



CHRISTIAN WATCH

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'And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.'

Mark 13:37

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Cover Picture: Smyrna

Dear Members,

January, 2016

On behalf of the Committee, I firstly wish you the rich blessings of our merciful Lord God.

We increasingly feel it is a wonderful favour to have such a kind and gracious God to go to with all our cares and concerns; a God who is able to manage all our affairs and to do for us all that we need. We are invited to *“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass”* Psalm 35:5.

As we commence the publication of our CW Newsletter for another year, we seek the Lord’s direction and guidance for the articles and items included. In addition, we hope you will approve of the new design and presentation and find it easier to read.

We are living in ever increasingly solemn times, both in our nation and in the world at large. We are warned that prior to Christ’s return there will be a time of trouble which will exceed all that has previously been experienced. For the benefit of the Lord’s chosen people, however, these times will be shortened. We recommend the prayerful reading of Matthew chapter 24.

An area of responsibility, which the Lord has placed upon His people, is to witness their beliefs to the world in general and at all times to contend for that which is scriptural. For example, our Government now tolerates and promotes homosexuality which is clearly condemned by God in His Holy Word - as is His anger against such sin – and we should oppose this whenever possible, including writing to those in authority.

A further area of responsibility is the education of our children and young people. How important it is for them to be taught the Christian values as given to us in the Bible. We hope to continue with the Ten Commandments Project this year but we are also investigating other possible means of conveying the truth to those in authority in our schools.

We much value your prayerful and financial support for the work we undertake and we pray the Lord will go before us in the coming year.

We wish you the best of blessings.

Yours in the precious bonds of the Gospel,

David Crowter,
Chairman

“STAND THEREFORE”

By: Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom

It seems remarkable that when the Lord describes the Heavenly armour, He mentions the girdle before anything else. “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph. 6:14). Why should this be so?

The purpose of the girdle was to fasten up long-flowing garments. Before anything of effort or importance (e.g. Israel on the Passover night), it was necessary to “gird up the loins” – otherwise you might trip, or stumble, or fall, certainly not stand. Hence the exhortation before breastplate, shield, sword, to “bind the golden girdle round thee” (as Hart expresses it).

So this expression of “girding up the loins” is often used in a figurative way in Scripture. For instance:

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately” (Luke 12:35,36).

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13).

The golden girdle is truth. Apart from this there can be no “girding up the loins” and no “standing.” There must be a vital, personal acquaintance with the truth.

1. The Truth “as in Jesus “ (Eph. 4:21). The Holy Spirit reveals the truth of our lost, fallen condition and our need of a Saviour, and then the glorious truths of the Gospel: the Trinity; the Person of the Lord Jesus, God and Man; the covenant ordered in all things and sure; the riches of free grace; eternal election; the preciousness of atoning love and blood; the security of God’s people; the Person and work of the Holy Ghost – and a personal interest.

Apart from this golden girdle there can be no standing.

2. Truth in the heart and life through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Scripture speaks of truth being received “in the love of it” (2 Thess. 2:10), of walking in the truth (2 John 4). We cannot stand without this. There are those things about us by nature which, like the long-flowing garments, would trail in the mire unless girt up by the golden girdle.

Only having our loins “girt about with truth” can the Church of God, or the individual believer, stand today in this world of wickedness. The great need today in the Church of God is what Luther called “Amen men;” men who will stand whatever the cost.

“Stand therefore.” We live in a day of compromise. People do not wish to stand – unless they personally are affected, their ease, their reputation. When England was guilty of the infamous slave trade, John Newton said no professing Christian really liked it or really approved of it – but they did not stand against it because it did not affect them personally. When taxes were raised, they were only too willing to stand!

So often today, when vital issues arise, the position taken is: “It is not my business”; “It is nothing to do with me”; “I feel it is right to keep out of it.” May the Lord give us singleness of eye for His glory, the spirit of Elijah: “the Lord God of Israel before whom I stand.” May we not be like Ephraim: “The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle” (Ps. 78:9).

In all this we need a right spirit. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.” “Lord, help us by Thy grace to stand.” Stormy petrels, who love contention and conflict, are no help to the Church of God.

“Stand therefore.” We need to stand for “the present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12). Luther said that if we stand firmly for every truth except the one at present being assailed, God counts us unfaithful. Some are wonderfully faithful in standing against the errors of the Pope and Archbishop, writing about them, denouncing them, but they do not stand firmly in the local Church against any deviation in faith or practice. This is not “standing.”

Some say they do not like trouble. No one does. Some seek to please both sides. Some (who should know better) say they do not understand. Some compromise. Some “look over their shoulder” to see what others think. Some say they do not wish to offend. “Stand therefore.”

But above all, the need to stand personally in the conflict. Satan is a mighty foe, too strong for us. So is the world, either opposing, persecuting or alluring. But what of indwelling sin, the conflict with self – evil self, proud self, self-righteous self? We can only stand as we are upheld. We do need the golden girdle. We do need to pray:

“Lord, help us by Thy grace to stand,
And every trial firm endure;
Preserved by Thy sovereign hand,
And by Thy oath and covenant sure.”

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”

“Gird thy loins up, Christian soldier;
Lo! Thy Captain calls thee out;
Let the danger make thee bolder;
War in weakness, dare in doubt.
Buckle on thy Heavenly armour;
Patch up no inglorious peace;
Let thy courage wax the warmer,
As thy foes and fears increase. (J. Hart)

Previously published in The Gospel Standard – June, 2006

The Roman Church Promotes Islam and Accepts Islamic Faith

By: Richard Bennett

As huge numbers of Islamic migrants continue to stream into Europe from the Middle East, there is great concern among Western people. Nonetheless, even with this astonishing background, Pope Francis continues to promote Islam. Instead of warning people against the dangers they face from the onslaught of migrating Muslims from across the world, Francis has left unaddressed Islamic persecution of Middle Eastern and African Christians, and indeed Europeans. In fact, Pope Francis' outreach to Islam is simply an intensified application of the Roman Catholic Church's Vatican Council II teaching.

The Roman Church has been consistently encouraging a massive influx of Muslims into Europe, even into the USA. Such immigration is a basic cause for the attacks that have already taken place. For example, there was the massacre in Paris on Friday November 13, 2015, during which at least 128 people were killed¹ and for which the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) has claimed responsibility.² Incidents of Islamic terror, such as the Paris attack or the San Bernardino attack in the USA, are driven by a vile, totalitarian ideology. Islam has its own dynamic,

and it is not based on any logical or rational grievances. Its totalitarian, ideological roots are grounded in the Qur'ân. It cannot be doubted that the Pope and his advisors know this.

The current exportation of Islamists to Europe was in planning at least since 2011, as the "Clarion Project," challenging Islamic extremism stated:

*"ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi stated 'loud and clear that if ISIS cannot defeat the West by military means, they will over-run it with jihadists....The present predicament indicates, without any shadow of doubt, that al-Baghdadi is on the ascent. The Islamic State may have occupied vast tracts of land in Iraq and Syria over the past fifteen months or so, but that victory diminishes into insignificance in comparison to what he is up to now...He [al-Baghdadi] has stretched his hand to grab the crown jewel of humanity: European civilisation. Along with the hundreds of thousands of migrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and other parts of the Islamic State caliphate that have landed on European shores are large numbers of Islamic State jihadis mingled among them -- with more millions on the march, trekking across the continents of Africa and Asia, heading towards Europe. ...[there is evidence that] al-Baghdadi had the financial backing of rich Arab States, in particular, Saudi Arabia and Qatar...And while Europe's leaders talk and talk, their countries are gradually being inundated with migrants and jihadists - exactly as planned by the modern day caliph.'"*³

Autumn 2015 Events

In Germany, which has 3.0 to 3.5 million Muslims, a Roman Cardinal spoke of Islam's Qur'ân as a part of the historic heritage of Europe and the Near East.

"The Cardinal was Cardinal and Bishop of Mainz who emphasised before 250 listeners at the event centre of the university that the Inter-religious dialogue has a long history and started at Vatican II. Then Cardinal Lehmann stated that Quran-Research shows ways to read the Quran as a text of late antiquity. As a result, the Quran does all at once not appear strange, but shows the nearness to Christendom and Judaism. The Quran is part of the historic heritage of Europe and the Near East," says the Cardinal."⁴

Such is the dreadful compromise carried out in Germany. Never mind the truth that the Qur'ân is not part of "the historic heritage of Europe," as the Cardinal himself knows. Rather, the

Roman Catholic agenda is again to strengthen its influence across the world!

Another tactic, the support for both legal and illegal immigration, has for many years been the policy of the Papacy. Thus, on September 16, 2015, Pope Francis addressed legal and illegal immigrants in Spanish at Philadelphia's Independence Hall saying:

"The Quakers who founded Philadelphia were inspired by a profound evangelical sense of the dignity of each individual and the ideal of a community united by brotherly love." This conviction led them to found a colony which would be a haven of religious freedom and tolerance. That sense of fraternal concern for the dignity of all, especially the weak and the vulnerable, became an essential part of the American spirit."⁵

Consequently, with this Papal mindset, it is becoming apparent that the Pope and Roman Catholicism are promoting the immigration, both legal and illegal, of Islamic people as refugees into Western nations. Thus, it is reported on a Roman Catholic website:

*"Syrians have left their homes, and four million have fled their country as a result of the civil war and the rise of ISIS within the borders...While the majority of these refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, some have sought asylum in Europe. Pope Francis and the Catholic Bishops have called on the U.S. and international Governments to support the asylum seekers."*⁶

Another Roman Catholic website reports -

*"Pope Francis and the Catholic Bishops have called on the U.S. Government and the international community to provide support to both Syrian refugees fleeing violence and to countries that have been at the forefront of this humanitarian effort."*⁷

However, five of the wealthiest Muslim countries have taken in no Syrian refugees, arguing that doing so would open them up to the risk of terrorism. Although the oil rich countries have handed over aid money, Britain has donated more than Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar combined.⁸ Rather, there is evidence that the ISIS leader al-Baghdadi might have been partially funded by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, along with three other of the wealthiest Arab nations. Undoubtedly, the Roman Catholic Church is rejecting analytical reasoning so that it can support both sides in the conflict, so that when there is a resolution to conflict, the Roman Church will be on the winning side.

The Roman Church Promotes Islam in Its Schools

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales desire that Muslim prayer rooms be opened in every Roman Catholic school. These Bishops also want facilities for Islamic pre-prayer washing rituals in all Roman Catholic schools. Muslims say that Catholic schools would need to install bidets, foot spas, and hoses to facilitate such extensive cleansing rituals. The recommendations have been approved by Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Birmingham, and the favourite to succeed Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor as Catholic Primate.

Catholic School Offers “Sacred Place” For Muslim Prayer⁹

One is aghast that any Catholic religious school should offer Islamic students “sacred spaces” of any kind. However, such facilities are allowed in Roman Catholic schools, not only in England and Wales, but also in the USA. For example, John Birney, president of “Brother Rice High School” in Bloomfield, Michigan has decided to permit a “non-Christian prayer room within the school to allow Muslims and other non-Christian students to pray.” Birney urged people to ask if the prayer room is “something that compromises our faith and identity, or is it in fact consistent with the respect that we have.”¹⁰

All of this assistance of Islam by immigration and Roman Catholic schools is happening under Pope Francis's jurisdiction. What Francis has made abundantly clear is, first, that he has no concern to protect faithful Catholics from the Muslim onslaught, which, if successful, will end up with Catholics and Westerners having to live under Sharia law. Second, as a primary Western religious leader, he is encouraging the Muslim religious leaders to persist in their violent onslaught, primarily on the West and on Christianity in particular, but also around the world in general. Third, it is clear that he is accommodating Islam for his own purposes of empire building and does so with no compunction to be truthful or Christian in his dealings with them. For example, Pope Francis has stated:

“The sacred writings of Islam have retained some Christian teachings; Jesus and Mary receive profound veneration and it is admirable to see how Muslims both young and old, men and women, make time for daily prayer and faithfully take part in religious services. Many of them also have a deep conviction that their life, in its entirety, is from God and for God. They also

acknowledge the need to respond to God with an ethical commitment and with mercy towards those most in need.”¹¹

The Pope’s statement is deceitful adulation because it must be reconciled with the Roman Church’s official declaration that “the plan of salvation” includes the Muslims, quotation:

“The [Roman] Church’s relationship with the Muslims. ‘The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind’s judge on the last day.’”¹²

Francis knows perfectly well that the Islamic Allah is not the God of the Bible. Thus, it is that Pope Francis, representing the Roman Church, has accepted Islam and its peoples. The fact that the Roman Church and the Allah of Islam agree on “the plan of salvation” demonstrates to true Bible believers that it is against Biblical faith. The Biblical Commandment not to venerate any strange god has been broken by the Roman Catholic Church in order to credit Islam and its adherents with holding to the faith of Abraham.

Islam Rejects the Trinity, Christ’s Divinity, and His Sacrifice on the Cross

Because of what is happening, it is necessary for us to study the official teachings of Islam. Christians believe in one God, which, in this one Godhead, there exists three Persons. Islam rejects this Trinitarian concept as blasphemous. The Qur’ân declares:

“Certainly they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third (person) of the three; and there is no god but the one God, and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve” (Surah 5:73).¹³

The Bible proclaims Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross in place of the believer, *“In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”¹⁴* Islam passionately rejects the crucifixion of Christ Jesus. Thus, the Qur’ân declares:

“And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the apostle of Allah; and they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for sure” (Surah 4:157).

The Bible proclaims Christ Jesus as Divine, being the brightness of the Divine glory, and the express image of God. In the Qur'ân, Christ Jesus is debased to being solely an apostle of Allah. Thus, the Qur'ân states, *"O followers of the Book! do not exceed the limits in your religion, and do not speak (lies) against Allah, but (speak) the truth; the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, is only an apostle of Allah..."* (Surah 4.171). Christ Jesus declared, *"Before Abraham was, I AM."*¹⁵ *"I and my Father are one."*¹⁶ *"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."*¹⁷ A religion that rejects Christ's divinity cannot be of the truth. It is abhorrent that Pope Francis and his Roman Church, in accepting the teachings of the Qur'ân implicitly, denigrate the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel and the Qur'ân's Religious Philosophy

In the Bible, the Gospel is as the Apostle John declared, *"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."*¹⁸ *"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."*¹⁹ The whole "purpose" of the God of Scripture is clearly seen in the Gospel of John, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God."*²⁰ This is totally different from the god of Islam who orders fighting, war, and punishment—by amputation, crucifixion, and murder. The following is just a sample of the primary concept of fighting for Allah that the Qur'ân requires:

"And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out, and persecution is severer than slaughter, and do not fight with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it, but if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers" (Surah 2.191).

"...let those fight in the way of Allah, who sell this world's life for the hereafter; and whoever fights in the way of Allah, then be he slain or be he victorious, We shall grant him a mighty reward" (Surah 4.74).

The Commandment of the Lord, however, is as different as darkness and light; for He says to those who are truly His own, *"Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be*

ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."²¹ While many individual Muslims may deplore atrocities committed in the name of Islam, it cannot be denied that these atrocities are encouraged and justified by Islamic teaching. Even the most moderate form of Islam is incompatible with Biblical truth.

Pope Francis' first foreign policy address in March, 2013 made Muslim-Catholic relations one of his top priorities. Before an audience of ambassadors from 180 countries, he explained how he wanted to work for peace and bridge building between peoples. Muslims and Catholics, he claimed, needed to intensify their dialogue. Positive shockwaves were sent into Muslim-Catholic circles and Muslim scholars and religious institutions around the world welcomed Pope Francis' election.²² Thus Roman Catholics are in dialogue with the Muslims. Consequently, it is the blind leading the blind as each tries to move forward its own particular agenda. Neither agenda is about finding truth in a fallen world but rather both agendas are centred on building an earthly empire in which they will have absolute control. However, they have not properly considered who the Lord Jesus Christ really is and the fact that the God of the Bible works all things according to the counsel of His own will.²³

Conclusion

Pope Francis and the Roman Church's promotion of Islam is an established fact. Instead of warning people against the onslaught of Muslims across the world, Francis has left unaddressed Islamic persecution of European, Middle Eastern and African people. Such Roman Catholic extremism is momentous.

The testimony of the Bible and history is that man by his own resources and research cannot adequately understand God. As Scripture states, *"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than Hell; what canst thou know?"*²⁴ The depths and riches of His wisdom are past human comprehension.²⁵ The Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed the means by which a person is to know who God is and how He acts. He said, *"sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth."*²⁶

The Lord God's written Word, the Bible, not only contains the truth; it is itself truth.

As descendants of Adam, we are sinful creatures, separated from our Holy Creator. By ourselves, we have no way to be right with God. From the beginning, God's Word made it clear that

even one act of disobedience would produce death. Death means separation. Mankind is spiritually dead, separated from the Source of life—the Lord God. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*²⁷ The Lord God is all pure and all holy. As sinful human beings, we cannot have a relationship with Him, as He cannot tolerate sin. Thus, a person must die and face God’s righteous judgment. Of ourselves we are helpless sinners because, *“the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”*²⁸ No amount of prayer, fasting, or good deeds can give us a relationship with the Lord God. We behold the answer to our spiritual position in Christ Jesus alone. God’s grace was planned before it was imparted, as the Scripture says, *“before the foundation of the world”* that we should be *“accepted in the beloved.”*²⁹ The purpose and design of God from all eternity was that all gifts should come to sinful man in and through Christ Jesus. Grace in its most proper and authentic sense is definitely free, as the Scripture says, *“being justified freely by His grace.”*³⁰ The reign of sin and false religion is overcome by the reign of God’s grace. As Scripture says, *“even so might grace reign!”*³¹ The abundance of grace far surpasses the evils of sin. Once a believing sinner receives Christ Jesus as his only surety before the All-Holy God, he finds himself not only freed from his sins, but also made to *“reign in life.”*³² Those who receive the abundant grace given by Christ are not only redeemed from the dominion of death, they live and reign with Him as they are sanctified daily through His Word by the Holy Spirit and by constant fellowship with Him. With Him they shall forever live and reign, world without end. Through Christ Jesus, grace reigns with sovereign freedom, power, and bounty! *“Blessed be His glorious Name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen.”*³³

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“For lordship to submit to service, for God to be man, the blessed God to become a curse, here is matter of wonder indeed.

Sibbes

NEWS ITEMS

Israel vs. ISIS – by Tom Alago, Prophecy News Watch, 10 Jan. 2016

ISIS is stepping up its rhetoric towards Israel and many analysts believe this will be the year it attempts to expand its influence in the Muslim world by targeting Israel with direct terror attacks.

A variety of news sources have recently pointed out some key developments in this regard:

1. The number of Israeli Arabs involved in Islamic State's activities has risen in the past year. According to Shin Bet assessments, a few hundred Israeli Arabs support ISIS.
2. The Islamic State recently published a series of videos which included threats to attack Israel, some of which were attributed to the events at al-Aqsa mosque. Some of the films sought to encourage terrorists to carry out attacks while ISIS Sinai branch directly threatened an attack on Eilat.
3. Five members of the same Arab-Israeli family have recently been charged with setting up an Islamic State terror cell with the intent to carry out terror attacks inside Israel. This is only one of a number of such groups that have been discovered and thwarted by security forces.

Ynetnews.com reported that in recognition of the ISIS attack threat, an IDF's (Israeli Defence Fighters) General Staff drill was carried out recently, which portrayed a scenario in which ISIS carried out a big attack in southern Israel, leading to the deployment of a battalion of paratroopers.

According to the same source, whereas concerning Hezbollah and Hamas the IDF knows exactly where to attack; this is not the case with Islamic State.

Adding to this dilemma is the fact that ISIS has for a long time been working hard on specific strategies to destroy Israel both from within and without.

Abbreviated

Even ISIS Can't Stop Spread of Secularism – "The Week" magazine quoting article by Matt Ridley of The Times (28 November, 2015)

The rise of ISIS and fanatical Islam might lead you to think that far from fading, religion is making a comeback, says Matt Ridley. But the reverse is true: it's humanists who are on the march. "The fastest-growing belief system in the world is non-belief." In Saudi Arabia, 5% of those polled in 2012 described themselves as

atheist and 19% as non-believers – a higher proportion than in Italy. In Lebanon, the figure was 37%. True, Arab Governments are now cracking down on atheism – Saudi Arabia has made it a terrorist offence – but this is “evidence not of confidence but of alarm”, just as the fanaticism of toting jihadis is evidence of their fury at the spread of secularism. But the efforts of the militants to shore up belief will be in vain: the pull of materialism, rationalism and scepticism is too strong. Whether you’re Christian, Jewish or Muslim, there is “just something about living in a society with restaurants and mobile phones, universities and social media, that makes it hard to go on thinking” morality derives from some Divine law. Jihadism is a grave threat today, but be assured “secularism and milder forms of religion will win in the long run”.

Every day, 200 Churches are attacked somewhere in the World – EU Parliament – British Church Newspaper, 8 January, 2016

A recent report by the European Parliament has found that some 200 churches or Christian places of worship are attacked every single day across the world – amounting to well over 70,000 attacks in a single year.

COUNSEL AND CARE

‘I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.’ Psalm 32:8

How frequently, when needing a special promise from the Lord, do we turn to our Bible and choose therefrom some (we think) suitable portion to our necessity, as if it needed no application by the Holy Spirit - without which all self-chosen promises (or rather passages) leave us as weak as ever! But, “*if any lack wisdom, let him ask of God.*” Yes, but we like to try our own puny wisdom first. This always fails, bringing us the lower, that we may see more beauty in, and more highly esteem the infinite wisdom and goodness of, our God. Recently, needing a special promise from the Lord of His guidance, we (not by chance) went into a certain room where, unobserved before, but tacked upon the wall, was a card with this promise from the Lord, and which He then and there sweetly applied: “*I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*” What a contrast between a self-chosen promise with no power and a

God-given one accompanied with that incomparable sweetness which only His blessed Spirit can bestow! Yet what a daily almost imperceptible trying there is to live not quite so dependently upon God. And sometimes He allows us to try the extent of our independence – with sad results indeed. But how glad are we then to become the humble recipients of His bounty! How great a mercy that,

“Though we have Him oft forgot,
His loving-kindness changes not!”

especially when, as at the present moment, we feel our utter helplessness more than ever. But He will ever be mindful of His covenant. He was mindful of it when in that awful agony He shed His precious blood, and thus opened the way to escape for us poor rebels; for

“No heights of guilt, nor depths of sin,
Where His redeemed have ever been,
But sovereign grace was underneath,
And love eternal, strong as death.”

And what solid comfort is there connected with the fact, that, although we cannot see what our future may be, it is in the hands of Him who, ere we came into existence, had planned it all, and therefore promised, *“I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”* Oh, to realise that His eye has ever been, is now, and ever will be, upon us! What a solemn, yet blessed thought! And how secure we really are from all harm, although at the approach of some seeming calamity we are at once cast down, as if there was no help. We make but poor soldiers of the cross of Christ and methinks all the fighting that is done is by the King Himself. And so it will be to the end of our journey, when, so far from having any creature merit to boast of, our most becoming language then will be:

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.”

Clement J. Cowell,
Gospel Magazine 1875

“He wants no company who hath Christ for his companion.” Sibbes

BRITAIN NO LONGER CHRISTIAN

By Tony Pearce

Britain is no longer a Christian country and should stop acting as if it is, a top-level inquiry into the place of religion in society has concluded. The inquiry, chaired by the former senior judge Baroness Butler-Sloss and involving leaders of all faiths, calls for public life to be systematically de-Christianised. It says the decline of church-going and the rise of Islam and other beliefs mean a 'new settlement' is needed for religion in the U.K., giving more official influence to non-religious voices and those of non-Christian faiths.

The report calls for faith schools to be phased out, because they are socially divisive; for acts of worship in school assemblies to be abolished and replaced with a '*time for reflection.*' It also calls for Church of England Bishops in the Lords to be replaced with Imams, Rabbis and other non-Christian clerics and the Coronation service for the next Monarch to be overhauled to include other faiths.

The report concludes:

'The increase in those with non-religious beliefs, the reduction in the number of Christians and an increase in their diversity, and the increase in the number of people identifying with non-Christian religions: these are the settled social context of Britain today and for the foreseeable future.'

In reality, the phasing out of Christianity from our public life has virtually happened already. The removal of the external trappings like school assemblies or the Bishops from the House of Lords would make little difference. Church leaders (especially Church of England Bishops) hardly ever make any public statement about the uniqueness of the Gospel and the one way of salvation through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When they do have a chance to speak publicly it will usually be to condemn capitalism or the Tory Government or to sow doubt rather than faith in Christianity. Our media and education system constantly promote the diversity agenda in our society and phase out any expression of real Christian faith.

An article in the *Daily Mail*, 'Brainwashing of our children', focuses on what is required in our public life today. It claims that Britain's schools are force-feeding pupils politically correct dogma about sexuality, climate change and British history. It gives examples such as the 11 year old girl who spoke to her

grandfather about her future marriage plans 'whether it is to a man or a woman.' She has obviously been well indoctrinated at school that homosexual marriage is an equally valid option to marriage between a man and a woman. Not to believe this would cause great offence to homosexuals. Another example is the child from a Church of England school who kept saying "Peace be upon him" every time she mentioned Mohammed. When asked why, she said "That is what we were taught to say in RE." Not to say this would cause offence to Muslims.

The article goes on to focus on the 'Gendered Intelligence programme' (promoting transexuality) in which a speaker called Jay invites children to question their sexual identity by asking them what it means to be 'girlish' and 'boyish':

'Some of them are as young as four: can you imagine what a shock it is for them when he reveals that he is a 'transgender man' who happened to have been 'assigned female at birth?'

Increasingly, children are expressing confusion about their sexual identity as the latest phase of indoctrination focuses on transgenderism and the rights of those who choose to change from being men to women and women to men.

At a nursery school in Tumham Green, West London, three-year-olds too young to read or write are required to sign an agreement in which they promise to:

'be tolerant of others whatever their race, colour, gender, class, ability, physical challenge, faith, sexual orientation or lifestyle and refrain from using racist or homo-phobic or transphobic language'.

The article describes how a uniformly left-wing world view is being promoted. Just before the election, one school was accused of having told its children that Labour *'is the only Party that wants us to live'*, and of having asked its ten-year-old pupils to write essays on why people should vote for Ed Miliband. Global warming and environmental issues were at the top of the agenda for opinion making. Nowhere, perhaps, is the march of the Mind Police more evident than in the way virtually the whole curriculum has been hijacked by environmental issues. A popular revision guide for GCSE English gives this example of a 'boring' sentence that may receive 'zero marks': 'Global warming is a bad thing.' And this as a 'much better sentence': 'Global warming is a very serious and worrying issue.' Then there's the Climate Cops initiative in schools in which children were given police officer-style note-books so that they could 'book' them-

selves, their friends or family members if they saw them wasting energy or performing 'climate unfriendly' acts.

One teacher writes:

'Geography was about saving rain-forests, re-cycling and instilling guilt about how humans are ruining the Earth. In literacy, there was very little focus on grammar or spelling. For history, we'd use a textbook with made-up quotes from historical figures, telling us how bad the British Empire was.'

Tradition is seen as the enemy of a future where everyone is equal, all shall have prizes and everyone should embrace the glorious new order of the enlightened, progressive Left. If the latter sounds like a form of cultural Marxism, that's effectively what it is. Anyone who dares to challenge these views will be a social outcast.'

The results of this are being seen in what is happening in our universities. According to another article in the Daily Mail, 'Britain's students: the new fascists?'...

'Britain's universities have changed. They've turned from citadels of intellectual inquiry into sprawling camps of conformism, where anyone who dissents from what is decreed to be the correct thought processes will be cast out into the academic darkness. Our colleges are now stuffed not with bright-eyed students keen to discuss any ideas, however radical, but proselytising zealots who will hound off campus anyone that offends their politically correct sensibilities. They spend their time constantly on the lookout for thinkers or books or even pop songs that blaspheme against their right-on ideology.'

Even radical feminist speakers who question transgender rights are being banned from speaking lest they cause offence.

Causing offence is the ultimate sin in this new 'group think'. Here are some views which it considers deeply offensive —

1. Jesus meant it when He said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.' Therefore there is the one way to God and people of all faiths and none should repent and believe the Gospel, that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again from the dead. Very offensive to atheists, Muslims, Hindus and nominal Christians.

2. Israel has a right to exist and to defend itself against those who attack it and wish to wipe it out. Very offensive to Muslims and pro-Palestinian groups (who are all very active and vocal in universities).

3. Marriage is between a man and a woman. Homosexual acts are sinful in the eyes of God. If you are born a man, be a man and if you are born a woman, be a woman. Very offensive to homosexuals, transgenders and their supporters.

Strangely, it does not matter how offensive you are to Bible-believing Christians. They should put up with being villified and ridiculed, because their views are offensive and should be banned altogether (and probably will be before too long).

From: Light for the Last Days magazine (Winter 2016)

THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813 – 1843)

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2: 8-11).

The last time I had the pleasure of speaking to you, it was about the Church of Ephesus, that Christ blamed it for something. He had this against her, that she had left her first love, and He bids her repent and do the first works; if not, He will come quickly and remove the candlestick out of its place. Ephesus was once one of the most flourishing Churches of Asia, but Jesus did come quickly, and He removed the candlestick. It is now only a heap of ruins [c. 1840]. So may God do with us – He may take away our candlestick. We have many churches just now and flourishing congregations; but God may leave us a heap of ruins, with only one Christian to tell us that the candlestick hath been taken away.

So it was with Ephesus; but it is very different with Smyrna. Notice, Christ does not blame her for one thing. What! Were the Christians of Smyrna so holy that even the eye of Christ did not see any fault? Well, we can get no comfort from that; for if Jesus were to send us a letter, it would be full of blame. But no! the Christians of Smyrna were just what Christians are now, but Christ

washed them in His own blood, and clothed their naked souls in His righteousness; and therefore He saw them all fair. This message to Smyrna reminds me of the Epistle to the Philippians; it is all kindness, all love. So is this message of Christ's to the Christians in Smyrna; it is all mercy, peace, gentleness, kindness and love. Smyrna is still one of the most flourishing towns of Asia. It has 100,000 inhabitants, and it has several churches, and two stations where are Protestant ministers, just like our own. God lighteth the lamp wheresoever He will.

But let us now see the *message* that was sent to Smyrna, and notice, first, *the character Christ takes to Himself here*. He takes different characters in all the messages to the seven churches, and it is very beautiful to remark that He takes a character which suits the case of each of them. To the Church of Ephesus He says, "I am He that holdeth the seven stars in My right hand, and who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"; showing them that He could remove the candlestick when He pleased. And *here* He takes His encouraging character: "These things said the First and the Last, which was dead and is alive." Notice, in the first chapter of the Revelation, what John says, when Jesus was revealed to him at Patmos, when "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace" – John says, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead". And Jesus said unto him, "Fear not" – just what He used to say upon the earth. You remember He said to His disciples on the Sea of Galilee, "Be not afraid"; and here, when John fainted, Jesus encouraged him by saying the very same words, "Fear not." And when on earth He used to stretch out His right hand – so John says He did to him: "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not."

And Jesus says here, "These things saith the First and the Last." He was the first at creation, and He will be the last at it; it is He that will gather everything together like a scroll. It is He who will make all things new; He says, "I will create new heavens and a new earth." And He is the first and the last in providence. From the time when a child is born into the world, Christ directs all the providences that happen even unto its dying day. And He is the first in grace. It was He who carried on the plan of salvation. And He was the last at it; it was He who said, "It is finished." It is He who laid the foundation-stone of this church, and it is He who will put on the top-stone. He is the first at a work of grace in the soul,

and He is the last at it – He will be with you in your dying hour. It is this that gives us hope: “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

And again, Jesus says of Himself here, He was dead and is alive again. How encouraging is this character of Christ! Jesus *was* dead – He has not still to die; it is all over. It is this that gives peace to an awakened soul, to know that Jesus was dead. Well, then, Christian, you are quite safe; no wrath can come upon you, every drop of God’s wrath hath fallen on *His* head. You have no more cause to fear it falling upon you than you would have to fear a storm of thunder and lightning, or an earthquake that happened more than eighteen hundred years ago. This gives great peace.

But there is another thing that gives peace – Christ was dead and *is alive again*. He has risen, and hath been accepted, and is now at the right hand of God; and we have peace from this, because we know that we shall be as pleasing and acceptable in the sight of the Father as Christ is. Jesus says, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.”

But let us see *what Christ says of the Church*. They had three kinds of troubles: “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty.” Afflictions very often go together. One trial seldom comes alone; perhaps sickness, or bereavement, and then poverty. But as putting the tree into the bitter waters made them sweet, so methinks it makes the bitter cup sweet – that there is so much sweetness in the cup, that none of the bitter will be felt, because Jesus says, *I* know it. It is *Christ* that knows. He measures all your suffering. He will not give you too much or too little. And again, Christ says, “I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” Another of the Christian’s troubles, and the third one that Christ mentions here, is Satan the devil. This is the worst of them all.

The church of Smyrna was very much tried, but it was the purest of them all: when gold is put into the fire, all its dross is taken away – so it was with the Smyrna Christians. Many of its members were burnt at the stake. Their Bishop, Polycarp, a very precious man, was cruelly put to death: and it is not that Satan is not as busy now, but he is sometimes a roaring lion and sometimes an angel of light. It is true we have not persecutions at present, for the devil just now is flattering men. Christians are

mixed with the world, yet the world hates them as much as ever. "Marvel not though the world hate you." But the devil *may* come out again like the roaring lion seeking his prey. *Our prisons may again be filled with Christians.*

But let us now see *the encouragements that Christ gives.* He says, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)." I had rather Christ would say that of me than all the wise men in the world. I had rather that Jesus would say unto me, "Thou art rich," than that all the world should say it. *They* are very apt to say of Christians, "They are poor"; but it is because they are blind. I have no doubt this word in the Bible is very little believed, but it is no less true: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom?" But do not mistake me, you will never get to Heaven because you are poor. There are very few of the poor in my parish who seem to be rich in faith; and O, if you are not in Christ, you are miserably poor, and will be miserably poorer still. But be ye rich in faith, and ye shall be heirs of the Kingdom!

Again, Christ says, "Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer." O that is a sweet word – fear none of them, the smallest or the greatest of them. If you stand on the seashore, you will notice that sometimes after a very small wave, a very large one comes. So it is often with affliction; Christ sends a small trial first, that He may prepare you for a large one; but fear *none* of them. If you were to bear the burdens yourself, you would be overwhelmed; but take them to Jesus, lay them all upon Him, and then you will slip from under them, and you will have to bear nothing. I believe there is not one who is a Christian here, but who will have to suffer in some way or other; for it is written, "Thou *shalt* suffer." But fear *none* of them. Fear not tribulation and poverty, fear not reproaches, fear not persecution, "fear none of those things which thou *shalt* suffer."

And here is another of Christ's encouragements: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The second death! And are there two deaths? Yes. Have you ever been at a death-bed? Have you ever seen the eyes roll back, the lips quiver, and the hands grow cold and motionless? Have you ever seen the death-bed of a sinner, of one who cried out, O for another day! O for another hour! O for another moment! – of one who was *obliged* to die? Well then, that is but a shadow of the second death.

When you are walking on the road, and when the sun causes you to see your figure, that is only the shadow – the substance is the real thing. So it is agreed by the soundest Divines (and I believe it is true) that God intended the first death to be a type, or shadow, of the second death of the Christless soul. If the first, the shadow, be so dreadful, what will the second death be? – when it shall be eternally dying, but never dead; when you shall be wishing to die, but are not able! When you see one ill with fever, he is anxious to get water, but he cannot swallow it; and this is but a type of the burning thirst of those who have died without Christ, when they shall ask for a drop of water to cool their parched tongue. But it is very different with the believer. Death is no death to him, for Christ hath taken away its sting. It is to him an entrance into life, and then he shall not be hurt of the second death – it shall pass by, but shall not touch him.

And again, Jesus says, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It is called in one place a crown of gold, in another a crown of righteousness, in another a crown of glory, and here it is said to be a crown of life – it shall never fade! But what is meant by being faithful unto death? It is to be believing unto the end, to believe unto your dying hour; and then, when God wipes away the tears, Christ shall put on the crown.

LIVING DESIRES

By: J. C. Philpot

“Look Thou upon me” – is not that the desire of your soul? You could not utter that prayer before the Lord quickened you. Before you can utter that prayer you must have faith to believe that the Lord *does* look down upon His people. You must have a desire in your heart that the Lord would specially bless and favour you. You must be weaned from all creature righteousness, creature wisdom and creature strength and be looking to the Lord to bless you with that blessing which maketh rich.

Do you not see how kind and tender the Lord is to His people? Do you not see that they are the only people on the face of the world whose lot is worth envying? Does not sometimes this petition – if not in words, at least in substance – steal out of your heart; “O that Thou wouldest look upon me! Though I am a vile wretch, though I am a guilty sinner, though I am a base

backslider, though I am a filthy idolater, though I deserve to be banished from Thy presence, though I merit to be trampled under foot – yet look upon me! It is what my soul desires – that Thou wouldest bless me; that Thou wouldest show me Thy mercy; that Thou wouldest shed abroad Thy love in my heart; that Thou wouldest speak with Thy own lips and whisper into my heart, “Fear not, for thou art Mine.”

And when you read in the Word of God, or hear from the lips of some experimental man of truth, the feelings of God’s people, those whom the Lord has really blessed; when you hear of the rain and the dew of Heaven falling upon their souls and the secret of the Lord resting upon their tabernacle – is there not in some of your bosoms a longing desire that the Lord would so bless you, so manifest Himself unto you, that you may enjoy the very same things in your own heart, by an application of them with power to your conscience?

From: ‘Sin and Salvation’ Selections from J. C. Philpot

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**‘Mercy is a sea of infinite sweetness for
faith to bathe in.’ Polhill**

FOOTNOTES for Richard Bennett article - Pages 4 - 12

¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/13/world/paris-shooting/> 12/15/2015

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZPZTYPPaiU>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZPZTYPPaiU>

³ www.clarionproject.org/blog/europe/al-baghdadis-trojan-horse-arrives-europe 12/21/15

⁴ <http://www.ruhrnachrichten.de/staedte/bochum/Bischof-in-Bochum-Kardinal-Lehmann-will-interreligioese-Gespraechе-mit-dem-Islam-foerdern;art932,2189134> Translated from the original German 12/15/2015.

⁵ <http://abcnews.go.com/US/pope-francis-philadelphia-founded-haven-religious-freedomtolerance/story?id=34064928>

⁶ www.societyofmaryusa.org/JPIC/JPIC-Action-HumanitarianCrisisInSyria110515.html 12/15/2015

⁷ www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis.cfm
<http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis.cfm> 12/15/2015

⁸ www.breitbart.com/london/2015/09/05/gulf-states-refuse-to-take-a-single-syrian-refugee-say-doing-so-exposes-them-to-risk-of-terrorism/

⁹ Details on: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1091218/Muslim-prayer-rooms-opened-Catholic-schools-say-church-leaders.html#ixzz3ubVKMF6E>

¹⁰ <http://www.truthrevolt.org/news/catholic-school-offers-sacred-place-muslim-prayer>

¹¹ <http://galliawatch.blogspot.com/2013/12/pope-francis-on-islam.html/20/14>

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Para. 841

¹³ All quotes from the Koran are from this site: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/k/koran/>

¹⁴ Ephesians 1:7

¹⁵ John 8:58

¹⁶ John 10:30

¹⁷ John 8:24

¹⁸ 1 John 1:5

¹⁹ John 17:3

²⁰ 1 John 5:13

²¹ Luke 6:35-36

²² <http://craigconsidinetcd.com/2014/01/24/pope-francis-christians-must-build-bridges-of-dialogue/>

²³ Ephesians 1:11, *"who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"*

²⁴ Job 11:7-8

²⁵ Romans 11:33; Isaiah 40:28; Ecclesiastes 3:11

²⁶ John 17:17

²⁷ Romans 5:12

²⁸ Ezekiel 18:4

²⁹ Ephesians 1:4, 6

³⁰ Romans 3:24

³¹ Romans 5:21

³² Romans 5:17

³³ Psalm 72:19

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