

CHRISTIAN WATCH

A PROTESTANT BIBLICAL WITNESS

“And what I say unto you

I say unto all, Watch”

Mark 13:37

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2014

November, 2014

To all Christian Watch Members

Dear Friends.

Another year is drawing to a close - and we continue to await our Lord's return. But do we, who desire to walk together in the fear of the Lord - through the assistance of His Holy Spirit - profess our deep and serious humiliation for all our transgressions? We can learn much from the Solemn Covenant adopted in 1689 by Pastor Benjamin Keach's great congregation in London when the following was pronounced :

- *We do promise and engage to walk in all holiness, humility and brotherly love - as much as in us lieth – to render our communion delightful to God, comfortable to ourselves and lovely to the rest of the Lord's people.*
- *We do promise to watch over each other's conversations and not to suffer sin upon one another, so far as God shall discover it to us, or any of us; and to stir up one another to love and good works; to warn, rebuke and admonish one another with meekness, according to the rules left to us of Christ in that behalf.*
- *We do promise in a special manner to pray for one another, and for the glory and increase of His Church, and for the presence of God in it, and the pouring forth of His Spirit upon it, and His protection over it – to His glory.*
- *We do promise to bear one another's burdens, to cleave to one another and to have a fellow-feeling with one another, in all conditions both outward and inward, as God in His providence shall cast any of us into.*
- *We do promise to strive together for the truth of the Gospel and the purity of God's ways, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).*
- *These, and all other Gospel duties, we humbly submit unto, promising to perform, not in our own strength, being conscious of our own weakness, but in the power and strength of our blessed God, Whose we are and Whom we desire to serve.*

Such a Covenant may be 325 years old, but we in Christian Watch would exhort you to take heed of its contents and seek the Lord's enabling grace to fulfil it. We have a great heritage – heritage is defined as that which has been passed from one generation to the next – and for the true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, no more important heritage can be left to the succeeding generations than the Word of God. We transmit that heritage through the opportunities that God gives us in our daily lives through teaching, example and prayer.

God gives us four Golden Moments in life which we must seize upon - "When thou sittest in thine house," "When thou walkest by the way," "When thou liest down" and "When thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). If we are to seize these golden moments, we must have God's help and God's grace to live a disciplined life. May the Lord enable it to be so as we look towards the start of a New Year – may we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word.

So let us look at where the Church finds itself in the present day – as the world is seemingly united in its opposition to God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We have included an article by Pastor Geoff Thomas (Aberystwyth) entitled **The Awe of God** – which is based on the second Psalm and details the characteristics of the world's rage against God and God's response to this rage against Him.

In a few short years, we will be remembering God's great deliverance as a nation as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the glorious Protestant Reformation and, as a build-up to this memorable occasion, we have included an article by Dr. Alan C. Clifford (Norwich) – **No Place Like Rome?** – in which he unashamedly pronounces that the Pope's religion is not the Christianity of Jesus Christ and the Pope's church is not the true church of Jesus Christ.

Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher's sermon – **Elijah at the Brook Cherith** – outlines the beauty that is experienced when the Word of the Lord comes to us; when we are visited by nothing less than God's eternal love and compassion. And the God of Elijah still lives – and can always be found of them that seek Him and call upon Him. Be strong and of good courage, child of God. Do not be cast down if the Lord should direct you to the wilderness but be of good cheer, for God's dew can drop upon you and bring forth blessings.

Just two **News Items** this issue, but both are of great interest for different reasons. The **Red Sea** discovery highlights yet again the amazing truth that the Bible's accuracy cannot be doubted. Within the past few weeks, this astounding discovery brings undeniable scientific proof that one of the most famous episodes of the Old Testament is indeed based on an historical event. No longer can historians consider it a work of fiction. However, the second news item – **Women Bishops** – points out very clearly how the Church of England is eroding the authority of Scripture and calls upon the Church to humbly submit to Christ in utter dependence on the Holy Spirit.

In closing, I want to bring to your attention the alarming news that ISIS have announced – on 27th October – a doctrinal shift in its ideology that carries potential historical significance. In a 42 minute message, it has called for the first time on its global support to take the fight to foreign shores beyond the Middle East. Abu Mohammed Ali al-Adnani, the group's spokesman, urged listeners to strike the USA and its allies, calling on them to use any means necessary to cause injury to the enemy. What is to be our Christian response? In the Book of the Acts, the Apostles 'turned the world upside down'. Those who truly know their God shall be strong and do exploits.

There is much to pray for. Continue in prayer for the McArthur family (Ashers Bakery) who are being ruthlessly pursued by the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland over their refusal to produce a gay marriage campaign cake. If you haven't already done so, please sign the petition that is circulating on their behalf.

May God have mercy upon us as a nation as we look to the close of the year and the beginning of 2015.

Yours in the Saviour's Name,

Ian R. Henderson

Ian R. Henderson,
Vice-Chairman

PS

Please note that there is a subscription renewal form for 2015 enclosed with this Newsletter. The annual membership fee remains the same at just £10 per annum. However, with the ever-increasing cost of printing and postage, all donations are greatly appreciated.

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THE AWE OF GOD

By: GEOFF THOMAS

Pastor of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth

Psalm 2

*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying,
Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.
Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.
Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.
I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day
have I begotten thee.
Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the
uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a
potter's vessel.
Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is
kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.*

We have here a description of the situation in which the Church finds itself in the present day. The situation is this; the world is united in its opposition to God and His Son, Jesus Christ. It is a situation where a force of immense numerical strength, of great intellectual prestige and ability, is mustered against the servants of Jehovah and against the whole body of revealed Christian truth. It is later described by Jesus as His disciples being sent out as sheep into the midst of a pack of wolves. In Psalm 2 you notice that our opponents, these combatants, are bringing all their resources to bear upon this particular enterprise. They use their minds, and their imaginations, and their creativity, and their access to every kind of communication – today we would talk of the media and the whole educational industry, to the publishing houses and the newspapers, and to entertainment.

So in, and through all of this, they are raging against the Lord. It is an intellectual confrontation, but it is also an emotional attack too. They are completely involved in this particular anti-Christian crusade. They co-operate with one another, politicians and executives of the television companies, teachers and publishing houses, newspaper tycoons and even the famous festivals at Hay-on-Wye, Wales, and in Edinburgh, Scotland - there are in them men and women taking counsel together and they are restless that there are still people who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that they believe the Bible, that these Christians believe in a God who will condemn the wicked. The atheistic hegemony is enraged that this is so. When they hear that children are taught by their parents to fear God and keep His Commandments then some of them label this 'child abuse' and they openly wonder when Government action will be taken against these mothers and fathers. Preachers in the open air have become a special target for their abuse. People have lost their jobs when their Christian convictions, expressed privately, have been made known to the authorities. When a Christian family baking business has refused to bake a cake celebrating homosexual marriages with pro-homosexual slogans iced upon it, then they are taken to court and charged with an offence.

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS RAGE AGAINST GOD

ij) The focus of their rage. We are told what is written on their banner, what their slogan is; “*Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us*” (v.3). “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have been our Masters for too long,” they say. “We have been imprisoned by them for years. It is time for us to throw off our fetters and break the chains of religion and proclaim that true freedom has at last come.” Go back to the source of the opposition that confronts these atheists. Go back to the first cause. Go back to origins. Where did it all begin? - with God the Creator. It is He that has made us and not we ourselves. In the beginning, He created the Heavens and the earth and He made man in His image and He gave man the Ten Commandments and wrote those ethics on the hearts of everyone. That is where it began and that is where their rage is focused. It is against the power and sovereignty and leadership of the living God whose glory is revealed day and night and who has given each of us a conscience rebuking us when we defy God. It is the response of resentment to the inescapable and obtruding authority of God. It is a rejection and repudiation of the life of Jesus Christ and His great claim that He is the Way and the Truth and the Life and the only access to God is by Him. They are opposing any right He has to exercise dominion over the whole of human life, especially over our eternal souls.

So we ask ourselves whether this isn't exactly our own position today. Isn't it this point at which the Christian faith sticks in men's throats, this particular assertion of the exclusive sovereignty of Jesus Christ? In other words, they may defend the rights of men and women to believe what they wish, and will even say kind words about moral principles and influences, and tolerate the good works that the Christian church does, but when we say, “He is your God too. He made the world and you, and after death we'll all have to give an account to Him and He will decide our destiny,” then their much vaunted tolerance disappears. Al Mohler, the Southern Baptist Seminary President, was being interviewed by talk show host Phil Donahue and Al simply repeated what Christians have believed from the time of Christ - that He is the only Way to God - and you would have thought that he had shot the Queen. “You believe that is true for everybody? That those who don't believe are going to Hell? That's arrogance!” Such media men take their stand and gather against God and Christ. They are not prepared to bow the knee and submit to the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus over them. He may not exercise dominion over their lives. They are saying, “We will not have this Man rule over us.” They claim that they are the ones who give us the right to gather and worship and preach. No, they do not. This is a God-given right. They say that they can admire the Sermon on the Mount and I Corinthians chapter 13 about love, but they object to Jesus Christ chaining them to Himself to follow Him and obey Him for the rest of their lives. They hate those bonds and they want to break them in pieces. So there is the focus of their rage on God in Christ.

ii) The antiquity of their rage. Atheists claim that their unbelief is simply a necessary consequence of being modern men and women. This is the essence of being 21st century people, that this is the mark of being contemporary. This is the march of progress and sophistication encouraged, they claim, by the advance of science and archaeological discoveries and the theory of evolution. There has been new research, they claim, and new information and progress and so it is intellectually impossible to hold to the teaching of the Bible. But you go back, right back to the centuries before Christ. Go back to the remotest points of antiquity 3000 years ago when David lived, and what we find is the same repudiation as today, the rejection of the one true and living God and the strongest opposition to His Word. We see it here at the beginning of the Book of Psalms, that the whole world a thousand years before Christ was united in their resistance to the God of Genesis chapter one.

You go back to Isaiah who lived 700 years before Christ and you find the same great fact. He preached to them with such clarity and authority and pathos of the suffering Servant of God, the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace, and they looked back at him in silence. He cried, “*Lord, who has believed our report?*” It was as discouraging then to preach the Messiah to people as it is today. And, in the days of the Lord's Apostles, during the time of the decline of Greece and Imperial Rome's domination over Europe, then you read that Christians were rejected and persecuted. When Paul preached the

resurrection and Divine judgment at Athens this was his audience's response, "*When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked (Acts 17:32)*. There was the same mixed response to preaching the Gospel as there is today. There was scorn, and blindness, and ignorance, and prejudice, and refusal to look at the evidence as there is today. There were books written against Christianity in the first centuries and they beheaded and crucified Christians then just as in recent weeks.

They were mocked at that time by people who then thought the earth was flat, and that the sun went round the earth, and that our planet was the centre of the whole universe. They had no learning whatsoever, and yet in their blindness and backwardness and superstition they were convinced about one thing - that Jesus of Nazareth was a blasphemer and a liar. They were as prejudiced and ungodly as Richard Dawkins, because it has nothing to do - nothing whatsoever to do - with sophistication. This scorn concerning the existence of God has nothing at all to do with being contemporary or being modern. The roots of men's centuries-old opposition to God's Word lie much deeper than that. Their resistance is earthed in the depths of human depravity and rebellion against God our Maker. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. They are utter foolishness to him and he cannot know them without a significant change of heart, what the Lord Jesus called a new birth. This opposition is not because they lived 3,000 years ago and we live 3,000 years later. It is because man lacks a sense of spiritual beauty, that he is blind to the spiritual and moral glory of the Lord Jesus. You take it even to those terrible words of the Apostle Paul when he tells us that the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not. And, if people in the 21st century reject Christ, it is not because of universal education, or superior intelligence and scientific discovery, or scholarship and learning. It is because they are blind; they've been blinded by the god of this world. And I wish today that those who crave so much to be considered modern - and pride themselves in being contemporary - would look at that and see how old-fashioned it is to repudiate the God of the Bible and His Christ. Then shall I go beyond that? Not only is this an opposition of long standing . . .

iii] *The prestigiousness of their rage.* Who is leading this outcry against God? Is it the subsistence farmers, and the mothers, and the unemployed, and the beggars? No. It is the Kings of the earth and the rulers. It is the movers and the shakers. They are the ones who are giving their prestige and their ability and their ingenuity and intellectual clout to this movement. They were men of self-discipline and men of indomitable determination, men whose decisions were listened to by the Press, men of gifts and aptitude, men who formed public opinion. They are the ones who stand in opposition to the Lord. Paul Johnson in his book about them dubs them, *The Intellectuals*.

There were men at the time of our Lord Jesus who listened in amazement to His teaching and saw His mighty works and yet they said to one another afterwards in the cold light of day, "But haven't you noticed that none of the rulers have gone after him." His disciples were just country bumpkins from Galilee and a few fishermen and women, no great men, no public figures. And so it is today. People ask, "Did the Beatles or Tom Jones go after him? Did members of the Welsh rugby team become His followers? Hollywood hasn't fallen before Him. What TV personalities are following Him? How many of the political leaders in our land confess Him?" There are many people on their way to a godless eternity - and that is only the logic of their unbelief - and they are saying, "No thinking people, no intellectuals, no important people are Christians." It was that way then - and it is that way now.

Think of the rise of atheism, where did it begin? - always with the rulers. It began in wealthy cultured Germany and Vienna, and then it spread to the U.K. and the battles of Spurgeon in the late 19th century and then across the Atlantic to America and to Machen's fight for supernatural Christianity after the First World War. It began in universities with philosophers and then it spread to the theology departments and then to the arts and sciences. It began with intellectuals and then to the bourgeois and on to the working classes. It began with learned treatises and then it spread to Victorian novelists and finally it reached popular music, John Lennon and the Manic Street Preachers. It began with the Bloomsbury set and the nobility and

then spread to the liberal-minded intelligentsia and middle classes and finally it reached the teenagers who showed increasing opposition to religion.

You take so many of the most famous public figures who helped and shaped the poor, calamitous and tragic 20th century and you find them standing united in total opposition to revealed religion, to God and His Christ. The men who were the giants, like Darwin, and Marx, and Freud, who have made our civilisation what it is; they were the absolute supremos of the western world, the super-stars. We have imbibed their values and we practice their principles quite unconsciously. Who are they? They are the rulers of this age. They are the kings who lead the movement against Christ, and how they influence the younger generation who are so impressed that that is where the scholars stand, and the wealthy, and the famous, and the people in the media, and the big personalities, and so they gain a following, very often like lambs to the slaughter.

I ask, will they ever pause, and will they take courage, and will they ask, "Why do I take the trouble to find out what the in-crowd are thinking and think it; and find out what they are laughing at and laugh at it; and find out what they are wearing and wear it; and find out what they are buying and buy it. Why must I follow them like a lamb to the slaughter? Don't I have the courage to think for myself?"

The Psalmist says two phrases to them, "*Be wise . . . be instructed*" (v.10). Remember Daniel in Babylon. He was wise, but by himself. Remember Athanasius, how he stood alone in saying that Jesus Christ was not simply Divine but that He was as much God as God Himself. Athanasius was opposing the world all on his own, and he was a wise man, the wisest of his age. Weren't Machen, and John Murray, and Van Til, and Dr. Lloyd-Jones and Francis Schaeffer wise men? Be an independent thinker! Read the life of Jesus Christ, He who is so uninventable, His extraordinary personality, His meekness and Majesty - holy and humble, loving and righteous at the same time, that incredible combination. It is only dead fish that have to be carried on by the river wherever the currents will take them. Go against the stream! Then you see something else; not only is it long-standing and prestigious, but it is immensely popular.

iv] The popularity of their rage. It was not like Islam, concentrated among the Arabs and Pakistanis and Malaysians, from where millions want to escape. This fierce opposition to God is not in some ghetto, it is worldwide; all the heathen are raging; all the nations are up in arms against Jehovah and His anointed Son. There was this tremendous unanimity at the time of David and that's how it is still. The drops-outs and the intellectuals, the Essex man and the Oxbridge man; women and children, teenagers and the elderly, no-one is exempt. Europe is indifferent; Harvard, Yale, and the Ivy League universities in the USA are quite contemptuous; the vast nation of India - over a billion people - and they are centres of world indifference and opposition to Jesus Christ.

But what of our town? What is the total church-going population? How many of the thousands who live in Ceredigion today have made their way to a place of worship? If you judge 5%, then that is too high - one teenager in every 20, one man in every twenty worshipping God? No, and so it is over 95% who are alienated from our Lord and His Christ. Just 100 of the 8,000 students at the local university gather on a Friday night at the Christian Union. 7,900 are absent. People follow the tide; they go with the majority; learn what others think and think it; learn what others drink and drink it; you have the men and women who are envied, the people of prestige; and then you have their lieutenants, the party members and the holy fools who simply follow; the rank and file, the apathetic, those who drift along with the multitudes; not with commitment, for they have very little commitment. They drift; they are neither for Christ not against Him in their own consciousness. And I want us to pause and ask where we stand. Do I stand with the conspiracy? Do I stand as one of the zealots? Do I stand in committed opposition? Do I stand, in spite of my presence here today, as another of the rank and file of this powerful world-wide, ancient, anti-God movement? Or do I simply drift along as the mood takes me, sometimes keen, sometimes bored?

2. GOD'S RESPONSE TO THIS RAGE AGAINST HIM

Do you see this? You have the omniscient King and He is standing before the conspiracy, surveying it all, and, in the marvellous eloquence of this Psalm, the King says one word, "Why?" This living God whose glory and design are all around us, Who has blessed us with every good and lovely thing, Who sends His Son to suffer and die as the Lamb of God to save us and to become our eternal Father taking us to Himself, He says, "Why?" Why do they rage against Me? Why do they imagine vanities and serve them rather than Me? Why do these favoured, intelligent, moral men and women cast their lot in with the atheistic conspirators? Let us ask this question.

ij Why is all this energy focused on opposing God? Look at all the activity and the planning, the column inches, the meetings, the hiring of halls, the advertising, the reporting on what was said, the publications and their promotion, the discussions on 'Newsnight' and 'Today,' the announcements of the latest books, the new court cases bringing cooks to justice, and doctors, and registrars, and owners of Bed & Breakfast establishments. Why are the police spending their time arresting open-air preachers of the Bible? What intemperate zeal! What determination to silence a Christian voice and totally marginalise the faith of the Bible. What is this great evil that is being opposed so unanimously? What pestilence, what deadly epidemic - like the ebola virus - is threatening to destroy our whole civilisation? What wickedness resulting in their beheadings and the destruction of communities that have existed for almost 2,000 years causing 100,000 people to flee from Northern Iraq for their lives, many of them having nothing but the clothes on their backs - of what wickedness, I ask, are those Christians guilty? What is the appalling peril we followers of the Lord Jesus present to the world that police and magistrates go to such measures in their attempts to annihilate us? Who are these Christians victimising? No-one at all. Is the unborn child at risk from them? No. Is the comatose patient going to be 'put to sleep'- that is, killed, because of us? No.

We are told that these opponents of religion are in fact opposing a King. Then He must be an appalling King if everywhere you meet such zeal seeking to destroy Him. Is He a tyrant? Is He a worthy successor to Attila the Hun and Ivan the Terrible and Genghis Khan and Hitler and Stalin? Is He just another despot? No. Jesus is the King of love telling His followers to love one another and love their enemies and overcome their evil with good. Then why do they go to such lengths against him? What absurdity! You stand before the marvel of this Biblical picture; there is a throne with a Lamb sitting on it. The Lamb has been killed. The Lamb is King Jesus. We see the young Prince of glory. Incarnate love and incarnate pity reign from that throne. What goodness, benevolence and longsuffering He shows. His judgments are all fair. What is it that justifies men's antagonism and reluctance to be identified with Him? Haven't we seen time and time again young people, for example, students who deliberately plan their lives motivated by the fear that they might get converted? I know a student who chose to go to Lampeter University as far from any Christians he'd heard about as he could get. He was certainly not going to attend the university in Aberystwyth, and yet when he arrived in his designated room on his first night and met his fellow room-mate at Lampeter College, he discovered he was a Christian who helped him greatly come to the faith. He had been frightened that grace would get him and that he would fall under the horrible negative influence of this King Jesus! Yet he was found by this King and coming to Him had the promised rest. Another student said, "No! I don't want to be a 'super-Christian.'" He was frightened of the redemptive energy of God and becoming one of His disciples. He feared the love of God flooding his heart and being saved.

Why this fear? I must stand with the Lord and ask you the question why. Why your opposition? Why do you hesitate? Why are you reluctant? Here He is as we gather in His name, and He is inviting us to come to Him to know His rest, to take His yoke upon us and learn of Him; for He is meek and lowly of heart and we shall find rest for our souls. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. It sounds good to me, very good. What's the snag? Is there any snag? Is there fine print? Is it that you have to follow Him, and go to where He points and refuse anything to which He says no? Are there beautiful and life-enriching things that He scowls at and opposes? Is

the life of serving Him soul-destroying? Is that why you so fiercely oppose him? Or again there is this . . .

ii] Why oppose God, in the light of the utter futility and patent folly of the exercise? God looks at all the huffing and puffing of this atheistic hegemony, all their endeavours to silence the people of the Way, and God laughs at them. All the time He is adding new recruits to the Kingdom of God. He is giving the new birth to multitudes, thousands every day all over the world; so many are being converted and no-one can prevent that reality, while the heathen are prisoners of their imaginations, imagining vain and empty things. They are trying to stop the activities of the Almighty. They are attempting to out-manoeuvre Him and the Lord scoffs at them. What possibility of success is there in such an enterprise? God has set His King on His holy hill of Zion. What rocket from the United Nations can dislodge Him from there? Who can overthrow the sovereignty of the Lamb? Who can frustrate the decree that says, "*Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.*" What NATO summit can alter that Divine decision? Who is going to change that? Can men frustrate God's determinate purpose? A student decides he will go to Lampeter to escape from God, but that is the very place where God had determined to meet him. You cannot escape from God. He is the potter and we are mere clay. The nations of the earth at last are going to be the inheritance of our Lord Christ.

Poor men, poor dust of the earth, poor clods of ground! They spend their time, and exercise their energy and ingenuity, in anti-Christian propaganda. They commit themselves to the extinction and evasion of the Christian Church – how utterly futile! Because at last, what is our security? The God who sits on the throne, the Lord who holds the whole world in His hands, He has made a decree; and in that decree the permanence of Christian truth is assured. "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*" In that word the Church's survival is sure; "*I will build my Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*" The triumph of the Lamb is certain.

There were the famous final words of a virulent atheist named Julian the Apostate. He was in moral and spiritual anguish and he experienced in his imagination standing before the glory of the Lamb, and he tossed out these words to Christ, "You have triumphed, O Galilean." Now it is not for man to comment on the destiny of any individual, but it is a solemn thing to realise today that those men of immense ability, who have gone to the world beyond and who spent much of their lives in anti-Christian commitment – I say it is a sombre question to ask what are their convictions today. We are asking whether the late Christopher Hitchens still thinks that "*God is Not Great*" – the title of one of his books. The opinions of Darwin, and Marx, have they undergone revision as they stand now – as they do stand now – in conscious and self-conscious existence before the glory of the Lamb, and they know, even as also they are known? How many men like Stephen Hawking who's said, "God did not create the universe" and also Richard Dawkins (who feels mothers of Down's children are to blame for not having them aborted) will one day be saying, "You have triumphed, O Galilean."

iii] Why oppose God in the light of the appalling risk you are taking? What does David say? "*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*" (v.9). What do you know of the destructibility of the wrath of the Lamb? Have you ever thought of that? David speaks of God here and he says, "*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little*" (v.12). He sees the beheading of a journalist in Iraq and His wrath flares up in a moment. He sees the sexual abuse of boys and girls in Rotherham and His wrath flares up in a moment. Should it not? Do you think the Holy One shrugs in indifference? Then wouldn't He be as bad as the people who behave like that? It would be a very solemn thing if all the energy of the anti-Christ movement ended simply in their lamentable display of vanity and futility. But it does not end there. It ends with the vindication of the crucified Jesus! It ends like this; "*Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure*" (v.5). That is the end of the atheistic hegemony. It ends in everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. That is not malicious wrath; it is not ungovernable passionate fury. It is the invincible and incomparable rectitude of Almighty God. This is where it ends - in the Great Judgment and the Great Separation. That is not where the leaders said it would end, no more than where Napoleon's invasion of Russia ended, or

where Hitler's Third Reich ended, or where those who fought for Biafra said it would end. For all of those leaders the end was utter destruction and ignominy. They'd been promised success and glory and pleasure and freedom and prestige, but their end was death and amputation and imprisonment. So too with us, we must all appear before the Lamb, and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire - and have men reckoned on that? They have not.

Suppose today that perdition wasn't a certainty. Suppose that it wasn't even a probability. Suppose it were only a possibility. Suppose that there is just a remote and outside chance that there is a Hell after death and suppose conceivably that there is one person in this entire congregation who is going there . . . just one. All the rest are safe, just one person possibly going to the place of woe where the worm doesn't die and the fires are not quenched; that place the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, spoke about. And suppose that that one person in this whole congregation who might be going to Hell is . . . me, or suppose it were . . . you, then what is the response of a wise man? Will you please check it out? Will you please make sure? There's the possibility of God having created and explained everything, not mere chance; the God who is light and in whom is no darkness at all; and Jehovah Jesus is His Son; and He is a righteous and just Lord to whom there is a fixed and immovable distinction between right and wrong; and if there is God then there is evaluation and judgment and justice - and if this Book is the Word of God, then, when men perish while on the broad road, they go to destruction.

Now I only mention it as a possibility, that I may perish, so let me check it out. Let me make some inquiries as to whether this can be true. Let me make sure. You know of the Frenchman Pascal and his wager. Is there God or not? Is there Hell or not? And will you wager or not. You say, "I don't want to wager", but Pascal says to you that you must wager because you are mortal and you have to die; and either God is, or God isn't. If you wager that God is not, and you are right, what will you get? Annihilation. And if you wager that He is, and you are right, then what will you get? Heaven. The rich man died and he was buried and that is the only word if there is no God. But if God is, and you have ignored Him and dissuaded your friends and children from believing in Him, and you have lived your life your own way; then what do you get? His wrath - that is His calm disapproval of your whole lifetime attitude to Him and His Son. God is determined to express His disapproval of your life. He will banish you from His presence. In other words, He will cut you off from all holiness and all happiness and consign you to what you have served all your life - sin! That is what you have lived for and that is what you will get - sin and misery.

But David here expresses it vividly in order to bring your affections to the truth. He speaks the truth. Why heed what I have said today? - because it is true. It tells us that if you remain indifferent and at enmity with God, then He will break you with a rod of iron and He will dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Lord Christ even more graphically and earnestly describes the end of those who (while receiving every blessing from God) then proceed to ignore Him and live at enmity against Him. What does He tell you to do? - to come to Him with repentance and real desire. "*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry*" (v.12). You know when you see how you have hurt your loving parents or your spouse and your heart is broken at what you have done, then you go to them and weep and kiss them and say how sorry you are; what a wretch you have been and so on. You would do that to save your marriage or to save your family. You would kiss and hug and beg their pardon for your dastardly behaviour and so why not to save your soul? As convinced of your sin, go to God as the prodigal son went to his father and tell him you have been a fool and plead for mercy. Who has ever done that and gone unheeded away? Not one. Don't be dashed in pieces. Kiss the Son!

It is when Christians get cold to God; dead to study; powerless and faithless in prayer; shy of the Lord; at a distance from His throne; beneath Heavenly-mindedness and void of Heavenly meditations, that they fly to the fathers, instead of flying to the Father of Eternity, where mercy, wisdom, and comfort may be got. *Huntington*

NO PLACE LIKE ROME?

PREPARING FOR THE QUINCENTENARY OF THE GLORIOUS PROTESTANT REFORMATION

(1517-2017)

Dr. Alan C. Clifford,

Pastor, Norwich Reformed Church

Avoiding Rome's predictable lies and her inevitable ecumenical deception in the run-up to this event, we unashamedly issue the following statement:

1. The Pope's religion is not the Christianity of Jesus Christ.

2. The Pope's church is not the true Church of Jesus Christ.

So, since the Pope may be identified as 'antichrist' (as many Continental and British theologians have cogently argued in past centuries), conversion to the Roman Catholic Church is a retrograde and tragic step. While the apostate condition of many Protestant Churches (including the 'feminised' and 'sodomised' Church of England) gives sufficient cause for disillusionment, the Roman option cannot provide a safe or satisfying spiritual home.

As affirmed in the doctrinal declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000), Rome claimed to be the only 'correct' church. In a more recent decree (2007), we are told that 'Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century' cannot be 'called Churches in the proper sense'. However, Rome's claim could not be more invalid. The proof is as follows:

I The doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church are utterly inconsistent with the plain teaching of the New Testament. The finality of Christ's unique sacrifice and His priestly intercession (see *Hebrews 9: 28; 10: 11-12*) rule out the sacrifice of the Mass and a human priesthood. **The theory of transubstantiation is an absurd philosophical fiction and utterly detrimental to the simple symbolism of the Lord's Supper - a memorial of our Saviour's once-for-all sacrifice.** Thus His blood shedding is remembered not repeated, on a table not an altar (hence Ministers are Pastors not Priests); His real presence is spiritual, not physical, in the hearts of His people and not in the bread and wine.

II Justification by faith in Christ's merit alone (see *Romans 5: 1-9*) and direct access to Him as sole Mediator (see *Matthew 11: 28; 1 Timothy 2: 5*) rule out the false, idolatrous and pretentious teaching that Mary is *Mediatrice*, a 'female mediator' through whom we approach our Saviour. Calling our Lord's mother 'Queen of Heaven' has turned her into a goddess!

The idea that the merits of the faithful are a necessary contribution to their salvation undermines the all-sufficiency of Christ's merit. Rome's traditional mistake in making sanctification a part of justification arises from her reliance on the Latin *justificare* instead of the Greek *dikaioo*. While the former verb means 'to make righteous', the latter means 'to declare righteous' by the remission of sins through faith in the blood of Christ (see *Romans 4: 5-8; 5: 1, 9*). Our pardon is provided by Christ's sacrificial righteousness alone, imputed to all who trust in Him.

While good works are a necessary and certain fruit of saving faith (see *Galatians 5: 6; Ephesians 2: 8-10*), their imperfection rules them out from justifying us. **Our persons and our**

performances alike always require pardon. That said, Christian sainthood is the present status of true though imperfect believers (see *Ephesians 1: 1-2*) not that of dead believers canonised by the Church of Rome.

III Thus purgatory and prayers for the dead (including Requiem Masses) have no apostolic warrant. Those who die 'in Christ' have no need of our prayers. Those who die otherwise cannot be helped by them.

Besides corrupting Baptism and the Holy Communion, Rome arrogantly added five more supposed sacraments to those commanded by Christ. Her re-alignment of the Ten Commandments - combining the first two and dividing the tenth - obscure in summary form God's prohibition of the idolatry of such popular graven images as crucifixes and statues of Mary. Venerating the bones of the saints and other relics breeds superstition.

Other distortions of Divine truth are no less serious. The Pope's title 'Holy Father' is a blasphemous insult to God the Father (see *John 17: 11*). His claim to be the 'Vicar of Christ' is a further insult to the Holy Spirit, Christ's true representative on earth (see *John 14: 16-17*).

The political claims of a highly fallible Papacy conflict with Christ's words that His Kingdom 'is not of this world' (*John 18: 36*). Rome's entire governmental structure - Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops etc. - has more in common with ancient imperial Rome than the apostolic Presbyterian order of the New Testament.

Rome's growing ambition to dominate Europe as in the days of the Holy Roman Empire is a re-emerging tyranny to be resisted by individual Christians and National Governments alike. Ever since the Reformation, the Papacy has always been opposed to the independence of the United Kingdom. Her arrogance is at odds with Christ's liberating truth (see *John 8: 32, 36; Galatians 5: 1*).

IV In addition to theological objections, the track record of Roman Catholicism does not commend itself. For violent and bloody persecution, no organisation can compete with Rome. Since the true Church of Christ is 'persecuted' rather than 'persecutor', this one consideration alone makes Rome's claim to 'correctness' null and void (see *John 15: 20-1; 2 Timothy 3: 12*). Besides the burnings of the sixteenth-century British Reformers, the dreadful cruelties inflicted on the ancient Waldensians, the French Huguenots, the Dutch Protestants and others (including Jews, Muslims and Eastern Orthodox) have never been truly repented of - since the doctrine directing these atrocities remains intact. Indeed, under another name - The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith - the Inquisition still exists.

Current persecution of Protestants in Central and South America shows no change in Rome's methods where she has a free hand. The intrigue and corrupting influence of the Jesuits knows no parallel. Vatican complicity in the rise of Hitler and the Nazi holocaust is well attested. The evils of the confessional and the 'unholy wedlock' of supposedly celibate priests refute Rome's sanctimonious image. While marital failure among Protestant Pastors is to be lamented, is it any wonder that paedophilia and HIV are rife among sexually-frustrated and homosexual Roman priests?

V Considering the post-Reformation dogmas of Mary's immaculate conception (1854), Papal Infallibility (1870) and the Assumption of Mary (1950), the Church of Rome is even more apostate than she was in Luther and Calvin's day. Thus any form of ecumenism on Rome's terms is nothing but satanic delusion (see *2 Thessalonians 2: 1-12*). Especially in the wake of *Dominus Iesus*, when naïve and gullible evangelicals, charismatics and others try to persuade us that 'Rome is changing', ask them which of her anti-Biblical dogmas has Rome renounced? Indeed, the late Dr D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was right to say that "**The Roman Catholic Church is the devil's greatest masterpiece.**" May all God's people understand the 'signs of the times' and cease not 'to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints' (*Jude 3*). Amen!

ELIJAH AT THE BROOK CHERITH

By Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher

Elijah did not remain long in this solitary condition, left to the musings of his heavy heart. When he knew not what to do, counsel was given him; and when he saw no way of escape, the gates were opened to him. Such is usually the case. We read that now “the Word of the Lord came to him.” What a cheering visitation in a land overspread with desolation and misery! For when the Word of the Lord comes to us, we are visited by nothing less than God’s eternal love and compassion; for the Word of the Lord is Christ. Nothing is so beatifying to the spirit of a man at any time as the visitation and manifestation of Christ. But this is especially blissful and desirable when we have undertaken something in His Name, and have thereby kindled a fire which threatens to consume ourselves and others – when, at His bidding, we have ventured upon a duty, the consequences of which are such as to perplex us and make us doubt whether it was really the will of God and at His bidding. Such perplexity is indescribably painful and raises our distress to the highest pitch. How gladly is He welcomed under such circumstances, when He unexpectedly knocks at our door and permits us again to hear the sweetness of His voice; when He again, in some way of His own, gives us to understand that we have acted rightly, causing something to transpire which leaves us no longer in doubt as to His approval of our conduct and either by some external help, or by some spiritual testimony and assurance of His grace, giving us an evidence that He regards us not with displeasure but with complacency; and that what we have done has been well done, for He has pronounced it good. O! this surpasses all other joy in this world and, though our temporal burdens may remain as they were, we are wonderfully strengthened to bear them!

“The Word of the Lord came to Elijah.” He had not to seek for it, but it came to him; and the Lord is kind indeed, thus to comfort His children uninvited and to anticipate their suit with His own counsel; for He does not always wait until they ask, any more than that saying is always true, that “distress will compel men to pray.” O how are men even at their wit’s end when the waves of trouble come suddenly upon them and imminent dangers encompass them! They are confounded at the winds; they shrink at the waves; they seize the rudder of human strength; they cling to the brittle anchor of human hope; but, “Master, awake, we perish!” is forgotten, or if the Lord is thought of, there is a want of faith, or filial courage and confidence, or something else; and scarcely one step is taken towards seeking the Lord. How justly might He be offended at this and requite us accordingly! But no! He rather prevents His children with the blessings of goodness and heaps coals of fire on their heads. He often visits them uninvited and breaks in with His light and salvation, where He was not only not sought after but even affronted with misgivings. Such visits of the Lord are surely well suited to humble and abase us, to melt the heart and stop the mouth, so that we have not a word to say for shame and confusion of face. Free and unmerited grace then appears in all its brightness; the Christian can find nothing in himself worthy to be thought of as a meritorious cause of the afforded aid – no prayer, no sigh, no looking up to the Lord; and this humbling acknowledgement of mere unmerited grace, which our proud nature is so unwilling to make, how salutary is it, how good, how conducive to our spiritual welfare!

But to return to the narrative. The Lord interposed, not only to comfort the prophet, but to rescue him from extreme danger. This, however, was to be done in a way which should glorify the Name of the Lord, as well as serve for a beneficial exercise of faith to Elijah. No fiery chariot was yet to bear him above his troubles; he was not yet to rise aloft amidst a convoy of angels. Here would have been little room for the exercise of faith. God, therefore, showed him another path. “Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.” A singular direction; as it would seem, from a bad condition to a worse! But you remember it was said to Manoah, “Why askest thou thus after My Name, seeing it is secret!” (Judg. 13:18). And as is His Name, so is His way. “Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in the deep waters, and Thy footsteps are not known!”

Do we enquire whether the Lord directs His children still as thus in old time? Undoubtedly He does; though not by any audible voice, yet with equal certainty and evidence; and this commonly by closing up, inwardly or outwardly, all other ways and leaving only one open to us. And is not this equivalent to our hearing a voice behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left"? When He *inwardly* leads us, He impresses a scriptural conviction on the judgment as to what we ought to do and it is scarcely possible for us any longer to hesitate. Would our feelings lead us in a different course? Then peace immediately departs and such disquietude arises with us that we are compelled to retrace our steps. When He *outwardly* leads us, He brings us into such circumstances, connections and situations that only one way remains open, for we see every other obstructed by visible providences. The ways which the Lord thus points out to us seem, therefore, like that to the brook Cherith, selected and appointed purely for the exercise of our faith and the crucifixion of our old man. Only follow on courageously! Whenever the Lord says to any of His children, "Get thee hence and hide thyself." He also adds, either expressly or by implication, "and the ravens shall feed thee there." Every duty which He commands has its promise appended to it; and we need be under no concern except to know that the Lord has directed our way.

And how did Elijah obey this command of his God? There was doubtless in him, as well as in every other man, something that would oppose this Divine direction and be dissatisfied with it. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are," and therefore his nature would have much to say against it. How could it please him that instead of an instantaneous and supernatural deliverance, he is obliged to make a long journey on foot like any ordinary person? And why he should be directed to turn eastward into the land of Judaea, which participated in the judgments of Samaria, he could not discover. To be directed into the lonely wilderness, and to the brook Cherith, amidst gloomy, uninhabited woodlands, was far from inviting. And even his security there, from the pursuit of Ahab and from the general drought, was not warranted by any natural appearances; while the prospect of being fed by ravens, those unclean and voracious creatures, must have appeared as disagreeable as it was contrary to reason and experience. But, however much nature might oppose, or the old man murmur and recoil, these were silenced and crucified within him. For there was a Spirit imparted to Elijah which taught him that his own nature was wrong and that God's will was right.

Not perhaps, that Elijah was able with fervency of joy to thank God for the command given him and triumphantly to rejoice in it. Possibly his mind was much tried and depressed by it; but it proved courageous in the faith by which he endured as seeing Him that is invisible. "As it is the Divine command," he might think, "therefore it is holy, just, and good. God's commissions to His children, what are they but hidden promises? Since He saith to me 'Get thee hence,' I am well assured that He will make a way for me, succour me and preserve me on the way. Since He commands me to turn eastward, I am certain, though I seem to be going towards the setting rather than the rising sun, still it will be morning over my head. Forasmuch as He bids me hide myself by the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan – that brook must be a safe place of refuge, though it was in the midst of Samaria itself. I am directed to drink of the brook; here then I have a pledge that the sun will not be permitted to affect this brook with his scorching rays." Thus might the prophet think and then he would conclude further that "God's promises are, virtually, obligations which He imposes upon Himself. If He say, 'I will do this or that for thee,' He must necessarily bring it to pass for His own Name's sake. Therefore the ravens will certainly come and, sooner will they themselves die of hunger, than I shall be suffered to starve." In this manner might Elijah have conversed with his own heart; and so, taking the Word of the Lord into the hand of his faith, he made it the staff of his pilgrimage. Whenever he grew weary, he leaned upon this staff, and his courage revived. When danger appeared in his way, he feared not while he had this staff to support him. And have you such a staff in your hands, dear brethren? Are you assured, with this prophet, that the path you tread has been pointed out to you of God, and has any Divine promise, or a general one, like this: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee. When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overflow thee"? O then of a truth, all is well, sure and certain!

But now look at Elijah as he takes his journey, a solitary traveller. It seems almost as if we heard the sound of his footsteps while we read that "he went and did according to the Word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan." Come, let us pay a visit to this man of God in his new dwelling-place. A dreary wild, near the banks of the Jordan, is the scene now opened before us. Dead silence reigns around, interrupted perhaps by the cry of the solitary bittern, while amongst the heath and the juniper bushes broods the ostrich, no hunter disturbing its repose. No pathway opens to the view – not a human footstep is seen – all is wilderness and solitude. Let us follow him, in imagination, towards the Jordan. Yonder lays our track, where the naked rocks rear their lofty heads and the forests frown. Then, through one thicket and another, through one narrow pass and another, we come at length down into a deep and narrow glen, overhung with tangled wood, where a brook runs murmuring along and finds its way between the rocky masses. Oh look! There sits the man of God! Here is his appointed dwelling. The blue sky his roof, the bare rocks his walls, the stone his seat, the shady wood his bed-chamber, the grass his couch; his company, the purling brook and the hoarse ravens aloft among the trees. There he sits in his hairy mantle, silent and reflecting; and whenever solitude becomes wearisome, or the hissing of serpents or the distant roar of the lion would inject terror into his soul, he remembers, "I am imprisoned here for the Lord's sake and His footsteps are among these rocks"; and thus by faith and hope he regains courage.

For twelve months did Elijah dwell there. This may seem to you incredible and almost dreadful! But how would you be astonished were Elijah to assure you that the whole time never appeared tedious; that solitude daily became to him less solitary – nay, lively and cheerful! And doubtless this was the case.

Let no one be too much cast down should the Lord ever direct him to the wilderness, by the river Jordan, and to the brook Cherith! For He still is accustomed to do so with His children in a variety of ways. If He visits us with sickness so that we must be alone upon our bed and in our chamber; or if our friends forsake us and forget us; if we become regarded as outcasts, having neither house nor heart opened to us any longer, or if we are called to sojourn in Mesech and, to dwell amongst those who are of a different mind from ourselves, who do not understand us and, who ridicule our way of life – in such situations we are shut in with Elijah by the brook Cherith. But be not alarmed; rather be of good courage! Such seclusion, or exclusion, how blissful and salutary may it become! Numberless Christians have been constrained to declare that it was in their imprisonment, or place of exile, in their lonely sick chamber, or in the days when they were forsaken by men and cast out by the world, that they entered really into their own hearts and ascertained their true spiritual state. The leaven of the Pharisees was then put away from them and worship was no longer paid to an imaginary Saviour. They began to long in earnest for close communion with Him; and the wrestling prayer of Jacob lasting until daybreak, which they had only talked of before, now became a matter of reality and experience, an event in their own personal history. And a hundred other things pertaining to inward religion, which they had only in imagination appropriated hitherto, were then individually realised. They were then also first truly brought into the number of those sheep who hear His voice and were never so conscious that He really lives and speaks to His children – and walks and dwells with them; nor did they ever experience His tender consolation and support, or ever feel His love so strongly, as at that very time when their path was so solitary and through the wilderness, when they were obliged to be with their Lord alone. Therefore be of good cheer, ye who dwell by the brook Cherith in solitude, for God's dew can drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness, as David sang, and the pastures in the wilderness do spring with blessings.

"Thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." Thus said the Lord; and however marvellous and unheard of it might sound, Elijah bowed himself and believed and his faith did not deceive him. All that the Lord had promised was "Yea, and Amen," and nothing remained unfulfilled. It was not long before the whole country was like a heath and fields and woods became scorched as by fire. One spot alone continued green and cool; that spot was the prophet's rocky vale. Every fountain was exhausted and every forest stream dried up by the sultry heat; one brook alone continued to flow – the brook Cherith – that

remained as fresh and as full as if nothing had happened. And the ravens also fulfilled their office. How wonderful! Those ravenous carrion birds, impure according to the law and so voracious and unfeeling that they would leave their own young to starve did not God interpose, as we read in the book of Job "Who provideth for the raven his food? When his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat" – these creatures we find employed here in an occupation of disinterested kindness, dead as it were to the natural voracity of their species, coming and going at God's bidding, denying their own appetites and performing a most beneficent office. No sooner does the morning dawn in Cherith's rocky vale than their cry is heard aloft in the trees, and when Elijah wakes, he beholds the provision for the day lying before him. And when the evening shades advance, these black livery servants again appear, laden with meat and bread. And this takes place not merely once, but a whole year round, without intermission. O wisdom of God, which carnal reason would account foolishness, how precious art thou! Let the world imagine to itself a magnificent Deity whose government is only general; we adhere to the Lord God of Elijah and rejoice in His providential superintendence of the smallest matters.

And this God still liveth, a living Saviour, who is always to be found of them that seek Him and is nigh unto them that call upon Him and whose delights are with the sons of men. About His servants and handmaids is encamped a mighty host; and when He saith, "Come!" they come, or, "Go!" they go; and there has been no end to His wonders, even to this day. Who else was it but the God of Elijah who, only a short time ago in our neighbourhood, so kindly delivered a poor man out of his distress; not indeed by a raven but by a poor singing bird? You are acquainted with the circumstance. The man was sitting early in the morning at his house door; his eyes were red with weeping and his heart cried to Heaven – for he was expecting an officer to come and distraint him for a small debt. And whilst sitting thus with his heavy heart, a little bird flew through the street, fluttering up and down as if in distress, until at length, quick as an arrow, it flew over the good man's head into his cottage and perched itself on an empty cupboard. The good man, who little imagined who had sent him the bird, closed the door, caught the bird and placed it in a cage, where it immediately began to sing very sweetly and it seemed to the man as if it were the tune of a favourite hymn. "Fear thou not when darkness reigns"; and as he listened to it, he found it soothed and comforted his mind. Suddenly someone knocked at the door. "Ah, it is the officer," thought the man and was sore afraid. But no, it was the servant of a respectable lady, who said that the neighbours had seen a bird fly into his house and she wished to know if he had caught it. "Oh yes," answered the man, "and here it is"; and the bird was carried away. A few minutes after, the servant came again. "You have done my mistress a great service," said he. "She sets a high value upon the bird which had escaped from her. She is much obliged to you and requests you to accept this trifle with her thanks." The poor man received it thankfully and it proved to be neither more nor less than the sum he owed! And when the officer came, he said, "Here is the amount of the debt; now leave me in peace, for God has sent it me."

The God of Elijah still lives! And under this truth I may rank your own experience also, my dear friends, which some of you have related to me; that in distressing necessities and perplexities help has often come to you in a wonderful manner from persons who were not only indifferent to you, but even disaffected towards you and bore you some ill-will; from unbelievers, who in general cannot endure them that are "quiet in the land." But all at once, it suddenly occurred to one, he himself knew not how, that he must bring you some particular thing; or another could not sleep for the thought of not having done something for you, and however much he strove to drive the idea from his mind, he could not succeed in kicking against the pricks. Yes, He, who turneth men's hearts as the rivers of water, sent them to your aid; and His purpose who shall defeat? What they did for you was not done because they intended it but because they were constrained by conscience - that is, by the God of conscience; and thus you experience that the God of Elijah, who can provide for His servants even by the ravens, still lives.

Therefore let every child of God be strong and of good courage! Only believe, ye who are at the brook Cherith and in the wilderness, for faith can supply the want of everything temporal and faith is the grave of care! And remember, dear friends, that it is in vain for you to rise early and sit up late and eat the bread of sorrows; for as David says, "He giveth it to His beloved

sleeping” (Psa 127:2, German Version). May He who giveth songs in the night teach us all the song of the royal Psalmist: “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety!”

NEWS ITEMS

1. Red Sea: Archaeologists discover remains of Egyptian Army from the Biblical Exodus - [www.worldnewsdailyreport](http://www.worldnewsdailyreport.com) - 24 October, 2014

Suez/Egypt’s Antiquities Ministry announced on 24 October, 2014 that a team of underwater archaeologists had discovered the remains of a large Egyptian army from the 14th century BC at the bottom of the Gulf of Suez, 1.5 kilometres offshore from the modern city of Ras Gharib. The team was searching for the remains of ancient ships and artefacts related to Stone Age and Bronze Age trade in the Red Sea area, when they stumbled upon a gigantic mass of human bones darkened by age.

The scientists, led by Professor Abdel Muhammad Gader and associated with Cairo University’s Faculty of Archaeology, have already recovered a total of more than 400 different skeletons, as well as hundreds of weapons and pieces of armour; also the remains of two war chariots, scattered over an area of approximately 200 square metres. They estimate that more than 5000 other bodies could be dispersed over a wider area, suggesting that an army of large size had perished on the site.

Many clues on the site have brought Professor Gader and his team to conclude that the bodies could be linked to the famous episode of the Exodus. First of all, the ancient soldiers seem to have died on dry ground, since no traces of boats or ships have been found in the area. The positions of the bodies, and the fact that they were stuck in a vast quantity of clay and rock, imply that they could have died in a mudslide or a tidal wave.

The sheer number of bodies suggests that a large ancient army perished on the site and the dramatic way by which they were killed both seem to corroborate the Biblical version of the Red Sea Crossing, when the army of the Egyptian Pharaoh was destroyed by the returning waters that Moses had parted. This new find certainly proves that there was indeed an Egyptian army of large size that was destroyed by the waters of the Red Sea during the reign of King Akhenaten.

This astounding discovery brings undeniable scientific proof that one of the most famous episodes of the Old Testament was indeed based on an historical event. It brings a brand new perspective on a story that many historians have been considering for years as a work of fiction and suggesting that other themes like the “Plagues of Egypt” could indeed have an historical base.

A lot more research and many more recovery operations are to be expected on the site over the next few years, as Professor Gader and his team have already announced their desire to retrieve the rest of the bodies and artefacts from what has turned out to be one of the richest archaeological underwater sites ever discovered.

2. Women Bishops – Advanced Anglican Apostasy - Comments by Dr. Alan Clifford on the article: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/1123566/Church-of-England-approves-historic-change-in-law-to-allow-women-bishops.html – 18 October, 2014

It’s been coming for a long time. The progressive erosion of Biblical authority has brought us to this. The lies of liberalism have dethroned God and His revealed Truth. This is the true crisis of the Christian Church. Where is ultimate authority to be found? During the early

centuries AD, God's written revelation had the first and last word (even before the Biblical canon was confirmed). Then medieval tradition took over. Then liberalism began to emerge. Then – in God's mercy – the Protestant Reformation took us back to the Bible. Since the 17th century, Rome and the Rationalists have been struggling for dominance, with Evangelicals being increasingly seduced by one or other deviant contenders and making cowardly concessions in the process.

As we approach the Quincentenary of the Reformation, we must pray that Martin Luther's God-honouring stance might be embraced again: "My conscience is captive to the Word of God!" Otherwise, Christianity is finished, not least in the face of Islamic infidelity.

Once you drift from the Holy Scriptures, where do you stop? For many, well-evidenced creation doctrine has been surrendered for secular pseudo-scientific evolution dogma; pure heterosexuality now has to co-exist with impure sodomy and SSM; and multi-faith relativism has demanded a denial of the uniqueness of God-in Christ. Pick 'n' mix theology has become the order of the day.

Part of this 'PC' mix is feminist intrusion into forbidden territory. Despite the clearest New Testament teaching, rebel liberal male scholars have flattered equally-rebellious females into aspiring to ministerial office in the Church, adopting roles denied to them by Christ and His Holy Apostles. The basic divinely-ordained principle is that men should lead. Of course, Rome rejects female priests, but for traditional rather than Biblical reasons. Rome is likewise in rebellion, since Christ (the only High Priest of the Church) and the Apostles never appointed sacrificing mass-priests. As the Epistle to the Hebrews makes perfectly clear, Jesus the Lamb of God ended all sacrifice for sin by His once-for-all sacrifice upon the Cross.

So, according to the Bible, there should be no women bishops, nor women priests, nor priests of any gender. The Genevan Reformer, John Calvin, demonstrated that New Testament 'presbyters' are not 'priests' but 'elders' – pastors and teachers. Unfortunately, creating a culture of compromise, Anglicanism retained the ambiguous 'priest', while affirming a sub-reformed view of ministry.

The role of Biblical Elders is to proclaim the finished work of Christ. Their functions are preaching, the administration of the sacraments (only two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper) and pastoral care. Such is the Faith and Order of the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly, an unholy mix of traditionalism and liberalism first produced priestesses - and soon there will be mitred bishopesses!

Lord, deliver us from this chaotic and rebellious confusion! In your mercy, grant us a new Reformation and Revival! The Christian Faith will never become a power for God and goodness in the world again until the Church humbly and faithfully submits to its Head in utter dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Sadly, we do not know of any Christian denomination that is without guilt in some respect. Some conservative Reformed confessional churches subject the Bible to their confessions of faith, a kind of 'Protestant Popery' governed by a magisterium of scholars long on erudition but short on application. Many tongues-speakers prefer the latest 'revelation' to documented Holy Scripture. And so on! We all have the successors of the traditionalist Pharisees and the liberal Sadducees in our midst. Hence we must listen afresh to the ever-challenging words of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 7: 6-9):

He answered and said unto them. Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them. Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

For all those who dismiss my message as 'judgmental', I would remind them that their dismissal is itself 'judgmental'. How many insist with strident dogmatism, "You must not be dogmatic!" Your objection simply masks the fact that you prefer your own judgment to mine! But consider this: dare you arrogantly dismiss the judgment of Christ, who also urged His disciples to 'judge righteous judgment' (Jn 7:24)? Hence Luther's appeal to the Bible remains a benchmark for us all – even though he got a few things wrong!

Finally, on the issue of female ordination, the Norwich Reformed Church believes that women are not permitted according to the Word of God to teach or exercise authority in the church in the office of pastor, elder or deacon.

With regard to our sisters in the congregation, it is important in a gender-sensitive area to avoid any misunderstanding. While they are excluded from formal office as pastors, elders and deacons according to the Word of God (see 1 Tim. 3:11-12; 2:10-12); Acts 6:3), they fulfil necessary, valuable and indispensable functions within the Church. (Note: while the office of prophet was discharged by men and women in early New Testament times (see Acts 2:17-18), this was temporary (see 1 Cor. 13:8-10). Once the Canon of Scripture was complete, the gift of prophecy ceased to function.) Therefore the sisters are to teach, exhort and encourage one another (see Titus 2:3-5). They are to assist the elders and deacons in their duties when help is requested (see Rom. 16:1-2). Albeit humbly and informally, the sisters may also advise and correct Ministers of the Word when necessary (see Acts 18:26). They also share with their brothers in the Church's general witness to the world (see Luke. 24:22-4): in this respect, the sisters have sometimes shown greater courage than their brothers (see Mk. 14:50; Jn. 20:17-18). Since our inheritance in the Kingdom of God is irrespective of gender (see Gal. 3:28), the greatest care must be taken to ensure that such a conviction is reflected within the fellowship at all times.

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Ten Commandment Project Up-date

Our progress with this project has regrettably been delayed in our designated trial area – Bedfordshire - as our first submission to selected schools was referred to the Schools Intervention Manager for approval. After some delay, we have now been advised that the Manager is communicating with the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for their opinion of the information we are proposing to provide. We understand this organisation - which has local branches in each county - must give their approval or the information will not be allowed in school RE lessons.

We are understandably disappointed at the delay but realise it is all in the Lord's control and subject to His will and purpose. We ask for your prayerful support for the Lord's overruling and guidance in our endeavour to promote His Word.

**'The force of their united cries
No power can long withstand.'**

John Newton

Doxology

Christians, adore your Three-One God,
The Father, Spirit, and the Word;
Repeat His love, His wonders sing,
And praise Him as your God and King.

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