

PRESBYTERIAN NETWORK

29/3

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND & WALES

»

LOVE AND ZEAL

»

**IS CODEx SINAITICUS
A FORGERY?**

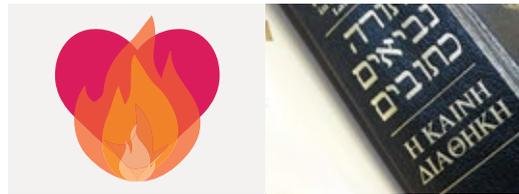
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**MEET A
MEMBER**

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**THE GREAT SYNOD OF
DORDRECHT: PART 2**

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“ EDITOR'S NOTE

Two themes run through the articles in this issue: the importance of the *truth*, and the call of Christ to *love one another*. Chris Statter's account of Oswald Dykes' ministry shows how the old Presbyterian Church of England was destroyed by doubt about the Bible and by departure from the Westminster Confession of Faith. We must pray for our preachers, that they may faithfully expound the Scriptures and hold fast to the Confession.

Phil Baiden's sermon echoes Christ's call: to love one another, as he has first loved us. The church is a pleasant place when brotherly love abounds. Love builds up, love covers a multitude of sins, love is the fulfilment of the law (Eph. 4:16; 1 Peter 4:8; Rom. 13:10). 'By this we know love – because he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren' (1 John 3:16). ◊

📁 SUBSCRIPTIONS AND GIFTS

We wish to thank readers for cheques paying subscriptions and making gifts towards the publishing costs of the *Presbyterian Network*. Some may find it helpful to know that subscriptions and donations can be paid via **PayPal** (and those living abroad can make a payment in their own currency.) To do this, you simply go on PayPal.com and donate/pay money to the following account: treasurer@epcew.org.uk ◊

📍 SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

📍 BARRY

'The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness' (Lam. 3:22-23). The Lord has faithfully provided for the ministry of the Word, sacraments, and prayer. We plan to receive a new member. A new children's outreach is underway. Significantly, the Lord provided a new church facility in the town centre of Barry. Though the site requires redevelopment, we hope to relocate in 2019 (DV). Please pray for our worship and witness to be more visible in the town, and for a new beginning for Barry EPC in the town centre.

Along with encouragements the Lord has blessed us with trials. Some members are no longer with us, and health trials of others contribute to lower attendance. In our trials, we bless the Lord: 'Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?' (Job 2:10). These providences suggest God is testing hearts and pruning his vineyard. We pray the Lord will cause us all to abide in Christ and his Word, that we may be more fruitful in him, for apart from him we can do nothing.

✍️ Drew Goodman

📍 BERLIN

Over the last year we have had discussions about our service times. The time in

between the services was too long to stay together and for some it was too short to go home, have lunch and then come back for the second service. We decided to have the catechism class at 10.00am, the morning service at 11.00am and the second service at 2.00pm, with a 'bring and share' lunch in between. So far this has worked very well for most of the church and it has helped to strengthen our fellowship.

We are looking forward to the Christmas season. We are planning an evangelistic series in the morning services leading up to Christmas. As a church we are thinking through different ways in which we can reach the people around us. Therefore I will do a topical sermon series on evangelism in our afternoon services.

Please pray that the Lord will use our efforts in order to call his elect. Pray that he will build his church in Berlin and that he will be glorified by his people gathering and worshipping him.

✍️ Johannes Müller

📍 BLACKBURN

We are conscious of the need to maintain a bright Reformed and evangelical witness as the knowledge and understanding of the Word of God in our town has receded, and have been encouraged to re-start our open air witness, speaking in Blackburn once a fortnight. Through this, some have engaged

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

in conversation with us and been interested to come to services, and there has been a greater boldness in us to witness on the street. We are encouraged by some increase in attendance and a deepening sense of the Lord in our meetings, and are praying for resulting growth in spirituality. Recently we have been especially focusing in ministry on the person of the Lord Jesus, preaching through Hebrews on the Lord's Day, and midweek with a series of studies on 'the things concerning himself'. The number of young children in the church now makes it viable to start a Sunday School, and we are making preparations for that. We also have the elderly and sick among us and pray that the Lord would keep and sustain all for his own glory.

 Norman Green

BURY ST EDMUNDS

As a church we are giving thanks for God's blessing on our summer mission week (30 July - 4 August). We had about 35 children, most of whom came from outside the church, for the Holiday Bible Club in the mornings. Between 60 and 100 people came to the evening meetings, where God's Word was declared. Relationships with those whom we know were strengthened and new folk heard the gospel perhaps for the first time.

A mums' and tots' group (Midweek for Mums) which we started in June has steadily grown and is now providing opportunities to get to know other folk in the community and we continue with our evangelistic youth club on Friday nights.

However, by far the greatest joy of the last few months has been the profession of faith and coming into membership of Jo. He was one of the first to come to our youth club about eight years ago and has been around the church off and on since. But now, he has been reborn by the Holy Spirit, the change is evident in his desire to study the Word, a new-found desire to pray, and his willingness to confess Christ despite the scorn of those around. Praise be to our gracious God!

 Benjamin Wontrop

CAMBRIDGE

We give thanks for God's continued blessing upon us as a church. We were sorry to see a number of people leave over the summer (around 30), but have been encouraged by a good number of new people coming along in recent weeks. Please pray that they would settle well.

We have been going through the book of Daniel in the morning services and the letters of John in the evening. For our midweek prayer meeting, we have recently started meeting once a month in the manse, hoping that the more 'homely' atmosphere will encourage better attendance and a greater liberty in prayer.

Church activities, including work amongst children, teenagers, and students/young adults continues to go well, and we are very grateful for the number of servant-hearted volunteers we have in the church. We were delighted to ordain Nelson Smith as a deacon in the church a couple of

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

months ago. Please pray that he, along with all of our officers, would serve well in true humility and gentleness.

 Douglas McCallum

CARDIFF: BETHEL

Memories of summer sunshine for Bethel included a picnic at a nearby country park and children's camps aided by church members from South Carolina. The arts and crafts camp was as popular as the football camp and over 60 children attended. The men, also, enjoyed a *braai* (BBQ) at the home of André Kilian from South Africa.

The children's work continued with a Family Fun Day with Lego. A toddler room with Duplo was also popular and a third of those who came were new to the church.

Three young teenagers were made communicant members of the church, with family visitors attending the Sunday morning service.

Our toddlers' group, Tiny Tunes, has unfortunately had to finish after 11 years. We are so grateful for Elmarie Kilian's leadership in this work and it is hoped to replace the weekly group with a monthly coffee morning.

Of late, the church has suffered various acts of vandalism and minor break-ins but we have been aware of the support of neighbours who do not attend church, and we pray that the wiles of the devil may be overturned by being a means to bring others to Christ.

 Patricia Stowell

CARDIFF: IMMANUEL



Iestyn & Family



Jumah & Family

Photographs by sarahloisphotography.com

The Lord is gracious. Recently we have been glad to welcome new members, among them Iestyn and Sunni ap Hywel and their two children. In September, Iestyn began to work full-time alongside the elders. This arrangement is initially for one year but we hope that it will lead on to a fruitful ministry for Iestyn.

We also rejoiced at the baptism of a covenant child. We pray for all Christian parents that they may be faithful in teaching their children and in bringing them into God's house.

One of the delights of church life is to see youngsters learning the Shorter Catechism. On two occasions, our little group has been able to recite a set of 10 answers before

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

the church. We continue to seek ways of reaching into our neighbourhood with the gospel. The Friday night youth work is a weekly opportunity to teach the Bible to youngsters, most of whom come from outside the church.

In the spring, God willing, the church will host a week's **Hebrew Course** (see page 18). We are looking forward to welcoming ministers and students for the ministry.

 Peter Naylor

CHELMSFORD



In September we hosted a welcome event at the manse for international students from the two universities in Chelmsford. About 40 came, including a few Muslims. Please pray for Charles (CU president), Zoe (FI worker) and Hadden (previous CU president) as they organize outreach events and CU meetings in church members' homes.

We are thankful to have restarted 'Impact'. This group of about a dozen people in their 20s to 30s meets fortnightly for food and Bible study.

Last month we hosted a half-day conference on the issue of Singleness.

It was well supported, with a number of people coming from other churches. Andrew Sach, minister of Grace Church, Greenwich, spoke, and Leonie Mason, women's worker at St Helen's Bishopsgate, led a discussion followed by Q&A. The subject was addressed from a whole church perspective, encouraging everyone, regardless of marital status, to serve each other in the church. A bookstall supplied by 10 of Those proved popular. We prayed much for this event beforehand and were pleased to receive very positive feedback from many who attended.

As a congregation, we rejoice with David and Fi Thomas in the safe arrival of their first child, Rowan.

 Ruth Ferguson

CHELTENHAM - NAUNTON LANE

The church has been without a minister since 1 July. The elders, Stephen Johnston and Chris Kavanagh, together with Michael Cochran, have jointly taken on the work previously done by Andy Young. Richard Holst has helped greatly with the preaching at the Sunday services. We continue to pray much and trust God wholly to provide the right man at the right time.

Hearty congratulations to Steve and Gaynor Robey on the safe arrival of Reuben Thomas on 30 July. May the Lord add his blessings to them as they settle into life as a larger family unit.

We welcomed Michael and Laura Cochran into membership and are glad to see them

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

and their son, Fox, in the congregation. This is an encouragement during the time we are without a minister. Michael leads the 'JAM Club' for children of primary school age, and helps to lead the midweek Bible Study and Prayer Meeting.

Refurbishment of the church hall continues apace. God willing, the work will be completed by the first Sunday of November, before the cold weather sets in.

 Tai-Tuck Yu

CHELTENHAM - WHADDON ROAD

We are encouraged here at Whaddon Road. Our attendances at the means of grace have increased with several new people among us. On the Lord's Day we have been going through 1 Samuel in the morning and Revelation in the evening; our studies are in Mark's Gospel during the midweek. The children's choir is going well with nearly 30 children on our books. We hope to run a



children's club near Christmas time to build on our work with the young folk and their families.

We have begun a *Christianity Explored* group (see photo) and these are precious times.

Larry and Mandy Wilkes (who are with Mission to the World), who are hoping to join us here in the work of outreach are now 92% funded.

 David Pfeiffer

DURHAM

'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep' (Romans 12:15). These words of Paul have summed up the life of our church over the past few months. Our dear sister Dorothy Greenald died after a period of illness. Throughout her last months she was faithful to the Lord Jesus and continued to witness to all she came into contact with. Her funeral took place in Cheshire and DPC hosted a memorial service the following day. She is deeply missed.

We also rejoiced at the wedding of a couple from Madagascar. The service was streamed over the internet to the couple's families, and the minister used the Malagasy language skills he had learned whilst living in the country.

We said farewell to students from the United States and Thailand, as well as a long-term member returning to Northern Ireland. A couple of new students have recently joined us, and the minister continues to seek ways to engage with the

 **SPOTLIGHT** on the Churches

Christian Union of Durham University.

We had a Reformation Day event which we hope will be the first of other similar events.

 Phil Baiden

 **GATESHEAD**

At the beginning of September, the Schweitzers returned from their year abroad. While we are grateful for all the encouraging preaching we have received from men visiting throughout the last year, we are glad to have Bill's faithful and consecutive preaching of the Word of God once again.

Another highlight in the past few months was Nathan Hilton's licensure exam at the Presbytery in September. We are delighted that Nathan passed. Please pray with us for the plans to send and install Nathan as a church planter in Sunderland (<https://sunderlandpres.org.uk>).

Recently, a possible opportunity has opened up to rent a beautiful old church building right in the city centre. We are currently negotiating with Newcastle council and other parties over changes to the building that need to be done. Please pray that the Lord would give us favour in the eyes of those in charge and for wisdom for the elders.

We have had consistently 15-20 students coming to worship with us on a Sunday for the past few weeks. It is a great joy to see how they are desirous to hear the voice of Christ. Please pray for their spiritual growth.

 Florian Weicken

 **HEXHAM**

Hexham Presbyterian Church has been encouraged and upheld in the temporary absence of their minister. We recently enjoyed a record attendance of thirty-eight people one Sunday morning, and have welcomed several visitors over the last few weeks. We pray for Joshua Rieger as he and his family spend six months in the States, and correspondingly we praise the Lord for providing pulpit supply through Nathan and other visitors for this extended period of time. Please pray for the Hilton family as they serve in Hexham and prepare for the work in Sunderland.

We have also enjoyed having various men from the church lead a series of midweek Bible studies on the fruits of the Spirit. The Church is growing closer together and showing openness and honesty in their love and fellowship.

We are preparing for some evangelistic outreach over Christmas and would appreciate prayer that the Lord would open doors and the hearts of the people in Hexham. Please pray that the Lord would help us to be wise and full of faith in this endeavour.

 Anna Hilton

 **HULL**

The Lord is sustaining us despite the fact we have no pastor at this time. We were encouraged with high numbers of attendance during September. This was

 **SPOTLIGHT** on the Churches

due to Tracey bringing friends and family before her departure to train as a Scripture reader for SASRA. She is currently at a Bible college preparing for this task.

A summer club for local children was cancelled due to circumstances. A harvest meal in October was well attended by believers and unbelievers and the Word of God was proclaimed to all.

We continue to make God's Word a priority by holding two services on the Lord's Day and a Bible study on Wednesdays. The practice of two services on the Lord's Day seems to be declining in many churches in our city. Numbers attending our services remain steady and we have seen great answers to prayer regarding illness of members and their families.

 Chris Lawson

 **OXFORD**

Please join us in giving thanks to our great God for the first five weeks in the life of Oxford EPC. Securing two central locations for our services was a huge answer to prayer, and then having 35+ attend our 10:30am services and 17-18 our 6:30pm services - we are amazed at all the Lord has done already. It has been such an encouragement to see the core group grow and begin to love and serve one another. It has also been encouraging to see a range of visitors join us, some coming to cheer us on, others from in and around Oxford to check us out.

Do pray that we would be able to continue to use St Luke's Chapel for our 10:30am

services, and for the Lord to provide the finances for this. Do also pray as we look to start a regular student meeting in central Oxford for the several students worshipping with us. Finally please pray for the Lord to add to us - students looking for a spiritual home, Christians looking for a Reformed church, and non-Christians seeking answers that can only be found in Christ.

 Andrew Young

 **SALFORD, MANCHESTER**

We are delighted that the Salford work has been formally planted as a church and received its initial eight members. Since then we have received two more into membership, neither of whom was attending church 12 months ago. We are seeking to support one another, especially our new members, in continuing to be rooted in Christ and growing.

At our morning services, we have our core of members, along with a greater number of regulars professing faith and others showing interest. The main way newcomers have been joining us is through personal invitations. We now have four continents represented and several people with children are coming. However, evening and midweek attendance is lower. Chris is preaching from Mark's Gospel in the mornings, and in the evenings he recently finished 1 Peter and started a short series on 'The Return of the King'.

We give thanks that the Lord has provided

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

us (Chris and Rosemary) with a suitable house to buy in the area, into which we have just moved.

 Rosemary Statter

SHEFFIELD

This year has been a stretching one. After four years of planning, not least with the planning authorities, our builders broke ground in April this year. Despite the expected snags and challenges along the way, the work should be completed in November 2018. This will mean that the overall structure is 60% bigger, with new toilets, a kitchen, foyer and an extra meeting room, so that the main existing structure will become the worship space. One major plus is that our main entrance will be from the back, whereas for the last four years, it has been via a side entrance, direct into the building from the side.

Wisdom will be needed for the coming season spiritually, in order to 'pastor the whole flock' as the work grows with new people, new families and new students. There is hardly ever a Sabbath nowadays, when visitors are not present. Our desire is to uphold the three marks of the church, whatever the numbers: the preaching of pure doctrine, the right administration of the sacraments, and church discipline, all to be administered with love, clarity and consistency.

Some things have had to be on hold for many months and this has included suspending our Sabbath catechism class, until all the work is completed. While the primary aim is to serve and lead the

local church in Sheffield, we hope that this facility can be helpful for EPCEW as well. We are also in the process of working with planning for an eco-friendly car park extension, one that is fitting to the location of this Grade 2 listed building..

 Kevin Bidwell

SOLIHULL

We praise God for blessing us so greatly during our mission week in the summer, with a team of 12 from Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, North Carolina. We enjoyed wonderful fellowship together and were also able to reach out to those in our neighbourhood with the gospel. We put on various events including a family fun day and a *Christianity Explored* Taster evening. Since then we have seen some come back to our Sunday services. Pray that they would come more regularly, that God would reveal himself to them and save them. Also pray that God would continue to strengthen our relationship with folks from North Carolina.

We thank God for the birth and baptism of another baby to one of our families. Pray for all our children that they would grow in their knowledge of Jesus and come to personal faith in him. We have also welcomed three people into membership. We thank God for adding to our number. In addition, some others, families and individuals, have visited us; these are seeking a spiritual home. Please pray that they will find one with us.

 Rachel Morgan

SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

SUNDERLAND

It is very exciting to make our first entry to the Network as an embryonic missions work in Sunderland. We have been holding church-planting Bible studies for over two years in the city of Sunderland and are finally taking some concrete steps towards a new church.

The Lord has blessed our meetings with a group of people who love the Word and are praying boldly for our God to pour out His Spirit into the hearts of many in the city. Our last meeting hit its record number for the second time, with eighteen in attendance. We give thanks that I was licensed at our last presbytery meeting and subject to a congregational vote will be ordained on 17 November.

We are currently seeking a place for worship and the prospect of one of the original Presbyterian churches has come up. We are praying for the Lord's wisdom and guidance as we take important steps forward. Please pray for the Lord's protection and blessing on our service.

 Nathan Hilton



TRANÅS, SWEDEN, IMMANUEL



Our mission worker Ben Thomas and his wife Heidi were blessed with the birth of their third child, Kate Ann, in August. She was baptized in a worship service in September.

We have quite a number of children in our Sunday school, compared with the size of the congregation. We are very grateful for this, and the ambitious Sunday school teachers are doing their very best to give proper and interesting Bible teaching in their classes.

A renovation of the kitchen in the church, well underway, will provide more efficient work in serving coffee and meals after worship services.

Pastor David Bergmark is taking time off from his service as a pastor for reflection, seeking God's will for the future. Please pray that this will be a clarifying and fruitful time. Elder Trygve Lundblad and mission worker Ben Thomas are taking some extra responsibilities in David's absence.

 Sune Jäderberg

EPCEW PRESBYTERY CONFERENCE 2019

ON PREACHING SERMONS.
ON HEARING SERMONS.

 **FRI 25 - SAT 26 JANUARY 2019**

 **HILL TOP CHAPEL**
(HOME OF SHEFFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH)
ATTERCLIFFE COMMON, SHEFFIELD S9 2AD

FRIDAY 25TH JANUARY

- » **Bill Schweitzer:** A theology of preaching
- » **David Pfeiffer:** Preparing a sermon outline
- » **Peter Naylor:** 10 dos and don'ts of preaching
- » **Kevin Bidwell:** A theology of hearing sermons
- » **Matthew Jolley:** John Newton on the topic of hearing sermons
- » **Andy Young:** On delivering a sermon

*Lunch (bring your own sandwiches)
Tea & coffee available*

SATURDAY 26TH JANUARY

- » **Richard Holst:** Preachers as ambassadors: A Puritan perspective on preachers & preaching
- » **Johannes Müller:** The work of the Holy Spirit in the congregation when hearing sermons

Lunch provided at Hill Top Chapel before departure. Tea & coffee available

MORE INFORMATION:

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PLACES TO STAY

3 minutes away is the **Premier Inn** and **Ibis Budget** at the Arena Square. (car parking is available).



Love + Zeal

SERMON AT PRESBYTERY



PHIL BAIDEN

'Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.' (Romans 12:10-11)

These words were written by Paul to remind us how we are to act as Christians in the church. They come after 11 glorious chapters in which Paul teaches the Romans the gospel. He leads them from humanity's

deadness in sin to how people are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He shows them how this was all part of the eternal plan of God worked out in history. These chapters should lead all of us to wonder and praise. We must all be confronted with the remarkable way in which God has delivered a sinful people and we must know that doctrine inside and out.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

But Paul also wants us to realize that this gospel has a practical outworking. Chapter 12 begins by speaking of how God's salvation brings us into a body. He explains how each of us has gifts with which to serve one another. We then read of the imperative to love one another with brotherly affection.

The words Paul uses here are important. It is language of the family. In this way Paul is reminding us that we have been adopted into the family of God. We were once not a people but now we are a people. God is our Father. And other believers are, therefore, our brothers and sisters. Paul is telling us that our relationships with fellow Christians are like the relationships we have with our closest kin.

Much of modern life involves undermining the idea of the family but most people will instinctively understand that family relationships are of more value than any other. There is a bond of blood between people that means something. Our family members may annoy us or let us down but they are still family. Paul is saying that our attitudes to one another must be on that level.

We often use the phrase 'brothers and sisters' when referring to one another in the church, but do we actually mean it? When you sit in church do you see the person next to you as being a family member whom you must love, and love with great affection?

But how well do we know one another?

Do we know enough of the trials and joys of our fellow believers? Do we engage in each other's lives to the extent that we know how people act under stress or what they appreciate? Brotherly affection for one another involves that kind of love. It should be a concrete love that is based on the reality of the other person rather than a vague concept. We must not imagine that we can mentally agree with the truth that fellow believers are family and yet not also do something practical about it.

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Paul also wants us to realize that this gospel has a practical outworking. He explains how each of us has gifts with which to serve one another.

Thankfully, Paul goes on to tell us how that love can be shown to one another. He gives us a concrete example, and it relates to being competitive. This sounds strange, as it would be a terrible thing if we were to compete with one another in certain areas. 'I have said more prayers than you today.' 'I have read four chapters of Scripture this morning!' These things would be far from loving one another. No, instead Paul is telling us that we are to be competitive in humility.

All of us must think higher of other people than we do of ourselves. Humility must be the mark of the Christian. And that humility must be shown in the church. All of us must seek to encourage and honour our brothers and sisters. All of us must lay aside our perceived 'rights' in giving honour to our fellow believers.

Are we people who show honour to others? Have we encouraged a fellow believer recently? The smallest things can mean so much in this. Perhaps you have been helped by the prayers of someone in the midweek meeting. Tell them so. Have you seen the quiet faithfulness of a member

of your church as they have served Christ in their vocation? Let them know how much you appreciate their example. Why don't you stop reading this article now and text or email someone with a word of encouragement?

We are urged therefore to love one another with brotherly affection.

FERVENT IN SPIRIT, SERVING THE LORD

Paul then goes on to show us another component of Christian living: zeal. The Authorised Version reads that we are not to be 'slothful in business'. That is good advice, we must battle against laziness in our daily lives. Many of us could do with dedicating more time and effort to our callings. However, as Robert Haldane says in his commentary: 'It does not appear that the word in the original can bear to be translated business. It denotes eagerness, earnestness, zeal, urgency, etc.' What Paul is saying is that we are not to be lazy in our zeal for the Lord.

Zeal is a misunderstood word. If someone is a zealot it is not a compliment. People in Britain prefer others to be mild-mannered and calm. We leave the zealous behaviours to other nations. But zeal, according to the Oxford English Dictionary means: 'Great energy or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause or an objective.'

When it comes to the way in which you live your Christian life can it be described as energetic or enthusiastic? Or are you coasting? Is there any life there at all? Think

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When it comes to the way in which you live your Christian life can it be described as energetic or enthusiastic? Or are you coasting? Is there any life there at all?

of all of your heroes, in church or secular history. How many people do we honour and look up to who were not zealous for something? Whether it be military leaders who were zealous for king and country, politicians zealous for a cause, or artists committed to their vision, these are people we admire for their single-minded enthusiasm.

An excellent Scriptural example of this is found in Numbers 25. In that chapter we hear of how the people of Israel were

tempted, went astray, and worshipped the gods of the surrounding nation. It was so bad that even after the judgment of God had been announced on the wrongdoers, a man brought a Midianite woman into his tent. But one man would not let that stand. 'When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped.' (Numbers 25:7-8)

Phinehas saw how the people's sin was abhorrent to the Lord. Rather than sit on his hands and complain, he took matters into his own hands. Do we do the same against our sin? Or is our zeal for the Lord so cold that we allow sin to enter into the camp of our hearts?

Paul urges us to be fervent in spirit. The imagery here calls to mind a pan of soup simmering away on the stove. We are to be like those that bubble with the fervency of the Spirit. Every aspect of our lives must be

lived for the Lord and in such a way that the world can see our love and zeal for him.

And the reason we do this is because we have God for our master. We must serve him as the most devoted slave served his master in Paul's day. A slave would not do very well if he went about his tasks with sighs and slumped shoulders. If he was not diligent in his work he could not expect to gain any responsibilities. He could not expect to be so valued by his master that he would be in charge of the running of the household. No, a lazy slave was a useless slave.

Our master is not like a Roman slave master. Even the best of them was a fallen man. No, we are to serve a perfect master. A master who has bought us not with silver or gold but with his own blood. What should our lives look like in response? Should we be the spiritual equivalent of a man who sits on his couch watching television and eating junk food? Or will we be zealous, diligent servants, bubbling over with love for God and his people?

In these things we must be encouraged not to think of ourselves but of those around us. It would be easy to lament the lack of godly zeal in the church as a whole in our nation. Perhaps we may look at the EPCEW and wonder if it is worth committing ourselves to these things. James W. Alexander was a

“ Every aspect of our lives must be lived for the Lord and in such a way that the world can see our love and zeal for him.

“ In these matters of love and zeal we always need to remember that we are following the one who exemplifies these attributes... We are following the Lord Jesus Christ whose love and zeal has accomplished our great salvation.

Presbyterian minister in America in the 19th century. He was the son of Archibald Alexander and had attachments to Princeton. In his journals he wrote of the preachers in his denomination and came to the conclusion that 'without any increase of our numbers, the very men we now have, if actuated with burning zeal for God, might work a mighty reformation in our country.'

Do we believe that God will use our churches for his glory? May we be full of zeal for our Lord and let us look with expectancy to what he will do through us.

In these matters of love and zeal we always need to remember that we are following the one who exemplifies these attributes. We are following the one who drove out the moneychangers from the temple because zeal for his Father's house consumed him. We are following the one who loved us so much he gave himself for us on the cross. We are looking to the one who was so zealous in the service of the Father that he was obedient even to death. We are following the Lord Jesus Christ whose love and zeal has accomplished our great salvation. He has done all that even your best love and most fervent zeal could not achieve. He has carried your sins to the cross and nailed them there. He has lifted the burdens from your shoulders so that you are free to serve him with joy. May we be faithful servants in these days. ○

IS CODEX SINAITICUS A FORGERY?



Recently three books have appeared which have received a lot of attention among evangelicals. First came Bill Cooper's *The Forging of Codex Sinaiticus* (2016). Then in 2018, two more books came out: David W. Daniels, *Is the World's "Oldest Bible" a Fake?* and Jack Moorman, *Was Codex Sinaiticus written in 1840!*

What is this all about? (sic) Codex Sinaiticus is a Greek manuscript, usually dated

somewhere between the fourth and sixth centuries AD. It contains the New Testament and the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). This manuscript and one other, Codex Vaticanus, are usually taken by New Testament scholars as highly authoritative witnesses to the original Greek New Testament, and most modern versions of the Bible reflect this opinion.



So, if Sinaiticus was forged in the 19th century, it would be a big deal and would constitute a serious challenge to critical scholars.

Kevin McGrane has carried out the most thorough investigation of the evidence, and he has demonstrated that the position advanced by Cooper, Daniels and Moorman, is to be **rejected**. (This does not mean, however, that Codex Sinaiticus is a reliable manuscript. That is a separate question, a subject for another occasion.)

We are greatly indebted to Kevin McGrane for carrying out such a thorough scrutiny of the subject and for steering us away from an uncritical acceptance of the thesis of these three books.

His work is available for download free of charge from the Protestant Truth Society website <http://protestanttruth.com/codex/>

ENJOY THE HEBREW BIBLE

AN INVITATION



WHO?

Ministers and students who have an elementary knowledge of Hebrew but have not kept it up, or lack confidence in using the Hebrew Bible in their studies or sermon preparation.

WHERE?

Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Cardiff

WHEN?

25 February - 1 March 2019

COST?

It is free!

BOOKING:

Text Rev. Dr Peter Naylor on 07773 09 37 38 or Email peter.naylor@immanuelcaerau.org.uk

The number of places on the course is limited.



'SHALOM!' THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEND A WEEK STUDYING THE HEBREW BIBLE TOGETHER.

The aim is to study some chapters of the Hebrew Bible, to master some basic vocabulary and paradigms, and to memorize a short portion of Hebrew Scripture. The study sessions will begin on Monday evening (which

allows the day for travel), and continue with morning, afternoon and evening sessions until Friday lunchtime.

A certain amount of accommodation is available and most meals will be provided. For the evening meals, we hope to visit a local restaurant on Tuesday and Thursday (allow approx. £20 for this), and have a fellowship meal with members of the church on Wednesday. o

DAYS OF OPPORTUNITY

SOME DIARY DATES FOR 2019

» 4-5 January

Reformation Bible Conference, Sheffield
'Recovering Truth for Christian Living'
(see back cover)

» 25-26 January

Presbytery Conference, Sheffield
'On Preaching Sermons, On Hearing Sermons'

» 25 February - 1 March

A Week of Hebrew, Cardiff

» 15-16 April

The STEM Course, London

» 27-31 May

A Christian holiday in Sidmouth organized by Immanuel, Cardiff. Christian fellowship with Bible Studies morning and evening.

» 10-12 October

Reformation Conference UK 2019, Gateshead
'The Holy Trinity'
www.reformedconferences.org/reformation-500

Orthodox theology holds many wonderful doctrines, but the doctrine of God as Holy Trinity is the most fundamental. We are baptized into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—apart from faith in this Triune God, we are not Christians at all. Yet it is also true that many people view the Trinity as an obscure doctrine they wish they knew more about. Helping people to grow in the knowledge of their God is the very purpose of the ReformationUK2019 conference on the Holy Trinity.

Today this doctrine of the Trinity is under attack, not only by enemies of the faith but sometimes even by well-meaning men who have departed from the church's creeds and confessions in a misguided attempt to address other concerns. Thus, the conference will seek to refute some of the errors being discussed in our day as well as teach straightforwardly the beauty and perfection of the biblical doctrine. We hope you will join us.





MEET A MEMBER

CHARLES MAPOSA, CHELMSFORD

I was born in Zimbabwe, and my family migrated to England when I was five. We settled in Ongar, Essex, and have been there ever since. Currently, I am a final year architecture student at Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford.

HOW DID I COME TO FAITH?

'For the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10).

I was raised in a religious environment, orientated around the prosperity gospel. We faithfully attended a church in Croydon. At a young age, I made a profession of faith. I prided myself that I

did not participate in things like drinking or drug taking, but as I look back, I now see that I lived in many other sins. Then, in year 11, I abandoned my religiosity to follow the desires of my heart. I spent most of my weekends partying and living a life of rebellion.

My mother made it her mission to convince me to attend church again. Out of respect, I watched a sermon series of her choice about the end-times by an African prosperity preacher. His themes were **'The Lamb's Book of Life'** and **'The Final Judgement'**. Thankfully, he preached the gospel throughout his sermons, and I saw that I loved so many other things, rather than God. I opened my audio Bible and stumbled across the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). There, Jesus made my indwelling sin clear to me; I was an adulterer and a murderer at heart. This deeply saddened me; I was convicted of my sins against God. I did not yet have sound doctrine to lead me to Christ; I did not know how to be made right with God. But I knew for sure that I was lost. I cried out to God for mercy, and he saved me. At that moment everything became new. I was a new creation, and my affections were turned from the world, to the Lord.

“

At a young age, I made a profession of faith. I prided myself that I did not participate in things like drinking or drug taking, but as I look back, I now see that I lived in many other sins.

“

I cried out to God for mercy, and he saved me. At that moment everything became new. I was a new creation, and my affections were turned from the world, to the Lord.

LIFE AS A YOUNG CHRISTIAN

Discovering the doctrines of grace gave me a true understanding of what Jesus did for me on the cross, and helped me understand the difference between heresy and God-glorifying truth. God used a prosperity preacher to show me the reality of sin: God used a crooked stick to draw a straight line.

I have heartfelt compassion for my kinsmen and those who come from my background. For this reason, I despise the prosperity gospel as it teaches that temporary and material blessings are vital and are the foremost effects of salvation. It turns Christianity into idolatry, as it trades the glory of God for a cheap substitute, making God the servant of man for our personal gain, rather than man being the servant of God for his glory and our pleasure in him. Throughout my journey, God has strengthened me, and it is his grace that has kept me to this day. God has blessed me with a faithful church, which I found through a CU 'church crawl'. Friends had told me about Chelmsford Presbyterian Church and I was not disappointed. There was a warm welcome from the church family here.

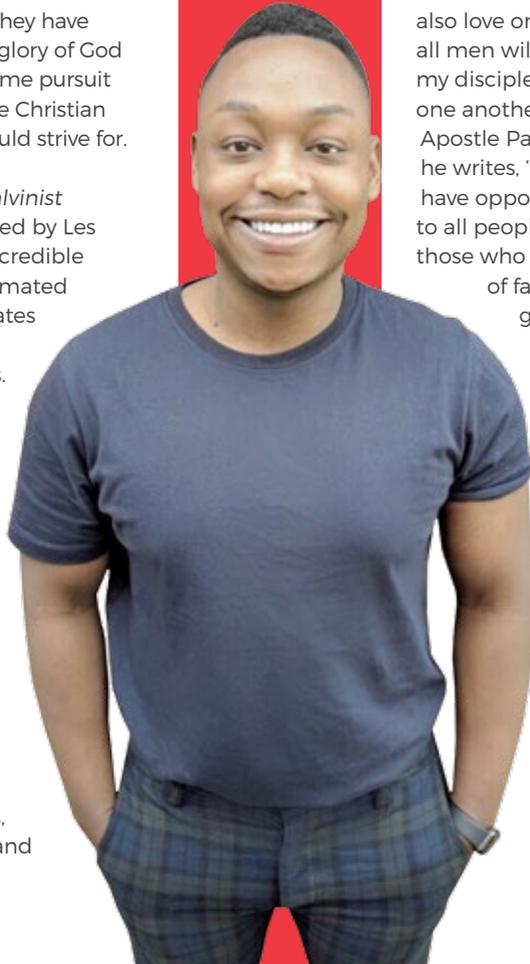


INFLUENCES IN MY CHRISTIAN LIFE

The main influences on me have been from saved family members, close church members, Reuben Hunter, and my current minister, Darren Moore. Darren has helped me through personal struggles and has invested time mentoring me.

John Piper's 'Desiring God ministry' has made a significant impact on my life and has helped me to understand and love the doctrines of grace. They have shown me that the glory of God should be my supreme pursuit and having joy in the Christian faith is what we should strive for.

Additionally, *The Calvinist Documentary* created by Les Lanphere was an incredible resource, rich in animated imagery that illustrates and explains Reformed concepts. I have also been profoundly influenced by teachers such as Paul Washer, David Platt, Shai Linne, Jeff Durbin (Apologia Studios), Matt Chandler, J.C. Ryle, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Thomas Watson (*The Art of Divine Contentment*), R.C. Sproul, Tim Challies, Charles Spurgeon, and Voddie Baucham.



The glory of God should be my supreme pursuit and having joy in the Christian faith is what we should strive for.

ENJOYING THE LOCAL CHURCH

I have been learning more about Christ, being immersed in rich theological teaching, serving in the church and sharing my gifts with others, and developing meaningful relationships.

The heart of Christian fellowship is to love our neighbour as ourselves. As Jesus says, 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another' (John 13:34-35). The Apostle Paul repeats this when he writes, 'So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to those who are of the household of faith' (Gal. 6:10). It is a great privilege we have in Christ, to serve him and others. I hope to mature in this in my church family. I want to grow closer to God, be conformed more to Jesus, and increase my joy and satisfaction in him.

God has given me the privilege of leading the Christian Union of Anglia Ruskin University. I have had

the opportunity to gain practical skills in teaching, leading, and one-on-one discipleship, in a way that glorifies God, full of joy in the gospel. 'As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another' (Prov. 27:17). I actively look for constructive criticism from others as I know that I have many blind spots. It is a great blessing to receive wise counsel from brothers and sisters in Christ.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

God has given me grace, by the Holy Spirit, to believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross. There justice was satisfied. The one who demanded justice took upon himself the penalty; the offenders were pardoned. Jesus became a curse for us, 'For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Cor. 5:21). He experienced the righteous wrath of his Father for the sins of his people. Salvation is based on the completed work of Jesus on the cross, and his resurrection is the proof that the Father has accepted what Jesus accomplished. The sinner need only trust in what Jesus has done on the cross and believe that he rose from the dead, to be counted as righteous by God. There is no greater love than his. By faith in him, we are raised from death to life. ◦



A NEW BOOK

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY

Weighed and found wanting



Kevin McGrane

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY: WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

Kevin McGrane,

The Gospel Magazine Trust
248pp hardback

ISBN: 978 1 5272 2902 0

Available: December 1, 2018

New Covenant Theology arose during the 1970s. Its doctrinal system brings together a cluster of gross errors. Kevin McGrane, who is an elder in Bury St Edmunds Presbyterian Church, has produced a very thorough appraisal of this theological movement.

Available within the UK from *The Gospel Magazine*, c/o 1 Chaplins, Frinton-on-Sea, Essex CO13 0RU, at £20 including postage and packing (cheques payable to The Gospel Magazine).

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THE DOUBTFUL MINISTRY OF **OSWALD DYKES**



REV. CHRIS STATTER

In the previous issue, we considered, 'Whatever happened to the Presbyterian Church of England?' I am now focusing on probably the most influential figure in shaping that church: Oswald Dykes.

Robert Candlish, a spiritual father to Dykes and a leading light in the early Free Church of Scotland, once preached a sermon on Romans 4:20, 'Faith Glorifying God'. He warned his hearers against mistaking hesitancy for the virtue of humility, as if timidity in the faith somehow honours God. In fact, the reverse is true: 'The intolerable presumption is to refuse to take God at his word... Brethren, be clothed with humility. And that you may be clothed with humility, be not faithless but believing. Be strong in faith, glorifying God.'¹

In the lifetime of Dykes (1835-1912), doubt came into fashion. In an era of progress, people were tempted to think that now they knew better than simply to believe what the Bible said. It has been said of the prevailing atmosphere, 'No educated Christian could fail to feel the disruption, caused by new knowledge, to the faith of his childhood. Such men understood doubt because they experienced it within their own faith.'² Disbelief was in the air, and Christians were breathing in the fumes. And so, Dykes's ministry was greatly affected by two disruptions. There was the 1843 Disruption within the Church of Scotland which gave birth to the Free Church, known for being faithful to the Scriptures and filled with spiritual vitality. There was also the deadly disruption of doubt.

In these difficult circumstances, Dykes was not alone in failing to respond adequately,

but his failure had important consequences. I intend to sketch the course of his ministry, partly to demonstrate his unrivalled position in the English Presbyterian Church. I will then show how he accommodated doubts, and the lasting effects.

THE COURSE OF HIS MINISTRY

After struggling with ill health, Dykes enjoyed two settled situations, each of

19 years. Born in Scotland, he spent the majority of his ministry in England. He ministered at Regent Square in London and then became principal of the denominational college.

Steadying himself, 1859-69

Dykes was ordained in 1859. He had trained for the ministry at the Free Church of Scotland's New College, where he was the brightest student in a year of dazzling talent. He then pursued further studies at Heidelberg and Erlangen. With hindsight, it was foolish of the Free Church to arrange for her students to get 'the best' learning there. They would imbibe the assumptions and methodology of Higher Criticism, which diluted their faith in the Bible as the infallible Word of God. Scottish writer and social commentator Thomas Carlyle realized this at the time: 'Have my countrymen's heads become turnips when they think they can hold the premises of German unbelief and draw the conclusions of Scottish orthodoxy?'³

After two years at East Kilbride, Dykes was sought by Robert Candlish to assist him in Edinburgh. Dykes's preaching was acclaimed, but his health broke down. He resigned, and in 1865 left for the Australian



Disbelief was in the air, and Christians were breathing in the fumes.

colony of Victoria. While there, he assisted Adam Cairns at Chalmers' Church in Melbourne. A heavy blow fell upon Dykes, whose long life would be marked by personal bereavements, with the death of his first wife, Helen. Soon afterwards, he preached the funeral sermon for Cairns's only son with tremendous sympathy.

When Dykes returned to Britain, he sought medical advice. He was told to preach to test his strength, and happened to do so at Regent Square Presbyterian Church the Sunday before a congregational meeting. Dykes gained approval from his doctor and the congregation. The English Church had always benefited from the Free Church of Scotland. Now it had received one of her favourite sons.

Steering the Church, 1869-88

Dykes quickly came to the fore within the 'Presbyterian Church in England'. He revived the initiative towards a union with the English Synod of the United Presbyterian Church and, in 1876, the two Churches were united as the 'Presbyterian Church of England'.

From 1883 to 1892, this Church relaxed its adherence to the Westminster Standards, effectively reducing its Reformed Faith to 24 Articles. Dykes led the way and chaired the committee. The minutes highlight Dykes, 'whose assiduous, continuous, and most willing labours contributed in the highest degree to the result attained; whose intellectual acumen, whose large acquaintance with confessional literature, whose skill, tact, and patience in conducting the business, often delicate and difficult, left their impress on every meeting

of Committee, and whose honoured name will henceforth be associated with the Articles of the Faith.'⁴

His significance is confirmed by the tributes at his death. According to the editor of British Weekly, the nonconformist newspaper, 'Dr Dykes was much more than minister of Regent Square. He was a leader and we should probably say the leader of the Presbyterian Church of England.'⁵ A fellow minister noted, 'During the forty years of active service which he gave to our Church, he was, by common consent, our chief man ... There was no movement of any note in our Church in which he was not the chief figure.'⁶

Since he had extraordinary gifts, others tended to defer to Dykes. A parallel can be drawn with Robert Rainy. Rainy's influence over the Free Church of Scotland 'could seriously be likened to that of an archbishop in other communions.'⁷ Presbyterian churches, which maintain in principle that elders rule with equal authority, can still in practice grant one man too much power.

At Regent Square too, Dykes proved able. He was attentive in looking after his flock and in overseeing the church's activities. He excelled in leading public worship, especially the prayers. When the College came calling, Regent Square was reluctant to lose him. It was only at the third time of asking that he was released.

Standing aloof, 1888-1907

During his time as principal, the major event was relocation from London. In 1899 it became Westminster College, Cambridge. Dykes demonstrated his capabilities by the

weight of his lecturing and the wisdom of his decision making. Yet, the change of scene tested him and his weaknesses surfaced. While he devoted himself to the College community, his detached and severe demeanour alienated him.

'There was a respectful chill in the relations between Dykes and the students and there were rumours that when Dykes's carriage was burned the students were not unconnected with the conflagration. The possession of a horse and carriage marked him out as the rearguard of a way of life which did not survive the First World War.'⁸

At the College, Dykes became outdated. He was reserved in leadership, and his relatively conservative theology was not perpetuated.

ACCOMMODATING DOUBTS

Dykes spent his ministry trying to support those struggling in the faith. He had a lifelong concern to help young men, and early on participated in College lectures which were incorporated into books: *Some Present Difficulties in Theology* (1873), *Disputed Questions of Belief* (1874), and *Problems of Faith* (1875).

In his work regarding the Standards, Dykes's concern was to make room for office-bearers who accepted Higher Criticism, without alarming conservatives. His compromise was to continue to require subscription to the teaching of the Standards, while introducing a set of Articles summarizing the substance of that teaching. This step allowed many who doubted the Standards at other points to subscribe. Dykes reassured those who feared change, and few objected.

Dykes was an effective mediator, partly because he was quite conservative. His address 'A Glance at Our Prospects and Duties' could be reproduced over a hundred years later in the Spring 1995 issue of this magazine. His book *Abraham, The Friend of God* was sold with a commendation by C. H. Spurgeon from the *Sword & Trowel*. To show the faithfulness of the Articles, Dykes encouraged the publication of Donald Fraser's commentary on them, *Sound Doctrine*.

Dykes was attempting to uphold Scripture's authority, but without asserting that every word was inspired and infallible. Faced with doubts about its reliability, he would say, 'The proper attitude of the Church on this subject appears to me to be one, not of dogmatism, but of defence.'⁹

Even in the pulpit, Dykes was defensive. His preaching was hindered by not straightforwardly declaring Scripture as the truth: 'In his sermons he was almost always struggling with doubts and difficulties, rarely sounded the note of joy and triumph... (They) were always thoughtful, carefully constructed, and highly polished, but lacked the ring of assured confidence and happy experience that makes the preacher's witness effective.'¹⁰

Dykes conceded too much. He concluded his instructions for younger ministers saying, 'There never was a time when it was more true than now that the value of a man's beliefs for his own religious life is in proportion, not to the number of orthodox statements which he is prepared to endorse, but to the strength of conviction with which he adheres to what he does believe.' Dykes suggested that strength of conviction is enough for the Christian life. However, a minister should challenge those who lack central convictions of the faith..



Presbyterian churches... can still in practice grant one man too much power.

LASTING EFFECTS

At his Ministerial Jubilee in 1909, Dykes reflected on his journey: 'I think I went into her Ministry with the enthusiasm of those young days – the first generation of the Disruption. I am sure I had more than a little of the limitation of that generation. It seems as if I had travelled a long way from that... It has been my earnest endeavour to educate myself in the lines of the new times. I would like to ask consideration at the hands of any of my younger brethren who think that I did not wholly enter into their views, and that I should have done better if I had been more modern.'¹² While Dykes did not cave in completely to modern liberalism, he had permitted teaching which would undermine confidence in the Bible.

By 1912, when Dykes died, it

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His preaching was hindered by not straightforwardly declaring the Bible as the truth.

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He had permitted teaching which would undermine confidence in the Bible.

could be publicly admitted: 'It is no secret that his was the master mind in the framing a quarter of a century ago of the Twenty-four Articles of Faith which form the real subordinate standard of our Church.'¹³ These Articles, however sound, had functionally replaced the Westminster Standards, and so weakened the Church's commitment to the truths of Scripture.

G. K. Chesterton gives the illustration of taking down a fence. One says, 'I don't see the use of this; let us clear it away.'¹⁴ To which another should say, 'If you don't see the use of it, I certainly won't let you clear it away.' Dykes did not appear to be clearing away the boundary. The Standards were still in place, but the details were no longer enforced. Panels had been removed from the fence around the sheepfold, and the Presbyterian Church of England was left wide open. ◦

¹ *Sermons by the Late Robert S. Candlish, D.D.* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1873), p. 124.

² Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II: 1860-1901* (2nd ed., London: A. and C. Black, 1972), p. 124.

³ Donald Maclean, *Aspects of Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1927), pp.170-171.

⁴ Samuel William Carruthers (ed.), *Digest of the Proceedings of the Synods of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1876-1905* (London: Publishing House of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1907), p. 26.

⁵ W. Robertson Nicoll, 'The Late Dr Oswald Dykes', *The British Weekly* (4 January 1912), p. 424.

⁶ 'Appreciation by the Rev. Alex. Ramsay, DD', *The British Weekly* (11 January 1912), p. 448.

⁷ Alec Cheyne, 'Ecclesiastical History', in David F. Wright and Gary D. Badcock, eds., *Disruption to Diversity: Edinburgh Divinity 1846-1996* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 100.

⁸ R. Buick Knox, *Westminster College: Its Background and History* (Cambridge: Westminster College, 1979), p. 22.

⁹ J. Oswald Dykes, *The Written Word and Other Essays* (Melbourne: S. Mullen, 1868), p. 48.

¹⁰ George Hanson, 'Twelve Years in a London Church', *The Dalhousie Review*, Vol. 3, Issue 4 (1924), pp. 453-467 [p. 454].

¹¹ J. Oswald Dykes, *The Christian Minister and His Duties* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), p. 366.

¹² 'The Jubilee of Dr Dykes', in *The Presbyterian Messenger* (July 1909), p. 240.

¹³ These words, spoken by Mr. Robertson at the January Communion Service at Regent Square, were printed in *Regent Square Magazine* (February, 1912), p. 4.

¹⁴ G. K. Chesterton, *The Thing* (first published, 1929; repr., London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), p. 29.



DR HANS W. MARIS

Retired professor of systematic theology
in the Theological University of Apeldoorn

The Great Synod of Dordrecht 1618 – 1619

PART
2



In my first article on the Synod of Dordrecht I remarked that ‘several of the British participants were more or less sympathetic towards the Arminian position’. I discovered that some clarification was needed here.

The British criticism was mainly focused on the harsh way in which the chairman sent away the Arminian representatives without giving them the opportunity for a full-length debate. I can imagine how some of the foreign representatives felt about this. But for the Dutch synod members, the atmosphere was already influenced by the preceding ten years of disputation, with pamphlets and lampoons from both sides. And the attitude of the Arminians was ill-natured (unlike that of Arminius himself). They gave the strong impression that they were aiming precisely at such a climax of the conflict. In a recent historical publication by scholars from both Arminian and Reformed backgrounds, they argued that this ejection was exactly what the Arminians had in view! But only after they had left was it possible for the synod to start working in the right atmosphere on the document that we know now as the **Canons of Dort**. The foreign delegations made a real contribution to the result.

After a brief resumé of the **Canons of Dort**, I will go further into the subject matter of the last chapter, the perseverance of the saints.

God's grace is decisive – to the end

The contents of the Canons of Dort could be described in several different ways. I wish to focus attention on the pre-eminence of God's grace in the saving of sinners. We are not saved because we are *willing* to believe. Nor is it because of our faith that the sacrifice of Christ leads to salvation. It is not because we allow the Holy Spirit to regenerate our hearts and lives that this happens. It is not because we persevere

in faith and obedience that in the end we will be saved forever. It is all because of the grace of our triune God.

Chapter 1: the initiative is with God, in his predestination. Chapter 2: it is by Christ that redemption is accomplished. Chapters 3-4: conversion is brought about by the Holy Spirit alone (without man's aid), by his life-giving power, with the Word. And finally, in chapter 5, on the perseverance of the saints, all these threads come together. For this reason, I want to go into the question whether we could lose our salvation that was once given to us by God's grace..

CAN A BELIEVER LOSE HIS FAITH AND HIS SALVATION?

Not a theoretical question

On the basis of our Reformed confessions, it may be simple to give an easy answer to this question: no, a believer cannot lose his faith. An entire chapter of the Canons of Dort (CD), chapter 5, is devoted to the ‘perseverance of the saints’.

But the followers of Jacobus Arminius did not consider faith to be a gift of God, a work of the Holy Spirit, but a choice of the human will, which can be made by people who want to follow God. From that premise, it would follow that, if faith is a human choice, then it is possible to lose it, if a person falls into sin and makes a new choice in the opposite direction. Arminians today (or ‘Remonstrants’ as they still call themselves in the Netherlands) no longer bother with this sort of question. But their influence is still felt in the evangelical world, through such men as John Wesley: so that Arminian views are virtually normal, and people commonly believe that you can be converted or born again several times.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (WCF) also deals with ‘the Perseverance of the Saints’ saying that those ‘whom God has accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.’ (WCF 17.1). Both the Confession and the Canons of Dort speak against the Arminian idea. Faith is a gift of God, and he ‘mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred upon them and powerfully preserves them in that grace to the end.’ (CD, 5.3). This is logical, a beautiful anchor for our faith. When somebody has been brought to true faith, it may be expected to remain. God's own faithfulness is the guarantee for that conviction. Grace is not to be lost!

It is useful to keep both the Arminian and the Reformed ways of thinking in mind. At the same time, we must be aware that reasoning like this has its limitations. In particular, factors other than logic may play a part.

Questions that arouse tension

Many factors might enter in and jeopardize the assurance of Christians, because of temptations in their own heart, as well as because of concerns about loved ones, children, grandchildren, friends. Examples abound.

“ But the followers of Jacobus Arminius did not consider faith to be a gift of God, a work of the Holy Spirit, but a choice of the human will, which can be made by people who want to follow God.

“ Both the Confession and the Canons of Dort speak against the Arminian idea. Faith is a gift of God, and he ‘mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred upon them and powerfully preserves them in that grace to the end.’

We see people who with enthusiasm confess faith in Jesus Christ, and later – sometimes very soon, sometimes after a long, slow process – leave it behind in their lives. Did they lose a real and sincere faith that had been present in their hearts? Or was it just some sort of religious feeling that had an effect on them but was not true faith worked by the Holy Spirit of God? And should we conclude, then, that it was not a case of losing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but only something that appeared to be faith? What should we think about an older person, who went to church for many years, and but at last says with a shrug, ‘The older, the colder’? Was there never sincere faith? Some parents, who were glad when their child confessed his or her faith, later notice that it has become weak, and that serving the Lord is hardly visible any more. What pain they feel in their hearts! They experience how difficult it is to broach the subject. They want to avoid a complete breakdown in communication with their child. But they find it easier to speak with the Lord about the child, than with the child about the Lord.

Tension exists in such situations. Pastors, elders, and others bearing responsibility in the church are confronted with it. The ultimate painful question is: Do we as a congregation lose a boy or girl, a man or a

woman, or a complete family? Even deeper: Is the Lord losing them? Even after he came so near to them, perhaps when they prayed in an illness, or an accident, and confessed that they must turn back to him?

In God's Word, we encounter those who had a good beginning, but in the end seemed to have lost it all. How sad was the case of Lot! At first, he faithfully followed his uncle Abraham, but later he lived in Sodom. There his righteous soul was tormented by the filthy lives of lawless men (2 Peter 2:8). And afterwards, by incest, he became the father of the Ammonites and the Moabites, who were to become enemies of God's people. King Solomon, how impressive was his example of serving the Lord at the beginning of his reign! What, however, was left of his influence after he gave in to his many foreign wives and their gods? And king Asa, no less an example, fearing the Lord, on the throne of David (2 Chr. 14-15). But one chapter later, we read that he throws the prophet of God into prison - at the very end of his life (2 Chr. 16:10-14). How doubtful is his case!

Entering through the narrow door

In the New Testament we also find such situations. Paul writes to Timothy about people who rejected their faith and good

“ In God's Word, we encounter those who had a good beginning, but in the end seemed to have lost it all. How sad was the case of Lot!

“ 'Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to...'

conscience and have made shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim. 1:19). Paul names Hymenaeus and Alexander, 'whom I have handed over to Satan' (indicating church discipline). He did this with an eye to their salvation: they must learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:20). Paul knows well from his own life how deep God's dealings with a person can go.

Similarly, there are admonitions in the letter to the Hebrews. 'See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart, that turns away from the living God.' A very sharp warning follows for those being hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Heb. 3:12-14). In chapter 6 we find that fearful admonition, that for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, it is impossible to be brought back to repentance (Heb. 6:4-6). Perhaps it may occur to us, that there is no mention of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that has been rejected; it is about receiving spiritual blessings that afterwards are thrown away, but not about genuine faith. Nevertheless, let us notice how deeply serious this admonition is! How terrible it is when we neglect the gospel of grace that we have received! Is this not all

about the concrete relationship between the holy God and us? Jesus, answering the one who asked him if only few people would be saved, said to all those present: 'Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to...' (Luke 13:23-24). That is the way to deal with the question.

Preliminary result

So far I have criticized the way this is sometimes put: Could someone lose his faith and salvation? Approached from the other angle this could mean: Are you really safe in the hands of the Saviour, when you have taken refuge in him by faith? We do find expressions like 'abandoning the faith', and 'falling away' in the Word of God (1 Tim. 1:19; 4:1; and Heb. 6:4-6). You might also think of expressions like 'committing a sin leading to death' (1 John 5:16) and 'disowning Christ' (Matt. 10:33; 2 Tim. 2:12). If we disown him before the people, he will disown us before his Father in heaven. If this may be a real possibility, then it seems that what our confessions say (in the *Canons of Dort* and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*) is of very little comfort. So a few more things have to be said.

Bearing fruit

The question about being saved or not is of great importance! It is about an eternal future, about being saved or about being lost and forever bearing the wrath of God. Yet it is not the only question that matters.

Another vital question concerns bearing fruit. God's electing love, choosing those that belong to him, is directed to that end (John 15:16). The Father will be glorified when Jesus' disciples bear much fruit (John 15:8). In the parable of the sower and the seed, it is clear that the seed falling in good soil achieves its purpose in the production of a rich crop (Matt. 13:7-8, 22-23). Paul shows the same concern, when he speaks about the possibility of someone being snatched from the flames himself, but all his work being burned up, lost (1 Cor. 3:15).

The only work that remains is that which is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

“ **The Father will be glorified when Jesus' disciples bear much fruit... The only work that remains is that which is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We should also be aware of Paul's words to the Philippians. The good work that God has begun in them, he will carry on to completion in the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6). That is what the apostle is sure about. He goes on, however, to speak about his prayer, that their love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, and in discerning what is best, and altogether about the fruit of righteousness that

comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11). And this all with an eye on the day of Christ, the day of judgment. So again we learn the importance of bearing fruit.

It may be that, because our interest is focused on questions about being saved, we too easily pass by this second question about bearing fruit, about growing, and honouring God in our lives. That emphasis, which is so clearly present in the Word of God, is sometimes different from where we place the emphasis.

The question, however, is justified!

The questions about assurance of salvation make sense. Salvation is not self-evident. Sometimes, because of disobedience, we read about the holy wrath of God that can even burn against his own people. God's anger and wrath rose against Israel (e.g. Ps. 78:17-22, 32-33). And how they deserved it. And yet, it is miraculous that this same Psalm clearly speaks of a place for repentance and mercy. But that repentance, that conversion, must then be present! The disobedient must turn back to the Lord. Without faith truly looking up to the Lord, there will be no salvation. How deep the sound of repentance is heard in a Psalm such as Psalm 38. The Psalmist shows that, on our part, there is nothing but sin; but when he says, 'I wait for you, O Lord' (verse 15), then we see that his relationship with God is restored! We cannot find an answer to our need anywhere but with God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this brings us at last, to what is essential in us: our faith!

The anchor of faith

The faithfulness of God is our subject! But holding to that is never like a bare logical deduction, that 'When someone has come to genuine faith, he can never lose it again.' That can make a man proud and careless, because he thinks 'I am safe'. The Canons of Dort 5.10 state: 'This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation, contrary to, or independent of the Word

of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort.' The Canons of Dort continue: 'This certainty... is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patient in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God' (5:12).

Assurance of God's faithfulness is the assurance of a faith that is really practised. No true assurance can exist except the assurance of faith. And we do not receive that if we live far from the Lord - only when we seek to be near him.

And in this way, we may wisely counsel and admonish those about whose spiritual well-being we have our fears. We may have wonderful thoughts about God's faithfulness and love in Christ. But being saved is never without a personal involvement. Assurance of salvation is not to be expected when there is no prayer life, no interest in God's Word.

Assurance does not exist in a vacuum but in a life that has trials and temptations. And in those trials and temptations, we find the truth of Romans 8:28, that all things work together for the good of those who love God. But unfaithfulness, neglect of the Lord, giving in to sins, can never be excused. Rather, the call to repent and turn again opens the way to a true believing confidence in the impressive faithfulness of our God. What a mighty anchor we then have (Heb. 6:19)! ○

“ Assurance is not produced by any peculiar revelation, contrary to, or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort.

**BARRY**

Wilberforce Chapel
Barry Rd, Barry CF62 8HE
Sun. 11am & 6pm
Minister: Rev. Drew Goodman
☎ 029 2140 4568
✉ agoodman@barryepc.org
🌐 barryepc.org

BERLIN

Luisenstrasse 39, 10117 Berlin
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Kettinger Strasse 131, 12305
Berlin. Wed. 7pm
Minister: Rev. Johannes Müller
☎ +491763102904
✉ johannes.mueller@epkd.de
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BLACKBURN

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Minister: Rev. Norman Green
☎ 01254 260388

BURY ST EDMUNDS

Newbury Community Centre
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Wed. 7.30pm
Minister: Rev. Matthew Jolley
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CAMBRIDGE

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

CARDIFF - BETHEL

Michaelston Rd, Culverhouse
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Minister: Rev. Mark Johnston
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CHELMSFORD

Hall Street Methodist Church
Chelmsford CM2 0HG
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: Vacant
☎ 07778 530 452
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CHELTENHAM - NORTH

Whaddon Road E.P. Church
Rear of Claremont, Whaddon Rd,
Cheltenham GL52 5LZ
Sun. 11am & 6.30pm
Minister: Rev. David Pfeiffer
☎ 07846 858766
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🌐 whaddonevangelicalchurch.org

DURHAM

The Chapel, Laburnum Avenue
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Sun. 10.30am & 3.30pm, Thu. 7.45pm
Minister: Rev. Phil Baiden
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GATESHEAD

Lobley Hill Community Centre
47 Scafell Gardens, Gateshead
NE11 9LS, Sun. 10.30am & 6pm
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✉ contact@gatesheadpres.org.uk
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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
Minister: Vacant
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OXFORD

St Luke's Chapel, OX2 6HT (am)
The Friends Meeting House,
43 St. Giles', OX1 3LW (pm)
Sun. 10.30am & 6.30pm
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SALFORD, MANCHESTER

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Hill Top Chapel, Attercliffe
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Reformation Bible Conference 2019

Friday 4th & Saturday 5th January

Recovering Truth for Christian Living



Rev. Dr Kevin Bidwell
Sheffield



Rev. Dr Rick Phillips
Greenville, USA



Rev. Andy Young
Oxford

Reformation Bible Conference

We would like warmly to invite you to join us for our annual conference which is beneficial for all ages, especially young people and families. Come and be sharpened in your mind from Holy Scripture. People come from across the UK to be strengthened in their faith. The conference provides an opportunity to enjoy rich fellowship together.

Speakers and Themes:

Rick Phillips: *The God of Creation; A Christian Worldview for Dating; The Masculine Mandate; What's so great about the Sovereignty of God?*

Andy Young: *Church Planting; Godly Living*

Kevin Bidwell: *Christ in the Old Testament; Christ and the Gospel in Ezekiel*

Any questions about the conference email:
liamrichardson2705@gmail.com

For more details visit:
www.sheffieldpres.org.uk



Conference held at:

*Hill Top
Chapel,
Attercliffe,
Sheffield,
S9 2AD*

This is a free event.

Where to Stay:

Ibis Budget &

Premier Inn

(both 3 minutes walk from venue)

The Programme

Friday 4th January

11 am - 11.30

11.30 - 12.15

12.15 - 12.30

12.30 - 13.15

13.15 - 14.00

14.00 - 16.00

16.30 - 18.30

19.30 - 20.15

20.15 - 20.30

20.30 - 21.15

Saturday 5th January

9 am - 9.30

9.30 - 10.45

10.45 - 11.15

11.30 - 12.15

12.15 - 13.45

13.45 - 14.30

14.30 - 15.00

15.00 - 16.00

Arrive, Tea & Coffee Served

Session 1: Andy Young

Break

Session 2: Rick Phillips

(The Masculine Mandate)

Bring Packed Lunch

Group Walk

Carvery Dinner at

Restaurant (around £5-£8pp)

Session 3: Rick Phillips

(The Sovereignty of God)

Tea & Coffee Break

Session 4: Kevin Bidwell

Saturday 5th January

Arrive

Session 5: Rick Phillips

(The God of Creation)

Tea & Coffee Break

Session 6: Kevin Bidwell

Lunch Buffet Provided at

Chapel

Session 7: Rick Phillips

(Christian Dating)

Tea & Coffee Break

Session 8: Andy Young