

CHRISTIAN WATCH

A PROTESTANT BIBLICAL WITNESS

"And what I say unto you

I say unto all, Watch"

Mark 13:37

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2015

30th November, 2015

To all Christian Watch Members

Dear Friends,

Dark days and tough times are nothing new to the Church of Christ. For generations, Godly Pastors have lamented the decline of the Church. Empty seats, careless souls, disgruntled members – a spirit of worldliness in areas of music, dress and behaviour – and they have been prompted to cry: *“Help, Lord, for the Godly man ceaseth.”*

Church leaders must admit their powerlessness to withstand the evils of our times. The fear of God’s judgment upon our nation, along with an honest confession that the Church has lost its voice in society, could well drive the righteous man and woman into despondency. All our efforts to stem the tide of ungodliness and human depravity have been no more than pathetic. We know it; the world knows it; and the devil knows it too. Thus we are left to suffer the same vexation of soul as felt by Lot while living in Sodom.

The solution, however, if God is pleased to send it, is in revival. If we re-visit history, we see how, at various times of hopelessness for the Church, God graciously poured out His Spirit in spiritual revivals. There were times when people were transformed from benighted souls – revelling in sin – to new creatures enjoying the fullest revelation of God’s grace.

Even though the hour is late and the day is evil, we certainly do not believe that the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from the earth. Until Christ returns, the Holy Spirit will still continue His work of calling sinners out of the world into His Church.

But there is a cost to revival! Because the Holy Spirit is the agent of revival, purity of life, honesty of heart and much praying in the Spirit will be required. As at Pentecost, revival begins with the call to persistent prayer. We must lay hold of the promises of God and pray to Him until the answer comes. Yes, revival has its cost, but think of the heavy price of not praying for revival. It will mean the death of vital Church ministry, for we will grieve the Holy Spirit. It will also mean eternal judgment upon our nation that is already under the wrath of God. With the conviction that it is either revival or judgment, we must begin to pray seriously for revival. May the Lord stir our hearts to pray for revival in our time.

In our last Newsletter, we referred to the introduction of new plans to silence extremists and disrupt their activities – known as Extremist Disruption Orders or EDOs. In this issue, we have included an excellent article by Mr. Anthony Busk – a CW member – entitled **Extremism Disruption and Banning Orders. Where is the Government Taking Us?** In view of the very real threat to our civil and religious liberty, he concludes that there is the need for revival – true revival that means repentance and a return back to the authority of Christ in the Scriptures.

In three of our four **News Items**, we bring to your attention the state of our nation. News Item No. 1 is a letter to the local Press in Scotland which outlines the dark and depressing days in which we live – right across Scotland and beyond. The police force is struggling to cope with the rise in criminality. News Item No. 3 reports on a study from the Arts and Humanities Research Council which calls for the daily acts of worship in schools to be scrapped and News Item No. 4 shows how dangerous it is for those who are converted from Islam to Christianity. However, while the picture in the United Kingdom looks increasingly bleak, News Item No. 2

reports on the growth of Christianity in China. It is thought that there could be more than 100 million Christians at the present time, with a growth of 7% every year.

Paris Attacks Inspire Anti-Religious Sentiment by Paul Price from Creation Ministries International asks the question – “*What does a world look like with no moral constraints from God?*” and **An Infallible Relief in Distress** by Dr. John Owen directs us to the words of God in 2 Corinthians, pointing out that true faith will alleviate all our afflictions and preserve our souls from fainting under them.

A detailed report of the **Christian Watch Public Meeting** in Brighton is included and Pastor James Zenker used as his text Ezra 9 v 8-9 to describe the spiritual state of our nation today. A full recording of his informative and challenging message can be heard on the Christian Watch website (www.christianwatch.org.uk) or obtained on CD from Christian Watch Resources (see Page 12).

In closing the Newsletter, we have included a pertinent message entitled **Great Gospel Gem** by Dr. Alan C. Clifford of Norwich Reformed Church, based on Psalm 139 verse 24 – Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. All the saints of God desire to be kept and led in this Way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, nor tire in it.

It is our intention to issue future Newsletters bi-monthly – with a new lay-out – including colour, better quality and pictures. The annual subscription, which will be due for renewal at the beginning of January, will remain unchanged but your continued financial support will enable the work to progress throughout 2016 – and beyond.

As we come to the close of another year, we thank God for His goodness towards us. We wish you the compliments of the season and trust that the Lord will continue to bless you in your work for Him in 2016.

Yours in His service,

Ian R. Henderson

Ian R. Henderson
(Vice-Chairman)

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EXTREMISM DISRUPTION AND BANNING ORDERS WHERE IS THE GOVERNMENT TAKING US?

By Anthony Busk, Christian Watch Member

An Odd Conversation

Recently I was talking with a Christian who used to live in Romania. She recounted that the Government's control of speech was draconian, forbidding any criticism of its policies. For Christians, it was forbidden even to meet and fellowship was in secret. The Communist Government took very seriously anybody offended through hearing or reading criticism of their Romanian Values and brutal punishment of individuals and organisations would be the outcome. They would not permit hate crimes against the regime. Will this be the future of Britain?

In order to counter terrorism, and in particular ISIS, Theresa May at the 2014 Conservative Party Conference, in her published speechⁱ, spelled out her intention to introduce Banning Orders and Extremism Disruption Orders (EDOs): "where the Home Office will soon, for the first time, assume responsibility for a new counter extremism strategy that goes beyond terrorism...It will aim to undermine and eliminate extremism in all its forms – neo-Nazism and *other forms of extremism as well as Islamist extremism*". On October 19th this year the Government published its counter-extremism strategyⁱⁱ, which has confirmed and reinforce its earlier statements.

The War against Public Righteousness

The Government as part of its anti-extremism policy intends to use EDOs and Banning Orders against individuals and groups who have nothing to do with Islam, but are recognised as extreme. Earlier, the Minister had already referred to equality and sexuality, with the implication that active public disagreement of those policies would be classified as extremism.

Alan Travis, Home Affairs Editor of *The Guardian*, in his blogⁱⁱⁱ pointed out how the police would be able to apply to the High Court for an order to restrict the "harmful activities" of an extremist individual. The definition of harmful would include a risk of public disorder or even a risk of harassment, alarm or distress or the vague-sounding threat to the functioning of democracy. The restrictions would include a ban on broadcasting and a requirement to submit to the police in advance any proposed publication on the web, social media or in print. Taking part in public protests or speaking at any public event would also be banned.

On 23rd March, 2015, Home Secretary Theresa May gave an address to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors: "A Stronger Britain, Built on our Values".^{iv} Its focus was on this new counter-extremism strategy particularly, but not exclusively, against Islam. She said it would aim to "tackle the whole spectrum of extremism, violent and non-violent, ideological and non-ideological, Islamist and neo-Nazi – hate and fear in all their forms". The Minister pointed to British Values as the "foundation stone of our new strategy" and that these are now the fundamental rules and norms for the country.

On 13th Mary, 2015, Theresa May in an interview on the *Today* programme, confirmed there would be EDOs: "for groups and disruption orders for individuals – for those who are out there actively trying to promote this hatred and intolerance, which can lead to division in our society and undermines our British Values".^v

On 20th July, 2015, David Cameron referred to "intolerant ideas which create a climate in which extremists can flourish. Ideas which are hostile to basic liberal values..." He included race, sex, sexuality or faith. In other words, although laws may not be broken, the propagation of opinions that can lead to British Values being challenged will be the target of EDOs. Back in 2014, Chancellor George Osborne stated that the new EDOs would include any activities that "justify hatred" against people on the grounds of religion, sexual orientation, gender or disability.^{vi}

This was not an issue of combating Islam alone, but extending the concept of hate crimes and offending people to cover both individuals or organisations that disagreed with specific British Values. Equality law and their “protected characteristics” have been specifically referred to by senior Ministers. Therefore, for example, any person or body publically contradicting same-sex marriage, or the teaching in schools of homosexuality as an equal value to heterosexuality, could potentially be generating homophobia. An actual criminal act may not be committed, but, if the police or a High Court judged that it could carry the risk of public disorder, harassment, alarm or distress, then there would be consequences.

One understands the requirement to ban those whose messages could indeed bring about a mind-set and behaviour which emulates ISIS, because these are matters of national security. However, for the Government to embark on a strategy that aims to dampen criticism of everyday policies, just because they do not fit the current political genre, is quite different and surely dangerous.

Freedom of the individual to criticise, and for an organisation to campaign, if necessary, for a change in the law is fundamental to our democracy. It is embedded in the system of governance, where a small Parish Council has the same right to debate social values contrary to Government policy as the large political parties in Westminster. Except in times of crisis the law is set apart from coercion. One may publically argue that traffic lights are unnecessary, but the law maintains their authority on the highway. Is this approach wrong?

A New Constitution

The Government, through Theresa May, intends to introduce a new kind of Constitution. It is a mechanism to ensure that selective political values are not to be questioned in the public place, whether it is within the traditional media, electronic communication, public protest or at any public event. Those who refuse to be silenced will be punished with the police and courts acting as adjudicators. The crime will be one of intention asking, for example, whether there is public debate taking place that could embarrass the Government of the day to bring about a change in the law.

Traditional marriage and the family already conflicts with the British Values upholding homosexuality and some other LGBT demands. However, it is not yet unlawful to campaign for a return to Judeo-Biblical values. But once the precedent has been established with banning orders and EDOs against numerous Christian founded organisations and individuals in the public square, an ever-widening definition will emerge of what areas of society contain extremist speech. British Values can be amended and expanded to make illegal public debate and campaigning against abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering and other humanist gods. The elimination of contradictory political movements, such as those which refer to the doctrines and tenets of Biblical Christianity, will be held to be damaging. Such extremism will be held to be contrary to the dogma of an evolutionary flow of the human race. Such are obvious targets of the humanist mind-set.

Street preachers are already targeted for causing alarm, being offensive or allegedly bringing distress, just for expressing an opinion in the public square. Church Ministers and Church bodies will also not be immune in the future if they proclaim righteous living. Within schools, there is already the threat of closure by the statutory body Ofsted if Heads, Governors and teachers do not endorse and teach homosexuality as equivalent to heterosexuality. Banning orders and EDOs will be applied as campaigning groups, police or Local Authority officials check that there is speech compliance!

Foundation Stones for Tyranny

If the Government introduces the policy of subduing criticism of its policies, it will lay the foundation stones for that same instrument of tyranny which brought about the Second World War and the brutality of Communism. As citizens, the question to ask the body of Christ is whether or not it should speak out whilst there is still liberty, or should it just pray for revival

and ignore the current political turmoil, merely observing how decadent secular humanism is displacing Judeo-Christian values.

There is the need for revival; but true revival means repentance back to the authority of the Christ of Scripture and, knowing again, His anointing in the days in which we live. It is to love our neighbour, our community, outside of the cloistered enclave of the redeemed. It is to hate wickedness, campaign for justice and, above all, preach the Gospel of salvation. The former Romanian church experienced the terror that came about from freedom of speech being crushed. It is our duty as citizens to use current democratic freedoms to halt this happening here.

ⁱ Theresa May Conservative Party Conference Speech 2014

<http://press.conservatives.com/post/98799073410/theresa-may-speech-to-conservative-party>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-extremism-strategy>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/30/theresa-may-extremism-disruption-orders>

^{iv} A Stronger Britain, Built on Our Values. Theresa May 23/3/2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-stronger-britain-built-on-our-values>

^v Family Education Trust Issue 159, July 2015

^{vi} John Bingham, Social Affairs Editor, Daily Telegraph 31/10/2014

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11202290/sharia-law-or-gay-marriage-critics-would-be-branded-extremists-under-Tory-plans-atheists-and-Christians-warn.html>

NEWS ITEMS

1. Letter to the Editor of 'Highland News' (Published as the main letter 12th November)
by Donald J. Morrison of Inverness (murtieuk@gmail.com)

Dear Sir,

Surely I am not the only one to notice the soaring number of criminals who seem to appear weekly 'in the dock' at Inverness Sheriff Court. The facts and figures make disturbing reading and are cause for great alarm. When one reads through the crime reports - some of them quite sickening - appearing weekly in the Highland News, it is evident - for any sane person to see - that something is desperately and seriously wrong. What an indictment to the Highlands of Scotland when a local paper struggles to cover, often over 3-pages, the spate of offences that take place, every week, with unremitting regularity.

Indeed every paper you read confirms that we are currently living in dark and depressing days - not only locally - but across Scotland and beyond. Things are deteriorating rapidly at breakneck speed. Lawlessness, it seems, is the norm! Crime is soaring; shocking immorality and corruption are being exposed in places high and low; violence is becoming more deadly and is involving younger criminals and victims; homes are breaking up at an alarming rate; the abuse of the young before and after birth grows more heartless; an anti-God spirit is becoming more hateful, vocal and widespread; immoral and debauched laws are legalised by godless politicians everywhere; the list is never-ending. The brutal stabbing in cold blood, over the past few days, of a 15 year-old boy in an Aberdeen school, is a chilling reminder to us all that lawlessness and anarchy abounds at our doorsteps. And his two assailants are not yet out of school!

Police officers and prison warders are ready to disclose the mess society is in. An officer on Inverness High Street recently told me: "The bottom line is Police Scotland can hardly cope with the sickly mess the country is in." Prison warders will quickly confirm this sad fact. They are hardly coping with 'the sickly mess' that the ever-rising prison population - currently 85,000 plus - that they daily have to somehow deal with. It should be a wake-up call for any

society when official reports disclose that all prisons – across the UK – are virtually filled to 100% capacity! This is shocking, to say the least.

The Bible soberly reminds us that when any nation dares to stubbornly turn its back on God there will, inevitably, be dire consequences. The pages of the Bible, along with the pages of history, clearly record the Lord's intolerance of nations that disregard Him. When we forget God, He will forget us. Having arrogantly pushed Him aside, that is why we are in such a 'sickly mess.' We are reaping the woeful consequences of forgetting God and sinning against Him...and it is only the beginning. I shudder and fear to think how deeper and uglier 'the sickly mess' will become...unless we get back to the Bible, back to God and back to the truth. Our only hope is to retrace our steps - and retrace them quickly...for our nation's good, for the Highlands' good and for our personal good. Surely, it is "now high time to awake out of sleep" as Divine truth exhorts us to do before it is too late.

And when we do wake up and repent of our spiritual waywardness, then God promises that lawlessness will be exchanged for blessing and happiness: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD...happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."

Yours,

Donald J. Morrison, Inverness.

2. China holding secret Conference on growth of Christianity - by Aaron James, www.premier.co.uk 17 November, 2015

It has been reported that Chinese authorities are hosting a secret Conference in Beijing this week to discuss the rapid growth of Christianity in the country.

Authorities have not publicly outlined the agenda of the event, called the Sinicisation of Christianity, but it is expected that Government officials, leaders from State-sanctioned Churches and academics will be attending.

It is thought there could be more than 100 million Christians in China, with a growth of 7% every year. If this estimate is correct, this outstrips the Communist Party's membership of 87 million people. (The Pew Research Centre in America claims China has 67 million Christians.)

There are fears the Sinicisation of Christianity Conference will look to increase Communist Government control of the Church in China.

More than 1200 crosses have been taken down and other Houses of worship completely demolished since 2013. This, and the detention of Christian human rights lawyer, Zhang Kai, since August, led to calls for Prime Minister David Cameron to challenge Chinese President Xi Jinping on religious persecution in his country when he made a State visit to the UK in October.

Currently, only State-sanctioned Churches are permitted to exist in China, forcing millions of Christians to worship in-house or in underground Churches.

Dr. Scott Pacey, the Deputy Director of the Chinese Policy Institute at the University of Nottingham, told Premier's News Hour: "They want to regulate it [Christianity] to make sure that religion doesn't conflict with State goals. Christianity has experienced quite a lot of growth in China in recent decades.

That growth is obviously something that will be of interest to them and something that they feel they need to keep an eye on. The underground Churches are really expanding quite a lot.

In the 1980s, when the regulations on religion were relaxed following the Cultural Revolution, there was a tremendous search for values that started to go on and this was a result of the disillusionment with Maoism. The rise of Christianity stems in part from that, but it is also a

search for values in society when the worldview that existed before is now starting to change quite a lot.”

3. Schools’ religious assemblies ‘should be scrapped’ - by Hannah Richardson, BBC News education reporter, 13 November, 2015

The duty of British schools to arrange daily acts of collective worship should be scrapped, a Report says. The study, for the Arts and Humanities Research Council, says such acts, which must be Christian in nature, could discriminate against other religions. It adds there is no clear rationale for the duty and that parents are often unaware they can withdraw their children from religious assemblies.

The Government says collective worship has an important role in schools. Schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are required to provide daily acts of collective worship and religious observance is required in Scotland. If the school is a faith school, these acts must be in line with the specific religion. In non-religious schools, the acts need to be broadly Christian in character without favouring any particular Christian denomination.

The Report by the University of Leicester urges Ministers to re-think the duty. Based on the contribution of 10 scholars in the UK, it focuses its recommendations on schools that are not religious in nature.

Issues include:

- Disagreement about the appropriateness of such acts in an increasingly multi-cultural UK.
- The degree to which the current system properly affords respect for the rights of individuals and minority groups, including those with no faith.
- Concerns that the present arrangements do not adequately develop the spiritual/moral education of pupils, or promote community spirit.

The Department for Education said the daily act of collective worship encourages children to reflect on belief and helps shape fundamental British values of tolerance, respect and understanding for others.

Abbreviated

4. Christian Convert Violently Attacked in Bradford –Christian Institute, 19 November, 2015

A father-of-six, who converted from Islam to Christianity, is recovering in hospital after being violently attacked in Bradford.

Nissar Hussain was set upon as he walked towards his car outside his house. The attack was captured by Hussain’s home CCTV cameras and shows two men emerging from a car at around 5 p.m. and attacking the 49-year-old. Neighbours quickly come to his aid, as the men are driven off.

Police are investigating the attack and have urged witnesses to come forward.

It is understood that Nissar and his wife, Kubra, converted to Christ in 1996. In 2008, the family were part of a Channel 4 documentary about people who have left the Muslim faith. Following the programme, he says they have faced abuse and threats. However, he says he does not regret speaking out as “this is an issue for converts up and down the country”.

Abbreviated

PARIS ATTACKS INSPIRE ANTI-RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT

By Paul Price, Creation Ministries International

In the wake of the recent tragic terrorist attacks, a popular video on YouTube, with nearly a million views, shows an unnamed pianist before a crowd on the street in Paris playing a piano with a giant 'peace sign' painted on it.ⁱ He is playing John Lennon's song, "Imagine" – a song with a strongly secular humanist, anti-religious message. In the lyrics, Lennon writes:

Imagine there's no Heaven	...Nothing to kill or die for
It's easy if you try	And no religion too
No Hell below us	Imagine all the people
Above us only sky	Living life in peace ... ⁱⁱ
Imagine all the people	
Living for today ...	

Lennon's point with this song is clearly to blame **all** religion for why this world isn't a better place and to blame religion for the many wars that are continually fought in human history. France, along with most of the world, has bought into the deception of secular humanism and revolution and now, in the face of this tragedy, it appears that at least some Parisians are blaming the concept of God itself for the attacks, rather than attributing them to the evil choices made by these radical cult members.

Unfortunately, Lennon was apparently blind to the implications of this humanistic worldview he was promoting. If there is no Heaven or Hell, that means there is no ultimate reward or punishment for anything you do while living on this earth. This was what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32).

What does a world look like with no moral constraints from God? Far from the peaceful paradise that Lennon 'imagines', the history of the 20th century bore out the results as the Marxist, atheistic Communist regimes took over and committed murder and genocide on a mass scale, never before seen in history. The simple fact is, the true morality of the Bible looks absolutely nothing like the actions taken by militant Islamists. To associate all religion, including Christianity, with such heinous acts is nothing more than a dishonest smear and a straw man. Jesus taught people to love even their enemies and bless them (Matt. 5: 43-48). Would a consistent application of that Biblical morality have yielded these attacks? Certainly not!

Actually, even the leading atheopath, Richard Dawkins, had a rare moment of clarity about this:

"There are no Christians, as far as I know, blowing up buildings. I am not aware of any Christian suicide bombers. I am not aware of any major Christian denomination that believes the penalty for apostasy is death. I have mixed feelings about the decline of Christianity, in so far as Christianity might be a bulwark against something worse."ⁱⁱⁱ

In reality, God is the basis for absolute morality. When you throw out God (that is, God as revealed in the Bible), you throw out the things that God gives us, including an objective right and wrong. If materialistic evolution is true, then our actions are determined entirely by our environment and physical brains, ruled by the laws of physics, as even the leading evolutionist, William Provine (1942 -2015) has admitted.

Dawkins, in one of his more typical moods, said that we inhabit a universe which has "no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."^{iv}

Where, in this worldview, is there any room to say that what these Muslim terrorists have done is 'wrong'?

When terrible things like this happen, people always are moved to ask why a good God would allow such evil things to take place; but what people sometimes fail to realise is that the very idea of 'good' and 'evil' that they are using to judge the situation comes only from God in the first place. Take this as an opportunity to share the Good News with those who are looking for answers!

ⁱ Pianist performs John Lennon's Imagine after Paris attacks, youtube.com, 14 November, 2015.

ⁱⁱ "Imagine", azlyrics.com, accessed 18 November, 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cited in: Gledhill, R., Scandal and schism leave Christians praying for a 'new Reformation', *The Times*, 2 April, 2010.

^{iv} Dawkins, CR., *River out of Eden*, Weidenfeld and Nicolswi, Chapter 4, 1995.

www.creation.com 20 November, 2015

AN INFALLIBLE RELIEF IN DISTRESS

From Dr. John Owen on 'The Glory of Christ'

As unto this present life, it is well known what it is unto the most of them who concern themselves in these things. Temptations, afflictions, changes, sorrows, dangers, fears, sickness and pains do fill up no small part of it. And, on the other hand, all our earthly relishes, refreshments and comforts are uncertain, transitory and unsatisfactory; all things of each sort being embittered by the remainders of sin. Hence everything wherein we are concerned hath the root of trouble and sorrow in it. Some labour under wants, poverty and straits all their days, and some have very few hours free from pains and sickness. And all these things, with others of an alike nature, are heightened at present by the calamitous season wherein our lot is fallen. All things almost in all nations are filled with confusions, dangers, disorders, distresses and troubles. Wars and rumours of wars do abound, with tokens of further approaching judgments; distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. There is in many places no peace to him that goeth out, nor to him that cometh in, but great vexations are upon all the inhabitants of the countries: nation is destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God doth vex them with all adversity (see 2 Chron. 15: 5, 6). And, in the meantime, vexation with the ungodly deeds of wicked men doth greatly further the troubles of life. The sufferings of many also for the testimony of their consciences are deplorable, with divisions and animosities that abound among all sorts of Christians.

But the shortness, the vanity, the miseries of human life have been the subject of complaints of all sorts of considering persons, heathens as well as Christians; nor is it my present business to insist upon them. My inquiry is only after the relief which we may obtain against these evils, that we faint not under them, that we may have the victory over them.

This in general is declared by the Apostle: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." But for this cause "we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4: 8,9, 16-18).

Our beholding by faith things that are not seen, things spiritual and eternal, will alleviate all our afflictions, make their burden light, and preserve our souls from fainting under them. Of these things, the glory of Christ, whereof we treat, is the principal, and in a due sense comprehensive of them all. For we behold the glory of God Himself "in the face of Jesus Christ." He that can at all times retreat unto the contemplation of this glory will be carried above the perplexing prevailing sense of any of these evils, or of a confluence of them all.

It is a woeful kind of life when men scramble for poor perishing reliefs in their distresses. This is the universal remedy and cure, the only balsam for all our diseases. Whatever presseth, urgeth, perplexeth, if we can but retreat in our minds unto a view of this glory, and a due consideration of our own interest therein, comfort and supportment will be administered unto us. Wicked men, in their distresses, are like a "troubled sea, that cannot rest." Others are heartless and despond, not without secret repinings at the wise disposals of Divine providence, especially when they look on the better condition (as they suppose) of others. And the best of us all are apt to wax faint and weary when these things press upon us in an unusual manner, or under their long continuance, without prospect of relief. This is the stronghold which such prisoners of hope are to turn themselves unto. In this contemplation of the glory of Christ they will find rest unto their own souls. For,

1. It will herein be made evident how slight and inconsiderable all these things are from whence our troubles and distresses do arise. For they all grow on this root of an *over-valuation of temporal things*. And unless we can arrive at a fixed judgment that all things here below are transitory and perishing, reaching only to the outward man, or the body (perhaps unto the killing of it): that the best of them have nothing that is truly substantial or abiding in them; that there are other things wherein we have an assured interest that are incomparably better than they, and above them; it is impossible but that we must spend our lives in fears, sorrows and distractions. One real view of the glory of Christ, and our own concernment therein, will give us a full relief in this matter.....
2. It is the way and means of conveying a sense of God's love unto our souls, which is that alone where ultimately we find rest in the midst of all the troubles of this life, as the Apostle declares (Rom. 5: 2-5). It is the Spirit of God who alone communicates a sense of this love unto our souls; it is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." Howbeit, there are ways and means to be used on our part, whereby we may be disposed and made meet to receive these communications of Divine love. Amongst these the principal is the contemplation of the glory of Christ insisted on, and of God the Father in Him.....This [a sense of the love of God] will lift the minds and hearts of believers above all the troubles of this life, and is the sovereign antidote that will expel all the poison that is in them, which otherwise might perplex and enslave their souls.

And this is the advantage we may have with respect to death itself. It is the assiduous contemplation of the glory of Christ which will carry us cheerfully and comfortably into it and through it.

Previously published in the Gospel Standard magazine - December, 2001

HE FAILETH NOT

"Their heart failed them" (Gen. 42:28)

"Mine eyes fail" (Ps. 69:3)

"The money faileth" (Gen. 47:15)

"The waters failed" (Josh. 3:16)

"My flesh faileth" (Ps. 109:24)

"They all shall fail together" (Isa. 31:3)

"HE FAILETH NOT" (Zeph. 3:5)

CHRISTIAN WATCH PUBLIC MEETING

BRIGHTON – 30th OCTOBER, 2015

A Christian Watch Public Meeting took place as planned on Friday, 30th October, 2015 in the coastal resort of Brighton. This was our first visit to Brighton and it was encouraging to see so many young people in attendance.

The subject of the meeting was *“The Spiritual State of the Nation – is there a Remedy?”* and the Vice-Chairman, Ian Henderson, in leading the meeting outlined the reasons why Christian Watch was originally formed some 15 years ago – formed for the sole purpose of informing Bible-believing Protestants of the danger of remaining silent whilst the devil – in a variety of guises – made inroads into our Protestant country and Constitution.

Referring to the continuing desecration of the Lord’s Day; ecumenism – with all its links with a range of false religions; the growth and general acceptance of gay rights with its ensuing depravity and the introduction of women Bishops into the Established Churches and the current threat to introduce Constitutional changes, Mr. Henderson gave three possible options:-

1. Total capitulation and surrender – Things have changed, let’s move on with the times – but that’s the easy option. It will make us popular with some – and maybe others will raise an eyebrow in disbelief and confusion – but for the real Bible-believing Christian it is not an option to be considered. The Word of God tells us in Romans 12 verses 1–2:- *“that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be NOT conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* That’s where we stand in Christian Watch – on the Bible’s clear message.
2. Bury our heads in the sand – and follow the see no evil, hear no evil, touch no evil – approach. But, by being so Heavenly-minded, we can become of no earthly use and we have a responsibility to remind our fellow men of the goodness of God and the mercy to be found in Christ. To bury our heads is to be guilty of neglecting our duty to warn others of the consequences of engaging in sin and refusing to turn away from ways that lead to disaster and ruin.
3. But the 3rd option is to be an example to the decaying world all around us. That means neither joining the majority popular opinion nor running away from reality. We must ever remember – ‘there go I but for the grace of God.’ People are blind – lost – and dead in sin – and so they need to hear the right message. We must remain convinced of the truth and teaching of God’s Word and the complete holiness of our triune God and the total depravity of man’s sinful nature.
 - It is the Gospel of Christ that will cleanse man’s life-style behaviour.
 - It is the Gospel of Christ that will convince men of the truthfulness of God’s Word.
 - It is the Gospel of Christ that will show what is the God-ordained way of marriage – no matter what worldly Governments may enshrine in law.

And Christian Watch endeavours to take this stand all over the country – through the work of individual members in their own localities.

The guest speaker for the evening was Pastor James Zenker, Principal of Crown College UK – who came to England nearly 10 years ago to set up a branch of Crown College in the West Midlands. Students come over from America on a regular basis to spend a term in England studying English Church history and other subjects and now the College is also engaged in Church-planting – opening up Churches that have previously closed their doors to the preaching of the Word.

Taking as his text Ezra 9 v 8-9, Pastor Zenker described the spiritual state of our nation today, outlining:-

1. The symptoms all around us.
Antipathy - apathy - apathetic – who cares what God thinks? Great Britain used to be a Christian nation but now it is lower than 5% of people who attend Church. Statistics indicate also that 50% of 11 year olds do not have parents that are married. 73% of British people believe that religion should have nothing to do with politics.
2. The correct diagnosis – a heart problem – but the disease is sin.
He emphasised the need to know, honour and obey God and warned against trying to make this world a better place to leave – to spend eternity in Hell. Laws may need changing; cultural issues may be challenging; internet access – wrongly used – may be a curse but the spiritual state of the nation was a heart problem. The problem of the heart is the heart of the problem.
3. The direction to look – Ezra 9 v 5-6. Ezra looked to God. In dark days, there is hope in God.
4. The remedy – Ezra 9 v 8-9. Grace hath been shown from the Lord our God – **God's Riches At Christ's Expense** – a little reviving from God – and verse 9 – God hath not forsaken us but hath extended mercy to His remnant. Nuclear bombs may be the biggest weapons around, but Christians have God, the Bible and Gospel power. We must continue to hope in the Lord – and seek His encouragement – and never give up.

Pastor Zenker closed by emphasising Romans 1 v 16 – “*for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*”

The meeting closed with a rendering of ‘*O God, our help in ages past,*’ based on Psalm 90 v 1-5 and a Christian Watch book table was made available with free literature to be taken away for widespread circulation.

(CD copies of the address by Pastor Zenker (including introduction by the Vice-Chairman) are available from Christian Watch Resources, (see back cover for address) - £2.50 each (including P&P)

GREAT GOSPEL GEM

By Dr. Alan C. Clifford, Norwich Reformed Church

“...lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:24)

Introduction

The Christian life being a pilgrim life, King David reminds us that it is an “everlasting way” of “everlasting truth” and “everlasting life”. Desiring that God should root out of him all that is wicked, the reflections of his profoundest Psalm climax with this prayerful ‘Gospel Gem’: such a prayer is necessary for us all. Before David’s son, Solomon, went tragically astray (see 1 Kings 11: 1-13), he had sufficient wisdom to see that “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). Oh that the son had prayed his royal father’s prayer: “...and lead me in the way everlasting”!

The two main Hebrew words for ‘way’ are instructive. The word *orach* stands for the way we *ought* to go; the word *derek* – used above by David and Solomon – is the way we tend to go by *habit*, rightly or wrongly. David is obviously conscious that not all his habits had been good. Not to forget that we are all troubled by various habits, David’s unrestrained sexual ones got him into deep trouble. Thus he is really praying: ‘Lord, establish good and godly habits in my soul by your grace. Incline my convictions, emotions and intentions in the right direction, that I

might daily pursue the true path, the way that leads to everlasting life.' No more important prayer can ever be heard on our lips. It is the prayer for salvation.

1. WHERE IS THE WAY?

Of course, for David as well as Christians, his prayer points directly to our Lord Jesus Christ – 'Great David's greater Son' (James Montgomery). When we recall that David is reflecting and praying in the presence of *Yahweh*, the LORD, we should remember that the Lord Jesus is the personal revelation of David's God (see John 1:1, 14; 1 Tim. 3:16). This is the truth behind the I AMs of John's Gospel, especially the triple truth of John 14:6, "I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life". Christ alone met David's need for guidance since He is the unique revelation of God, the incomparable 'God-man'. This is true because Jesus shares the Father's *nature* and *name*. He embodies *Yahweh's* name as the Angel-guide of Israel (Ex. 23: 20-21; 1 Cor. 10:4, 9). Accordingly David spoke of Him in Psalm 23.

With David's prayer in mind, we should note that John 14:6 also gives us a simple and relevant summary of the Christian Faith. Each part says something basic about the Gospel, explaining why Christ is the only Saviour of the world, David's Saviour and ours. He alone covers all our needs. He is therefore the perfect antidote to ancient and modern multi-faith madness. In view of His claims, the Lord Jesus is not merely one of several options for religious people. He is *the* way, *the* truth and *the* life; not a way, a truth, a life. Christ's emphasis is absolute and final. There really is no alternative. Therefore He concludes "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This was true for David and all Old Testament believers as well as for us.

2. CHRIST IS THE WAY

Not only did Christ teach us the way of God (Luke 20:21) and the way to God (Luke 15:18), but He Himself is the way. Having spoken of His forthcoming departure – following the resurrection – to prepare our Heavenly home (John 14: 1-4), His statement was made in response to Thomas's question, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" The Lord Jesus only answers the second part of Thomas's question, as if to say "All you need to know is that I am the one who gets you there, so trust me." In doctrinal terms, Christ is saying that He – as 'God-man' – is the only mediator between God and the human race (1 Tim. 2:5). He is all-sufficient! Let no one else – however holy – be trusted alongside Him, neither Mary, nor saint nor priest! He is the only bridge between Heaven and earth. Through His incarnation, Jesus our Immanuel ('God with us' - Matt. 1:23) reconciles us to God.

Through Christ's humanity, the Father is able to reach down to us; through Christ's divinity we are able to reach up to the Father. It is as if, on the cross, Christ's outstretched arms were bringing us together. The chasm created by sin was bridged on the cross! In personal terms, Christ is our guide (through the Holy Spirit indwelling us). If the Bible may be likened to a map, Jesus becomes our personal Guide. Even with a good map like the Scriptures, we are like sheep 'prone to wander', a truth David honestly expressed in Psalms 23 and 119:176. Thus we need Christ our good Shepherd to guide and lead us. If He doesn't – sin and Satan will! May we constantly cast ourselves upon His mercy and care. Being 'in Christ' (2 Cor. 5:17) is surely 'the Way' to being eventually 'in Heaven'.

3. CHRIST IS THE TRUTH

The 'way everlasting' is necessarily the way of truth. Purity of doctrine is therefore essential (Jude 3). However, Christianity is more than doctrine. It is a person. That person is Christ. Therefore He said, "I AM the Truth." He is truth incarnate, personal truth. If the Scriptures are the written Word of God, Christ is the *personal* Word of God (John 1:1, 14). As Christ is the author of the written Word (Col. 3:16), the written Word points us to the living Word. Thus the Gospel of Christ leads us to the Christ of the Gospel; the Word of God leads us to the God of the Word. When, in his spiritual blindness, Pontius Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), he failed to see Christ the incarnate Truth of God right in front of him!

Of course, since the entire fabric of creation is Christ's skilled 'handiwork' (see John 1:10; Col. 1:16), He knows all the secrets of the universe. Scientists and philosophers try to discover the truth He encoded in creation. However, while researchers seek to know the 'how' of the

universe, Christ knows both the 'how' and the 'why'. In the Gospel, the most important 'hows' and 'whys' are answered: why do we suffer and die? How can we find salvation? The Aristotles, Descartes', Darwins and Einsteins of the human race grope after ultimate truth like blind men. While they teach truth mixed with error, Christ remains the source of all truth and salvation. He was all the information we need. Thus the Church of God must faithfully proclaim Christ who said, "I AM the Truth." Here is truth for all, the wise and the simple. Unlike the proud philosophers, the simple saint knows enough if he or she knows Christ!

4. CHRIST IS THE LIFE

David prayed to be led in the 'way everlasting'. This surely speaks of everlasting life, available only through Christ. Without Him we stray and wander in the darkness of ignorance – however many degrees we might have! Our natural state is also one of spiritual and eternal death. Christ alone brings a new sense of direction and true knowledge. He alone plants within us new convictions, habits, desires and intentions. This new spiritual life is by its nature also eternal life (see John 10:10; 17:2-3). On the cross, Jesus gave His life that we might live. By His sacrifice, He dealt with sin, the cause of all David's and our problems. By His indwelling Spirit we become 'new creatures in Christ' (2 Cor. 5:17). Those who trust in Him who rose victorious over death will live eternally (John 3:16). We live because He is 'the Life'. The call, comforts and challenge of God's way, truth and life in Christ are set before us by Richard Baxter:

If therefore God hath convinced thee that this is His will and way, I adjure thee as in His dreadful presence, that thou delay no longer but resolve, and absolutely give up thyself to God as thy Heavenly Father, thy Saviour and thy Sanctifier, and 'make an everlasting covenant with Him,' and then He and all His mercies will be thine: His grace will help thee and His mercy pardon thee; His Ministers will instruct thee and His people pray for thee and assist thee: His angels will guard thee and His Spirit comfort thee: and when flesh must fail and thou must leave this world, thy Saviour will then receive thy soul and bring it into the participation of His glory: and He will raise thy body and justify thee before the world and make thee equal to the angels: and thou shalt live in the sight and love of God and in the everlasting pleasure of His glory. This is the end of faith and holiness. But if thou harden thy heart and refusest mercy, everlasting woe will be thy portion and then there will be no remedy.

In short, the new spiritual life of faith will reach its eternal climax in the life of resurrection! David rejoiced at the prospect of this, the culmination of pursuing the way everlasting: "O God...[thou] shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth...Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 71: 20; 73:24). This is the 'good old way' of the Gospel. Matthew Henry sums it up when he says: 'All the saints' - i.e. true believers – 'desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, nor tire in it.' So, may we trust David's God, pray David's prayer, travel David's way and share David's glorious everlasting destiny. **Amen!**

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