



# THE RECORD

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF  
THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND  
**SEPTEMBER 2020 • £2.00**



**Editor •** John Macdonald  
The Editor, Free Church Offices,  
15 North Bank Street, The Mound,  
Edinburgh, EH1 2LS  
[editor@freechurch.org](mailto:editor@freechurch.org)

**News Editor •** Dayspring MacLeod  
[dayspring.macleod@icloud.com](mailto:dayspring.macleod@icloud.com)  
07974 261567

**Missions News •** Sarah Johnson  
Free Church Offices, 15 North Bank Street,  
Edinburgh, EH1 2LS  
[sarah@freechurch.org](mailto:sarah@freechurch.org)

**WfM Editor •** Fiona Macaskill  
8 Campsie Drive, Glasgow, G61 3HY  
[rffmacaskill@me.com](mailto:rffmacaskill@me.com)

**Gaelic Editor •** Janet MacPhail  
24 North Bragar, Isle of Lewis, HS2 9DA  
01851 710354

**Seminary News •** Rev. Thomas Davis  
St. Columba's Free Church, Johnston Terrace  
Edinburgh, EH1 2PW  
[thomas@stcolumbas.freechurch.org](mailto:thomas@stcolumbas.freechurch.org)

**Prayer Diary •** Mairi Macdonald  
[ian.macdonald57@btinternet.com](mailto:ian.macdonald57@btinternet.com)

**Design & Layout •** Fin Macrae @DUFI Art  
[www.dufi-art.com](http://www.dufi-art.com)

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[offices@freechurch.org](mailto:offices@freechurch.org)

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# WELCOME TO THE SEPTEMBER RECORD



**T**HIS MONTH'S MAGAZINE INCLUDES SEVERAL PERSPECTIVES ON MISSIONARY WORK, including the second instalment of Pages from Adam's Diary and a feature in anticipation of a new book detailing the history of the Free Church's mission work in Peru. The book itself will be reviewed in a forthcoming edition of *The Record*.

Thanks to Margaret Fraser, Ronnie Christie and Charlie Douglas for allowing us to print some of their photographs from their work in Peru.

Thank you, also, to Daniel Sladek of ETS for taking the time to share insights into resurrection, as it is found in the Psalms. His contribution augments Iain Gill's series on the resurrection of Jesus.

I was grateful to receive correspondence from readers reflecting on some recent articles which have appeared in these pages, particularly on the matters raised through *Public Questions*. I look forward to the conversation continuing – further *Public Questions* features will appear in the coming months. •

If you have any news articles please send them to [dayspring.macleod@icloud.com](mailto:dayspring.macleod@icloud.com).

Yours in Christ

John

**That in all things he might  
have the pre-eminence**  
Colossians 1:18

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# Plentiful Harvest

The decline of the West and  
the march of the Gospel

BY **THE EDITOR**



*This is the lens through which our culture sees missionaries — an image from the 19<sup>th</sup> century of an agent working in coordination with invading Western powers. Inevitably, the reality is not so simple.*

#### WHAT IS A MISSIONARY?

Almost two years have passed since the story of John Allen Chau was reported in the international press. Chau was a twenty-six-year-old American missionary who aimed to bring the Gospel to people living on North Sentinel Island in the Bay of Bengal. The Sentinelese are an uncontacted people who have made it clear they wish to be left alone. Travel to North Sentinel is prohibited by the government of India to protect islanders from disease. However, with the help of fishermen working elsewhere on the Andaman archipelago, Chau made contact with islanders on three occasions between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2018. He was last seen landing on North Sentinel on November 16<sup>th</sup>. He is presumed dead, though his body has not been recovered.

His diary survived, however, and excerpts were widely reported in the aftermath of his disappearance. Chau wrote that the first time he met residents of North Sentinel, he shouted to them from his kayak, 'My name is John. I love you, and Jesus loves you.' In response, the islanders strung their bows, and Chau paddled away. Later that day, he landed on the island

briefly. He reports that the people he met tolerated his presence long enough for him to preach from Genesis. Then a child shot an arrow at him, which lodged in Chau's Bible. Again he retreated. He returned to the island the following day with the help of the fishermen and has not been heard from since.

Chau's flair for wilderness survival (about which he blogged) and his clandestine foray into unknown territory mean his story reads like something from an early Michael Caine film. His actions provoked ire in the media and embarrassment for many Christians.

Some, more dispassionate, observers appreciated his motives while criticising the mistakes in his method. Despite offers of support, he had gone alone. He also seemed to have set aside Jesus' instruction given in Matthew 10:14, '*If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.*'

Whether due to his online profile, his methods, his nationality, or a combination, John Allen Chau's story garnered attention and has become part of a broader discussion about what it means to be a missionary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ►►

*Many Western Christians, evangelical as well as liberal, have grown uncomfortable with the idea of mission work abroad. They don't want to be associated with the stereotypical missionary.*

#### **AGENTS OF EMPIRE?**

Chau had no discernible links to the US government. His actions were not in line with American foreign policy. His support network amounted to a parachurch missions agency. Yet he was frequently referred to as a colonialist by commentators. This is the lens through which our culture sees missionaries — an image from the 19<sup>th</sup> century of an agent working in coordination with invading Western powers.

Inevitably, the reality is not so simple. It is worth acknowledging that some early Protestant missionaries made dreadful mistakes alongside their loving concern for sharing the truth of the gospel. John Eliot (1604-1690), a Puritan missionary, learned to preach in Algonkian and translated and published a complete Algonkian Bible, the first Bible printed in America. But he also thought it important for the indigenous inhabitants of New England to add a 'civilised' social order to acceptance of the gospel. This meant those who were converted abandoned their nomadic culture for settled towns — they were refused baptism by Eliot until they did so. Even so these Christians were not permitted to join Puritan churches, and during King Philip's War between Wampanoags and the English settlers, they were sent to concentration camps by the distrustful colonists.

On the other hand, the Scottish missionary James 'Diego' Thomson (1788-1854) was sent to South America by the British and Foreign Bible Society. In addition to translating and distributing Scripture, he helped to establish public education systems in Argentina, Chile and Peru shortly after these countries gained independence from Spain. The governments of Argentina and Chile both gave him honorary citizenship in recognition of his work.

That Thomson is viewed positively by history is perhaps testament to the fact that he worked outwith the European colonies. For those serving amidst empire, political entanglements have clouded the picture. Prof. Brian Stanley suggests that Henry Williams (1792-1867) of the Church Missionary Society believed he was acting in the interests of the Māori people when, at the request of the Colonial Office, he convinced more than 500 chiefs to sign the Treaty of Waitangi. Williams' translation of the treaty led the chiefs to believe they were accepting British protection of their land rights. Actually, the treaty gave their lands over to the British Crown. Prior to this, Williams

had taken action to prevent Māori land from being purchased by the chartered New Zealand Company. But, subsequently, he bought 11,000 acres to provide income for his own children. All the while, Williams led a successful mission that resulted in several thousand people becoming Christians.

It is difficult to assess a legacy like Williams'. His experiences serve as evidence that Christians cannot separate themselves from politics. To visit people in another culture, another country, and ask them to change is an act with consequences which reach beyond the individual. To be a missionary in any context is to be out on a limb, and so support from the rest of the body of Christ is essential. The powerful political forces of the British Colonial Office and the New Zealand Company held sway over the Society which sent Williams, leaving him isolated at times during his ministry. As a result, it is possible to interpret some of his actions as self-serving; it is equally plausible to conclude he was making the best of difficult circumstances. Ambiguity will remain. But it is not rational to suggest he was simply an agent of the state seeking to oppress Māori people. As God works through each of us despite our continual sin, so God has used missionary efforts tainted by colonial politics.

Nevertheless, our culture has settled on a view of missionaries and their motives. Unfortunately, John Allen Chau's story has played into the stereotype that has been built for the Christian missionary: that of the eccentric, lone adventurer trampling native cultures in pursuit of personal acclaim. All he lacked was the pith helmet. It is understandable that such a conclusion would be reached by people who don't consider conversion to Christianity to be a positive outcome. More surprising is the impact this narrative has had on Christians' view of missionaries.

#### **THE RISE OF THE REVERSE MISSIONARIES**

Many Western Christians, evangelical as well as liberal, have grown uncomfortable with the idea of mission work abroad. They don't want to be associated with the stereotypical missionary. It is easy to over-exaggerate this lack of enthusiasm. The most recent authoritative study (from Gordon Conwell Seminary in 2010) shows the US still sending the most missionaries (though, admittedly, as many as half were Mormons), and seven of the top ten sending countries are from Europe and North America.

***The 21<sup>st</sup> century is notable for the rise of the so-called 'reverse missionary' – gospel workers who come from countries formerly only considered destinations for missionaries.***

Yet, there is growing evidence of Western decline. Recent surveys of Christians from North America and Europe working abroad suggest even many of those in the field don't want to be described as 'missionaries', and are more focussed on social projects than evangelism.

In contrast, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is notable for the rise of the so-called 'reverse missionary' – gospel workers who come from countries formerly only considered destinations for missionaries.

In the Gordon Conwell study, Brazil, South Korea and India also make the top ten sending countries. Of equal significance, the country sending most missionaries per million church members is Palestine. Samoa, Singapore and Tonga also make the top ten by this measure, along with South Korea.

'Majority-world Christians...are not burdened by a Western guilt complex,' Lamin Sanneh, professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale Divinity School, recently told *The Atlantic*, 'so they have embraced the vocation of mission as a concomitant of the gospel they have embraced: The faith they received they must in turn share. Their context is radically different from that of cradle Christians in the West. Christianity came to them while they had other equally plausible religious options. Choice rather than force defined their adoption of Christianity; often discrimination and persecution accompanied and followed that choice.'

The extent of reverse mission has not been quantified. But the testimony of those currently, actively and deliberately involved is significant.

Girma Bishaw came to the UK from Ethiopia in the 1990s as a refugee. He is now a pastor in London. He told *Quartz Africa*, 'Britain brought the gospel to us in the past. Now, by God's providence, we are here when Christianity is very much challenged and the UK churches are really declining. It's not just coincidence we're here.'

Also based in the UK, Rev. Israel Oluwole Olofinjana is a Baptist minister and missionary from Nigeria. He is also the founder of the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World. He writes, 'Reverse mission starts with a deep sense of gratitude from those who have benefited from historical European mission activity.'

'It is this sense of gratitude, combined with the understanding that Europe also has need of missionaries, that has led to missionaries being sent to the UK from across the majority world.'

'The same God that called some European missionaries is the same that is calling missionaries from the Global South. This does not mean that Europe and North America have stopped sending missionaries or should stop sending missionaries into the Global South or the rest of the world, but it only means that the previous monopoly on world mission is no longer tenable.'

'The history of mission was the West going to the rest of the world and engaging in missionary activities. But for now, reverse missionaries are saying that we've moved beyond that and are now mature enough to give rather than just receiving.'

## **INTO THE HARVEST FIELD**

As Christianity's centre of gravity is further established in Africa, South America and Asia, what part does the declining, western church have to play in the Great Commission? What part does the Free Church have to play? It would be easy to conclude that we have had our day in the sun, and it is time to take a back seat. Scottish missionaries have lost the public support and respect they once enjoyed. Meanwhile, the motives of African pastors do not get tied to geopolitics.

But it would be a disservice to our brothers and sisters not to stand beside them. There is no aspect of human endeavour which is free from human folly. But God's Word stands forever, including the portion which commands us to '*make disciples of all nations*' (Matthew 28:19). Missionaries, inevitably, have made mistakes. They have made no more than anyone else, and they will continue to make them. When these mistakes catch the world's attention, fierce criticism will follow.

But, we are blessed to stand in a long tradition of missionary work and theological study. The churches sending missionaries are younger than ours, and have had less time to accumulate mistakes. They are also, very largely, not Reformed. We must not be ashamed to share what we have learned from our errors and our studies; we must not be too proud to learn something new from our friends. We can be iron sharpening iron (Proverbs 27:17), in both a theological and methodological sense. We can see around us that there are too few workers for the harvest. This is no time to step back from the harvest field. ●



# WORLD NEWS

AMERICAS AFRICA EUROPE ASIA AUSTRALASIA

## VIEWS ON DOCTRINE ARE SHIFTING (AMERICAS)



A new survey from the American Worldview Inventory at Arizona Christian University has found that the *solae* of the Reformation are increasingly being set aside in the US. Researchers found that 56% of those who describe themselves as evangelicals agree that having some kind of faith is more important than the particular faith a person ascribes to. In addition, 41% of evangelicals believe a person can attain salvation by being someone who is 'generally good or does enough good things for others'. The research surveyed 2,000 adults in January 2020. ●

## SHIBBOLETH (EUROPE)



Between 20,000 and 40,000 people are seeking asylum in Germany on the grounds of religious persecution after converting to Christianity, according to Open Doors. While anti-refugee sentiment has been growing and sceptics see the claim of conversion as an easy route into the country, the German Evangelical Alliance has called for reform of the process for determining whether a person's faith is genuine. Reinhardt Schink, General Secretary of the Alliance, said, 'People who often are not believers think they can judge the beliefs of someone else within half an hour. It's absolutely ridiculous.' The Evangelical Alliance is calling for standardisation of procedures and more cooperation between the government and religious leaders. ●

## BIBLE DISTRIBUTION INCREASES (AMERICAS)



New figures released by the United Bible Societies show that just under 40 million Bibles were distributed by Societies around the world last year. Over the last five years, 1.8 billion Bibles, New Testaments and Scripture portions have been provided. A quarter of the Bibles distributed in 2019 were downloaded. The United Bible Societies digital library now holds 2,500 versions of the Bible in 1,622 languages.

By far the largest share of the Scripture disseminated by Bible Societies has gone to Central and Latin America. Since 2015, 68 million Bibles, 5 million



New Testaments and 1.4 billion portions of Scripture have been shared in the region. The Bible Society of Brazil provides more Scripture than any other in the world. The printing press at Bauren, São Paulo produced 23,000 copies of the Bible per day during 2019. ●



## DEATH PENALTY FOR APOSTASY ENDS (AFRICA)



April 2019 brought hope for Sudanese Christians as Omar al-Bashir, after 30 years as president, was overthrown in a military coup. It appears that some of the promise is being realised. Sudan is currently governed by a joint military-civilian Sovereign Council who are due to be in power for a two-year transitional period. The ruling Council recently announced sweeping reforms, including the removal of the death penalty for those who convert from Islam. 'We are keen to demolish any kind of discrimination that was enacted by the old regime,' said Justice Minister Nasredeen Abdulbari, 'and to move toward equality of citizenship and a democratic transformation.'

'I am very pleased, God has answered our prayers,' Noha Kassa, a deaconess at Khartoum's Bahry Presbyterian Church, told *Christianity Today*. 'The government is in a critical period. But for our church, I am excited for our ministry amid such changes.'



## CCP CONTINUES TO PRESSURE CHRISTIANS (ASIA)



Officials from the Chinese Communist Party have replaced a cross with an image of Xi Jinping in the home of an 84-year-old man, and instructed him to pray to Xi instead of God, according to *Bitter Winter*. 'Xi Jinping is a man, not God,' he said. 'I feel saddened for the cross being taken down, but there is nothing I can do.' Further reports have emerged in recent months of people being told to replace crosses with images of Party officials or risk having their welfare benefits removed. *Bitter Winter* also reports that state-sponsored churches which had to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic are only being permitted to reopen if they make donations to the Chinese Communist Party. This is not a new experience for church members. A deacon from a Three-Self church (China's state-sanctioned Protestant denomination) in Henan province said, 'Government departments ask us for charitable donations every year. If we refuse, our church will be closed.'

## PASTOR AND THEOLOGIAN ELECTED PRESIDENT (AFRICA)



Following a year of protests, Malawi's election in June returned a new president. Lazarus Chakwera was elected with 58% of the vote, and has pledged to tackle corruption and seek economic progress which allows everyone to prosper. Prior to entering politics, Chakwera taught at the Pan African Theological Seminary and served as chair of the Assemblies of God School of Theology. Assemblies of God is a Pentecostal church, and one of the country's biggest denominations.



Describing his change of career in 2013, Chakwera said, 'God spoke to my heart.... He said, "I am not pulling you out of ministry. Instead I am extending your ministry. I want you to get into politics."' In July, the new president called for three days of prayer for the healing of people affected by COVID-19, and the protection of frontline health workers.



## INDUCTION IN KILMALLIE AND ARDNAMURCHAN

BY **CRAIG MURRAY**

**A**FTER A VACANCY OF JUST OVER THREE YEARS, TUESDAY, 28<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020 WAS AN EVENING OF JOY AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CONGREGATION OF KILMALLIE & ARDNAMURCHAN, and the wider Presbytery of Inverness, Lochaber and Ross, with the Induction of Rev. Dr Euan Dodds to be our minister. For the Presbytery, and indeed the wider church, it was a double celebration of God's faithfulness as we were able to share the occasion with the ordination and induction of Rev. Peter Turnbull to Burghead Free Church. The online service was taken by Rev. Calum Iain MacLeod, Ferintosh Free Church. It was special to be able to share the occasion with Burghead, and one psalm was led by the folks of Burghead, whilst the other was led by the folks of Kilmallie & Ardnamurchan.



(Special thanks also go to Stephen Allison, Kiltarlity Free Church, for keeping the technology running.)

Euan was welcomed as a minister of the Free Church at the General Assembly in May 2020. He has studied at Cornhill Scotland and Highland Theological College and has also served in ministry in St George's-Tron, Glasgow and Holyrood Evangelical Church, Edinburgh. He brings a warmth and wisdom with him, which is already being seen in his preaching and pastoral concern for our congregations. We warmly welcome him, along with his wife Helen and their daughters Anna, Caitlin and Eilidh, into the fellowship.

Whilst current circumstances precluded the opportunity for a gathering of people to mark the occasion at a physical induction service, and thereafter the oft-lauded spread provided by a gender-neutral cross-section of the congregation, the online format of the meeting allowed for a larger number of people to be part of the proceedings than might otherwise be.

As we thank God for the provision of a new minister and new chapter in the congregation's ministry to the community, we also thank him for his faithfulness in the provision of Rev. Dr John Ross as our Interim Moderator and (along with his wife, Elizabeth) so much more over these three years.

Both men, we trust, have been men provided 'for such a time as this'. We as a congregation give God the glory, honour and praise. ●

## BURGHEAD INDUCTION

**A** LONGSIDE KILMALLIE AND ARDNAMURCHAN'S INDUCTION, PETER TURNBULL WAS ORDAINED AND INDUCTED INTO THE MINISTRY OF BURGHEAD FREE CHURCH.

Peter has been faithfully leading the Burghead congregation as a church worker since 2015, having moved from Sheffield with his wife Morag, originally from Elgin, and their three young children.

Through regular visits to friends and family in the area, Peter eventually sensed a call to swap his music ministry in Christ Church Fulwood for preaching in Morayshire. Peter has spent the past seven years in study, first at Highland Theological



College and then for the past five years at ETS while working full-time for the Burghead congregation.

Not one to shy away from a challenge, Peter led a successful refurbishment of the church building over the past five years and welcomed two new additions to his family.

Relieved to have finally finished his studies, Peter said, 'As a family, we have been delighted to find a

home within the Free Church over the last five years.

'We now look forward to building on the growth which the Lord has given here in Burghead in recent times.

'A big thank-you to those, both at ETS and in the presbytery, who have helped and supported us greatly through this somewhat unorthodox route to pastoral ministry.' ●

# BIG FREE ONLINE RALLY – 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

BY KIRSTEN MACDONALD

**T**HE BIG FREE RALLY IS AN EVENT TO WHICH HUNDREDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY USUALLY TRAVEL EVERY SEPTEMBER. It's a brilliant day full of friends, laughter, singing, Bible talks, games and activities, and, while it provides an opportunity to catch up with friends made at camp the previous summer, it's open to all young people in P5 upwards, regardless of whether or not they were at camp.

This summer, although none of our young people were able to attend Free Church Youth Camps, they are all invited to join us on 26<sup>th</sup> September for the Big Free Online Rally! While we're disappointed not to be meeting as usual, we hope that plenty of young people will be able to join in the fun online and to hear more about God's love and how that impacts the way we live our lives.

Spread the word, save the date, and keep an eye on our website for more details: [freechurchofscotland.org/big-free-rally](https://freechurchofscotland.org/big-free-rally) ●

# FREE CHURCH RESPONDS TO HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER BILL

**T**HE JUSTICE COMMITTEE OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT HAS INVITED THE PUBLIC TO SUBMIT THEIR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSED HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL.

According to the Scottish Government, this Bill provides for the modernising, consolidating and extending of hate crime legislation in Scotland. In extending hate crime legislation in Scotland the Bill seeks to introduce two new offences – one of stirring up hatred and one of possessing inflammatory material.

The Bill has raised widespread concerns about its implications for free speech. The Board of Trustees has submitted a response to the Government's consultation on behalf of the Free Church which addresses some of these concerns. The Trustees have written that:

'The Free Church of Scotland is committed to following the teaching of Jesus which includes condemning genuine hatred and promoting the good of all people. In Matthew 5:43-44 Jesus tells his disciples, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'" However, we do not consider that the

new offences are the way to secure this end and we are very concerned about the Bill's significant detrimental effect on free speech within our society.

'We are concerned that the [offence of stirring up hatred] does not require people to intend to commit the offence – all that is needed is that it was likely that hatred would be stirred up.

'Given the offence can be committed unwittingly or unintentionally we are deeply concerned for Freedom of Speech in our society. The obvious example in the context of a church is the potential undermining of the right of ministers to preach the whole range of Biblical views on ethics which are part of mainstream Christianity.

'We also note the additional offences of possessing inflammatory material combined with the right for a warrant to be issued to remove inflammatory material and ultimately destroy it. This is deeply worrying to us as it could lead to certain books and publications essentially being banned.

'As Christians we are deeply concerned that the Bible could fall foul of this offence.

'We accept that our beliefs are not shared, nor



necessarily understood by everyone. We welcome challenge, debate and open discussion of our beliefs both from within our Christian community and the wider community. The effect of the Bill is that, notwithstanding the fact that we do not undertake preaching and discussion of our beliefs with an intent to stir up hatred (whatever that means), normal activity becomes criminalised and debate of any sort is closed down by individuals who simply disagree with our views. Their mere disagreement is construed as a "feeling" that we are "stirring up hatred". We believe that this encourages the culture that is normally promoted

in totalitarian rather than democratic states.

'We also worry that in general such an offence will have a chilling effect on free speech, making all of our members concerned about speaking up in relation to their faith for fear of committing the offence of "stirring up hatred". We would question whether this offence is compatible with the European Convention of Human Rights, in particular in relation to our rights of freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of speech.'

The full response from the Trustees can be found on the Free Church website. ●

## NEW OFFICE BEARERS AT FERINTOSH AND RESOLIS

**F**ERINTOSH AND RESOLIS FREE CHURCH ARE BLESSED BY THE ADDITION OF SIX NEW ELDERS AND FOUR NEW DEACONS TO THEIR LEADERSHIP TEAM. This

is a significant milestone in our journey to equip the congregation for mission in the North Black Isle and beyond. The photo shows from left to right: Ian Brown (deacon), Iain Stewart (deacon), Alan C Fraser (elder), Blair Gardner (elder), Tom Rea (elder), David Forbes (elder), Calum Iain Macleod (minister), John Maclean-Yuille (deacon), Fraser Stewart (deacon), Ian Matheson (elder), Calum Macaulay (elder). ●



## STIRLING FREE CHURCH PERSISTING IN PRAYER

**W**HILE IN LOCKDOWN MANY CONGREGATIONS HAVE LEANED ON PRAYER MORE THAN EVER.

Stirling Free Church made the decision early on to commit to 40 days of prayer and have seen God not only answer those prayers but use the resources of the church to bless others around their community, nation and across the world.

As churches began to close their doors in the middle of March, the Stirling congregation introduced a daily prayer meeting online which was open to all. Serving as a way to connect with one another while socially distanced, it also helped to focus their minds on seeking God through prayer.

These informal daily prayer meetings eventually led to a commitment of 40 days of prayer for the needs of their city and more widely across the world.

Teaming up with former members of the church

who had moved abroad, they worked together to support them – both prayerfully and financially.

Collectively as a group of people they managed to raise many thousands of pounds to support and fund projects in Kenya, India and Peru in aid of those who are most vulnerable during this season of crisis. Funds were also raised to support a young family in Scotland who were recently bereaved.

Having reached their 40-day mark, they weren't settled to leave it there but decided to press on and have now completed another 40 days.

Rev. Iain MacAskill said, 'We will never forget these eighty days of prayer. The presence of God was tangible as we prayed for people and places throughout the world. We witnessed many prayers being answered in the most miraculous ways.' ●

# SEPT/OCT 2020 PRAYER DIARY

The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. **Psalm 103:19**

**Mon 7<sup>th</sup>** As we long for an end to the coronavirus crisis, pray that all those who have been affected physically by the virus will recover fully. Continue to pray for those who have been bereaved.

**Tues 8<sup>th</sup>** September is Childhood Cancer Awareness month. Pray for those engaged in research, developing treatments and caring for patients and for any you know who are suffering.

**Wed 9<sup>th</sup>** In countries where Christians are under pressure, access to God's Word on a smartphone can be safer than keeping a physical copy of a Bible hidden. Many Christians in places like Iran, Yemen and Pakistan have downloaded full Bibles and need our prayers.

**Thurs 10<sup>th</sup>** Today has been designated as Suicide Prevention Day. Pray for relief from the pain of isolation, fear, depression and stigma around mental illness, which affects so many, sometimes leading to suicide.

**Fri 11<sup>th</sup>** 20 schemes ask us to pray for the Millar family in Maryhill, Glasgow. Tommy is the pastor of Maryhill Evangelical Church and his wife Lorne is the women's worker serving this scheme.

**Sat 12<sup>th</sup>** Ask God to have mercy and to protect workers and organisations that provide opportunities for Christians to speak up on behalf of those who are oppressed and destitute.

**Sun 13<sup>th</sup>** Remember the congregation of Fort William and Kilmonivaig and Rev. Gordon Martin, their interim moderator, as they look to the future. Pray that they will know God's guidance as they witness in their community.

**Mon 14<sup>th</sup>** Continue to remember our schoolchildren and young adults as they face the future with some trepidation after months of lockdown.

**Tues 15<sup>th</sup>** Pray for wisdom for our senior civil servants as they decide how best to tackle the spread of coronavirus while also protecting jobs and the economy.

**Wed 16<sup>th</sup>** Give thanks that Scotland's Biggest Holiday Club, online virtual SU Holidays and the Magnitude

youth festival all went ahead, with hundreds of children and young people registering to take part. Pray for blessing to follow.

**Thurs 17<sup>th</sup>** The Board of Trustees are scheduled to meet in Inverness today. Pray for wisdom, vision and ability to move on and learn from all the changes that have been forced on us this year.

**Fri 18<sup>th</sup>** The Board would value your prayers that a suitable person would be found to fill the CEO vacancy, and that the period of transition would be smooth.

**Sat 19<sup>th</sup>** The WfM ladies conference was due to happen today. Pray for the work of WfM as the next project is launched online.

**Sun 20<sup>th</sup>** Bring the small congregation of Assynt and Eddrachillis and their interim moderator, Rev. Ian Allan, to the Lord today.

**Mon 21<sup>st</sup>** On the International Day of Peace, let us pray for unity in our churches as we share the love of God in our communities.

**Tues 22<sup>nd</sup>** Pray for all our young folk, especially those who have left school and are heading for further studies in a very different academic climate from what they anticipated and have looked forward to.

**Wed 23<sup>rd</sup>** Pray for all those who find themselves out of work, many facing redundancy and others who have possibly never begun in the workforce.

**Thurs 24<sup>th</sup>** As we wash our hands throughout the day, let us pray for Tearfund partners who are setting up hand-washing stations, distributing soap and raising awareness about virus prevention.

**Fri 25<sup>th</sup>** Pray for the army of unpaid carers who look after family and friends at home – many also juggling education and jobs, as well as their own health and other issues.

**Sat 26<sup>th</sup>** Pray for Glasgow City Free Church as they look for new premises, as the St Vincent St building is becoming increasingly unfit for purpose.

**Sun 27<sup>th</sup>** Give thanks for the witness of the Brora congregation, and pray for them and their interim

moderator, Rev. Roddy Macrae, as they look to the Lord for their future ministry.

**Mon 28<sup>th</sup>** Pray for Mission International partner Tun Lin, who has been involved in translating material written in English into Burmese for some years now in order to provide necessary teaching and training materials for the Burmese church.

**Tues 29<sup>th</sup>** Continue to remember the Colegio San Andrés school community and Peru in your prayers as they struggle with the effects of coronavirus.

**Wed 30<sup>th</sup>** Members of the Timothy Project, which develops Turkish-language Bible study materials, are producing a series of videos of the studies. Pray for helpful discussions, and also that these videos will be useful to those who watch them on the website and the Project's new Youtube channel.

**Thurs 1<sup>st</sup>** Pray that more parents who discover that their unborn child may have a disability will continue with the pregnancy, despite the opposition and challenges they may face and pressure to abort.

**Fri 2<sup>nd</sup>** Ask the Lord to strengthen all MPs and the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group, who give support in opposing attempts to further liberalise abortion in the UK.

**Sat 3<sup>rd</sup>** Pray for residents and staff in care homes greatly affected by the coronavirus, especially with families unable to visit, as they face so many ongoing practical and emotional challenges.

**Sun 4<sup>th</sup>** The scattered congregation of Bonar Bridge and Lairg would value your prayers as they and their interim moderator, Rev A. MacAulay, look to develop the work in that area.

**Sun 5<sup>th</sup>** Pray that God would grant wisdom to Chancellor Rishi Sunak and the Treasury as they address growing problems of poverty worsened by Covid-19.

**Sun 6<sup>th</sup>** Pray that those who listened to services for the first time during lockdown would continue to engage with the gospel message and become Christians.

**Prayer requests to:** [ian.macdonald57@btinternet.com](mailto:ian.macdonald57@btinternet.com).

Please take time to send requests for your congregation or ministry to be included in forthcoming Records. These prayer notes are prepared 5 weeks in advance of publication.

## MARKING ESSAYS AND EXAMS – HOW DOES IT WORK?

**THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS HAVE SEEN QUITE A BIT OF CONTROVERSY ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL GRADES.**

With no exams because of lockdown, schoolteachers were asked to send in their estimates. But it seems that initially the government thought they were too generous, so lots of grades were lowered. Not surprisingly, this didn't go down well at all and, after several days of political controversy, the decision was reversed. In the aftermath of all that, we thought it might be good to think a little bit about how grades are worked out at ETS. Students have to submit lots of assignments and lecturers have to do a lot of marking. But how does it all work?

Almost all the assignments at ETS involve writing essays. That includes exams, which mostly involve giving an essay-length answer to three or four questions. The only exception is in regard to languages. Language assignments are probably the easiest to mark, because translating words from Greek or Hebrew is usually just a case of marking a tick or a cross if the student has got it correct or not. It's marking essays that's a bit more complicated. How you do work out whether an essay is good, bad, medium, amazing or awful?!

Unlike a language test (or indeed a maths one), essays are not as simple as just a tick or a cross. Instead, marks are distributed across a scale. The basic format for this is to use letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, G or H. The first four (A-D) are a pass, and anything from E onwards is a fail. Thankfully, the appearance of these letters is very rare. All these letters are subdivided further, so the very best you can get is an A1. Then there's A2, A3, A4 and A5. After that it just goes up to three: B1, B2, B3, C1, etc. etc.

But if an essay is a pass, how do you decide if it's an A, B, C or D? Well, the key thing to try not to make it too complicated. At very simple level, there's four different standards: D is 'satisfactory', C is 'good', B is 'very good' and A is 'excellent'. The easiest ones to identify are Ds and As. A 'D' will have a lot of things wrong with it, and an 'A' will

have very little wrong with it. The tough ones are the Bs and Cs, because they will have a mixture of good bits and bad bits. If there's more good than bad, then it's probably a B, if more bad than good, then probably a C.

There are several specific things to look for when marking. The number one thing (by a mile) is whether or not the essay actually answers the question. This might seem a silly thing to say, but probably the easiest mistake for a student to make is to answer a question that they haven't been asked. So for example, let's say the essay question was 'To what extent were Calvin, Luther and Zwingli interconnected?' If you just provide lots of information about what the three great Reformers did, then you're not actually answering the question. The key word in the question is 'interconnected', and a good essay has to focus on that.

Beyond this, there are other important things to look for. The first is content. An essay needs to have a good level of information which is both relevant and accurate. Depending on the topic, that content will come from the Bible, commentaries, books and articles, and the more wide-ranging the research, the better the grade will be. Secondly, there needs to be good structure. Many essays which have good content are spoiled because the information is just splodged onto the pages without much order and coherence. Here, the key thing to remember is that the simpler the structure is, the better. An essay needs to have an introduction, a chunk in the middle with clearly marked sections, and a conclusion. Throughout it all, you are aiming to have a clear argument that flows through the whole thing. Third, there's style and presentation. A good essay will have nice clear language. Short sentences are always better. Much better. And everything should be neat and tidy, with all references to other books clearly marked. There's always the odd mistake, and it's very easy miss out a word. That kind of thing doesn't usually



get penalised, unless it is really bad! And lastly, an essay should show some kind of critical analysis. Now, that doesn't mean having a go at people! It means looking at different opinions and trying to evaluate whether that opinion is justified. It is so easy to quote someone and think that because they've written a book, they must be correct. But the best essays will always try to show whether an argument is strong or weak, whether the evidence is in their favour or otherwise, and whether what the person says actually makes sense. In other words, essays are not aiming to get students to repeat a pile of information that they've found in books or articles. Essays are aiming to get the students to *think* about all that they've found.

So an essay needs to answer the question. And in doing so it should have relevant content, a coherent structure, clear presentation and appropriate critical analysis. If all four are there, you'll get an

A. If three, it's probably a B. Two is likely to mean a C. And only one (or none!) is going to mean a D.

Finally, in order to make sure grades are accurate, every single essay and exam is marked by two different people. Each one marks independently without knowing the grade that the other has given and then they come together to agree a final grade. If there's a difference of opinion, then they will look again at the essays and together work out the appropriate grade.

So that's how it works. At the end of it all, getting your marks back can be a huge encouragement, or sometimes a disappointment. The key thing to remember is that grades are not about being the best, they are about doing your best. And whatever grade you get, the aim is that you will learn for the future and that it will help you to research more thoroughly, to think more rigorously and to communicate more effectively. ●

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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**Re: *Public Questions*, May 2020**

Dear Sir,

As we appear to be revisiting the debate focussed on Genesis 1, I thought I might share a set of propositions in order to make the problem plainer. I hold them all to be true. I realise that better minds than mine will read your publication and be able to formulate better propositions but to them I can only apologise.

The Bible is Truth. Historical and scientific information can be true. Historical and scientific truth cannot and never will conflict with the Bible. All apparent conflict between historical and scientific truth and the Bible takes place in the human mind and not in reality. All apparent conflict only takes place because the human mind does not have sufficient knowledge of the necessary concepts. Those who propose a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 do not necessarily have a purer concept of the work of Creation. The Hebrew word for day has a wider meaning than the English word used to translate it. The hypothesis that humankind evolved is false.

This controversy underlines the truth of Solomon's words, 'He that increases knowledge increases sorrow' and 'Fear God and keep his commandments, that is the whole end of the matter'!

Yours sincerely,

Donald M. Kesson

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**Re: *Letters*, June/July 2020**

Dear Editor,

Further to what I wrote in the June/July copy of the magazine, I'd like to add the following.

When Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17, He said, '*Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth*'. For Him all God's word to man, the Old Testament Scriptures in their entirety, was God's truth. The first chapters of Genesis were accepted from the beginning as God's revelation of how He had created everything perfectly

in six literal 24-hour days and ceased from creating on the seventh. It was to that narrative as we still have it in the Bible that He referred those asking Him about divorce and of those same OT Scriptures which we have in our English translations, He said, 'Scripture cannot be broken'.

When Jesus was about to return to the glory He had with the Father before the world began, He told His disciples that He would not leave them orphans but would send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth by taking what belonged to Him and making it known to them (John 16:7,12-15). This sets the New Testament Scriptures on a par with those of the Old Testament. And so, Paul could write in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, '*Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit*'.

And Peter, in 2 Peter 3:15-16, could refer to Paul's writings as God given and Scripture.

Jesus also said on another occasion, '*The Sabbath was made for man; not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath*' (Mark 2:27-28). As Creator of all things in six days, He had then ceased from creating on the seventh day, blessed that day and set it apart as a day dedicated to Himself for the good of man, worship and rest, in the weekly cycle. That is brought out in the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11. That was to be a day set apart for God in man's weekly cycle. In Exodus 20:11, God makes reference to this giving in Genesis 2:2-3, as the reason for keeping the Sabbath.

The creation of the first man, Adam, on the sixth day from the dust of the earth, was the work of the eternal Son, who became man later in time, Jesus the Messiah. As recorded in Genesis 2, He then created Eve to be the complementary companion for him from Adam's own rib. From this one, as Paul said at Athens, Acts 17:26, '*He made every nation of mankind*'. Paul was going by what God has revealed in the first two chapters of Genesis which he took as being historical fact.

When Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:16, wrote '*All Scripture is God-breathed...*' he meant Scripture as he had it as given by God which is what our translations are made from. Peter, in 2 Peter 1:20-21, wrote, '*Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*'. How is it possible then that what was given by God and, as Jesus said, 'Scripture cannot be broken', has, as some declare, now to be interpreted in terms of an understanding of origins which is based on a modification of a philosophy of science which has as its raison d'être eliminating God from the picture? Why would God give His word, confirmed by Jesus and the Holy Spirit for centuries/millennia only to have it need modification by a human philosophy of origins promulgated in the 19th century?

For those who wish to know if Creationists can demonstrate that experimental science does support the Biblical facts, there is ample material to be had through creation.com. There are, among this, two DVDs on the cutting edge of genetics which deal with the issue raised in Anne Sutherland's letter — *Mitochondrial Eve and The 3 "Daughters" of Noah and DNA Battles — were Adam and Eve historical?*

Lastly, with regard to the truth that 'all truth is God's truth', Francis Schaeffer wrote, with reference to the statement that 'the Bible is not a scientific textbook', that this is true is in the sense that science is not its central theme, and we do not have a comprehensive statement about the cosmos, but that the Bible tells us much about the cosmos in reference to the central theme. He goes on to say that in Genesis 1 we have the statement of the creation of the cosmos and when we come to Genesis 2 the central focus is placed upon man which is the central theme, and we can understand man's setting. He then goes on to say that many people today use the statement (The Bible is not a scientific book) to say that the Bible does not affirm anything about that in which science has an interest. When the statement is used to mean this, he says, it must be totally rejected. The Bible does give affirmations about that in which science has an interest. He also says that there is a tendency among many today to consider that the scientific truth will always be more true and that we must reject this" (Francis Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict*).

Sincerely,

Andrew Fraser

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We would love to hear from you...please write the editor at:

The Record, Free Church Offices  
15 North Bank Street, The Mound  
Edinburgh, EH1 2LS  
or e-mail [editor@freechurch.org](mailto:editor@freechurch.org)

**Re: *Public Questions*, August 2020**

Dear Editor,

August's issue raised the subject of re-establishing Christian schools and I write in the hope that the subject will not just be forgotten. There is a great need to take it seriously.

Although the law recognises the right of parents to have their children educated in line with the wishes of their parents, some of the things taught in state schools (especially in relation to marriage, sex and gender) run counter to Christian teaching and we would do well to remember the chilling words of the UK's Supreme Court when it struck down the Scottish government's silly Named Person scheme: 'The first thing that a totalitarian regime tries to do is to get at the children, to distance them from the subversive, varied influences of their families, and indoctrinate them in their rulers' view of the world' [paragraph 73 of ruling].

Nearly 35 years ago when I was a minister of the Church of Scotland I argued in its General Assembly for a study on the feasibility of establishing Christian schools. There was little support and the matter was remitted to a committee (which has been defined as a group of people who individually cannot do anything but who can get together and agree that nothing can be done). Since then the need seems to have become more and more marked.

Of course many teachers, including Christians, are doing a wonderful job, but the ethos of education has changed so much since 1843 when the church voluntarily handed over education to the state in the assumption that it would be biblical values that would be taught. Today, the idea (in one of your articles) that Christian parents should simply send their children off to school and trust that all will be well seems rather naïve.

It really does look as if we need to start again. The establishment of Christian schools would take a great deal of effort (and expense) and there would be much opposition, but the church needs to get going on this matter before it is too late – before another generation is indoctrinated in the ways of secularism and before there may be official efforts to cut off all avenues of escape.

Much depends on teachers who are Christians; are there teachers who would be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices for the sake of nurturing the young in the ways of Christ, or are we to resign ourselves to a passive acceptance of what 'the state' prescribes?

Yours sincerely,

David J Randall

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**Re: *No Justice, No Peace*, August 2020**

Sirs,

As an exercise in spiritual vacuity it would be difficult to meet the three page opening article in the August 2020 edition of the *Free Church Record*.

The opening gambit is that 'Racism is the besetting sin of western culture'.

There may be many transgressions which could compete for this accolade. This one was new to me.

So I look for some biblical justification for such an assertion.

Quotations from Exodus and Romans which have nothing to do with the subject.

A reference to Revelation 7:9 which makes reference to the kingdom of heaven and has nothing to do with racism (whatever exactly that word means).

The Galatians verse about the body of Christ knowing no distinction between Jew and Greek, male and female. That was it!

Throw in a quote from Martin Luther King and a front cover appearing to show some homage towards a 1960s terrorist organisation and we really are in trouble.

Any chance of a magazine which focuses on Scripture and the Westminster Confession of Faith rather than being a vehicle for the propagation of editorial political leanings?

Donald MacKay

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# UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

**DAYSPRING MACLEOD** introduces her new political platform

**F**ORGIVE ME FOR MUSING YET AGAIN ON MY HOMELAND **THIS MONTH.** I've become a real news junkie during lockdown, and very little of it is good. If I perform here something of an amateur dissection of my nation, I hope it will still be useful to reflect on Scotland and the UK as well. America's situation is in some respects unique, but her problems are not.

When you are young, you love your country like you love your parents — unquestioningly. It doesn't matter how many other kids say their dad is the best; you *know* yours is! Your parents provide your boundaries, your expectations, your morals, your history.

I come from a land of heroes, where the names of Christopher Columbus, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt are written on marble monuments in the capital and high schools across the nation. I come from a land where a huge

*Sin is a bipartisan issue. Sin is the thing we all have in common, yet always divides rather than unites us.*

statue lifts the lamp of liberty over a great harbour, bearing a poem welcoming 'huddled masses yearning to breathe free'. I come from the most well-meaning, down-to-earth, friendly, generous, innovative people in the world (though I might be biased).

And yet. Watching the news from across an ocean these days feels like both a horrific vantage point and a safe distance. The race riots have showed up the grave faults of our heroes; we are turning away or detaining in subhuman conditions even the most desperate immigrants; our vices of food and entertainment are making us physically and spiritually unhealthy. Worst of all, the nation is being torn apart by conspiracy theories from the right and thought control from the left; any attempt at compromise is interpreted as weakness. There's economic unrest everywhere and firearms being sold at Walmart. With

## ***The Old Testament prophets would not have been elected to public office.***

election day looming, I smell a storm in the air.

I miss my old sense of absolute patriotism. It's an easy love, loving your country that way. I miss thinking America was really encapsulated by the Southern restaurant chain Cracker Barrel: country music, chicken-fried steak and rocking chairs on the porch. And yet, watching the riots and the baffling presidential press conferences and the mounting pandemic death tolls, cataloguing the hypocrisies of the past and present and speculating on the dangers of the future, a strange phenomenon took place: I found I loved America more than ever. I didn't know any longer if it was objectively the best country in the world — but it was still mine.

When your parent gets a cancer diagnosis, you don't love them less for having a life-threatening illness. You love them more. You hold them tighter. You pray for their healing. America has had cancer growing in her, slow and invisible, for years. There are tumours of racism, yes, but also of greed, of depravity, of pride, of indulgence, of ignorance, of 'rights' for individuals overshadowing any love for others. America is being torn apart by politics, but sin is a bipartisan issue. Sin is the thing we all have in common, yet always divides rather than unites us.

Is my country's illness curable? There is only one way out of sin, and that is death. Death to self through life in Jesus, or death indeed: physical, spiritual and eternal. America prides itself on its Christianity, but it's very often a simplistic, half-seeing religiosity; an 'asking Jesus into your heart' without much knowledge of who he is, or real repentance. To cure its cancer, America needs humility above all things. Humility to acknowledge past wrongs and take responsibility for them; humility to look past our 'rights' to see where our practice of them could be harming others; humility to see where the other political party or even other nations have lessons we could learn; humility to listen; humility to see that all heroes are fallen men and women, and can have their great deeds recognised while still mourning their failures.

Both the situation and the cure of America are found in the letter to Laodicea in Revelation 3:17-19. You say, *'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'* But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

Recently I joked on Facebook that I should run for public office — it only received two likes, so I think I'll hold off! But imagine that someone actually ran on a platform of repentance. I don't think they would get very far. Religious parties are usually in the business of telling their people that God is already on their side (and against their enemies). The Old Testament prophets, notoriously ill-received, would not have been elected to public office.

There's a line in the Broadway musical *Hamilton* that keeps occurring to me these days: 'America, you great unfinished symphony.' Unfinished it is. I don't know if America will have another civil war, if it will continue as the world's greatest cultural exporter, if we will have another golden age. I don't know if the country as we know it will survive the next election. But I do know that if it wants to become in earnest all the things it believes it is — welcoming, winsome, open, kind, good-hearted, faith-filled — then repentance and humility must come and bring healing to the land.

I'm Dayspring MacLeod, and I approve this message. God bless the United States of America. ●





BY **REV. DANIEL SLADEK**

# RESURRECTION IN THE PSALMS



***Either you can place your trust in the Lord, in which case he will be your shepherd, or you can place your trust in wealth, in which case death will be your shepherd.***

**W**HAT DO THE PSALMS TEACH ABOUT THE RESURRECTION? As we consider that question, I want to consider two general principles, followed by a specific example.

### **CHRISTIAN HOPE**

The first principle is that the Christian hope is the resurrection. That may seem too obvious in a series on the resurrection! It is worth stressing, however, not only because we often forget it, but also because it may explain a strange feature of the Psalter. Namely, there are some psalms that seem to question the hope of any life after death. For example, in Psalm 88:10-12 the psalmist asks:

*Do you work wonders for the dead?  
Do the departed rise up to praise you?  
Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,  
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?  
Are your wonders known in the darkness,  
or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? (ESV)*

Psalms 6:5, 30:9 and 115:17-18 may appear equally pessimistic.

It is at this point that we have to remember that the final state which Christians await is not an ethereal realm of disembodied spirits. Our hope is nothing less than the resurrection of the body, in which we will inherit a new creation where we will dwell in the presence of our God. Anything short of that is provisional, even strange. While it is an important truth that at death our souls immediately pass into glory, this nevertheless results in a situation – the separation of body and soul – which is so strange from a biblical point of view that Paul can describe it as nakedness (2 Corinthians 5:3)! Perhaps the apostle's thinking was influenced by the Bible's emphasis, evident from the first chapters of Genesis, that being truly human means to exist, soul and body, in the creation which God made. For the soul to be disembodied and to exist outside of this creation is not normal.

It may be that those apparently pessimistic psalms struggle with death not because they intend to deny either life after death or the resurrection, but precisely because the death of our physical bodies seemed so anomalous to the authors, so contrary to God's intention for his people. These psalms are the cries of people convinced that true life, even eternal life, must ultimately be an embodied experience of God in the world he has created. In the language of Psalm 88, God's love is not declared in the grave. It is inconceivable that he should leave his people there. The implication is that his love will be declared by delivering them from the grave.

### **PROGRESSIVE REVELATION**

A second important principle is the common saying that what was latent in the Old Testament becomes patent in the New. To put it another way, the New Testament is sometimes clearer on topics which the Old Testament only hints at. This means that in addition to looking for explicit statements that assert the resurrection, we ►►



***These psalms are the cries of people convinced that true life, even eternal life, must ultimately be an embodied experience of God in the world he has created.***

should consider ways in which the overall message of the Psalter bears upon this doctrine. One key theme of the Psalms is God's ultimate victory as king (e.g. Psalms 96 and 97). Many psalms wrestle with the fact that this world is not the way it should be, and they look to God to intervene (e.g. Psalm 44). More specifically, they look for God to put this world to rights through his anointed king (e.g. Psalm 18). Psalms 1 and 2 set the stage. The following five books of the Psalter trace the vicissitudes of this kingdom. The low point arrives in Book 3, where we find the king's crown lying broken in the dust (Psalm 89:39). Book 5, however, restores hope with the promise that God will remember the Davidic king, polishing his crown and clothing his enemies in shame (Psalm 132). The Psalter then closes with a symphony of praise to the victorious, divine king (Psalms 145-150). Peter says that the Old Testament speaks of 'the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow' (1 Peter 1:11). One would have struggled to predict the exact details of Jesus' life, but now in light of his life, we can certainly see how the Psalter applies to him and anticipates his work, both in his suffering (e.g. Psalm 22:1) and in his ultimate victory (e.g. Psalm 2:6).

#### **LEADING US BEYOND DEATH**

We can now go beyond general principles and note that there are specific assertions in the Psalter, which, while not as common or as explicit as they are in the New Testament, nevertheless indicate a hope of life after death (Psalm 73:24-26) and indeed even the hope of the resurrection (e.g. Psalms 16:9-10 and 17:14-15).

Psalms 48 and 49 provide a fascinating example. According to the ESV's marginal note, the former concludes with the assertion that the Lord 'will lead us beyond death'. The term for 'leading' is pastoral, the same verb being used in Psalm 78:52. The use of pastoral imagery together with a reference to death provides a twofold point of contact with Psalm 49:14. This latter psalm also helps us understand what it means for God to 'lead us beyond death': he will ransom us from the grave (Psalm 49:15), something we could never do ourselves (vv 7-9). The pairing of these two psalms thus offers a choice. Either you can place your trust in the Lord, in which case he will be your shepherd (Psalm 48), or you can place your trust in wealth (Psalm 49:6), in which case death will be your shepherd (Psalm 49:14). Stark choice! To be shepherded by death has obvious implications. For the divine shepherd to lead you beyond death means that even the grave itself will not be able to hold you.

The Psalter presents you with the Lord as the great king who will be victorious over all his enemies. It calls you to trust in him with the promise that you will know him as your shepherd not only in this life, but even beyond death. This is a hope in which you can have great confidence because Jesus has come as God's son (Psalm 2), the one who has himself defeated death (Psalm 16; see also Acts 2:31-32). ●

Rev. Daniel Sladek teaches Old Testament and Hebrew at Edinburgh Theological Seminary

# HE CARETH FOR YOU

BY **PROF TOMMY MACKAY**

**D** **OES GOD CARE FOR US?** Here is a wonderful story of how much he cares.

It was the day of my sister's funeral. The banner at Ardoch was to be flying at half-mast. But there was an issue. The banner was fine at full-mast and when lowered, but the space in between had been so invaded by the overhanging branches of the nearby pear tree that nothing could be done. The branches had to be cut down.

However, there was a problem. This wasn't low branches growing up the way. It was high branches growing down the way – so high in fact that they were above the height of my longest extension ladders. Nevertheless, a few days before the funeral I was determined it had to be done. So – I was all ready to go as far as the ladders took me and then climb the rest and get the job done.

It was then that my unstoppable optimism met an immovable object: the 'domestic veto'. There seemed to be a view that the gymnastics required for me to reach where I needed to reach, complete with a potentially lethal saw, might lead to some more spectacular acrobatics than those previously witnessed. There was something of a hint that one funeral might be quite enough at this stage.

Now perhaps there aren't many people who would fret over a question of flag protocol. However, I fretted over it. And there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. Our tree surgeons couldn't come out. Apparently something to do with a flag didn't justify a team of men driving the 80-mile return trip from Bonnybridge as it fell a little short of meeting the strict interpretation of the Government's definition of an 'emergency' at this time of Coronavirus lockdown.

It was then that the wonderful thing happened. It was the day before the funeral. We've not been having any visitors turning up in the current lockdown, but on that day we had a visitor. He came in the form of a man wearing an orange safety jacket, and perhaps I just didn't notice that

his wings were tucked in under it. He told me he'd come because of an 'emergency'. He was from Network Rail. There was a dead tree at the bottom of our garden beside the line, and it would need to come down. It was absolutely urgent, for otherwise they would have to close the whole line.

Now – the old oak tree beside the line has been standing there since the 1780s. It has been dead for years and its appearance has not changed in the best part of a decade. The line is constantly being inspected in the minutest detail – but this particular emergency seemed to have eluded them. Until now.

Early on the morning of the funeral three vans of specialist equipment and four able-bodied men arrived. 'Could you do me a favour?' I explained the predicament of the flag.

'Yes, of course.'

And so I watched as the ladders came into the orchard, along with equipment I could only have dreamed of. Never

before had I seen a chainsaw on the end of a 15-foot pole. In almost no time the job was done, and the flag was in its correct half-mast position, one third from the top of the flagpole. And thus we went off to the funeral.

Is God concerned about flag protocol? Yes – because he is concerned about *me*. Once again, as so often before, I saw the truth of the words I learnt at my mother's knee:

*God who made the earth,  
The air, the sky, the sea,  
Who gave the light its birth,  
Careth for me.*

*And 'he careth for you' (1 Peter 5:7). ●*

*Is God concerned about flag protocol? Yes – because he is concerned about me.*

Professor Tommy MacKay is Clinical Director of the National Diagnosis and Assessment Service for Autistic Spectrum Disorders and co-founded the National Centre for Autism Studies at the University of Strathclyde.

# HECTOR GRIGOR (1927-2020)

BY **REV. FARQUHAR RENWICK**

**IT WAS WITH A MIXTURE OF EMOTIONS THAT THE CONGREGATION OF KNOCKBAIN FREE CHURCH LEARNED OF THE PASSING OF ITS ESTEEMED ELDER, HECTOR GRIGOR, ON TUESDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020.** Sadness at the passing of someone loved so dearly and gladness that at last he had entered into the bliss of the redeemed.

Hector was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1927 at Cullicudden, in the parish of Resolis on the Black Isle, the home of his parents, Kenneth and Catherine. Once he was safely delivered and all was well, the local midwife promptly headed off to the manse at Resolis to await the arrival of Hector's cousin, Georet (sister of the late Rev. Hector Cameron and future wife of the late Rev. Hugh Ferrier). The youngest of three children, he attended Cullicudden School, which he left at the age of 14 to work with his father on the farm.

In 1950, the Fraser family of South Clunes in Kiltarlity bought the farm next door, Wester Cullicudden, bringing to the area Elma, a nurse, living at home temporarily to look after her mother.

Hector and Elma married on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1951, and established an open-hearted and happy home, which they would ultimately share for over 65 years.

Hector and Elma's first son, Kenneth, was born in 1953 but sadly predeceased them in 2010. It was a hard blow but it was borne with dignity and grace. Kenneth was followed by Isobel, Brian, Fraser, Gillian, Andrew and Allan. At the same time, in their home they cared for Hector's parents and for Elma's father until their death.

In 1984 Hector and his sons moved from Cullicudden to Redfield Farm, North Kessock. Two years later, his health deteriorated, necessitating a heart bypass operation in 1986. Enjoying a good recovery, Hector returned to work on the farm, where he continued to play a role into his eighties. He particularly enjoyed livestock, and in 1991 received national awards for sheep and cattle at the Royal Highland Show. In their later years, Hector and Elma travelled widely, particularly to visit Allan, his wife Carol, and their family in New Zealand, where he made new and lasting friends.

His parents' home had been very musical, and Hector played the fiddle and clarinet, whilst also taking great pleasure from singing. In 1950, he was asked to join his father as precentor at Resolis Free Church, which he continued until leaving the parish in 1984. His love of singing found an outlet also in Highland Harmony and the Inverness and District Gospel Male Voice Choir.

Very hesitantly, Hector became an elder in

Killearnan Free Church, and with equal hesitation latterly became an elder in Knockbain Free Church. Perhaps the hesitancy was no bad thing; he was hugely respected.

Following Elma's death in 2017, he continued to live at home with the support of his family and the Black Isle Cares team until his passing. In these three years, he bore declining strength patiently and with a kind and ready smile.

Hector was low-key and self-effacing, a trait that endeared him all the more to many. In life's journey one meets some who are gentlemen but not Christians, and some who are Christians but not gentlemen. It can safely be said of Hector that he was a Christian gentleman. He has left a fragrance in this world.

Our deepest condolences are offered to all his children and their families as well as the wider family circle. ●



**Dear in God's sight is his saints' death.** Psalm 116:15

# WHAT GOD ORIGINATES, HE ORCHESTRATES.

BY **SHEKINAH HUSSAIN**

**H**I. I'M S. SHEKINAH HUSSAIN FROM DEHRADUN, INDIA. I have been seeking God for the last five years for my return to be part of a mission in Thailand with Interserve India. It is with a lot of hard work, patience and support that I have been able to reach a position where the path seems to be forming for me to play my part in this mission.

Early in 2015, I went to Thailand to work as a Media and Communication Assistant with Project Video. The Project's mission is to share the Word of God amongst people that cannot read or write using video, which is phenomenal. Reaching out to the people and sharing the Word in their vernacular language is marvelous. The best part of doing this mission is that I can use my talent and knowledge of making videos. While I was working with the Project, I was able to go to the churches in the villages of Thailand and see how God was working amongst them. I had the opportunity to visit a Lahu village. The people there are strong Christians and have a lot of talent. The best part is that they use their talent for the glory of God. They were doing so much with just the little they had. Also, Project Video aims to teach the people from the community who have already accepted Jesus so they can go and create videos and share the Word in their languages amongst their community.

My work in Project Video this time is going to be a little different than my last visit there. I will be working as a video editor and helping in video-making as well. It will be a whole new experience for me as I have not entirely worked as an editor before.

I have spent much of these last years understanding how God made this way for me to return. I had never imagined that it would be possible to return to this mission. God has made a

way when there seemed to be no way. Going back is a long-term plan. This will be my full-time work, initially for a period of two years. In mission, it's impossible to survive without the support of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Prayers, friendship, family and spiritual and emotional support is vital in the field. I am thankful for this opportunity to share this mission with all of you. I look forward to travelling to Thailand in 2020. ●



Given Shekinah's connection to the Free Church, Generation would like to publicise details which will allow people to support her work. To make a donation direct to Shekinah, go to the Interserve GBI webpage, [interserve.org.uk/donate](https://interserve.org.uk/donate), and choose one of the giving options. Please add the Allocation Instruction as **Other** and details as **INDIA ON TRACK SHEKINAH HUSSAIN**.



**IT DISTRESSES ME WHEN I HEAR WORDS WHICH BETRAY THE FACT THAT THE SPEAKER IS UNCONSCIOUSLY REGARDING SUNDAY AS THE LAST DAY OF THE WEEK.** We have become careless about regarding Sunday as the first day. Publishers of diaries have changed our perception. Secular talk and attitudes have permeated our thinking.

Sunday is the first day of the week. That is important; it really matters. I hear myself being called King Canute, trying to halt the inevitable progress of change. An old man longing for what is past and what no longer matters.

But it does matter. And it is important.

It is important because Jesus rose again on the first day of the week. It is important because Sunday thereby became the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath. It is important because on the Lord's Day the church of Jesus Christ, throughout the world, meets to worship their risen Saviour. It is important because its existence testifies to the resurrection of Jesus. It is important because Jesus' resurrection testifies to the existence of God, the fact of the Incarnation and the reality of the Crucifixion. It is important because its place in the weekly cycle of life calls all men everywhere to public worship; it is a symbolic call to repentance.

Do you really not mind if we lose that?

By loose talk and careless thinking we put at risk what we currently have: our ability to meet for worship and the respect the church enjoys. Covid-19 has reminded us that such meeting is precious and cannot be taken for granted. In many countries around the world this privilege is denied or severely restricted.

Over the past several months I have many times listened intently to politicians talking about the effects of Covid-19, and not once have I heard any of them slip into the mistake of treating Sunday as the end of the week. And yet in Christian circles I often hear words which seem to imply exactly that. Chatting on Sunday before or after a service, we talk about what we will be doing 'next week'; looking ahead to the next Sunday we identify it as 'at the end of next week'. We have adopted the speech of pagans. I sympathise because it is all so subtle. But we risk losing precious treasure.

Paul describes Jesus' resurrection as the 'first fruits', and that practice, instituted in Leviticus 23, was to happen 'on the day after the Sabbath', the first day of the week. The Gospel writers describe the resurrection as happening on the first day of the week. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, it was the first day of the week. The New Testament church started to worship on the first day of the week and that has been the practice since. Sunday was always regarded as the first day of the week. We are letting this slip away. Once gone it will never be recovered.

Sunday is a reminder to the whole world that Jesus rose again. It is the day the world witnesses the church at worship. We have lost the Sabbath, for all practical purposes. What is left may feel merely symbolic in comparison. But let's not lose it due to our neglect. It speaks of Jesus' resurrection and that is a beacon whose light shines in a dark world. ●

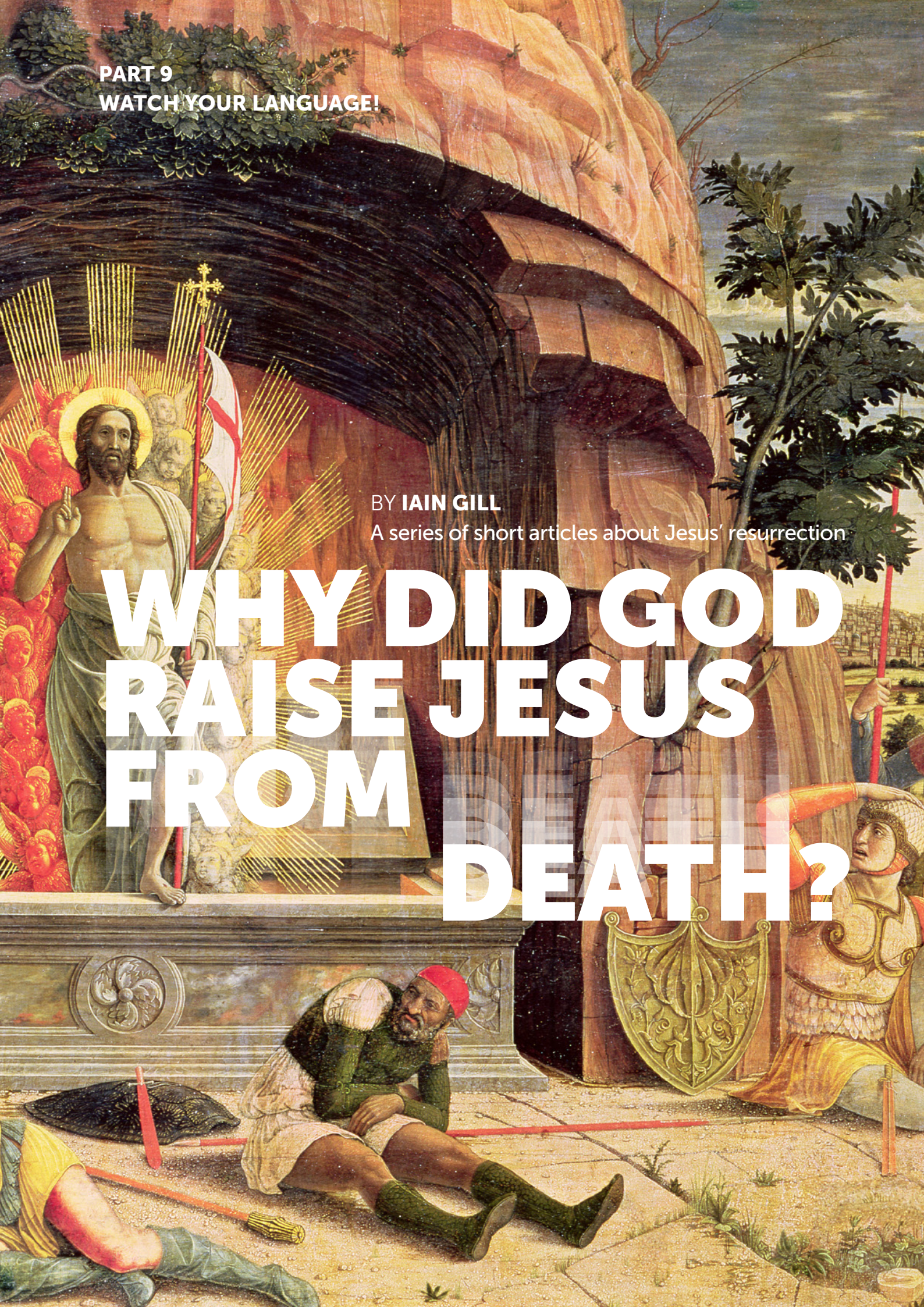


**PART 9**  
**WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE!**

BY **IAIN GILL**

A series of short articles about Jesus' resurrection

# WHY DID GOD RAISE JESUS FROM DEATH?





# ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT PART 1

BY DONALD MACKAY

**T**HE BIBLICAL RECORD OF THE EXODUS HAS LONG BEEN CONTENTIOUS IN SCHOLARLY CIRCLES. The current academic consensus – with which some Orthodox Jewish writers go along – is that the account is a myth constructed to explain and bolster the Jewish sense of identity. Evangelical writers, while stoutly maintaining the historicity of the Pentateuch, tend in practice to ignore the historical details and to veer off into deriving ‘spiritual’ lessons from the various incidents of the Exodus.

Of course spiritual lessons are to be derived from the Exodus: as Paul explains, ‘These things happened to them as examples, and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come’ (1 Corinthians 10:11). But it is important also to understand the context of this extraordinary event, including the interweaving of the natural and the supernatural in God’s dealings with his nascent people.

Consider first the condition of Israel prior to the exodus. The twelve tribes were originally family groups, settled in a favoured part of Egypt, with traditions and customs going back to the Patriarchs. However, after a period of prosperity, they had had to endure 400 years of enslavement and ill-treatment. During all this time they ‘multiplied and grew’ into a nation of well over a million. It is noteworthy that it was the number of the Israelites that was the great fear of the Egyptians and the motivation for their repression. The Egyptians were not so much afraid of being subjugated as of losing their labour force by an escape from Egypt.

What was the state of mind of the Israelites at this time? Their cry went up to heaven, but it was not directed to God. One gets the impression of a cowed people, with low morale, and not at all inclined to rebellion. The only evidence of spirit was among the midwives. The one raised up to be a deliverer was, in effect, an outsider who,

as Stephen was to comment many centuries later, was rejected by the Israelites and branded as a trouble-maker.

How was this inertia to be overcome? It would have to be by a movement of earthquake dimensions. Two obstacles would have to be removed: the Israelites would have to be motivated to depart, and the Egyptians induced to let them go. No wonder that Moses quailed at the prospect. And it only got harder as he started on the job. The Israelite elders met him with scarcely veiled disbelief. Pharaoh reacted with furious rage and an intensification of the Israelite burdens.

The plagues of Egypt were designed with both of the above ends in view. Pharaoh at last recognised that the God of the Hebrews meant business. The Israelites were given a graphic display at the same time of his avenging wrath, and his protective care. But they were scarcely organised for departure. We are told that they carried the dough for their bread in kneading troughs over their shoulders. The nearest we can get to visualising their exodus is through the images of mass flight of present-day refugees from Syria or Burma.

Think of perhaps two million tribespeople, with pots and pans, children and dependants, flocks and herds, all moving at the speed of the slowest. Before they had got any distance, the cry goes up, 'Pharaoh's horsemen and chariots are coming!' and all sense of relief at their escape is gone. No wonder that Moses shared in the general despair. True, they had a wonderful deliverance from that crisis, celebrated in song. But it took only three days of marching before a shortage of water dried up all their elation and set them off grumbling at their leaders and against God.

For what was becoming increasingly clear was the absence within the Israelite nation of a sense of purpose in the exodus. As far as many of them were concerned, it was an adventure wished upon them by Yahweh and Moses. It had no visible end-point or goal – just endless wandering in the desert, far from the onions, leeks and garlic of the Egyptian fleshpots. There was a wilful blindness towards the awful servitude from which they had been freed, and also towards the amazing providences shown towards them by God.

From the start, therefore, theology was brought to bear. The Israelites were reminded of their heritage and of the election of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by a covenantal God who was committed to giving their descendants a future and a land of their own. The nature of Yahweh as both compassionate and holy was brought home by the institution of the Passover at the very moment of their deliverance. And the initial goal of their pilgrimage was given as that of worshipping God at Mount Sinai, where he was to reveal his character and his law. ●

***There was a wilful blindness towards the awful servitude from which they had been freed, and also towards the amazing providences shown towards them by God.***



# THE FREE CHURCH IN THE ANDES

**T**HE MONTHLY RECORD OF AUGUST 1909 DREW FREE CHURCH FOLKS' ATTENTION TO PERU, 'one of those great South American countries...one-half the size of Europe', but a land 'in a better state in every way under the Incas that it was after the Spaniards.'

The Free Church's General Assembly of 1914 heard that the Congress of Peru had recently granted religious liberty, the last country in South America to do so, opening the door to Protestant missionaries. The Foreign Missions committee reported that 'the claims of South America have been pressing heavily on the heart of a young student — Mr John Mackay of Inverness. He has offered himself to the committee for mission work in South America.' Following a year of preparatory work, the 1915 Assembly commissioned John Mackay to travel to Peru, 'the most necessitous and the most important country for missionary activity' with a view to establishing mission work. So began the story of the Free Church in the Andes.

From Lima to Cajamarca and Moyobamba, the full story is told for the first time in a new book by Iain Fraser Grigor. He draws together accounts from missionaries who served throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from John Mackay to Charlie Douglas, and including his own aunt — Netta Fraser — the nurse in Moyobamba whose pet puma terrorised the local dogs.

The photos here were provided by Margaret Fraser, Ronnie Christie and Charlie Douglas.

Look out for a review of *The Free Church in the Andes – Scottish missionaries in the mountains of 20<sup>th</sup> century Peru* in the next Record



Charlie and Daphne Douglas and family, ready to leave for Peru in the summer of 1982.



Free Church Field Council Lima 1976 photo, L-R: Maggie Fraser, Alan Fraser, Catherine MacKay, Anne Fraser, Bill Scott, Florrie Donaldson, Isobel Scott, Andrew Fraser, Irene Thomson, Ena MacKay, Margaret Fraser, Morag Christie, Willie MacKay, Catherine MacPherson, Ronnie Christie, Iain MacKay, Cairene MacPherson, George Thomson, Elizabeth MacKenzie, Malcolm MacPherson, John MacPherson  
Front row: David Scott and Fiona Christie





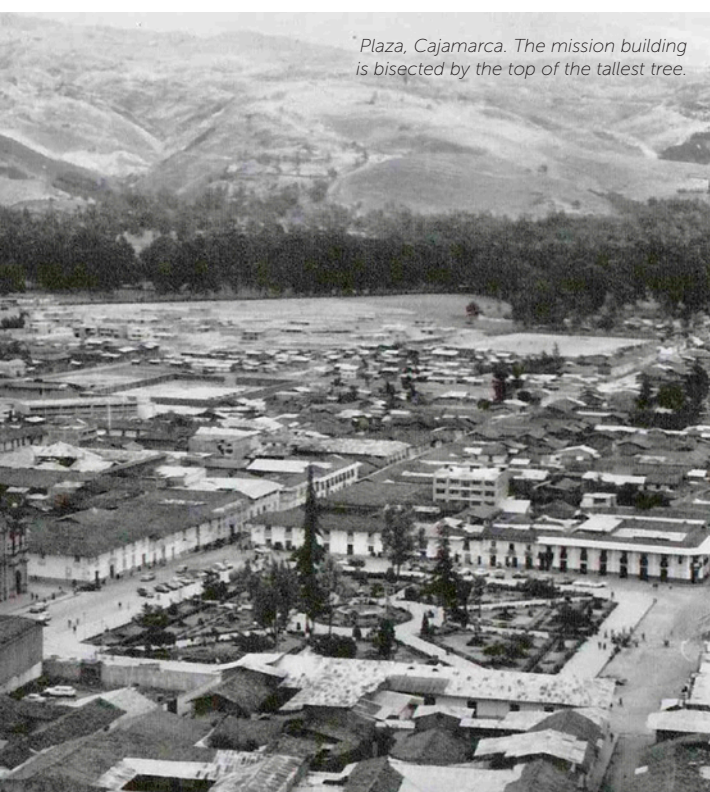
Corrie van Donkersgoed with Jesus Liza and Juan Silva. Corrie, along with her late husband Bert, worked in Moyobamba before moving to Pomacochas.



The Sarah MacDougall memorial. Sarah MacDougall served the Cajamarca Mission as a nurse in the 1920s.



Juvenal Pando with his wife Esther and family. Juvenal still works in the Casa de la Biblia bookshop. He is also now an elder in the Cajamarca congregation.



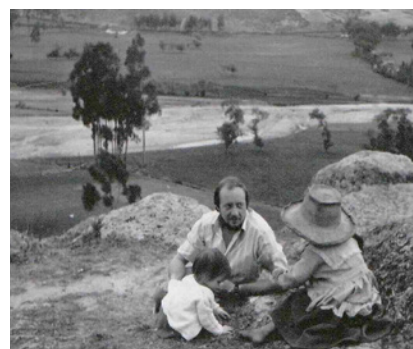
\* Plaza, Cajamarca. The mission building is bisected by the top of the tallest tree.



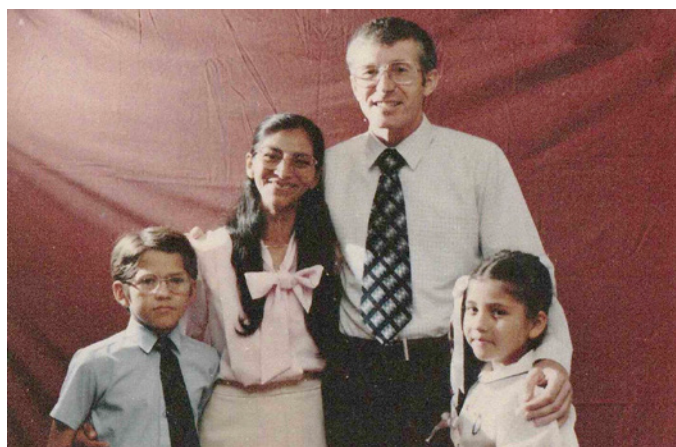
The original PROESA team. (L-R) Elsa Aguirre, Esther Lopez, Victor Cardenas, Alonzo Ramirez, Dr Nicolas Lopez. (Kneeling) Dorti Rojas.



David Scott, Moyobamba.



Andy Fraser with his niece, Maggie, at Otuzco.



(Above and below) Donald and Julia Smith, with Alex and Catriona. Donnie worked as pastor in Cajamarca before taking on responsibilities as director in the Lima seminary.





# PAGES FROM ADAM'S DIARY, PART 2:

## An Afghan Doctor

A brother, known to some of us as Dr Adam, has served the Lord among his suffering church for many years. Dr Adam has also ministered in various parts of the world among refugees. We have asked his permission to print some of the stories of his life and service for the encouragement of readers of *The Record*. For well understood reasons, the names of people and places have usually been changed or omitted.



*It was as though this man and his wife were passing through a door and over a bridge—from darkness into light, from death to life.*



**ONE OF THE FIELDS IN WHICH I HAVE HAD THE BLESSING AND THE PRIVILEGE TO SERVE OUR SAVIOUR IS AMONG THE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES OF EUROPE.**

As I follow our Lord through his fields, there are always extraordinary and unforgettable encounters and events. One such incident happened in one of my visits to a refugee camp several years ago when an Afghan medical doctor came to one of our introduction-to-the-Christian-faith and Bible-study gatherings. He continued to come in the following days. He had fled Afghanistan with his wife and their two young daughters. They had gone through unbelievable ordeals to make their way to Europe. Although he had suffered at the hands of the Taliban, he seemed devoted to Islam. He was an intelligent and gracious man. For a whole week, he came to all of our meetings, and afterward, he often insisted that I go to his small camp room, where he and his family lived. He was interested to learn why I had 'changed my religion'.

'What caused you to become a Christian?' I told him that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the most beautiful message I had ever heard. I noted that, in the face of Christ, I saw the face of God; in his teaching, I heard the truth; and in his words, I heard the words of God.

I explained, 'No other person has ever impacted every aspect of human history for good as Jesus Christ has.' On one occasion, I was teaching John chapter 10, and our Lord's statement that *'My sheep hear my voice and they follow me'*. I told him that this passage was knitted to the preceding account about the man who was born blind and Jesus had healed him. This blind man could now see, in the face of Jesus the man, the face of God because he was one of his sheep. On the other side were the religious leaders who, in their own estimation, were enlightened and righteous. However, that external piety had blinded them to the wretched condition of their hearts. They thought they were able to see when, in fact, they were blind (John 9:39-41). They were seeing the man, a Galilean carpenter, but they were unable to perceive that they were looking into the face of God (Colossians 1:15-20).

My Afghan doctor friend was listening intently. As I was elucidating the meaning of the words of Christ that *'His sheep hear his voice'*, I was sitting on the floor and he was sitting in front of me. His head was down. As he was looking at the floor, I noticed he wiped a tear from the corner of his eye. With that, I was prompted by the Holy Spirit, with much urgency and emphasis, to ask him, 'Doctor Shah (not his real name), are you hearing the call of the Great Shepherd?' Without saying a word, he nodded his head, 'Yes!' Tears were streaming

from his eyes. His wife, watching her husband, was now overcome by emotion. It was as though the Spirit of God had passed through the room. Right before my eyes, I was seeing a spiritual metamorphosis. It was as though this man and his wife were passing through a door and over a bridge — from darkness into light, from death to life. And what a change God brought into the heart of this man, his wife and their children! The evidence of the reality of the transformation followed quickly.

A few months later, he who had gone through such upheaval to leave Afghanistan and come to Europe took his family and went back to Afghanistan. I learned he had rented a house and opened a makeshift clinic in the north. He was using that clinic and medicine as a means of spreading the Gospel. No human ideology can achieve that kind of transformation in the life of person, from self-preservation to selflessness. Only Christ can do that! As far as I know, he is still in Afghanistan, not only as a medical doctor but as a light, as an ambassador of Christ and harbinger of life in a country choked and ravaged by an ideology of hate, ignorance, violence and death. What God has done through the life of this former refugee one day will be made known in heaven. A brave, lone man, empowered by the Spirit of God, mightier than ten armies of the Taliban, amidst such despair and darkness. They are bent on evil but he has been sent forth for enduring good.

Not long after meeting this Afghan family, I was visiting a dear pastor friend of mine in Scotland. He invited me to go with him to see his son's farm where they also raised sheep. When we arrived at the farm, the son told his father that earlier that day, he had taken 100 sheep to the market, but two were kept because they were pet sheep for his 12-year-old sister. She was with us to visit her brother and sister-in-law. Then my friend asked, 'Where are the two sheep?' (Both of whom had been named.) We looked around and noticed several hundred meters away on the side of a hill what appeared like two small white cotton balls. The young man said, 'There they are!' He called their names, but they did not respond. Then my friend called, but again, no response. He asked me to call. Still no response. Then the young girl to whom the two sheep belonged, in her soft child's voice, called them by their names. Upon hearing her voice, it was as though two rockets had been launched. They turned around, dashed down the hillside, jumping over brush and heather, and soon they were right at her feet. It was a beautiful illustration of the words of our Lord when he told those who were rejecting him, *'My sheep hear my voice and they follow me. A stranger they will not follow. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me'* (John 10:3-17). ●



# BOOK REVIEWS



Our books this month have a little bit of everything, from personal testimony to global mission. Whether you stay within your comfort zone or try something different, we have something for you.

All are available at <https://thefree.church/shop>, unless otherwise stated.

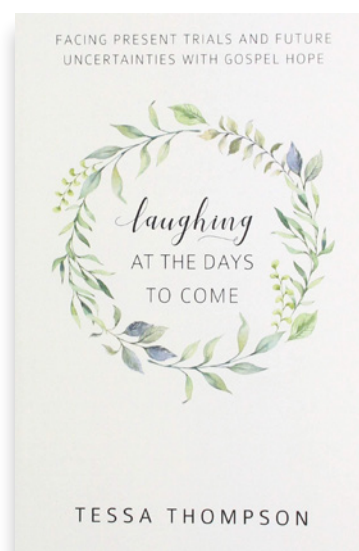
## **LAUGHING AT THE DAYS TO COME** **TESSA THOMPSON (2020)**

From the very first page, you can tell that Tessa has poured her soul into the writing of this book. She writes openly and honestly not only about her fears and struggles, but also about the peace and happiness that she has found in the Lord throughout her journey with a medical condition known as NF2, which caused her gradual and then eventually complete deafness.

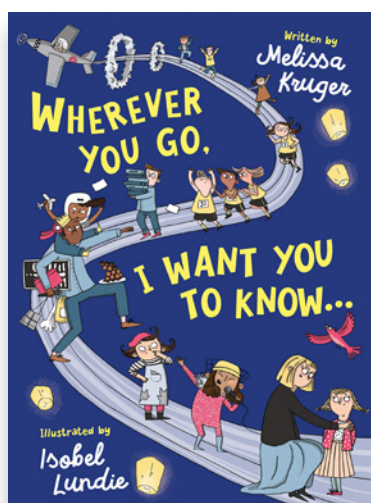
She has methodically structured her testimony from definition, to doctrine, to doing; which helps the reader see not only Tessa's ultimate message of the book, but what her journey looked like getting there. With many Christian books, written by women for women, the main focus seems to be on marriage or children. Although those types of books are encouraging and certainly have their place, I found Thompson's book to be much more inclusive of all women in every walk of life. She often uses her marriage or her children as examples, but the aim of the book is not to be 'a better wife' or a 'better mother' specifically. Her message shines across every page: Christ alone can comfort and guide us in our uncertainties, and our purpose is to be seeking after our relationship with the Lord so that we can be better equipped for our various vocations, regardless of whether we are wives, mothers, single women, or childless.

For anyone that has ever suffered major trauma or for those that simply deal with the minor inconveniences that life can bring about, Thompson sets out a clear line of thinking about how we should view our situation in light of God's ultimate plans for our lives. ●

This book is available to purchase from [eden.co.uk](https://eden.co.uk).



Sarah Perkins, London City Presbyterian Church



## **WHEREVER YOU GO, I WANT YOU TO KNOW** **MELISSA KRUGER & ISOBEL LUNDIE (2020)**

As a parent of a pre-schooler, I read a lot of kids' books. Some aren't great, and your child skips over it on the shelf in future. Some are firm favourites, and are dog-eared in no time. Whether we like it or not, this is true of Christian books for children as much as any other genre. This new book from Melissa Kruger and Isobel Lundie is destined for the 'favourite' pile.

It is a wonderful book. It's so simple, and yet so delightful. Its message of reaching for the stars AND finding your true home in Jesus is one every child deserves to hear. I have never read a kids' gospel book quite like this, and I don't know why. It's such an easy book to read to a child you care about, whoever you are to them. Read it to your child, grandchild, or tiny church friend and you will leave them in no doubt of how much joy Jesus brings you — and that's a surefire way to get them keen on him too. ●

Miriam Montgomery, Free Church Books

## THE GOSPEL OF OUR KING

BRUCE RILEY ASHFORD & HEATH A. THOMAS (2019)

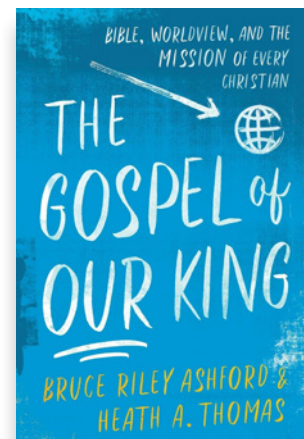
In order to understand their purpose as human beings, Christians need a good grasp of God's purposes for his creation as expressed in the Scriptures and the calling he gives to followers of Jesus. This book has been written to make these matters clear.

The book opens with an introduction, followed by two main parts, with an 'interlude' between them. The introduction sets the scene, explaining that '[t]he Bible tells the story of the King' (2). The opening chapters of the book, therefore, 'trace the Bible's main storyline' (2). The authors take a consciously theological (God-centred) and Christological (Jesus-centred) approach to their reading of Scripture (3-4). They then introduce the concept of worldview (6-7), highlight the importance of gospel language (7), and then discuss how the biblical story relates to mission. Part one is composed of four chapters entitled 'Creation', 'Fall', 'Redemption', and 'Restoration'. The authors explain these categories with careful discussion of selected biblical texts. It is clear that they are drawing on excellent academic studies, some of which are referenced in footnotes, but the book is very readable and is not just for students and preachers.

The interlude draws together the themes of worldview, gospel, and mission. While many of us may not use the term 'worldview' regularly, the concept is very useful as a means of grasping that everybody, without exception, has a number of basic beliefs that shape the way we understand our life in this world. The authors provide brief but clear discussions of the key terms, 'gospel' and 'mission'. While these are more familiar to most people than 'worldview', that can be a problem when definitions are assumed rather than carefully considered. While some readers may quibble with the positions the authors adopt, I found their views to be well-founded on careful reading of Scripture. Part two considers four aspects of Christian mission: theological, social, cultural, and global. In the course of these four chapters, Ashford and Thomas discuss (among other topics) how the gospel speaks to our secular age; the witness of the church (taking account of its increasingly global and multi-ethnic character); the relationship of Christianity to culture; and God's purposes for 'the nations'.

This book is an excellent guide to thinking carefully about biblical theology, mission, and the ways in which these two fields relate to each other. I warmly commend it to anyone who wishes to dig more deeply into these vitally important subjects. ●

This book is available to purchase from Book Depository.



Alistair I. Wilson, Edinburgh Theological Seminary

## IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

SINCLAIR FERGUSON (2018)

In an age of 'chronological snobbery' where the present is king and the past is — well, 'just the past' — it's so refreshing to come across this concise compendium of twenty chapters covering twenty centuries of the Christian church. The book's strengths are many: an introduction which explains the value of church history to the modern mind; an easy-to-read overview of key developments in theology and church practice through two millennia; contemporary application of historic theology and practice provided in every chapter; and a non-hagiographical assessment of those individuals whom God used to shape the formative stages of the grand narrative of the Christian Church.

But perhaps one of the greatest assets of this book is the title: *In the Year of Our Lord*. In our current post-Enlightenment era where the distinctiveness of the Christian faith has been eroded in contemporary society by the secular intelligentsia, the title asserts unashamedly the centrality of Christ's lordship over history. Christ and history cannot be separated — and this book certainly shows that to be true.

That this summary of the Church's history is written by Sinclair Ferguson is an added bonus — he is a theologians' theologian who has a real appreciation for the past and whose passion to tell the story of the Lord's work through the Lord's often imperfect people shines through these pages. This book is a welcome addition to any personal library. ●

This book is available to purchase from Book Depository.



Nigel Anderson, Livingston Free Church

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## CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW EUGENICS

CALUM MACKELLAR, IVP, 2020, PB 212 PAGES, £8.99

Are you bewildered by the latest scientific advances in genetics and IVF, with their possibilities of eradicating hereditary human diseases and selecting or enhancing offspring? If so, this is the book you have been waiting for. Dr MacKellar, an evangelical Christian and an experienced biochemical researcher in genetics, is Director of Research at the Scottish Council for Human Bioethics and has written and lectured regularly on bioethics.

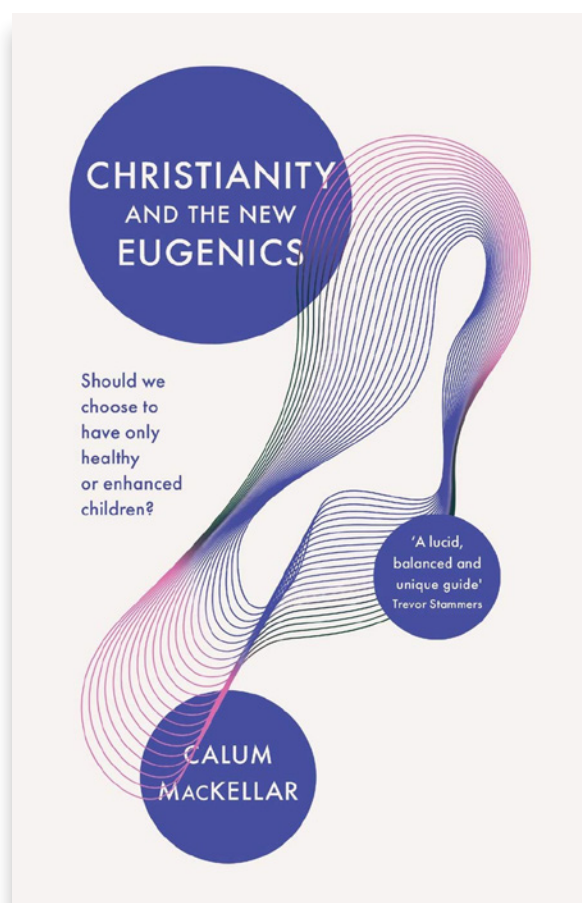
Dr MacKellar points out the pressing need for Christians to be aware of the ethical issues surrounding the eugenic possibilities of these advances and the lack of study from a Protestant perspective. The modern eugenic movement is traced to Sir Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin. His ideas became very popular in Britain and the USA, but were never mainstream. Nazi Germany applied these ideas enthusiastically and this led to a revulsion from them after the Second World War. The new eugenicists tend to avoid the term 'eugenics' and use more euphemistic language. The danger now is that the emphasis has changed from 'improving' the human stock to catering for individual autonomy. If it is scientifically possible, why shouldn't people be able to choose to have children free from genetic diseases and congenital defects or to choose the desirable characteristics of any child? 'Quality of life' is stressed to the detriment of the dignity and worth of all human life. Sadly, this new eugenics is much more acceptable in the scientific world than the original version.

In the longest section of the book Dr MacKellar argues persuasively that the Biblical doctrine that human beings are made in God's image gives the only sound basis for the inherent dignity and worth of every person, including the embryo, regardless of genetic defect or any other characteristic or capability. The implications of this are followed out in detail. There is interaction with other points of view and various objections answered. Be prepared to have your views challenged and broadened!

The wide range of eugenic possibilities are then clearly explained and arguments for and against them fairly set forth and answered. In conclusion Dr MacKellar shows how the ethics of the new eugenics involve a value judgment on every human life which inevitably leads to discrimination against people with disabilities.

I heartily recommend this important book.

**Donald M. MacDonald, Edinburgh**



## QUOTATIONS:

*There are days when we can bring before God...laughter of joy and gratitude. There will be other days when we can only muster a bitter, angry complaint. Be confident that God will accept whatever we lift up before him, and he will make it serve his purpose and our good.*

**Gardner C. Taylor**

*Blues are the songs of despair, but gospel songs are the songs of hope. I sing God's music because it makes me feel free. It gives me hope. With the blues, when you finish, you still have the blues.*

**Mahalia Jackson**

*What a power the believers in Christ will be in this world, where such multitudes are hateful and hating one another, when they all come to abound in deep, pure, fervent love to God and to their neighbours!*

**Charles Octavius Boothe**



# POETRY PAGE

## THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB BY LORD BYRON

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:  
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;  
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;  
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,  
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:  
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) is considered one of the leading figures of the Romantic movement. His narrative poem *The Destruction of Sennacherib* imagines events described in 2 Kings 19. During the reign of Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria took the fortified cities of Judah and threatened Jerusalem, defying God's authority. Hezekiah prayed for deliverance and, through Isaiah, God told him 'I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David' (2 Kings 19:34). Byron repeatedly begins lines in his poem with 'And', creating a sense of momentum and the impression that events are following one another in quick succession.



# MISSION MATTERS

A monthly take on some of the mission work the Free Church is involved in by our Mission Director, **DAVID MEREDITH**

**C**OULTER IS IN SOUTH LANARKSHIRE. IT'S SO SMALL THAT IF YOU WERE TO BLINK THEN YOU WOULD BE AT THE OTHER SIDE. In old Scots it is Cootyre, a safe place for cows. In a distant past, before the 1980s, it was also deemed to be a safe place for Free Church ministry students to preach. In my day it had dwindled to a congregation of four.

The musing of the month is to ask what we can do with such situations. Can a congregation be too small? Is there hope, even in the unpromising rubble of decay?

There is an optimism which is ridiculous. There are times when we simply have to walk away from the model of sustaining a full-time ministry in an area with few prospects. Coulter's day was over, but we are people who believe in the principle that life comes from death. Indeed, there are times when life only comes when death has taken place.

What does life after death look like?

First, there must be the recognition that death has taken place and that the old entity is beyond resuscitation. It is said that a church is like a cat; it has nine lives. In medicine one can terminate life before we expect a natural end, but the spirit of the age demands that life be extended, no matter what the cost or ultimate quality of life. Few speak of the statistic that between 30% and 40% of people suffer brain damage after prolonged ventilation. A church may have a pulse but that's not the same as health.

Second, there is always new set of circumstances. Usually this is new leadership or a change in outlook among the existing leadership. This change in dynamic almost always follows the same pattern. People who are invested in the church see beyond the problems to the possibilities. They realise that their calling is to mission and kingdom growth and they commit to removing barriers and opening up the church.

A symbol I often use is that of the church door. Most older or larger buildings have double front

doors. My observation was that many of the doors were only half-opened, which was symbolic of the culture of the church. A little change is simply to open all the doors, literally and metaphorically. As a side-bar, there was one exception. In one Western Isles congregation I tentatively made this suggestion about the doors. The minister at the time smiled and after the meeting took me to the front door. It was a wild day. He opened the door – I got the point. There are exceptions.

Charles F Kettering was an inventor. He personally held 186 patents. He said of the Wright brothers, 'They flew through the smokescreen of impossibility.' This language is familiar to Christians, who trace the origins of their Church to a 100-year-old man called Abraham and his childless 90-year-old wife, who together became the parents of the faithful.

Let's be honest, there are many tough situations in our denomination, but few which have zero potential. What about the congregations in the county of Argyll? Oban, Tarbert, Lochgilphead and Campbeltown are not empty of possibility. Helensburgh, which is just in Argyll, is one of our church plants which is ready to get going.

What about the places where we used to have a presence? Govan Free Church closed, but within a decade a new entity was planted which is in another league in terms of reaching local people compared to the old Govan. What made the difference? People with vision.

Let me return to Coulter. Yes, some of the assets primed the financial pump at Livingston. Is it misplaced to regret that Coulter was not replanted in Biggar, Lanark or Carluke? Is it the end for Paisley or Greenock? Please let the answer be a resounding 'No', and let's write the first notes of a new song in these places. ●

# Ceòl ann an tìr choimhich

## (Music in a foreign land)

LE JANET NICPHÀIL

**T**HA SINN ANNS NA MÌOSAN A CHAIDH SEACHAD, AIR A BHITH BEÒ 'ANN AN TÌR CHOIMHICH', A'BRUIDHINN GU SAMHLACHAIL. Tha sinn ann an suidheachadh neònach, glè eadar-dhealaichte bho mar a bha cùisean nar beatha ron Mhàirt.

Ged a tha sinn air a bhith glaist' nar dachaighean, tha seirbheisean eaglais'air a thighinn thugainn nar dachaigh. Mar a thuirt sinn a'mhios a chaidh, cluinnidh sinn agus leughaidh sinn iomadh nì math air computair.

Ged a tha seo gu lèir fìor, tha an suidheachadh cho eadar-dhealaichte bhon bheatha àbhaisteach air an robh sinn eòlach, 's nuair a thèid sinn a mheasg dhaoine, bidh còmhachd air ar n-aodainn. Gu cinnteach cha robh sinn eòlach air an seo, agus chan eil fios againn cuin a dh'atharraicheas cùisean.

Is e sin mar a tha sinne aig an àm-sa, ach bidh dòchas againn gum bruidhinn an Cruthaidhear ann an sìth, agus dìreach mar a chleachd E an suidheachadh-sa, gum bi E a' toirt oirnn' a bhith le ceòl-molaidh, ged a tha iomadh clàrsach aig an àm-sa 'crochte air geugan seilich', mar bha o chionn fhada, aig sruthan coimheach Bhàbiloin.

Togaidh sinn ar clàrsaichean a-rithist, agus bidh pongan anns a'cheòl, nach biodh ann ron àm-shàraicht'-sa.

Bidh an ceòl na òran-molaidh, airson gach cuideachadh a rinneadh oirnn' aig àm teanntachd.

Ged a tha sinne air a bhith am broinn an taigh, tha iomadh fear agus tè air feadh an t-saoghail beò ann am fìor bhoichdainn, le cion bidh, dìth dachaigh agus iomadh seòrsa uallach eile. Tha iad ann an riochachdan anns a bheil fìor bhoichdainn, agus iad a' cur feum air cobhair aig an àm èiginneach-sa.

Nach cuimhnich sinn orra nar n-ùrnaighean, agus sinn mothachail air nach e nì sam bith a th'annainne a tha ag adhbharachadh gu bheil an Cruthaidhear cho pailt-làmhach dhuinn.

Tha sinn air a bhith ag ionntrainn cuideachd ar càirdean, agus saorsa a bhith gan coinneachadh mar a b' àbhaist.

Is e nì àlainn a th' ann a bhith a'seinn laoidh-mholaidh 'anns a'phrìosan as fhaide a-staigh', mar gum biodh. Nuair a bhios cùisean a'dol nar n-aghaidh, is e nì brèagha a th' ann a bhith a'moladh Dhè aig àm mar sin, oir glè thrìc, is e sin an ceòl as binne. Nuair a thuigeas sinn, ge b'e dè a thachras dhuinn, gu bheil Dia math, a' riaghladh gach nì, agus saoghal a' toirt feart Air, agus mòran, ged a tha iad umhail Dha oir's fheudar, nach eil ga

aithneachadh. Nach e cùis-smaoinich a tha an sin?

Bidh dòchas againn 'gun tionndaidh E an ailbhinn theann gu loch de uisge tàimh'.

Nì sinne ceòl aig àm-èiginneach, air sgàth gu bheil Criosd ag àithne d'A dheisciobail cho tric gun eagal a bhith orra. Tha na fàidhean a' bruidhinn mar sin cuideachd, agus gealladh prìseil a' tighinn an-dèidh na h-àithne, "Na biodh eagal ort, oir tha Mise maille riut."

Nuair a thig na facail sin le cumhachd thugainn bhon Chruthaidhear, bheir seo neart, spionnadh agus spiorad socrach dhuinn, ged a bhiodh na h-amannan nan cùis-eagail.

Nach glac sinn uile misneach bho na facail-sa, "S fheàrr na bhith 'g earbs' à duine beò ar dòchas chur an Dia."

Air ar cuartachadh led mhaitheas an Soisgeul againn ann am pailteas, mòran ri ithe de nithean tha càilear is càirdean oirnn'cuimhneach ged nach eil iad an làthair.

Sinn cuimhneach an-dràst' air na bochdan san t-saoghal, gun bhiadh is gun dachaigh ann an saoghal glè aon'rach, gum biodh iad nar n-ùrnaigh a là 's a dh'oidhche 's dèan casan bhios siùbhlach gu cobhair thoirt d'an ionnsaigh. ●





BY CATRIONA MURRAY

# POSTTENEBRAS LUX

**F**OR A LONG TIME I HAVE LOVED ZECHARIAH 4:10, BUT PARTICULARLY THE FIRST LINE — ‘FOR WHO HATH DESPISED THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS?’ I first heard it in childhood, always in Gaelic, and, to be honest, I’m not at all sure I recognised that it was even Scripture then.

I believe that, for many years, I mistook its meaning a little. In my own fanciful way, when I realised that it was God’s word to us, I do believe I thought he was telling me to be content with the little things in life. Every day cannot be a parade, of course, and a youngest child of four, growing up in 1980s Lewis, is better placed than many to realise that. We were not wealthy, but neither were our neighbours.

In those days, most homes had one television set. In order to reflect the dourness of our Presbyterian sensibilities, we all decorated our sitting rooms in beige and brown. And yet, there was a wee rebellion, in the form of ‘The China & Glass’. This astonishing Stornoway emporium was a purveyor of ornaments to the ladies of Lewis — and quite probably Harris as well. My more rustic friends assure me that there was even a travelling shop version of ‘The China & Glass’, which brought dainty crinoline ladies, crystal bells and bon-bon dishes to cailleachs on the West Side and beyond.

A little bit of affordable luxury was enough to promote great joy.

I remember, too, the small happinesses of my own life — many of them more vividly

than my wedding or graduation day. Once, I came home from primary school for lunch and there was a small package lying on my bed. My mother had bought me my very first purse. It wasn’t designer, it wouldn’t have been expensive, but it was an unexpected gift, chosen for me and given out of love.

Another such recollection is the book a friend of my parents gave me one evening while we were visiting her. It was a children’s nightly devotional, designed to be read at bedtime. I loved books, but the woman who made this gift to me could not possibly have known the effect it would have.

I wish that I could tell her now that this was a true picture of Zechariah’s exhortation, for I am certain that the book was my small beginning.

It consistently reminded me that Jesus was knocking at the door of my heart, and asked how long I would ignore him. I was a sensitive child and this knowledge troubled me. But I was also a miniature Leòdhasach and I knew the acceptance of Christ was no small thing. The days I spent thinking about it were not a denial of his worthiness, but of my own. Eventually, though, I knelt, prayed, and asked him into my heart.

I spent some time after that trying to be good. It had not yet penetrated my child’s understanding that this was not the way it worked.

Nonetheless, something happened as a result of that

innocent prayer. I believed in my heart, however incoherently. Many, many times over the years that followed, I drifted from him. He never moved, though, and thus I kept finding my way back — in ever decreasing circles.

I began a conversation with the Lord the day my young and tender soul was moved with pity for a Saviour ignored. From that ‘amen’ through every triumph and disaster since, he has been here. Despite grief and failure, I can truthfully say that I have not known a moment of loneliness. Even when I half-heartedly questioned God’s existence, I was speaking to him in my heart.

That book was as the plumb-line in the hand of Zerubbabel. It was a gift to a child of nine, given in faith and in hope. From it, I learned to need my Saviour and, quietly, was united to him in ways I was too young to understand. Though I was frequently negligent of the guest to whom I opened the door, he waited patiently for me to remember his presence.

If you know a child for whom you pray, don’t lose heart. I am certain no one around me suspected the work that was going on in the depths of my soul. And don’t forget the Lord’s steadfastness. Our faith may crack and weaken, but it is vested in a Saviour who does not fail. However small and unpromising your day is, he will magnify and make it beautiful in his Father’s sight.. ●