

# CHRISTIAN WATCH

Issue No. 37

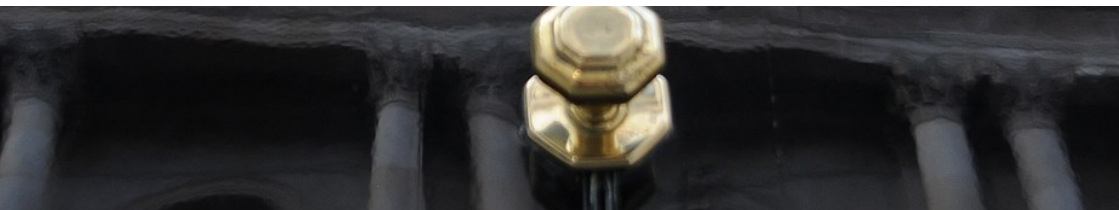
A Protestant Biblical Witness

Jan/Feb 2022



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

*Mark 13:37*



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**“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Isaiah 27:3**

The Lord Jesus Christ, who lives at God's right hand, has to send down supplies of His grace continually to keep your soul alive unto Himself. Without this life being kept up and maintained by these continual supplies of His grace, you cannot pray, or read, or hear the Word, or meditate with any feeling or profit. You cannot love the Lord and His blessed ways; you cannot submit to His righteous dealings; or hear the rod and Him who appointed it. You may approach His throne, but your heart is cold, clouded and unfeeling; your spirit sinks under the weight and burden of the trials and difficulties that are spread in your path; nor are you able to do anything that satisfies yourself, or that you think can satisfy God.

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**J. C. Philpot**  
*Ears from Harvested Sheaves*

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(Some articles may not necessarily reflect the opinions and beliefs of Christian Watch but are included for information only and not as an endorsement.)

January, 2022

*Dear Friends,*

In this, our first Newsletter of 2022, may I again bring you greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In February, 1952, Her Majesty the Queen ascended the throne following the death of her father, King George VI. 70 years later, we congratulate her on reaching this tremendous milestone of her platinum anniversary – a remarkable achievement – and it is good to report that in the recent General Synod of the Church of England, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II urged the Church to continue in its ‘supreme task’, which is ‘to bring the people of this country to the knowledge and love of God.’ In the speech, delivered by the Earl of Wessex on her behalf, she stated that the Church must focus on the unchanging Gospel of Christ. “Whilst we focus,” she said, “on all that has changed over the past 70 years, much remains unchanged – including the Gospel of Christ and His teachings.”

Whilst Her Majesty the Queen was saying the above, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Justin Welby) and the Archbishop of York (Stephen Cottrell) were busy elsewhere. Two important events have taken place which show the true state of the Church of England in 2022. Firstly, the Archbishop of Canterbury has selected a Secretary who will oversee the appointment of Bishops in the Church of England. His name is Stephen Knott, a gentleman who, in 2021, entered into a same-sex marriage relationship with Alastair Bruce, the Governor of Edinburgh Castle. The Archbishop of Canterbury recently referred to Mr. Knott’s predecessor as, and I quote: ‘the most powerful person in the Church of England.’ That this strategic position is to be occupied by a person in a same-sex marriage relationship is clearly not good news.

Secondly, the Archbishop of York is of the opinion that climate change is the Gospel. This is what he said recently in Canada. “This is the Gospel...how we inhabit the world in the way of Christ...this is the Gospel. So, I’d want to preach and teach about it much more.” He went on to press home the point by saying – “this needs to be not a kind of add-on to the Gospel.” This language of Cottrell is reminiscent of what the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 1: 8-9 – “*But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*” The Archbishop might wish to reflect on what the great Apostle said – and in whose Apostolic footsteps he claims to tread – as, in Biblical terms, the curse levelled by the Apostle Paul involves eternal damnation. His implication is that false teachers cannot show the true way of salvation because they do not have it themselves.

The Archbishop wasn’t finished yet though. He went on to say that ‘we need to teach

more about this. Clearly, I have been asleep at the wheel for over seven decades, unaware that my lifetime pursuit proclaiming the Gospel in thought, word and deed has been misplaced and I should have been alert to volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, cows and sheep defecating in the bucolic streams of New Zealand and running around the world in greenhouse gas spewing jet planes, a major cause of our climate dilemma.' So, there you have it! The good news of Jesus Christ is fixing climate change. This is why Jesus died on the cross. This is the cause for which countless Christians have been martyred. This is what gives meaning and purpose to life. What utter incoherent tripe! The late Bishop Charles P. McIlvaine stated: "The New Testament leaves us in no doubt that the heart of the preaching of the Apostles - and the early Church - was Christ." This seems to have eluded these two Archbishops!

Northern Ireland Protocol – make no mistake! The protocol is a dire consequence for every citizen in Northern Ireland. Creating a border in the Irish Sea has advanced the partitioning of the United Kingdom and promoted the unifying of the island of Ireland economically. Article 6 of the Act of Union was the fundamental building block and foundation of the Union. It was to the effect that there would be free and frictionless trade across and within the entirety of the United Kingdom. Pray that the DUP (the largest Unionist Party in Ulster) will realise that it is and was always the case that Northern Ireland could be sacrificed for Europe – and that they must act accordingly before it is too late.

In these dark and evil days in which we live, which try the patience and test the mettle of us all, there must be a light to dispel the darkness, an anchor to stay our ship and a compass to guide us. That compass, that anchor, that light, is the living Word of God, by which the worlds were formed and the raging storm was silenced in an instant – and by which all things consist. The Word of Almighty God gives light and life to all and quickens the spirit of man, enlightening the hearts and minds of all those whom it touches. Turn daily to God's Holy Word for guidance and strength, spending time each day in meditation and prayer.

Pastor John Sherwood's adjourned Hearing at Uxbridge Magistrates Court has been re-arranged for Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2022. This follows his somewhat heavy-handed arrest for preaching in the open air near Uxbridge Tube Station last year. Please remember Pastor Sherwood in your prayers.

May I take this opportunity to thank you if you have already renewed your Annual subscription for 2022 and for your continued prayerful and financial support. The subscription fee remains unchanged at £12 and we look forward to hearing from you if you haven't yet made contact.

Yours in His service,

*Ian Henderson*

Ian R. Henderson  
(Chairman)

# THE GOODNESS OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT

By: Peter Murcott

Bible League Quarterly, January – March 2022 issue

*“O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.” - Psalm 67:4*

It is a good thing to be reminded at regular intervals that the government of nations is graciously ordained of God. Scripture declares: “By Me Kings reign, and princes decree justice. By Me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth” (Proverbs 8:15,16). To this, the New Testament adds: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers” (Romans 13:1).

These and other comparable portions of Scripture are applicable everywhere. It matters not whether a country is an Empire, a Kingdom, or a Republic. It makes no difference whether it is a one-party State, or a democracy, or of any other constituted character. Those who govern receive their power to do so from God. It does not emanate from the people, even if their constitution is worded that way. Paul continues: “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (verse 1).

## **An unalterable reality**

That is the unalterable reality whether it is acknowledged or not. That is why Scripture says that “the throne is established by righteousness” (Proverbs 16:12b). It is, of course, perfectly possible for Governments to ignore the implications of this and to pass laws in open defiance to the Word of God. Yet Scripture warns: “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts” (Proverbs 21:2). Therefore,





remember that no rebellion against God will succeed (see also Psalm 93).

These realities should be known and acted upon; but the faithful, especially at the present time, might well ask: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3). How should Christians respond where God's holy laws are ignored? What should they bear in mind? The Psalm just quoted supplies the first limb of the answer. The foundations of truth simply cannot be destroyed by being disregarded. "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in Heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." God is in full control. Therefore, look to Him! Love and obey Him! Have faith in Him! Boldly make His way known! Never give up! Above all, *never* depart from His Holy Word; rather receive it gratefully.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. The Gladness of God's People.**

Our text speaks of joy. It begins by saying: "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy." Singing is one of the most natural ways of expressing exhilaration. It was present at the very beginning of creation. How do we know, for no mortal was there? Hear what God said to Job, in the form of rhetorical questions, as recorded in Job 38:4-7:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?  
declare, if thou hast understanding.  
Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or  
Who hath stretched the line upon it?  
Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who  
laid the corner stone thereof;  
When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of  
God shouted for joy?



Joy was there for an excellent reason: perfection, power and purity were present, because God was there: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the great Creator. This is surely a matter for great rejoicing! What is man in comparison? (Ps. 8:4). Why should anyone be awestruck by what he says, thinks or does, especially when he acts in direct conflict with the word of Almighty God?? The Bible says of God: “For Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth” (Ps. 67:4). And so He will, no matter what happens.

### **An immense blessing**

Is that more than enough to make every believer to be full of overflowing with gratitude and joy? Psalm 11:7 says: “For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; His countenance doth behold the upright.” This supplies the second limb of what the righteous can do. Remember that the Lord God Almighty is fully aware of all the afflictions of the righteous, especially in the days of decadence and of national apostasy. Moreover, as Psalm 34:19 promises: “the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

Therefore, brother, sister in Christ, stand firmly upon the rock of truth where your feet were set at your salvation (Ps. 40:2). Walk in God’s good way, “and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16b).

The joy of the Lord is a direct result and an expression of saving health, mentioned in Psalm 67:2. It keeps you faithful to God through thick and thin, especially if, like physical health, it is looked after. Mortal man on the other hand is governed by moods – especially by the mood of the moment, which is hostile to the Word of God. Those who are not blessed with saving health are very susceptible to the malign influences of the age. In contrast those full of the joy of the Lord can effectually declare:

None of these things move me, neither count I my life  
dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with  
joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord  
Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.<sup>3</sup>

How does the Psalmist continue? “O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.” This draws attention to –

## **2. The Goodness of God’s Government**

Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was political upheaval in Britain about how the nation was to be governed. There were two conflicting views. The first one regarded all political power as resting primarily in the Monarch’s hands. This was known as ‘the Divine right of Kings,’ which taught that the King should not be challenged as to what he did, or be compelled, if necessary, to change course. The theory then was that the King was answerable to God alone, and that on earth he was, in effect, God’s vice-Regent to



whom unquestioning loyalty and obedience was always due.<sup>4</sup>

The alternative view was that Government was a power-sharing partnership between the Monarch and the people's elected representatives. The two propositions were poles apart, making conflict inevitable.

### **The ultimate safeguard**

And conflict there was until 1688 when it was established that all law-making would take place between the Monarch and Parliament, acting together. Moreover, (and this is of fundamental importance), it was also agreed that all National laws should conform to the Laws of God and to the Christian faith. This was established by the Coronation Oath Act, 1688 that, amongst other things, required the Monarch solemnly to swear to maintain to the utmost of his or her power the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel. That Act is still in force.

That was truly a matter of rejoicing because it meant that the nation's Government ought to serve the people righteously, by establishing what was right and wrong in the sight of God.

### **The present day**

Why is this noble principle not conspicuous today? One reason is that, in 1688, Monarchs had far more power than they now have, meaning that now this ultimate safeguard is virtually impossible to exercise.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the Act represented the political consensus of the day that the sovereignty and the supremacy of God over-arched the laws of the land. That consensus no longer exists.

### **What to do**

Yet the Psalmist insists: "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt govern the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth." Yes, Christians should be overjoyed that God retains sovereign control; but what can be done about the current state of the nation?

#### ***1. Do not be unduly dismayed***

Yes, the days are dark. Without doubt, the nation has gone badly astray. Therefore, **pray** for it, individually and corporately and especially for those who govern. Remember, God's Word will prevail.

#### ***2. Be a light in a dark place***

"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Give Him the supremacy that is His due. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" i.e., the fear of the Lord (1 Peter 3:15).

### **3. Be aware of the relevant Scriptures**

Some of them have already been quoted. There are others such as 2 Samuel 23:3. Learn and quote them. Remember that the Word of God stands for ever (Ps. 119:89; 1 Peter 1:25).

### **4. Beware of acclimatisation**

There is a real danger of capitulation to the spirit of the age by acquiescing in it.<sup>6</sup> The corrupting power of the national departure from God's Word is both subtle and sinister. O be very watchful!

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). May this ever govern your hearts, words and deeds.

<sup>1</sup> In this, take heed and take heart from what it says. Read Psalm 91 for comfort. Read Psalm 93 for re-assurance. Notice especially verses 3 and 4 about the futility of man's rebellion against the Word of God. Remember what Christ Jesus said about His Words, Mark 13:31.

<sup>2</sup> Much wisdom is to be had from the middle verse of the Bible: Psalm 118:8.

<sup>3</sup> (Acts 20:24) Spoken by Paul when he was reviewing his life's work to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus.

<sup>4</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm II (reigned 1888-1918) of Germany adhered to this doctrine, even though by his time it was at least a couple of centuries out of date.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, William III (1688-1702) refused the Royal Assent to certain Bills, without any adverse consequence. Things are different now.

<sup>6</sup> For an article on The Spirit of the Age see the Bible League website [www.bibleleaguetrust.org](http://www.bibleleaguetrust.org)

## **UNITED PROTESTANT COUNCIL**

**Public Meeting** to be held D.V. on

**SATURDAY, 5<sup>TH</sup> March, 2022** at 2.00 p.m.

### **GOSPEL LIBERTY IN OUR NATION – HOW LONG?**

Speaker:

**Rev. Peter Simpson**

(Penn Free Methodist Church)

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# THE WILFUL BLINDNESS OF MEN!

By: Rev. Ivan Foster (Rtd)

*“And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.”*

Exodus 7:23.

As it was in Egypt at the time when God's judgments began to fall upon that land as the run-up to the 'Exodus', the Lord's delivering of His people and a bringing them on their way to the land promised of old to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, even so will it be again when the time comes for the Lord to fulfil His great promise to His elect people to return again to reign on the earth.

What happened in Egypt some 3500 years ago is instructive for us today for “all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). Of course, ungodly men do not see this to be so, but God's

people should ever see the Bible as a map upon which is wonderfully outlined not only God's dealings with men and nations in the past but, foreshadowed in such dealings, a pattern for the future.

With that in mind we can look back to Pharaoh's folly and see there a clear indication of that which will precede the Saviour's return in judgment upon the wicked and in wondrous delivering mercy for His chosen ones.

The ways of God do not change. His response to man's sin will ever be the same. As Malachi the prophet stated: “For I [am] the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6), so we may



see, in the past actions of God against the wicked, a paradigm of how the Lord will act in the future against man's rebellion.

That being so, we should study the Scriptures to find in them, in both the historical records and in the prophetic predictions, wonderful instruction affording us hope for the future. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

The description given us of the heart and mind of Pharaoh in our text is that of the mindset of our nation in the midst of the pandemic which rages at present. There is a 'turning of the back' upon the truth that is ever so obvious to those who truly fear the Lord and see His hand at work amongst the nations.

The events that have taken place in the last two years would have stirred our forefathers to see that this "is the finger of God"! But there has been an UTTER SILENCE in the midst of the millions of words spoken and written about the world-wide impact of Covid-19 regarding the Lord. Where He has been mentioned, there is an expunging of any reference to that mention in the media reports of the discussion or debate where someone had the courage and the wit to speak His Name.

The Parliament in Westminster in December was riven with division and disagreement, to such a degree that the Tory Party was almost split down the middle, with a large percentage voting against their own Prime Minister, Boris

Johnson. He suffered the biggest rebellion since he took power, as almost 100 Tory MPs voted against his Covid Plan B; but despite the ever mounting level of chaos and confusion in the ranks of various agencies struggling to cope with the effects of Covid-19, there is never a mention of the supernatural element in the whole affair.

Couple the impact of the ever-evolving crisis that the virus has brought upon society with the incalculable financial implications for Government, for businesses and for individuals, and you would think that there would at least be some mention of the unparalleled ramifications of this outbreak! But no, not a mention of perhaps the God of Heaven having something to do with these events!

But the scale of these uncustomary occurrences is not merely measured in medical and monetary terms. When we look out across the world, we have reports of the most horrendous natural catastrophes! Fires, droughts, floods and Avian Flu resulting in the slaughter of tens of thousands of ducks and hens. Then again, there is the increasing threat of war with Russia and China who are arrogantly flexing their nuclear muscles.

Ongoing are the wickednesses that are a dreadful provocation to Heaven. The slaughter of unborn babies - the killing of the unborn - is deemed by most today as a perfectly normal and routine practice, when in fact it must be seen as murder, infanticide. That is how Heaven views it. This was seen in the Lord's reaction to the cruel practice of Israel in its apostasy, when it turned from God to idols and the

slaughter of innocents was part of its idolatrous worship.

“For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? [As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. [As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you” (Ezekiel 20:31-33).

I find it amazing that the nation should react in horror and condemnation and call for the death penalty to be re-instituted

for the guilty as it did to the recent horrible murders of two youngsters by their parents and yet endorse the murder of the unborn. In truth, there is no distinction in the eyes of God between the atrocious actions of the womenfolk who have been found guilty of these appalling crimes and the on-going daily murder of unborn children.

Added to this national endorsement of murder, we have the legalising and ‘sanitising’ of sodomy, that which provoked the judgment which fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah. The Labour Party has appointed a man who has long been an openly proclaimed sodomite as Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary. There has not been any public protest at such an affront to decency and doubtless the political parties will have dealings with him without any hesitation.





This combination of abominable developments gives us the REASON for the Divine visitation that has come upon the nations; but the hearts and eyes of men and women are closed to this fact! Such blindness is a fruit of the spirit of rebellion amongst the nations. It is also the harbinger of the approach of God's final wrath upon the nations. As it was with Israel of old, so it will be with the nations of the earth. "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee ... The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart ... Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded thee" (Deuteronomy 28:15, 28, 45).

Christian, it is time to recognise and understand the 'signs of the times' and to

pray for loved ones and friends who are yet out of Christ and rejecting the Gospel for, without doubt, the darkness of the final apostasy and rebellion is drawing very near and with it dreadful occurrences.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

The outcome of this wilful blindness is clearly stated by the Lord in many places in Holy Scripture. The best known is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 - "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

May we, with open eyes and awakened hearts, prayerfully watch for that day!



# WITNESSES

**“Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.”**

Acts 1:8

One of the evidences of genuine conversion is a sincere desire to know and to do the will of God. Paul’s prayer on the Damascus road - “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6) - is proof that he had truly become a child of God. He had come to realise that he was not his own and that, in saving him, the Lord had a purpose for his life. That purpose for Paul was that he should be a witness for Christ. The same is true in the case of every believer. Surely our longing and prayer should be that we might be good witnesses. But what does this require?

First, in a court of law one is reckoned a good witness if he has confidence. There is clarity and certainty in his testimony. He knows what he speaks is true, for he has seen, heard and experienced it for himself. The Apostles used the same criteria in their witness for Christ: “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). As believers, we declare the truth we have personally experienced (I John 1:3).

Then there must be character. Opposing Counsel in a trial are aware that they can destroy the credibility of a testimony by discrediting the character of the witness. So, the world and the Devil are not slow to highlight the contradictions between what we profess to believe and how we actually behave. May God give us grace, that the message of our lips and our lives will be the same.

Finally, there must be courage. Under cross-examination, a witness’s evidence and person will be subjected not only to scrutiny but even to scorn. He must have strength of conviction to endure the bombardment of disbelief and ridicule. How we need to pray that we will remain faithful in witness even when called to “suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). What sort of witnesses are we?

**Rev. David Fletcher**

From: **Eagles’ Wings**,

Daily Devotional Meditations - Edited by Alan Cairns

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**“Witnessing is not something we do; it is something we are.”**

Anonymous



# THE VISIBLE CHURCHES WARNED

By J. C. Ryle

I ask my readers to observe that in every Epistle [to the seven churches in the Book of the Revelation] the Lord Jesus says - "I know thy works." That repeated expression is very striking. It is not for nothing that we read these words seven times over.

To one Church the Lord Jesus says, "I know thy labour and patience"; to another, "thy tribulation and poverty"; to a third, "thy charity and service and faith"; but to all He uses the words I now dwell on - "I know thy works". It is not - "I know thy profession, thy desires, thy resolutions, thy wishes" but - "thy works". "I know thy works".

The works of a professing Christian are of great importance. They cannot save your soul. They cannot justify you. They cannot wipe out your sins. They cannot deliver you from the wrath of God. But it does not follow that because they cannot save you – that they are of no importance. Take heed and beware of such a notion. The man who thinks so is fearfully deceived.

I often think I could willingly die for the doctrine of justification by faith, without the deeds of the law; but I must earnestly contend, as a general principle, that a man's works are the evidence of a man's religion. If you call yourself a Christian, you must show it in your daily ways and daily behaviour. Call to mind that the faith of Abraham and of Rahab was proved by their works (James 2:21-25). Remember it avails you and I nothing to profess we know God – if in works we deny Him (Titus 1:16). Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "Every tree is known by his own fruit" (Luke 6:44).

But whatever the works of a professing Christian may be, Jesus says, "I know them!" His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good (Proverbs 15:3).

You never did an action, however private – but Jesus saw it.

You never spoke a word, no, not even in a whisper – but Jesus heard it.

You never wrote a letter, even to your dearest friend – but Jesus read it.

You never thought a thought, however secret – but Jesus was familiar with it.

His eyes are a flaming fire. The darkness is no darkness with Him. All things are open and manifest before Him. He says to everyone - “I know thy works.”

- a) The Lord Jesus knows the works of all impenitent and unbelieving souls – and will one day punish them. They are not forgotten in Heaven, though they be upon earth. When the great white throne is set, and the books are opened, the wicked dead will be judged ‘according to their works’.
- b) The Lord Jesus knows the works of His own people – and weighs them. “By Him actions are weighed” (1 Sam. 2:3). He knows the why and the wherefore of the deeds of all believers. He sees their motives in every step they take. He discerns how much is done for His sake, and how much is done for the sake of personal praise. Alas, not a few things are done by believers, which seem very good to you and I – but are rated very low by Christ.

*Previously appeared in ‘English Churchman’ Newspaper,  
14 January, 2022*

# **“It is enough: stay now Thine Hand”**

*2 Samuel 24:16*

By **John Hooper**

(From **‘Grace for Troubled Times’**, devotional readings prompted by the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown - 12 May)

Dear Friends,

One of the concerns being expressed now about the epidemic is that there is no clear end in sight. A question being asked increasingly is - how long is this going to last? The anxiety in people's minds is that no one knows - and it could possibly go on for a long time yet.

That question - How long? - appears many times in Scripture, relating to many different situations. Often it is a prayer addressed to the Lord; sometimes the question is asked by the Lord Himself – and sometimes by an individual to another; or perhaps we're reminded of Elijah's challenge to the children of Israel - “How long halt ye between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21). In Psalm 79 it is a prayer to God offered at a time when the nation of Israel was under attack from foreign invaders. Jerusalem is reduced to rubble; the temple has been defiled and the people slaughtered. The cry goes up - “How long, LORD? Wilt Thou be angry for ever? Shall Thy jealousy burn like fire?” (v. 5). In Psalm 13 the prayer is personal: “How long wilt Thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?” (v. 1-2). And so we could go on with many more examples and in each case the inferences are the same, that God knows how long, that God always has our best interests at heart and that the duration is under His sovereign bidding and control.

The nations are taking radical steps to manage and minimise the effects of the epidemic, but they are very much in the hand of the Lord our God. Inevitably, at times like this, conspiracy theories arise and people become anxious for the future, but for our comfort we need always to remember that “A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). “There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand” (Proverbs 19:21). We may rest assured that the end of the pandemic will be timed in accordance with the Lord's own timetable established in His wise, eternal and perfect decree. In other words, it will come in His time and in His way to fulfil His

purposes. The plagues on Egypt came and went at the Lord's beckoning. For a more recent example, reports of the influenza pandemic in 1918/19 tell of a sudden reduction in cases as the virus mutated to become less virulent. Such a change could not have taken place apart from the sovereign purpose and direction of God. It might yet occur this time.

In Second Samuel chapter 24, we have the account of "a pestilence upon Israel." It was God's holy response to David's sinful numbering of the people of Israel and, in the space of one day, seventy thousand men throughout the land died; but as the Angel of the Lord stretched out his hand over the city of Jerusalem to destroy it, God said - "It is enough: stay now thine hand" (v.16). In wrath God remembers mercy (Habakkuk 3:2). It was not that mercy trumped justice, but that justice had been satisfied. Justice must be done – and so it was. It is enough! These words and the incident that prompted them have a typical character pointing us forward to Calvary, where the justice of God was satisfied perfectly in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sins of all His people. For our sins. It is enough. A. W. Pink writes, "how these words remind us of that blessed utterance of our Saviour's - 'It is finished' – proclaiming the glorious truth that all the claims of God are now fully met." There remains no more sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:26).

We can be sure that the pandemic will not end a day sooner or a day later than when, according to God's purposes - "It is enough." It will end when it is enough for God; it will end when it is enough for this world and God's hand of judgment is stayed; and it will end when it is enough for us, His people, in His working these trials for our good. God will declare - "It is enough."

What is more, a day will come when God will pronounce over all the suffering, pain and sorrow of this world - "It is enough." Similarly, over the sin, the greed and self-centredness, the rebellion, the godlessness of man, He will one day pronounce - "It is enough." When all things are ready and the cup of man's iniquity is full, He will declare - "It is enough." When all the elect of God are gathered out of the world and into the safety and security of the Kingdom of His dear Son, the Son will appear in the clouds of Heaven and all the world will know - "It is enough." When God declares - "It is enough!" - then shall the end come and that will be to the everlasting comfort and joy of all of God's dear people, but to the everlasting sorrow of all who have not trusted Him.

In the meantime, may the prayer of our hearts be this: "How long, Lord?"

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# News and Current Affairs



## **2022: We shall reap, if we faint not**

Editorial comment by British Church Newspaper, 7 January, 2022

As we enter the New Year, we are conscious of the problems crowding in on us.

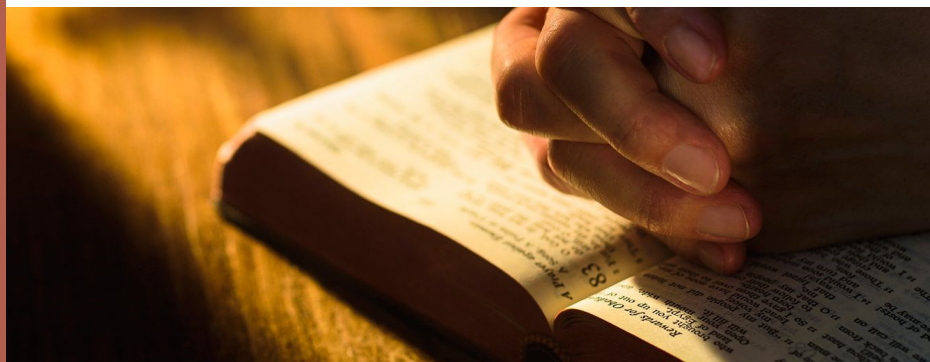
Churches are closing. Fewer people describe themselves as Christians. Public and private morals are collapsing. Brexit appears to be fading and with it the unity of our Kingdom. Mass illegal immigration continues unabated. No end to Covid is in sight. Falling incomes, rising taxes and inflation cause distress and discontent and prepare the way for unrest and for the authorities to curtail our democratic liberties. Government is losing respect. War looms in the Ukraine.

Can we do more than encourage the world in its solutions to the problems? Is there something we can offer that is quite different? The world craves a radical solution, a magic formula. Is there a word from the Lord?

First we must ask God to raise up more Christian leaders in Church and State. That is our desperate need. When God does a great work, He raises up leaders. Yet we should add, in the same breath, that the powers that be are ordained of God and must be respected.

So we offer a radical solution: "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Those are just the things that Church and State need and that is where they are found.

It is a message that has transformed our country in the past. So "let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal.6:9).



## CPS aims to make 'compassionate euthanasia' prosecutions less likely

Christian Institute website [www.christian.org.uk](http://www.christian.org.uk)

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has been accused of endangering vulnerable people with proposals to make prosecutions for so-called mercy killings less likely.

The CPS currently states that, where there is sufficient evidence that someone has killed a sick or infirm friend or relative, "prosecution is almost certainly required", with life imprisonment the maximum penalty; but new proposals state that a prosecution should be less likely if it is believed a suspect was "wholly motivated by compassion".

The proposals are being put forward for consultation, when the public will be asked for their views on whether the requirement to "almost certainly" prosecute any killing "even in cases such as 'mercy killing' of a sick relative" should be replaced by a number of factors for prosecutors to consider instead.



The factors include whether the victim "had reached a voluntary, settled and informed decision to end their life" and whether the suspect "was wholly motivated by compassion". Others include whether the suspect fully assisted the police or was part of a 'suicide pact' with the victim.

In the document, the CPS outlines eleven factors which would make prosecutors more likely to pursue a case, including if the victim was under 18 or lacking the mental capacity to make "an informed decision", or if the suspect is a doctor or nurse.

The Head of the CPS, Max Hill QC, claimed that "there are circumstances where actually, even where you have the evidence, you may be able to move away from prosecution".

But The Christian Institute's Ciarán Kelly expressed serious concerns, saying: "Current guidance already allows for a certain amount of discretion, but these proposals are far too subjective.

"There is a real risk that 'compassion' becomes a 'get out of jail free card' that undermines protections for vulnerable people."



Gordon Macdonald, CEO of Care Not Killing, said: “At a time when elder abuse and other crimes against vulnerable people are on the rise, most people will not understand why the CPS wants to launch a review specifically designed to weaken the laws that protect them.”

‘Compassion’ is also often used as an argument in support of legalising assisted suicide.

Baroness Meacher’s assisted suicide Bill is being considered by the House of Lords and, in Scotland, Liam McArthur MSP is also pressing ahead with his plan to legalise assisted suicide. But in a recent statement, the Christian Institute said: “True compassion for those who are terminally ill means valuing their lives, giving them hope, and ensuring that high quality palliative care is available to everyone who needs it.”

**CW comment:** *What does the Bible say? Exodus 20:13 states – “Thou shalt not kill” – whilst Ecclesiastes 7:17 asks – “Why shouldest thou die before thy time?”*

## The ‘Open Doors’ World Watch List, 2022

Open Doors website [www.opendoorsuk.org/worldwatchlist](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/worldwatchlist)

The Open Doors World Watch List ranks the countries where Christians face the most persecution – helping supporters to pray, support and speak out. The 2022 List was launched in Parliament on 19 January and the UK Government was urged to continue to uphold the principle of worldwide Freedom of Religion or Belief. Open Doors have long recognised that religious liberty is like the canary in the coalmine for all other human rights. When this freedom is violated, many others disappear with it and they are increasingly concerned over the increasing absence of any regard for human rights at all, as Governments are becoming more totalitarian. The Covid crisis has continued to be used as a cover to weaken the church and churches in some countries remain closed even though other Covid restrictions have been lifted. Below are the ten most difficult and dangerous countries in the world in which to be a Christian in 2022.

**1. AFGHANISTAN** — Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Christians have had to flee or go into hiding. Those whose names are known to the Taliban are being hunted down. If men are discovered to have a Christian faith they are executed. If women are discovered, they may escape execution but face a life of slavery or imprisonment.

**2. NORTH KOREA** — There is no religious freedom in North Korea. The regime keeps a watchful eye on all citizens. If Christians are discovered, they and their families are deported to Labour Camps as political criminals or killed on the spot. Gathering with other Christians is therefore almost impossible and must only be attempted in utmost secrecy.



**3. SOMALIA** — Christians in Somalia are under extreme threat. They are explicitly targeted by the terrorist jihadist group, al-Shabaab, often being killed immediately upon discovery. Anyone found in possession of a Bible or other printed Christian material is executed with the blessing of their relatives and community.

**4. LIBYA** — In lawless Libya, various radical Islamist groups and organised criminal groups target Christians to exploit, kidnap, rape, enslave and kill with impunity. When attacks are carried out on Christian converts by family members, it is considered a matter of honour.

**5. YEMEN** — Yemeni converts to Christianity run the risk of honour killing or physical violence if their families or communities discover their faith. New converts whose faith is exposed face pressure to recant. Refusing to do so can lead to imprisonment, violence or death.

**6. ERITREA** — The Government has refused to recognise any religious groups except the Eritrean Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran churches and Sunni Islam. Christians who have left the historical Christian communities (especially the Orthodox Church) to join non-traditional congregations and Muslims who have converted to Christianity can face serious violence, intolerance and discrimination. Non-traditional Christian communities such as Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are regarded as agents of the West.

**7. NIGERIA** — Christians endure a suffocating combination of Islamic oppression, ethno-religious hostility, dictatorial paranoia and organised corruption and crime. Most violence against civilians, especially Christians, occurs in the north (including the Middle Belt) and is perpetrated by Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), Fulani militants and armed 'bandits'. In raids, Christian men are kidnapped or killed, while Christian women are abducted, raped and forcibly married as part of the mission to de-populate Christian majority territories.

**8. PAKISTAN** — Christians are victims of roughly a quarter of all blasphemy accusations, despite being less than 2% of the population. Girls and young women continue to be abducted, forcefully married and converted. All Christians suffer from institutionalised discrimination; occupations seen as low and dirty are reserved for Christians by the authorities.

**9. IRAN** — Converts from Islam to Christianity bear the brunt of religious freedom violations. Leaders and members of Christian house churches have been arrested, prosecuted and given long prison sentences for 'crimes against national security'.

**10. INDIA** — Since Modi became Prime Minister, the annual reported number of violent attacks against Christians has increased dramatically. India's State-level 'anti-forced-conversion' laws have been enacted to regulate religious conversions and are misused to punish Christians by falsely accusing them.

## **Finnish MP Stands Trial for Tweeting Picture of Bible Verses**

English Churchman, 28 January, 2022

Finnish MP and Former Minister of the Interior, Päivi Räsänen, was tried on Monday, 24 January after tweeting a picture of Bible verses.

She was brought up on criminal charges for “ethnic agitation” under the War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity section of the criminal code of Finland.

The charges brought against Räsänen stem from a pamphlet she authored 17 years ago supporting the Biblical view on marriage and sexuality. She expressed those views on a radio show in 2019 and tweeted photos from it. As a result, the Prosecutor General charged her with three criminal charges.



Before the start of the trial, Räsänen said: “I have a calm mind ahead of the trial. I trust that we still live in a democracy and we have our Constitution and International Agreements that guarantee our freedom of speech and religion. If I win the case, I think that it is a very important step for freedom of speech and religion. I think it’s not only important for Finland but also in Europe and other countries. If I’m convicted, I think that the worst consequence would not be the fine against me, or even the prison sentence, it would be the censorship. So, now it is time to speak; because the more we are silent, the narrower the space for freedom of speech and religion grows.”

According to one report from Finland, the police “made strong recommendations not to continue the prosecution.” Her statements did not even run afoul of Twitter or the national broadcaster’s very PC standards.

Paul Coleman, Executive Director of the advocacy group, Alliance Defending Freedom International, said before the commencement of the trial: “In a free society, everyone should be allowed to share their beliefs without fear of censorship. This is the foundation of every free and democratic society. Criminalising speech through so-called ‘hate-speech’ laws shuts down important public debates and poses a grave threat to our democracies. These sorts of cases create a culture of fear and censorship and are becoming all too common throughout Europe. We hope and trust the Helsinki District Court will uphold the fundamental right to freedom of speech and acquit Päivi Räsänen of these outrageous charges.”

Räsänen has been a member of the Finnish Parliament since 1995.

# THE MYSTERY OF THE LORD'S DEALINGS

*From a discourse by J. K. Popham on the death of Lazarus:  
"I am glad for your sakes that I was not there" (John 11:15).*

Jesus Christ has always the best interests of His people at His heart; His people are very near to Him. He can neither do, nor permit to be done, anything to their real injury. Pained, grieved, burdened, perpetually killed, "killed all the day long" they may be; but all shall turn to the furtherance of the Gospel in them. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

On the face of it, His not attending to the implied urgent call from the sisters of the dying, then dead, Lazarus, would argue against His care, His love, His wisdom; as said the Jews, "Why could not this Man have prevented the death of His friend Lazarus?" He said here, "I am glad for your sakes, for I love you - I intend your good in all that I do. I am glad that I did not go. I let him die for your profit."

You are all acquainted with the pathetic story of this interesting family – the man Lazarus and two attached sisters, all of them loved by Jesus Christ. When Christ's friend Lazarus was sick, then sent the sisters to Him that message, "Lazarus is sick." I said it was a sort of summons. Perhaps they did not doubt that Christ would go instantly to heal their brother; but He abode two days after hearing of this sickness in the place where He was. He let His friend die. He did it wisely. He did it lovingly. He did it for His glory. He did it for the good of those whose sorrow was great at the death of Lazarus. And Jesus was glad to let this circumstance go to an extremity; glad that a death should come where it would have been absolutely easy for Him to have preserved life. He had but to send, as it were, a word without any utterance; a look, a command; and the disease would have left Lazarus. But no, that was not the Lord's way of glorifying Himself in this case; so He lets His friend die.

According to the Scriptures it is no uncommon thing for the Lord to let things go to extremes, to permit death to go here and there, to decree a consumption upon things, upon businesses, upon lives, upon experiences, upon hope; to let a death come. Instances are numerous of this in the blessed Word of God, which was "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." We will look at one or two instances of this dealing of God with His people.

Take, first of all, Abraham's case. He receives a promise of a son; and what more natural than for him to expect that son to follow at once? The promise was given, but God lets death come, permits it to be an impossibility on natural grounds that this son should come as promised. Twenty years killing a promise - solemn naturally killing a

promise. Twenty years of a blight on a promise full of life, full of myriads of people, nations and Kings and - above all others - of Christ, who should come in the promised line; and all, all dead, naturally dead.

Take Jacob's case. "Go," said his God to him, "Go back to thy country, and to thy father's house, and I will deal well with thee." What more natural than for Jacob to think that the way would be cast up, not a dog to stand in the way to hinder him from obeying God's commandment? But 400 men following an injured brother stand in the way and Jacob's fears stood in the way; death had come, 400 swords to prevent a promise being fulfilled; a brother's injured spirit, hatred rising up and standing between Jacob and the country to which he was told to return. God allowed it to come.

Take the case of Saul of Tarsus. Who would have thought that he, this enemy, this injurious person, persecutor, consenting to the murder of Stephen, was a vessel of mercy and an ordained Minister and an Apostle? Why did not the Lord stop him before? Why was he permitted to hale to prison men and women and to endeavour to cause many to blaspheme the Holy Name by which they were called? Nay, He lets the murderer go on, He lets him get his hands full of authority, as full of authority as his heart was of enmity and go boldly and madly toward Damasus, reach its gates and all but lay his hand on these poor saints; then comes the moment.

And why did not Christ prevent Peter's sad fall? He, who prayed that Peter's faith should not fail, could have prevented the trial, or permitting the trial, have prevented the fall. We see by these instances - and they could be easily multiplied - that Christ does not always stop evil when it would seem to His interest, and to the interest of His dear people, that He should do so.

Now come to your cases, to my case. Why does not the Lord put the hand of His power on our sins, our lusts, our wicked hearts, to prevent the outbursts, never seen perhaps, never heard by men, blessed be God, but heard and felt by ourselves? Why does He let these things occur? Why does He bring us into an acquaintance with that which the Apostle sets out of himself in the Romans - a conflict in which he was for a time defeated? "When I would do good, evil is present with me"; and "how to perform that which is good I find not." "When I would do good, I cannot do it; evil prevents me. And the good that I would I do not, and the evil I would not, that I do." Also, this may go on for such a time as to make the subject of the conflict think that he will die by the hand of his sins. He thinks his blood will be spilled on the battlefield and the prize he set out to win, the conquest he hoped to gain, the crown he looked forward to wearing and the harp he hoped to harp to God's praise in glory, now he may think he shall miss all. And the Lord does not step in powerfully to stop it.

Do you know this conflict? This bitter disappointment? Look back upon ten, thirty and forty years of conflict - I can go back to more than fifty years - and yet there it is... a

conflict. Shameful defeats are sustained. People cry out and shout to Christ, but He seems to shut out their prayers, as He seemed to shut out Jeremiah's. Why? And why this trouble in providence? Why an affliction that irritates you? Why a delay that wears you as the waters wear the stones, that makes you feel – and say perhaps sometimes to the Lord, that He knows you would honour Him, but how can you with this irritation always present? How can you with this annoyance to your eyes, this thorn in your flesh, this weakness, this crookedness, this difficulty; how can you? You would fain worship Him in quietness, but you are always more or less perturbed, disturbed, distraught. Why this straitness? Also why does that mighty Conqueror who led captivity captive and received gifts for men and who by a look could chain Satan and prevent his assaults and his subtlety, permit him to come and deal you deadly blows, or work - to your utter distraction and dismay - such foul deceitfulness in your mind, and whisper such terrible things concerning that God you could fain love and serve?

What is the reason? We do not well to ask 'why?' of some things. There are things we may not enquire into concerning God, who giveth not any account of His matters. However, when Christ does reveal a reason, then we may seek, we may look into that reason and seek to have it realised in our own souls. There is a reason here which Himself gives. Peter expresses the same truth when he says to the saints that the trial of their faith, which was much more precious than of gold that perisheth, was to this end – that it *"might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*

And so here, this trial to Martha and Mary, this that brought the question in the minds of the Jews, "Why could not this Man have prevented the death of His friend?", this that would be a trial to the disciples had for it a reason; a reason expressed to them very soon, namely, *"To the intent that ye may believe."* But they did believe already, did they not? Had they not said by Peter, "We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"? Yes, but no matter how much we believe, there is yet more in God to be believed; how much soever of Christ we believe, there is infinitely more in Him to be believed; and however much we have received, there is infinitely more to be received from Him.

And His dealings strange and cross, contrary to reason, destructive to natural possibilities, we have here in the death of Lazarus. "To the intent – for this end; this is My reason, My purpose. I purpose this, I intend it always, that when the cloud is dispersed, when appearances of unkindness, of neglect, of impotence are passed away, *you shall believe more than you believed before.*" And what are you to believe? "To the intent you may believe more fully that I am your Head, your Saviour and Friend. To the intent that ye may know that I who am the Life speak to death, and death is nothing to me; that I speak to corruption." "Lord," said Martha, when Christ commanded that the stone be rolled away, "Lord, by this time he stinketh; he hath been dead four days." In that climate corruption was soon manifest. O but what is this to Him who is Purity? What is death to Him who is Life?

# EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

2 Peter 1:4

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!  
What more can He say than to you He has said,  
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

In every condition – in sickness, in health,  
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;  
At home, or abroad, on the land, on the sea,  
"As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.

"Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed;  
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;  
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When thro' fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

"E'en down to old age, all my people shall prove  
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
*I will not, I will not desert to his foes;*  
That soul, tho' all Hell should endeavour to shake,  
***I'll never, no never, no never forsake."***

K., 1787

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