

CHRISTIAN WATCH

Issue 49

A Protestant Biblical Witness

Jan/Feb 2024



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

Mark 13:37



HE MEASURED AND BROUGHT ME THROUGH

Ezekiel 47:3-4

That weakness and pain so hard to bear,
That sorrow and trial too,
It did not last – it passed away
He measured....and brought me through.

Not a moment too long did it remain,
Though 'twas hard to bear 'tis true;
But there came an end with a spiritual gain
He measured....and brought me through.

In a wonderful way He revealed Himself,
In a way entirely new.
As Jehovah-Ropheca I knew Him then
He measured....and brought me through.

'Tis always so with our loving Lord,
Be the trials many or few,
He times them all – His appointed time;
He measures....and brings us through.

Child of God in trial, there will be an end.
Trust Him for His word is true.
Be patient and wait, in His Own good time
He'll measure....AND BRING YOU THROUGH.

E. G. Lessey

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

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Christian Watch PO Box 6526, Leamington Spa, CV31 9NL

January 2024



Dear Friends,

In this, our first Newsletter of 2024, we greet you in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. However, the change in the year does not bring a change in Government policy and it is regrettable that so much decision-making goes directly against the Word of God.

Let me consider for a moment transgenderism. The transgender movement holds that there are more than two genders – such people calling themselves non-binary. What madness our nation has endorsed and sanctioned! It is all part of the latter day movement to recreate the atmosphere and environment of Sodom – and not just on a national scale - but international. To the Christian believer, it is but a signal that the end of this age is rapidly approaching – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke of the times which indicate the approach of His second advent (Luke 17 v 28-30). What happened in the days of Noah was repeated in the days of Lot (Matthew 24 v 37-39).

Marriage – a renowned retired theology Professor in the USA – Dr. Gerald McDermott – describes the abandonment of male-female marriage as the most serious issue facing the Church. He says: “Same-sex marriage is the great creation heresy of our age on marriage and sexuality. Marriage is central to the Christian faith because marriage is the principal metaphor in the Bible for God’s relationship to His people. Thus, getting marriage wrong means getting God wrong.” In a recent survey, the result showed that 24% of the British people were actively opposed to same-sex marriage, with a further 16% stating they did not hold any strong views. Although such numbers could be better, those of us who stand for traditional marriage can be encouraged as it shows that, in spite of unceasing Government propaganda, we are far from alone in our views.

LGBT - New figures recently released – according to the Taxpayers’

Alliance (TPA) - show that public bodies in England (Local Authorities and NHS Trusts) spent over £550,000 in sponsorship and LGBT-branded merchandise in June, 2023 – so-called Pride month. Such purchases included rainbow lanyards, badges displaying staff pronouns, LGBT flags and whistles, glitter tattoos and lip balm. It has been said that Pride is fast becoming the UK's new established religion.

Let us remember – in spite of the wickedness all around us – that our Saviour says – “be of good cheer” – because He has - ”overcome the world.” What a wonderful promise that is for you and me to hold on to in these dark days in which we live.

I close by thanking all of you who have already forwarded your subscription for this New Year. If you have yet to do so, a further form and reply envelope is enclosed herewith.

Yours in His Service,

Ian Henderson

Ian R. Henderson (Chairman)

STOP PRESS:

It has just been announced that the Stormont Assembly in Northern Ireland is to be restored. The DUP – who withdrew from the Assembly some 2 years ago in protest at the Brexit arrangements which established an Irish Sea border, thus breaking the Union and giving the EU jurisdiction over an integral part of the United Kingdom - has agreed to the re-opening of Stormont, this time with a First Minister who campaigns to have Northern Ireland taken completely out of the UK and into the Irish Republic. More about this in our next Newsletter, but the observation must be made that Governments are made up of sinful men and women and they are not wiser than other people just because they have been elected into positions of power.

(Ian R. Henderson)

“Thou hast been my help; leave me not.”

Psalm 27:9

by **G. D. Buss**

(An address at the Gospel Standard Annual Business Meeting, 2022)

In this verse there is a very short, but very apposite expression: “Thou hast been my help; leave me not.” Just four very brief points from that sweet word:

First, **we have a good desire**: the presence of the Lord. We can desire nothing more needful than the Lord’s presence. “If Thy presence go not with me,” said God’s servant Moses, then “carry us not up hence” (Exod. 33:15); and surely every living child of God here this afternoon will say that this is something they are asking for continually. Nothing tries them more than when the Lord withholds the comfort of His presence; and we may say, without presumption, that where there is that longing desire for the Lord’s presence, then already the Lord is presently working in that sinner’s heart. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps.42:1-2). So first we have a good desire.

Second, **we have a good retrospect**. He says, “Thou hast been my help.” Now if you look back over the past year – and years (and personally we have to confess how often we have failed: faults, follies,



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foolishness encumber us about in the memory of our lives) – and yet what a wonderful thing if you can say, despite all your unworthiness, all your unfitness, all that sometimes stares you in the face as a wretched sinner, “Thou hast been my help.” It dishonours God if we fail to acknowledge that. We should acknowledge it more often. “Thou hast been my help.” We can say that in the Churches.

We can say it personally in our pathway. Many of us here can say, “Yes, this is something of which we are blessedly persuaded. We would not have come thus far without it. We would have sunk to rise no more without it.” “Thou hast been my help.” Blessed be God, dear friends, if you have a good retrospect this afternoon. Yes, much to mourn over, much to confess, yet amidst it all, a golden thread: “Thou – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – hast been my help.”

The third thing is, **we have a good prospect**. Where we may be enabled to say, by God’s Holy Spirit in His teaching, “Thou hast been my help” – there is a prospect. The Psalmist was pleading it: “Leave me not.” ‘Lord, there are more steps to be taken. There are more chapters opening up before me. There is an unknown way. Lord, “Thou hast been my help” – but now, just as I could not have managed without Thee in the past, I **dare** not go on without Thee in the future. “Leave me not.” Leave me not to myself.’ Terrible thought that! ‘Leave me not to the temptations of the evil one, whether it be as an angel of light, or as a roaring devil, roaring lion. Leave me not to this vain world.’

“Save me from this bewitching world,
That has to death ten thousand hurled.” (*H Fowler*)

Leave me not to a bad spirit, an un-Christ-like spirit. Friends, we could go on, couldn’t we! “Leave me not.”

“If Thou should’st leave us, we must fall;
Without Thee, cannot rise;

For when our Jesus hides His face,
Our hope, our comfort dies.” (D. Herbert)

But the prospect is good. If you do have Ebenezers to look back to, there are Ebenezers to look forward to. Why is that? Not because you will be any better, not because you will have improved. Dear me, no! It is, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). O bless His holy Name for that.

The fourth thing is, **we have a good claim**. What does he say? “Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me,” and here is the claim: “O God of my salvation” – the God who has answered my poor prayers; the God who has often come to my aid when without Him I would have sunk to rise no more; the God that has opened my eyes to see a little of my unworthiness, but of Christ’s preciousness. “O God of my salvation.”

Not just in grace, but in providence – the doors He has opened; the mountains He has levelled; the matters He has put right. You say, ‘There are many more matters to be put right!’ Friends, I know that! But here is the claim: “Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” Friends, if He is not the God of your salvation, you have no salvation! “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

A good desire, a good retrospect, a good prospect – yes – and a good claim. May God make these things spirit and life to each of us.

The confidence of God’s children is never so complete that they are free from all fear, even the fear of unbelief; but still we ought to struggle against it, so as not to be hindered in the course of our calling.

John Calvin

HOW TO BE A REAL PROTESTANT

Ulster Bulwark, January – March, 2024

The word Protestant has become misused. In Northern Ireland it has been taken over by men who use it as a word to describe which political or religious group they belong to. Because of this, it has been vilified by certain charismatics, ecumenists and even some evangelicals, as a word which they do not wish to apply to themselves for fear of the connotations of association with a particular cultural or religious tradition.

Some evangelical teachers will argue that they would prefer to call themselves Christians rather than Protestants, as if the word Christian had not also become an abused word today. Is it not true that many people call themselves Christians just because they come from a Christian home, or because they were baptised into a Christian Church, or because their parents were Christians? None of these are good enough reasons for thinking that one is a Christian, just as being



born into a Protestant home or country does not make one a true Protestant.

So just what is this Protestantism - and how can I become a true Protestant?

1. “Protestant” is a word which springs from the Reformation

The word Protestant was first coined at Speyer in Germany in February, 1529 when the Emperor Charles summoned a Council in an attempt to secure victory against the Turks and to bring about the unity of the church. The Roman Catholic dignitaries at the Council believed that this was their opportunity to crush the Reformation forever. The effects of the Council were that the Mass was to be unhindered throughout Europe, Catholic laity could force local clergy to co-operate with Rome and the Reformation would never spread. The Lutheran members at the summit entered their famous protest - and the name “Protestant” was given to the world. The protest of Speyer was not just a negative reaction to popery and tyranny, but a positive assertion of the right to the freedom to preach God's Word and to assert the authority of Scripture over and above the traditions of men. One meaning of the word “protest” is “bearing witness”. The positive influence of the Protestant Reformers was to let the Gospel message be proclaimed, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and that the way to God is by salvation by grace through faith alone.

2. A Protestant is a witness to the Truth

It is absurd for a man to say that he is a Christian and not a Protestant. The Christian who is not a witness to the truth is no Christian at all. In the same way, it is equally absurd for a man to declare that he is a Protestant if he has never met the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and known the Truth of God in his own heart. Such a man is Protestant in name only and needs to be saved by God's sovereign grace before he can claim his title to the word Protestant.

3. A Protestant is one who has accepted the teaching of the Reformed faith.

When the Reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox and others proclaimed the principles of Protestantism, they were drawing people away from a corrupt system of religion and showing them the Biblical precepts regarding real faith in God. They taught us again that justification was by faith alone, that grace was appropriated through faith and not through the sacraments, that our sins needed to be confessed to God and not to a priest, that Jesus Christ is Head of the Church - and not the Pope - and that we do not need to pray to an array of saints and martyrs, or even to Mary (as if we could), for we have access into the very presence of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To this day, real Protestants still maintain those Reformation principles. Protestantism has not changed. This is just as well, for Roman Catholic theologians continue to compound heresy upon heresy and to lead poor blinded people astray.

ARE YOU A REAL PROTESTANT?

To be such a Protestant, you must have turned to God in repentance. Realising that you are a sinner by nature and practice, you must ask God for His forgiveness and pardon, obtained by Jesus Christ on the Cross and yield your life totally to Him. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* – Ephesians 2:8-9.

When a sense of guilt is raised up, take heed of getting it allayed any way but by Christ's blood; all other ways tend to harden the conscience. Make Christ thy peace (Eph. 2:14), not any duties, thy tears etc. Thou mayest oppose Christ by duties as well as by sins. Look at Christ, alone.

Thomas Wilcox

SINCERITY


By: J. C. Philpot

“But speaking the truth (margin, being sincere) in love.”

Ephesians 4:15

Sincerity lies at the root of all gracious profession. If a man be not sincere, he is nothing. God makes a man sincere by planting His truth in his heart; and whenever God does make a man sincere, the truth which He has implanted will grow. Truth does not lie in a man's soul dead and motionless, like a stone in the street; it is a living, active, expansive principle. If the truth be in the soul it will be ever pushing out error, because the two principles cannot exist together; and as Isaac thrust out Ishmael, and Jacob proved stronger than Esau, so will simplicity and godly sincerity be ever mightier than craft and deception. The truth of God in the heart will not wither and die, but will be shined upon by the Sun of righteousness and sunned into fruitfulness by the smiles of God; and as truth becomes day by day more and more precious, so will error and evil become day by day more and more hateful. A sincere soul stands “girt about with truth;” and truth forms its shield and buckler.

But how does this Christian sincerity prove the soul's safeguard from error? By putting it ever on the watch tower, looking out and looking up for the teaching of God and the light of His countenance. A soul made spiritually sincere takes nothing upon trust; it requires the seal of God on all it receives and the witness of the Spirit to all that it feels. He who is sincere sees the rocks ahead on which others concerning faith make



shipwreck; and being well ballasted with temptations, afflictions and trials, he is not easily tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. His desire to be right keeps him right; his fear to be wrong preserves him from wrong. The light of God in his soul makes him see; the life of God in his heart makes him feel; the fear of God in his conscience makes him honest; the love of God in his affections makes him love; and all this gives truth such a firm place in him that there is no room for error.

The Apostle adds, therefore, “in love.” It is not enough to be “sincere;” we must be “sincere in love.” Mark that. It is not receiving God’s truth as a certain orderly system; it is not furnishing our heads with a sound doctrinal creed and compact Calvinistic scheme which will avail us in the trying hour; but it is to have the truth of God brought into our soul by a Divine power and realising such unutterable sweetness in it as communicates a firm abiding love, both to the truth itself and to Him of whom it testifies and from whom it comes. It is thus we are made “sincere in love.”

The fear of God creates the sincerity, the application of the truth with power creates the love to it. And when we are thus made “sincere in love” we are brought out of the childish state in which we are carried about with every wind of doctrine and in danger of being entrapped by the cunning craft of every deceiver. We know the truth, love the truth and become established in the truth.

From: *‘Through Baca’s Vale’*

THE RISE OF VEGANISM – A SIGN OF THE LAST TIMES?

By **Mark Pickles**

British Church Newspaper - 18 December, 2023

In recent years, there has been significant rise in veganism. This is evident when shopping for food, or even shoes, where vegan products are visibly promoted. According to a recent YouGov survey, 36% of UK adults believe that eating a plant-based diet is “an admirable thing to do” and around 4% [1 in 25] of the population now identify as ‘vegan’.

SO WHAT IS VEGANISM?

It is a practice and philosophy that rejects the use of animal products for any purpose, such as food or clothing. This includes avoiding animal products such as dairy and eggs and even not using cattle manure on land. Those who advocate veganism say they do this for animal welfare, ‘ethics’ and the environment, claiming “animal



agriculture is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation...it is wrong to exploit or kill animals for human consumption or use...we have a moral obligation to protect animals.”

WHAT GUIDELINES DO WE HAVE FROM SCRIPTURE?

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that: “The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits...commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused...” (1 Tim. 4:1-4). God has miraculously provided meat and fish several times. He provided quails to the children of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 16:13) and to Elijah at the brook Cherith - “the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening” (1 Kings 17:6). The Lord Jesus Christ provided fish for the disciples after His resurrection as recorded in John 21:9.

ADAM, EVE AND NOAH

Veganism may be for some a misguided attempt to recreate the order before the fall of Adam and Eve: “And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed...and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat” (Gen. 1:29). After the Fall, God said to Adam - “Thou shalt eat the herb of the field” (Gen. 3:18), but He clothed Adam and Eve with ‘coats of skins’ which He had made (v21) and which clearly had required the sacrifice of at least one animal.

After the flood, God said to Noah: “**Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you;** even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat” (Gen. 9:3-4) – and this is re-inforced in the New Testament in Acts 11:5-10 and 15:19-20.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Whilst vegans are understandably concerned about animal welfare, Proverbs 12:10 gives direction on this: “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast”; but what we must not do is accept the vegan and evolutionist’s view of humans and animals being ‘one’, as there is a distinct difference – “God created man in His own image” (Gen. 1:27) and “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (2v7).

Ecclesiastes 3:21 emphasises the difference between man and animals: “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

CLIMATE CHANGE AND REARING ANIMALS FOR FOOD

Climate change alarmists and the media are steadily conditioning the public to believe that ‘meat production is bad for the environment’ with headlines like “Meat accounts for nearly 60% of all greenhouse gases from food production” and “each cow emits 154-264lb of methane per year.” Christians believe that man should be a careful



steward of God's creation but also that the earth and atmosphere are well able to sustain that which God has created for man's good. God spoke to the Israelite of their flocks and herds 'multiplying' (Deut. 8:13), but also warning them not to forget Him.

RESEARCH OF FRANK MITLOEHNER

Frank Mitloehner - Professor of Animal Science & Air Quality at California-Davis University - and world-renowned for his study of greenhouse gas emissions, has highlighted serious errors made by other researchers on this topic (including the UN Food & Agricultural Organisation (UNFAO)). He says they falsely claimed that cattle are more damaging to the environment than transportation, electricity production and other industries. He challenges the notion that we should all convert to plant-based diets, making a strong case for how beef cattle are **beneficial** to the environment and can help solve the problem of providing good nutrition for the world's population. He wrote: "Many people continue to think avoiding meat as infrequently as once a week will make a significant difference to the climate; but one recent study showed that even if Americans eliminated all animal protein from their diets, they would reduce US greenhouse gas emissions by only 2.6%." Without meat, it would be hard for a growing population to meet its nutritional needs. Grazing cows is an important part of utilising marginal land that would otherwise go unused, not being suitable for growing vegetables or crops. They effectively use the growth of green grass (by solar power!) to convert it into high quality protein. Grassland and meadows also 'capture' carbon. Mitloehner adds - "The energy in plants that livestock consume is most often contained in cellulose, which is indigestible for humans and many other mammals; but cows, sheep and other ruminant animals can break cellulose down and release the solar energy contained in this vast resource. According to the UNFAO, as much as 70% of all agricultural land globally is 'range land' that can only be utilised as grazing land for ruminant livestock. Meat is more

nutrient-dense per serving than vegetarian options and ruminant animals largely thrive on feed that is not suitable for humans.”

VEGANISM AND ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS

There have been several recent warnings about the ultra-processed nature of some vegan foods. According to Dr. Giles Yeo, an obesity expert at Cambridge University, “Ultra-processed vegetarian or vegan foods, faux-meat burgers almost have an aura of health around them; [but] they are ultra-processed foods with very good PR [Public Relations]! These foods tend to be low in protein and fibre, and high in salt, sugar and fat.” A number of significant studies have shown that ultra-processed foods (not only vegan ones) lead to a risk of higher blood pressure and heart disease as well as other medical problems.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that rearing animals humanely, in the natural environment, for the purpose of eating meat, using dairy products and even being clothed in animal skin is Scriptural. Rightfully considered, it reminds us of the Fall, the Flood and Christ’s teaching (see John 6:53-58). “The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats’ milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens” (Proverbs 27:26-27).



NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

5 million more persecuted believers in 2023

Christian Institute, 22 January, 2024 (www.christian.org.uk)

The global persecution of Christians continues to rise. According to the Open Doors annual World Watch List, over 365 million believers face persecution – up 5 million on 2022. Across the world, one in seven Christians still experiences hostility, with 4,998 Christians killed for their faith last year, the majority – 90 per cent – in Nigeria.

Speaking at the Report's Parliamentary launch, Open Doors CEO, Henrietta Blyth, suggested that “under the cover of chaos” in sub-Saharan Africa, violence against Christians had “intensified”.

Referring to Nicaragua, which has climbed 20 places in the list, and China, where 10,000 churches were closed last year, she observed: “Elsewhere, the noose is tightening around the church's neck as autocratic Governments increase their control.”

Blyth told the gathered Parliamentarians: “The World Watch List paints a grim picture, but there is hope. Prayer and action work.”

“Despite all opposition, more and more people are coming to faith in Jesus



OpenDoors

**WORLD
WATCH LIST
LAUNCH**
2024



and churches continue to be a force for good in the communities they serve.”

Addressing the meeting, a Christian from Iran explained: “In 2023, more Christians were arrested, sentenced and had their homes raided than in the previous year. The growing number of Christians leaving Iran reflects the difficult challenges they confront, leading them to leave their homes, families and loved ones.”

North Korea remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian, topping the World Watch List for the twentieth time.

Open Doors believes that many of the country’s 400,000 believers “are being held in labour camps and prisons for their faith. Meeting for worship is extremely dangerous and must be done in utmost secrecy – and at grave risk.”

One secret believer told the organisation: “The thing I give thanks for the most is that Father God uses me to work as His servant. I desire to dedicate my life, until death, to glorify Him.”

Freedom of Speech and Expression

Email from Shaun Willcock, Bible Based Ministries, SA

Dear Friends,

Throughout much of history, men have not had legal protection to say what they liked; and now again, in the twenty-first century, it is being removed from nations which once had strong free speech protections. Without true freedom of speech protections, the Christian is not free to preach the Gospel publicly – and men are not free to hear it being preached, to read it, to say publicly that they have believed it or to begin publicly preaching it themselves. Those who do any of these things where freedom of speech does not exist are committing a crime in the eyes of the State - and may then be prosecuted and punished as criminals. Governments are now insisting that Christians speak, write and even think as *they* deem fit. In

various countries Christians now face jail time if they are found guilty of opposing the official narrative.

For true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, our response must be the same as that of the Apostles: *“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:19,20): *“We ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29).

Shaun Willcock has produced two pamphlets which complement each other on this subject. The first is a Biblical examination of today’s “hate speech” legislation in Western countries and why Christians are not to be bound by such legislation – for, in enacting it, Governments exceed their legitimate bound. The second is a detailed Biblical examination of the topic – how free speech is being eroded and eliminated in one Western country after another - and why.

These pamphlets are free for the asking from the author; simply email him at willcock@futurenet.co.za and he will send them to you by email. If you do not have email or would like a printed copy, please contact the Christian Watch Office – PO Box 6526, Leamington Spa, CV31 9NL (jean@christianwatch.co.uk)

House of Lords Foetal Sentience Bill

Lord Moylan, a Conservative politician, has set out a Foetal Sentience Bill in the House of Lords with a view to creating a Committee which, on an on-going basis, will be a source of scientific expertise on the sentience of the human foetus (its ability to experience sensations) in the light of the rapid increase in scientific knowledge relating to the development of the unborn child. This has followed on from the decision that pain relief would be given between 20 and 26 weeks for spinal surgery for spina bifida babies in the womb, which is in sharp contrast to the abortion process where no such consideration is given and no pain relief is provided.

Please pray that this Bill will become law and that it will lead to a more compassionate regard for the unborn child.

Anglican and Catholic Bishops move from Rome to Canterbury in second phase of joint summit

Premier Christian News – by Ros Mayfield – 28 January, 2024

The second phase of the latest joint Summit, bringing together Anglican and Catholic Bishops from around the world, has been taking place in Canterbury (w/e 28 January). Over a four-day weekend, the Bishops took part in a candlelit tour of Canterbury Cathedral, a Vigil Mass at St. Thomas of Canterbury and a Cathedral Eucharist (Holy Communion) together.

The Summit, entitled “Growing Together”, has seen pairs of Anglican and Catholic Bishops gather for a series of Ecumenical discussions and visits to holy sites in Rome that have significance to the common roots shared by both traditions. The International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) aims to foster closer co-operation between the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions and put into practice progress made in theological discussions.

The group held Ecumenical discussions on joint witness and mission and worked on the preparation of a Joint Statement, for how the Bishops will take forward the fruits of their discussion in their home dioceses.

This is the second time during Archbishop Justin Welby’s and Pope Francis’ leadership that the Summit has been commissioned. The two leaders have met often in Rome and, along with Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, they have spoken repeatedly of the vital importance of churches working together for the sake of the Gospel.

Abbreviated



‘ALL THINGS’

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

By: John Hooper

We have here a familiar and wonderful statement of truth that is often quoted to help believers through times of trial and difficulty - and rightly so. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899 – 1981) makes the point that this is exalted doctrine but also one of the most comforting statements in the whole of Scripture. It is doctrine for our edification and consolation.

We learn from the opening words, “And we know,” that this is the testimony of the mind. The Apostle speaks of his knowledge; but it is also rather more than that, it is a firm assurance confessed from the heart. Not only has he learned it and received it intellectually, he knows it experientially and, I suspect, that many readers will have shared in his experience. It is only as we grow in faith and make progress in the Christian life that we really know what this text is all about. It reflects a firm, unshakeable confidence that is intrinsic to the believer’s faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul confirms just a few verses later - “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (v31).

The text is directed toward those who love God and it is self-evident that not everyone is in that position. Not everyone loves God, so not everyone is able to derive comfort from these words. They are not for all. So who are those that love God? They are those who have been called according to His purpose. Here we encounter high doctrine indeed. Those who love God have been called with a call of sovereign and effectual grace. They have been called by the Spirit of Jesus Christ – and His call is not a random, aimless, indiscriminate call but is according to purpose - “His purpose.” Here we find the doctrine

reaching ever greater heights because we arrive now at the summit, the doctrine of predestination. The call is governed by God's election of a people for Himself from eternity past.

Paul explains this in the following verses. He goes on to speak of predestination by which a specific people, those "whom He did foreknow" (v29), are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, and he goes on to say - "Moreover whom He did predestinate, *them* He also called" (v30). This call is an effectual call. It is never fruitless, never without a positive and joyous response. It is always successful. We know this because the next link in the chain tells us that "whom He called, *them* He also justified: and whom He justified, *them* He also glorified" (v30). These, then, are the people Paul is writing about and if we are to derive any comfort and any blessing from this text, we need to be among this people.

So what is the comfort given to us here by the Apostle? It is the firm assurance that all things work together for our good. Yes, *all* things! All things in the experience of our own little life – the good things, but also the bad things - encouraging things, but also life's disappointments. Things that we think are favourable to us, but also the unfavourable – life's troubles, difficulties and failures. They all work together for our good. Then we can expand the "all things" yet further to include in its widest sense the history of this world and all the ways of Divine providence. Floods and storms, the rise and fall of Governments, the fluctuations of the Stock Market, social movements, wars and peace treaties; probably contrary to all appearances these too work together for the good of the children of God. Why can we be so sure? Because all of history and providence has God's people at its heart and has their calling and gathering as its ultimate purpose. All things "work together" because it is God Himself who is working them. He works in them and through them according to His eternal counsel and, in that counsel, there is but one purpose, one goal, which is the one described by the Apostle in verse 19 as "the manifestation of

the sons of God.” All things work together to that one glorious end.

At this point too we need to understand just what the Apostle is driving at. By “our good” he does not mean our earthly good, our temporal health and prosperity. No, our earthly good, if that is what we can call it, may well suffer and decline. In fact, we can be sure that our health will most certainly deteriorate at some point as we are brought nearer to death. Earthly prosperity is not guaranteed. The consolation is derived from the fact that our earthly good is not the all-important thing. Our earthly good is limited and temporary, but we have a Heavenly good that is eternal. By “our good” the Apostle means our ultimate good in glory.

Yes, all this is high doctrine, something so often disparaged in our day, but it has a wonderfully practical ‘use’ as the old Puritan writers would say. Today we call it ‘application.’ Yes, this is a glorious text, but the all-important question is this: Do we love His Son, Jesus Christ, believing on Him, trusting in Him wholly for our salvation? Do we love the fellowship of God in prayer? Do we love the Word of God, reading and studying it so that we might know how we should live to please Him whom we love? Do we love the people of God and desire their company? Are we living and walking in the love of God, shunning the vain and shallow attractions of this world? If we love God, Romans 8:28 will be to us the greatest comfort in all the trials of this life.

*From: **Grace for Troubled Times***



On Union with Christ

Letter by **John Newton**

Dear Sir,

The union of a believer with Christ is so intimate, so unalterable, so rich in privilege, so powerful in influence, that it cannot be fully represented by any description or similitude taken from earthly things. The mind, like the sight, is incapable of apprehending a great object, without viewing it on different sides. To help our weakness, the nature of this union is illustrated in the Scripture by four comparisons, each throwing additional light on the subject, yet all falling short of the thing signified.

In our natural state, we are driven and tossed about by the changing winds of opinion and the waves of trouble which hourly disturb and threaten us upon the uncertain sea of human life; but faith, uniting us to Christ, fixes us upon a sure foundation, the Rock of Ages, where we stand immovable, though storms and floods unite their force against us.

By nature, we are separated from the Divine life, as branches broken off, withered and fruitless; but grace, through faith, unites us to Christ the living Vine, from whom, as the root of all fulness, a constant supply of sap and influence is derived into each of His mystical branches, enabling them to bring forth fruit unto God and to persevere and abound therein.

By nature, we are hateful and abominable in the sight of a Holy God and full of enmity and hatred towards each other. By faith, uniting us to Christ, we have fellowship with the Father and the

Son and joint communion among ourselves; even as the members of the same body have each of them union, communion and sympathy with the head and with their fellow-members.

In our natural estate, we were cast out, naked and destitute, without pity and without help, Ezekiel 16; but faith, uniting us to Christ, interests us in His righteousness, His riches and His honours. Our Redeemer is our husband; our debts are paid, our settlements secured and our names changed.

Thus the Lord Jesus, in declaring Himself the foundation, root, Head and husband of His people, takes in all the ideas we can frame of an intimate, vital and inseparable union. Yet all these fall short of the truth; and He has given us one further similitude, of which we can by no means form a just conception till we shall be brought to see Him as He is in His Kingdom. John 17:21: *“That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us.”*

Well may we say, what hath God wrought! How inviolable is the security, how inestimable the privilege, how inexpressible the happiness, of a believer! How greatly is he indebted to grace! He was once afar off, but he is brought nigh to God by the blood of Christ: he was once a child of wrath but is now an heir of everlasting life. How strong then are his obligations to walk worthy of God, who has called him to His Kingdom and glory!

Whate'er my God ordains is right;
His Holy will abideth;
I will be still whate'er He doth;
And follow where He guideth;
He is my God;
Though dark my road,
He holds me that I shall not fall:
Wherefore to Him I leave it all.

Whate'er my God ordains is right:
He never will deceive me;
He leads me by the proper path:
I know He will not leave me.
I take, content,
What He hath sent;
His hand can turn my griefs away,
And patiently I wait His day.

Whate'er my God ordains is right:
He is my Friend and Father;
He suffers naught to do me harm,
Though many storms may gather,
Now I may know
Both joy and woe,
Some day I shall see clearly
That He hath loved me dearly.

Samuel Rodigast (1649-1708)
Tr. Catherine Winkworth (1827-78)