created us all as free individuals. There is no compulsion to come to Christ this morning. God wants willing volunteers to come and worship him and trust in his Son. The gospel is only for those who are thirsty for spiritual life – for those who know they are sinners and desire forgiveness.

Transferred

At the point of sacrifice, the Israelite would put his hand on the head of the animal and by faith believe that the guilt of his own sins was transferred to the animal (v. 4). The Hebrew word which is translated 'put' means more than just 'place'. It means 'lean on'. The same word is used in Psalm 88:7, 'Your wrath *lies heavy* upon me.'



Truly, our unconfessed sins lie heavy upon us, like a load too heavy to bear.

Yet there in Leviticus stands a beautiful picture of how we have our sins dealt with today. If we are to be forgiven then we must lean completely and only on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. When a sinner is saved an extraordinary transaction takes place. Our sins are laid upon Jesus Christ and put to his account. In the burnt offering this is wonderfully symbolised by the Israelite laying his hand upon the animal.

Death

The Israelite himself had to kill the animal (v. 5). This may surprise you. Surely the priest would kill the animal? No – it is the man who brings the offering, the man who has sinned. It is he who must kill the animal.

Picture the scene once more. The Israelite raises the knife to slaughter the dumb animal, perhaps one of his prize bulls. The animal looks up into the eyes of his owner as the knife plunges in. The animal has never done the man any harm – in fact the animal has no doubt served him well. But now it must die.

'Jesus knew down to the smallest detail what he would have to go through to save sinners from their sins.'

Now think of the One who died for sinners on the Cross – not a dumb animal but the Son of God! The Lord Jesus has never done us any harm. He created this beautiful world and gave us life and all that we enjoy. Yet it is this same Jesus who stepped into time and space and quietly, humbly, and silently laid down his life for us.

People sometimes debate the question of who killed Jesus. Was it the Jewish leaders who plotted his arrest? Was it the Jews who cried, 'Crucify him'? Was it Pontius Pilate who passed sentence? Was it the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross? No. It was me. I killed Jesus. My sins nailed him to the cross. He died for me!

Sprinkled blood

The priest then sprinkles the shed blood all around the altar (v. 5). The scene of slaughter becomes a bloody mess. Likewise, the precious blood of Jesus was sprinkled all over the altar of the cross. From head to foot Jesus would have been a crimson eyesore on the cross. We are reminded again that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.

Dismembered

The man then skins the animal and cuts it into pieces (v. 6) before it is burnt on the altar. With every cut of the knife he would be reminded that it was his sin that had caused this animal's suffering and death. With every cut he would be reminded that he deserved the wrath of God for his sins.

Here is a picture of the torment that our sins deserve and the torment that Christ suffered for us. What do we deserve? Eternity in a place of punishment, nothing less. We deserve to feel the pain of punishment every day in hell. What did Christ suffer? An eternity of punishment for us on the cross.

Burnt

The priest then places the dissected animal on the altar, setting it on fire until it is completely consumed (v. 8). Christ gave his whole life for us. He held back nothing to save us from our sins. Head, hands, feet, body, soul, and spirit were sacrificed on the altar of the cross to save us from our sins. What love! What compassion! What devotion!

The poor dumb animal was ignorant of its fate. But Jesus wasn't. He knew down to the smallest detail what he would have to go through to save sinners from their sins. What a Saviour we have!

Sweet aroma

The smell of the sacrifice was a sweet aroma to the Lord (v. 9). Finally the sacrifice is over. The bloodletting is finished. All that is left is the aroma of burnt flesh. To God, however, this is a sweet-smelling aroma. Why? Because the sinful man has, by faith, followed God's instructions as to the way to approach a holy God.

How, we wonder, could that which was just an animal provide a sweet-smelling aroma to God? The answer is that the sacrifice pointed to a greater sacrifice to come: the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God was pleased with the sacrifice of his Son, because it perfectly served to save all God's people from their sins.

What a beautiful picture we have in just a few verses at the beginning of Leviticus. I said at the beginning that Leviticus is a neglected book, but I hope I have inspired you to read it all. And as you do, look for Christ. And as you see Christ and his sacrifice, see the love of God for you.

Spring reminds us of the God of creation



By Peter Milsom
An elder at St Mellons Baptist Church, Cardiff, and Chairman of Associating Evangelical Churches of Wales.

planet on which we live to abound with life.

The earth stands out in stark contrast to all we know of the vast universe around us. It seems that Earth is one of God's special creations. Jesus came into this world that we 'may have life and have it to the full'.

God is beautiful and the source of all beauty. He has wonderfully adorned his creation with beauty. The mountains and the valleys, the flowers and the trees, the animals, the fish and the birds, the great variety of people from all nations reveal the mind of God, who 'makes everything beautiful in its time'.

Atheistic societies build ugly concrete blocks and force people into their 'one-size-fits-all' mould. Sadly, our secular society seems to promote things which degrade and demean people who have been created in the image of God.

God created us to love and worship him. One hymn writer reminds us how wonderful God is:

*How wonderful, how beautiful,
the sight of thee must be,
thine endless wisdom,
boundless power,
and awful purity.*

*Yet I may love thee too, O Lord,
almighty as thou art,
for thou has stooped to ask of me
the love of my poor heart.*

*Father of Jesus, love's reward,
what rapture will it be,
prostrate before thy throne to lie
and ever gaze on thee.*

Spring has come. After the dark, wet days of winter we are enjoying bright, sunny, blue-sky days. The snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils, and magnolias are blooming. People are out walking and cycling. Our spirits are lifted as we look forward to the long, warm days of summer.

Seeing nature coming to life reminds us of the God of creation. Long ago David wrote, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.' God is light. His first creative command was, 'Let there be light!' God's character is pure and good and true. In him there is no darkness at all.

He is transparent. He has wonderfully revealed his character and gracious purposes for the people of this world in Jesus Christ, his eternal Son. He calls us out of the moral and spiritual darkness of this world 'to walk in the light, as he is in the light'.

God is the giver of life. Through the winter months his creation has lain dormant, but now it is stirring to life again. God is the source of all life and has made this little



Crunch Points

We all value biblical advice from our elders, the first ones to whom we turn for counsel. **Jeremy Walker** outlines the kind of answer he might give to a question received at the chapel door.



Source: Shutterstock

My wife earns more than me and we've got three children. Is being a house-husband biblical?

I appreciate that this isn't an easy question, especially in a more expensive part of the country. This is one of those times when, like the Lord Jesus, we've got to dig down to some very basic questions about our identity as men and women, and what that means in terms of the roles we play and the priorities we pursue, established when Adam was made the earth-worker and Eve the child-bearer.

First of all, I don't think it's necessarily wrong that your wife works for a wage outside the home. Nevertheless, according to Paul, the older women are to admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed (Titus 2:4-5).

While that's by no means an exclusive list, it does suggest the priorities of the women of God. If you compare that with a passage like Proverbs 31, you see that the wise woman's priorities are her husband, her children, and her home, in that order.

Now, don't undersell that for a moment. Read that chapter and see the vital and dynamic way in which she conducts her extensive business (including financially responsible and productive



By Jeremy Walker
Jeremy is the pastor of Maidenbower Baptist Church in Crawley.

labour) and the way in which her husband respects and appreciates her. But the fact is, her primary sphere is the household under the loving authority of her husband, and she is ideally suited, by divinely-worked constitution, to that particular work. This is a high calling indeed!

On the other hand, remember what Paul says to Timothy: 'If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever' (1 Timothy 5:8). This seems to suggest that part of the basic responsibility of the head of the household is to be what they used to call 'the breadwinner'. Part of our masculine mandate is to provide for our family.

Bear in mind that there may be some important exceptions – perhaps due to sickness, for

example. While that doesn't mean we cannot take account of our wife's earning power, it does mean that we ought to be taking the lead. That's especially so when there are young children in the home who need to see Dad and Mum modelling the roles and responsibilities that God has established for families.

Some of the godless currents in our society have been eroding these fundamental and God-given distinctions. I know you may not be able to get a better-paying job, but I don't think that you should be giving up work to rely on your wife's wage. For her sake, and your children's, and your own, and for your testimony to the world, I think you need to bite the bullet on this one.

Being God's man in this situation may involve some sacrifices, brother. It might mean a smaller home, fewer holidays, an older car, and so on and so forth. But you cannot put a value on embracing and enjoying the God-ordained pattern for family life, and that will bring blessing long after the blessings of wealth in this world have passed away.

If you would like an answer to a crunch question, please email crunchpoints@evangelical-times.org. We cannot guarantee an answer to every question.

Events Diary

Events Diary

THIS SPACE IS FOR YOU — send us details of your forthcoming special meetings, which we will endeavour to fit in, as space allows. Alternatively you can submit an event using the web site: <http://www.evangelical-times.org/events/submit.php>

ALL ITEMS FOR THE EVENTS DIARY MUST BE RECEIVED BEFORE THE 1ST OF THE MONTH PRECEDING THE MONTH OF PUBLICATION. THEY WILL BE DISPLAYED IN BOTH THE NEWSPAPER AND ET WEB SITE.

MAY 3 **KESGRAVE.** Kesgrave Baptist Church, Cambridge Road, Kesgrave, Ipswich, IP5 1EW. Christian Institute meeting 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Tom Mawson (07762) 564835.

MAY 4 **KING'S LYNN.** Terrington St. Clement Church, Churchgate Way, Terrington St. Clement, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE34 4LZ. Christian Institute meeting 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: David Peet admin@tscparish-church.org or Christian Institute office (0191) 281 5664.

MAY 5 **DERBY.** Woodlands Evangelical Church, Blenheim Parade, Allestree, Derby, DE22 2GP. Christian Institute meeting 7.45pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Colette Patterson (01332) 551336.

MAY 6 **VIA ZOOM.** Christian Values in Education Online meeting, 8.00 to 9.30pm. Subject: State Education – Making your views known. Meeting ID: 814 5686 2468. Passcode: 625720. This meeting will consider how parents can make their views known regarding God-dishonouring ideologies and practices that are promoted in schools. Further details: www.cvie.org.uk or e-mail: enquiries@cvie.org.uk

MAY 7 **CHELTENHAM.** Providence Baptist Chapel, Naunton Parade, Leckhampton, Cheltenham, GL53 7NP. Bible League 130th Anniversary meeting to be held, God willing, at 3.00pm. Preacher: Revd Malcolm Watts (former Chairman of the Bible League Trust).

WARBOYS. Warboys Baptist Church, 73 High Street, Warboys, Huntingdon, PE28 2TA. Church Anniversary, 7.00pm. Preacher: Paul Gamston (South Craven Evangelical Church). Supper after service. Details: (01487) 823405. www.warboysbaptistchurch.org

MAY 7-8 **WOOLER.** Wooler Evangelical Church, 10 Cheviot Street, Wooler, NE71 6LN. Special Bible Ministry weekend: Saturday, 4.00pm & 6.30pm (with refreshments between); Sunday, 11.00am & 6.00pm. Speaker: Revd John Shearer (retired minister at Musselburgh Baptist Church). www.wooler_evangelical.org.uk

MAY 10 **SIDCUP.** Days Lane Baptist Church, 257 Days Lane, Sidcup, DA15 8JX. Christian Institute meeting 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Pastor James Stewart (07527) 143974.

MAY 11 **THATCHAM.** Thatcham Evangelical Church, Thatcham Parish Hall, Chapel Street, Thatcham, RG18 4JP. Christian Institute meeting 7.45pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Pastor Hedley Clemo (01635) 898164.

MAY 12 **SALISBURY.** Bishopdown Evangelical Church, Bishopdown Road, Salisbury, SP1 3DU. Christian Institute meeting 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Church Office (07842) 241612.

MAY 13 **BLUNHAM, nr Sandy, Bedfordshire.** Providence Baptist Chapel, Park Lane, Blunham, MK44 3NH. 180th Church Anniversary service, 7.00pm. Guest speaker: Pastor Derrick Morlan, (Oxford Baptist Chapel). Light refreshments after the service. All are welcome to join with us. Contact: David (07917) 113930 or e-mail: david.j.green1949@gmail.com

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BANBURY. Evangelical Free Church. Sundays 10.30am and 6.30pm; Wednesdays at 7.30pm. Phone: 01295 252607 or 01295 251169 or see www.befc.org.uk for venue details.

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DROITWICH. Witton Chapel, Tagwell Road. Evangelical Reformed ministry in Worcestershire. Sunday 10.30am & 6.30pm. Thursday 7.30pm Bible study and prayer meeting. Details: (01905) 794271 or (01684) 567969. www.wittonchapel.org.uk

YORK

YORK. Evangelical Church, Millthorpe School Hall, off Philadelphia Terrace, YO23 1DH. Sunday 10.30am & 6.00pm, except 1st Sunday evening, 5.00pm, Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, YO23 1BW. E-mail: info@yec.org.uk Tel: 01904 375875. www.yec.org.uk

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HULL. Kingston Evangelical Church, Park Grove off Princes Avenue, HU5 2UR. Sunday services 10.30am & 6.30pm. Wednesday 7.30pm. Bible study and prayer meeting. Enquiries, tel: 01482 844579.

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LAMPETER. Evangelical Church, New Church, 16 College Street. Sunday services: English 10.30am, Welsh (with translation) 5.00pm. Wednesday 7.30pm. Contact G. Jones, tel: 01570 423368. www.lampeterevangelicalchurch.org

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TOPSHAM. Two-bedroom cottage overlooking Exe estuary and hills. Shops, inns, restaurants close. Coast, moors, Exeter nearby. Tel: 02920 759314. E-mail: dee.jones@virgin.net

SUSSEX: EAST

HAILSHAM. S/c 1 bedroom stable conversion. Quiet country location. www.eastsussexselfcatering.co.uk Tel: 01323 841227. E-mail: longleysfarmcottage@gmail.com

YORKSHIRE: EAST

FLAMBOROUGH, Bridlington. 3 bedroom cottage, sleeps 6. Pets welcome. Beach one mile. Tel: 07804 691736. www.coblecotageflamborough.co.uk

HOLIDAYS
WALES

PEMBROKESHIRE: Freshwater East. Refurbished well-equipped holiday home (with 2 adjacent, available to book separately). Sleeps 1-6. Beach 250yds. From £320pw. Discounts for clergy and additional weeks. Sorry no pets. Please call for more information. Tel: 01978 357481. www.fresheast.co.uk

HOLIDAYS
OVERSEAS

GERMANY. Haus Barnabas in Black Forest. Holidays all year round. Activities include winter sports. B&B or halfboard. Brochure: rosemaryedwards2009@talktalk.net Tel: 01227 363857. www.haus-barnabas.com

SPAIN. Altea (Costa Blanca). Two-bedroom/bathroom apartment. Pool, garden, tennis. Shops, restaurants, beach close. Warm winters. Airport transfers. Tel: 02920 759314. E-mail: dee.jones@virgin.net

Institute staff. Contact: Beka - Church Office (01422) 250872

Events Diary

Continued from page 28

MAY

14

LUTON. Legrave Baptist Church, Vincent Road, Luton, LU4 9AN. A Taste of Zambia by Proclamation Zambia, 12.30pm. Join Proclamation Zambia for an afternoon of Zambian food, a quiz on Zambia, and a talk on Zambian culture by Benjamin Sakala. Bible message from Mr Hezron Muwowo. www.proclamationzambia.org/14-may-2022-a-taste-of-zambia

ROWLEY REGIS. Christian Heritage Centre, Providence Chapel, Bell End, Rowley Regis, nr Birmingham, B65 9LU. Opening of Christian Heritage Centre, 1.30pm - 4.00pm. All most welcome. Further details, phone (01384) 637314 or see: www.christianheritagecentre.org.uk (Feel free to phone or check website if in doubt.)

MAY

17

EDMONTON. Silver Street Community Church, 50 Statham Grove, Edmonton, London, N18 1RE. Christian Institute meeting 8.00pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Luke Crowter (0208) 807 6994.

MAY

18

WOKING. St John's Church, Church Road, Woking, GU21 7QN. Christian Institute meeting 8.00pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: St John's Church Office (01483) 377477. E-mail: office@stjohnswoking.org.uk

MAY

19

ILFORD. All Nations Church, Ley Street Centre, Ley Street, Ilford, IG1 4AA. Christian Institute meeting 8.00pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Revd Simon Arscott (07534) 635883.

MAY

24

HALIFAX. King's Church, The King's Centre, Park Road Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX1 2TS. Christian Institute meeting 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian

MAY

25

DONCASTER. Doncaster Evangelical Church, Wentworth Hall, Beckett Road, Wheatley, Doncaster, DN2 4AY. Christian Institute meeting 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Revd Gareth James (07913) 577686

MAY

26

SHEFFIELD. Crystal Peaks Church, 103 Robin Lane, Beighton, Sheffield, S20 1BB. Christian Institute meeting 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Steve Horton (07903) 416083

MAY

28

CANTERBURY. St Martins House, St Martins Avenue, Canterbury, CT1 1QQ. Canterbury Fundraising Dinner for Proclamation Zambia, 7.00pm. Join Proclamation Zambia for evening dinner and presentation about our Bible College in Kitwe, Zambia. Cost £20pp goes towards supporting a student. www.proclamationzambia.org/28-may-2022-canterbury-dinner

Don't date that guy



By Melissa Edgington
Blogger at
yourmomhasablog.com.

My firstborn child just turned 17. She's standing on the edge of a future that will draw her out into this big world, and in so many ways I know that she can't wait to get started. I'm excited to see where she goes, whom she meets, and what God does in her young life in the future.

Chances are good that she will fall in love with someone sooner rather than later. I see so many women in our churches who struggle in their marriages to unbelievers, and it makes me somewhat fearful for my daughters. How does it happen that so many Christian women marry men who aren't believers?

In some cases, they were both lost at the time they dated and married. But so often it's a different story: a Christian woman goes on one date with a man she knows she should never marry. And then before she knows it, she's in love with him. Love clouds her judgment. She's unable to see how spiritually incompatible the two of them are. And she marries him.

I want to make it clear that I'm not saying that a marriage between a Christian and an unbeliever can't be a pleasant one. Of course it can. But when the person you have committed your life to can't understand and share the deepest part of who you are, the core of your very being, namely your love for and faith in Jesus Christ, then there are levels of intimacy that just aren't available to you.

Unequally yoked

The apostle Paul warned Christians not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers in marriage (2 Corinthians 6:14). Can that marriage still be fun? Yes. Can it be sweet and romantic? No doubt. But as the years march on, Christian



Source: Shutterstock

women begin to see more and more reasons why Paul wrote what he did.

They begin to feel the distance that is created by different worldviews, different belief systems, and different spiritual priorities. And then they wind up scrolling through Christian message boards or in their pastor's office, wondering why they can't have the kind of marriage that they now realise they need and want.

If I could offer one piece of advice to women who are dating, it would be this: *don't go on even one date with a man you already know you shouldn't marry.*

Every marriage begins with a first date. Initial sensations of flattery can quickly lead to feelings of infatuation, which then soon lead to falling in love. And once a woman has fallen in love with a man, it becomes very difficult for her to resist the urge in her heart to stay with him and make a life with him.

But time tells the truth: it won't be long until she realises that those differences in belief that seemed insignificant at first now overshadow their life

with conflict and a desire for a deeper connection. Further difficulties await. When children arrive, who decides what they will be taught? Which worldview messages will they hear the loudest?

Disney princess movies may constantly tell girls to follow their hearts, but the Bible paints a very different picture. Scripture tells us that our hearts are liars. How much more clearly is this demonstrated than when blind love leads a godly Christian woman to marry someone outside of her faith? It happens all the time, and it all starts with one date.

Admittedly, there are times when a first date is needed because you don't know enough about the person to make a judgement call about your compatibility. But if you already know that he isn't a professing Christian, if you already know that he claims to be a Christian but lives a lifestyle suggesting otherwise, if you have already seen traits and behaviour that are red flags or that shout, 'This is not the guy!' then don't go out with him. Not even once.

On guard

Protect your heart. Guard your future. Wait for someone who loves the Lord and then take your time getting to know him, asking God to help you clearly see if he is someone you should build a life with.

We live in a world that likes to paint dating as a risk-free adventure. I would argue that such an attitude leaves Christian women vulnerable to the lies that their own hearts will tell them about how the wrong men will change into the right men with enough love and time.

Every date has the potential to lead to a life-long commitment. It may sound dramatic, but ask the many women you know right now who are attending church alone each and every week – women who have no partner in the things of God.

A woman in this situation is missing out on the joy that comes from sharing all of the intimate victories and struggles of life with a husband who loves Christ. Before marriage, she may have dreamed of one who

would spur her on to goodness and obedience, one who would sympathise with her weaknesses, understanding what battles with sin are like.

She may have imagined herself walking through life arm-in-arm with a godly man who serves the church, who longs for holiness, who wants to honour God above all else, in marriage and in parenting and in all other arenas.

Instead, she treads the narrow road as a solitary figure in her home, unable to share with the person she loves most of the precious things that God is doing. She wanted so much more, but because she fell in love, she lost her ability to recognise what her future would look like.

If I could shout it from the rooftops, I would: if you already know he isn't in love with Jesus, don't date that guy!

My teenager has heard these words come out of my mouth so many times. One of these days she will fall in love. I hope that she will date wisely and carefully, never forgetting that every marriage begins with one very first date.