

ISSUE
28/3

PRESBYTERIAN NETWORK

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND & WALES

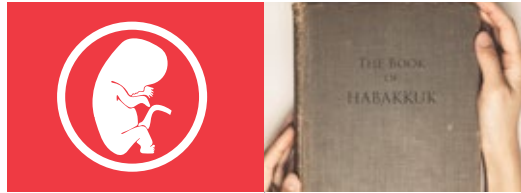


MARTIN LUTHER PURSUING REFORMATION

»
**THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF REFORMED CHURCHES**

»
**FROM FALTERING TO
TRIUMPHANT FAITH**

» INSIDE this issue



17 » Abortion:
How long will this
be tolerated?

**15 » From
Faltering to
Triumphant Faith**



**17 »
The ICRC**

**20 »
Psalm 102: a study**

03 » Spotlight on the Churches

13 » Abortion: How long will this be tolerated?

15 » From Faltering to Triumphant Faith:
Some Thoughts on Habakkuk

17 » Martin Luther: Pursuing Reformation

**20 » The International Conference
of Reformed Churches**

24 » Psalm 102: a study

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“ EDITOR'S NOTE

The Scriptures encourage us to pray. 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5:17). The Lord 'will turn to the prayer of the destitute and he will not despise their prayer' (Ps. 102:17).

The prayers of the saints are like incense rising before the throne of heaven (Rev. 5:8). Such men as Daniel and Elijah are given to us as examples (Dan. 9:21; James 5:16-18). Best of all, our great high priest intercedes for us unfailingly moment by moment (Heb. 7:25).

The Lord has graciously entrusted to us a work to do for him. We want success. We want the preaching of his Word to result in the salvation of lost sinners and the building up of the church. We want to see revival and reformation again. We want to see a future generation arising that loves and is devoted to the kingdom of Christ. We want to be a light to our world, and for example to raise a voice for the unborn victims of abortion.

Let our prayers be like Jacob's wrestling - 'I will not let you go unless you bless me' or like Knox's cry - 'Give me Scotland or I die'.

Let us pray for one another throughout our congregations. ○

» SPOTLIGHT on the Churches



» BERLIN

We give thanks to the Lord for his faithfulness. He promised to build his church and he is doing so in Berlin. In the last month he added six individuals to his church here, who all want to become members in the future. Jesus is the great shepherd of the sheep and he provides for his flock. As elders we realize that more and more work is coming our way and we pray for wisdom. Please join us in prayer for elders and deacons.

One particular need is to find a new meeting place from the beginning of January 2018. We are currently using a room made available to us by the Korean Presbyterian Church, but unfortunately we are not able to continue to use this next year. The search for suitable places is harder than expected, but we know our God is sovereign and he will provide for us.

✉ Johannes Müller

» BLACKBURN

The congregation has been encouraged lately by seeing new people attending services. Norman Green continues to preach and has felt helped in his ministry. The church appreciates the support of Kevin

» BARRY

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). On 31 August 2017, Rev. W. J. Cook officially retired as Pastor of the congregation, and has been succeeded by the Rev. Andrew Goodman. Although Rev. John Cook has retired from the pastorate, he will continue to function as an Elder in the Church, and to minister God's Word among us and in other congregations around us. A meeting was held on 28 October to mark his retirement and to give thanks to God for his faithfulness. It was good to welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ, to hear God's Word and have fellowship.

At present there are a few members suffering from various ailments. We pray that they will know the comfort that comes from God during their trials.

Rev. Andrew Goodman has begun an Adult Sunday School to run in conjunction with the Children's Sunday School. Those attending are studying the Westminster Confession of Faith. As we go through these changes in the life of the congregation, we know that our God and Saviour remains the same.

✉ Brendan Hope

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

McGrane who serves as an assessor elder. Norman has experienced ill health in recent weeks and just now is recovering from minor surgery. At the end of November, he is making another visit to Kenya to speak at a Reformed Pastor's Conference entitled 'Serving the Lord in the day of apostasy.'

The congregation in Blackburn would be thankful for the prayers of the other congregations.

 Peter Naylor for Norman Green

BURY ST EDMUNDS

Over the last year we have seen at least 20 people (including children) - all American military - move to other places and we are due to see a further two families move in the New Year. We have also seen a much more momentous move. Ivy Goodman a beloved older lady whom the Lord brought to himself through the church fell asleep in the Lord on 8 October. Matthew took her funeral, which gave a wonderful opportunity to witness to her unbelieving family and the local community.

Nevertheless, the Lord has shown us his great kindness through bringing to a clear profession of faith and into membership a young family that lives near where we meet. They have really become a part of our church family and we bless the Lord for them!

We continue to have many opportunities for the gospel in the community around us and pray for faith, faithfulness, time and resources to bring the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to those blinded by the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:5-6).

 Benjamin Wontrop

CAMBRIDGE

Ministry. The congregation is pleased that Rev. Douglas McCallum has accepted a call to be our associate minister, and a service of installation is planned for 11 November. Pray for Doug and Rebecca as they settle in Cambridge. Please continue to pray that we will find a senior minister soon.

Adventurers. 'Adventurers', our primary school group, are studying Acts this term, and have also filled 12 shoeboxes towards our congregation's support of the Blythwood Care Christmas Shoebox Appeal. Pray for wisdom for the leaders in teaching God's truth, for new children to attend, and for the spiritual growth of the children who have recently left us.



SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

Students. As new students arrive in Cambridge, pray that a good number will settle with us and be blessed by the ministry and hospitality.

Health. We are pleased that the health of Andy Batchelor has improved enough to allow him and his family to return to Cambridge after an absence of three years. A number of our members continue to suffer from ill health. Thank you for your prayers for them all.

 Annabel Haylett

CARDIFF - BETHEL

Summer at Bethel was very busy. A packed church listened and sang with the Cambrensis choir, with local people requesting another concert next year. End of term activities with Family Explorers and Tiny Tunes gave an opportunity for our minister, Rev. Mark Johnston, to speak to those who attend regularly with their children.

Older children have now graduated to Bethel Youth Group (BYG) and 20+ regularly attend including recruits from the Summer Dance and Football camps, helped by students from First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina.

We celebrated the marriage of Toni Saad to Caroline Vaughn (right) with a guest list of people from around the world.

Four new members joined us: Steffen and Sally Jenkins and their two sons, Ben and

Daniel, from Chelmsford and Matthew and Rachel Faux and their toddler, William, from Southampton.

A Lego Family Fun Day kick started the autumn term with 72 children attending and parents enjoying coffee in a quieter zone!

Our prayer is for the work at Bethel to have an impact on the local community and, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to bring many under the Word of God

 Patricia Stowell



SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

CARDIFF - IMMANUEL

Friday evenings we have a youth group. Youngsters from the streets around the church love to come. Although we play a few games and have some refreshments, the focus is on Bible teaching. It is so encouraging to see the children listening, understanding, and asking good questions. Recently the course has been on Luke's Gospel, and has raised many questions about the mystery of the incarnate Son of God. Each half-term, there is a memory verse. Currently it is: 'And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21.' These youngsters are loved and prayed for! It has been so good to see the leaders persevering in this challenging work, and learning how to work together as a team, and growing in faith. We thank God for every open door for the gospel. The coming 'Christmas season' will help us to invite our neighbours to come to church.

Recently, our brother Jim Corney was found to have cancer, and we are prayerfully waiting to know what treatment he will have.

In July, Peter Naylor and Richard Holst were in Canada for the ICRC (see the article in this issue). With the agreement of the elders' session, Peter has been added to the faculty of Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Gateshead.

We are prayerfully hoping that the Lord will raise up gifts among us and the elders session and the diaconate will be strengthened in due time.

 Peter Naylor

CHELMSFORD

It was encouraging to hear about Iris Heij's visit to Living Waters, Borneo, when she returned at the end of the summer. She helped with childcare, decorating, and other tasks, and enjoyed fellowship with others who were spending the summer working there.

We have a number of people who have been coming on Sundays for a while now, some of whom are asking about membership. We are praying particularly for new families in order to build up our children's work. On Thursday nights we have been studying Christianity Explored. Visitors attending this are asking some key questions.

A good number of students attended a welcome meeting at Darren and Glad's home at the start of term, and we hope some of them will make their church home with us. In November we are hosting 'The Monk's Tale', a play about the Reformation. Tickets are selling well and through this we hope to make new contacts.

Some in our congregation are supporting ill relatives, and we are praying for them in difficult times. We are also looking forward to two new babies who are due soon – one way to grow our children's work!

 Ruth Ferguson

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

CHELTENHAM - NAUNTON LANE

The last several months have seen our church both mourning and rejoicing. The sudden passing into glory of Eric Godden, a committed and valued member, caused us to mourn with his wife Ruth, and yet rejoice in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. Please pray that Ruth will continue to know the daily strengthening of the Lord.

We also rejoiced at the baptisms of Benaiah and Gaynor on profession of faith, and were encouraged by their becoming members, together with Steve, Brian and Kay. It was a delight a few months later to see Steve & Gaynor get married and begin a Christian home together.

In early September we hosted an evangelistic afternoon entitled 'Boy to Bandmaster and Beyond', where Philip Shannon MBE spoke winsomely of his army musical career and of his faith in Jesus Christ. Please pray for the non-Christians who came along.

We have been busy developing contacts with a number of International students and have hosted two pizza evenings when we have shared the good news of Jesus Christ and sought to help them in practical ways. Please pray for our ongoing contact with them.

It was bitter-sweet to see Doug and Rebecca McCallum move to Cambridge to take up the ministry there – bitter to see them go, yet sweet to see God's hand in leading them to Cambridge. Do pray for

them as they settle in, and for us as we look for a new Assistant to take Doug's place.

We finally ask for prayer for the Ludeman family as Linmarie finishes her course of chemotherapy; for Courtenay and Ali Harris as Ali is laid low with health issues; for the Cochran family who will be moving over from the USA in early January as ARP missionaries, and for the Branco's as they enjoy the new addition to their family of Anneliese.

 Andrew Young

CHELTENHAM - WHADDON ROAD



We have been encouraged as a church by several things. During the last week of July, we celebrated our 140th anniversary. Various events were well attended (including by our local MP) and we were helped by the visit of 6 young people from Urk, Holland.

Our choir for children aged 6-11 has increased in size and we hope to hold a concert in December. We hope that the

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

contacts made will develop into gospel opportunities which begin a journey of real discipleship. The same could be said of our international work – see the picture from an event in September.

At the end of August, we welcomed a family into membership. The two boys in the family were baptized and we have been very encouraged by their presence and participation in the life of the congregation.

Please pray that the Lord would accelerate the raising of funds for Larry and Mandy Wilkes who hope to join us through MTW (PCA). We feel that their presence would enable us to minister more effectively to God's people and help us reach the lost for Christ.

 David Pfeiffer

DURHAM



In September we marked the 30th anniversary of DPC with a service of thanksgiving. The service was led by the minister, and Chris Bowerman gave a summary of the history of the church. Jonathan Winch, an elder at DPC before planting the church in Gateshead, led the

congregation in prayers of thanksgiving. The sermon was given by Rev. Malcolm Peters who preached at the very first service 30 years ago. The service was followed by a fellowship tea. Displayed around the chapel were photos reminding us of God's faithfulness. There was a wonderful sense of fellowship on the day and it came as a great encouragement to us.

We have had a few families leave us for various reasons over the summer but the congregation numbers have remained steady. We have been blessed by the birth of Deacon Campbell and the arrival of a number of new students, with others returning for another year. The minister has started meeting with the students for prayer and Bible study in a public area in the Students' Union. After some media reports about the difficulties Christian students are having in some universities this is a positive witness.

 Phil Baiden

GATESHEAD

We are excited to see the Lord's hand working in various ways. Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary has been strengthened with some new students, and visits from excellent lecturers.

The exploratory Bible studies in Sunderland have been blessed occasions. There is a real sense of the Holy Spirit moving in the hearts and minds of those gathered. Please pray that the work would be protected from the attacks of the evil one.

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches



We also anticipate a carol service, which is a joint effort with the Community Centre in which we meet. Please pray that this would be an effective outreach to the neighbourhood.

We have just hosted the Reformation 500 Conference. It was a wonderful opportunity to unite with believers from several countries in remembering the Lord's goodness to his church.

We praise God for the baptism of our newest covenant child, and for the ordination of Dr Chris Richards as an elder and Mr Tony Drummond as a deacon. In the temporary absence of Rev. Bill Schweitzer, we have benefited from the ministry of several godly men. Please pray that the church body would continue to know faith, hope, and love, in this new season..

 Anna Hilton

HEXHAM

As the work in Hexham continues, our summer has been busy as it always is. Tynedale sees many visitors each summer, and we always have the opportunity to welcome people from around the country and even overseas. This is a joy for us: we look forward to being a larger congregation during the summer months.

We continue to pray that the Lord would provide a building that we could use through the week, as well as on the Lord's Day. We also pray for the Lord to add to our number, especially young families.

We have had several difficulties in the last months among the congregation. There have been health issues, various financial issues, deaths of family members and more. These things continue to draw us together in prayer for one another. As we study Philippians together on Sunday mornings, we are learning to rejoice in the Lord.

 Joshua Rieger

HULL

We have been encouraged in the past few months on the Lord's Day because our numbers are maintained and we have seen a small number of new people coming.

We had a four day holiday Bible club in the summer. Although the number of children was not as we would have liked, it was encouraging to have children who come to church and some were new children also. The theme this year was young people in the Bible whom God used for his work.

Due to circumstances, Rev. Barry Shucksmith and Janet his wife are staying in the area. We look forward to having him preaching for us again in the months ahead. Rev. Josh Rieger is our new assessor elder along with Chris Bowerman.

**SPOTLIGHT** on the Churches

The final blessing of this season was the harvest meal at the church. 27 attended and heard something of the gospel proclaimed.

A new pastor continues to be a need although we do not seem to be making much progress at this time.

There are a few who cannot attend due to illness at this time. One faithful member in particular despite illness is still attending almost every service; his faith though tested is strong.

Chris Lawson

**OXFORD**

The need for a distinctly Reformed, confessional, and warm-hearted church in Oxford is growing. To that end Re:Con was started over a year ago to advance knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the historic confessions of the church, but also to push the door on a potential church plant in Oxford.

A year on and we are really encouraged. We have two more meetings planned for this year: Monday November 6 when Rev. David Gilbert from Grace Presbyterian Church (GA, USA) will be with us, and helping lead the discussion on Free Will; and December 4 when we will discuss Effectual Calling. We will then meet on the first Monday of every month in 2018.

All are welcome to these meetings. More information can be found at

www.facebook.com/reconstudygroup. Please advertise, share the facebook page and 'Like' it - to generate interest in this group, and if you know anyone in the Oxford area that would be interested, put them in touch with me. Pray that the Lord would stir up more interest in these meetings. Please also pray that the Lord would lead, direct, provide and ultimately open a door, for a lasting work in Oxford..

Andrew Young

**SALFORD,
MANCHESTER**

From September we have been meeting weekly on Thursdays in the Statters' home in Broughton, Salford. Chris Statter has been teaching the Apostles' Creed, on declaring the same old gospel. We have been praying for our supporters, other churches in the Presbytery, the community and our witness. We are delighted to have welcomed local believers who do not currently attend a church in the area, and we have been getting to know each other over a meal beforehand. Pray that God would cause us to grow heavenwards and numerically.

We praise God that a school building is available for trial Sunday services. Chris has been giving out lots of invitations, principally through door-to-door and a book-table, and we've put up posters too. Salford is in many ways needy. With respect to the gospel, 'How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?' Give thanks for the initiative of the Sheffield

**SPOTLIGHT** on the Churches

elders, including sending Chris. Pray that he would preach faithfully, and that many would hear and believe. Pray that all of us would be seeking to make Christ better known.

Rosemary Statter

**SHEFFIELD**

In many ways this year has been one of consolidation and preparation. As a congregation we now own two acres of land and the historic Hill Top Chapel. The Chapel was built in 1629 and the founding minister was Rev. Stanley Gower, who became one of the Westminster divines. It is an unusual providence that the building has survived the English Civil War, two world wars, and is now the home of a confessional Presbyterian congregation in the 21st century. It provides a great home for the growing needs of the congregation.

In recent times we have extended the car park and secondary internal glazing has been fitted to ensure that the needs of the worshippers are being met, to keep people adequately warm in the winter seasons. We are working on the final stages of extending the Chapel by more than 50% and this will provide a new kitchen, additional toilets, a place for parents and children, a large entrance hall for welcoming (it is currently done outside, unless it rains) and the worship space will be able to seat many more people. It would be good if this could be completed before next summer.

Though buildings are not the essence of the gospel, they are not secondary to the gospel either. We pray that the improvements to the Chapel, will then provide a home to the pastoring of the sheep and the propagation of the Reformed faith for decades to come. Our long-term desire is for the planting of more congregations within an hour of Sheffield Presbyterian church and hopefully a strong base will help us to facilitate this .

Kevin Bidwell

**SOLIHULL**

We look back with thankfulness for the time Chris and Rosemary Statter were with us. Now that they have moved to Salford to plant a new church we miss them! However, we are excited about the new work Chris has been called to.

Last June/July we had an experimental evangelistic foray into Acocks Green in Birmingham. With the help of Birmingham City Mission we organized four meetings to address objections to Christianity. In the weeks beforehand we invited hundreds of people to come. The response of the community was disappointing, though we now have relationships with a couple of people. However, there was benefit for our own congregation as the meetings became opportunities for our members to discuss how to address hard questions with friends and colleagues.

Generally the church is in good heart and seems to be growing. As sometimes happens after the summer, new people have started attending. We are having to

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

tackle some practical problems of growth, especially with the growing number of children (with more on the way)! Pray for us as we look to the future. We would love to see another church plant in Birmingham soon. We are in the Lord's hands.

✍ Stephen Dancer

TRANÅS, SWEDEN

In September we had a conference with the focus on the difference which the gospel makes in four different life areas. The theme was 'In a new light'. Our speakers were Doug McCallum from the EPCEW and Daniel Ringdahl from Rosenius Church in Stockholm. The teaching was excellent and much appreciated by the participants, and we hope to hold some more similar conferences in the future.

Our new co-workers, Ben and Heidi Thomas, with their sons Jack (age 2) and Elliot



(1), have now arrived from Atlanta, USA. They have settled into their apartment and are getting to know the church and surroundings, and they are about to begin learning Swedish. The short-term plan is for them to get to know our church and learn the language. The long-term plan is, God willing, to plant a new church in Sweden. We are so glad that they have come, and we pray that their service here will be fruitful. Ben will be commissioned as a Missionary of the EPCEW in the morning worship service on 12 November.

✍ Sune Jäderberg

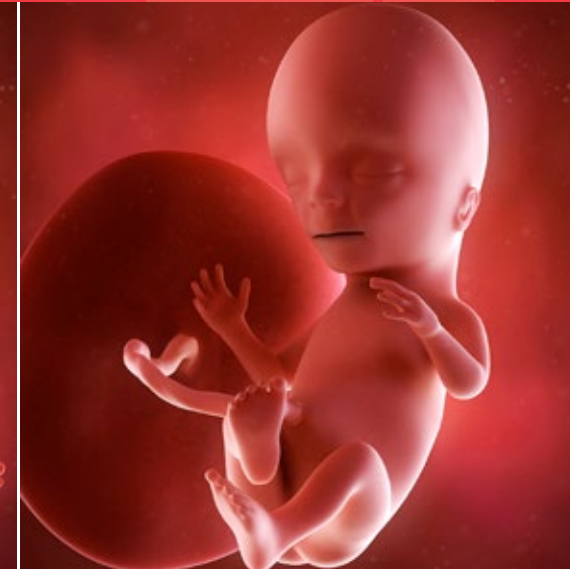
ABORTION

How long will this be tolerated?

The Abortion Act 1967 was passed on 27 October 1967 and came into effect 27 April 1968. This act of Parliament made it legal to kill a baby still in its mother's womb up to 28 weeks. In 1990 the time limit was reduced to 24 weeks' gestation.



This is what an unborn baby looks like at 24 weeks.



And this is what a baby looks like at 15 weeks.

Since 1968, about nine million unborn babies have been killed in Britain. At present rates about one million are put to death every five years. »



ADDRESSES ONLINE

www.presbyterianseminary.org.uk

On the back cover of the last issue of the Presbyterian Network, we drew attention to a conference about the Reformation to be held in Gateshead. The addresses given by Joel Beeke, Ian Hamilton, Jon D. Payne, Geoff Thomas, Kevin Bidwell, and Bill Schweitzer are now available on the website of Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

HOW CAN THIS BE?

It comes down to two things. First the false doctrine of moral autonomy. This states that a woman has authority over her own body, and must be subject to no law other than the law of her own wants. And if she doesn't want to have a baby, then she can kill it. This deprives the unborn baby of his or her right to life. The mother may kill her baby for her own convenience.

Second, there is a battle of words. The slogan for this moral autonomy is 'pro-choice'. Abortionists refuse to speak of 'the baby' in the womb. At 24 weeks, the baby clearly looks like a baby; head, arms and legs, heart beating (and has a 60% chance of survival). But they prefer to call it 'a foetus', or 'a pregnancy', not a person. So abortion is 'removing a pregnancy' rather than killing an unborn child. So it is alright to put it to death. If it is older than 12 weeks, then it is permissible to dismember it (cut it in pieces) in order to remove it from the womb. The brutal reality is concealed, the conscience is silenced, and the grisly massacre is denied.

THE BIBLE'S VERDICT

Does the Bible say anything about this? It certainly does. First of all, there is the sixth commandment, 'You shall not murder', which rests on the second great commandment of love for one's neighbour (Exodus 20:13).

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The brutal reality is concealed, the conscience is silenced, and the grisly massacre is denied.

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The Lord Jesus informs us that the devil 'was a murderer from the beginning... and there is no truth in him' (John 8:44). We know that he is at work in men and women, swaying them carry out evil deeds.

The Bible shows that the unborn baby is a living person. Who better than Doctor Luke to teach this? He records that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit and leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:15, 41-44). We do not need to multiply cases: one is enough to establish the point, although Psalm 139 confirms it. Hence the people of Ammon were guilty before God when they ripped open the pregnant mothers of Gilead (Amos 1:13).

The Lord Jesus informs us that the devil 'was a murderer from the beginning...and there is no truth in him' (John 8:44). We know that he is at work in men and women, swaying them carry out evil deeds. When we consider abortion, we must reckon with his influence. By one means or another, he has moved people to kill babies, newborn and unborn.

The slaughter of tiny, defenceless unborn babies (at a rate of 200,000 per annum in Great Britain) leaves a weight of guilt. The British nation has had blood on its hands for fifty years. o



Some Thoughts on Habakkuk

 REV. DOUGLAS McCALLUM

In chapters 1 and 2 of Habakkuk we find a man whose faith is faltering. Dismayed by the iniquity he sees around him among the covenant people, Habakkuk cries out to God and is troubled by the LORD's apparent lack of interest. He seems unable (or unwilling) to hear and to save (1:2).

And when God does answer his prophet and tells him that he is going to raise up the Chaldeans as an instrument of judgment against Judah (1:5-11), Habakkuk is astonished that the Holy One is planning to use a more wicked nation to punish a less wicked one (1:13). He wonders whether the LORD will ever punish the Babylonians and bring their wickedness to an end (1:17).

Habakkuk's basic question is this: what is God going to do about evil? Will he one day

bring an end to the wicked? Is he even able to do so?

Such questions continue to be asked by people today and provide a staple diet of any apologetic debate. Though ancient in its origin, the book of Habakkuk sounds a decidedly contemporary note.

In response to Habakkuk's complaints, the LORD gives two answers. He assures his perplexed prophet that he will one day judge Babylon, issuing a series of five 'woe' statements in chapter 2 (verses 6, 9, 12, 15, 19). The wicked will not get away with it.

What is more, he tells Habakkuk that 'the just shall live by his faith' (2:4), a key verse that is quoted three times in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

In this significant statement, God is telling his servant that the just/righteous are those who are justified by faith and who will therefore not be punished along with the wicked (this is the focus of the Romans and Galatians quotations) and, in addition, that the just/righteous will persevere by faith in the midst of troubling circumstances and often unexplained suffering (this is the focus of the Hebrews quotation).

So how does God answer Habakkuk's 'problem of evil'? By assuring him that one day the wicked will be punished and that, in the meantime, he must live by faith. Following this divine revelation, we see a transition in Habakkuk from a man whose faith is faltering (chapters 1 and 2) to a man whose faith is triumphant (chapter 3). The change is remarkable and compelling. What, then, characterises Habakkuk's now-triumphant faith? Three things.

First, it is a faith that remembers how God has acted in the past both to save and to judge. Habakkuk 3:3-15 takes in a grand sweep of Old Testament history, ranging from Moses and the Israelites to the conquest of Canaan under Joshua to the preservation of the kingdom at the time of David – and more besides. It is a case study in how to pray redemptive-historically. In doing so, Habakkuk's eyes are lifted up to God, and away from the evil circumstances that trouble him so much, and his faith is thereby strengthened.

Second, it is a faith that looks forward to the future. Now Habakkuk rests in the day of trouble, quietly waiting for God to act against his enemies (3:16). No longer is he fretful. By faith, he patiently waits for God to do what he has promised to do.

And third, Habakkuk's faith is joyful in the present. His joy is exquisitely expressed in

the closing verses of the book, verses that are a preacher's dream because they preach themselves. Habakkuk is no longer a man who anxiously worries about the course of evil. Instead, he is a man who rejoices in the LORD, even if evil disaster decimates the whole created order and leaves him with nothing to eat (3:17-19). Such faith-filled joy in God must surely captivate the heart of every believer.

There are probably times when your faith falters. Perhaps, like Habakkuk, you are troubled by the evil that you see in the world (or in your own heart) and you wonder what God is going to do about it. Take the message of this little-known prophet to heart. Remember that God has acted in the past in judgment against evil and so be assured that he will certainly act again in the future. In between these times, lift up your eyes to God by faith and wait patiently, rejoicing in the fact that, whatever happens, the LORD is your salvation and your strength.

This is how God changed Habakkuk from a man whose faith was faltering into a man whose faith was wonderfully triumphant. And you have even more reason than Habakkuk to enjoy a faith that triumphs even in the midst of evil, injustice and suffering. After all, unlike Habakkuk, you have the privilege of looking back to the cross, God's decisive act of salvation and judgment, an act that guarantees and anticipates Christ's consummate salvation of all his people and his final judgment of the Satanic Babylon (Rev. 18-19) when he returns in glory.

Your faith will triumph because your Saviour has already triumphed and will one day bring his triumph to eschatological completion. And then, to echo Habakkuk 2:14, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. ◦



MARTIN Luther

PURSUING REFORMATION

REV. PHIL BAIDEN

After publishing the *Ninety-five Theses*, Martin Luther was in a dangerous position. His request for scholarly debate had been spread far and wide by the printing press and many had seen in him a champion for change in the Roman Catholic Church.

Although the *Ninety-five Theses* were carefully worded to avoid directly criticizing the Pope and the Roman system, the seeds for more radical reform were planted.

NEW STEPS FORWARD

In the three years following 1517, those seeds came to growth in Luther's writings. He wrote three major works in this period which were attacks on the foundation of medieval religion. *The Address to the German Nobility*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *The Freedom of the Christian Man*, were shots across the bow of the Roman church and showed that Luther was questioning all manner of things. In these works he attacked the papacy, clericalism, the administration of the sacraments and other cherished doctrines.

These attacks meant that Luther could no longer hide. His writings came to Rome and the Pope was not happy. In his eyes Luther

was disturbing the peace of the church. The Pope and his cardinals were unwilling to debate with this German monk because the issues he raised had been settled in the church years before. Luther was undermining the whole fabric of the church and society with his intemperate writings.

PAPAL BULL

Eventually they could no longer ignore the situation. Luther was not going away. The Pope published a bull – a declaration – condemning 41 errors (as he saw it) in Luther's works, ordering his books to be burned, and excommunicating him, if he failed to recant and return to obedience to the church. The bull is known by its opening words: *Exsurge Domine* and began in this way:

'Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause. A wild boar has invaded thy vineyard. Arise, O Peter, and consider the case of the Holy Roman Church, the mother of all churches, consecrated by thy blood. Arise, O Paul, who by thy teaching and death hast and dost illumine the church. Arise, all ye saints, and the whole universal church, whose interpretation of Scripture has been assailed.'

Even in these opening words we can see from our vantage point the vast differences between the Roman church and the true Christianity which was being recovered. Here was the assumption that the Roman Catholic Church was the only true church, guarded by the Pope claiming to be the direct successor of Peter. Here was the idolatrous praying to saints for their help and guidance. Here was the assumption that authoritative scriptural interpretation was in the hands of the papacy.

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My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand I can do no other.

Luther had returned to the text of Scripture. He had seen the abuses that were rife in the medieval church. He had sounded the gospel alarm for a return to the Lord and true religion, freed from the accretions of the past. But he would not be welcomed by a hierarchy that saw Luther's works as an attack on their position and privilege.

BURNING BOOKS

As the bull was publicized throughout German and Dutch lands, bonfires were lit and Luther's books burned. It was not an easy time for the papal nuncios, the men who had the role of carrying out the burnings. Not everyone was convinced that Luther's works should be condemned. Some of the executioners who had the task of lighting the fires refused. Sometimes the nuncios were pelted with stones.

Eventually the bull came to be seen by Luther. Rather than lead the German monk to repentance, it led to a hardening of positions. His break with Rome became final. He publicly burned the bull, along with books of canon law and medieval theology. There

was no chance of Luther changing the mind of the Roman Church. He would be excommunicated. But would there be any stricter penalties from the state? He had to appeal to the civic authorities. And at the time of Luther, the highest civil authority was Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.

DIET OF WORMS

Luther was summoned to Worms where the German rulers were meeting with their Emperor in what was called a Diet. What happened at the Diet of Worms in 1521 stands as a beacon throughout the ages of gospel courage and principles. Luther was accorded safe passage to the Diet, and when he arrived, there was great excitement. The Roman church may have rejected him but the German people had taken him to their hearts. Luther came before the Emperor. His books were laid out on a table before the gathering. After he had affirmed that these books were his, Luther was asked: 'Do you recant?'

This was a surprise. Luther was expecting to debate these writings, not be pressured into rejecting all that he had written. Luther was struck by the magnitude of the moment. His voice failed him. His courage seemed to leave him. He asked for twenty-four hours to prepare his reply. The imperial entourage was shocked. This was the central issue and Luther was not prepared? They reluctantly agreed to the delay.

HERE I STAND

The next day the meeting room was packed to the rafters. Only the Emperor had a seat. Once again Luther stood before the court

of Charles V and was asked: 'Do you recant?' This time Luther's voice did not fail. He confidently answered that all the books were his but they were not all of the same sort. Some had been praised for their doctrine even by his enemies. Some attacked the 'tyranny' of the Pope and the excesses of the church, which many agreed needed to be changed. Some did go a little far in attacking individuals. Recantation came there none.

The papal nuncio leading the questioning asked again: 'Do you recant?' Luther's final answer stands as a monument to his courage and his clear-sightedness:

'Since your Majesty and your lords desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of Popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand I can do no other.'

The excommunication was confirmed. The might of the Empire was attached to the might of the Roman church: Luther's works were to be burned and Luther was established as a heretic. He was not to be harboured by any.

KIDNAPPED

Yet harboured he was. He was swept away in a fake kidnapping to the Wartburg castle where Luther took on the disguise of a Knight and grew his beard. He felt as if he had been taken away from the battlefield, yet he was not idle. He began his great work of translating the Scriptures into German for the ploughboy to read in the fields. He continued to write copious amounts. The

Reformation had begun and Martin Luther was the spark that God used to light a conflagration that continues to this day

WIFE IN A BARREL

Eventually Luther returned to Wittenberg and carried out reforms of worship in that city. He married a former nun, and she arrived in the city concealed in a fish barrel! He lived a life for God and left behind him a legacy that all Bible-believers must be thankful for. There were mistakes and errors. His personality was not suited to compromise, and a break took place between the Lutherans and 'the Reformed' which weakened the Reformation witness across Europe. He died in 1546 at Eisleben, leaving the field to the next generation.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

What can we learn from this German monk? The most important thing is to ensure that we, too, can say what he said at Worms. Is your conscience captive to the Word of God? Are our churches captive to that Word? Are our lives lived in accordance with God's revealed will in Scripture? Do we conduct our affairs in the church according to God's way, or our own? In the face of opposition from the world do we weakly fold or stand firm in our Biblical convictions?

Recent years have seen some seek to apologize for the Reformation, or even deny its central doctrines. We must learn from Luther never to do such things. Luther was used by God to recover the truth of the gospel. He recovered the glory of our salvation being by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We must never compromise on these things. Here we stand. We can do no other. Amen. ○



THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

The ICRC is a place where 'Reformed' Churches can meet every four years. There are 32 member churches, coming from every continent. Some are called 'Reformed', and adhere to the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort). Others are called 'Presbyterian', and they hold the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms.

 REV. DR PETER J. NAYLOR

Photography by Michael Zwiep, Member, Vineland Free Reformed Church and Contributor, Christian Renewal!

The ICRC website is at: <https://www.icrconline.com>. There its main aims are set down:

- » to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;
- » to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;
- » to encourage co-operation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates;
- » to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
- » to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

These are good aims and progress in them should strengthen the churches.

THIS YEAR IN CANADA

The Ninth Conference met in Jordan, Ontario, 13-19 July. Jordan is a 20 minute drive away from Niagara Falls.

Each day of the conference began with a time of worship. During these sessions, the chairman focused his remarks on four great principles of Reformed teaching: our faith is determined by Scripture alone, and we are saved by God's grace alone, through Christ alone, being justified by faith alone, without works. This choice was entirely apt since it was 500 years ago that Luther published his *Ninety-five Theses on Indulgences*.

Looking to India

In the lectures that were given, there was a lot of attention upon bringing the Reformed Faith to India. Those churches that come from 'the West' greatly value their sister-churches in India and other

parts of the world. Indeed, it may be that the next ICRC in 2021 will be held in Delhi, but if that is not possible, then God willing it will be in Australia.

Working together

Much thought has been given to ways in which our churches may encourage one another by co-operating in the great tasks of mission, of training of ministers, and of diaconal works of mercy. This year, it was decided that the magazine *Lux Mundi* would become a publication of the ICRC.

New members

We were thrilled to welcome two new member churches: the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Uganda. Some other churches have also shown an interest in the ICRC, for example, the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and the Eastern European Reformed Presbyterian Church in Central and Eastern Europe.

Building relationships

One of the great benefits of the ICRC is the fostering of personal contacts among ministers. As we get to know our fellow-servants in other churches, we are able to help build stronger sister-church relations.

A very sad suspension

The conference in Jordan had to grapple with one vexing problem. Towards the end of June, a general synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) decided to approve of the ordination of women to the offices of elder and minister. Their reasons and the discussion of this thorny issue is reported in detail in the *Proceedings of the Conference*, which can be found on the ICRC website. The other member churches were united in their view that the decision was contrary to the Scriptures and in breach of the ICRC's Constitution. Accordingly, the member churches voted to suspend the RCN's membership of the ICRC.

This action was taken in a firm but gracious manner. It was felt all the more deeply because the RCN was a founder member of the ICRC. A few decades earlier, the RCN had withdrawn from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, standing opposed to their approval of the ordination of women to those offices. It was apparent that the RCN's change of direction had come about because their way of interpreting

the Bible had changed, and that change, fundamental as it is, is likely to produce other unbiblical ways of thinking and acting. This suspension does not remove the RCN from the ICRC but it does prevent their representatives from voting. The conference urged the RCN to reconsider. We expect that the outcome will be known in 2021.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ICRC

Is the ICRC important? Does it benefit the members of the flock? Is the conference remote and irrelevant to our daily Christian walk? No doubt the discerning observer would feel that there is room for development and improvement. Even so, there are good reasons for the EPCEW to be a member and to participate actively in the conference.

First of all, our Lord Jesus, the head of the church, has made it plain in the Scriptures that he regards the unity of the church as important.

Second, we are in a battle. We are assailed on every side by error: false religions abound; in the West, the media, education, and even legislation, have been hijacked and made to serve an ungodly and unrighteous agenda. It is vital that we, the Reformed Churches, stand together and speak with one voice the truth of the Bible, whether we please or whether we offend.

Let us face the fact that, in Britain, for example, we have already passed the point at which ordinary Bible-believing Christians are dragged into the courts for speaking or acting uprightly in accordance with the Law of God. Governments are passing laws that will criminalize Christians who will obey God rather than man. Those who speak against us – and against God and Christ – are many and they have loud voices!

Third, how many times have we seen a major natural disaster and wanted to help but not known how to do that effectively? The ICRC gives us a network. In many parts of the world we know where there are churches and missionaries, through whom we may have a way of helping without going through the major secular relief agencies. Expression of *Christian love* is possible. Foreign Aid from western governments and Charitable Aid from NGOs usually comes with strings attached – requiring the acceptance of a corrupt liberal agenda.

Fourth, how often has a church member travelled abroad for work, or education, or even for a vacation and wondered where he might worship the Lord? Again the ICRC network is a good place to start. Will you visit India, the US, Korea, New Zealand? We can point you to a church. You are not alone! The EPCEW is not alone, a curiosity in a modern world: we have millions of brothers and sisters who believe the same biblical truth.

IN EUROPE

There are currently eight member churches in Europe. We have succeeded in holding a regional meeting six times since 2007 and we plan to meet again in 2018 in England. Our subject? The Care of the Flock! See www.eucrc.org.

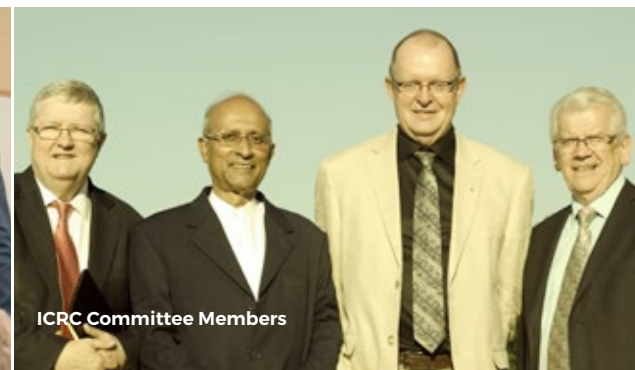
ECUMENICAL

Since 1910, the Ecumenical Movement has been a reality of church life. It led to the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948. But it is a movement that is founded on false doctrine. Early slogans of the Ecumenical Movement include: 'No confession of faith, but deeds of faith,' and 'Doctrine divides, service unites.' The WCC is big – it dwarfs the ICRC – and the Roman Catholic Church dwarfs the WCC! Reformed Churches are, by definition, deeply opposed to the false teachings of Rome and cannot accept the unbiblical character of the WCC. The ICRC represents a biblical alternative to the paths of false alliances or total isolation. ○

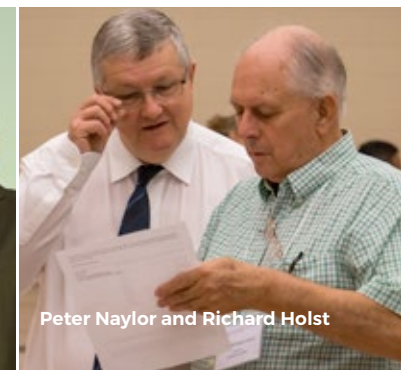
Note: K. Deddens and M. K. Drost, *Balance of Ecumenism* (Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 1989) offer a good study of this matter up to the 1980s. What has happened since 1989 can be discovered by searching the websites of the WC, the ICRC and the EuCRC.



New Members



ICRC Committee Members



Peter Naylor and Richard Holst

PSALM 102: A STUDY



REV. DR PETER J. NAYLOR



The congregation was singing 'The set time now has come to bless Jerusalem' (*Sing Psalms*, Psalm 102 verse 13). Thrilling! But what if now is not the set time? Can I sing this? What if it is for another generation, another time? What if I am left to long for the time of favour but not enjoy it? Thus, I was drawn into a study of Psalm 102.

TIME AND PLACE?

When we read a psalm, we naturally ask who wrote it and

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When the believer is cast down on account of the low condition of the church, he can take up this psalm as his own prayer.

in what circumstances. The title to Psalm 102 does not answer these questions: only that a poor, afflicted man is overwhelmed by his suffering (1-11), sets his hope on God (12-22), and his cries are answered (23-28).

WHAT COMMENTARIES SAY

Most commentators think that this psalm comes from the period of the Babylonian exile, when Jerusalem was in ruins, but the time for Judah's return was at hand (13). Jeremiah had prophesied that the

exile would last for 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2) and perhaps, like Daniel, the psalmist realized that the time was approaching. John Calvin wrote, 'This prayer seems to have been dictated to the faithful when they were languishing in captivity in Babylon' (*Commentaries*, 6.95). Allan Harman says: 'Most probably this psalm comes from the time of the exile in Babylon' (p. 332). Bruce Waltke says: 'An anonymous, desperately sick exile in his midlife is on the edge of the grave at the end of the Babylonian exile' (p. 223).

So then, when the believer is cast down on account of the low condition of the church, he can take up this psalm as his own prayer. Dickson writes that a person 'cannot fill up the words of this psalm in his own proper present feeling, yet he may make good use of this prayer, which teacheth him how to wrestle for a deliverance' (2.202). This is the way in which the majority of commentators explain and apply Psalm 102.

Are they right? Is that how our ministers should interpret and preach Psalm 102? Several observations lead me to a different view.

ANOTHER VIEW

1. Hebrews 1:10-12

Verses 25-27 are quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12. Hebrews 1 contains a string of Old Testament quotations, all chosen because in them God the Father is speaking to (or about) his Son (e.g. Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 45:6-7; and Ps. 110:1). He includes this:

Previously, you founded the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands.
They will perish, but you will stand;

and all of them like a garment will wear out,
and like clothing you will change them,
and they will be changed.
But YOU ARE HE,
and your years will not be completed.
(Psalm 102:25-27 my translation).

When we first read these words, we may think that the afflicted one is confessing his faith in the everlasting God. But Hebrews is showing us that these are words of God the Father, assuring his Son that he will live for ever.

Scripture interprets Scripture is a fundamental principle of interpretation. 'The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, (which is not manifold but one,) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly' (*Westminster Confession*, 1.9). Hebrews 1 reveals that the afflicted man is our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, when overwhelmed by his sufferings..

2. In the future

Psalm 102 speaks of a future occasion. The title can be read as 'A prayer for an afflicted man *when he will be overwhelmed and will pour out his complaint* before the LORD.' The Hebrew form and syntax suggest, or at least admit, a future reference. John Calvin wrote: 'Those who translate the verbs in the past tense ... give an incorrect view of the mind of the prophet' (p.96).

The 'appointed time' is in the future (13). The prayer is written for the sake of a later generation; and a people not yet brought into existence will praise the Lord for what will take place (18). The great vision of the psalm lies many years ahead (15-16, 22).

This is not the only psalm to speak about the future. So do Psalms 2, 22, 69, 72, and 110. This is characteristic of the Old Testament, in the Law, Prophets, and Writings. The song of Moses testified to what would happen after his death (Deut. 31:28-32:43). The LORD spoke to David about his house 'for a great while to come' (2 Sam. 7:19). David always 'foresaw the Lord' (Ps. 16:8). Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun 'prophesied with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals', and these are the priests who wrote some psalms (1 Chr. 25:1). They take their place among such as Enoch, Abraham, Job, Isaiah, and all the prophets, who foresaw the day of Christ and rejoiced.

3. Christ's sufferings

The afflictions of Psalm 102 resemble the Gospel record of Christ's sufferings in detail.

- » He is alone, isolated (6-7). 'They all forsook him and fled' (Matt. 26:56; Ps. 69:8, 20; Isa. 53:3).
- » His enemies reproach him, mock him, and are sworn to destroy him (8). So they reviled Christ; remember the spitting, the taunts, the reed sceptre, the purple robe, and the crown of thorns (Matt. 26:3-5, 14-16, 67-68; 27:28-31, 39-44).
- » He feels God's indignation and wrath (10). Consider the three hours of darkness and his cry of forsakenness (Matt. 27:45-46). The Aaronic blessing was that the LORD's face would shine on his people; this darkness surely signifies the opposite, that he bore the curse (Num. 6:25; Gal. 3:13).

- » He is stripped (17). They divided his garments among them (Matt. 27:35).
- » He is overwhelmed (the title of the Psalm). Remember Gethsemane.
- » He is dying in mid-life, his life cut short, his days like smoke, or like a shadow in the evening (3, 11, 23-24a). God has shortened his life. He prays not to be taken away at the half-way point of a normal life span (23-24a). Our Lord was in his 30s when they crucified him.

Surely Psalm 102 fits precisely the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ?

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Since the day of Pentecost, the preaching of the gospel has set men free from captivity and death and has gathered many from the nations to Christ.

4. Resurrection and Pentecost

God's answer (13-17, 19-22, 24b-28) refers to the resurrection of Christ and the fruit of the gospel from the day of Pentecost to the end of the age. The afflicted one will live, and that for ever (17a, 24b-27). Prisoners doomed to die will be delivered (20). Nations and kings will be gathered to the Lord, to fear and serve him (15, 22). Zion will be built (16, 28). The Lord will appear in his glory (15b).

Now all this is exactly what God promised to Abraham and his Seed, and to David and his Seed (Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 72). And this great promissory vision is fulfilled in Christ alone. 'I am he who lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore' (Rev. 1:18). Since the day of Pentecost, the preaching of the gospel has set men free from captivity and death and has gathered many from the nations to Christ. The church is that body in which Christ's glory will be manifest (Eph. 3:20-21; Rev. 21).

SOME SUPPORT

In many commentaries on the Psalms, hardly anything of this is found. Clearly it is possible to read the Old Testament and not see Christ where he should be seen (Luke 24:44-45). It can be unnerving to stand apart from the majority of commentators. However, some exegetes have seen Christ in Psalm 102.

Matthew Henry wrote:

'Some think that David penned this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion; others that Daniel, Nehemiah, or some other prophet, penned it for the use of the church, when it was in captivity in Babylon, because it seems to speak of the ruin of Zion and of a time set for the rebuilding of it... But it is clear, from the application of v.25, 26, to Christ (Heb. 1:10-12), that the psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah, and speaks either of his affliction, or the afflictions of the church for his sake.'

Long before Matthew Henry, Augustine (354-430) wrote:

'Behold, one poor man prayeth, and prayeth not in silence. We may therefore hear him, and see who he is: whether it be not perchance He, of whom the Apostle saith: "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye though His poverty might be rich"' (vol. 8, page 494).

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With Augustine, Matthew Henry and Kidner, I believe that this psalm looks forward to the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

VERSES 24-27 AGAIN

Derek Kidner rejects the traditional view that this is one of seven 'Penitential Psalms'. He says, 'So the Psalm...is Messianic; and in the light of that, the sufferings and world-embracing vision of the speaker lead the mind to Psalm 22' (p.360).

With Augustine, Matthew Henry and Kidner, I believe that this psalm looks forward to the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How then should we read verse 24? Who is saying 'Your years are throughout all generations'? It is common to regard them as words of the afflicted to God. But they could be the first words of the divine answer. The Son says 'Do not take me away in the midst of my days' and the Father replies immediately with 'Your years are throughout all generations....' If so, there is a change of speaker in the middle of the verse. That should not put us off. In Hebrew poetry there are abrupt changes – consider Psalm 22:21 – and two voices. Whichever reading is correct, the meaning of the dialogue is preserved. As Psalm 21:4 expresses it, 'He asked life from you, and you gave it to him – length of days forever and ever.'

Let us look again at verse 27. We are familiar with the translation 'But you are the same' here and in Hebrews 1:12 and 13:8. The words in the Hebrew original are 'You are he' (אתה

אֲנִי). Sometimes the pronoun 'he' (הוא) functions as the copula 'are'. In some places, the expression 'I am he' (אֲנִי הוּא) alludes to the divine name, I AM THAT I AM (e.g. Isa. 41:4; 43:10, 13). This would certainly fit Psalm 102 and indeed Hebrews: he is not simply 'the same', meaning eternal and unchangeable, but he is God the LORD, I AM THAT I AM (אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים). The sufferer is acknowledged to be God, as he is in the New Testament (John 8:58; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:8; 22:13).

In passing, we should not overlook the sustained contrast between 'the days' of the poor praying sufferer (3, 11, 24) and the endless 'years' promised to him (24b, 27). There is even a contrast between this creation's passing away and the Son's eternal deity. They will perish; but he will remain (26).

THE USE OF THIS PSALM

If Psalm 102 is about Christ, how can we apply it to ourselves? Have we lost something? The answer to this question has two parts.

1. It was for Jesus

Consider Jesus' manhood. The incarnation of the Son of God is a great mystery. He is the second person of the Trinity, and as God he was unchangeably omniscient and all wise. Peter was right, 'Lord, you know all things' (John 21:17). And yet, Luke gives us a glimpse of his childhood, when he was taken to the temple, feast after feast, and to the synagogue, Sabbath after Sabbath. 'Jesus increased in

wisdom and stature' (Luke 2:52). We cannot penetrate the mystery, only accept what God has revealed.

“ Jesus was continually hearing the Scriptures, and thus he was hearing time and again his own commission.

The point is, Jesus was continually hearing the Scriptures, and thus he was hearing time and again his own commission; his offices, his work, his death and resurrection, were being set before him. Scripture was not written only for our sake but for the sake of the incarnate Son of God. What an impact the Scriptures must have had on him who was filled with the Holy Spirit. In the great conflict with Satan, in the path of obedience, he would be strengthened by the Scriptures.

Facing the cross, at the age of 33, what else did he need but every written promise of God to *him!* He knew that the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35) and because it was written he must lay down his life (Matt. 26:54). Then, from the Scriptures he knew that God the Father will hear his strong cries and tears and save him from death (Heb. 5:7). What else did he need beside the faithful promise of God? When he cried out 'It is finished' – his obedience complete, his commission fulfilled – he also knew with certainty that it was 'not the end', only the beginning. We must consider what Christ understood about himself as he heard Psalm 102.

2. It is for the believer

Second, the believer in his own suffering is not prevented from drawing on the psalm, even though he knows it is about Christ. On the contrary. The believer must see

that it does apply to him also, because of the great truth of his union with Christ (see John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pp. 161ff).

The connection is not between the believer today and a Judean exile in 550bc; the connection is between the believer and Christ. Every believing child of God is 'in Christ' (ἐν Χριστῷ). He is a member of the body of which Christ is the head. When the believer today suffers as a Christian, he does so with Christ; he shares in his sufferings, and he also knows that he will share in his glory (Rom. 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:17).

On the one hand, Christ's vicarious sufferings are unique and spare us from the curse of the law and the just wrath of God; but on the other hand, we are called to suffer with him.

All that our Lord once did, we did in him; all that happened to him happened to us (Rom. 5:12-21; 6: 4-6). And yet, at the same time, we see how remote from our experience is his cross, and, seeing that, we aspire after it. On the one hand, Paul could write of our blessed standing in Christ (Eph. 1:3ff), and on the other hand he knew that he had not yet reached the goal to which he had been called. So he discarded all other interests in order to know the power of Christ enabling him to be conformed to his sufferings and death (Phil. 3:9ff). This is what forges a dynamic link between the Christian and Psalm 102. If it is Christ's, then it is ours. It can indeed strengthen and comfort us in the good fight of faith. We can press forward, with our eye on Christ our forerunner. We shall live and reign with him, sit in his throne.

3. For the sake of the church

Just here is a valuable lesson for the believer. This Poor Man's affliction was brought about by Zion's desolation. See his dedication to God's covenant people. Christ loved the church. Christ was moved to compassion by our lost condition, his heart was afflicted in our afflictions (Isa. 63:9) – he died for our sins.

“ **If it is Christ's, then it is ours. It can indeed strengthen and comfort us in the good fight of faith. We can press forward, with our eye on Christ our forerunner.**

If we have the mind of Christ, an indispensable part of our Christian experience will be to suffer for the sake of his church. John Calvin makes this point:

'No person could utter these words with the mouth without profaning the name of God, unless he were, at the same time, actuated by a sincere and earnest affection of heart. We ought particularly to attend to the circumstances already adverted to, that we are thus stirred up by the Holy Spirit to the duty of prayer in behalf of the common

welfare of the Church. Whilst each man takes sufficient care of his own individual interests, there is scarcely one in a hundred affected as he ought to be with the calamities of the Church... These expressions...show how deeply the desolations of the Church ought to wound the hearts of the people of God. Let every man, therefore, carefully examine himself on this head. If we do not prefer the Church to all the other objects of our solicitude, we are unworthy of being accounted among her members. Whenever we meet with such forms of expression as these, let us remember that they reproach our slothfulness in not being affected with the afflictions of the Church as we ought.'

4. Psalm 102 and the EPCEW

When we look at the present state of the church in the British Isles, we might doubt that this is God's set time of favour. But we know that the set time of favour is that period following Christ's death and resurrection and we are in that time!

As men of faith have always done, we look not at what is seen but what is unseen and true – we walk by faith and not by sight – and so we pray without ceasing that the vision set out in Psalm 102:14-16, 22 and 28, will become a reality for our churches, for our mission outreach to our countrymen:

When your servants take pleasure in her stones,
and they favour her dust.
And nations will fear the name of the LORD;
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
When the LORD has built Zion
his glory will be seen.

When peoples are gathered together,
and kingdoms to serve the LORD.
The sons of your servants will abide,
and their seed will be established before you.

May the Lord favour us and let us see him doing these things in our days. ○

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BARRY

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Sun. 11am & 6pm
Minister: Rev. Drew Goodman
☎ 029 2140 4568
✉ agoodman@barryepc.org
🌐 barryepc.org

BERLIN

Droysenstrasse 15 10629 Berlin
Sun. 10am & 4.30pm
Treseburger Ufer 44b 12347
Berlin. Wed. 7pm
Minister: Rev. Johannes Müller
☎ +491763102904
✉ johannes.mueller@epkd.de
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BLACKBURN

Fecitt Brow, Blackburn
Lancashire BB1 2AZ
Sun. 11am & 6.30pm
Wed. 7.30pm
Minister: Rev. Norman Green
☎ 01254 260388

BURY ST EDMUNDS

Newbury Community Centre
St. Olaves Rd, Bury St Edmunds
IP32 6RW, Sun. 11am & 6.30pm,
Wed. 7.30pm
Minister: Rev. Matthew Jolley
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CAMBRIDGE

Queen Emma Primary School (am)
Resurrection Lutheran Church,
Westfield Rd (pm)
Cockcroft Hall, Clarkson Rd (Thu)
Sun. 10.30am & 6pm, Thu. 7.45pm
Minister: Rev. Douglas McCallum
☎ 07855 130526
✉ dmccallum1981@gmail.com
🌐 cambridgepres.org.uk

CARDIFF - BETHEL

Michaelston Rd, Culverhouse
Cross, Cardiff CF5 4SX
Sun. 11am & 6pm, Wed. 7.30pm
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CARDIFF - IMMANUEL

Heol Trelai, Caerau,
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Wed. 7.30pm
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CHELMSFORD

Hall Street Methodist Church
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Sun. 11.30am & 6pm, Thu. 8pm
Minister: Rev. Darren Moore
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CHELTENHAM

23 Naunton Lane, Leckhampton
Cheltenham GL53 7BJ
Sun. 10.30am & 6pm Wed. 7.45pm
Minister: Rev. Andrew Young
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🌐 cheltenhampres.org.uk

CHELTENHAM - NORTH

Whaddon Road E.P. Church
Rear of Claremont, Whaddon Rd,
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Minister: Rev. David Pfeiffer
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✉ drpfeiffer85@hotmail.com
🌐 whaddonevangelicalchurch.org

DURHAM

The Chapel, Laburnum Avenue
Durham, DH1 4HA
Sun. 10.30am & 3.30pm,
Thu. 7.45pm
Minister: Rev. Phil Baiden
☎ 01916 700972
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🌐 depc.org.uk

GATESHEAD

Lobley Hill Community Centre
47 Scafell Gardens, Gateshead
NE11 9LS, Sun. 10.30am & 6pm
Minister: Rev. Dr Bill Schweitzer
☎ 07939 071404
✉ contact@gatesheadpres.org.uk
🌐 gatesheadpres.org.uk

HEXHAM

The Torch Centre
Corbridge Rd (near hospital)
Hexham NE46 1QS
Sun. 10am & 5pm, Wed. 7.30pm
Minister: Rev. Joshua Rieger
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HULL

Rear of 336 Holderness Rd
Hull, HU9 3DQ
Sun. 10.30am & 6pm
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SHEFFIELD

Hill Top Chapel, Attercliffe
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Reformation Bible Conference

2018

Friday 5th & Saturday 6th January

Christ & Our Identity in Christ



Rev Dr Kevin Bidwell
Sheffield



Rev Dr Peter Naylor
Cardiff



Rev Andy Young
Cheltenham

Reformation Bible Conference

Join us for the Reformation Bible Conference 2018, to be strengthened in our faith, ready for the year ahead. The biblical teaching sessions, prayer and provides a great opportunity to enjoy rich fellowship together.

The conference this year provides a wide variety of sessions which will be highly encouraging and beneficial to families, young people, students and all ages. This is a free event.

Our speakers & their themes are:

Peter Naylor: *Biblical Exposition*
Andy Young: *Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, Parts I & II*
Kevin Bidwell: *Christ in Gethsemane, Gabbatha & Golgotha*

Any Questions? Contact Us:

Email: kevinjbidwell@me.com

For more details to get to the Venue:

Website: www.sheffieldpres.org.uk



Conference Location:

Hill Top Chapel,
Attercliffe,
Sheffield,
S9 2AD

Disabled Access &
On-Site Car Park

Where to Stay?

Ibis Budget &
Premier Inn
(both 2-3 minute
walk from venue)

The Program Friday 5th January

- 11 am - 11.30 Arrive, Tea & Coffee Served
11.30 - 12.15 *Session 1: Andy Young*
12.15 - 12.30 Break
12.30 - 13.15 *Session 2: Kevin Bidwell*
13.15 - 14.00 Lunch (Bring Own Packed Lunch/ Sandwiches)
14.00 - 16.00 Walk at Rother Valley Country Park
16.30 - 18.30 Carvery Dinner at Restaurant (around £5-£7pp)
19.30 - 20.15 *Session 3: Andy Young*
20.15 - 20.30 Tea & Coffee Break
20.30 - 21.15 *Session 4: Kevin Bidwell*

Saturday 6th January

- 9 am - 9.30 Arrive
9.30 - 10.20 *Session 5: Peter Naylor*
10.25 - 11.00 Prayer & Church Plants Update
11 am - 11.30 Tea & Coffee Break
11.30 - 12.15 *Session 6: Kevin Bidwell*
12.15 - 13.45 Lunch Buffet Provided at Chapel
13.45 - 14.30 *Session 7: Peter Naylor*
14.30 - 15.00 Tea & Coffee Break
15.00 - 16.00 *Session 8: Peter Naylor*