

CHRISTIAN WATCH

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A Protestant Biblical Witness

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

Mark 13:37

HM Queen Elizabeth II
1926—2022



IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

Letter from the Chairman	4
God Save King Charles III <i>Ian Henderson, CW Chairman</i>	6
Christian Watch letter to HM King Charles III	8
Jesus My Guide <i>Joseph Hart</i>	9
Put not your trust in Princes <i>Rev. Stephen Holland</i>	10
“Should such a man as I flee?” <i>Mason’s Spiritual Treasury</i>	12
“Blessed are they that mourn.” <i>Peter L. Meney</i>	13
The Heart must be given to God <i>Ambrose Serle</i>	15
News and Current Affairs	16
Zerubbabel’s Kind Dealings <i>James Bourne</i>	22
The Character of Martha and Mary <i>Thomas Reade</i>	24
Jesus Talking with the Centurion <i>Dr. D.A. Doudney</i>	27

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Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Committee of Christian Watch, may I again bring you greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Since the issue of our last Newsletter, we have – as a nation – been mourning the death of our long-serving and dedicated Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II. 70 years of service is a long time and even two days before her death, she was welcoming a new Prime Minister into Downing Street. I have included an article on Queen Elizabeth II and King Charles III in this Newsletter.

Northern Ireland – September is the month when we remember the signing of Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant – signed by nearly half a million people on 28 September, 1912. 110 years later, the recent announcement of the 2021 Census results in Northern Ireland have set alarm bells ringing. For the first time, the Protestant population has been overtaken by the Roman Catholic population, leading to demands being made for another Border poll. However, it remains apparent that many Roman Catholics have no desire to reject the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the recent response to the visit of King Charles III to Hillsborough Castle and Belfast indicated very clearly that the Royal family are still very popular amongst the rank and file. At the height of the 'Troubles' – in 1973 – during the Premiership of Edward Heath – a major referendum was held on the future of Northern Ireland, resulting in a voter turnout of 58% - 99% of whom voted to remain in the United Kingdom. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 states that 'if at any time it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a United Ireland, the Secretary of State shall make an Order in Council enabling a Border poll.' Ulster is British – and we must pray that the Lord will intervene and raise up men again like Lord Edward Carson and Sir James Craig, the founding fathers of Northern Ireland in the 1920s.

We have a new Prime Minister. Let me quote from a speech in a recent campaign:

'Why is the family an enemy? Why is the family so frightening? There is a single answer to these questions; because everything that defines us is now an enemy for those who would like us to no longer have an identity. So they attack national identity. They attack religious identity. They attack family identity. I must be citizen x, gender x, parent 1, parent 2. I must be a number; because when I am only a number, when I no longer have an identity or roots, then will I be the perfect slave at the mercy of financial speculators – the perfect consumer. That's why we inspire so much fear; because we do not want to be numbers. We will

defend the value of the human being – every single human being; because each of us has a unique genetic code that is unrepeatable. And like it or not, that is sacred. We will defend it. We will defend God, country and family.'

I cannot ever imagine Liz Truss saying that, you may think. Sadly, you would be correct. This was a speech by the new Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni.

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) – contains 10 clauses and is also complete in itself. The first clause confirms God's sovereignty; the second gives honour to His Name; the third testifies to the existence of His Kingdom; the fourth clause refers to the earth and its subjection to His law. The fifth clause establishes God's grace in the supplying of our daily needs, whilst the sixth makes way for the acknowledgment of man's sin. The seventh is our plea for spiritual guidance and followed by the eighth clause which contains our plea for deliverance from all evil. The ninth clause is an acknowledgment of God's over-ruling power and glory and the prayer closes with the tenth clause – an acknowledgement of the eternal nature of God.

As I write this letter, I can hear the birds singing, the occasional sound of a dog barking and the sun shining through the window. These things are so normal, but they are very precious and they tell us that our beloved Father in Heaven is still on the throne and that He is with us at all times. Let us determine to draw ever closer to Him. Let us learn to be still before Him and be reminded, in that blessed quietness, that He is God, that He is in control and that He is working all things together for our good. The birds and all the other creatures of nature continue on as always, uninterrupted, and the sun is still running its course. You may feel you are in the midst of a storm – but let us focus not on the storm but fix our eyes instead upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He is there, His goodness can be seen all around us. Trust Him and He will not let you down.

Yours in His service,

Ian Henderson

Ian R. Henderson
Chairman



GOD SAVE KING CHARLES III

by the **Chairman of Christian Watch**

Queen Elizabeth II

These past few weeks have witnessed one of the most dramatic periods in British history, with the election of a new Prime Minister on 6th September and then just two days later the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 8th September, the longest serving Monarch in British history. The end of an era indeed.

Although the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was both inevitable and expected, it still came as a great shock to the nation and, indeed, the world. The outpouring of grief was not only far greater than anyone expected, but also a manifestation which endeared great national pride.

It is difficult to comprehend that HM Queen Elizabeth II – in the 70th year of her reign – is no longer with us. Many cannot remember any other Monarch and her profile on stamps and coins has become as much a symbol of Britishness as the Union flag.

In her later years, particularly in the Christmas broadcasts, she made reference on many occasions to her Christian faith and, in her funeral service, which she herself arranged, it was good to hear the Authorised Version being so clearly read (readings that the Queen herself had personally chosen) and some of the old hymns being sung.

We take this opportunity to thank God for her dedicated service to both this country, the Commonwealth and even further afield, for so many years.

King Charles III

We must now, however, look to the new Monarch, King Charles III. At one time, he saw his role as not only ‘Defender of the Faith’ but ‘Defender of Faith’ more generally. More recently, however, speaking for the first time after his accession, King Charles III stated categorically: –

“The role and duties of Monarchy also remain, as does the Sovereigns’ particular relationship and responsibility towards the Church of England – the Church in which my own faith is so deeply rooted.”

Some still question whether King Charles III is really a believing Christian – time will tell – but on the public viewing of the Privy Council when the Accession Council Declaration was pronounced, King Charles III stated:

“

“I, BY THE GRACE OF GOD OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND OF OTHER REALMS AND
TERRITORIES KING, DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, DO FAITHFULLY PROMISE
AND SWEAR THAT I SHALL INVIOBABLY MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE THE
SETTLEMENT OF THE TRUE PROTESTANT RELIGION AS ESTABLISHED BY
THE LAWS MADE IN SCOTLAND IN PROSECUTION OF THE CLAIM OF
RIGHT AND PARTICULARLY BY AN ACT INTITULED ‘AN ACT FOR
SECURING THE PROTESTANT RELIGION AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
GOVERNMENT’ AND BY THE ACTS PASSED IN THE PARLIAMENT OF
BOTH KINGDOMS FOR UNION OF THE TWO KINGDOMS, TOGETHER
WITH THE GOVERNMENT, WORSHIP, DISCIPLINE, RIGHTS AND
PRIVILEGES OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND. SO HELP ME GOD.”

”

This Oath – which originates in the Act of Union, 1707 – has been taken by every Sovereign at their accession since King George I in 1714. It is our prayer that this vow, so publicly proclaimed by King Charles III, will be upheld and that we will see him faithfully uphold the Protestant Reformed Faith throughout his reign.

God save the King!



CHRISTIAN WATCH

A PROTESTANT BIBLICAL WITNESS

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His Majesty the King,
King Charles 111,
Buckingham Palace,
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10th September, 2022

Your Majesty,

On behalf of the Committee and members of Christian Watch, may I extend my heartfelt sympathy to you – and all the members of the Royal family – following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 11.

We mourn as a nation at the loss of such a dedicated and hardworking Monarch – our Queen – but are conscious that as a family you will miss her most of all.

Many of us have never known any other Monarch in our lifetime, but as you now take over the responsibilities of State – and the Oath of Accession is pronounced – we wish you well and trust that Almighty God will be your Guide and Counsellor in the days that lie ahead.

“Happy is that people, whose God is the Lord” – Psalm 144:15.

I am,

Your Majesty's obedient servant,

Ian R. Henderson

Ian R. Henderson
(Chairman).

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Letter to King Charles III from Christian Watch

JESUS MY GUIDE

(Psalm 73:24; 2 Corinthians 7)

Whene'er I make some sudden stop –
For many such I make –
And cannot see the cloud cleared up
Nor know which path to take,

I to my Saviour speed my way,
To tell my dubious state;
Then listen what the Lord will say,
And hope to follow that.

If Jesus seem to hide His face,
What anxious fears I feel!
But if He deign to whisper peace,
I'm happy! all is well.

Confirmed by one soft, secret word,
I seek no farther light;
But walk, depending on my Lord,
By faith, and not by sight.

Of friends and counsellors bereft,
I often hear Him say,
"Decline not to the right or left:
Go on; lo! here's the way."

Weak in myself, in Him I'm strong;
His Spirit's voice I hear.
The way I walk cannot be wrong,
If Jesus be but there.

He is my Helper and my Guide;
I trust in Him alone;
No other helps have I beside;
I venture all on One.

Joseph Hart

PUT NOT YOUR TRUST IN PRINCES

By the **Rev. Stephen Holland**

Protestant Perspectives

Protestant Truth Magazine September/October, 2022

The UK has recently undergone a change in political leadership. Whatever one's view is on the rights or wrongs of the circumstances that brought about this change, one cannot doubt that this is something new, even in our own nation. Such political turmoil, confusion and uncertainty have been with us before – several times in fact. The one thing that the believer in Jesus Christ ought not to do is to fret and panic. They look into the Word of God and find enlightenment and instruction. What does God have to say on these matters? Is God ever taken by surprise by human conditions? The obvious answer is no. Not only is He never taken off guard, but more precisely, He is in complete control of everything. What do we learn from God's word?

No perfection in a fallen world

Nations have been in existence since the early chapters of the Book of Genesis and further since the great flood in the day of Noah. One common feature about all these nations is their imperfections. No matter what period of human history we study, we ever find imperfection – corruption, lies, deceit, broken promises, theft, selfishness, backbiters, adultery and a million other sins that we could add. Nations have advanced in technology; conditions, life expectancy and creaturely comforts have improved vastly. Yet human rulers and leaders have not in themselves improved. Though we are called in Scripture to obey our leaders (unless our obedience contradicts Scripture), we are ever warned about putting all our trust and hope in them. They will fail and disappoint us. The promises in Scripture are never of a world growing ever more into perfection; rather, they are of a world struggling and battling the problem of sin.

No difference in the human heart

We may ask, why is it that human rulers never seem to improve from one generation to another? We read and hear of scandals and the same failures, but why? We cannot blame economic conditions, as we have rarely had it so good. The Gospel of Mark provides the answer: *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man”* (Mark 7:21-23). The human condition, with all its frailties, stems from a sinful nature. Until that is addressed, no amount of changing political leaders will solve the problem. It is a changed heart that is needed, regardless of any change in Prime Minister. Only the Lord can give a changed heart and restrain sin. We are to pray for our leaders. May the Lord grant us good leadership and not wicked rulers out of judgment.

No failure in the coming world

Unlike the present conditions in our world, the new world will have no disappointing circumstances, no change in human leadership and, more importantly, none of the effects of man's sinful nature. That will be no more. The effort by some to look for and create a perfect world will never materialise until God makes all things new. This will be in His time and by His power.

Until then, we must not make the mistake of looking to our leaders for our salvation. In the past, this brought disaster. Take the rise of Adolf Hitler. He rose to power under terrible economic conditions. He was even called their saviour. It is folly to place our hope and trust in men; they will disappoint.

We are ever called to look not to human genius or ability, but to the Lord who has promised to make all things new. That's not to say that we ignore our responsibility as citizens of the State. We must use our judgment wisely and vote for whom we believe will best serve our nation; and, as mentioned, **pray for our political leaders.**



“Should such a man as I flee?”

Nehemiah 6:11

From **‘Mason’s Spiritual Treasury’**

Nehemiah was engaged in a great work; his God was with him and gave success unto him; friends and enemies united against him; by base insinuation, craft and stratagem, they strove to dishearten and deter him from going on with God’s work. Opposition is the Christian’s lot; courage his honour; perseverance his jewel. Look at this man of God; he boldly repels all fear. Instead of fleeing from his work as advised, he flees to his God and cries, “O God, strengthen my hands.” Faith inspires prayer; prayer brings courage to the heart; then he boldly demands, “Should such a man as I flee?” - a man so greatly favoured, so highly honoured, as to be employed by God to work for him? No; I disdain such mean cowardice; I will work on, it is God’s cause; let God see to the event, I fear it not.

Christians, know your calling. It is to work for God; expect opposition from within and without; this may call up fear and dismay; but consider your dignity, maintain and assert it: “Should such a man as I flee?” A man called by the grace of Jesus, to resist the Devil, to face carnal men, to vanquish sin, to overcome the world, to victory over death and to receive a crown of righteousness in endless glory; shall I flee? What, I, who am called to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus? O my soul, put on Christ, and put off fear; put up prayer and put down dread. From whom should such a man as I flee? Of whom should I be afraid? Doth not my Lord say, “My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in thy weakness?” O Lord, strengthen my heart to resist Satan, that he may flee from me, and to overcome the fear of man, which is a snare to me. I bless Thee for Thy precious word; strengthen my heart in the faith of it: “Fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands” (Is. 7:4). “Hearken unto Me, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings” (Is. 51:7). “I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?” (Is. 51:12,13). The Lord God will help me, I shall not be confounded; I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed: the moth shall eat up my adversaries (Is. 50:7,9).

*‘Courage, my friends, Christ’s strength is ours;
Though of ourselves we’ve none.’*

“Blessed are they that mourn”

Peter L. Meney,

New Focus Magazine, July, 2022 edition

Sooner or later we all experience the death and loss of a loved one. It may be the most testing trial we ever have to face: a wife or a husband, a mother or father, a brother or sister, a child. Yet, child of God, know this, there is Divine grace even in bereavement for a believer and spiritual comfort in trusting the Lord when grief threatens to overwhelm our souls.

It was our Lord who gave the promise, *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”* (Matthew 5:4), and He who declared, *“I, even I, am He that comforteth you”* (Isaiah 51:12). Mark it down. Remember it when the time arrives. Our Father, our Brother and our Friend has made a promise; personal and particular to you, of a special portion of help for the special form of need that is bereavement.

It is to the promises of Scripture our minds must turn when waves of sorrow overwhelm our days and new depths of grief, as yet unplumbed, threaten to engulf our hearts and minds. The promises of Scripture are for you, dear saint. They were inspired by the Holy Ghost, recorded by men of like passions as ourselves and have been tested,



proved and confirmed to be true by countless generations to whom they have been sanctified by the love of Christ. It is Jesus who says, *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me"*, and adds, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you"* (John 14:1, 18).

However much the Lord's family may be distressed and disturbed by the changes of life and the passing of loved ones, they shall never be left destitute of mercy and grace. The promise to Paul is equally to you who mourn in Zion, *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). We delight in the brightness of Christ's glory, yet in this moment our emptiness and loss is the dark background against which the splendour of His goodness shines.

Submissiveness is seen as negative by today's wisdom but in the walk of faith it is a positive attribute taught by sovereign grace. Our experience of God's grace and goodness does not begin and end in our conversion. Far from it! We long to know the Lord more, day by day, to grow in grace, to deepen our faith and enlarge our appreciation of spiritual truth, yet the means by which this comes is never easy. John Newton wrote:

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

The Lord's people have no command or example to pray for afflictions or wish hardship upon themselves. Tribulation will come without being sought and is not to be prayed for. Yet, God in His wisdom will teach His people submission to His sovereign will that they might thereby discover Divine love and experience spiritual comfort in the depths of personal loss. Our Saviour learned obedience by the things that He suffered. Shall not His followers expect the same? It is after we are humbled under the mighty hand of God that we shall be exalted in due time. We must be brought low before we can be lifted up. It is the ploughed and tilled field that produces the best fruit.

The heart of our case is this. Let us under our heavy burdens look to Jesus to give strength and support. Only then shall we be able to resist the enemy of God's elect

and when he tries to darken our mind, disquiet our spirit, distress our soul, disturb our peace, destroy our confidence and damage our comfort in the dim paths of this world. *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me”* (Psalm 23:4).

It is our gift and privilege to trust a loving God and Saviour who delights to treat us with the goodness and gentleness His love demands. Our God is wise, holy and good to His people both when He gives and when He takes away that which He has given. When this world changes, remember, God changes not. We fix our eyes too readily on the blessings we receive rather than upon the Divine Giver whose hand supplies. All true life, peace and happiness comes from Christ and we must look to Him to provide it. Isaac Watts wrote, “All needed grace will God bestow, and crown that grace with glory, too.”

It is in dark days that believers prove the comfort, peace and light in God's promises.

THE HEART MUST BE GIVEN TO GOD

By **Ambrose Serle**

If we could offer to God the whole world and yet keep back our heart, it would be to Him a worthless and an odious offering. He considers not the greatness or outward grandeur of human works, but the spirit by which they are performed. Some build hospitals, make noble endowments, give large donations and do many other great and wonderful works; all which are not to be spoken against in themselves, because they are of use to the world and especially to the poor; but it is possible to do all these without a heart for God, without considering His glory, without faith in His mercy, or love of mercy to man — and without being in the least degree nearer to Him or His holiness. A widow with two poor mites and a hand and a heart of faith will be found to have done more than all these, in the sight of Him who judgeth righteously.

If our heart be given to God, we shall not be barren or unfruitful indeed; but our fruit will not be for carnal vanity, but unto true holiness. Christ in us the hope of glory is a principle of such power, that it turns a man (as it were) out of himself, delivers him from his own selfish whims and intentions, releases him from a multitude of slavish fears and concerns and ardently to desire and delight in those things alone which may exercise a gracious gratitude in showing forth the praises of his kind Redeemer.

The Christian Remembrancer

News and Current Affairs

Cremation and Annihilation – The Free Presbyterian Magazine, September, 2022.
Notes and Comments by Rev. D.W.B. Somerset

Cremation was re-introduced in Europe in the late nineteenth century and has become popular for various reasons. It is now cheaper than burial, it uses less space and there is usually no headstone to be maintained. Others do not like to think of their bodies rotting in the grave and prefer to have them burnt. For relatives, it may be a convenient way of evading the ongoing reality of death: there is no body and no grave and the deceased is almost reduced to being an idea of the past. In this way cremation fits well with atheistical notions of annihilation and of people going out of existence at death.

With burial, on the other hand, there is a body – or whatever remains of it – lying in the ground, in a particular place; and in looking at graves, the Christian's thoughts will never be far from the resurrection. Christ will return to this world on an appointed day and will raise all these bodies out of their graves (and those that have been cremated too, and those eaten by animals, and so on). To some it will be a resurrection to everlasting life (Dan. 12:2) and to others to shame and everlasting contempt. Christ lay in the grave and the believer is happy to sleep there as well when his turn comes. He does not fear or recoil from the corruption of the grave because it is only for a little while, and that which is sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption and glory and power (1Cor. 15:42-3).

The burial of the righteous in the ground is the sowing of a seed for eternity, but the furnace in which a corpse is cremated gives us a picture of the fate of the unrighteous. In that day, however, it will not be a body without feeling that slides into the flames but a body and soul united and susceptible to eternal torment. Burial for the believer is a mark of hope; cremation for the unbeliever is an evidence of despair.



Home Secretary: 'Police must prioritise crime fighting over wokery'

Christian Institute website 27 September, 2022

The police must focus on tackling crime instead of 'diversity' initiatives, the Home Secretary has said. In a letter to senior policing figures across England and Wales, Suella Braverman KC MP emphasised that the public have "a right to expect that the police get the basics right."

Earlier this year, it was found that 30 police forces had spent thousands of pounds on Stonewall's pro-LGBT training schemes. Braverman wrote: "Unfortunately, there is a perception that the police have had to spend too much time on symbolic gestures, than actually fighting criminals. This must change. Initiatives on diversity and inclusion should not take precedence over common-sense policing."

In an interview with The Daily Telegraph, Chief Executive of the College of Policing, Andy Marsh, added that such priorities damage the public's trust in the police and hinders its ability to work effectively. He said: "The fundamental purpose of the police is to keep our community safe, catch criminals and bring offenders to justice" and "where our conduct or behaviour becomes a distraction from that mission, it's unhelpful."

For example, Marsh highlighted that police officers' "appearance, behaviour and standards of dress has to say everything about our role and function. Badges risk distracting from that."

Referring to the College's interim guidance on 'non-crime hate incidents', he said: "The police should not be involving themselves in spats on Twitter. It is not where the public want the police to be. It is not their role. We cannot pick sides on contested social issues, we have a job to do: to police without fear or favour, to prevent and detect crime."



The College's interim guidance followed a Court of Appeal ruling last year, which stated that previous guidance on recording the incidents unlawfully interfered with free speech. The Interim guidance will remain in place until the Government approves a new code of practice, probably in early 2023.

Former police officer, Harry Miller, had challenged the College's previous guidance, which stated that when someone claims they have been a victim of hatred, officers must keep a record against the name of the accused person even where no crime was actually committed. No investigation of the claims is required.

A total of 119,934 non-crime incidents were recorded by 34 police forces in England and Wales between 2014, when the guidance was introduced, and 2019. The Court said that recording perceived offences in a police database was likely to have had a serious "chilling effect" on public debate.

From Death to Life – 'History is used as a pastoral tool by many church leaders in Iran.' by Claire Evans - International Christian Concern's 'Persecution' Magazine, July, 2022

King Cyrus' legacy is spread throughout the Old Testament. He is the King who helped exiled Jews return to their homeland and rebuild the temple. Isaiah calls King Cyrus anointed by God. Meanwhile, Daniel prospered under the reign of King Cyrus.

Today, he is remembered as the first Empire Ruler to codify religious freedom, yet his country is known across the world as a serious violator of religious freedom. Forty-three years ago, Iran violently transitioned from a secular to Islamic nation that became filled with a religious energy that sought to sanctify the nation. Almost overnight, the country transformed.



"The churches used to be a sleepy church because there was so much prosperity and there were so many foreigners living in Iran," remembered Tat Stewart from Talim Ministries. Stewart was a missionary living in Iran and witnessed the country's political transformation first-hand. Iran's embrace of Islam forced the church underground.

"They went from sleepy, once-a-month members to a church on its knees," explained Stewart, "but by closing churches and forcing them underground, they (the regime) could no longer monitor - and all an underground church needs are people who are hungry for the Word."

Dr. Mike Ansari from Heart4Iran agrees. "Before the revolution, the church in Iran was just maintaining a mere presence. It was a church [whose] legacy was being maintained.... After the revolution and a series of events, it seemed that persecution started and we saw the favour and growth of Christianity in Iran."

Forty years later, the desire of Islamic piety in Iran is replaced by a longing for cultural authenticity. The youth who have only known Iran's harsh interpretation of Islam are weary of the country's moral and economic bankruptcy.

"Iranian youth are no longer happy and satisfied with the status quo," said Dr. Ansari. "They are looking elsewhere for the meaning of life... This is a very enlightened generation of younger people in Iran."

Education has led them to realise that "the legacy and history of Christianity [in Iran] goes over a thousand years ago," continued Dr. Ansari. "The youth realise that, over time, the church was marginalised and eradicated by Islamic rulers. They are taking a sense of pride in their past and heritage. They want to know what their ancestors were before they were forced to be Muslim."



This is where King Cyrus becomes important. Iranians "gravitate toward historical fact... When they realise that in the Old Testament that King Cyrus was mentioned, revered and even a parallel to the Messiah, they really tune in," explained Dr. Ansari. "Iranians unfortunately these days are known to be terrorists, but that is not how the majority of them would like to be known... Once they realise that they have had a global impact and freed the captives, their worldview starts to change. Providing Scripture to the people of Iran helps validate their historical past."

For many Iranians, learning about Christianity means becoming in-touch with their ancestral history, a story that has been suppressed by the authorities. Iran's presence in the Bible is an opportunity for many pastors to share the Gospel. As Iranians experience newfound freedom in the telling of their own history, the miracle of the cross works within and the church only grows.

Death of Family: Majority of Babies Born out of Wedlock for First Time in History

Breitbart website, 10 August, 2022

The majority of babies were born to unmarried mothers in Britain for the first time in recorded history, the Office for National Statistics has just revealed.

ONS figures showed that of the 624,828 live births recorded in England and Wales last year, over 320,000 were born out of wedlock. A total of 51.3 per cent of live births were born to unmarried women, the first time a majority of babies were born out of wedlock since such records began in 1845.

Up until 1978, the percentage of children born out of wedlock was less than 10%. However, this increased to 34% by 1988 and has been over 40% since the turn of the millennium.

The Head of health analysis at the ONS, Dr. James Tucker said: "This follows the long-term trend of declining marriage rates and increasing numbers of co-habiting couples seen in recent decades."

The data also showed that women are waiting until older ages, with the majority of babies (372,222) being born to women over the age of 30. Conversely, the number of children being born to women under the age of 30 has fallen to half the rate seen 50 years ago.

Abbreviated



UN Draft Resolution heralds campaign for worldwide ‘right to abortion’

British Church Newspaper, 26 September, 2022

On 2 September, the United Nations (UN) adopted a resolution on ‘the right to justice for survivors of sexual violence’ which, in due course, will be put before the General Assembly. Whilst most would agree with its primary campaign objectives, one element of the resolution aims to promote the cause of ‘safe abortions’, using the wording “The right to the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women and their sexual and reproductive health.” The resolution disregards the legislation of many UN member States whose laws specifically protect human life in the womb, such as Poland.

Approval of the document by the General Assembly would reverse the outcome of the 1994 Cairo Conference, which left the decision on abortion matters to individual States, stipulating (Paragraph 8.25) that “abortion may not be promoted as a method of family planning.”

If adopted by the General Assembly, the UK would unleash a campaign pledging its support to legalising access to ‘safe abortion’ in countries around the world and call on Governments to “ensure sexual and reproductive health” as “a means to combat violence against women.” The authors of the document, in their preamble, went so far as to explicitly call on all States to “guarantee abortion as a right.” President Joe Biden is strongly in favour of such a policy.

The resolution – which was passed after four amendments failed to gain majority support – also included numerous references to ‘gender-based violence’, in line with an internationally accepted definition that includes “sexual orientation and gender identity.”



ZERUBBABEL'S KIND DEALINGS

By **James Bourne** from
'Morning Readings'

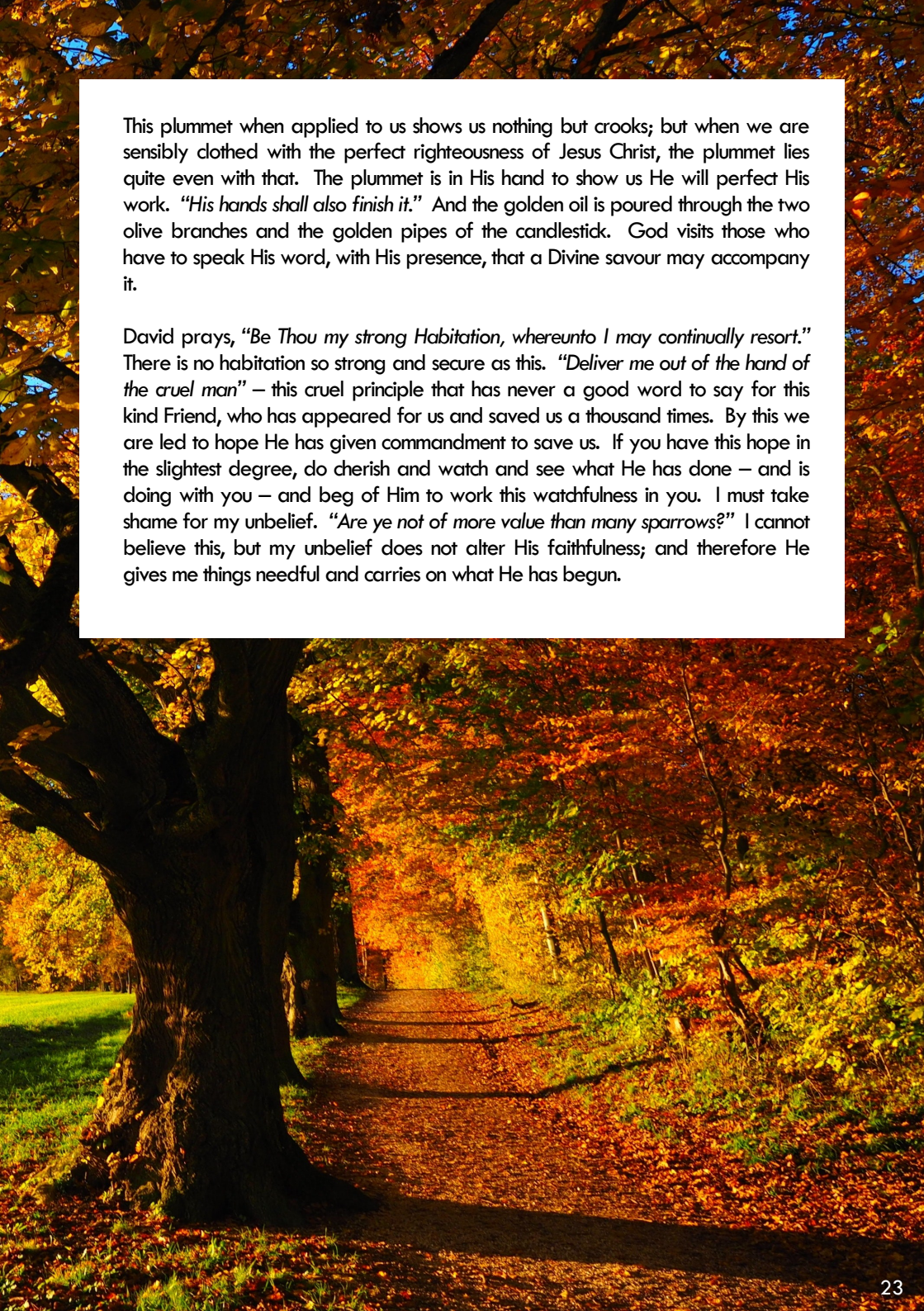
"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at."

The world wonders at the people of God; they seem such mean, poor, contemptible creatures, fit for nothing. They wonder that they have not come to an end long ago. They cannot see the secret power of God that supports them from year to year; but they see this, that when they get into their troubles that seem like destruction, they are always brought out of them.

"And the Angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." The Lord does this from time to time; for He says, "If I let these poor creatures alone, they will glide back into the spirit of the world." Therefore, He comes and gives afresh repentance and confession and spiritual energy to seek His face again with full purpose of heart. By being left for a time – and not being able to do these things for ourselves – we find the preparation of the heart is of the Lord (Prov. 16:1); that we may go to Him and ask Him to work these things in us.

"So I answered and spake to the Angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my Lord?" Now this is the way we should act: "O Lord, here is a dispensation I am now under which I do not understand. O Lord, please do not bring me into any dispensation for my good and leave me not to understand it. Be pleased to teach me and let that which is lame be healed." *"Then He answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."* This we ought to be fully persuaded of, that whatever is wrought in us, it is not by us, but by the Spirit of God in us. Our strength is soon gone and all we undertake in that will come to nought; but nothing can resist the power of God. Therefore He says, *"Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."* This Zerubbabel is Jesus Christ; and whatever the mountain be, of unbelief or pride, or what not, before Him it shall become a plain.

"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; His hands shall also finish it." This house is the poor sinner's heart where God dwells. How is it you have not one kind word for this Friend? *"For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel."*



This plummet when applied to us shows us nothing but crooks; but when we are sensibly clothed with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the plummet lies quite even with that. The plummet is in His hand to show us He will perfect His work. *"His hands shall also finish it."* And the golden oil is poured through the two olive branches and the golden pipes of the candlestick. God visits those who have to speak His word, with His presence, that a Divine savour may accompany it.

David prays, *"Be Thou my strong Habitation, whereunto I may continually resort."* There is no habitation so strong and secure as this. *"Deliver me out of the hand of the cruel man"* – this cruel principle that has never a good word to say for this kind Friend, who has appeared for us and saved us a thousand times. By this we are led to hope He has given commandment to save us. If you have this hope in the slightest degree, do cherish and watch and see what He has done – and is doing with you – and beg of Him to work this watchfulness in you. I must take shame for my unbelief. *"Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?"* I cannot believe this, but my unbelief does not alter His faithfulness; and therefore He gives me things needful and carries on what He has begun.

THE CHARACTER OF MARTHA AND MARY

From **Spiritual Exercises of the Heart**
by **Thomas Reade**

With what beautiful simplicity is the interview between Jesus and the sisters of Lazarus related by Luke in the tenth chapter of his Gospel. How gentle and yet how forcible is the reproof which our Lord gave to Martha; how gracious the testimony which He bore to the piety of Mary. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words. Happy and favoured station! She sat at the feet of Him who is infinite wisdom and heard, with teachableness and delight, those gracious truths which proceeded from His lips. The Lord inclined her heart, as He did Lydia's to attend unto the things which He spoke unto her. His words fell like good seed into a soil prepared by sovereign grace and brought forth the blessed fruits of righteousness.

Martha was cumbered with much serving and careful about many things. Her mind was ruffled at the apparent inattention of Mary, who had left her to serve alone; but Jesus, instead of reproof, bestows His commendation on Mary's conduct, since He came to their house not for the purpose of feasting Himself with their earthly dainties, but to feast them with the delicious truths of Gospel grace.

This family picture is often exhibited in the Christian world. We are naturally more inclined to the bustle of religious occupations than to the retired devotional exercises of meditation and prayer. Martha's hospitality was in itself commendable and sprang from love to her Saviour; but the hurried state of her mind, and the neglect of a precious season for spiritual improvement, were highly reprehensible. She forgot her own spiritual needs and the great object of Christ's visit. She was cumbered with much serving. Her spirit got ruffled. An improper feeling carried her away beyond the bounds of affection and decorum. She even interrupted our Lord in His discourse with Mary and wished Him to dismiss her with a suitable reproof for neglecting her household concerns. *"Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me"* (Luke 10:40). The reproof, however, unexpectedly fell upon herself. *"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her"* (v. 41,42). This faithful admonition was no doubt sanctified to her, for *"Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus"* (John 11:5).

We cannot contemplate this family scene without being struck with the value of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. A mind active and ardent, alive to neglect and susceptible of irritation, is generally admired by the

world, as indicative of a noble spirit; while a retired, noiseless, yet humble and obedient frame of heart is ridiculed or despised as low and unmanly.

But the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. *“That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”* (Luke 16:15).

Like Mary, I, too, am privileged to sit at Jesus’ feet; for when I read the Holy Scriptures, I read the Word of Jesus. When I hear the Gospel faithfully preached, I hear the Gospel of Jesus. With what reverence, then, should I listen to the words of eternal truth; with what delight should I receive the glad tidings of salvation, proclaimed by Him who came down from Heaven to seek and to save that which was lost and who graciously declared that all who look unto Him, who come unto Him, who receive Him and believe in His Name, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

“Lord, give me faith and hope and love, that all my affections may be fixed upon Thee and my whole life devoted to Thy glory. But alas, how often do I resemble Martha! Daily do I need her salutary reproof.”

The various occupations and businesses of life, the multiplied cares and anxieties about earthly things – no, even the very labours required in actively conducting religious institutions – have a tendency, without great watchfulness and prayer, to weary the spirits, to clog the wheels of the mind in its ascent heavenward, and to render us unfit for that tranquil, spiritual posture of soul in which Mary was found when she sat at her Saviour’s feet.

To be actively employed is good for the Christian, while a too great seclusion unfits the mind for general usefulness. There is, however, a happy combination of activity and retirement which at once strengthens the mind and preserves its spirituality from decay.

The characters presented to our view in the Holy Scriptures are drawn by the unerring pencil of truth. There we see man as he really is, both in his best and worst estate. The excellencies of the saints are recorded with remarkable conciseness, while their defects and falls are dwelt upon with awful particularity. The reason seems to be apparent – to humble the natural pride of man and to demonstrate that he who glories must glory in the Lord.

The Bible tells us the unwelcome truth that *“man at his best state is altogether vanity”* (Ps. 39:5); that *“there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not”* (Eccl. 7:20). It is absurd, then, to expect perfection, but not unreasonable to expect consistency.

While I labour to promote the spread of the Gospel through the benighted regions of the earth, I must beware lest I neglect to cultivate, by close communion with Jesus, the work of grace in my own soul. When, like Martha, I find my mind cumbered with much serving – when I begin to feel an increasing distraction of thought and a growing unfitness for spiritual meditation – then let me betake myself with redoubled frequency to Mary's happy station.

At the feet of Jesus, I am permitted to ask for every blessing. In secret fervour of spirit, I may there implore that all sufficient grace which is so freely promised to all who sincerely seek the Heavenly treasure.

"Lord, enable me to cultivate diligence with devotion, to employ my humble powers in Thy service, both in the active range of Christian benevolence and in the passive exercise of self-denying resignation. Mould my will to thine; let holy love be the ever-moving spring of all my actions, that whatever I do in word or deed, I may do all with a view to Thy glory and to the spiritual good of a perishing world."

Descend, blest Spirit, in my heart,
And give me Mary's better part;
An interest in the Saviour's love,
A foretaste of the joys above.

Dispel the darkness of the mind;
In Thee alone sweet peace I find;
Whose kindly office it is to bless,
Through Christ the Lord, my righteousness.

Oh, may I walk with holy fear,
While journeying as a pilgrim here;
Feel my weak soul by Thee sustained;
And in the path of life maintained.

Descend, blest Spirit, from above,
Thou God of peace, of joy, and love,
Seal Thy salvation to my heart,
And never from my soul depart.

JESUS TALKING WITH THE CENTURION

By **Dr. D. A. Doudney**, from 'Walks and Talks with Jesus'

Unlike what Jesus did in other cases for the sake of trying the faith of those who appealed to Him, in regard to the centurion we read that at once "*Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him*" (Matt. 8:7). How tender and loving this was of Jesus, for it is plain that He did not even wait for the centurion to say all that he was ready to say in a way of entreaty that Jesus would come and help his servant!

But Jesus knew what was in the centurion's heart. There was, therefore, no need for Him to wait for him to tell out what he thought and what he wanted. And how was this? Because Jesus was God, as well as man; and, therefore, He knew what was in man. The Apostle says, "*He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:27). May the Lord indeed help you to think of this with respect to yourself.

"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The centurion did not speak this in a proud, haughty spirit. He did not say what he did with a view of calling attention to himself, as one in command and therefore superior to others in point of position. His only object was to express his conviction that as he had power to command and right to be obeyed, in a higher and more glorious sense it was but for Jesus, as the great and good Physician, to speak and disease and death must be obedient to His word. They must obey His voice.

That saying, "*Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed,*" was Christ exalting indeed.

Have you faith to believe that Jesus, were it His holy will, could do the same with regard to you, either in reference to any bodily ailment or with respect to the still worse malady of the soul, even that of sin?

O then, be it yours to pursue the self-same Lord with the self-same appeal: "*Speak the word only, and Thy servant shall be healed.*" Adhere to this! Do not give it up! Be not discouraged because you have to wait for an answer. Put in your plea and watch the issue. Remember that "delays are not denials." Seek to connect these three words: **WRESTLE! WATCH! WAIT!**

And, as assuredly as you are enabled so to do, sooner or later you shall hear, as the centurion did, the words of Jesus, "*Go thy way! And as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*"

The Lord always recognises the faith He gives. A waiting faith shall ever prove a winning faith.



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