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Family wins school transgender case

By Mike Judge, Editor

A Christian family on the Isle of Wight has been awarded £22,000 in legal costs in settlement of their court case against the Department for Education, following a five-year legal battle.

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre, Nigel Rowe, 49, and his wife Sally, 47, had taken legal action against the Department for Education (DfE).

They and their six-year-old son were labelled 'transphobic' by a Church of England primary school for refusing to 'believe' in transgender affirming policies.

The government has now decided to settle the case after the Rowes won permission at the High Court for a judicial review of the government's transgender-affirming policies.

Nigel and Sally Rowe are now calling on the Church of England (CofE) to urgently abandon transgender guidance which says that children as young as five should be affirmed if they want to identify as the opposite gender.

The case dates back to 2017 when the Rowes raised

concerns after two boys in their son's classes at the age of six came to their CofE school identifying as girls.

The Rowes were told that their son would be demonstrating 'transphobic behaviour' if he expressed a belief against transgenderism or if he refused to use the transgendered children's preferred pronouns.

The parents were later given an 'accept it or leave' ultimatum by the school. The local Church of England diocese backed the school's position based on its own guidance, which covers the CofE's 4,700 primary schools.

The CofE guidance says that children as young as five should be affirmed if they want to identify as the opposite gender.

The Rowes subsequently had no other choice but to home school their two sons, as they believed the school's policies were harmful and in direct opposition to how they wanted to shape their children's understanding of human identity.

In response to their treatment by the school, the Rowes wrote to the DfE calling on the Secretary of State for Education to intervene in their case.



Nigel and Sally Rowe say they are delighted with the outcome (Source: Christian Legal Centre)

They also called on the DfE to scrap the Cornwall Schools Transgender Guidelines which are being held as best practice by the government.

Since 2015, the guidelines, produced by LGBT activists and driven by Stonewall, provide schools, teachers, and governors with guidance on how transgender ideology can be embedded into the fabric of a schools' culture.

The legal case was heading to the High Court when the DfE settled and awarded the Rowes £22,000 in costs, which they intend to donate to the Christian Legal Centre.

The government has also said that its official guidance for schools on transgender issues is being developed by the Department for Education in conjunction with the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

In response to the result, Nigel and Sally Rowe said, 'We are delighted with the outcome and pray that it will contribute to real change in primary schools.'

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, said, 'We will continue to hold local authorities, schools and the government to account if these commitments and promises are not adequately met.'

Comment, p.10

Christian medics slam the handling of the care sector during Covid

The Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF) has said the government's handling of the care sector at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic was an 'utter disaster'.

CMF spokesman Steve Fouch says people that lost loved ones need

answers. He said, 'We were assured that there would be a ring of protection around the care homes, but in practice, what was happening was people were being discharged from hospital with Covid infections to care homes without any proper screening or testing.

'So care homes suddenly found themselves with massive outbreaks, when they shouldn't have done, when they could have actually been kept safe.

'So these care homes were being isolated from the community. People couldn't see loved ones, all they could

do is wave at them through a window and yet they were having people with Covid admitted back into the care home directly.

'So that was an utter disaster and by the time people realised what was going on and changed it, lives had been lost.'

National News

Catholic mother arrested in front of her children after being accused of criticising transgenderism

A Catholic campaigner and mother of five has been arrested by police in front of her children following messages posted online about gender issues.

Caroline Farrow was arrested at her home by police who accused her of posting 'malicious' content and 'harassing' others.

Farrow strenuously denies the allegations, and campaigners have condemned Surrey Police for 'wasting time on trivial nonsense'.

She claims two Surrey Police officers 'forced' their way into her home to detain her, following a series of anonymous posts shared on internet forums in June.

Farrow said the police arrived when she was in the middle of preparing a roast dinner for her husband Robin and five children.

She says that the officers wanted to take her away for an interview under caution, but when she asked 'Do you have a warrant?', she claims they replied, 'We don't need one.'



Caroline Farrow being arrested and searched by Surrey Police (Credit: Caroline Farrow / Twitter)

Photographs posted online by Farrow show one officer appearing to put his hand on her front door, and another shows her being searched outside.

Farrow said, 'One minute I am cooking some roast chicken for dinner, the next I am having my socks searched for drugs, because of "insulting posts on the internet".'

'It's scary that the police can take someone's word for



something and just come and arrest you. All they could say is "we've had an allegation which needs to be investigated".'

Toby Young, General Secretary of the Free Speech Union said, 'Police forces in England and Wales have been told by the Home Secretary and the head of the College of Policing to stop investigating Twitter spats and focus on crime.'

'Unfortunately, it seems like Surrey Police didn't get the memo. If I was a Surrey resident who'd been burgled and couldn't persuade the local police to do anything about it, I'd be extremely angry that they're wasting time on this trivial nonsense.'

'Something has gone very, very wrong at Surrey Police. They need to get their priorities straight.'

A spokesperson for Surrey Police said officers attended the address in Guildford as part of a probe into 'allegations of malicious communications and harassment', adding that officers 'seized a number of electronic devices'.

Temporary Detective Chief Inspector David Bentley said the devices had been seized as police continue to 'gather further evidence and carry out an investigation to prove or disprove the allegation'.

Farrow was previously the subject of a five-month police investigation in 2019, after she was accused of calling a transgender woman a 'he' on Twitter.

NEWS IN BRIEF

10m abortions since 1967 Act

The ten millionth baby is believed to have been aborted since the 1967 Abortion Act became law. Although official numbers have not yet been published, pro-life groups used government data to project that the ten millionth baby had its life taken by abortion at 11:41 a.m. on Friday 23 September. Last year, 26 babies were aborted every hour.

4 in 10 kids see harmful content

Almost half of English children have seen harmful content online including images of self-harm and suicide, a shocking study shows. Christian charity CARE is urgently calling for more safeguards to protect children from such material. But government proposals to regulate the internet have been embroiled in free speech concerns.

Focus on crime, police are told

Home Secretary Suella Braverman has told West Sussex Police that they should avoid playing identity politics. She said they should 'focus on catching criminals not policing pronouns'. Her comments came after the police force had called a convicted paedophile 'a woman', even though he is biologically male and committed the crimes prior to 'transitioning'.

Divorces surge after new law

Divorce applications have reached the highest number in a decade, following the introduction of the new quickie divorce law. Official statistics reveal that there were 33,566 applications for divorce, including the dissolution of civil partnerships, between April and June 2022. This was 22 per cent higher than last year, and the greatest number since 2012.

'Chilling' report on conversion therapy calls for church leaders to be 're-educated' or 'defrocked'

Campaigners say an advisory report sent to the Scottish government about banning so-called 'conversion therapy' is 'chilling'.

The report says parents who try to discourage their children from changing sex could run the risk of having their children taken away by the state.

And it says groups that are critical of homosexual or transgender ideas should be barred from receiving public grants, hiring public venues, or having charitable status.

A ban on conversion therapy could limit Christian freedoms to preach, pray, pastor – and even parent – in line with biblical teaching on gender and sexuality.

The report suggests that church ministers who breach the proposed law by expressing the Bible's teaching on such matters should be 're-educated' or 'defrocked'.

The alarming document was published last month by The Scottish Government Expert Advisory Group on banning conversion therapy.

It recommends that a Scottish ban on conversion therapy should have a very broad definition which includes transgenderism and disregards a person's consent.

The plans are controversial, not just among religious campaigners, but also with

feminist and gay groups that are critical of the transgender movement.

Maya Forstater, a prominent feminist gender-critical voice and ally to J. K. Rowling, says the report effectively labels 'conversion practices' as 'anything they say they are'.

She also is deeply concerned that the report recommends consequences as severe as losing children, venues, and professional licenses for those who dare to defy the ban.

She said, 'Organisations that they deem to be practising "conversion" (i.e. not falling in line with gender ideology) will be barred from public places, grants, charitable status,' and added, 'You will be threatened with losing your children'.

She continued, 'If you oppose this attack on family life and children you will be accused of supporting torture and your personal reputation will be smeared.'

The Let Us Pray campaign has been spearheaded by The Christian Institute to protect religious liberty from a ban on conversion therapy.

Spokesman Simon Calvert said, 'LGBT people deserve to be protected from physical and verbal abuse just like anyone else. But these proposals go much, much further.'

'The report demands a law that could criminalise traditional churches and "gender-



Maya Forstater

critical" feminists alike – simply because their conversations around sex and gender do not conform to a narrow brand of LGBT politics.'

He added, 'Leaders of traditional, mainstream churches are particularly in the firing line.'

'The report suggests they be "re-educated", and demands the removal of charitable status and the right to hire buildings from churches it deems non-compliant. It even calls for the defrocking of church ministers.'

Christian doctor vindicated for offering to pray with patients

A Christian doctor who had been disciplined for offering to pray for patients has been vindicated following a four-year legal battle.

Dr Richard Scott, 62, from Margate, Kent, had been set to contest disciplinary measures and mandatory conditions imposed against him by NHS England.

The hearing was due to take place at Ashford Tribunal Hearing Centre, Kent, but the case was settled beforehand.

Lawyers for NHS England agreed that Dr Scott was free to pray with patients within General Medical Council guidance.

The trouble began when the National Secular Society

filed complaints against Dr Scott, based solely on a Radio 4 interview he gave in January 2019 in which he discussed the role of prayer in his medical practice.

A series of investigations took place throughout 2019, 2020, and 2021 which resulted in him being threatened with removal from the NHS Practitioners List.

The doctor, who has more than 35 years of practice under his belt, had previously been exonerated by the General Medical Council (GMC).

Yet, despite the GMC ruling twice in 2019 and 2020 that he had not breached any of its guidelines and that 'discussion of faith in consultations is not prohibited', NHS England pursued its case.

However, just before proceedings commenced at the Ashford Tribunal Hearing Centre, Kent, in September this year, NHS England agreed to settle the case.

This included NHS England lawyers agreeing that Dr Scott was free to offer to pray for and to pray with patients if he did so within agreed GMC guidance.

In return, Dr Scott agreed, out of good will, and with no admittance of wrong-doing, that he would attend a one-day course related to professional boundaries.

Previously, he had contested attending that course, as it is usually offered to those who have breached boundaries involving relations with patients.



Dr Richard Scott (*Christian Concern*)

Dr Scott maintained he has always offered prayer and spiritual support within GMC guidance and that complaints against him have been consistently engineered by secular groups and anonymous complainants.

Dr Scott said, 'I do try to follow the General Medical Council guidelines and if you read them correctly, they allow you and encourage you to speak to patients about religion where it's relevant to their care.'



Professor Bobby Duffy

Students fear a lack of freedom of speech, says Policy Institute study

Freedom of speech is becoming increasingly threatened at UK colleges and universities, a study has claimed.

Research by the Policy Institute at King's College London, based on an analysis of multiple surveys carried out among students, found 34 per cent of respondents felt freedom of speech was 'very' or 'fairly threatened'.

This was an increase from 2019, when 24 per cent of students felt free speech and robust debate was becoming restricted.

Although 65 per cent of students said free speech and robust debate were 'well protected' in their university, 49 per cent agreed that universities generally were becoming 'less tolerant' of a wide range of viewpoints.

Worryingly, more than half (51 per cent) agreed their institution's culture prevented people from voicing their true beliefs, while 34 per cent admitted to personally withholding

their opinion on the topic of 'gender identity'.

Professor Bobby Duffy, director of the Policy Institute at King's College London, said, 'We can't divorce these trends in universities from changes in wider society, where we've seen increasing focus on "culture war" issues, which will influence student opinions.'

Earlier this year, Office for Students data highlighted that 193 requests to host events or speakers were turned down by higher education institutions in 2020-21, more than double the number of the previous year.

As reported by ET last year, Oxford's Worcester College hosted Christian Concern's Wilberforce Academy in 2021, but decided to cancel a second booking following allegations by a small number of students.

But in 2022, the college, run by former Stonewall chairman David Isaac, had to admit an independent review found 'no evidence' Christian Concern's Academy had acted improperly.

Charity Commission is investigating pro-transgender group 'Mermaids'

The Charity Commission has launched an investigation into trans-activist group Mermaids following concerns about its approach to safeguarding children.

The announcement followed an exclusive report published by *The Daily Telegraph* which revealed the controversial group had been sending chest binders to girls as young as 13 without their parents' knowledge.

The paper claimed Mermaids has been offering free chest binders to young teenagers since at least 2019.

The newspaper also reported that discussions in the charity's moderated online forum gave advice to 12 to 15-year-olds on how they could raise money to buy puberty-blocking drugs and cross-sex hormones.

Speaking to the BBC, a spokesperson for the Charity Commission said, 'Concerns have been raised with

us about Mermaids' approach to safeguarding young people.

'We have opened a regulatory compliance case, and have written to the trustees. We now await their reply.'

A separate investigation by the *Daily Mail* uncovered what it called a 'consistent stream of questionable – if not dangerous – material being circulated by the charity and those working for it'.

Further controversy hit the charity when a trustee was forced to resign after reports he spoke at a conference organised by a group that promotes support for paedophiles.

Dr Jacob Breslow quit the transgender children's charity after the *Times* revealed he had attended the B4U-ACT conference in 2011, as a PhD student.

B4U-ACT calls for paedophiles to have the right to live 'in truth and dignity', but Mermaids says the organisation is 'completely at odds' with its values.



Susie Green (*CEO of Mermaids*)



DEFENDING THE GOSPEL AT ALL COSTS

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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Available at: Amazon (UK), Evangelical Bookshop (Northern Ireland),
FM Bookshops (Scotland), and Kingsway CLC Trust (UK)

Two hundred gather for Crowborough church plant

By Zachary Gillit

At the end of August this year, the opening service of a new church plant was held in Crowborough, East Sussex.

Jarvis Brook Baptist Chapel is located in a historic, disused Baptist chapel that has been freely given to the Crown Christian Heritage Trust for this new gospel work.

It was a great encouragement to see the chapel filled to capacity with believers from all corners of the country who had gathered to lend their prayers and support.

Pastor Derrick Morlan of Oxford Baptist Chapel led the opening service. Hymns of thanksgiving and praise rang out once again from more than 200 worshippers who crowded into every bench and aisle of the chapel and gallery.

The Bible message of dedication was delivered by Dr Clarence Sexton, pastor of Temple Baptist Church and President of Crown College of the Bible in Knoxville, Tennessee. His sermon was taken from Jude 22: 'And of some have compassion, making a difference.'

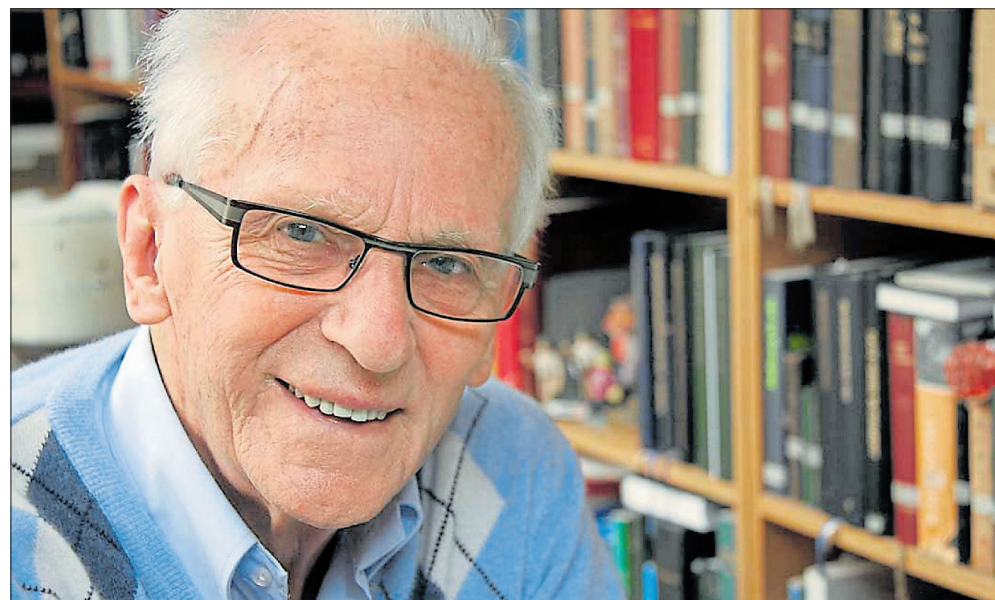
A special collection was also taken up during the meeting

to raise funds for the purchase of a minibus for the Sunday School work.

Pray for Carl and Charmaine Houser, who have been sent from Beeches Road Baptist Chapel in the West Midlands to labour in this new work.

We give all thanks and praise to God for opening this door of opportunity to see this chapel preserved for the ministry of the gospel.

We trust that he will do a marvellous work in Crowborough through the preaching of God's Word and through gospel outreach in the local community.



Obituary: 'Brother Andrew' (1928–2022)

By John Tredgett

Andrew van der Bijl, known as 'Brother Andrew' and famous for smuggling Bibles across the Iron Curtain in a blue Volkswagen Beetle, has died aged 94.

His autobiography, *God's Smuggler*, has been in print for 40 years and has sold over ten million copies in 35 languages.

Andrew was born in Sint Pancras, the Netherlands. He joined the colonial army of the Dutch East Indies, and converted to Christianity during a period of convalescence, where he spent much time reading the Bible.

After receiving missionary training in Scotland, Andrew travelled to Poland in 1955 to participate in a Communist youth rally. He travelled there with a suitcase full of Christian tracts. Upon arrival, he discovered that churches behind the Iron Curtain were isolated and in need of encouragement.

In *God's Smuggler*, Andrew recounts his border crossings in a bright blue Volkswagen Beetle stuffed with illicit Bibles in 1957.

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands knighted Andrew in 1993, but perhaps the recognition that pleased him most was the copies of KGB reports which he obtained after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

There were more than 150 pages about him, detailing his work in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Despite this, they were still unable to stop his work.

In 2018, then-Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt wrote to Andrew, saying, 'I would like to express my personal thanks for the extraordinary and courageous support you have provided to the persecuted Church throughout the years.'

'Having read *God's Smuggler* as a child, I know that your story has inspired millions of people around the world to speak out on behalf of the voiceless and suffering.'

Andrew was married for 59 years to Corry, who died in January 2018. He is survived by five children and eleven grandchildren.

Obituary: Achille Blaize (1941–2022)

By Jack Hampshire

Achille Blaize was born in Dominica, arriving in England in 1962 before settling in East London.

Initially a Roman Catholic, Achille knew nothing of the Bible until an open-air gospel message impressed him deeply and led to his new birth as a Christian.

Achille became a member of East London Tabernacle. He then served as a deacon and district evangelist. Subsequently, the church called him to be assistant pastor to Paul Tucker.

At a Banner of Truth conference, Achille met Albert Martin, which led to a lifelong friendship. It also led to Achille being called to the eldership of Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, New Jersey, in 1973, where Pastor Martin ministered.

Two years later, Trinity sent him back on a church-planting mission to East London. After some time, a group

covenanted to become Grace Baptist Church meeting in rented halls in Leyton.

Achille became friends with Wilfred Khurt, a retired missionary and pastor of the church in Gurney Road, Stratford. In 1980 they agreed that it would be advantageous for their two churches to become one congregation, meeting in the Gurney Road building.

Until his retirement in 2009, Achille laboured faithfully at Grace Baptist, Stratford, alongside a wide preaching ministry.

He was a loveable man of great integrity. We all appreciated his preaching and wise counsel.

In the closing years of his life, Achille suffered ill health which gradually limited his abilities. Nevertheless, his love for Christ was always strong, showing itself in cheerful contentedness and thanksgiving.

He is survived by his widow Esyln, two children, and four grandchildren.



Church News

Geoff Thomas and Jonathan Stobbs speak at the 57th Derbyshire Bible Weekend in Stanton Lees

By Dr Jonathan Bayes

Stanton Lees Chapel in the Derbyshire Dales held its 57th annual ‘Bible Weekend’ in August. It is an event which has taken place every year since 1965, with the one exception of 2020.

The two speakers this year were Geoff Thomas (retired pastor of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth) and Jonathan Stobbs (current pastor of Penzance Baptist Church).

The Weekend comprises a series of meetings over three days. The Monday morning meeting takes the form of a historical or biographical talk, while the other six meetings are preaching rallies.

In between several of the meetings, tea is provided by our excellent catering team, ably led by Rosie Young.

Those attending came from several neighbouring churches in the Bakewell, Matlock, Crich,



Ashbourne, and Derby area, as well as many of parts of England.

On the Saturday Geoff spoke on the meaning of the cross, giving us, as he put it, ‘a multi-perspectival view’ of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Over his two sessions he explained ten things that the cross was: revelation, humiliation, retribution, substitution, propitiation,

redemption, reconciliation, satisfaction, destruction, and proclamation.

It was wonderful to be reminded of these truths, and thrilling to hear of one person who was converted as a result of receiving a fuller understanding of what Christ had accomplished for him.

Jonathan Stobbs’s overall theme was *knowing God in trials*. He began by pointing

us to the amazing, pardoning grace of God, and then in his remaining three sessions spoke about the times of trouble, doubt, and denial that we all may face.

He spoke with tender sympathy, and reminded us of the constant need to call upon God, to look to the Lord Jesus, and to be challenged, stirred, renewed, and delivered.

At the Monday morning biographical session, Geoff told us about his former teacher, Edward J. Young, whom he described as defender and proclaimer of the Old Testament. We learned about his battle against modernism, but also the loving way in which he engaged with liberal theologians.

I thought this was a model historical talk: its relevance to issues which we face today was clear, and it was heart-warming – not a merely intellectual exercise, but a real ministry to our souls.

Professors, medics, and pastors speak to more than 100 students at the Truth In Science Summer School

By Andrew Saywell

In recent years there has been a growing concern that students in universities are being increasingly subjected to liberal theology under the guise of theistic evolution.

This theology states that Genesis is a myth up until the appearance of Abraham. This means no literal Garden of Eden, no fall of man, no worldwide flood, but millions of years of gradual evolution of ape-like creatures into modern man.

Who will stand for the truth and complete inerrancy of God’s Word? Who will stand for a direct supernatural creation? Who will prepare students for the onslaught of flawed science, corrupt theology, and secular worldviews?

These were among the concerns of Willis Metcalfe back in 2006 when Truth in Science was formed.

From humble beginnings, the Truth in Science Summer School has grown to more than 100 students, all listening attentively to a variety of 30-minute talks and lectures by experts in their respective fields.

This year, professors, medics, and pastors highlighted recent discoveries such as soft tissue found in dinosaur fossils, the wonder of our central nervous system, and the rapid sedimentation in the rock strata.

Questions in the fertile minds of young people abounded, and solid scriptural arguments were provided in response. Topics of discussion included the cultural Marxism of the ‘woke’ movement, and transgenderism. Students also had opportunity to share testimony on how to stand for the truth while at university.

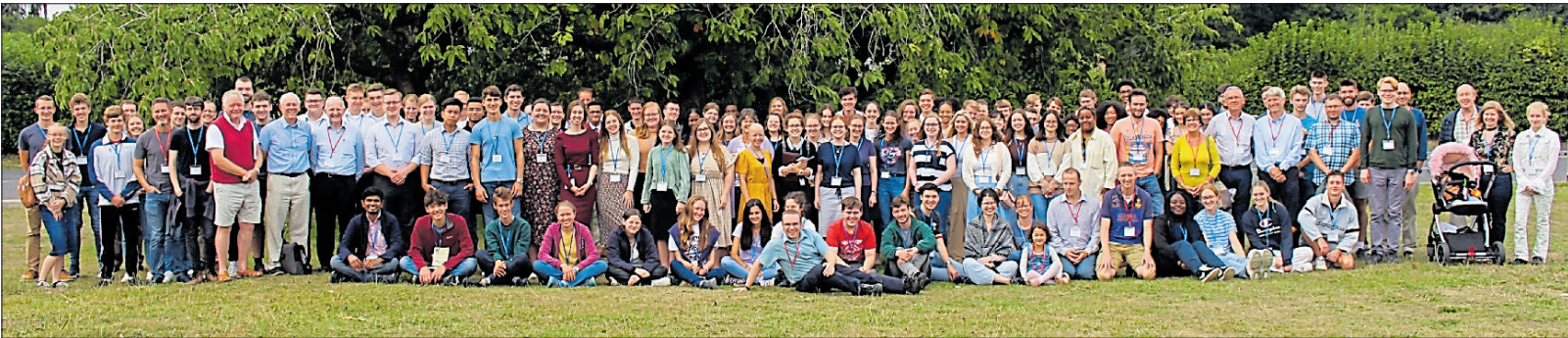
There seemed an air of excitement about the discovery of truths evidenced in the natural world, and in the infallible testimony of Scripture.

Feedback from students has been very encouraging: ‘It was so much better than I imagined. Quality talks, lots of information’; ‘I have loved these two days so much’; ‘I have learnt so much about the challenges of being in the world, both the social and scientific aspects.’

This was a conference like no other, where students were able to ask questions that really mattered to them as they begin university studies. It was a conference where they could find answers which perhaps they wouldn’t find elsewhere.

Someone who was a university student 30 years ago commented, ‘If only there was something like this around when I was starting out at university.’

The recorded messages can be found on truthinscience.uk. May the Lord cause the seeds sown to bear much fruit in the stand for truth in years to come.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Trinitarian Bible Society’s AGM

In September over 200 people gathered for the 191st AGM of the Trinitarian Bible Society. During the meeting in London, updates concerning Bible distribution and various translation projects were provided. The financial report indicated growth. A service of worship was led by Revd David Campbell of the Edinburgh congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Romanian Bible translation work

A team at Tyndale House research institute is continuing work on a fresh translation of the Bible into Romanian. The work, supervised by Dr Emanuel Contac, has been underway since 2015. Over the summer the translators completed work on the ‘minor prophets’, which were uploaded to digital Bible apps (YouVersion and eBiblia) for all Romanians to access.

Northumberland Bible weekend

A Bible ministry weekend was held at Wooler Evangelical Church in Northumberland in September. People from the Scottish Borders and from as far south as Newcastle came to the event, which features four sessions over two days. Conrad Pomeroy (Dudley Baptist Church) spoke on redemption during the conference, considering Ephesians 1 over the course of four meetings.

Gospel care packs given

Grace Baptist Edinburgh recently partnered with Bellevue Chapel to prepare and distribute 350 ‘gospel care packs’ to new university students arriving in Scotland’s capital. The packs included cans of Irn-Bru, shower gel, evangelistic leaflets, and an invitation to a student lunch.

Philip Bell speaks on the Ice Age and climate change



By Alwyn & Patricia Turner

In September, Creation Matters North West held their bi-annual public meeting at Grace Evangelical Church, Carlisle. Presentations were given by Philip Bell, CEO of Creation Ministries International (UK/Europe).

Philip's first talk, 'Ice, the Bible and time' explored evidence for a post-Flood ice age. As well as geological data, Philip referred to several verses in Job that mention

abundant snow and ice, clearly suggesting large frozen areas, e.g. 'The surface of the deep is frozen' (Job 38:30).

Philip demonstrated that glaciers not only flow at considerable 'speed' but that, given the current rate of deposition, they can easily form within a biblical timescale rather than over millions of years.

The second talk was entitled 'Climate change: biblical and scientific perspectives'. Philip focused

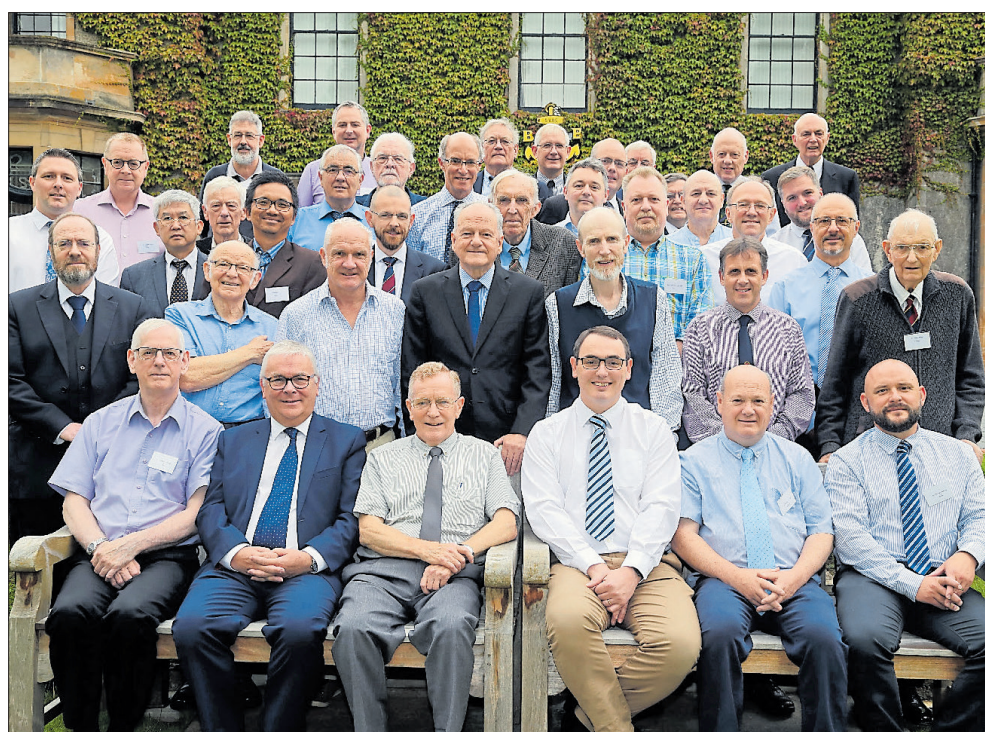
on the tensions between real scientific data and the alarmist/apocalyptic view presented by the media and hard-line environmentalists.

He showed that there is much data to suggest that the alarmist view of impending doom from global warming is not entirely supported by the hard scientific data.

Globally, there have been many examples of the earth undergoing periods much warmer than currently experienced or predicted.

Philip also suggested that many scientists/politicians are being informed from a non-biblical, long-age perspective rather than from a viewpoint based on the Bible, including a global flood that can account for much of climate change.

Philip cautioned us against simply accepting what is being presented in the media and to become better informed. We must not make decisions in a climate of fear, but rather on trustworthy, scientific data.



Increased numbers attend the Free Church Continuing's 69th School of Theology in Larbert, near Falkirk

By Revd E. T. Kirkland

Organised by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), the 69th School in Theology took place in September in Larbert, just outside of Falkirk. Rather than a conference, it is a school, in that the papers are given by those who regularly attend rather than third-party speakers.

It was good to see an increase in numbers of those attending this year, and each day began and ended with worship.

In terms of papers, we began with the life of Alexander Moody Stuart by Revd John Keddie. It was a resounding and thrilling commencement to the School.

Home mission worker Donald Morrison filled the missionary slot with an update on his work across Scotland, enabling us to hear first-hand the real state of the nation. Gospel ignorance abounds and

Scripture knowledge is, in many places, non-existent.

In such a day, where feathery Christians abound and gadding about has become endemic, the Revd Davide Ratti (Dores) spoke on 'Biblical necessity and responsibilities of church membership'.

Ezekiel 1 was ably tackled by the Revd James Gracie (Edinburgh), who showed how the structure enables us to understand the meaning and significance of this extraordinary book.

What it means to be a child of God was presented by Revd Harry Woods, who gave a comprehensive description of adoption.

No School would be complete without book reviews which occurred on the Wednesday, followed by 'Themes in Jude' by Revd Craig Dennison. Papers were also given on John 1:1 by Revd Greg MacDonald (Ness) and 'Scoffers in 2 Peter 3:3' by Revd Thomas Buchanan (Brora).

Bible Text Publicity Mission celebrates 100 years of ministry

By Martin Lawrence

If you saw an aeroplane overhead writing an advertisement for a tobacco company in coloured smoke, what would you think? Or what if you looked up while walking through Elephant and Castle to see an electronic sign telling the result of a prize fight that had just finished in the Royal Albert Hall?

In 2022 one would probably think very little of such things, but back in 1922 these were new phenomena – dramatic, state-of-the-art advertising techniques.

This is what Charles Phillips witnessed, and his first thought was, 'These could be used to share the Bible with the public.' That inspirational moment was the beginning of the Gospel Sky Sign Mission, later renamed Bible Text Publicity Mission.

In the very place where Charles Phillips saw the electronic sign, Elephant and Castle, the first campaign was launched, displaying the verse 'Be ye reconciled to God' (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Among the many people to read this verse were a young, engaged couple. They were both converted that night. God's hand was on the work from the very beginning.

Today, BTPM displays God's Word far and wide as finances permit. From Inverness to Penzance, Bible verses are displayed at train stations, inside trains, trams and underground carriages, on buses, and many other places.

Culture has changed tremendously over the past century, and we now live in an age where people have so little knowledge of the Lord and his Word. It is now essential for communication links to be on our posters – telephone, email, social media – so enquirers can discover more about the relevance God's Word has for them.

How many lives have been transformed by the displaying of the Bible in public spaces? This detail is known only to God, but we can be confident that his powerful Word will not return to him void and shall accomplish all his purposes.



International News

Belgium: European Court says right to life was violated in euthanasia case of depressed woman

The European Court of Human Rights has censured Belgium for failing to conduct a proper investigation into circumstances of the 2012 euthanasia death of Godelieva de Troyer.

The Court held that there was a violation of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights that everyone's right to life shall be protected by law.

Godelieva de Troyer died by lethal injection in 2012, aged 64, following a diagnosis of 'incurable depression', but her son – Tom Mortier – later raised concerns.

The doctor who carried out the euthanasia was a cancer specialist, not a mental health specialist.

Prior to her death by euthanasia, no family member was consulted. Her son only found out the day after she was euthanised, when the hospital contacted him to make the necessary arrangements.

Furthermore, her psychiatrist was not informed that euthanasia was being considered, even though he had been treating her for more than 20 years. Her psychiatrist doubts she satisfied the requirements of the Belgian euthanasia law, introduced in 2002.

The law specifies that the person must be in a 'medically futile condition

of constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated, resulting from a serious and incurable disorder caused by illness or accident'.

In the months before she was put to death, she only spoke with doctors who belonged to the pro-euthanasia movement, despite the requirement for independent opinions in the case of individuals not expected to die soon.

Her son said, 'My mother suffered from severe mental difficulties, and coped with depression throughout her life. She was treated for years by psychiatrists, and sadly, she and I lost contact for some time.

'It was during this time that she died by way of lethal injection. Never could I have imagined that we would be parted forever.'

Reacting to the European Court ruling, he said, 'This marks the close of this terrible chapter, and while nothing can alleviate the pain of losing my mother, my hope is that the ruling from the Court that there was indeed a violation of the right to life puts the world on notice as to the immense harm euthanasia inflicts on not just people in vulnerable situations contemplating ending their lives, but also their families, and ultimately society.'

He was represented before the Court by Robert Clarke, Deputy Director of ADF International, a pro-life and religious liberty legal advocacy organisation.



Tom Mortier (Credit: ADF International)

Clarke said, 'This ruling serves as stark reminder. It is clear that the so-called 'safeguards' failed because intentional killing can never be safe.

'We must be unfailing in our commitment to advocating for the right to life and the truth that people have inherent dignity no matter their age or health condition.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chicago declares abortion 'rights'

The City of Chicago, Illinois, has declared abortion and trans-affirming procedures to be a 'fundamental right'. The Chicago City Council has approved the Bodily Autonomy ordinance, which prevents its police force from assisting investigations against people who travelled to the city in the US state of Illinois from other states where such procedures are illegal.

Action week for suffering church

The last week of October saw Barnabas Fund hold its Suffering Church Action and Awareness Week. During the launch event, the organisation unveiled the new Barnabas Aid 'medical. gives' project, and gave an overview of the increasing suffering endured by Christians, and how we can understand the times we are living in.

Sex-swap age limit scrapped

A global pro-trans group has removed minimum age recommendations for sex swap drugs and surgery in its latest best practice guidelines. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health recommends children can receive puberty blocking drugs and cross sex hormones from the first physical signs of puberty, which can be as young as nine.

Five Christians held in China

The charity Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling for the release of five Christians who have been detained in a rural area in China's southwestern Yunnan province, near the border with Myanmar, since early August. CSW's source say the Christians were targeted because they held a few gatherings to give hymn lessons to youngsters.

Canada: Parents raise alarm as school district sends intrusive sexuality survey to children as young as 12

Canadian parents and commentators have criticised a district school board which has rolled out an intrusive survey questioning young children about their sexuality.

The Upper Grand District School Board in Guelph, Ontario, launched the census to identify barriers based on students' identity.

In the survey, which is not anonymous, students are not asked about biological sex, but instead have to select their gender identity and sexual orientation.

The survey explains gender identity as 'a person's feeling' and that it can be 'different from their sex assigned at birth'.

Options offered to children include: Boy/man, gender fluid, gender variant, girl/woman, non-binary, questioning, trans boy or man, trans girl or woman, or two-spirit.

According to reports, children as young as 12 are also asked to choose their sexual orientation from a list that



For illustrative purposes only (Credit: Shutterstock)

includes straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, queer, questioning, asexual, and pansexual.

If a preferred gender identity or sexual orientation is not listed students can specify their own.

While the survey is not anonymous, students can choose to opt-out and the district school board has said it will treat all the responses confidentially.

This survey has sparked a backlash on Twitter from people

questioning the need for such topics to be raised with young children.

One person tweeted, 'I think I would go to police and ask for an investigation on the entire board as to why an adult is asking my child about sexuality.'

Another person said, 'Teachers are in school to teach the basics, not to corrupt our children's minds.' Another asked, 'Do schools actually teach anything anymore? Or just indoctrinate?'

But the Upper Grand District School Board in Guelph defended the survey, saying it is necessary in order to gain 'the tools to identify and name specific areas where bias and oppression are creating barriers to our racialized and marginalized students'.

The board also said it is 'only through identifying and naming areas of oppression' that the district will 'be able to make systemic changes that will create more equitable outcomes for all our students'.

Canada is not the first country to roll out similar gender identity surveys in schools. The UK has been quick to promote transgender ideology.

Earlier this year, almost a third of local authorities in Scotland refused to roll out the Scottish government's controversial survey into the sex lives of young people.

In another survey funded by the Welsh government, children as young as 13 were asked highly intrusive questions about their sexual experiences.

Australia: Football boss chooses to quit rather than disown his church

A Christian chief executive of an Australian Football League club has chosen to resign rather than disown his church's biblical beliefs.

Andrew Thorburn stepped down as chief executive of Australian Football League club Essendon a day after his appointment.

It followed an outcry by liberal activists over his links to a church which holds a biblical view of sexual ethics and a pro-life position against abortion.

Even the Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews joined

in with the anti-Christian attacks, saying, 'Those views are absolutely appalling.'

'I don't support those views, that kind of intolerance, that kind of hatred, bigotry. It is just wrong,' he told reporters.

Thorburn, who has a background in banking and now works as an investor, chairs the governing board of the City on a Hill Church in Melbourne.

But Melbourne-based Australian Football League club Essendon said the church's beliefs contradicted the values of the club and it decided Thorburn could not continue to

have roles at the football club and the church.

In a statement the club said, 'The board made clear that, despite these not being views that Andrew Thorburn has expressed personally and that were also made prior to him taking up his role as chairman, he couldn't continue to serve in his dual roles' – at the club and the church.

Thorburn responded to backlash, saying, 'As it happens, I do sometimes disagree with things I hear in church – but I believe strongly in the right of people to say them, especially when taken in context.'

He added, 'It is troubling that faith or association with a church, mosque, synagogue or temple could render a person immediately unsuited to holding a particular role.'

'That is a dangerous idea, one that will only reduce tolerance for others and diversity of thought and participation in our community and workplaces.'

Philip Freier, Archbishop of Melbourne released a statement in support of Thorburn, saying people should not be sidelined from public life just because of their religious beliefs.



Andrew Thorburn
(Credit: City on a Hill Church)

US: Worrying decay in core evangelical beliefs is revealed in Ligonier's 'State of Theology' survey

Results from a survey of 3,000 US citizens have revealed a dramatic decline in belief of core evangelical doctrines.

Every two years since 2014, Ligonier Ministries has partnered with LifeWay Research to conduct the 'State of Theology' survey.

Americans are asked about their beliefs concerning God, the Bible, salvation, and ethics. Statistics from the 2022 survey have been released and they show big changes since the last survey in 2020.

Respondents were classed as 'evangelical' if they 'strongly agreed' that the Bible is the highest authority for faith, that Jesus' death is the only sacrifice that removes sin, that faith in Christ alone is the only way to receive salvation, and that it's personally important to encourage non-Christians to trust in Christ as Saviour.

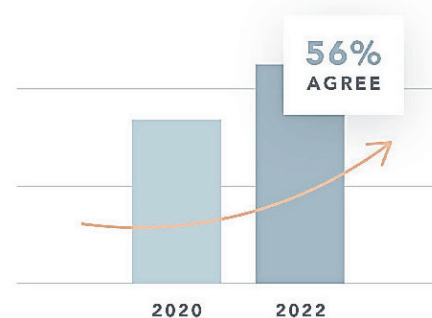
Despite this, a full 56% of 'evangelical' respondents agreed with the statement that 'God accepts the worship of all religions, including

56% of evangelicals say that God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.' This was up from 42% in 2020.

Understanding of the Trinity among evangelicals was also adrift: only 54% disagreed with the statement that 'Jesus was a great teacher, but not God', and only 33% disagreed with the statement that 'The Holy Spirit is a force but not a personal being'.

On the subject of ethics, some results were more in line with orthodox evangelicalism. 94% of evangelicals agreed that sex outside of traditional marriage is a sin, and 92% believed abortion to be a sin.



However, the percentage of evangelicals who think the Bible's teaching that homosexuality is a sin doesn't apply today was up at 28% (jumping from just 11% in 2020).

Some of the results gave a mixed message: 95% of evangelicals agreed with the statement that 'The Bible is 100% accurate in all that it teaches', but yet 26% of them agreed that 'The Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true', and 30% agreed that 'Modern science disproves the Bible'.

Nigeria: Christian woman shot dead by Fulani militant while she cleaned at church building

A Christian woman who was cleaning her church building was shot dead by a suspected Fulani militant, Release International has reported.

The woman, Lyop Dalyop, from Plateau State, Nigeria, was busy cleaning in the Church of Christ in Nations' building, Riyom County, when she was attacked by armed militants.

An attorney who serves as director of the Emancipation Centre for Crisis Victims in Nigeria said the men were suspected to be Fulani Islamist terrorists.

A few weeks later, Islamic terrorists in southern Nigeria were reported to have kidnapped four nuns. The incident came a few days after Islamists raided the home of Christian lawyer Benedict Azza and shot him dead.

Chad: Christians under a double threat from floods and militant attacks

Christians in Chad are facing a double threat of floods and attacks by Islamist militants, charity Barnabas Fund has warned.

As widely reported, this year's rainy season saw unusually torrential downpours in July and August. These were the heaviest rains for 32 years, resulting in flooding on a scale never seen before.

According to estimates from the United Nations, some 340,000 people living in 55,000 households have been affected.

This number includes many Christians, with one project partner pointing out to Barnabas Aid that the country is 'still in the rainy season'.

Meanwhile, Christians are finding themselves under attack by Islamist militants who burn down Christian villages.

In some places, Christians have endured destruction by both fire and water: arson by militants and flooding from extreme rainfall.

Barnabas Fund has launched a special appeal to help victims in Chad. In a statement, it said,



'We hope, by God's grace and through your gifts and prayers,

to feed 4,000 Christian families who have been made homeless

and destitute by water or fire, that is, around 25,000 people.'

Comment



CHAPTER TWO
CALENDARS FOR 2023

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ET Comment

The Rowe case is just one of many scenarios we all need to think about

Congratulations to Nigel and Sally Rowe and their legal supporters for a successful outcome in their case against the Department for Education (see p.1). Their family was treated appallingly when their sons were told to affirm transgenderism or, effectively, leave the school. The fact that the Church of England backed the school rather than the Christian parents shows just how bad things have become.

It also shows how much we – as Christians – need to think carefully about our liberties and the limits of the state. That's why, in this November edition of ET, we have decided to publish an article (see p.12) by Tobias Riemenschneider, one of the main authors of the Frankfurt Declaration of Christian and Civil Liberties. As Tobias himself points out, although the Declaration was published in the wake of the Covid crisis, it speaks to much bigger issues of the state overreaching itself.

We know Christians have different opinions about the Covid restrictions, and we have no wish to open up sore wounds which may still be raw and painful for some churches. There may well be points in Tobias's article which some ET readers may sharply disagree with. But these matters – uncomfortable though they may be – are important to think about. They are relevant for issues beyond the Covid crisis.

Think, for example, about the recommendations that have been recently published for a ban on conversion therapy in Scotland (see p.2). An 'expert' group – made up largely of activists and campaigners – has recommended that church ministers be 're-educated' or 'defrocked' if they breach a ban. They also say children should be removed from their family homes by the authorities if parents won't back a child's request for a sex change. Should Christians simply submit to the authorities if those proposals become law?

By and large, Christians are peaceful and law-abiding people. Rightly so, for the Bible tells us to honour the governing authorities, who are God's servants to do us good. But the command to 'honour' those in authority over us has never meant unquestioning obedience and absolute loyalty to whoever happens to be in charge. Think of the Hebrew midwives who defied the orders of Pharaoh to kill the baby boys in the days of Moses, or Daniel who defied the orders of King Darius regarding prayer, or Daniel's three friends when they defied Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship the golden statue, or the Apostles who refused to stop preaching about Jesus.

There are times when Christians are not just permitted but commanded to disobey earthly authority. It's no good just nodding our heads and agreeing with the general principle of that idea. We need to think about the particular applications of that principle in all sorts of scenarios – in our children's schools, our homes, our workplaces, our churches. Christians may disagree in good conscience over the particular applications, but unless we are prepared to think biblically about specific scenarios, we won't be ready when they happen.

While we think about those things, spare a thought for Christians in parts of the world who have far fewer liberties than we have. Here in the West we enjoy many freedoms that others could only dream of. Such things are precious, which is why we should do all we can to take care of them lest we lose them. May God give us all wisdom, for he gives generously to all without finding fault.

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Letters to the Editor

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Please include your name and address

Remembering Queen Elizabeth

SIR – I was grieved at the passing of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth in September. Members of the royal family, including King Charles III, have been in my prayers.

Reflecting on the Queen's reign, we give thanks that on many levels her record of public service was truly unique and unmatched by any public figure in her lifetime. She justly deserved the affection and esteem of her people.

However, in specific areas doubts are in order. The Queen failed to keep her Protestant coronation oath, and later rubber-stamped government policies on abortion and same-sex marriage.

Accordingly I have for years felt ambivalent about Her late Majesty from a strictly Christian perspective, even allowing for her Christmas and other broadcasts.

With regard to His Majesty King Charles III, our prayers for his salvation are urgent, given his multi-faith propensities and past private behaviour.

The two previous Caroline eras (under King Charles I (1625-49) and King Charles II (1660-85)) were times of royal hostility to the Reformed Faith and much suffering among the Nonconformists.

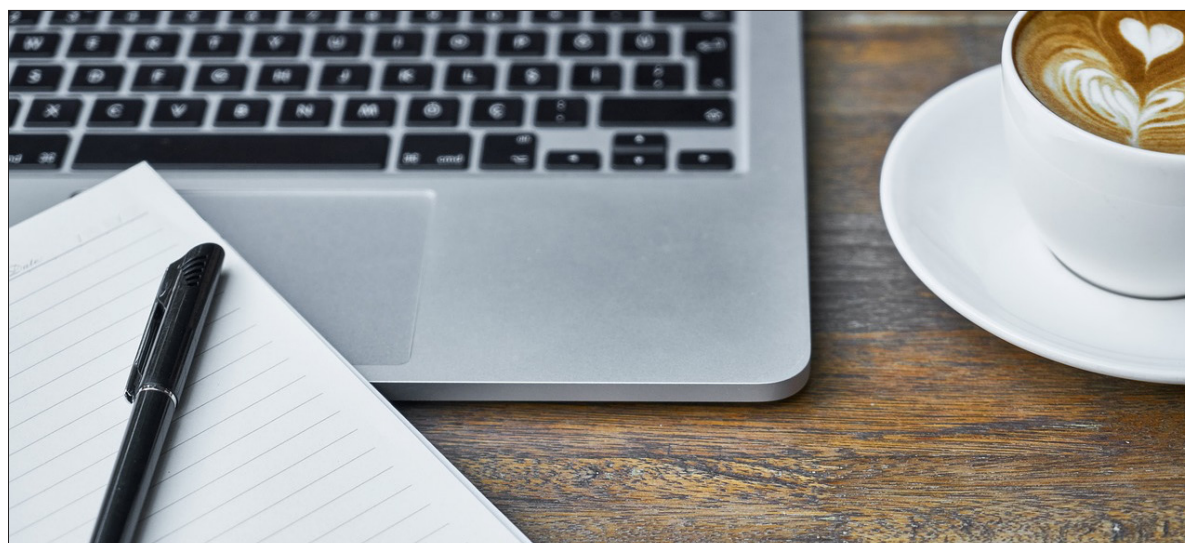
Unless God's grace takes hold of our new King, the third era – with the added secular dimension – will pose an even greater threat.

Without questioning the sovereignty of God or doubting the triumph of his kingdom in our affairs, recent events arousing a tsunami of royalist sycophantic sentiment will test true 'non-PC' Christian integrity as never before.

May the Lord grant his people undaunted faithfulness and courage in these evil times.
Dr Alan C. Clifford
Norfolk

SIR – Queen Elizabeth's funeral was a poignant farewell. It reflected the public's respect, gratitude, and genuine affection.

What made her our best-loved monarch is something



hard to define. At her coronation in 1953, her grace and dignity, as well as public affection for her, were already evident.

The Archbishop of Canterbury made the point that promises made by Elizabeth as a young royal could not have been more faithfully and dutifully kept.

Still, the testimony given of her personal faith in Jesus Christ would, for the vast numbers of unbelievers now characterising British society, remain something they could neither relate to nor understand.

Some have called the death of Queen Elizabeth the final solemn act of the post-Second World War era. Perhaps it is mostly the people of my generation and older who can really regret her departure.

Despite immense material benefits during these last seventy years, the Queen's reign has involved her and her family in all the weals and woes common to mankind. She was not a person immune to personal heartache.

The best explanation of the Queen's dignity as an individual can be found in the faith she placed in a Person whose light, goodness, and glory has never been equalled in the whole history of the world.

Is it an exaggeration to believe that it was evident that Queen Elizabeth personally bowed in humble and conscious allegiance to an eternal King, whose life she understood was graciously and gloriously laid down for her?

Kevin Bettany
Blurton, Stoke-on-Trent

Satan's power

SIR – Stephen Rees in his article about Satan ('Ignorant of his devices', October ET) deduces an understanding about Satan from selected narrative accounts in the Bible. This, I suggest, is not a sure way of handling Scripture.

For example, Stephen argues that Satan lacks agency, because in the specific incident in 1 Kings 18, 'the demons that the priests of Baal worshipped were powerless to intervene physically'.

But the book of Job clearly demonstrates that Satan was not powerless because, albeit with God's permission, he afflicted Job and his family.

In John 12:13, Jesus says that Satan is the ruler of this world, and described the woman he healed in Luke 13 as being *bound* by Satan.

Satan has successfully disguised himself, despite being mentioned in the New Testament at least 137 times by every New Testament author, and 'topically' (that is, when Satan is the subject of the discourse) in 14 out of the 27 books.

Colin Hamer
Kirby Cross

Talking to the dead

SIR – With reference to Mostyn Roberts' short article, 'Talking to the Dead' (October ET), I'm quite sure Mr Roberts didn't intend to further upset any reader who has recently lost a loved one, but it seemed an insensitive thing to publish.

It also appears to express an unbiblical opinion. In the

first chapter of 2 Samuel, in his famous and presumably public lament for Saul and Jonathan, King David did exactly what King Charles did in his recent speech – having mourned over the fall of the mighty and proclaimed their greatness, he addressed his dear departed friend Jonathan directly: 'I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was very wonderful...' (2 Samuel 1:26).

Sheila Barns
Sidcup

No place to lie

SIR – May I respond to some points raised by Rosannah Kill (Letters, October ET)?

The Lord manifested a reserved manner on the Emmaus road towards the two distraught disciples. This reveals his gentle way of dealing with people suffering genuine shock and loss. Christ's approach helped the two to come to terms with the awesome truth that God incarnate, once crucified, is now risen and with them.

Jesus knows how to restore their shattered world, little by little, until at last their eyes are opened. There were no false impressions, just the revelation of a divine, loving sympathy in a recovery strategy for people suffering serious trauma.

There are a variety of reasons why Jesus left the crowds uncertain of his whereabouts. One was to remove himself from the high risk of stoning. Another would

be to deal with superficial excitement stirring the crowds, who were not ready to hear his teaching.

Jesus simply chooses, using common social ways, to make himself not available to every demand of curiosity, or to avoid a superficial mass-movement provocatively making him king (John 6:15).

Helping Christians in grave danger is doubtless challenging. Consider how Paul was let down the city wall of Damascus in a basket to escape imminent arrest and likely death (Acts 9, 2 Corinthians 11). Wise stealth has a place, and concern for truth never obliges us to tell that which some people have no inherent right to know.

Michael Austin
Newport, County Mayo

Reaching California

SIR – Once again I am cutting up ET and printing out articles, which I will be placing in the bulletins for our Sunday morning services.

The article that will be in this week's bulletin for 9th October is written by J. P. Earnest, and the title is 'Reaching the lost in the open air'.

At our small-ish Miller Avenue Baptist Church in Mill Valley, California, we are preparing materials to hand out to locals, mainly at the famous depot up the street.

Our county may well have the smallest percentage of Christians in America. Our town of Mill Valley has far more Buddhists, atheists, and those who directly and proudly engage in occultic/psychic forms of therapy.

On Miller Avenue are two yoga meditation studios, a Buddhist temple, and 13 offices occupied by 'life coaches'. Rarely does a non-Christian wander into our services, so we must go out to them.

I have just finished printing out the article by Mr Earnest and I will use it to encourage our congregants to hit the streets.

Kent Philpott
Mill Valley, California

A personal view

A personal view:

Why I believe the Frankfurt Declaration is necessary



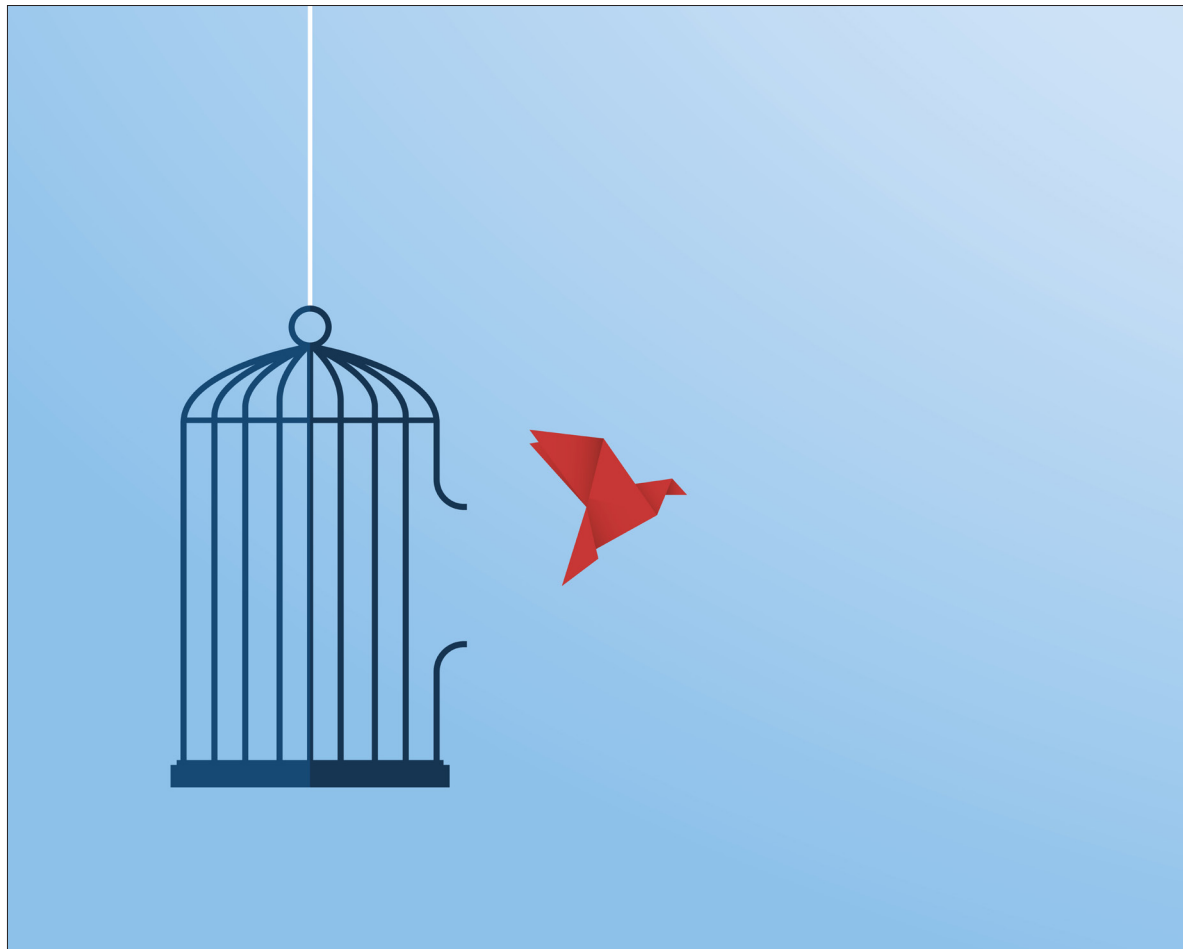
By Tobias Riemenschneider
Pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Baptist Church of Frankfurt, Germany, and co-author of the Frankfurt Declaration of Christian and Civil Liberties.

In the spring of 2021, pastors from different countries came together to draw up a joint declaration in response to the Covid measures of many states. The result is the Frankfurt Declaration of Christian and Civil Liberties ('Frankfurt Declaration'), which was presented to the public on 28 August 2022 near Frankfurt, Germany.

The Frankfurt Declaration was initially signed by fifty pastors and theologians from America, the UK, Europe, Australia, and Africa, including men like Dr John MacArthur, Dr James White, Tim Conway, Geoff Thomas, and others. In the meantime, more than 5,000 signatories from all over the world have joined the Frankfurt Declaration.

Even though the concrete reason for drafting the Frankfurt Declaration was the Covid measures, it is not primarily about these measures, but about the underlying spiritual reasons that led states to infringe so massively on the constitutionally guaranteed rights and liberties of their citizens.

The signatories of the Frankfurt Declaration see this unprecedented disregard for rights and liberties as just one symptom of an emerging totalitarianism of the state over all spheres of society, including the church, that has been developing for years, even decades.



Source: Shutterstock

The Frankfurt Declaration seeks to address these threats with the timeless truths of God's Word, through affirmations and denials derived from biblical principles. In this article I would like to briefly show how the statements made in the Frankfurt Declaration are relevant for our time.

Article 1: God the Creator as Sovereign Lawgiver and Judge

For centuries, the countries of the Western world have been moving further and further away from the biblical truth that God created the cosmos and everything in it, including man. Most people's thinking is now strongly influenced by a radical materialism that assumes that all processes and phenomena in the world go back not to a personal Creator, but to impersonal matter and motion.

But if there is no creator God, then there is no divine lawgiver who has revealed his universal, immutable law to man, and there is no divine judge who will judge all mankind at the end of time according to this law. And if there is no heavenly lawgiver above the earthly state, then the state is the highest lawgiver, and its laws need not measure up to

any higher standard. And if there is no divine judge above the human legislators, then they will not one day have to answer to him for their actions.

Thus, the state and those who govern it assume for themselves the role of God, freely determining what is good and evil conduct without being bound by a divine standard of morality. The result is devastating: unconverted people, corrupt by nature, turn the commandments of God into their opposite and call good evil and evil good.

There were many examples of this during the Covid crisis. For example, it was called evil and was forbidden to visit the elderly, the sick, and the dying, although Christ even says that it is precisely by this that one knows who is blessed of the Father and inherits the kingdom and who is cursed and must depart from Christ into everlasting fire (Matthew 25:31-46).

But the phenomenon of the state calling things good that have been considered sin for millennia is one we have been observing for years: the state facilitates divorce and sexual immorality, promotes homosexuality and transgenderism, and allows the killing of children in the womb.

But not only does the state approve of this, it demands that its citizens do likewise. Even young children in kindergartens and schools are indoctrinated accordingly. Anyone who disagrees is considered backward, hateful, and a threat to society.

The Frankfurt Declaration affirms that God, as supreme lawgiver and judge, is the ultimate source of ethics, and that he has revealed an unchanging morality which is rooted in his own character and which determines for all people at all times what is good and evil conduct. It therefore denies that the state has the right to define morality and to demand unconditional obedience from its citizens when this contradicts God's law, invoking the *clausula Petri*, that one ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Article 2: God as the Source of Truth and the role of science

With the turning away from the truth of the Creator God, other truths also increasingly falter. As Christians, we know that God has ordered creation by objective truths, which man can discover through scientific observation. This knowledge is what made scientific endeavour

possible in the first place. This likewise means that all scientific investigation is an inquiry into the works of God and hence cannot pretend neutrality.

When science no longer serves to glorify God, then science itself becomes a god. Many today are convinced that science can provide answers to all questions and instructions for the right action in all situations. This scientism overlooks the fact that scientific endeavour not only often leads to erroneous results due to the lack of data and the human propensity for error, but that it can in no way provide answers to moral questions.

Science can only say what is, but not what should be. Virology and epidemiology can say what measures might be promising to contain a virus, but they cannot answer whether a lockdown or other infringement on people's rights and liberties are ethically justified to achieve that goal. However, this is exactly what happened during Covid: individual experts were considered to represent "science", and their predictions and recommendations guided the policies of entire states.

As C. S. Lewis once put it, 'Let scientists tell us about sciences. But government involves questions about the good for man, and justice, and what things are worth having at what price; and on these a scientific training gives a man's opinion no added value.'

Furthermore, since man has fallen into sin, all his thoughts, deductions and institutions contain degrees of corruption which tend to distort, manipulate, or suppress the truth. In the hands of ideologically driven people, truth becomes subject to change by their reinterpretations, and science is quickly perverted into an instrument of indoctrination and the exercise of political power through fear-mongering or propaganda.

Dissident voices are ignored, suppressed, or cancelled. During Covid, dissenting doctors and scientists, some of whom had been considered luminaries in their field for decades, were silenced and discredited and not seldom lost their jobs.

But we see this in other areas as well. For example, the state and the 'scientific consensus'

have been propagating scientifically untenable theories, such as Darwinism, as proven truth for decades. Recently, we are being told that science has discovered that it is no longer possible to determine what a man or a woman is.

The Frankfurt Declaration endorses science which seeks to discover, through the scientific method and debate, the truths that God has built into the natural world, but it rejects scientism. Furthermore, it denies that governments, scientific experts, or the media are morally and ideologically neutral and that their presentation of 'the truth' should be trusted unconditionally.

Article 3: Mankind as the image of God

If one no longer believes that there is a personal creator God, but that all processes are determined only by matter and motion, then man is nothing more than the product of an impersonal and ultimately purposeless evolutionary process without any transcendental purpose or value except to serve the 'greater good' of society.

The states of the Western world have promoted this view of man for decades, and we are now seeing the effects of it: this Darwinian view of man offers no protection of the individual against the abuse of power by the stronger.

During the Covid crisis, states have psychologically manipulated individuals by deliberately scaring them with predictions of horrific death tolls and agonizing death by suffocation, as internal government papers show and some governments have openly admitted. Distrust of others was promoted by portraying them as potential threats to life and limb.

In addition, many states imposed restrictions that infringed on people's rights and liberties in ways that previously seemed unthinkable in the 'free' world. This happened even though such infringements are prohibited by the constitutions of most states. (To make it clear: the issue is not whether or not certain measures make sense from a virological or epidemiological point of view, but whether or not the state has the right to forcefully impose such measures and thereby infringe on the rights and liberties of its citizens.)

According to the biblical worldview, on the other hand, God created man in his image and likeness, whereby all human



Source: Shutterstock

beings have an inherent dignity and worth from which derive God-given, inalienable rights and liberties that the state must respect and protect (cf. Romans 13:3-4).

These rights and liberties include the right to in-person relationships, vocational employments, medical self-determination, and participation in the important events of human life such as witnessing the birth of one's child, marrying in a public gathering, and fellowshiping with others.

When the state deprives a person of these rights and liberties or makes them contingent on compliance with certain mandates, it dehumanises them and makes them a mere object of state tyranny. This is a direct attack on the image of God, which we have seen time and again, especially in anti-Christian systems like communism and socialism.

The Frankfurt Declaration therefore affirms the inalienable worth of every individual as made in the image of God and hence opposes the state's infringement on their God-given rights and liberties by lockdowns and mandates, which usurp the innate value of mankind by subjecting them to manipulation, enforced segregation, and other unjust deprivations of rights and liberties.

Article 4: God-given mandates and limits of authority

If one neither believes in a God who has supreme authority over all spheres of life, including the state, nor in human beings as created in the image of God, then the way is paved for a totalitarian rule of the state over all areas of life. In reaction to the growing nihilism that is the result of this turning away from the Christian

faith, the modern state will try to invent pseudo-religious beliefs to keep people under control.

Hence the new religion of multiculturalism, diversity, health, climate, planetary salvation, and impending doom unless we are saved by the central planning and control of the highest remaining power – the new god of State, who now assumes the role of ultimate lawgiver, provider, priest and saviour, thereby creating an authoritarian society in which the state is absolute.

In this system, dissidents cannot be tolerated because they threaten the narrative on which the legitimacy of this statism and totalitarianism is based. The state thus tries to centralize beliefs and conduct for their citizens.

Therefore, the state also has a special interest in gaining influence over the children as early as possible in order to indoctrinate them according to the state ideology and turn them into 'loyal' citizens. The state thereby engenders an ideological intolerance which seeks to silence, cancel, re-educate, and punish those who disagree.

We have seen this not only with Covid, when the state elevated its narrative to absolute truth and interfered with the family by forbidding them to fellowship and care for each other, and interfered with the church by forbidding it to worship or sing praises, but with a variety of ideologies, such as feminism, sexual and gender identity self-determination, and climate change.

This totalitarian statism, however, is contrary to the divine order of things. All earthly powers draw their authority from God to whom all must give an account, and he has established different spheres of responsibility: the family, to whom the rod is given to train

the children in the ways of the Lord; the church, to whom the Word is given to make disciples of all nations; and the state, to whom the sword is given to punish evil and reward good. In doing so, God has at the same time set limits to the authority of these institutions.

The Frankfurt Declaration affirms that the family, the church and the state are granted limited authority by God *only* over their respective spheres. It thus denies statism and the totalitarian ideologies of governments which do not recognise the boundaries of their authority and usurp the authority delegated by God to the church or the family.

Article 5: Christ as the Head of the Church

The fact that the state no longer recognises the God-given limits of its authority and no longer has any fear of God and what is holy is increasingly having an impact on the Church. The state no longer recognises the spiritual importance of the church but increasingly views and treats it like any other association or event of people, even as a danger to the state's own ideologies.

This was clearly demonstrated during Covid. Whereas in the past, churches were usually full during national emergencies because people understood that ultimately only God can save them (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:13-14), this time worship services were banned for several weeks or months in large parts of the Western world.

When worship services were allowed again, there continued to be severe restrictions, such as capacity limitations, distancing, mask or test requirements, or restrictions on the administration of the ordinances.

The state even ordered the congregational singing of God's praises to be silenced throughout

the countries for several months. And sadly, most churches obeyed these mandates. But we also see this in other areas – for example, when pastors are arrested or have to answer in court for preaching the Word of God.

According to Scripture, however, the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He commands us not only to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, but also give to God what belongs to God, thereby establishing the functional independence of the church from the state.

The church must therefore not withhold from God his worship and praise, or keep his blood-bought children from worshipping him and receiving his grace in the Word and ordinances.

The Frankfurt Declaration affirms that the church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ at the cost of his life, and that it is accountable to him alone in all matters of faith and practice, and that therefore the activities of the local church, insofar as they are essential acts of worship, are to be regulated by Christ alone.

It denies that any other authority has jurisdiction over the church to criminalise, inhibit, or regulate any of its affairs in matters of faith and practice, or to relegate its activities to a non-essential status.

A call for respect, repentance, and resistance

The Frankfurt Declaration ends with an expression of gratitude to those civil authorities who respect these Christian beliefs and the rights and liberties of each individual, and with a call to repentance to those civil authorities who have disregarded these freedoms, lest in the abuse of their God-given authority they become liable to God's wrath.

It also encourages Christians to steadfastly and faithfully obey the Lord rather than men and stand by one another and pray that God would give us the grace to remain faithful and persevere to the end.

The Frankfurt Declaration is not a politicisation of the gospel (quite the contrary!) nor is it a call for strife and division in the church or for unlawful rebellion against the state. It is meant to provide light and strength for Christians for a faithful witness to Jesus Christ in our time. May God graciously use it in this way for his glory.

The Frankfurt Declaration can be read and signed online at frankfurtdeclaration.com.

What did the Queen really believe?



By Paul Smith

Paul is a full-time elder of Grace Baptist Church, Broadstairs, Kent.

Many wonder what the Queen really thought. Hints emerged on some topics, but little more. Princess Anne's son-in-law, Mike Tindall, wishes he'd asked our late Queen more questions.

Evangelicals ask: what did the Queen really believe? Her faith was clearly important to her. British Catholic historian, Jack Scarisbrick, viewed Elizabeth II as 'probably our most sincere Christian monarch since the Stuarts'. But what exactly were those sincerely held beliefs?

We are not helped by some of our sources. A former royal chaplain even blasphemed on Radio 4 while reflecting on her interactions with the Queen. In his funeral sermon, Archbishop Justin Welby stated, 'I know His Majesty [Charles] shares the same faith and hope in Jesus Christ as his mother.'

Evangelicals lament legislation to which the Queen gave royal assent. They wonder what she thought when signing the 1967 Abortion Act, the 1994 Sunday Trading Act, and the 2003 Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act. They point to the example of the King of Belgium, who temporarily abdicated in 1990 to avoid signing a new abortion law.

Yet others see her role as merely fulfilling a constitutional duty. Thus, Elizabeth II's royal assent did not mean endorsing laws but fulfilling her duty as a constitutional monarch.

Some consider Queen Elizabeth's meetings with various five Popes, including in the Vatican, as violating her coronation oath to defend the faith. Pope John Paul II, the first reigning pope to visit England, was welcomed to Buckingham Palace in 1982.

Others would highlight the fact that both Pope and Queen



Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II in 2008 (Source: Shutterstock)

have two roles. Both are heads of state (Vatican City being an independent city state) as well as religious leaders. The Queen sitting next to President Putin in a royal carriage demonstrated her role in diplomacy rather than an endorsement of his regime.

Many highlight the Queen's life as an example of Christian virtue. Unlike her uncle, and many today, she embraced the providence of God in her birth and his abdication. Elizabeth II was diligent in her duty until the day before her death. Unlike many in her family, the Queen's life was unsullied by scandal. By common consent she was a kind, unselfish, and thoughtful lady. Others would, for balance, point out that she was also passionate about horse racing, a pastime inseparable with covetousness and gambling, to the ruin of many lives.

Clearly the Queen was outstanding with people, inspiring loyalty and affection worldwide. A carefully crafted persona avoided the depth of interaction which might introduce controversy. Even a Prime Minister with a regular audience, James Callaghan, noted that 'what one gets from the monarch is friendliness but not friendship'.

The Queen's avoidance of expressing opinions allowed people to interpret her actions through their own lens. Billy Graham claimed that 'her official position has prevented her from openly endorsing our Crusade meetings. But by welcoming us

and having me preach on several occasions to the royal family at Windsor and Sandringham, she has gone out of her way to be quietly supportive of our mission.'

Others would point out that Graham was supported by non-evangelical and liberal Archbishops while Lloyd-Jones avoided his crusades.

Much has been made of the Queen's 2011 Christmas message. It is understandable that this has been extensively used for gospel purposes. However, the Queen's Christmas addresses contain many different comments that can be used to prove a variety of views.

During the Blair years, the Christmas addresses seem to show the Queen to be a religious pluralist. In 2000 she stated that 'the Bible, the Koran and the sacred texts of the Jews and Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs, are all sources of divine inspiration and practical guidance passed down through the generations'.

In 2002 the Queen stated, 'like others of you who draw inspiration from your own faith, I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.'

In 2004 the Queen claimed that 'diversity [seemingly cultural and religious] is indeed a strength and not a threat'.

In 2005 she said, 'I believe also that... our faith – whatever our religion – can inspire us to work together in friendship and peace for the sake of our own and future generations.'

In 2006 she said, 'It is very easy to concentrate on the differences between the religious faiths and to forget what they have in common – people of different faiths are bound together by the need to help the younger generation to become considerate and active citizens.'

Someone could use the Christmas messages to claim that the Queen embodied the best of liberal Anglicanism – Christ the good example, teaching us to follow his golden rule.

She mused in 1996, 'If only we can live up to the example of the child who was born at Christmas with a love that came to embrace the whole world.' In 2000 she stated that Christ's 'great emphasis was to give spirituality a practical purpose'. In 2006 the Queen claimed that 'Christ was born to bring peace and tolerance to a troubled world'.

As a great-grandmother, in 2013 she said that 'as with all who are christened, George was baptised into a joyful faith of Christian duty and service'. Her 2015 address included the claim that 'Christ's unchanging message was not one of revenge or violence but simply that we should love one another'.

However, the Queen's references to her *personal* faith seem more encouraging. In her Golden Jubilee year, 2002, the Queen reflected, 'I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning, I know that the

only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God.'

It has been claimed that the Queen held back from such personal remarks until after the 2002 death of the Queen Mother, who didn't deem them appropriate.

The Queen's 2011 message, an evangelical favourite, is fairly encouraging – if read in the light of a sound gospel understanding. 'Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves – from our recklessness or our greed. God sent into the world a unique person – neither a philosopher nor a general, important though they are, but a Saviour, with the power to forgive. Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.'

Positively, forgiveness and Christ as Saviour are mentioned. But our need – 'saving from ourselves' – and forgiveness – which will 'reconcile divided communities' – are both described with regard to man and not God.

One of the Queen's final public comments, in August 2022, was a letter to the Lambeth Conference. It commends the pursuit of 'Christian unity' as a continuation of the (unbiblical) ecumenical drive of the 1920 Lambeth Conference. More encouragingly, the Queen stated that 'throughout my life, the message and teachings of Christ have been my guide and in them I find hope'.

Perhaps we should charitably conclude that the Queen seemed to have grasped the positives of the gospel, but not what it rules out. In that, she and the ecumenical Billy Graham had something in common. To what spiritual heights could the Queen have attained had she been blessed with a Latimer or a Knox to listen to?

Should this not spur us on to pray that King Charles III would seek out and hear the gospel from believers he knows at this momentous time? And that he would hear faithful preaching from gospel men of which the Anglican Church is certainly not bereft.

First Remembrance Day since the Queen's death



ASR Mike Blackstock at work sharing the gospel

The workshops I run have become very popular very quickly. I challenge people on where they find hope and spiritual resilience before sharing about my faith. This soft approach leads to deeper conversations.

ASR Steve Curley

I had a wonderful opportunity to speak with a soldier, who asked, "How do you become a Christian?" I shared that being a Christian is about having a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and trusting him for salvation.

This was all new to her and I was able to share my own testimony of how as a young soldier on guard duty, I came to put my trust in Christ. She thanked me for my time and accepted some literature.

ASR Paul Somerville

A soldier who attended the evangelistic talk that we organised last December says that it got him thinking seriously about the things of God. I am now meeting with him and another soldier over Zoom each week for a Bible study. They are hungry to know more!

ASR Josh Fortune

The season of Remembrance this year is rendered especially poignant by the passing of her late majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. As the nation stops to remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in service of 'Queen and country', displaying all the core values of commitment, courage, discipline, respect, integrity and loyalty, our thoughts turn naturally to the late monarch, who was not only the head of the British Armed Forces but also embodied these same core values to an unusually transcendent degree.

Particularly important to the Queen was her sense of service of something greater than herself, and particularly her Lord and Master, 'whom to serve is perfect freedom'.

For many Christians, Remembrance is also a time of year when we remember him who paid the ultimate sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. The old poem says, 'For your tomorrow, we gave our today' – how much more is this true of the Lord Jesus Christ!

For the Scripture Readers of SASRA, the *Soldiers' and Aviators' Scripture Readers Association*, Remembrance is another opportunity to share with the young people of our Armed Forces that sacrificial love of Christ.



By John Surtees
SASRA Lead
Communications Officer.

2022 has been an intense year for the British military, with ceremonial duties during the time of national mourning and the state funeral following hard upon heightened emotions and activity surrounding the conflict in Ukraine. Many troops have been 'on exercise' in Eastern Europe in support of NATO operations.

As we pause this November to remember those who have died, it is worthwhile also to take time not to forget those still serving – young men and women, many of them teenagers or in their early 20s, who stand ready for whatever might lie ahead. 2022 has been a year of uncertainty, fear, frustration, and angst. The contrasting emotions that are a natural part of military life only serve to amplify the spiritual need of these young people.

It is in this context that SASRA's Scripture Readers take the hope of Jesus to a generation that know nothing of him. It is our earnest desire that every member of the British Army and Royal Air Force should have a chance to hear the gospel during their time in uniform.

SASRA Scripture Readers have an extraordinary access to the military community to share the gospel and the hope of Christ, but they truly can't do it without you. This season of Remembrance, as the national attention turns once again to the military community, consider how YOU can get involved to support SASRA's mission. In the days running up to Remembrance Sunday, we invite you to join in SASRA's 11 days of Remembrance. Request a copy of our Daily Devotional booklet (remembrance@sasra.org.uk or 03000 301 302), invite a friend over for coffee, and read together of the work of the Scripture Readers. If your church doesn't have a SASRA Advocate, consider whether you could be our point of contact for sharing news and prayer needs with your congregation.

Most of all, 'pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honoured' (2 Thessalonians 3:1).



Soldiers have learnt that they can trust me and are comfortable to get in touch – one such example was a soldier who emailed me to ask for a copy of Saint John's Gospel and a military Bible.

ASR Gavin Dickson

I went with the Padre to take a field service for a group of recruits. When we arrived, we were greeted by 300 Ukrainian trainees who were due to return to Ukraine the following day. They had been told they would be deployed straight to the front-line. After the service we asked if anyone would like to hear more. Fifteen recruits gathered round and through the interpreter I read from Isaiah 43:1-3, and Hebrews 12:1-3, then the Padre gave a gospel message.

After we had finished with a time of prayer, five of them wanted to speak to us privately. They shared their fears, concerns, and the horrors and deaths they had already experienced. They asked if we would pray for them. What a tremendous privilege!

One of them asked if God could forgive him for all the evil wicked things he had done in his life. To this we replied, 'Yes; if you sincerely ask God to forgive you and put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.'

He had tears in his eyes as he said a prayer and made a commitment. Then another soldier shared all that had happened in his life and wanted to give his life to Christ. He asked for forgiveness of his sin and put his faith in Jesus, again he was crying.

ASR Dave Hossack

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A shrink thinks...

The problem with miracles



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



Source: Shutterstock

What are miracles? I have written elsewhere about the problem of definitions. When we attempt to define something we find there are always exceptions. Here we are interested in those events in Scripture, such as Moses parting the Red Sea and Jesus walking on water or raising Lazarus from the dead, which are commonly recognised as miracles.

Such events are supernatural or extra-ordinary in the sense that they are not explicable in natural or ordinary terms. God causes everything in his creation but on such occasions he acts in a highly unusual manner. That is, a miracle occurs when God acts differently from his usual providential activity in his creation, displaying his power and control by intervening to do something which cannot be explained by the laws of science (because these simply describe God's usual activity).

Benjamin Warfield said, 'A miracle is an event in the external world produced by the immediate efficiency of God.' (By 'efficiency' here he means God acts directly.) Similarly, Louis Berkhof wrote that a miracle is 'not brought about by secondary causes that operate according to the laws of nature'.

This does not define miracles as simply events we don't understand, with the implication that one day with advances in science we may be able to explain them. No. Such events remain ever beyond scientific explanation just because God has acted differently from how science describes his usual activity.

He acts immediately, directly, without using his usual secondary causes.

But miracles have also been defined subjectively, in terms of their impact on observers. They are termed 'wonders' (Exodus 15:11) because they evoke amazement in witnesses, and descriptions of crowds being awestruck by Jesus's miracles are commonplace in the Gospels.

Wayne Grudem defines a miracle as 'a less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself'. While miracles do bear witness to God and do arouse awe and wonder, the problem here is that such a subjective definition greatly broadens the category of miracle.

Without including the objective element of God acting directly in the definition, the category of miracle can include many events simply because human beings find them surprising. Anything which is amazing, anything which surprises, can be deemed a miracle.

A woman who seemed certain to be killed in a head-on collision with a lorry just avoids it and onlookers cry 'it's a miracle'. A raging fire threatens a church building in Australia and the livelihood of its members. Christians pray

'God's kind providences are fully worthy of praise. There is no need to use the language of miracle, and much harm arises from doing so.'

and learn the fire faded away without such devastation and we praise God for an amazing answer to prayer. It was a miracle, they declare.

It is right to thank God in such circumstances, but when Christians adopt such a subjective definition, it devalues what really happened in the Bible and undermines our gospel witness. This is especially the case with healing miracles.

A woman diagnosed with multiple sclerosis is pronounced cured by her neurologist. Her church had been praying for her and now they praise God for this miracle. A man is operated on to remove his bowel cancer but is found to have no cancer at all and his church thanks God for answered prayer by miraculously removing his cancer. An 84 year old celebrates that he has beaten Alzheimer's disease by living with it for 20 years.

These are examples I have encountered. And the problem is that none of these people ever had these illnesses. Doctors make mistakes. They gave a wrong diagnosis. Every time a Christian declares such 'healings' to be miracles they give onlookers the impression these are same kind of healings as in the Bible. Doctors and others go away convinced that

the miracles of Jesus were like these: diagnostic errors born of ignorance.

But in the Bible it is people damaged with clear and obvious conditions who are healed by miracles isn't it? A man born blind is healed (John 9), leprosy is banished (2 Kings 5; Mark 1:40-32), and a cripple picks up his mat and walks (Mark 2:1-12). There is no room for misdiagnosis here.

Not all contemporary 'healings' are due to misdiagnosis. There are other natural explanations, such as spontaneous remission and the impact of our mind on our physical bodies. Psychological explanations often suffice to explain healings of bent backs and chronic pain.

I am not the first Christian doctor to have made such observations. Professor Verna Wright wrote about his similar experiences and investigations made into reported healings. Dr Monty Barker investigated cases and found all of them were explicable in natural or psychiatric terms. The Christian Medical Fellowship has published investigations into healings and healing campaigns, failing to find any comparable to those in the Bible. All healings investigated had psychosomatic explanations.

But when such healings are claimed as part of Christian activity and gospel ministry and yet doctors know they aren't healings, what does this say about the gospel? Those who later find they are not healed are devastated. They question their faith. If they had no genuine faith they rebel in anger against the message they have received. God is dishonoured. Onlookers laugh and mock our Saviour and our gospel testimony is damaged.

It is vital we carefully define the healings and miracles of Scripture, recognising their objective basis in God's direct action, and so distinguish them from other natural healings. We can thank God when people recover from sickness without needing to call this a miracle. God's kind providences are fully worthy of praise. There is no need to use the language of miracle, and much harm arises from doing so.

Features

Slow down, you move too fast



By Billy Hill

Billy is a member of Charminster Chapel, Bournemouth.

Simon & Garfunkel once sang a song which began, 'Slow down, you move too fast.' It is timely advice for all. We live in a world where everything is getting faster. Most of us are constantly on the go with the pedal pressed firmly to the floor.

Modern technology may have helped us with such tasks as cleaning and cooking, but it has not made us more calm, just increasingly stressed and frantic. It is not surprising therefore that burn-out is a major problem for many today, including Christians.

Scripture continually tells us to slow down. Proverbs 19:2 says, 'One who moves too hurriedly misses the way.' Psalm 46 echoes this message with the instructions to 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life. We should learn to eliminate it wherever possible.

Jesus's example

Nowhere in the Bible do we ever read of Jesus rushing, yet his three years of ministry were incredibly strenuous. The apostle John said the Lord did so many things that if they were all recorded, 'I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written' (John 21:25).

Despite this, the Lord was never in panic mode, never desperate to be somewhere else, never 'watching the clock'. Throughout his life he moved with an unhurried poise, a flow and a rhythm that musicians call 'tempo giusto' – the right speed. Jesus was



Source: Shutterstock

focused and diligent, never losing that natural composure of one who is in total control. What are some of the lessons that Scripture can teach us in living a less stressful, slower lifestyle?

Relax

First, we need to take responsibility for our schedule and ensure regular relaxation is included in our lifestyle. No top-class athlete will ever train seven days a week. Without exception they will take at least one day off for total rest. The reason is obvious – both the body and spirit work at their optimum level that way.

A day of rest each week is also part of God's plan for the human body. It's interesting to note that this command appears more times in the Bible than any of the other Ten Commandments.

A well-known Bible teacher wrote, 'Once I was complaining about my heavy schedule, but one day I said to myself, *You're the one who makes the schedule; if you don't like it, do something about it.*'

We often allow ourselves to be pressured by not taking responsibility for our own life. The fact is, many well-

intentioned believers are walking around burned out and depressed because they won't take a break. The Lord Jesus, as our example, always made time for rest and renewal.

Inevitable interruptions

Second, recognise that interruptions are a part of life. We often think otherwise: interruptions are seen as those annoying hindrances that get in our way and make us more rushed to fulfil our obligations.

The story is told of an old professor at the University of Notre Dame. When asked what was the most important lesson he learned during his teaching career, he said: 'I have always been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that the interruptions *were* my work.'

Again, we have numerous examples of how the Lord dealt with interruptions in Scripture. He was never too busy to help people even if it invaded his schedule.

We read in Luke 18 that the disciples tried to usher families away as they tried to bring their children to him. But the Lord said, 'Let the little children come to me.' He took the time.

In the same chapter the blind man Bartimaeus was being rebuked by people for calling out, 'Jesus, Son of David!' But Jesus tells the people they are wrong and stops and heals his blindness. He took the time. When we accept that interruptions are woven into the very fabric of life, they become far less stressful.

Resting in Christ

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we must never forget that the Christian walk is entirely dependent on Christ, not us.

Watchman Nee put it like this: 'It is wrong for the Christian to try to live the Christian life, and we are not asked to do so. The Bible says *It is not I, but Christ that lives in me.*'

If we give him his rightful place in our lives, he will direct proceedings. We no longer need to scurry from one day to the next in a desperate attempt to get everything done.

The apostle Paul's ministry was the epitome of that lifestyle. He was where God wanted him to be and that obedience radiated in a relaxed yet dynamic life. He obeyed

God as to where he should go and let God do the rest. The fruit of that lifestyle was colossal.

Today we live in a world where everything is based on speed – fast transportation, fast internet access, fast news, fast deliveries, fast food. But the Bible clearly teaches that God is not in a hurry. He is moving according to his fixed and perfect timetable.

In the Old Testament the prophet Habakkuk became agitated because he didn't think God was moving quickly enough. But God reminded him that just because nothing seemed to be happening fast did not mean that nothing was happening.

He told him: 'This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed' (Habakkuk 2:3, NLT).

God is in no hurry, so we don't have to be either. We should walk in this frenetic world as a people with God-glorifying confidence, not because the future is known to us but because it is known to God. 'He who believes will not be in haste' (Isaiah 28:16).

Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing



By Simon Arscott
Simon has been sent by the International Presbyterian Church to lead All Nations Church, Ilford.

I wonder what commends a minister to you. What things would stand out to you as marking a Christian minister as *bona fide*? Paul comes up with a very interesting list of qualities that 'commend' him as a minister to the congregation at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 (their relationship was clearly a bit bumpy).

With a series of pastoral scandals breaking and the relationship between congregations and those in the ministry being particularly fraught, it might be a good list to acquaint yourself with.

One particular quality caught my eye: 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing'. It's a catchy phrase, but what does it mean? Paul isn't saying, sometimes he's sorrowful and sometimes he's rejoicing. This isn't describing the natural ups and downs of our spirits. Rather, he is describing two simultaneous experiences.

On the one hand, Paul constantly experienced sorrow. This wasn't a problem to be medicated, for it actually authenticated his ministry. As far as Paul's concerned, this is a vale of tears; here we have no continuing city. He's longing for a better country. He experiences the misery of sin.

With Paul, there's no pretending, or fake smiles. Paul wept much more than I do. He truly cared and sympathised and was grieved by sin. He wasn't distant and remote, or cool and cold. No one could listen to Paul and not long for Jesus' return. He never left you feeling you were okay as you were.

But, at the same time, Paul was always rejoicing. Nothing could douse his joy. People could dismiss Paul as unimpressive in person, or as unskilled in speech (2 Corinthians 10:10), but no

one could have called Paul glum. There was always a twinkle in his eye. Even in his tears, there's a joy. Even in his anguish, what Jesus Christ had done for him and for you wasn't shaken or disturbed.

Yes, the jars of clay could crack, and the earthly tent rip, but nothing could threaten the treasure and the eternal house in the heavens, which Jesus Christ had given to his people. Paul delighted to offer people the real Jesus.

In other words, sorrow and joy co-existed in Paul's soul. They weren't competitors that cancelled each other out, or even 'balanced', but two features of faith in Christ.

It is precisely this combination of sorrow and joy that Paul says commended him as a real Christian minister. It's what made him different from the fake peddlers of God's Word (2 Corinthians 2:17) and the 'super-apostles' (2 Corinthians 11:5).

Their goal was to leave people feeling upbeat and in a positive mood. But in practice their this-worldly, pop-psychology quickly morphed into something legalistic and enslaving, which spiralled into misery (2 Corinthians 11:20). But in Paul's faithful ministry both sorrow and joy harmonised.

So, this combination of sorrow and joy is something to be on the lookout for in ministers. The authentic Christian minister will make you both more sorrowful (2 Corinthians 7:8) and more joyful (2 Corinthians 1:24).

Rather than prizing one over the other, or trying to balance them out, grip both sides of Christian experience tight. The real Jesus leads his people to be 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing'.



Source: Shutterstock



A walk with Mr O

The prayer meeting is getting me down

Mr O, since the summer I've been going regularly to our church's weekly prayer meeting, but, to be honest, it's beginning to get me down.

You know what I'm going to say next! Tell me more.

Well, first of all, there aren't many people there. Those that are there don't seem very fired up. The same people pray every week and pretty much in the same order. The meeting is made up of long prayers and long silences and, frankly, I usually go home quite discouraged. It doesn't have to be like that, does it?

No, it doesn't. But please get hold of this: the problem is not the prayer meeting. A poor prayer meeting is a symptom of spiritual disease, but it is not the disease itself. Don't soothe the spots and leave the underlying condition untreated!

*I've never thought of it like that. So what **is** the underlying condition?*

It's a simple fact that praying people like to be with other praying people. 'Birds of a feather flock together', as the proverb says. Praying people seek out other praying people, and pray with them. There obviously aren't many praying people in your church. If there were, the prayer meeting would be full – and a spirit of prayer would run through it all, even through the silences.

Yes, Mr O, but surely only God can make men and women into praying people. We can't do much about it, can we?

Yes, we can. First of all, we can make sure that we are praying people ourselves.



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

Every morning we can ask the Lord to breathe a breeze of prayer through everything we are and everything we do. Every evening we can repent of our prayerless moments and have our consciences freshly cleansed at the cross. Those who are married can ensure that they are praying every day with their spouses. Those who have children can start daily moments, enjoyable moments, when the family gathers around the Bible for worship. Christian friends can develop the habit of never separating without praying together. All of us can arrive early for church and have a time of quiet prayer before the service begins. In these simple ways a spirit of prayer can little by little become a noticeable characteristic of our congregations.

That's quite a list and it's very challenging. Could you add to it?

We can all add to it. We just need to see that a spirit of prayerful love for Christ and for other people is our greatest need. It's easy for a church to set up a WhatsApp group where people can post personal news and prayer requests. It's easy to meet up with a Christian friend so that the two of you can pray together. It's easy for mums in the church to meet up and pray for their children and for the schools they attend. To quote another proverb: 'Where there's a will there's a way.'

And what about the pastor and the church officers? Surely they have a particular responsibility in this area.

Yes, they do. They are the people who set the spiritual tone of the church, and if they are not nurturing each other's spiritual life and praying together regularly, their church is doomed. If you remember, we talked about this last time. But there is something else I need to say. Through the years I have noticed that wherever pastors practise the three cardinal rules of preaching – and do so in every sermon – the prayer life of their church is lively, believing, and blessed.

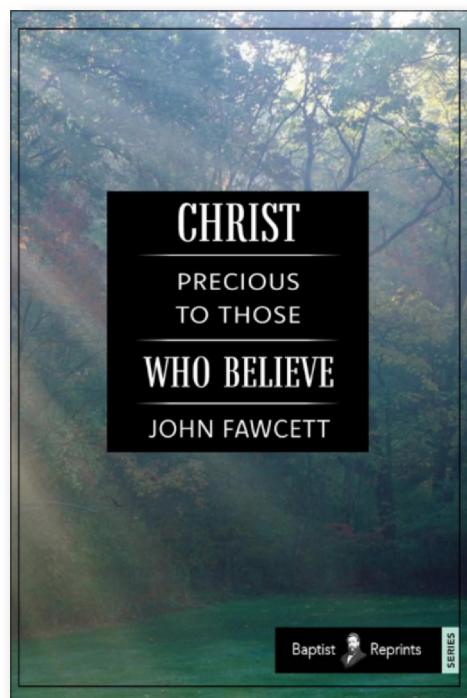
The three cardinal rules of preaching? I have never heard of them. What are they?

Maybe that explains why your church's prayer life is as it is. The three rules are simple. Here they are: (1) Tell them about Jesus; (2) Tell them about Jesus from the Bible; (3) Love them as you do it.

I've got it. Thanks Mr O!

Book Reviews

Christ Precious to Those who Believe: A practical treatise on faith and love



John Fawcett
Free Grace Press
288 pages; £9.49

Some Christian books sadly neglect Christ. Some Christian books are properly about Christ. Few Christian books are full of Christ. Happily, John Fawcett's gem is one of them.

I first read this title in about 2014 or 2015. I was on an aircraft travelling to preach. I have a scrawled note in the front cover to the effect that, had I died before I reached home, but the book survived, I wanted my family to read it.

Sadly, one of the challenges was the relative rarity of copies. I spent several years gently badgering various publishers about a reprint. Whether or not my solicitations had any effect, I have no idea!

In any case, I could not have been more satisfied to discover that Free Grace Press were republishing this book. It is worth noting that the whole has been lightly, and for the most part very sensitively, updated (and Americanised) in its language. All this taken into account, I want warmly to commend *Christ Precious* to you.

Fawcett was born in Lidget Green, near Bradford, Yorkshire, on 6 January 1740. Converted under the ministry of George Whitefield in 1755, he was initially attached to the Methodists, but eventually joined the Baptist cause. In 1765 he became pastor of Wainsgate Baptist Church in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire.

He united in his person and ministry the vital piety of the Evangelical Revival with the doctrinal purity and ecclesiastical stability of the more evangelically-minded Particular Baptists. This happy blend permeates his writing, including his hymns ('Blest be the tie that binds' is one of his) and other productions, of which *Christ Precious* is probably the best known.

'This is a book both to enlighten and to enliven the heart. It is full of Christ. It probes the nature and quality of your faith, and makes it purer.'

Fawcett's starting point for his treatise is from 1 Peter 2:7: 'Therefore, to you who believe, he is precious' (NKJV). Our author is concerned for Christ's dignity and glory in the gospel, where he is seen to be most precious to those who believe.

Fawcett's scheme is simple. He first inquires as to the character of those to whom Christ is precious. Then he teases out the evidences that true saints give of being among those who believe. He considers the fruits of their faith, and we see something of that vibrant Christianity which delights in and desires after Jesus the Lord more than anyone and anything else.

The third section, in which he rises to heights of holy eloquence, shows in what respects Jesus Christ is precious to believers, covering such topics as his person, names, offices, love, throne, commands, day, house, and benefits. As Fawcett sweeps across the sacred territory, we are not only amazed at how little we trust, value, love, and esteem the Christ set forth, but wonder how a Christ so set forth would not draw all men to himself. Oh for more preaching in this strain!

Fawcett's style matches and adorns his substance. Even his prose is poetic. There are points at which the writing rises to the most splendid strains of language, befitting the subject matter. His delight in Christ sweeps off the page and into the reader's heart.

Fawcett is natural, even spontaneous, weaving in prayers and praises as he goes, both his own and those which might spring from a heart moved by his material. He has a happy knack for weaving Scripture words and phrases into his meditations, so that the whole sings with divine force. He communicates the highest theology with the deepest feeling: he loves the gospel of Christ in its simplicity, clarity, purity, immediacy, and

beauty; he loves the Christ of the gospel in his majesty, dignity, glory, beauty, and humility.

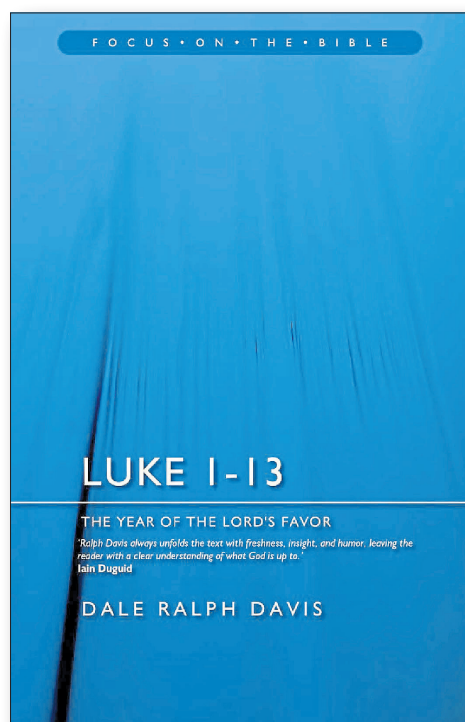
This, then, is a book both to enlighten and to enliven the heart. It is full of Christ. It probes the nature and quality of your faith, and makes it purer. It displays and extols the person, work, and character of Christ Jesus, and makes him more exceedingly precious in your eyes. It should, as you enter into its substance and become accustomed to its style, make your soul sing. It will not only teach you more about Christ; it will also teach you and model for you how to respond to his dignity and beauty, to the praise of the glory of God's grace. It is why I still want my family to read such a book. I want you to read it too.

A sample from the third chapter: 'He is the beloved Son of God, the first and the everlasting favorite of heaven, the highest object of his Father's delight; he is the great peacemaker between God and sinners, the chief messenger of divine love to men...

'He came to deliver us from our state of enmity and rebellion, to save us from sin and its dreadful consequences, from the curse of God's righteous law, and from everlasting destruction. His heart was pierced for the sake of sinful men. The messages of his own and of his Father's love he has written to us in lines of blood; he sealed the covenant of peace between God and man with the blood of his cross that he shed for us, to procure the remission of our sins. This is that Divine Savior who, though disregarded by many, is precious to those that believe.'

Christ Precious to Those who Believe is available exclusively in the UK and Europe at www.brokenwharfe.com

Jeremy Walker
Crawley, West Sussex



Luke 1-13: The year of the Lord's favour

Dale Ralph Davis
Christian Focus Publications
 264 pages; £14.99

If you've read any of Dale Ralph Davis's commentaries, you'll know what to expect: thought-provoking Bible exposition frequently illustrated from American history. This volume on the first half of Luke's Gospel doesn't disappoint in that respect.

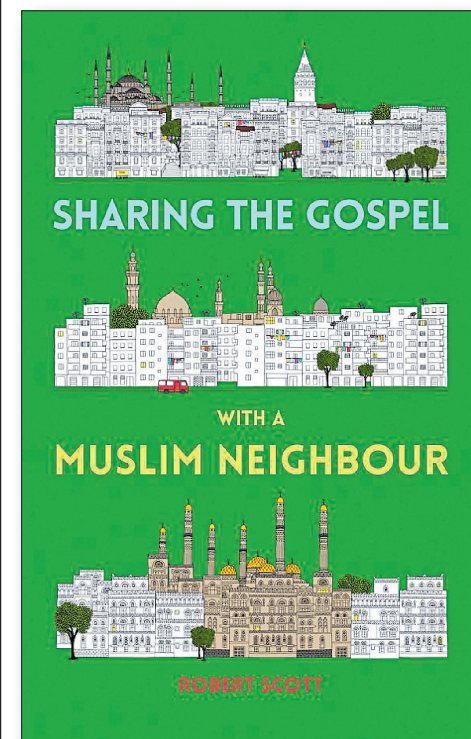
The style of writing is down to earth and descriptive, with vivid and varied illustrations ranging from baseball to the Soviet Union, from Abraham Lincoln to George Whitfield. As a reader I found myself drawn into the scenes, a fly on the wall as Jesus disputed with Pharisees, healed lepers, and taught his disciples.

Don't misread me though: it's not a shallow read. It would be a 'go-to' resource for anyone who wants to dig deeper into Luke's Gospel, and a worthy addition to every preacher's bookshelf. The book explains Greek words and phrases simply, and there are frequent footnotes that provide further technical detail for anyone who's interested. And perhaps most importantly, there is frequent and direct application to the soul: Davis pulls no punches, he challenges and encourages, and he points us to Christ.

There is a second volume, on Luke 14–24, available for purchase – and I've just bought it!

Dave Cox
 Nelson, South Wales

Sharing the Gospel with a Muslim Neighbour



Robert Scott
 10 Publishing
 192 pages; £4.99

Sunnis, Shias, Sufis, Salafis, and Ahmadis – do you know the differences? The writer of this little book helpfully summarises them for us, in order to point out that the Islamic world is not a monolithic society. It is every bit as fragmented as institutional Christianity.

The main thrust of the book is that, if you have the opportunity to speak with your Muslim 'neighbour', you should treat him or her as an individual, made, as we all are, in the image of God, though like us, seriously flawed. Thus the injunction to 'love your neighbour' should dictate the course of the conversation.

The assumption throughout is that you can have a rational discussion, and that not all Muslims are hostile or aggressive. They are as likely to have as many questions about biblical Christianity as we might have about Islam. That being so some very helpful lines to follow are suggested.

There is great deal of valuable information in this book. Insights into the nature of the Qur'an and the life of Muhammad are included with a clear overview of Muslim beliefs and practices. This will help to provide an understanding of the way in which your contact is likely to think and conduct themselves.

The book is clear and readable, and will prove extremely valuable if the Lord grants you such opportunities to witness to Muslims.

John Harris
 Thornhill

The Puritan Path: A pictorial witness

Joel R. Beeke & Stephen McCaskell
Reformation Heritage Books
 164 pages; £24.95

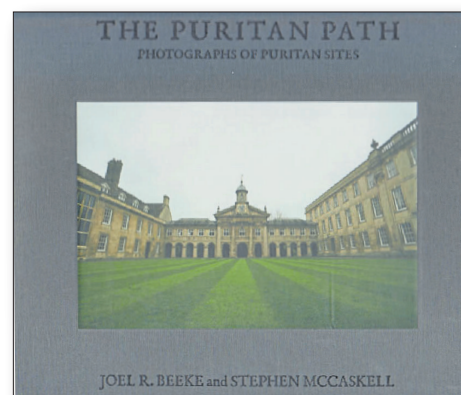
This is a magnificent book: a coffee table book with a difference. It is a volume of beautiful colour photographs of sites associated with Puritanism in Britain, the Netherlands, and North America.

Beginning with Wycliffe's Lutterworth, it moves through the Puritan era proper all the way to Spurgeon's tomb, and then a beautiful Devonshire woodland, perhaps indicating that Puritanism, although often eclipsed, still endures.

Introductory material includes an exposition by Joel Beeke of John Geere's 17th century description of a Puritan, which stands in sharp contrast to the contemporary perception of these men and women of God – and indeed to much popular thinking today.

There are two fine pictures of the great Canterbury Cathedral. It is a pity that no mention is made of the Huguenot Chapel in the crypt, where French language services are still held. An additional site in Canterbury worthy of a picture would have been the martyrs' memorial, the place where 41 believers were burned at the stake between 1555 and 1558.

Every lover of Puritanism has his own special sites, and this outstanding



book whets the appetite for more. The visual record will stimulate interest in these spiritual pioneers, and is worthy of a wide circulation.

Robert W. Oliver
 Wiltshire

In the Shadow of the Rock: An autobiography

Geoff Thomas
Reformation Heritage Books
 384 pages; £23.99

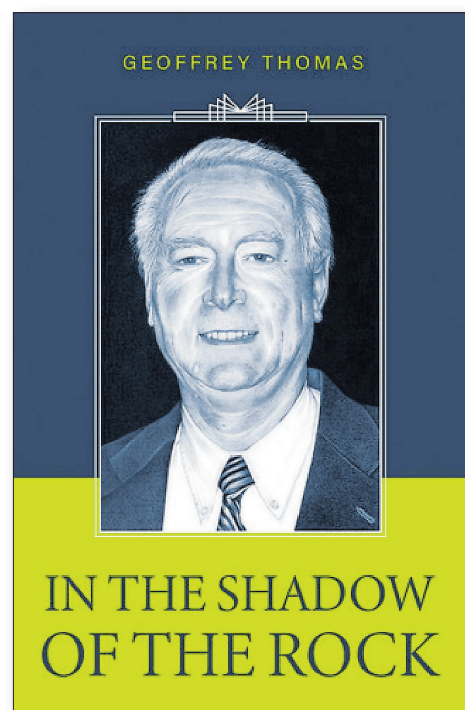
Having sat under Geoff Thomas's ministry as a student, I certainly agreed with the sentiment of his quote of Spurgeon in defence of his own autobiography: 'Whether this arises from egotism or not, each reader shall decide according to the sweetness or acidity of his own disposition.'

I was impressed by the fact that there is relatively little of Geoff himself in the book, and much more concerning those who have influenced him. Of course that includes some giants of the twentieth century, but also members of his family, friends, and church members.

This is living social and ecclesiastical history. While you will find out about rightfully famous people in the kingdom of God, the majority would be quite anonymous in the eyes of the world – yet precious in the sight of our Lord.

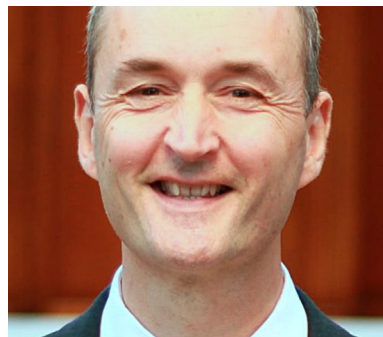
I especially appreciated the author's evangelistic appeal to embrace the God who sustained him and his first wife Iola through her final years suffering dementia: 'The ground of her hope of going to heaven and being forgiven was in the achievements of her wonderful Prophet, Priest and King, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I commend her Saviour to all of you.'

Robert Chamberlain
 Stockton-on-Tees



Features

What does it mean to discipline?



By Jonathan Winch

Jonathan served as principal and executive principal in state funded Christian-ethos state schools for 17 years; his wife Julie taught their four children within a home school cooperative through their primary years. He now directs Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Newcastle under Dr Ian Hamilton.



Source: Shutterstock

A knock on the door, and Michael walks in. Not, I observe, quite as sheepishly as might have been expected. He's here to explain to me how he managed to lock a group of students in the toilet, and why he kicked over a bucket of water as he ran off.

Michael is not alone. In comes Mum, and behind her a man I don't recognise.

'Mr Winch, this is Dr B___,' Mum's mouth is set in a terse line, 'Michael's consultant psychiatrist.'

A locksmith might have been a more helpful addition to the party, but Dr B is clearly well-briefed, and I assure him of my readiness to listen.

'Michael suffers from ADHD. I'm here to explain his behavioural needs.'

The meeting is as long as it is bewildering. It appears that Michael is not to be disciplined because Michael couldn't help it. Michael is, I discover, the victim of an unhappy condition that deprives him of self-control. The bucket was in the wrong place at the wrong time. And so were the children.

I venture an alternative opinion. Is it in Michael's interests to be labelled as a victim? Is that going to prepare him for adult life? Apparently it is.

As I recall, I held my ground and discipline was duly administered. But the damage was done; Michael endured his detention with self-righteous indignation.

Sovereign self-determination

I tell Michael's story not because it is rare but because it is common. At least, it is now. When I began to teach, most parents I worked with recognised that their child needed discipline. We worked together to help the student listen to their conscience, resolve to behave differently, make restitution.

In recent years it has become the norm for parents to mount an impassioned defence – supported by external agencies of various stripes. Their child is not a wrongdoer but someone who needs to be better understood; an individual with special needs, unique home background and personality; a person whose needs require not discipline but therapy.

Carl Trueman's *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Crossway, 2020) summarises the spirit of the age as *expressive individualism*:

'The intuitive moral structure of our modern social imaginary prioritises victimhood, sees selfhood primarily in psychological terms, regards traditional sexual codes as oppressive and life denying and places a premium on the individual's right to define his or her own existence.'

As the author observes, this understanding was bequeathed to us by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (among others) who taught that the child is wholly innocent; it is society and culture that corrupt the individual, preventing him from being truly authentic.

Modern-day philosopher Charles Taylor explains, '[It follows] that each of us has his/her own way of realising our humanity, and that it is important to find out and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside...'

Discipline, then, is repressive. Worse, it is oppressive. It challenges a child's sovereign right to individual self-determination.

How different the voice of the (second-) wisest man that ever lived: 'My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline

or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights' (Proverbs 3:11).

How can a dad who delights in his son possibly bring himself to use discipline to suppress his little boy's innate desires?

Perhaps because he knows his heart! Because he knows from Scripture that his child's innate desires are the expression of a heart that is *desperately wicked and deceitful above all things* – and from experience that his own human nature is just the same.

Yes, this wide-eyed wonder is created in the image of a glorious, perfectly good God, but that image is now marred by original sin: '*In sin did my mother conceive me*' (Psalm 51:5). Rebellion now comes naturally, deceit finds ready reception, *auto-nomy* (literally, being a law unto oneself) is more attractive than submission to God's law.

Discipline defined

Enter discipline. For discipline to be of value to a child he need not yet be converted. For sure, where the Spirit of God has been at work, the heart of

stone replaced with a heart of flesh, the parent will find the task easier: with a regenerate child a word and a prayer may be enough to bring repentance. But all children will benefit from the gift of discipline.

Discipline is *training that develops self-control*. Its aim is to render sin odious and truth sweet. It works by attaching negative consequences to the former, positive to the latter. Not as a dog or a horse is trained – through mindless operant conditioning – but by accompanying consequences with words, unconditional love, role-modelling; by impressing truth on the mind in such a way as to shape the affections (the inclinations and emotional response), inform the conscience, and strengthen the will.

A gift of God's 'common grace', discipline does not bring about a change in the nature of man as special grace does; it does not regenerate. But as Geerhardus Vos wrote, common grace may make one 'receptive to the influence of the truth that works on him from his consciousness. It works persuasively, by offering motives to the will and by making use of inclinations that are already present...'

A child is born with an inclination to avoid pain and seek happiness; discipline sets out to show that happiness is to be found in obedience to God.

But has our Creator not designed the universe in such a way that good and bad actions lead naturally to happiness and suffering? Does not Scripture tell us that *the way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright a level highway* (Proverbs 15:19)?

He has, and it does. But in God's patience natural consequences are often delayed; we may be sure our sin will find us out, but that may not be for years. More seriously yet, natural consequences are often severe. It is precisely to spare the child the pain of natural consequences that a loving parent disciplines his or her child.

That discipline will naturally transition from *enforced* to *logical* consequences as the child grows in their capacity for

reasoned argument and logical deduction. That is to say, a smack may be exactly what a young child needs, but with an older child, a consequence that fits the misdemeanour will normally be more effective.

The idea is not simply to associate pain with disobedience, but to show what kind of painful consequences a particular action will have. Laziness with chores may mean that a special event is missed – in order to complete the jobs left unfinished. The principle holds good with rewards: the wise parent will show creativity in finding fitting ways to recognise their child's moral progress.

In moving to the 'how' of discipline, let me suggest three guiding principles.

Grow close

Confronting wrongdoing outside of a loving relationship is not discipline; it is the exercise of power. It may be punishment, but it's not *chastening* – the Bible word for the kind and constructive confrontation parents are called to.

To be authoritative without being authoritarian, *grow close* to your child. Let him know that he means all the world to you – that you discipline him because you love him.

To *discipline* shares the same root as to *disciple*. We are teaching our children to *become followers of what is good* (1 Peter 3:13). So walk this road together. Open your life to your little ones, let them see both your love of holiness and your need for the Holy Spirit in your struggle against sin. Look for opportunities to say sorry: your child will remember them always. Lead by example: your life speaks far louder than your voice. As Christ observed, *everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher*.

Never discipline by withdrawing your affection – even if that seems to get compliance. Remember that the objective is not to control your child but to train him to control himself. Your child needs to know that you love him no matter what – that there is no sin so great that it will break the bond between you. Love makes discipline a sweet sorrow; your child will believe that it is for his own good always; that it really does hurt you more than it hurts him.



Source: Shutterstock

Give your child the benefit of the doubt. Better far to suspend judgment in a doubtful case than administer punishment on an innocent child. You are not required to be a mind-reader or take the place of the conscience.

Cultivate the positive alternative. Wild swimming is more memorable than Call of Duty; a family 5k walk beats aimlessly wandering the mall with friends; climbing trees with the cousins trumps messaging a thousand Facebook 'friends'. Your young teen will not feel so bad about being the only one without a smartphone if they are also the only one who can really talk to their parents. It may be a cliché that teenagers spell love T.I.M.E., but there really is little that can compete with an intentional one-on-one with Dad or Mum, whether planned long in advance or completely spontaneous.

Shepherd your child's heart – as Ted Tripp eloquently argues in his book of that title. Learn to see wrongdoing as an opportunity rather than a threat. The Reformers emphasised three uses of the law, and the second – the pedagogical use – applies

here: the law shows us our sin and points us to mercy and grace outside of ourselves. Let your child see that their wrongdoing reveals a heart problem – selfishness, pride, greed, idolatry, for example – that only God's Holy Spirit can help with. Show that your own sanctification grows out of your relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Be consistent

Keep your promises even when it costs you. As you value your child's honesty, uphold your own. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. If you have warned of discipline then administer it; if you have promised a reward, give generously.

Beware of the age-old game of *good cop, bad cop*. Children are experts in playing Dad and Mum off against each other. Debate in private so that you can be of one mind before the children. Children feel safe when Dad and Mum are one.

Know that in setting your rules you are choosing your battles. Say 'yes' whenever you can. To keep rules to a necessary minimum, distinguish moral risk from

physical. With the former, stay well away from the edge of the cliff. But children don't need wrapping in cotton wool; teach your children how to risk-assess, and encourage adventure. Wage war against impurity, but embrace dirt and sweat – and expect the odd broken bone and bloody nose. Value courage.

Distinguish house rules from moral rules. Every home has its conventions, but children need to know that when they are disciplined it is for breaking God's rules. The issue is not the muddy footprints on the carpet but the disobedience. Clumsiness is not a moral issue; milk will be spilt, precious china broken, and that's okay.

Let the consequence be in due proportion to the misdemeanour. We don't cultivate a love of justice in our children by being unjust ourselves.

Beware of letting your day shape your disciplinary response. Children are incredibly perceptive, and if our standards vary with our mood they will learn only resentment. Which leads to the final 'how' of discipline:

Stay calm

Another way to say this is, 'Know thy strength'. A father is so much bigger, stronger, and deeper of voice than his two-year-old son, but somehow he can feel altogether helpless when confronted by a full-on meltdown. The temptation is to meet fury with fury. I know; I have been there!

But discipline administered by an undisciplined adult can do lasting damage. First we must discipline ourselves, then our children. It's a great help to remaining calm to remind ourselves that, however weak we feel, we are in a position of strength. The Word of God (and, yes, the law of the land) lends authority to our words. We discipline not by the force of our personality but the power of reasoned argument from God's moral law, supported by measured and meaningful consequences.

This is where we need to lay down rules for ourselves.

Never discipline in anger; wait until you are calm, for *the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God*. Step aside, pray for grace; God will give you the help you need.

Cultivate a tone of voice that supports the words you use; express command not rage, instruction rather than pleading, gentleness and respect and never condemnation or rejection.

Welcome questions; you too are a man or woman under authority. Take children back to scriptural principles. Avoid nagging; train your children to respond to your first request. An obedient spirit must precede discussion.

Disciplining our children through the long years of childhood immaturity is often a thankless task. Where does the inspiration come from to stay the course?

It comes from the example of our own heavenly Father, who disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. We have learned at first hand that *for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant – but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it* (Hebrews 12:11).

May God grant that in an age in which so many – young and old – are yielding the bitter fruit of self-expression, we may so nurture our children that they bring forth *the peaceable fruit of righteousness*.



In 2022 Farming Christian Link had a Christian witness at forty Agricultural Shows.

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Bernard Hicks.
fcl.secretary@googlemail.com
Mobile 07810 405342
www.farmingchristianlink.co.uk

Events Diary *Continued from page 28*

NOV
12

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

NOV
15

BANBURY. St Paul's Church, Warwick Road, Banbury, OX16 2AN. Christian Institute meeting, 8.00pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Sue Castle: (01295) 252332.

NOV
16

TUNBRIDGE WELLS. Pantiles Baptist Church, 73 Frant Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 5LH. Christian Institute meeting, 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Church office: (01892) 521903.

NOV
17

COLCHESTER. Wivenhoe House Hotel, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 3FA. NB: See hotel website for directions. Christian Institute meeting, 8.00pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Christian Institute (0191) 281 5664.

NOV
18

CHIPPENHAM, Wiltshire. Ladyfield Church, Hungerdown Lane, SN14 0BA. Corsham & Chippenham Central Bible Study, 7.30pm. Speaker: John Roberts (Leominster). Contact (01225) 708643.

ASHFORD. Grace Fellowship, Singleton Road, Great Chart, Ashford, Kent, TN23 3BB. Christian Institute meeting, 7.45pm.

NOV
22

Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Church Leaders: (01233) 340343 or contact@gracefellowship.co.uk

NOV
23

BEXHILL-ON-SEA. St Mark's Church, Green Lane, Little Common, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN39 4BZ. Christian Institute meeting, 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Revd Jonathan Frais: (01424) 843733.

NOV
24

CATERHAM. Oakhall Church, 181 Chaldon Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5PL. Christian Institute meeting, 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Church office: (01883) 370264.

NOV
25

CHIPPENHAM, Wiltshire. Ladyfield Church, Hungerdown Lane, SN14 0BA. Corsham & Chippenham Central Bible Study, 7.30pm. Speaker: David Herring (Bridgwater). Contact (01225) 708643.

LONDON, NW6. New Life Bible Presbyterian Church, 44 Salusbury Road, London, NW6 6NN. Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony meeting, 7.00pm. Subject: 'When will there be peace in Jerusalem?' Preacher: Revd Richard Monteith.

NOV
26-27

CHORLTON-CUM-HARDY, Manchester. Chorlton Evangelical Church, Chorlton Green, M21 9FG. Anniversary weekend: Saturday, 7.00pm; Sunday, 11.00am & 6.30pm. Preacher: Matthew Cox (Bethersden, Kent). All welcome. Further details: (0161) 881 4230. www.chorltonevangelical.org



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Happy 300th birthday, John Brown of Haddington



By R. A. Miller
Pastor of Sarasota
Reformation Church in
Florida.

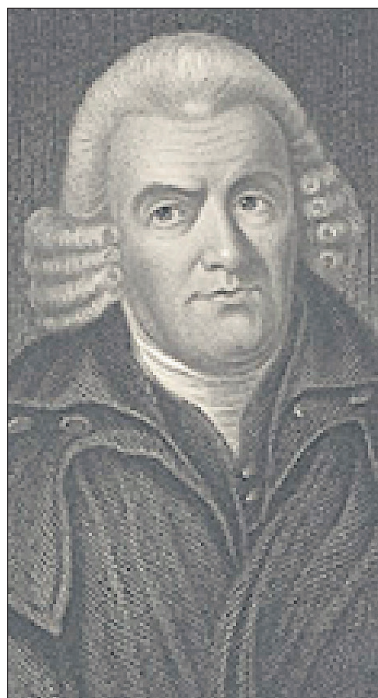
taught by Satan. These cutting yet foolish remarks kept Brown humble.

Despite the slander, God continued to work through Brown and made his critics look foolish. The Lord also instilled in Brown a love for language which led him to eventually become fluent in nine other foreign languages besides Greek. In addition to his expertise in language, Brown was also a gifted author. He published several works and *The Self-Interpreting Bible* proved to be his most notable.

Brown's biographer, Robert MacKenzie, said this about the former's magnum opus: 'Your Self-Interpreting Bible seems to stand in lieu of all other commentaries; and I am daily receiving so much edification and instruction from it, that I would wish it in the hands of all serious ministers.'

Brown also published a Bible dictionary, a concordance, and a commentary on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, among his other works. This former herd boy spent the last two decades of his life as a professor of several subjects including divinity and theology.

In addition to all of his other numerous accomplishments, Brown also pastored a church in Haddington, Scotland, for 36 years. Let us marvel at the testimony of John Brown of Haddington. God took a poor orphan at death's door and moulded him into a bold proclaimer of truth. Praise God for the mighty work he did in the life of John Brown of Haddington!



This year, 2022, marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of John Brown of Haddington. In 1722, Brown was born into a poor Christian family in Scotland. As a young teenager, he found himself an orphan after an illness claimed the lives of his parents. Soon after, he became quite sick as well.

Brown recalled in his memoirs, 'Four fevers on end brought me so low within a few months of my mother's death, as made almost every onlooker lose all hopes of my recovery.' Eventually, Brown did recover and began to support himself as a herd boy.

Despite his Christian roots, Brown lived in disobedience until he heard a particularly convicting sermon while his sheep were resting. The Scripture preached upon was John 6:64, 'But there are some of you that believe not.'

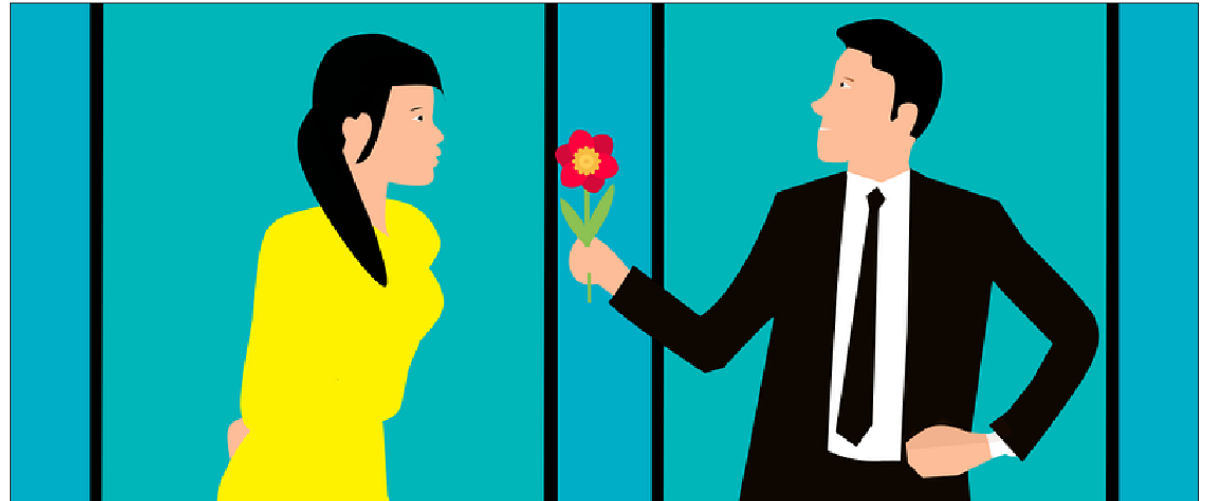
This marked a major turning point for Brown. He later said this sermon 'pierced my conscience as if almost every sentence had been directed to none but me, and made me conclude myself one of the greatest unbelievers in the world'.

He was further moved by sermons on Isaiah 45:24 ('Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.') and Isaiah 53:4 ('Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.').

Brown soon found himself leaving what he called 'practical apostasy'. After God changed Brown's heart, he was compelled to teach himself Greek as a teen. People were so shocked that this poor young man became fluent in Greek that they accused him of being

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.



Wanting to be married

I would love to be married but there's no one my age in my church or those I know. Should I visit Christian dating websites?

I am pleased that you want to be married. That isn't the case for everyone. You shouldn't feel guilty if you're not ready, or if God hasn't given you that desire, but it's a normal desire for healthy Christians to want to be married (Genesis 2:18).

At the same time, take care that marriage doesn't become an idol to you, either in itself or as the imagined solution to some other problem: if we are not content with what we have now, we are unlikely to be content with whatever else the Lord may give us. People who complain about being single tend to complain about being married!

I accept that this is a challenge in a smaller church, and among smaller churches. Often there aren't too many people your own age in one or among several churches. Or perhaps you have grown up with them, and there's not always a 'romantic' attraction.

So the first thing we should do is pray. You may not know it, but the people in this church have been praying for our young or single people that the Lord would save them, sanctify them, and – if it is his will – provide a spouse for them.

I imagine that you are praying that earnestly, too. Pray that the Lord would prepare them for you, and you for them. Perhaps the Lord will bring someone to the church through salvation or through transfer of membership?

Also, churches and pastors, with parents, can and should be



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

involved in this. Perhaps there are conferences we can find where likeminded Christians gather. They don't have to become meat markets; they're natural environments to find people you enjoy being around. We have meetings with other churches of like mind where people can meet and get to know one another.

If you would like, I can put out some feelers with trustworthy pastors and ask if there's anyone in their congregations who might be suitable for you.

It may be that you could visit some other churches from time to time to do what an old friend of mine called 'sanctified looking around' – just make sure you don't creep people out! The advantage of all this is that you would have a measure of security, of knowing and being known, with all the protection and direction that offers.

I don't think that Christian dating websites are inherently wrong, but they do lack some of these checks and balances and safeguards. Almost by definition, we tend to put the very best of ourselves on display. That's true in person, too, but it's harder to

be falsely consistent! You don't necessarily know from a profile what someone is really like at home, at church, in the world – just the impression they (or you!) want to give.

So if you go down that route, go carefully and cautiously. Make sure that you get to know any contacts safely offline, and ask the right questions about their family and church situations.

Don't pursue this in isolation, but keep your family, pastors, and wise friends in the loop, so that we can offer appropriate prayer and counsel. As soon as possible, get that friendship off the screen and into a safer and more substantial environment where there's a more complete connection and exploration.

Remember that the best way to find the person the Lord has for you is to walk in obedience to him. That's the path in which you are going to fall in step with others who are going in the same direction at the same pace, those who are going to be genuine helpers to you on the road heavenwards.

So, let's consider all the legitimate means, and appropriate ways, of prayerfully pursuing this desire. Let's keep it in its proper perspective, view it all through a scriptural lens, pray for it consistently but not obsessively, pursue it by wise means, and manage it with discretion, courtesy, and purity.

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

Scripture’s hidden gems: Revelation (Part 2)



By Alan Hill
Pastor of Lausanne Free Church,
Switzerland.

In Part 1 we considered how the final book of the Bible has a clear and central theme: our Lord is on the throne, and he is coming back.

We saw that the marvel of Revelation is that the entire book is for us *now*: it helps us now; it comforts us now; it guides us now. It is a book written for all ages and all Christians.

I also acknowledged that Revelation is a book subjected to a host of diverse interpretations by Bible-believing Christians. The four most common are the preterist, the futurist, the historicist, and the idealist views.

I suggested that combining and drawing ideas from all four of these approaches will help us understand this profound book.

But whatever your view, I repeat what I said in my first article: my desire here is not to cause controversy but to glorify Christ. My prayer is that by the end of this article, even if you disagree with its standpoint, you will join with the apostle John and say: ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus!’

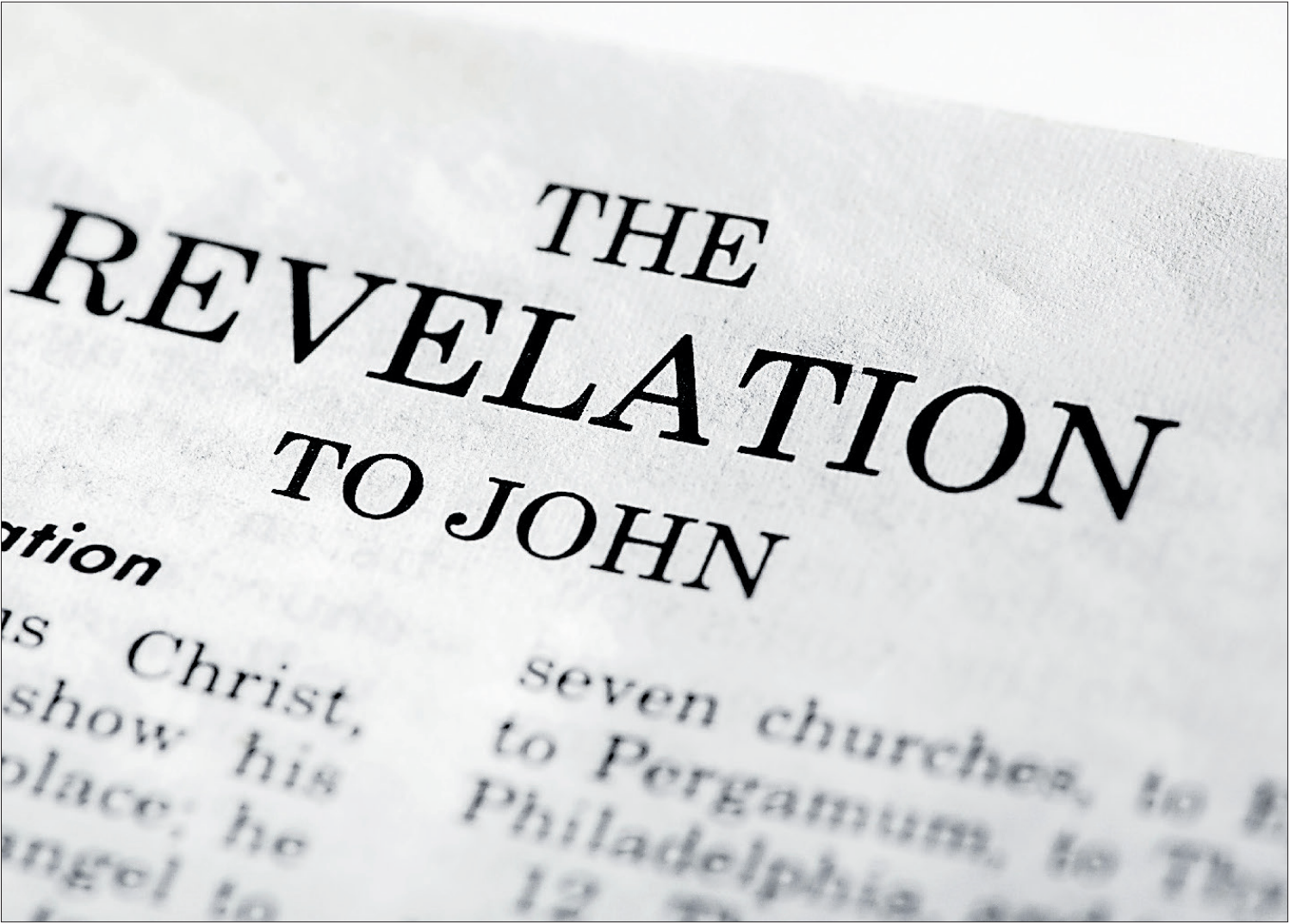
In this article we’ll look more closely at the structure of Revelation in light of my proposed framework.

What is the structure of Revelation?

Revelation is a book in which the number 7 has special significance. The book is addressed to seven churches. These churches receive seven letters. Each of the seven letters has a sevenfold structure. There are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls of judgment. There are seven angels before the throne. Overall, the number 7 is mentioned 54 times!

Revelation as a whole can also easily divide into seven sections. Each one can be understood to cover the period of history from the First Advent of Jesus to his future Second Coming.

The main evidence supporting this structure is that events connected to



Source: Shutterstock

the end of the world (such as the Day of Judgment) are mentioned at the end of each of the seven sections – not just at the end of the book of Revelation. We find this in chapters 1, 6, 11, 14, 16, 19, and 20.

This should convince us that Revelation is not a linear chronology of events – how can the end event occur again and again before the end?

In addition, we can note a progression in these seven sections: sections 1, 2 and 3 describe the struggle on earth (the church in the midst of a world under judgment). Sections 4, 5 and 6 show the deeper spiritual background (the dragon, the beast, and Babylon, with Satan behind it all). In all seven sections, the final judgment is announced, introduced, described, and then carried out.

Same event, different angles

Why is Revelation structured in this way? Think of a 100-metres men’s sprint final. How long does this event take? 10 seconds. Yet when you watch it on television, how long does it take to show the whole event? Maybe 30 minutes!

How do they fill the time after the race itself? They show the race from different camera angles and at different speeds. Here is a view from the side, from the front, from the back, from above. Here is the view in slow motion, etc.

‘The marvel of Revelation is that the entire book is for us now: it helps us now; it comforts us now; it guides us now.’

Revelation is a series of videos of the whole gospel age shown from different perspectives and with different details.

Limited space prevents further exploration of this here, but we find a similar sevenfold structure in Zechariah 9 to 14 (the part of Old Testament prophecy most similar to Revelation), and in the Lord Jesus’s teaching on the gospel age and the end of the world in Matthew 24 and 25.

Let us look at the seven sections of Revelation.

1 Christ in the midst of his church (chapters 1–3)

Christ is ruling over each church and brings a message for those seven historical churches. But there is also a message for believers in every age. At any one time there will be churches and individual believers who are like each of the seven churches – loveless, persecuted, lukewarm, compromising, corrupt, dead, or faithful.

How does the section begin? With a reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus (1:5). How does each letter end? With a reference to life in the new heaven and new earth. And how does the last letter end? With a reference to the marriage supper of the Lamb and the end of all things (3:20-21).

The message for us today is that the Lord Jesus rules the church and where necessary disciplines the church. Let us aim always to stay faithful to the Lord and look forward to his coming!

2

The vision of heaven and the seven seals (chapters 4–7)

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the one who sits on the throne and the Lamb. The Lamb of God is handed the scroll with seven seals. In chapters 6 and 7 we see what happens as each of the seals are opened.

The first reference to the Lord Jesus (5:5-6) is a picture of him as a lamb slain. In chapter 6 judgment is introduced (6:16-17), and the section ends with a picture of believers in paradise (7:16-17).

The scroll with seven seals represents the plan of God for the gospel age. Opening the scroll and breaking the seven seals in turn therefore represents an aspect of God's plan. The Lord is going to tell us in general terms the principles that will characterise *every* age of history.

The first seal is a white horse with one going out to conquer. This is a picture of Jesus going out into the world saving people from their sins.

The second seal is a red horse that was granted power to kill. This is a picture of Christians being persecuted for their faith.

The third seal is a black horse with the rider holding a pair of scales. This is a picture of Christians suffering financial hardship.

The fourth seal is a pale horse on which rides death. This is a picture of the general woes of war, disease, and disasters that strike all of mankind.

The fifth seal gives us a picture of God's people in heaven. They are waiting – but for what?

They await the sixth seal to be opened, which pictures the Day of Judgment coming upon the world.

This second section ends with a description of those who are in heaven having come through the great tribulation (7:13-17).

Here we find the first reference to 144,000 (the other being in chapter 14). Those who wish to take 144,000 as a literal number must also believe that they are all Jews (with each group of 12,000 from different descendants of Jacob), all men, and all virgins.

A better way is to see this number as the church, the Israel of God. Evidence for this is that the dimensions of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 (a picture of the church, v. 9) include the numbers 12, 144 and 12,000. For instance, the ground area of New Jerusalem is 12,000 times 12,000 which equals 144,000.

Whatever view you take, the message of 144,000 is simple: God's chosen people are as safe on earth (Revelation 7) as in heaven (Revelation 14).

3

The seven trumpets (chapters 8–11)

This section begins with silence in heaven. The seven trumpets picture God's warning to a sleeping world about judgment to come.

The first trumpet symbolises disasters affecting parts of the world at different times. Here a flood, there a fire, and over there an earthquake.

The second trumpet signifies great nations suddenly collapsing.

The third trumpet depicts God allowing Satan to inflict bitter trials and troubles on mankind.

The fourth trumpet represents the Lord withdrawing his restraining hand and allowing mankind to fall into a deep depravity of sin.

The fifth trumpet pictures Satan spreading the smoke of deception and delusion, of sin and sorrow.

The sixth trumpet describes wars and all the machinery of war.

Chapters 10 and 11 then tell us about the church. Life will be bittersweet for the believer. Chapter 11 warns us about the great 'falling away' and times when the church will all but disappear before times of revival.

At the end of the section there are references to the end of the world, the day of judgment, and the eternal happiness of the saved (11:15-18).

What is the message for believers from this section? Yes, the world is under judgment, but do not fear: we are safe. Keep witnessing to the end!

4

The persecuting dragon (chapters 12–14)

This section again goes back to the start of the gospel age, beginning with the birth of the Lord Jesus (12:1-2). The section then outlines the persecution of the church by the dragon and his two helpers – the beast of the sea and the beast of the earth.

The beast of the sea represents empires and governments; the beast of the land represents false religion and false philosophy. It ends with a frightening description of – can you guess? – the judgment of God against the unsaved (14:18-20).

This section is reminding us that behind the persecution of the church is Satan. But do not fear, dear believer: we are safe, our salvation is secure.

5

The seven bowls of wrath (chapters 15–16)

The section begins with praise in heaven – worshippers with harps sing the song of the Lamb. Seven bowls are referenced, and they represent God's judgments upon mankind as men and women refuse to repent.

Once again, the section ends with a reference to the end of the world and the last judgment (16:20-21). This section reminds us that we can expect there to be disasters, famines, and wars.

But again, believers need not fear – God is in control. The following sections now turn to the defeat of all God's enemies.

6

The woman, the beast, and Babylon (chapters 17–19)

In this section we see the defeat of Satan's allies – the beast of the sea, the beast of the earth, and Babylon. The section ends with the Day of Judgment: the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (19:20-21). God is reminding us once again that we don't need to fear: all the anti-Christian governments and powers will one day come crashing down and be judged by God.

7

The Devil's doom and the believer's joy (chapters 20–22)

Only Satan is left to be dealt with! The section begins with Satan being bound and cast down, an event that took place during the ministry of the Lord Jesus (see Matthew 12:25-29). Then there is the reference to 1,000 years. Do the 1,000 years mean a literal or symbolic period of time? Bible-believing Christians are divided.

What is true is that the number 1,000 is used at least 15 times in the Bible in a symbolic way simply to mean a vast number. Examples include Psalm 84:10: 'a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere'; Psalm 90:4: 'a thousand years in your sight is like yesterday'; and Psalm 91:7: 'a thousand shall fall at your side'.

In the New Testament, '1,000 years' is only mentioned in one other place besides Revelation 20, and it is in 2 Peter 3:8. Here it is clearly symbolic once again: 'With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'

Based on this evidence and the fact that most other numbers in Revelation are symbolic, it is reasonable to conclude that the '1,000 years' of Revelation 20 are symbolic.

What does it symbolise? The 1,000 years represent the gospel age in which we are still living and in which the good news goes out to all nations. It began with the fall of Satan (Matthew 12) and will end when Satan is released from being bound and the world experiences the great tribulation and falling away (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Revelation 20:7-15 then tells us that after Satan's 'little season', the Lord Jesus will return, defeat Satan and usher in the Day of Judgment and separation of the lost and saved.

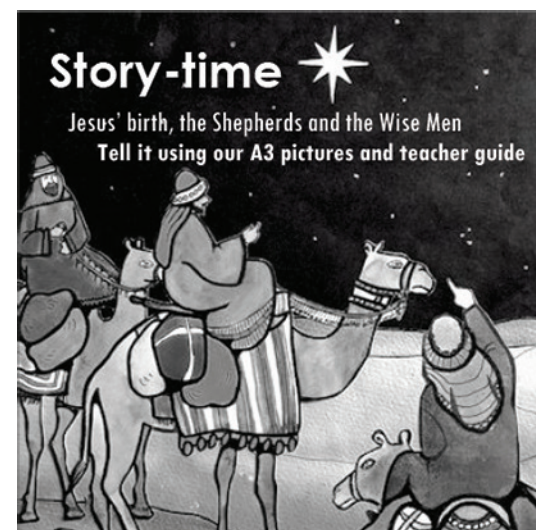
The book ends with a beautiful description of the new heaven and new earth. This is a real place where there is no death, no sorrow, and no crying. The Lord will make all things new. What comfort for believers!

For all ages

This interpretation means that all of Revelation is relevant to every believer in every age. In every age the Lord is ruling over, helping, and disciplining the church where necessary. In every age God is carrying out his plan (the scroll with seven seals). In every age God is sounding trumpets of warning. In every age the church is persecuted by the world and false religions. In every age God is pouring out bowls of wrath to warn the world of judgment to come. In every age the devil and his helpers are persecuting the church. And in every age the Lord is protecting his people and will take them to be with him one day. Finally, in every age we can look forward to the new heaven and new earth.

It may seem that Satan and the world are winning, but that is not the reality. The message of Revelation is that Christ is the ultimate victor, and that we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!

It is unlikely that you will agree with every aspect of my interpretation of Revelation, but my prayer is that we do not focus on what we cannot agree on, but on what unites us. The Lord Jesus is on the throne. The Lord is in control. The Lord is coming back soon. *Even so, come Lord Jesus!*



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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.

NOV 1
BIRMINGHAM. Crossway Church, St Heliers Road, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 1QS. Christian Institute meeting, 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Mr John Perham: (07513) 167240.

NOV 2
NOTTINGHAM. Arnold Road Evangelical Church, Arnold Road, Bestwood Park. Nottingham, NG5 5HN. Christian Institute meeting, 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Revd Nathan Pomeroy: (0115) 920 1788.

NOV 3
WIGSTON. Little Hill Church, Launceston Road, Wigston, Leicestershire, SatNav: LE18 2FU. Christian Institute meeting, 7.45pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Pastor Joshua Harrison: (07743) 760756.

NOV 4
CHIPPENHAM, Wiltshire. Ladyfield Church, Hungerdown Lane, SN14 0BA. Corsham & Chippenham Central Bible Study, 7.30pm. Speaker: Klaas-Jan Gunnink (Chippenham). Contact (01225) 708643.

NOV 5
GORNAL, W. Midlands. Gornal Bible Fellowship, Lake Street Church, Lake Street, Gornal, DY3 2AU. Meeting, 7.15pm. Preacher: Colin Robinson. Contact: (01902) 673150.

NOV 5-6
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 Iver Martin (Edinburgh Theological Seminary). Contact: albefairnington@btinternet.com www.wooler-evangelical.org.uk

NOV 8
SAWBRIDGEWORTH. Sawbridgeworth Evangelical Congregational Church, London Road, Sawbridgeworth, CM21 9EH. Christian Institute meeting, 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Pastor Gary Harrison: (01279) 722373.

NOV 9
FLITWICK. King's Church, Kings Road, Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1ED. Christian Institute meeting, 7.45pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Mr Andrew Nock: (07758) 456481.

NOV 10
RIPON. Zion Evangelical Baptist Church, Blossomgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire, HG4 2AJ. North Yorkshire Bible Rally, 7.45pm. Preacher: Mostyn Roberts (Welwyn). www.nybr.co.uk
ISLEHAM. Pound Lane Free Church, 28 & 30 Pound Lane, Isleham, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5SF. Christian Institute meeting, 7.30pm. Subject: 'Sure Foundations'. Speakers: Christian Institute staff. Contact: Mr Dave Hall: (07977) 142075.

NOV 11
CHIPPENHAM, Wiltshire. Ladyfield Church, Hungerdown Lane, SN14 0BA. Corsham & Chippenham Central Bible Study, 7.30pm. Speaker: Oliver Gross (Bristol). Contact (01225) 708643.
ONLINE. Christian Values in Education Online meeting via Zoom, 8.00pm – 9.30pm. Subject: 'State Education – Becoming a School Governor'. This meeting will look at the role of school governors/trustees: what is involved, how you become one, and does it make a difference? Further details: www.cvie.org.uk or e-mail: enquiries@cvie.org.uk

NOV 11-12
CARLISLE. Church of Scotland Chapel, Chapel Street, Carlisle, CA1 1JA. The Banner Borders Conference 2022: Friday from 7.00pm; Saturday from 9.30am. Subject: Not Ashamed of the Gospel. Speakers: Paul Yeulett, David Pfeiffer and David Campbell. Join us for a time of fellowship and engaging Bible teaching on a crucial theme for our time. Tickets are £12 and do not include food or accommodation. E-mail: info@banneroftruth.co.uk or tel. 0131 337 7310.

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BRISTOL. Zetland Evangelical Church, 4/6 North Road, BS6 5AE. Sunday 11.00am & 6.30pm. Contact: Eddie O'Brien. Tel: 0117 9629868. www.zetlandchurch.org.uk

YATE. Grace Church, 250 Station Road, Yate, BS37 4AF. Sunday 11.00am & 6.00pm. Wednesday 7.30pm. Contact: The Elders, tel: 07783 300862. www.gracechurch.org.uk

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CHATTERIS. Community Church, The King Edward Centre, King Edward Road, PE16 6NG. Sunday 10.30am. For Sunday evening and midweek meetings please phone Pastor Robert Read. Tel: 01354 694393.

CORNWALL

FALMOUTH. Carrick Free Baptist Church, Bosvale Community Centre, off Hillside Road, TR11 4HQ. Sunday 10.45am & 6.30pm. Tel: 01209 862920. E-mail: carrickfbc@gmail.com www.carrickfbc.org.uk

FALMOUTH. Falmouth Evangelical Church, Killigrew Street (by the Moor). Sundays 10.30am & 6.30pm. Meetings in accordance with Covid guidelines. E-mail: mikeccoles@aim.com www.fec.org.uk

GORRAN HAVEN. Haven Church (off Church Street), PL26 6JN. Sunday 10.00am (Breaking of Bread) & 4.00pm. Wednesdays 7.30pm. Enquiries: 01726 842873. Website: www.havenchurch.co E-mail: haven_gh@outlook.com

NEWQUAY. Reformed Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, TR7 1NB. Sunday 11.00am & 6.00pm. Tuesday 7.00pm. James Virgo (Elder), tel: 07785 102054.

CUMBRIA

KESWICK. Lake Road Chapel, CA12 5BS. Sundays 10.30am & 4.00pm. Thursdays 7.00pm. Enquiries: Philip Helm, 01768 88797. E-mail: philip@lakeroadchapel.net www.lakeroadchapel.net

DERBYSHIRE

CRICH. Baptist Church, Market Place. Sunday 10.45am & 6.00pm. PM/BS Tuesday 7.30pm. Pastor Chris Hand, tel: 01773 853180. E-mail: info@crichbaptist.org www.crichbaptist.org

DERBY. Castlefields Church. Sunday 10.00am & 4.30pm @ Derby Conference Centre, London Road, DE24 8UX. Wednesday 7.30pm @ Traffic Street, DE1 2NL. www.castlefieldschurch.org.uk, 01332 550879.

STANTON LEES CHAPEL (off A6 nr Darley Dale). Sunday: 8.00am prayer meeting; 2.30pm & 6.30pm services. Pastor Jonathan Bayes. Wednesday 7.30pm. Tel: 0771 2080257. www.stantonleeschapel.org.uk

DEVON

BARNSTAPLE. Whiddon Valley Evangelical Church (Reformed), Stoa Park. Sundays 11.00am & 6.30pm, Thursdays 10.30am. Pastor David Kay, tel: 01271 269213. www.wvec.org.uk

EXETER. Independent Evangelical Church meeting at Heavitree Evangelical Church, Fore Street, Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 2RR. Sunday 11.00am & 6.30pm. Thursday 7.00pm Bible study & prayer. Tel: Pastor Jonathan Munday 01647 270067 or Tom Cook 01392 811204.

GALMPTON, nr Paignton. Flavel Chapel (Reformed Evangelical), Stoke Gabriel Road, TQ5 0NQ. Sunday mornings, 10.30am, evenings Flavel Hall, TQ5 0NJ, 6.30pm at the Roundings. Walford Catling, 01803 559040, or John Young, 07779 169750. All warmly welcome. E-mail: walfordandelaine@hotmail.com www.flavelchapel.com

HONITON. Evangelical Congregational Church, High Street. Sunday services 10.30am & 6.00pm. Tuesday 7.30pm. Contact: Revd Mike Plant, 01404 548576. www.honitonecc.org

SMEATHARPE nr Honiton. Newhouse Baptist Church. Sunday 11.00am & 6.30pm. Tuesday 6.30pm. Details: Pastor John Woollam, tel: 01404 861313. www.newhouse-baptist.org.uk

PLYMOUTH. Beacon Park Baptist Church, 11 Peverell Park Road, Plymouth, PL3 4LR. Lord's Day services 10.30am & 6.30pm. Wednesday Bible study 7.30pm. A warm welcome awaits you. Pastor Richard Clarke, tel: 01752 227009.

DORSET

CHRISTCHURCH. Carmel Evangelical Church (non-ecumenical) meeting

Continued on page 30

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TELFORD. Grace Church Wellington. Sunday 11.00am in the Wellington Library at the Wellington Leisure Centre, TF1 1LX. Visitors welcome. Website: www.gwellington.com

SUSSEX: EAST

HAILSHAM. Baptist Church, Market Street, BN27 2AG. Sunday 11.00am & 6.30pm. Thursday 2.30pm. Contact: R. Hogg, tel: 01323 833501. www.hailsham.baptistchurch.co.uk

WARWICKSHIRE

BULKINGTON. Congregational Church. Sunday 10.30am & 6.00pm. Prayer/Bible study Wednesday 7.30pm. Pastor Andrzej Stelmasiak, 024 7767 9138. www.bulkington.congregational.org

WEST MIDLANDS

BIRMINGHAM. Chelmsley Wood Reformed Baptist Church meeting at Fordbridge Centre, Nineacres Drive, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham, B37 5DD. Sunday 11.00am & 6.00pm. Thursday 8.00pm. Tel: Keith Wrangles, 0121 7792804. E-mail: office@cwrb.org.uk www.cwrb.org.uk

WORCESTERSHIRE

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.witton.chapel.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

YORKSHIRE: EAST

HULL. East Hull Presbyterian Church (Evangelical), R/O 336 Holderness Road, Hull, HU93DQ. Sunday 10.30am & 6.00pm. Wednesday 7.30pm. Details, tel: 01482 214248 / 01482 581069 / 01482 789690. E-mail: christophermlawson@hotmail.com

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.

YORKSHIRE: SOUTH

DONCASTER. Doncaster Evangelical Church, Beckett Road, Doncaster, DN2 4AY, Sunday services 10.45am & 6.00pm. Pastor Gareth James, 07890 754581. www.doncasterevangelical.org

CHURCHES WALES

CARDIFF. Emmanuel Baptist Church, Gabalfa Avenue, Gabalfa, CF14 2SH.

Sunday 11.00am and 6.00pm. Wednesday 7.30pm. Contact: Alan Lansdown, tel: 02920 616816. www.emmanuelcardiff.org

HAVERFORDWEST, Pembrokeshire. Hill Park Baptist Church (Ind), SA61 2ET. Sundays 11.00am & 6.00pm. Sunday school 10.15-10.45am. Prayer meeting Wednesday 7.00pm. Contact: Revd Ian Middlemist, misty_923@hotmail.com www.hillpark.net

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.lampeter.evangelicalchurch.org

LLANGOLLEN. Glanrafon Evangelical Church, Princess Street, LL20 8RD. Sunday 11.00am and 6.00pm. Wednesday 7.30pm. Church secretary: 07863 706666. www.glanrafon.org

LLWYNPIA. Rhondda Evangelical Church, Salem Terrace, CF40 2JL. Sunday 11.00am & 6.00pm. Wednesday 7.15pm Ministry and Prayer. www.rec.wales

SWANSEA. Ebenezer Baptist Church, near High Street station. Sunday 11.00am & 6.00pm; SS 10.00am. Wednesday 7.30pm. Minister: Revd Graham John, tel: 01792 582845.

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Features

Matthew Parris: The rebirth is real



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



A few years ago, Matthew Parris, a former MP and a distinguished journalist, visited Malawi, where he had lived as a child. He was impressed by the development work of Pump Aid, a small British charity helping rural communities to have safe water. But, to his surprise, something else impacted him: ‘Travelling in Malawi refreshed a belief I’ve been trying to banish all my life, but an observation I’ve been unable to avoid since my African

childhood. It confounds my ideological beliefs, stubbornly refuses to fit my world view, and has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God. Now a confirmed atheist, I’ve become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: secular education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people’s hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good.’

Matthew has struggled with this for many years, ‘I used to avoid this truth by applauding the practical work of mission churches in Africa. It’s a pity, I would say, that salvation is part of the package, but Christians black and white, working in Africa, do heal the sick, do teach people to read and write; and only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say the world would be better without it. I would allow that

if faith was needed to motivate missionaries to help, then, fine: but what counted was the help, not the faith. But this doesn’t fit the facts. Faith does more than support the missionary; it is also transferred to his flock. This is the effect that matters so immensely, and which I cannot help observing.’ Matthew says, ‘Our family had Africans working for us who had converted and were strong believers. The Christians were always different. Far from

having cowed or confined its converts, their faith appeared to have liberated and relaxed them. There was a liveliness, a curiosity, an engagement with the world – a directness in their dealings with others – that seemed to be missing in traditional African life. They stood tall.’ Matthew recognises that since the 16th century Reformation Christianity teaches a direct, personal relationship between individuals and God that liberates people. He concludes, ‘Those who want Africa to walk tall amid 21st-century global competition must not kid themselves that providing the material means or even the knowhow that accompanies what we call development will make the change. A whole belief system must first be supplanted. Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone, and the machete.’



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