

PRESBYTERIAN NETWORK

ISSUE
31/3

WINTER 2020

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND & WALES



PREACHING TO THE CONSCIENCE



**DAVID WINCH,
1934-2020**



**THE CHURCH IN
PAST AGES (2)**



**ROBERT BRUCE AND
THE LORD'S SUPPER**

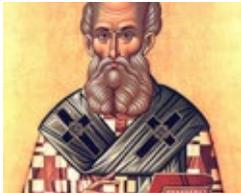
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“ EDITOR'S NOTE

People are more aware of death now than ever. In normal times we push the thought to the back of our minds, but this year the 'death toll' – from one cause – is broadcast daily. Even young people are hiding away in case the virus takes them. Enslavement to fear is evident everywhere. Hopes are pinned on the NHS, the scientists, and the government. But what can they offer? Medical care, palliative care, a vaccine – but they cannot save you from dying.

Our God, who alone has immortality, is sovereign over every person's life. He has appointed our span of life, the time and manner of our death. 'Now see that I, even I, am he, and there is no God besides me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from my hand' (Deut. 32:39). To the LORD our God belong escapes from death (Ps. 68:20).

Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in him has everlasting life and will not perish (John 3). Death is the wages of sin. In him there is forgiveness of sin. His tomb is empty; he is risen. He has the keys of death and hades. He will return and raise the dead. All those who belong to him will live and reign with him for ever. o

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SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

Because this issue of the *Presbyterian Network* comes so soon after the delayed summer issue (31/2), only some congregations have sent in news. Here are their messages and some other matters for prayer.

PRESBYTERY

During 2020, Presbytery was unable to hold its scheduled meetings on time. The November meeting has been postponed until 30 January.

SEEKING A JUDICIAL REVIEW

The government's order to close churches has met with serious objections from many churches and from several MPs who debated it in the House of Commons on 4 November. For many ministers of the gospel the fundamental principle at stake is found in the Westminster Confession chapter 30, 'The Lord Jesus Christ, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.' That the civil government should not trespass on the government of the church is a principle embedded in the law of England and Wales. In faithfulness to this fundamental truth, several ministers and elders of the EPCWE are among the 122 church leaders from across Britain who are applying for a judicial review. *Christian Concern* is supporting this cause, assisted by solicitors Andrew Storch, and a barrister.

BARRY - CHRIST CHURCH

Last June Rev. Andrew Goodman (and family) returned to the USA, initially for six months, which has now been extended by a further six months. In the interim, Rev. Richard Holst has taken most of the Lord's Day services and all the mid-week Bible studies. On Sundays he has been taking us through 1 Thessalonians, which has been singularly appropriate for our small congregation. Other ministers have occasionally assisted, including Rev. Robert Letham from Bethel, and Rev. Philip Haines from Ely Presbyterian Church.

Apart from a short break due to the recent 'fire break' lockdown, the congregation has been meeting on the Lord's Day since July. It has been a blessing to worship together and enjoy fellowship in the Lord.

The Bible Study/prayer meeting is conducted via Zoom, but this is unsatisfactory, and we are thinking of reconvening in the Church, but are not confident that many would attend. It would at least give notice to the community that something is happening. We need an influx of 'foot soldiers' to strengthen the fellowship, encourage existing members, and help with our witness.

 Russell Young



SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

BERLIN

Older ministers often tell you how privileged they are to baptize the children of children they have baptized earlier in their ministry. This November I was able to baptize the son of the first man I ever baptized. It shows us the faithfulness of God. In all the chaos surrounding us at the moment, God shows us that he is still the almighty God, who cares for his covenant people.

As a church in Berlin, we feel privileged. The government decided to have a second lockdown for November, and it seems that it will continue until Christmas. Nonetheless churches are allowed to stay open. We therefore continue to worship God on Sundays. Coronavirus regulations have shown us again that we are in need of a new meeting place, which is not easy to find at the moment. Nonetheless, we trust the Lord. He will provide for us.

 Johannes Müller

CHELMSFORD

After a brief break from lockdown when we were able to hold evening services, albeit with limited numbers, we are now once again back to worshipping together through a number of internet platforms. Although this is not what we would choose, we are encouraged by the number of people who have 'found' us online, not only from across the UK, but also from abroad. It is exciting to see how God is using this

time to spread his gospel to people who otherwise may never have heard. We ran an online Christianity Explored course recently, which was attended by local people and those from Suffolk and London as well. Although we may be discouraged at times that we cannot meet together in person, it is wonderful to see God's hand at work drawing people to him through this very situation.

In January we are planning an online evangelistic event with Jeremy Marshall. After his talk he will answer questions live via the YouTube feed. We have held this sort of event before at Costa Coffee. We are praying that as this is online, a good number of people who do not yet know the Lord, and who would not come to church, will be challenged by and respond to the message.

We held our half-yearly AGM recently by Zoom and were very thankful for the financial situation with which God has blessed us. As well as having good provision for our own church, it has been a privilege to have been able to make significant financial contributions to our mission partners. Recent meetings with them on Zoom have meant that we enjoyed fellowship with them and can pray with greater insight for their needs. Our youth work has continued over Zoom as well during this time.

In early October we celebrated the marriage of Hadden Turner and Kiara Autenrieth. At the time weddings were limited to 15 people, but as a congregation we were able to share the occasion on Zoom. We are delighted for this young couple and pray that God will bless them



SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

richly as they begin their married life together. We also rejoice with Nelson Taylor and Millie Chapman, a young couple in the church, who have just announced their engagement. We pray that they will know God's guidance and presence with them as they make plans for their future.

It has been a difficult year in many ways, but as we look back we clearly see at work the hand of God who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine.

 Ruth Ferguson

DURHAM

The church in Durham has much cause for thanksgiving. The awe-inspiring, heart-thrilling, opening chapters of Revelation have shown us that our Saviour walks amongst his churches, holds their angels in his hand, and intimately knows our situation. Our God is the creator and sustainer of all things – and he is seated on the throne of the universe.

In our sorrow at the death of our former elder, David Winch, we also give thanks for his humble leadership. We recall how he deeply cared for the congregation: even for those members he barely knew due to his missionary service elsewhere.

We have also had cause to remember how diligently our former pastor, Brian Norton, laboured to promote the unity of the church. Our communion is grounded on an unbreakable union. We thank God

for such a vital legacy, and pray that we would continue to promote the peace of the church. We are grateful for the labours of our ruling elder and deacon which have enabled our minister to take a short sabbatical, and for the provision of men to fill the pulpit.

The oldest member of our congregation has entered his 98th year; we give thanks for the faithful testimony he has borne over many decades.

 Jonathan Johnson

NEWCASTLE - ALL SAINTS

We are thankful for the recent opportunity we had on Remembrance Sunday to join together with the congregations in Durham, Hexham and Sunderland, for an open-air service outside All Saints. Despite the less than inviting weather, it was a joyful opportunity to express the unity of the Church and bear public witness to the beauty and importance of corporate worship.

We have also had the bittersweet occasion of sending Florian and Veronica Weicken to Zürich, Switzerland, for the work of church planting. They will be greatly missed, but we rejoice to see what God has planned for them as they begin a new phase of ministry in Florian's home country.

 Peter Winch

 **SPOTLIGHT** on the Churches



Top: Bill Schweitzer preaching at the Remembrance Day Service

Above: A joint open-air service with members from Hexham, Durham, Sunderland and All Saints on Remembrance Sunday.



SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

SALFORD, MANCHESTER

We are thankful for how the Lord has provided for our needs, feeding and looking after us as a little flock. Through lockdown we have used an online meeting app for Sunday services, with some listening by phone. Most of our regulars have taken part, including those who are more recent converts. Some have decided to stay away, but a number of visitors have joined in through online adverts and especially through personal invitations.

We have felt acutely the unnatural separation from one another and rejoiced to meet back together from August. On Sundays we have been hearing from Acts and Hebrews, fixing our eyes on Christ, responding to his warnings and encouragements.

In Greater Manchester, we have been subject to tighter restrictions, so that for most of this year we have not been permitted to meet in each other's homes or gardens. This has greatly hindered our usual fellowship and hospitality. The ladies met a few times in a park when legislation and weather permitted, and are seeking to start reading Megan Hill's 'A Place to Belong: Learning to Love the Local Church'. As a young church plant, we are often aware of our own weakness, and pray for the Lord to raise up men to be elders and deacons.

 Rosemary Statter

SUNDERLAND

Even in periods of restriction, the Lord continues to encourage us. It has been great to have a couple of newcomers attend and show interest. Nathan is also leading three people through membership classes and one-to-one studies on baptism. One of these is a lady who reached out to us, seeking a church home and baptism for her new daughter. We were especially pleased to hear that her mother had viewed our website and given us a spiritual thumbs-up.

Another exciting thing to look forward to is our winter evangelistic outreach. We are hoping to hold a Christmas Eve service for our congregation, Lord willing, and stream it to the public. Please pray that this will be able to go ahead, and that it will be a blessing to those of our number, and those we have not yet met.

 Anna Hilton

TRANÅS, SWEDEN - IMMANUEL

The congregation in Tranås is unable to meet until 22 December.

ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND

Rev. Florian Weicken and his wife Veronica have moved to Zürich to continue the work of church planting. ○

Youth Camp

DIFFERENT, YET BLESSED



Praise God that we were blessed again this summer to hold our three-day young people's camp. Due to COVID regulations it was very different. But friends from across the UK were reunited, and we were able to sit under God's word in his beautiful creation. We even had lots of great food - not a celery smoothie was in sight! Veteran camper Isaac, aged 17, said, 'It was great. To be honest, I can't think of anything that could have made it better!'



BENJAMIN MITCHELL

Surfing, theme park, Go Ape, and more

The young people had award-winning surf lessons at Tynemouth, spent a day at an outdoor theme park and beach, and experienced the exhilarating Go Ape outdoor climbing experience near Hexham. Grace, 11, said, 'It was fun, I really enjoyed it!'

The first day campers went surfing in the North Sea. Despite the temperature it was a favourite activity. In fact, no one was put off by the fact that the largest basking shark seen in UK waters had been spotted in the bay a few years earlier. We praise God that he sent waves that were perfect for surfing whilst the campers were in the water. Following our times of worship, beach games, and 'find the leader', we finished the first day with fish and chips.

The next day we dashed around a local theme park and nearby beach. Campers enjoyed exhilarating rides such as 'crash test', 'shaken and stirred', and the 'ice jet'. The dodgems were ever-popular, especially when campers were promised double points for bumping leaders. A lot of candy was bought, and it is still being debated if the largest smile on record was witnessed behind a dinnerplate-sized lolly being licked by one of the campers. On the last day, the young people disappeared into the treetops for a Go Ape experience. Harnessed to the zipwire, they whizzed through a forest near Hexham. Some of the adult helpers were particularly thankful for (or frazzled by) the experience of joining in with the campers at high altitude. Following the Bible study, which took place in the forest, we had takeaway pizza, and then played the now traditional 'Cops and robbers' in Hexham park.

Bible teaching: Greatest commandment and Ruth

The most important part was the Bible teaching. We looked at the 'Greatest Commandment' in the afternoons, and the book of Ruth in the evenings, with teaching suited to teenagers. We were encouraged that some young people determined to take up the challenge to adopt the Greatest Commandment as their life motto. Others found that the book of Ruth was particularly helpful to them, as they heard of the greater Boaz, the Lord Jesus Christ. Along the way, tips were given on how to read and interpret different books of the Bible. Rose, aged 13, said 'YP camp has not only given me an opportunity to meet and make new Christian friends the same age as me, it has also expanded my biblical knowledge with all the fantastic teaching we are given every day.'



Thanks

Our thanks go to All Saints Presbyterian Church, Newcastle, who once again gave a substantial subsidy to every camper; and to the hard-working team, Peter and Ina, Juliet, Jess and Joy. Many thanks to other adult helpers from All Saints and Hexham who took time off work to help. The camp would not have been possible without their sacrifice. Pastor Andy Young stepped in at short notice for Go Ape, and drove a group up from the South so that they could attend the camp. The Banner of Truth Trust gave a very generous discount on the book we gave to each camper: Sinclair Ferguson, *A heart for God*.

Next year

God willing, 50 young people from across the denomination are expected to attend the camp next year. We pray for Peter Winch, the new youth camp leader, and for the precious young people that the

Lord has given our denomination, that they would grow in grace and follow God, learning from him in their youth (Num. 14:24; Ps. 71:17). ◯ ◯



EVANGELISM CONFERENCE:

for the crisis we face



BENJAMIN MITCHELL

Introducing a vibrant talk on personal evangelism at this year's ReformationUK conference, our very own Andy Young summed up the crisis we face: 'Europe is the only continent in the world where the church is receding'. This crisis had prompted Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary to host a conference on evangelism, to help Christians reach those who have 'no hope and without God' (Eph. 2:12). How can we reach family, friends, and neighbours with this glorious gospel? We know that few will enter a church; many will only hear the Lord Jesus' name as a swear word. Truly we face a crisis that must be addressed urgently.

'LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP'

To stir us into action, Geoff Thomas fittingly opened the conference by speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ's miraculous catch of

fish (Luke 5). Here the Lord had directed seasoned fishermen – who had caught nothing all night – to 'launch out into the deep.' To be successful fishers of men in this crisis we need nothing more than to take Christ at his word.

BIBLICAL TRUTH, PRACTICAL WISDOM

Therefore, the conference turned to the principles of Scripture to answer the questions 'What is the Gospel?', 'What is evangelism?', and 'How do we evangelize?' Topics included prayerful dependence on God, evangelistic preaching, personal evangelism, and youth work.

Bill Schweitzer, Peter Naylor, Andy Young, Donald John MacLean, David Strain (PCA), Matthew Roberts (IPC), and Dan Peters (Ind.) gave conference addresses.

George Curry (CofE) led a time of prayer for the nation. It was wonderful to share fellowship with a number who had travelled up from other EPCEW churches. Doug McCallum, minister of Cambridge Presbyterian Church, said 'I was hugely blessed by this year's Evangelism conference. Every talk was of a very high quality, full of biblical truth, practical wisdom, and an appropriate level of challenge. The fellowship was a real encouragement...I am already looking forward to the conference in 2021.'

HIGHLIGHTS

Bill Schweitzer, speaking on 1 Cor. 15:3-5, reminded us that the gospel is not just any good news, it is the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, and has eternal consequences. The gospel must be proclaimed; the apostle John saw an angel 'having the eternal gospel to preach' (Rev. 14:6). Andy Young gave two stirring addresses on preaching and presenting Christ, the One who is 'chief among ten thousand' (Song of Solomon 5:10). His teaching dovetailed well with Dan Peters' talk on evangelistic preaching, which encouraged ministers to be exegetical, yet enterprising, preachers. Donald John Maclean spoke on the free offer of the gospel. It is an invitation from the Lord Jesus himself; a pleading, a selling, a promise to be offered to all freely (Isa. 51:5). Peter Naylor spoke on the necessity

of teaching the young people whom God has entrusted to our care. What a person learns first will be the last thing they forget. If we do not teach our young people others will. Practical advice was given on how to catechize our children.

All these tasks are possible only by God's grace. David Strain's talk on 'prayerful dependence on the sovereign God' undergirded much of what was said by other conference speakers and his insightful talk on 'Today's False Gospels; therapeutic, reactionary, and social' left delegates thankful for Christ's work on the cross, which deals with the heart of the problem, the human heart.

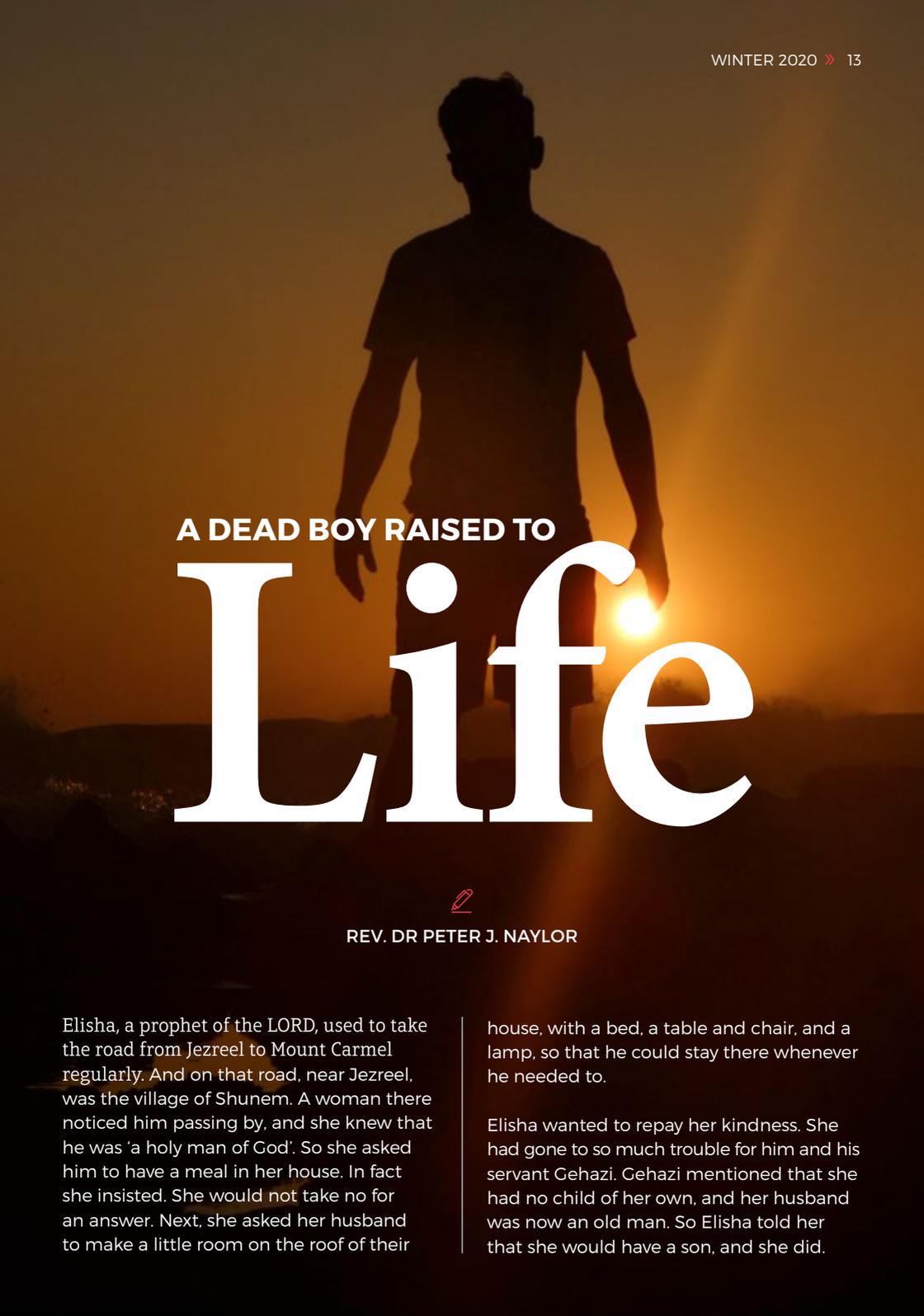
'I LOVED BEING THERE'

One who attended was Liam, aged 24. He commented, 'The conference was an exceptional time of Christian fellowship, alongside solid Reformed teaching, with an emphasis on the glory of God as revealed in the gospel. I loved being there and very much look forward to attending next year.'

At the close, the new Executive Director of WPTS, Jonathan Winch, concluded, 'It is great that hundreds joined us, online and in person, from across four continents. The challenge now is to 'launch out into the deep' with this good news. The cross of Christ is the only answer to the crisis of our time.' ◦



Conference addresses can be viewed online at:
www.youtube.com/c/WestminsterPresbyterianTheologicalSeminaryUK/videos

A silhouette of a man standing with his arms slightly away from his body, set against a warm, golden sunset background. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow behind the man's figure.

A DEAD BOY RAISED TO

Life



REV. DR PETER J. NAYLOR

Elisha, a prophet of the LORD, used to take the road from Jezreel to Mount Carmel regularly. And on that road, near Jezreel, was the village of Shunem. A woman there noticed him passing by, and she knew that he was 'a holy man of God'. So she asked him to have a meal in her house. In fact she insisted. She would not take no for an answer. Next, she asked her husband to make a little room on the roof of their

house, with a bed, a table and chair, and a lamp, so that he could stay there whenever he needed to.

Elisha wanted to repay her kindness. She had gone to so much trouble for him and his servant Gehazi. Gehazi mentioned that she had no child of her own, and her husband was now an old man. So Elisha told her that she would have a son, and she did.

Years passed – we do not know how long – and the boy went out to see his father and the reapers in the field. Suddenly he had a terrible pain in his head. So they carried him home. He sat on his mother’s lap and at midday he died. What did she do? She told no one, not even her husband. Why not? Well, see her putting the little boy’s body on Elisha’s bed. Clearly, she was going to get Elisha. What could he do? She must have been convinced he could do something. She called for a servant and a she-ass and she rode as fast as that animal could carry her, the 30 miles to Mount Carmel. It was desperate. Gehazi came out to meet her, but she did not want to say anything to him. No, it had to be Elisha. She arrived, jumped down from the animal, and took hold of Elisha by the feet. Imagine it. By now, her heart was breaking. Elisha sent Gehazi ahead with his staff. But the woman, whose name we are never told, refused to leave Elisha, the man of God. So he went, and he prayed, and the boy was raised up from the dead.

If there had been newspapers in those days, can you imagine what the headline would have been in the Galilee Herald, the Jezreel Daily Mail, or the Jerusalem Times? ‘Dead boy raised to life!’ What an astonishing moment.

What should we notice as we read the account in 2 Kings 4:8-37?

DISCERNMENT

First of all, we see that the woman of Shunem recognized Elisha as ‘a man of God’ (verse 9). In fact, in this account, Elisha’s name appears only three times, but seven times he is called a man of God. The woman never uses his name. She only ever addresses him in this way, showing

him respect. This is very important. There were many prophets, indeed many false prophets, around at that time, and lots of people were quite happy to listen to them! Not so this woman. She had discernment. Discernment is so important, the ability to recognize the difference between the genuine and the fakes. God had given to this woman the eye of faith, by which she knew a true man of God.

HOLDING ON

Second, see how she held onto him. She had persuaded him to stay; she insisted on it (verse 8). She made it a regular arrangement (verse 10), and went to great trouble to provide for him and his servant (verse 13). Other women have acted in this way. When Paul visited Philippi and Lydia was converted by his teaching, she too insisted that Paul and his fellow-workers should stay in her house (Acts 16:15). And we can read of a godly believer called Elizabeth Bury (1644-1720), about whom it is written:

Of all orders of men, she had the greatest love for the ministers of Christ: she coveted their company, in order to improve by it, and was never better pleased than when her house and her table were filled with them. She would diligently enquire of them in all her difficulties, and as carefully observe all their directions... She thought it her duty to pray for ministers above all men, inasmuch as they are concerned with the welfare of so many souls.

She looked upon God’s tabernacles as truly amiable, which she had often seen filled with his glory, and where the blessing had been commanded out of Zion. She constantly attended upon ordinances [services].

When the Shunammite woman's son died, she would turn to no one else – not her husband (verse 23) nor Gehazi (verse 26), but she held onto Elisha's feet and refused to be separated from him (verses 27 and 30).

HER LIFE AFFECTED

Third, we realize that her whole life was changed because she insisted on being with the man of God. She insisted that he would have a place in her life, a very important place, and she was blessed by God as a result. If she had not invited Elisha into her home, she would not have had her son. And even if she had, and he had died, that would have been the end of it. She would not have received him back from the dead.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS AMAZING ACCOUNT?

When we hear this, do we say, 'I wish Elisha were here today'? No, that is not how to respond.

First, we can see how important it is to recognize God's men. If you have ministers and elders who truly love the Lord, who speak the Word of God in truth, and who pray for you, then Elisha would do no more than they are doing. It is very important to know who are servants of God. Sadly there are plenty of so-called ministers who do not teach the truth, and there are people who gladly listen. But we must know God's men and stick to them.

Second, and much more important, we have one who is far, far greater than

Elisha. God has given us his only-begotten, beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus raised from the dead Jairus' daughter (Mark 5 and Luke 8), and the widow of Nain's only son (Luke 7), and he called Lazarus out of the tomb when he had been dead for four days (John 11). Much more than that, Jesus himself has conquered death for ever and he has dealt with the cause of death. The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). Our Lord Jesus died at Calvary 'for our sins'. He

has taken away our guilt. And he rose again from the dead. His tomb is empty. He is the first, and he will raise all his people. The day will come when his voice will call us from our graves to himself. He holds the keys of Death and Hades (Revelation 1:18).

We must hold fast to Jesus Christ and we must not turn to anyone else. Put your trust in him, follow him, learn from him, obey him. In this way, your whole life will be changed by that one relationship with Jesus Christ. You will be blessed.

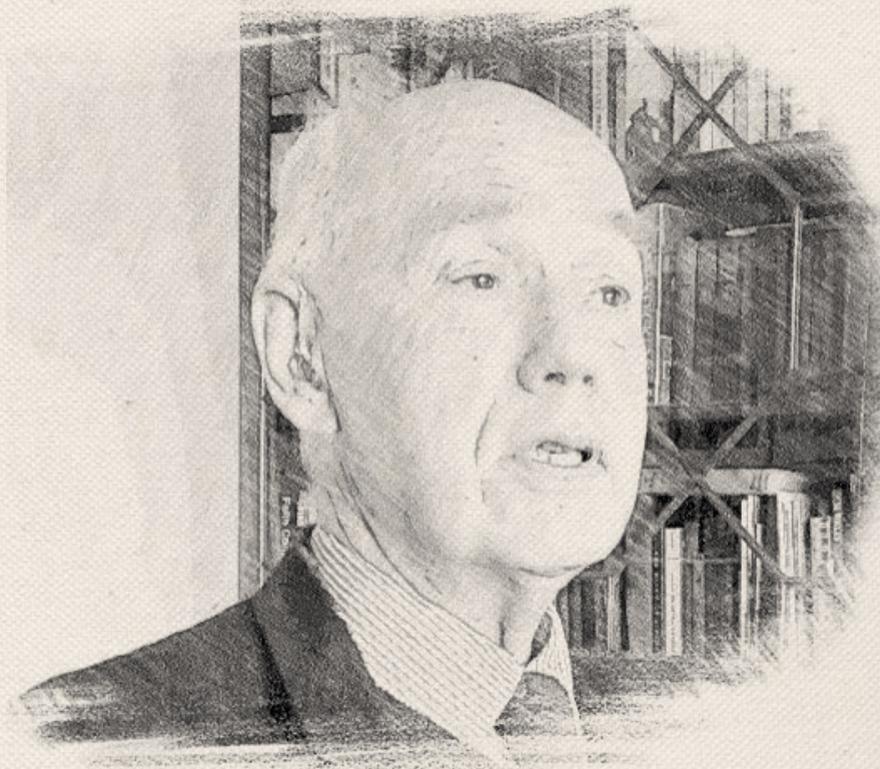
This is what Paul did. He wrote: 'I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Phil. 3:8-11). ○



We have one who is far, far greater than Elisha. God has given us his only-begotten, beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

DAVID WINCH

1934 - 2020



**“Show me, Lord,
the purpose for which I was born,
that I may try to achieve it in the strength
that you supply and for your glory!”**

These words, written in David's characteristic hand under the Greek of the text he was expounding, appear in the introductory pages of his commentary on John. He was writing in retirement, at an age when most men look back to measure their life's achievement; David's impulse was to look ahead, for to him to live was Christ. Despite failing powers his life continued to express the simplicity of purpose that had distinguished 40 years of missionary labour amongst the Turkish people.

To live for Christ had not always been David's purpose. True, he had sensed a call to the ministry when still a child but when, after his compulsory military service he arrived at Mansfield College, Oxford, he had merely a scholar's interest in the Scriptures. Knowing Jesus Christ little better than he knew Julius Caesar, the summit of his ambition was to distinguish himself in his denomination. As John J. Murray has written elsewhere, 'The Winch family were products of the twentieth-century Congregationalism that had embraced theologically liberal teaching.'

Fellow-student John Marshall was the instrument used to introduce David to the living God. The Bible, previously regarded as a historic manuscript riddled with error, became a means of sweet fellowship with the Saviour who had loved him and given himself for him. David's conversion impacted his parents and the church they attended together in Hemel Hempstead. He would later recall:

'A group of us were gathering to pray for revival of true religion.... I well remember the early rising, cycling the five miles into Hemel, the excitement and air of expectancy.... At these meetings we pleaded with God for the man of his choosing, a true man of God, to be called to the Alexandra Road church.'

In 1961 David used a prize he won at Oxford to fund an expedition to the Holy Land led by Professor Ken Kitchen and Dr Martin. It was an eventful trip for all, as surviving letters indicate, but for David it was life changing. The route took them through Turkey, and it was in this land of history and romance, once the centre of Eastern Christendom and home to the first Ecumenical Councils, that David received a shock: in a land of 28 million, just two Turks were known to be Christian. The thought never left him: 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?'

Back in England David was able to repay a debt to a dear friend: he became the means of bringing John Marshall to his parents' church in Hemel. John would devote the remaining 45 years of his life to that pulpit – and to open-air preaching in the town – to great effect. And it was John, alongside the church at Alexandra Road, who sent David and his young bride Ann to Turkey as missionaries in 1966. Ann was pregnant with their first child as they took the sea voyage, and their primitive wooden house in the historic centre of Istanbul soon resounded with a baby's cry.



The work commences - Istanbul, 1967

Despite recent reforms by President Kemal Ataturk, religious freedom was so little advanced that to share the gospel openly amongst Turkish people meant likely deportation; to secure residence, David worked as an English teacher. David and Ann joined a church in Istanbul, where David preached by translation until he reached fluency in Turkish. For 10 years he travelled the country, making contacts and taking Bible studies in villages and towns. Two of those years were spent in Gaziantep on the Syrian border, where his young family formed the entire congregation each Sunday. In these early years there was much hard ground to be broken up and much discouragement. David was constantly interceding for the lost; the excitement and air of expectancy that characterized his prayers as a young convert compelled him to rise early and give the first part of every day to intercession. The conviction that God is sovereign in salvation, that all Christ's lost sheep would be found, gave him the strength to witness day after day, confident that his labour was not in vain in the Lord.

In 1977 the family - now five in number - returned to the UK for the children's secondary education; Turkish schools were fiercely Islamic, Western schools too expensive. London was now home to tens of thousands of Turks and Kurds, and David went from door to door with the gospel, conducting Bible studies when invited in - as often happened. He planted a Turkish-speaking church in North London, and Trans-World Radio broadcast his evangelistic messages throughout the Turkish-speaking world. In the summer he would return alone to Turkey for journeys into territory that would have been dangerous with a family. After the children's education was complete David and Ann returned to Selçuk, near Ephesus, where David taught at the newly established theological seminary.

A gentleman and a scholar, David was trusted by Muslims, who knew instinctively that he loved them. He spoke of his Lord without fear, never with aggression or superiority; he commended the truth by the consistency of his life. He was called to plough and sow more than to reap, and yet during the span of his ministry Turkey has changed: when David went out he could count the number of ethnically Turkish

Turkey was, and remains, a Muslim stronghold





David commended the truth by the consistency of his life

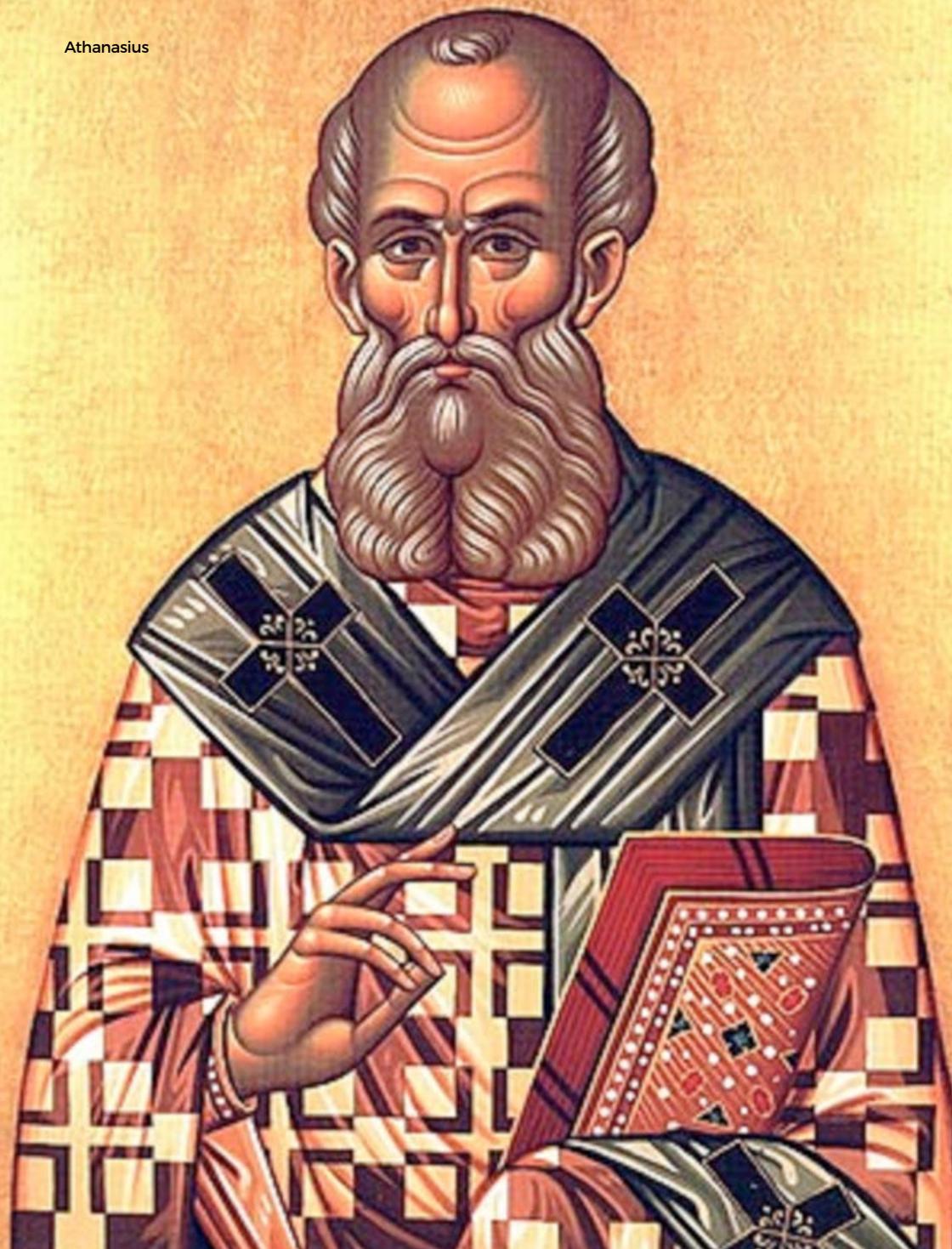
evangelicals on the fingers of one hand; today estimates start at 7,000.

During his last and long battle with Alzheimer's, David lost the use of his mind by degrees, but retained the gentleness, consistency and integrity of character that endeared him to the Turkish people. He never lost his love for the Scriptures;

unable to talk in his final months, he would nonetheless read the Bible in private, maintaining his daily practice of 66 years.

On Monday 5 October 2020 David died peacefully, after three days with his wife by his side. He is now worshipping Christ in his immediate presence, fulfilling the purpose for which he was born. ○

Athanasius



Part 2

The Church in Past Ages

ATHANASIUS AND THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY



REV. DR IAN HAMILTON

'The Arian controversy was the greatest theological controversy in the history of Christianity'
(Nick Needham).

The early Christian church worshipped Christ as God, but this raised huge questions. In the four centuries after the apostles, these questions were debated by theologians of outstanding ability. Their conclusions (that of the Church catholic) were encapsulated in a succession of credal statements, the most important and significant being the declaration of the Council of Nicaea in the year AD 325. This was the first "ecumenical" council (ecumenical is derived from Greek

οἰκουμένη 'the inhabited world'). The central truth affirmed at the Council was that Christ, as Son of God, was 'homoousios' (consubstantial) with the Father.

ATHANASIUS

The great figure at this Council was Athanasius of Alexandria. He came to prominence at a time when the deity of Christ was being questioned, and openly rejected by some in the Church.

There was a presbyter in Alexandria called Arius. Around 318 he clashed with the bishop of Alexandria, claiming that the Father alone is truly God, and that Jesus was essentially different from the Father. Arius argued that the Son did not possess by nature or by right any of the divine qualities of immortality, sovereignty,

perfect wisdom, goodness, purity: the Son did not exist before he was *begotten* of the Father; Jesus Christ is merely a creature! This is precisely what Jehovah's Witnesses argue today; they are 21st century Arians.

It may be that Arius wanted to explain the incarnation without difficulties i.e. how could God become man? Although he appealed to certain biblical texts (such as John 17:3; 1 Tim. 6:16; Col. 1:15), like all heretics, he operated with a false methodology: *reason not revelation* was his ultimate authority.

Like Origen, Arius believed that the Father is greater than the Son, who in turn is greater than the Holy Spirit. He did not believe it was possible to have a hierarchy of divine beings; the Father alone is God. As for the Son, 'There was once when he was not'.

Council of Nicaea



First, Arius denied the self-existence and eternity of the Son: 'The Son has an origin, but God is unoriginated'. 'There was when he was not... and before he was begotten, or created, or determined or established he did not exist.' The Son owed his existence to 'the Father's will.'

Second, Arius denied that the Son is equal with God, he was a creature; only the Father was Creator. This was the heart of the reason why Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, excommunicated Arius. Arius, Alexander alleged, held that the Son was not 'like the Father in substance' (*homoios kat' ousian*), he was mutable (*atreptos*) and alterable (*alloitos*). Yet, to Arius, the Son was a 'special' creature, but at best only a mediating creature.

The anti-Arian party, led by Alexander and later by Athanasius, was driven 'by fundamental religious concerns, whatever other, baser factors may have contributed to their motivations' (Donald Macleod). In their view, the very future of Christianity was at stake:

- ▶ If Christ were not God he could not be the revelation of God
- ▶ If Christ were not God, men had not been redeemed by God
- ▶ If Christ were not God, believers were not united to God
- ▶ If Christ were not God,

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Arius argued that the Son did not possess by nature or by right any of the divine qualities of immortality, sovereignty, perfect wisdom, goodness, purity: the Son did not exist before he was begotten of the Father; Jesus Christ is merely a creature! This is precisely what Jehovah's Witnesses argue today; they are 21st century Arians.

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The deity of Christ 'safe-guarded not merely a theological dogma but the very core of the piety and worship of the Church'

Christians had no right to worship him!

This was the ground Athanasius stood on. He wrote in his *Second Oration against the Arians*: 'if the Son were a creature, man had remained mortal as before, not being joined to God... nor would a portion of the creation have been the creation's salvation, as needing salvation itself' (69).

This was vital for Athanasius because he understood salvation in terms of deification (see 2 Peter 1:4 'partakers of the divine nature'). The idea that Christ was a creature was fatal to this. The deity of Christ 'safe-guarded not merely a theological dogma but the very core of the piety and worship of the Church' (Donald Macleod).

This Council opened on 19 June 325 in the presence of the Emperor Constantine. Around 220 bishops were present, mostly from the East. In the extant lists of bishops present, Ossius of Cordova, and the presbyters Vitus and Vincentius are listed before the other names, but it is more likely that Eustathius of Antioch or Alexander of Alexandria presided.

It should be remembered that many of those present had, because of the recent persecutions, suffered and faced threat of death for their faith. These were not wishy-

washy men. It might also be remarked that they were extremely sensitive to details of doctrine. As evidence of this, the second major concern of the Council of Nicaea was to address the hotly debated question of what the proper day was to celebrate the resurrection. Above all, these men 'feared heresy more than martyrdom'.

The bishops of the Council stopped their ears on hearing the words of Arius and immediately rejected his teaching as alien to the belief of the Church. They tore to pieces a letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia containing Arius' teaching, as well as an Arian confession of faith.

Originally 17 of those bishops gathered at the Council were unwilling to sign the Creed penned by the Council; all but three of these were convinced to sign by the end. It is thus apparent that the Arians were a distinct minority among the bishops. Initially there was some resistance to the Creed of Nicaea, not because of what it said but because of how it said it. Many objected to the use of the word 'homoousios' in an official document because it was not used in Scripture, despite their agreement with the meaning it conveyed.

The Council interrogated Arius using Scripture, only to find that he had a new way of

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Doctrine matters. Truth is non-negotiable. The church's unity is precious and should be pursued with resolve.

interpreting every verse they brought before him. Finally, they used the argument that Arius' view had to be wrong because it was new. Athanasius said,

'But concerning matters of faith, they [the bishops assembled at Nicaea] did not write: "It has been decided," but "Thus the Catholic Church believes." And thereupon confessed how they believed. This they did to show that their judgement was not of more recent origin, but was in fact of Apostolic times...'

In this regard also, Athanasius asks rhetorically, 'how many fathers [in other words, the writings of the early Christians] can you cite for your phrases?'

It must be concluded, then, that the controversy was between a great majority who held the belief that the doctrine expressed by the Nicene Creed was ancient and Apostolic, and a minority who believed that Arius' new interpretation of the faith was correct.

THE ROLE OF CONSTANTINE

The controversy greatly agitated Emperor Constantine, and he sent a letter to Arius and Alexander in an attempt to persuade them to lay aside

their differences. It has been suggested that because Constantine referred to the issue as 'trifling' that he did not really understand it. Let me explain. Arius was willing to say that Jesus was 'homoiousios' with the Father, that is, 'of like nature' with the Father. Athanasius, however, was adamant that Jesus was 'homoousios' with the Father, that is of 'the same nature' as the Father. Notice that only one letter differentiates these two terms; one letter, but to Athanasius a letter that destroyed all hope of salvation for sinners. If Jesus was only 'like' the Father, he could not make atonement for sin against God. Strangely it is recorded in a letter by Eusebius of Caesarea that the Emperor suggested the key word 'homoousios' that appears in the Creed.

Constantine did play an important role at the Council. Eusebius of Caesarea reports that he played a key part in calming, convincing, and bringing all to agreement on contested points. The account of Eusebius fairly glows in regard to the Emperor. It is nowhere suggested, however, that he was permitted to vote with the bishops nor that he used any form of force to obtain an outcome.

It may be that the eloquence and glory of the Emperor had sway with some; however it should be remembered that he did eventually (years after the Council) support the Arian party.

Nor was Constantine the last emperor to side with the Arians. Athanasius writes concerning this in 'The Monks' History

of Arian Impiety' (AD 358), 'When did a decision of the Church receive its authority from the emperor?' and 'never did the fathers seek the consent of the emperor for them [conciliar decrees of the Church], nor did the emperor busy himself in the Church.'

The Church was willing to accept the help of an emperor, to listen to what he had to say, but not to accept the rule of an emperor in matters of faith. However one describes the role of Constantine at the Council of Nicaea, it must be remembered that the Creed of Nicaea expressed what the great majority of bishops at the Council found to be the traditional, biblical, and orthodox expression of the Christian faith, a faith in which they believed so firmly that they were willing to die for it.

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So, let us contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and do so with courage, resolve, great grace, and a willingness to die rather than accommodate error that undermines the gospel of God.

A GREAT LESSON TO LEARN

Doctrine matters. Truth is non-negotiable. The church's unity is precious and should be pursued with resolve (read Eph. 4:1-6). But unity must never be bought at the price of truth. A unity

that is not founded upon God's truth is not true, God-honouring unity. But truth that is pursued with no regard to unity, will always be cold, metallic, precise, and devoid of grace.

So, let us contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and do so with courage, resolve, great grace, and a willingness to die rather than accommodate error that undermines the gospel of God. ○



REV. MAURICE
ROBERTS

Preaching to the Conscience



There is an important difference between lecturing and preaching. Whereas both lecturing and preaching address the mind and convey information to the understanding, preaching must go further. Preaching not only gives theological knowledge to the hearers; it also rouses the conscience. True preaching therefore leaves the hearer feeling uncomfortable when he learns that his way of life is displeasing to God. The preacher, both in the pulpit, and even in conversation, will feel it his duty to stir the conscience of the unconverted. 'As he [Paul] reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled' (Acts 24:25). This example of faithfully aiming at the sinner's conscience is an important lesson for all who are called by God to spread his gospel.

The Lord Jesus Christ preached with a view to rousing and awakening the conscience. In addressing the Pharisees on one notable occasion our Lord struck hard blows repeatedly at their conscience in order to expose their hypocrisy. He makes it clear that his motive in so convicting them was one of mercy: 'How often would I have gathered thy children together...and ye would not' (Matt. 23:37). He makes it clear to us all that the faithful preacher's duty is to awaken the conscience of his hearers to realize how grievously they are sinning. His language is stern: 'Ye fools and blind!' (v.19). 'Ye blind guides' (v.24). 'Woe unto you!' (v.27). 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers' (v.33). 'How can ye escape the damnation of hell?' (v.33).

Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ used

these stern words out of compassion for their souls and with a view to awakening them from their false religious beliefs and practices. He never said a wrong or a false word to his hearers. But in love a true preacher must be cruel to be kind. Better it is to awaken the souls of those who are asleep in a false piety than to allow them to sleep on until they wake up in a lost condition of soul where they will suffer eternal punishment and misery.

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The preacher's duty is to present to the mind divine truths which will not only inform the mind but also disturb the conscience.

The preacher's duty is to present to the mind divine truths which will not only inform the mind but also disturb the conscience. The unworthy preacher keeps off all subjects which might upset his hearers. But preaching should aim always to seek to move the hearers towards godliness, repentance, faith and personal reformation. The unworthy preacher strokes the conscience of his sleepy hearers and makes them feel comfortable in their sleepy state of soul. But woe unto all such preachers! The

preacher's real task is to confront his hearers with God's truth in such a way that they have no peace until they find their peace in Christ through the gospel.

It is a kindness on the preacher's part when he presents a sermon to the people which awakens the sleeping soul of his hearers. 'Be sure your sin will find you out' (Num. 32:23) is just such a text. Who can sleep, when confronted with such a divine truth? No matter how carefully we may seek to cover up our sins they will be seen by God and we shall have to pay the price if we do not repent.

It would be good from time to time to preach a sermon on Judas Iscariot. He

professed to be an apostle; he professed to love Christ; he no doubt prayed with others and worshipped with others. But it was all hypocrisy. He sold the Son of God for money and betrayed him with a kiss! Sadly, a preacher may be a fraud at heart even when he is admired for his office as a minister. 'The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?' (Jer. 17:9). Judas was not the last person in the church to be a hypocrite and a traitor to Christ's church.

A sermon should contain, here and there, a sword-like sharp point. This is not to hurt anyone's feelings by some unkind references. The faithful preacher's aim, in attacking the faculty of conscience, is to stir the hearer to call on God for mercy. This is what good preaching will do.

Those who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost cried: 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:37). The keeper of the prison, awakened by God's earthquake, realized in his conscience how great was his need of mercy: 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30). Before his awakening his conscience was probably fast asleep. He would never have asked how to be saved if his conscience had not been dealt a heaven-sent blow. So, in our sermons, we must pray for wisdom as to how to stir up our hearers out of their sleepy state. It is in love for our hearers that in preaching we should seek to rouse them to pray for God's forgiveness.

Pastoral wisdom is needed in all our work as preachers. We must not alarm our hearers, all of whom are sinners, to the point of suicide. Our aim in preaching is to stir people's conscience. The preacher has

a loving and evangelical concern for their eternal salvation. We preach to wound the conscience of our hearers, not so that they need medical help to preserve their sanity, but so that they may seek God's forgiveness and enter into the blessed state of salvation. 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted' (Matt. 5:4).

It is the way of God with us, as fallen sinners, to make us sad before he makes us glad. He makes us weep before we are fit to leap for joy. In this divine way God shakes the sinner out of his worldly self-confidence and educates our soul to say: 'I will arise and go to my father' (Luke 15:18).

This is the lesson which Christ teaches us in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The sinner who has never experienced this self-accusation in his, or her, conscience will, sadly, embrace the false and arrogant religion of the elder brother in that parable. Pharisaical self-centredness will lead people to despise true biblical repentance and biblical self-abasement before the God of heaven.

The person who has experienced evangelical repentance and has passed from spiritual death by the new birth is on the way to heaven. It is no wonder that the Ethiopian eunuch, having understood from the Scriptures that Jesus is God's 'slaughtered sheep' (Acts 8:32) came to believe in Christ with all his heart. After a genuine profession of his faith he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).

As gospel preachers our duty is to awaken the soul of our hearers with gospel warnings to the conscience. Those who hear our warnings and who truly repent will rejoice to be new creatures in Christ. ◦



The faithful preacher's aim, in attacking the faculty of conscience, is to stir the hearer to call on God for mercy.

ROBERT BRUCE AND THE LORD'S SUPPER



REV. NATHAN HILTON

We often think of salvation as the pivotal issue of the Reformation. Crucial though it was, part of the Reformers' concern for a recovery of biblical truth was a right understanding of the sacraments. Though the abuse of Jesus' gift to his church provoked strong, and at times polarized, positions from the early Reformers, Calvin's view was adopted by the Westminster Assembly and became the standard for many of our churches. That said, I dare say that, were a poll to be taken in our congregations today as to the purpose and benefit of the sacrament, we might see much scratching of heads. Is there a communication of grace through

the sacrament or merely help for our memories? If we have received Christ through the hearing of the gospel, why do we need the sacrament? If we have received grace, can we receive more grace? It is with questions like these that Robert Bruce (1554-1631) is able to help.

Bruce preached a series of sermons in 1589 that were so well received that they have been in print ever since, and were thought by the editor of the 1614 edition 'worthy to be written in letters of gold' (currently available from Christian Focus, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*). It is not that Bruce adds anything to Calvin's excellent work on the Supper, but in the

context of his congregational ministry he was able to communicate with a pastor's sensitivity and understanding to folk just like you and me.

1. WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

Bruce tells us that a sacrament is (a) a holy sign and (b) a seal that is (c) annexed to the preached Word of God to seal up and confirm the truth contained in the same Word (p. 33).

As a sign the sacrament in both the elements and actions point us in a very visceral manner to the reality of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. The bread and the breaking of it point to the flesh of our Lord as well as his 'pain, anguish and distress of heart under the weight and indignation of the wrath of God'. The wine and the pouring of it point to his blood and its separation from his flesh (pp.76-77). However, as a sacramental sign the Lord's Supper actually delivers Christ and his benefits to the believer because of a God-ordained connection between the sign and the thing signified. Bruce said, 'I call them signs because they have the Body and Blood of Christ conjoined with them. Indeed, so truly is the Body of Christ conjoined with the bread, and the Blood of Christ conjoined with the wine, that as soon as you receive the bread in your mouth (if you are a faithful man or woman) you receive the Body of Christ in your soul' (p.35). Why? A picture or an idea of Jesus cannot save you. As

with a decent meal, in order to get the benefits, you cannot just look at it. And in the same way, if we are to enjoy the benefits of Jesus, we must receive him (p.73). Our Lord says, 'this is my body'. This is a promise which, rightly understood, indicates the presence of Christ and his benefits in the sacrament (p.139). Other texts like 1 Cor. 12:13 describe the sacraments as truly conveying the spiritual benefits they represent (p.104).

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the sacrament must be regulated by the express commands and instructions of our Lord and his apostles, which safeguards us from all the profanations of Rome and others, for example, removing the cup from the people of God.

In times past, any official document would have been given a seal, a wax lump imprinted with the mark of the authority that stood behind it in order to confirm its authenticity to the recipient. The sacrament as a seal confirms that Christ is truly delivered to the faithful recipient (p.108). It is as though you were given the title and deed to a piece of land. You are then in no doubt about the lawful possession of that land. Well, when you receive the sacrament in faith, you lawfully receive possession of Jesus Christ, and are in no doubt that he is truly yours (p.102).

It is crucial to appreciate that the Word is part of the definition of a sacrament.

We are reminded that the sacrament must be regulated by the express commands and instructions of our Lord and his apostles, which safeguards us from all the profanations of Rome and others, for example, removing the cup from the people of God (pp. 114, 116). The moment you cease to have a sacrament regulated by the Word, it is no longer a sacrament.

2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SACRAMENT?

There are four.

1. The sacrament is a public testimony to the whole world that we 'avow and worship Christ', and 'that we might also testify of our love towards his members, our brothers'. What a great display to the world of our collective dependence on Christ, and bond in him, as we humbly and reverently gather around his table.
2. It is an opportunity for thanksgiving; every time we come, we have set before us all that he has done for us.
3. It is sovereign medicine for all our diseases. It is a regular call to repentance, an invitation to reconciliation, a declaration of assurance, one that can remove all doubts and fears (p.69-70).
4. It is nourishment for the soul. As the 'bread is able to nourish your body for this earthly and temporal life; so the flesh of Christ, signified by the bread, is able to nourish both body and soul to everlasting life' (p.48).

3. HOW DO WE RECEIVE CHRIST THROUGH THE SACRAMENT?

We have said that the sacrament truly delivers Jesus, and that this



The sacrament is a public testimony to the whole world that we 'avow and worship Christ', and 'that we might also testify of our love towards his members, our brothers'.



There is no union with Christ apart from the Spirit and therefore the connection between Christ and the believer in the sacrament must be of a spiritual nature.

is because of a God-ordained connection between the sign and the thing signified. But what is the nature of that connection, and how does it work?

It is not that the bread and body of Christ occupy the same physical place (against the Lutheran teaching of consubstantiation). Nor is the physical flesh of Christ in any way present (against the Roman Catholic teaching of transubstantiation). Our Lord has a real body and he is seated at the right hand of God in heaven. As Bruce points out, if the things signified were physically present, the sign would be redundant (p.44). What then is the connection? It is a sacramental connection. It is of a 'mystical, secret, and spiritual' nature, one that cannot be fully explained or demonstrated, but one that is to be perceived with the 'heavenly eye', that is of faith (p.45). In order to understand the connection we must think about it within the broader category of our union with Christ.

How are we united to Christ? Through the Holy Spirit and faith. It is through the operation of the Spirit alone that we enjoy any participation in Christ. It is the Spirit 'who seals him up in our hearts, and confirms us more and more in him' (2 Cor. 1:20-22, 1 Cor. 6:17, John 3:6) (p.37). There is no union with Christ apart from the Spirit and therefore the connection between Christ and the believer in the sacrament must be of a spiritual nature

(p.104). It is also by faith. Spirit-enabled faith apprehends Christ as he is offered to us, and he is offered to us in the Supper. Bruce uses as an illustration the woman with the flow of blood. She reached out and touched the hem of Christ's garment, not his flesh, and power went out of him to heal her. How so? Because 'with faith, which is the hand of the soul, she touched her Saviour, God and man'. Faith was the instrument through which she received grace from Christ. And this is confirmed by his words, 'go your way, your faith has saved you' (p.106). As Jesus Christ is received by faith through the Spirit under the ministry of the Word, he is likewise received under the ministry of the sacrament.

Is he then present in the Supper? Yes. 'Not in the bread and wine, nor in the accidents or substance of bread and wine. We hold that Christ is present in the Supper because he is present to our soul, to our spirit and faith' (p.139). He is not present outwardly and physically, but inwardly and spiritually. But can something be truly ours if it is set at a great distance from us? Yes. Again, with the example of a title and deed to a piece of land, it may be very far from you physically, but it is no less yours than if you were standing upon it (p.102). Can we truly know the benefits of a thing far off? Yes. 'Is not the body of the sun in the heavens? It is impossible for you to touch the body of the sun, and yet the body of the sun and you are conjoined by the beams and by the light that shine on you' (p.94). Thus, Christ is truly present, truly yours, and truly beneficial to your soul as you come to the Table in faith. Bruce summarizes his teaching in these words: 'This secret conjunction, then, is brought

about by faith and by the Holy Spirit. By faith we lay hold upon the Body and Blood of Christ, and though we are as far distant as heaven and earth are, the Spirit serves as a ladder to conjoin us with Christ, like the ladder of Jacob, which reached from the ground to the heavens. So the Spirit of God conjoins the Body of Christ to my soul' (p.96).

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Christ is truly present, truly yours, and truly beneficial to your soul as you come to the Table in faith.

4. WHY DO WE NEED CHRIST THROUGH THE SACRAMENT?

If we can have the Word without the sacrament, and if it is the same Christ who is ours in the Word and in the sacrament, then why have the sacrament at all? This is Bruce's answer, 'that you may get the same thing better than you had it in the Word', which is to say, you get Christ better. But in what sense? The ideas amount to two things, greater assurance of Christ and his benefits to you, and the greater effects of Christ felt within you. Remember what we have said about the sacrament as a seal. It is like that title and deed. When you look to your baptism, when you come to the Table, it is as though you are receiving a physical, legal, claim to Jesus (p.102). When you come, believing, God declares his Son is yours and removes every cause for doubt. Although you may have believed the substance of the sacrament before, 'by the seals, you believe it better' (p.102).

And the more we are assured of him, the more our faith grows, and the benefits of Christ are felt in our lives. He says, 'where I had but a little grip of Christ before, as it were, between my finger and my thumb, now I get him in my whole hand,

and indeed the more my faith grows, the better grip I get of Christ Jesus' (p.84). But for Bruce this is not just about affirming faith, and thereby growing it, but also a real increase of spiritual grace through the communication of Christ to the soul. Bruce says, 'the sacrament awakens all the outward senses, such as the eye, the hand, and all the rest. When the outward senses are moved, without doubt the Holy Spirit concurs, moving the heart all the more' (p.61). He says, through the sacrament 'Christ may have more room in which to reside in our narrow heart than he could have by the hearing of the simple Word' (p.59). He says, 'my faith is nourished, the bounds of my soul are enlarged'; each time you come, you grow 'in knowledge, apprehension and feeling' (pp.84-85). He says that, as the soul gives the body life, movement and feeling, so Christ quickens the soul with heavenly life. But he is to the soul a thousand times greater than the soul is to the body. 'Whereas the body by the presence of the soul gets only an earthly and temporal life, subject to continual misery, by the presence of Christ in my soul, I see a blessed life, I feel a blessed life, and that life daily increases in me more and more' (pp. 90-91).

5. HELP AS YOU APPROACH THE TABLE

Bruce encourages us to keep a distinction in mind made by Irenaeus, who said 'a

sacrament consists of two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly', or the sign and the thing signified (p.32). So that, at the time of administration, we are to think of a parallelism between sign and substance: 'When you are at the Lord's Table, watching what the minister does outwardly, in breaking and distributing the bread, in pouring out and distributing the wine, think of

this: Christ is as busy doing all these things spiritually to your soul. He is as busy giving to you his own body, with his own hand; he is as busy giving to you his own Blood, with its power and efficacy. Likewise, in this action, if you are a faithful communicant, think of what the mouth does, and how the mouth of the body is occupied outwardly; in the same way, the hand and mouth of the soul, which is faith, are occupied inwardly. As your mouth takes the bread and the wine, so the mouth of your soul takes the body and blood of Christ, and that by faith' (p. 77).

Let me commend to you these tremendous sermons, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper* (Christian Focus). They have blessed my soul and moved forward my understanding and practice of the sacrament. Since reading them I have made several adjustments to the administration of the Supper in Sunderland where I serve. May the Lord richly bless you as you come humbly and in faith to the feast of grace he has so magnanimously spread before you. ◦

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As the soul gives the body life, movement and feeling, so Christ quickens the soul with heavenly life. But he is to the soul a thousand times greater than the soul is to the body.

A DIFFICULT VERSE CONSIDERED



REV. DR PETER
J. NAYLOR

I have often read Psalm 138, and one line has always puzzled me: ‘For You have magnified Your word above all Your name’ (verse 2c).¹ Commentators agree that this is difficult to understand. It is not possible to begin to unravel this without studying the Hebrew text. A close examination of the text in the original language is one of the tasks of ministers, but it does place an obstacle in the way of many readers. In order to assist everyone, let me offer my own translation.

Here is verse 2 in Hebrew.

אֲשַׁתְּחֹה אֶל־הַיְכֹל קִדְשֶׁךָ
וְאוֹדָה אֶת־שִׁמְךָ עַל־חַסְדֶּךָ וְעַל־אֱמֻנָתְךָ
כִּי־הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שִׁמְךָ אֶמְרֹתֶיךָ:

Here is my translation.

I will worship towards your holy temple,
and I will praise your name
according to your mercy and according
to your faithfulness,
for you have made your word grow,
according to the whole of your name.²

With this before us, let us look first at the structure of the Psalm and then at some of the words in verse 2.

STRUCTURE OF THE PSALM

In Psalm 138, there is a clear progression of thought:

1-2b Speaking to the LORD: I will praise you.

2c-3 The reason why.

4-5a Speaking to us: kings will praise him.

5b-6 The reason why.

7-8a Speaking to us again: he will deliver me.

8b-c Speaking to the LORD: do not forsake the works of your hands.

In this context, we can see that verse 2c gives the reason why David is moved to wholehearted praise: ‘for you have made your word grow’.

THE MEANING OF SOME WORDS

Our focus is on this clause (verse 2c):
כִּי־הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל־כָּל־שִׁמְךָ אֶמְרֹתֶיךָ³

(a) The verb *הִגְדַּלְתָּ* (*higdaltā*), ‘you have caused to grow’, is from *גָּדַל* (*gādal*), which means ‘to grow up, to become great.’⁴ This can refer to a child growing, or to wealth increasing, or even grief being intense.

Besides this simple form, the verb has derived stems. The Pi’el stem generally conveys the idea of bringing about a state or condition.⁵ Thus *גִּדְּדֵל* (*giddēl*) can refer to bringing up children, or letting hair grow long. God said to Abram, ‘I will make your name great’ (Gen. 12:2).

The Hiph’il stem is causative.⁶ In Isaiah 9:3, it means ‘you have increased the joy’; the Lord has caused them to rejoice abundantly. In Psalm 138:2, we meet the Hiph’il, which could be ‘you have made your word great’ (a state) or ‘you have caused your word to grow’ (an action). I have preferred the latter, to convey the thought that what is promised is progressively becoming reality.⁷

(b) ‘Your word’, *אֶמְרֹתֶיךָ* (*imrāthekā*) means ‘an utterance, a speech, what was spoken.’⁸ David could have used the more general term *דָּבָר* (*dāvār*) ‘word’. His choice of *אֶמְרֹתֶיךָ* may be more suggestive of that great moment when the LORD did speak to him through Nathan the prophet, and

made with him a covenant (2 Sam. 7; Psalm 89).

The combination of this verb and this noun means that the LORD has caused his promise to become a growing reality in David's experience. A similar idea is encountered in Acts. Luke wrote, 'But the word of God grew and multiplied' (Acts 12:24; see also 6:7; 19:20). The gospel preached 'grew'; many being added to the Lord. David is moved to praise as he contemplates that God has been keeping his promise. He has subdued nations (Philistines, Moab, Edom and others), expanded Israel's borders, and increased David's wealth (2 Sam 8). The expansion of his dominion was part of the covenant vision (Ps. 72:8-11; Ps. 89:22f, 27).

(c) The words **אֶמְרָתְךָ ... בְּיִהְיֶה לִּי**⁹ are qualified by **עַל-כָּל-שְׂמֹךְ**.¹⁰ But what does **עַל** (*al*) mean? The Hebrew lexicon devotes over seven pages to this preposition because it has a wide range of meanings: 'upon, on the ground of, according to, on account of, concerning, beside, in addition to, above or beyond, etc.'¹¹ In verse 2, all the main Bible versions render it 'above', meaning 'more than, over'. But before we accept that, notice that it appears three times in the verse, and on the first two occasions it means 'according to'. The flow of thought and the parallelism suggest that the same is the case on the third occasion: 'according to your mercy', 'according to your faithfulness', and 'according to the whole of your name'.

David is praising the name of the LORD, as he made it known to Moses (Exod. 3:14; 6:6-7; 34:6-7). In other psalms, David shows that he loved to meditate on the wonderful attributes of God, which his name expressed. Exodus 34:6-7 is echoed in Psalm 103:6-10 and Psalm 145:5-9, Davidic psalms. David understands that as God is

fulfilling his covenant promises, so he is displaying his glorious attributes. As God leads his servant on in life, more and more he sees his covenant love and faithfulness, and he knows that he is true to his own glorious character. As one hymn writer put it, God's purposes ripen fast, unfolding every hour. The totality of his name is seen in the breadth of his deeds.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Verse 2 is in the past tense: Lord, you have already caused your promise to unfold in amazing deeds of power. But the Psalm does not end there. There is more to come. From verse 4, David speaks of the future. The LORD has not finished his work. David anticipates that all the kings of the earth will hear God's word and will praise him. He knows that when he passes through distress, the LORD will save him. A complete fulfilment lies in the future (verse 8). The mercy of the LORD is for ever!

David looked to the future. 'You have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come...For your word's sake, and according to your own heart' (2 Sam. 7:19, 21). At the end of his life, he said, 'He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; will he not make it increase?' (2 Sam. 23:5) David saw the day of Christ, the kingdom of his greater Son, his everlasting and universal reign (Ps. 16:8; Acts 2:22-25).

David grew bold in faith as he meditated on God's word, his work, his deliverance, his name, and the fulfilment of promise yet to come: you made me bold (verse 3c). He knew where history was heading. Whatever was true of David's kingdom would be far fuller and richer in the kingdom of his

greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. When our Saviour cried, with vehement cries and tears, God would answer him (Heb. 5:7). When he was in distress – ‘now is my soul troubled’ – he would be delivered, even from the tomb. Kings would hear Christ’s gospel and come and sing of his ways. David knew that the covenant uttered to him was ultimately to be fully realized in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: FOUR APPROACHES REJECTED

Here are four approaches that you may find in many commentaries.

1. The ancient Greek Septuagint has two readings. One is, ‘for thou hast magnified thy holy name above every thing’ and the other is, ‘for you have magnified above every name your word.’¹² Neither is faithful to the Hebrew, but has changed the text. We cannot agree.
2. The ESV, following the RSV, adds the word ‘and’: ‘you have magnified above all your name *and* your word.’ John Calvin was familiar with this approach, but he summarily rejected it: ‘This learned interpreters have rejected as a

meagre rendering.’¹³ Again, we cannot accept a translation that relies on altering the Hebrew text.

3. The NIV gives a looser rendering: ‘you have so exalted your solemn decree that it surpasses your fame.’ Several commentators follow this.¹⁴ They interpret it to mean that God’s word (his promise, or his Torah) shows more of God’s greatness than his name (or fame) does. In a similar vein, the medieval Jewish commentator Rashī¹⁵ (1040-1105) thought it meant that God’s forgiveness (word) trumped his justice (name). None of this is satisfactory. Theologically it is impossible to imagine that God’s promises are greater than his character; and Rashi’s opposing of forgiveness and justice is incompatible with the gospel (as in Romans 3:26 for example). Forgiveness and justice belong together (Psalm 85:10).
4. John Goldingay offers another way to treat the problem. In Hebrew ‘above all your name’ is a single unit (construct chain עַל-כָּל-שִׁמְךָ). Goldingay thinks we should break the chain into two parts: ‘above all’ and ‘your name’. He then takes ‘your name’ and ‘your word’ in apposition. God has made both his name and his word great above all.¹⁶ ○

¹ The Authorised Version has ‘for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.’ The Revised Version and the Jewish Publications Society translation have the same.

² This translation is somewhat unnatural in English but that is because the aim is to show the Hebrew. If we were preparing a Bible version, we would seek to smooth out the English.

³ *Kī hīgdaltā Cal-kol-shimekhā ‘imrāthekā.*

⁴ *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Brown Driver & Briggs (abbreviated BDB) 152.

⁵ Van der Merwe, Naude and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd edition, (T. & T. Clark, 2017) 81-82. They call it factitive.

⁶ Van der Merwe, 88-89. *Hiph’il* can also be elative, heightening, or intensifying the force of the verb.

⁷ Most Bible versions say ‘magnified’.

⁸ BDB 57.

⁹ *Kī hīgdaltā...‘imrāthekā.*

¹⁰ *Cal-kol-shimekhā.*

¹¹ BDB 752-759.

¹² The first is the translation by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton (1851) of *oṯti ejmegaluna- ejpi pan to ojnoma to aḡlion sou* but Rahlfs’s edition follows the reading *oṯti ejmegaluna- ejpi pan ojnoma to logion sou*, which I have rendered ‘for you have magnified above every name your word’.

¹³ *Commentary*, p.200.

¹⁴ Dickson, 2.471; Leupold, 939-40; Anderson, 2.902; Hossfelt, 526, 529; Hassell Bullock, 2.496-7. Rashi interprets it similarly, that God forgives rather than judges – his promise to forgive outranks his attribute of justice. Clearly this is false and must be rejected.

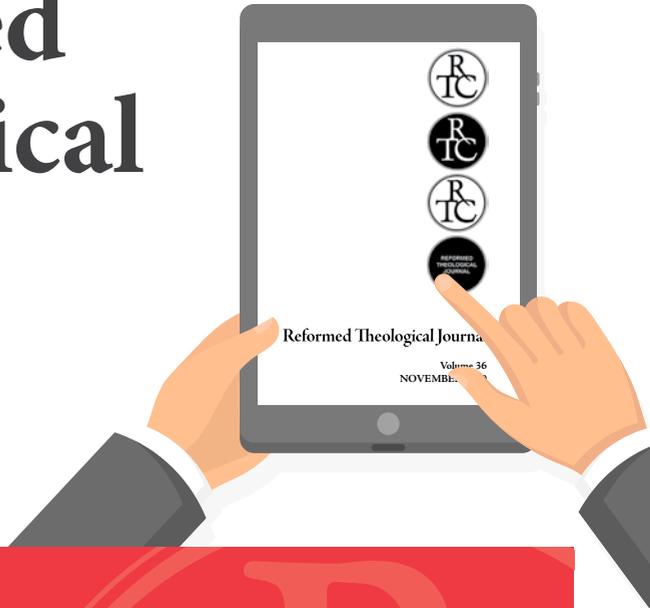
¹⁵ Rabbi Sh’lomo Yitshaqi – *yqjxy hmlv ybr.*

¹⁶ Dahood, 3.277 and Harman 429 take this kind of approach. Calvin does not handle the text in that way but he does come to a similar interpretation. *Commentary*, page 200, footnote 1: the editor has referenced Philip.

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*An Account
of the Life &
Death of Mrs
Elizabeth Bury,*

edited by
Kevin McGrane
(Reformation
Heritage
Books, Grand
Rapids, 2006),
pages 283-284.

Surely, if the blessings of Abraham are come on the Gentiles by Jesus Christ, what God hath spoken to them and our fathers is spoken to us, who, by faith, lay hold on that Covenant; and though it runs not so freely in temporals under the gospel dispensation, we have still the double portion, though the younger children. The elder indeed had large and sure promises of the fertile Canaan, and no doubt their hopes and joys had higher objects when they dwelt in tents, and slept on stones, left their country and relations. But yet, life and immortality was veiled to them in comparison of what is now brought to light by the gospel. I am ashamed to think how Jacob lift up his feet in the way to Padanaram after his vision at Bethel, while I go on sluggishly in my way to heaven after so many signal appearances of God to me and mine.

- Mrs Elizabeth Bury