

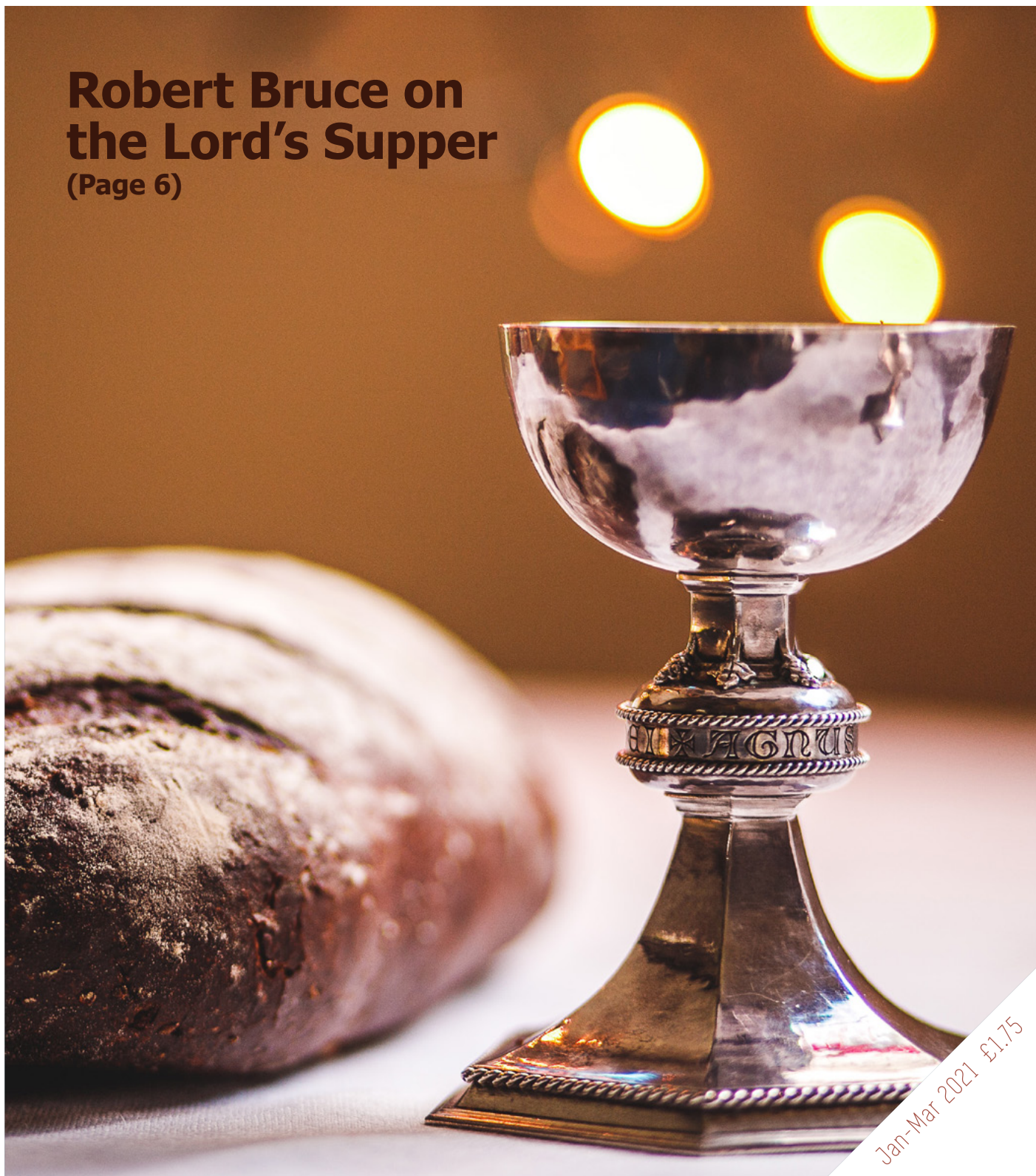
EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE

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Philippians 1 v 9-11

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Philippians 1:9-11



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FIRST WORD

In my first year at university my roommate was an excellent juggler. He would spend hours practising all sorts of impressive tricks, throwing a ball from under his knee and catching it behind his back, and the like. Occasionally, I would give it a try as well. Now, I'm pretty good at juggling with one ball (also known as 'catching'), but when it comes to two, three, or four balls I am absolutely hopeless!

Pastoring a church over these past few months has at times felt like something of a juggling act, with so many new things to learn and extra things to keep in mind. Lockdowns, zoom meetings, online services, social distancing, face masks, hand sanitiser, government regulations, church closures, and so on...

In the midst of trying to juggle all of these different things, there has been one verse of Scripture in particular that has helped to focus my mind as we have tried to steer the church through these difficult waters. The verse is 1 Peter 2:17:

"Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor."

In this verse, the apostle Peter succinctly sets out four relationships in which we, as the church, are called to fulfil our God-given duties.

1) Honour everyone

As Christians here on earth, we live in the midst of an unbelieving society. We are 'sojourners and exiles' here (2:11), and how we conduct ourselves in relation to wider society is of great importance to our witness in the world. To that end, we are to show honour to 'everyone' in society. Peter writes, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." (2:12)

Over the past few months, perhaps more than ever, the church has been under scrutiny from the world around as they watch to see if we are being reckless or responsible members of society. Especially at a time like this, may the world see that our conduct as the church is indeed 'honourable', as they see our good deeds, and in due course may they come to glorify God.

2) Love the brotherhood

How precious is the fellowship we have with our brothers and sisters in Christ! But in recent days this fellowship has been hindered greatly. For a total of seventeen Sundays in 2020, churches in Northern Ireland were asked not to gather publicly for worship, and in addition to this many Christians have been physically separated from fellow believers due to shielding, or having to self-isolate, or as a result of living in a care home and not being able to receive visitors. It has been a great encouragement to me to have seen how Christians have rallied around to show loving fellowship to those in our churches who are most severely affected by the restrictions: a phone call, a text message, a card, a doorstep visit, help with shopping, and so forth. Under the current circumstances, what can you be doing to 'love the brotherhood'?



3) Fear God

Our highest calling and our greatest duty is, of course, to worship our God, serving him and glorifying him in all that we do. Earlier on in this chapter, Peter has described the church in these majestic terms:

"You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ..." (2:5)

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (2:9)

How challenging it has been to seek to live for God's glory when so many of our regular activities as the church have been interrupted or restricted in recent days. We have been forced to make quick decisions about how to 'do' church in the circumstances, and this has not been easy. But, regardless of COVID, our chief end in all things must remain the glory of God.

4) Honour the Emperor

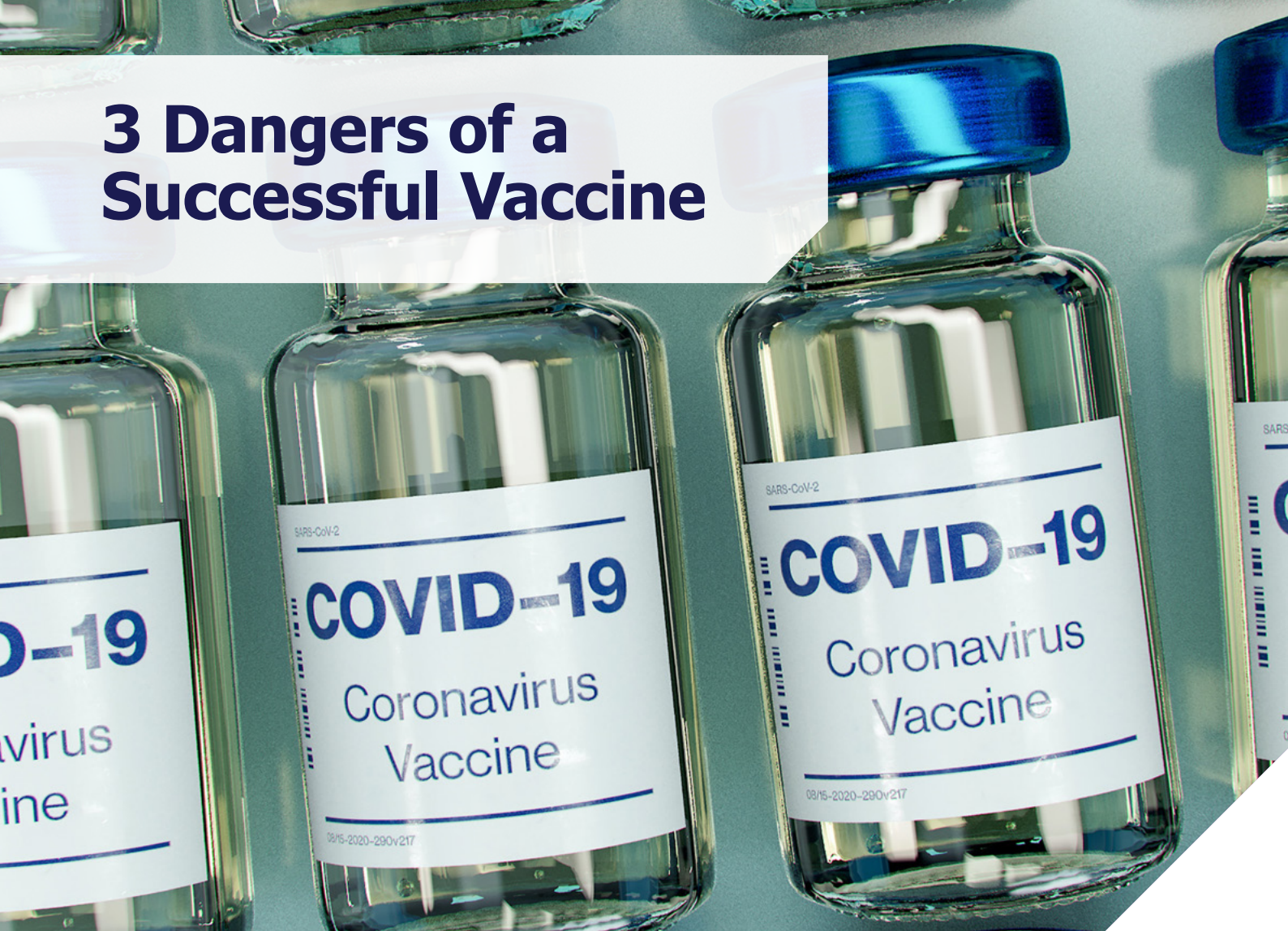
As members of society, we also have duties to fulfil in relation to the civil authorities, to whom we are called to submit (Romans 13:1ff) and for whom we are called to pray (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Peter describes our relationship to the civil authorities in verses 13-15:

"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people."

2020 was certainly an unexpected year as far as the interaction between the church and the state is concerned, as we responded to ever-changing regulations and guidelines. Whatever you may think of the legitimacy, effectiveness or necessity of some of these measures, the fact remains that we are called to show honour in our relationship to the authorities.

I trust that 2021 will be a more straightforward year than last year was for the church, but whatever the next year has in store may we, by God's grace, fulfil each of these four God-given duties: honour everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honour the emperor.

3 Dangers of a Successful Vaccine



Editor's Note: The following article was written by Christopher Ash in early December in response to the progress made in formulating a vaccine for COVID-19. The Gospel Coalition subsequently published the article on their website, and Christopher also gave kind permission for the article to be included in this edition of the Evangelical Presbyterian.

Our newsfeeds are full of encouraging results in trials of potential vaccines for COVID-19. I need to start this countercultural article by saying I really hope we get an effective vaccine. I hope we get it soon. I hope it can be rolled out, not only in my own country, but all over the world.

The upsides are clear and rich. Most obviously, it will save lives. Life is a good thing; saving lives is a desirable aim. It may also offer some relief for the many enduring mental-health problems due to lockdowns and COVID restrictions, a way of escape for those suffering the hidden miseries of domestic abuse, the chance of restored education for millions of schoolchildren and college students, and a better prospect of jobs for so many whose work hopes have been blighted. How we long for these miseries to be alleviated. I feel especially for the young people who are paying—and probably will continue to pay—so much of the cost of all this suffering.

It will be such a joy to again be able to meet freely with brothers and sisters in Christ, to sing God's praises together, and to do all the "one another" things the New Testament encourages. Such a joy. A secular society cannot begin to understand the depth of the grief that our current restrictions cause to our souls. If a vaccine enables all this to restart: hallelujah!

And then there is the ability to see precious family, to spend time with friends, to restart hospitality in our homes. So, of course we all long for a successful vaccine, and soon.

As I've meditated about this, it seems that the Bible warns of three dangers that might accompany a successful vaccine—and therefore three spiritual warnings. These, I suspect, are not so obvious. They're certainly not in our newsfeeds.

1. We may not let God's kindness lead us to repentance.

A pandemic is, I take it, yet another warning from God that there is a judgment to come, that we live in a world by which the pure, holy, and righteous God is rightly angered.

That doesn't mean getting a horrible disease is always personal punishment for a particular sin; Jesus firmly corrected those who thought it was (e.g., John 9:1–3). But it is a warning to all of us that, unless we repent, we too will perish (Luke 13:1–4). The terrible refrain in the book of Revelation (e.g., Rev. 16:9, 11) of people suffering anticipations of final judgment but not repenting, ought to warn us to repent. That God does not immediately punish all our sins is a kindness that ought to lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). A pandemic is, to use C. S. Lewis's memorable phrase, a "severe mercy," because it warns us of worse to come and therefore of the urgent need to turn to God.

Writing of a disaster in Sicily in the 18th century, the Christian poet William Cowper reflected:

God may choose his mark,
May punish, if he please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If he spared not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine escape,
Far guiltier England, lest he spare not thee!

In my country, I see little sign of a society moved by COVID-19 to a penitent fear of God. I see little sign of it in the churches. And, worst of all, I find little of this in my own self-righteous, complacent heart. As I write this, I say to myself: Christopher, you need daily to repent of your sins and flee afresh to Christ for mercy. My first reaction, all too often—and I say this to my shame—is to grumble, to criticize governments, to wallow in self-pity. May God have mercy and move me, and move our churches, and move our nations, to a deep and widespread repentance.

2. It may feed our pride so that we neglect to thank God.

How extraordinarily clever are the scientists in the pharmaceutical industry! The skill, ingenuity, hard work, perseverance, and mind-boggling brilliance of those who develop a vaccine is a matter of wonder and amazement. It is an extraordinary thing to watch the whole process as it develops with such speed and—as it seems at the moment—likely success.

And yet—and this too we won't learn from our newsfeeds—every iota of skill, every ounce of energy, every whisper of wisdom they possess comes entirely from their Creator by his common grace. Like the proud Corinthians, they need to learn that they have nothing they did not receive (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7). How good it will be if, as well as praying prayers of fresh repentance, we give thanks to God for his great mercy in giving the gifts and resources to scientists to make a vaccine.

3. It may give us a false sense of security for the future.

There's a widespread sentiment that, when a vaccine is rolled out, we can happily return to normal. Sure, some things will probably change; there may be a lot more remote working, big-city business districts may be changed, that sort of thing. But, in the big picture, surely we'll be able to pick up where we left off, won't we? We will be safe again, right?

What dangerous nonsense! Of course we won't be safe. It reminds me of the beast whose mortal wound was healed, and everyone marvelled (Rev. 13:3); and yet it was still a beast, still under the judgment of God. Commenting on Psalm 42:7, John Calvin put it with bracing sobriety: "If it should please God to rain with violence upon us, as soon as he shall have opened his sluices or waterspouts, there will be no termination to our miseries till he is appeased; for he has in his power means marvellous and unknown for executing his vengeance against us."

We may be safe from one virus (unless it mutates), but God "has in his power means marvellous and unknown" to execute his judgment against sinful humanity. So let's not get our hopes out of proportion. If a successful vaccine is rolled out, it will be a signal mercy of God. But let's not think we will then be exempt from his judgment. Only the death and resurrection of Christ can bring the wonderful assurance that "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

All three of these warnings need to be heard whenever God shows his kindness to us in any way. When any of us is wonderfully cured of an illness, we can fall into these traps. When medics develop a cure for any disease, we should heed these warnings. But perhaps the COVID-19 pandemic and the prospect of a vaccine has given unusual publicity to these dangers?

So, I do hope the vaccine project is successful. I really, really do. Still, though, I want to pray that God's kindness will lead us to fresh repentance, that his gifts will move us to gratitude, and that a temporary reprieve won't stop us from fleeing to Christ from the wrath to come—and urging others to do the same.

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Robert Bruce on the Lord's Supper



We often think of salvation as the pivotal issue of the Reformation. Crucial though it was, part of the Reformers' concern for a recovery of Biblical truth was a right understanding of the sacraments. Though the abuse of Jesus' gift to His Church provoked strong, and at times polarised, positions from the early Reformers, Calvin's view was adopted by the Westminster Assembly and became the standard for many of our churches. That said, I dare say that were a poll to be taken today as to the purpose and benefit of the sacrament within our congregations, we might encounter many scratched heads. Is there a communication of grace through the sacrament or merely a helpful aid to failing memories? If we have received Christ through the hearing of the Gospel, why do we need the sacrament? If we have received grace, can we receive more grace? It's with questions like these that Robert Bruce (1554-1631) is able to help. He preached a series of sermons in 1589 that were so well received that they have been in print ever since, and were thought by the editor of the 1614 edition 'worthy to be written in letters of gold'. It's not that Bruce adds anything to Calvin's excellent work on the Supper, but that in the context of congregational ministry he is able to communicate with a pastor's sensitivity and understanding to a congregation of folk just like you and me.

1. What is a Sacrament?

Bruce tells us that a sacrament is 'a (a) holy sign and (b) seal that is (c) annexed to the preached Word of God to seal up and confirm the truth contained in the same Word'.¹

a. As a sign the sacrament in both the elements and actions points us in a very visceral manner to the reality of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. The bread and the breaking of it point to the flesh of our Lord as well as His 'pain, anguish and distress of heart under the weight and indignation of the wrath of God'. The wine and the pouring of it point to His blood and its separation from His flesh.² However, as a sacramental sign the Lord's Supper actually delivers Christ and His benefits to the believer because of a God-ordained connection between the sign and the thing signified. Bruce said, '*I call them signs because they have the Body and Blood of Christ conjoined with them. Indeed, so truly is the Body of Christ conjoined with the bread, and the Blood of Christ conjoined with the wine, that as soon as you receive the bread in your mouth (if you are a faithful man or woman) you receive the Body of Christ in your soul.*'³ Why? A picture or an idea of Jesus cannot save you. As with a decent meal, in order to get the benefits, you can't just look at it. And in the same way, if we are to enjoy the benefits of Jesus, we must receive Him.⁴ Our Lord says, 'this is my Body'. This is a promise which, rightly understood, indicates the

presence of Christ and His benefit in the Sacrament.⁵ Other texts like 1 Cor 12:13 describe the sacraments as truly conveying the spiritual benefits they represent.⁶

b. In times past, any official document would have been given a seal, a wax lump imprinted with the mark of the authority that stood behind it, in order to confirm its authenticity to the recipient. The Sacrament as a seal confirms that Christ is truly delivered to the faithful recipient.⁷ It is as though you were given the title and deed to a piece of land. You are then in no doubt about the lawful possession of that land. Well, when you receive the sacrament in faith, you lawfully receive possession of Jesus Christ, and are in no doubt that He is truly yours.⁸

c. It is crucial to catch that the Word is part of the definition of a sacrament. We are reminded that the sacrament must be regulated by the express commands and instructions of our Lord and His Apostles,⁹ which safeguards us from all the profanations of Rome and others, for example removing the cup from the people of God.¹⁰ The moment you cease to have a sacrament regulated by the Word, it is no longer a sacrament.

2. What is the purpose of the Sacrament?

There are four.

1. It is a public testimony to the whole world that we 'avow and worship Christ', and 'that we might also testify of our love towards His members, our brothers'. What a great display to the world of our collective dependence on Christ, and bond in Him, as we humbly and reverently gather around His table.

2. It is an opportunity for thanksgiving; every time we come, we have set before us all that He has done for us.

3. It is sovereign medicine for all our diseases. It is a regular call to repentance, an invitation to reconciliation, a declaration of assurance, one that can remove all doubts and fears.¹¹

4. It is nourishment for the soul. As the 'bread is able to nourish your body for this earthly and temporal life; so the flesh of Christ, signified by the bread, is able to nourish both body and soul to everlasting life'.¹²

3. How do we receive Christ through the Sacrament?

We've said that the sacrament truly delivers Jesus, and that this is because of a God-ordained connection between the sign and the thing signified. But what is the nature of that connection, and how does it work?

It is not that the bread and body of Christ occupy the same physical place (against the Lutheran teaching of consubstantiation). Nor is the physical flesh of Christ in any way present (against the Roman Catholic teaching of transubstantiation). Our Lord has a real body and He is seated at the right hand of our Father in Heaven.

As Bruce points out, if the things signified were physically present, the sign would be redundant.¹³ What then is the connection? It is a sacramental connection. It is of a 'mystical, secret, and spiritual' nature, one that cannot be fully explained or demonstrated, but one that is to be perceived with the 'heavenly eye', that is of faith.¹⁴ In order to understand the connection we must think about it within the broader category of our union with Christ.

How is it that we are united to Christ? Through the Holy Spirit and faith. It is through the operation of the Spirit alone that we enjoy any participation in Christ. It is the Spirit 'who seals Him up in our hearts, and confirms us more and more in Him' (2 Cor 1:20-22, 1 Cor 6:17, John 3:6)¹⁵. There is no union with Christ apart from the Spirit and therefore the connection between Christ and the believer in the sacrament must be of a spiritual nature.¹⁶ It is also by faith. Spirit-enabled faith apprehends Christ as He is offered to us, and He is offered to us in the Supper. Bruce uses as an illustration the woman with the flow of blood. She reached out and grabbed the hem of Christ's garment, not his flesh, and power went out of Him to heal her. How so? Because 'with faith, which is the hand of the soul, she touched her Saviour, God and man'. Faith was the instrument through which she received grace from Christ. And this is confirmed by His words, 'go your way, your faith has saved you'.¹⁷ As Jesus Christ is received by faith through the Spirit under the ministry of the Word, He is likewise received under the ministry of the Sacrament.

Is He then present in the Supper? Yes. 'Not in the bread and wine, nor in the accidents or substance of bread and wine. We hold that Christ is present in the Supper because He is present to our soul, to our spirit and faith'¹⁸. He is not present outwardly and physically, but inwardly and spiritually. But can something be truly ours if it is set at a great distance from us? Yes. Again with the example of a title and deed to a piece of land, it may be very far from you physically, but it is no less yours than if you were standing upon it.¹⁹ Can we truly know the benefits of a thing a far off? Yes. 'Is not the body of the sun in the heavens? It is impossible for you to touch the body of the sun, and yet the body of the sun and you are conjoined by the beams and by the light that shine on you'²⁰. Thus, Christ is truly present, truly yours, and truly beneficial to your soul as you come to the Table in faith. Bruce summarises his teaching in these words: 'This secret conjunction, then, is brought about by faith and by the Holy Spirit. By faith we lay hold upon the Body and Blood of Christ, and though we are as far distant as heaven and earth are, the Spirit serves as a ladder to conjoin us with Christ, like the ladder of Jacob, which reached from the ground to the heavens. So the Spirit of God conjoins the Body of Christ to my soul'.²¹

4. Why do we need Christ through the Sacrament?

If we can have the Word without the Sacrament, and if it is the same Christ who is ours in the Word and in the Sacrament, then why have the Sacrament at all? And this is Bruce's answer, 'that you may get the same thing better than you had it in the Word', which is to say, you get Christ better. But in what sense? The ideas amount to two things, greater assurance of Christ and His benefits to you, and the greater effects of Christ felt within you. Remember what we have said about the sacrament as a seal. It is like that title and deed. When you look to your baptism, when you come to the Table, it is as though you are receiving a physical, legal, claim to Jesus.²² When you come, believing, God declares His Son is yours and removes every cause for doubt. Although you may have believed the substance of the Sacrament before, 'by the seals, you believe it better'.²³

And the more we are assured of Him, the more our faith grows, and the benefits of Christ are felt in our lives. He says, 'where I had but a little grip of Christ before, as it were, between my finger and my thumb, now I get Him in my whole hand, and indeed the more my faith grows, the better grip I get of Christ Jesus'.²⁴ But for Bruce this is not just about affirming faith, and thereby growing it, but also a real increase of spiritual grace through the communication of Christ to the soul. Bruce says, 'The sacrament awakens all the outward senses, such as the eye, the hand, and all the rest. When the outward senses are moved, without doubt the Holy Spirit concurs, moving the heart all the more'.²⁵ He says, through the sacrament 'Christ may have more room in which to reside in our narrow heart than He could have by the hearing of the simple Word'.²⁶ He says, 'my faith is nourished, the bounds of my soul are enlarged'; each time you come, you grow 'in knowledge, apprehension and feeling'.²⁷ He says it is like how the soul gives the body life, movement and feeling, so Christ is to our soul, what our soul is to our body. He quickens the soul with heavenly life. But He is to the soul a thousand times greater than the soul is to the body. 'Whereas the body by the presence of the soul gets only an earthly and temporal life, subject to continual misery, but by the presence of Christ in my soul, I see a blessed life, I feel a blessed life, and that life daily increases in me more and more'.²⁸

5. A Help to you as you approach the Table

Bruce encourages us to keep a distinction in mind made by Irenaeus, who said 'a sacrament consists of two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly', or the sign and the thing signified.²⁹ So that, at the time of administration, we are to think of a parallelism between sign and substance: '*When you are at the Lord's Table,*

watching what the minister does outwardly, in breaking and distributing the bread, in pouring out and distributing the wine, think of this: Christ is as busy doing all these things spiritually to your soul. He is as busy giving to you His own body, with His own hand; He is as busy giving to you His own Blood, with its power and efficacy. Likewise, in this action, if you are a faithful Communicant, think of what the mouth does, and how the mouth of the body is occupied outwardly; in the same way, the hand and mouth of the soul, which is faith, are occupied inwardly. As your mouth takes the bread and the wine, so the mouth of your soul takes the Body and Blood of Christ, and that by faith'.³⁰

Let me end by commending to you these tremendous sermons. They are in print through Christian Focus under the title *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*. They have blessed my soul and moved forward my understanding and practice of the sacrament; since reading them I have made several adjustments to the administration of the Supper in Sunderland where I serve as a church planting minister. May the Lord richly bless you as you come humbly and in faith to the feast of grace He has so magnanimously spread before you.

¹Robert Bruce, *The Mystery of the Lord's Supper*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2012), 33.

²Ibid, 76-77. ³Ibid, 35. ⁴Ibid, 73. ⁵Ibid, 139. ⁶Ibid, 104.

⁷Ibid, 108. ⁸Ibid, 102. ⁹Ibid, 114. ¹⁰Ibid, 116. ¹¹Ibid, 69-70.

¹²Ibid, 48. ¹³Ibid, 44. ¹⁴Ibid, 45. ¹⁵Ibid, 37. ¹⁶Ibid, 104.

¹⁷Ibid, 106. ¹⁸Ibid, 139. ¹⁹Ibid, 102. ²⁰Ibid, 94. ²¹Ibid, 96.

²²Ibid, 102. ²³Ibid. ²⁴Ibid, 84. ²⁵Ibid, 61. ²⁶Ibid, 59.

²⁷Ibid, 84-85. ²⁸Ibid, 90-91. ²⁹Ibid, 32. ³⁰Ibid, 77.



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The ethics of Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions (Part 1)

This is the first of four planned articles on issues relating to health care ethics. These will focus on decisions relating to Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) or, more specifically, decisions not to attempt CPR - so called Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) orders. I have chosen this topic as it can be a cause of confusion and distress among patients and carers and source of anxiety for staff. I have based my thoughts on questions and misconceptions which I have encountered in clinical practice. Decisions about CPR may result in media headlines, for example, concerns surrounding the use of DNACPR orders in care homes during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. This is an emotive issue and I hope to provide some background regarding the medical practice of CPR as well as the ethical issues it raises. The expression 'first world problem' can safely be applied to decisions regarding CPR, as it is a practice dependent on the availability of modern medical technologies and resources.

When is CPR performed and what does it involve?

CPR describes a combination of techniques designed to support a patient's circulation in the event of a cardiac arrest, that is when the patient's heart has stopped beating effectively and their blood is no longer circulating. Cardiac arrest can be due to a number of causes, some relating to the heart itself and others relating to conditions outside of the heart. If a patient suffers a cardiac arrest there is only a very short time, a matter of a few minutes, before irreversible damage occurs to the brain and other organs. Thus the goal of CPR is to maintain a sufficient supply of oxygen to the brain and heart while the cause of cardiac arrest can be identified and treated. The blood may be oxygenated by mouth-to-mouth respiration whilst chest compressions provide a low volume circulation of oxygenated blood to the vital organs. Together these comprise basic life support. More advanced techniques include using a bag-valve-mask combination for the respirations, or attaching the bag to a tube placed directly into the patient's airway through the mouth (endotracheal intubation). CPR is traumatic. Survivors will complain of rib pain. Broken ribs can occur. Basic life support is very much a holding measure until the cause of the cardiac arrest is found and dealt with. Often the cause is not correctible. The situation, so often portrayed in television medical dramas, where an electric shock (defibrillation) can return the heart to a normal effective rhythm, occurs only in a minority of cases. Even if there is a return of the patient's circulation, a period in the intensive care unit (ICU) may be necessary to support organ function until it is clear that the patient is truly recovering. This too may be arduous. It is much easier to start mechanical ventilation than it is to stop, as a process of weaning the patient off the ventilator

is required. For this the patient must have regained sufficient respiratory function to make the jump off the machine and back to normal breathing. Sometimes this step is not possible. This is one reason why intensive care physicians may be reluctant to take someone with poor baseline health to ICU for respiratory support.

Why has CPR become such an emotive issue?

In many respects CPR should be viewed in the same way as other treatments; there are situations where it would be of benefit, others where it would be of questionable benefit and others where there would be no benefit and indeed potential harms. In those circumstances where it would be of benefit then the question is would the patient consent to the treatment. Basically this can be summarised: would the treatment work, and if it would work, would the patient want it? So then, why is the decision-making process for CPR such a contentious issue? One reason is the fact that there have been so many instances where the decision has been made not on clinical grounds nor according to the patient's wishes but instead based on a clinician's judgement regarding a patient's quality of life. Such value judgements are clearly subjective and open to challenge. Sadly, these cases have caused great anxiety and distrust. Lack of communication is another major factor. Another reason may be the public perception of the likelihood of success and a lack of awareness of the potential arduous nature of ICU which may end in a prolonged death rather than a return to health. A final concern, perhaps more prevalent among those from a Christian perspective, is the thought of the medical team 'playing God' and denying a loved one a chance of life. We will discuss each of these in turn.

Asking hard questions

We have said that a decision regarding CPR should be made on the basis of the answers to the questions 'Would it work?' and, if so, 'Does the patient want it?' So far, so good, but what if the questions are not asked? This may be as the result of an oversight or sometimes, even though doctors are encouraged to discuss CPR on admission to hospital, cardiac arrest may be thought an unlikely occurrence and the matter is not raised. In such circumstances, if there is no discussion and no DNACPR order the presumption will be to call the cardiac arrest team if the patient collapses. Hence a patient may receive CPR even if they would have declined had it been discussed. Another reason for not asking is the simple fact that these are difficult things to discuss. Legal opinion and guidelines on good practice tell doctors that if there is a significant risk of cardiac arrest they should discuss this with the patient. This sounds well and good in the teaching session but it is different matter in the cold neon glare of the admissions unit, holding the hand of the ill person who has come to you for help and whom you have only just met. Who would feel comfortable confronting them with their mortality, discussing treatments that would not help, only to tell them they will not be offered?

Sometimes the questions are not asked because the patient is unable to communicate their opinion in a meaningful way. This may be due to short-term impairment, such as coma or delirium, or a longstanding problem such as intellectual disability or dementia. In these situations the medical team are encouraged to discuss the situation with those closest to the patient in order to get an idea as to what the patient's view would be (or if the matter had been discussed before the onset of

cognitive impairment, what their expressed wishes would have been). It is important to emphasise that the medical team are not asking the family to make the decision: it remains a clinical decision but an idea of the patient's wishes helps the team make that decision. Unless someone has legal guardianship or power of attorney they cannot give consent on behalf of another adult. Even then, they can only give consent to a planned treatment, they cannot compel a medical team to provide a treatment that is not clinically indicated.

Likelihood of success and chance of harm

Sometimes doctors will be accused of 'playing God' in withholding CPR and are felt to be denying the patient a chance of life. We have already discussed the success rate of CPR and its likelihood of good outcome being limited to certain situations. Perhaps it would be helpful to compare CPR to surgical procedures where there may be a discussion of the proposed operation, its chances of success and its potential side effects. The outcome of such a conversation may be that the patient may not want the surgery, the medical team may feel that the operation would not be of benefit or even that the patient would not survive the anaesthetic. For some reason such discussions do not provoke such strong feelings as those about CPR. In response to the accusation of playing God, it is perhaps equally applicable to those who would try to prolong someone's life when their time has clearly come. As mentioned above, attempting CPR when it would be of no benefit can make the difference between a tranquil death and a flurry of activity and no additional benefit.

‘But he has no quality of life’

A (hopefully) past problem has been that clinicians have made decisions based not on physiology or the patient’s wishes but on their own evaluation of the patient’s present or future quality of life. For example, a physician may have viewed someone with dementia as having a quality of life which they themselves would have thought unbearable, regardless of what the opinion of the patient or their family might have been. Such evaluations are often wrong. Someone who has significant physical or mental impairment may have a positive view of life with precious interactions with others. Such value judgements often ignore the inherent value of the individual. (We will discuss the question of personhood and the value of persons more fully in a future essay).

‘Isn’t DNACPR just the same as euthanasia?’

The answer here is an emphatic NO! Despite the depictions in hospital dramas, the outcome of CPR is usually poor. Fewer than 20% of adult patients having an in-hospital cardiac arrest will survive to discharge. Frail patients are much more likely to have a poor response to CPR. A decision to withhold CPR is often part of a care plan that acknowledges the limitations of medical techniques to offer benefit in a given set of circumstances.

‘So you’re just going to let him die?’

Another misconception is that the placing of a DNACPR order is the same as a decision to withhold or withdraw other treatments. For example, the medical team may make a decision to treat a patient with sepsis aggressively with antibiotics, intravenous fluids and oxygen therapy

but at the same time put in place a ‘ceiling of care’ where intensive care and CPR in the event of cardiac arrest would be inappropriate. The topic of withholding or withdrawing treatment could justify an essay in itself, but for the moment we will simply note that medicine has its limits and, if a patient is deteriorating despite best therapy, especially if that therapy is arduous, then it may be appropriate to withdraw that treatment. Comfort care will be continued. Whilst the decision to withdraw treatment in a dying patient will involve a DNACPR order the contrary is not necessarily true.

The role of the courts

Given the strong feeling that CPR evokes it is perhaps not surprising that disagreements about resuscitation decisions have reached the courts. Such legal rulings affect practice and are subsequently reflected in clinical guidelines. However, questions of law and ethics are not identical and the law should have sound ethical basis.

CPR and Covid-19

A more recent worry has been the suggestion that in the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, with concerns that hospital and critical facilities could be overwhelmed, DNACPR orders were put in place indiscriminately for nursing home residents and the frail. Of course, the blanket use of DNACPR orders flies in the face of standard practice. However, there may well be more patients requiring critical care beds than there are beds available. In such circumstances, difficult decisions regarding access to intensive care (and so also CPR) would have to be made. There is therefore a tension between the desire to use resources to the best advantage (an approach known known as utilitarianism), to

do the greatest good for the greatest number, and the duty to care for each individual (duty based ethics). We shall discuss the theory behind this in more detail in the next essay.

In conclusion

I have tried to describe the process and procedures involved in CPR and to give some idea of the reasons when it may be thought an inappropriate intervention for certain patients. I have also attempted to dispel some common misconceptions. Clearly the challenge of making sound judgements still exists and the pressures of the current pandemic have highlighted this. I am conscious that, for an article in the Evangelical Presbyterian, this piece has little theological content and no Bible references. However, I hope that it has prepared the ground for the following essays in which I plan to use the issues raised to discuss the processes involved when considering questions of clinical ethics, and how the conflicting Christian and secular ideas of personhood and the value of life clash when considering these issues.



Michael Trimble has been attending Stranmillis EPC since 1993, and works as a physician in the Royal Victoria Hospital. He is married to Rachel and they have three children, David, Sophia and Solomon.



Conversations with the King

Ben-Israel conducts the first of 4 interviews with Solomon, king of Israel.

Ben-Israel:

Your majesty, thank you for the opportunity to spend time with you today. You're a busy man, and I know I'm only one of many who are eager to hear your wisdom – you're getting a name for it! I know from speaking to others that your interests are wide and we could spend hours talking about dendrology, zoology, ornithology, herpetology and ichthyology; but I think our readers are most interested in you yourself, the man of wisdom, the king of peace!

This time of peace we're all enjoying is wonderful; we've never had it so good. The kingdom has expanded and the nation of Israel is a happy place to be, we are indeed a blessed people. What would you say has been the key of your success?

King Solomon:

You've started with an easy one! The key is wisdom. Wisdom is the key to living God's way, and His way is always best. Wisdom has brought an order to the kingdom that has evaded us until now; I've a good cabinet, men of faith, men I can trust. The priesthood has been purged from the wickedness of Eli's family. The military has a new commander-in-chief – Benaiah whom I can trust; not only with my own life, but with the life of this great nation. I've got 12 good governors as well, who see that every region in the kingdom is provided for.

The days of chaos are over. Those days of war that my father lived through are at an end; they may have been exciting days for your readers to mull over on paper, but they were not good days to live through. God's wisdom has given us order and joy; His wisdom is excellent.

Ben-Israel:

Excellent indeed, but it wasn't an easy transition for you – the nation was facing disaster when you were crowned king. I mean, your brother Adonijah laid claim to the throne before you, those were fragile days for the kingdom, perhaps you could give us the inside story as to how you came to be recognised as our true king.

King Solomon:

This one is not so easy to talk about! What can I say? My father was old, I think he had taken his eye off the ball a little bit. Maybe he just didn't see the coming treachery from my brother Adonijah.

To be honest, he was spoiled; my father never rebuked him much for the things he did; he grew up getting his own way most of the time. He was a good-looking boy too, as was our more infamous brother Absalom. Like him, Adonijah had illusions of grandeur and tried to take the throne for himself. He thought he had it sussed when he secured the help of military through General Joab, and the help of the priesthood through Abiathar, but when my mother and Nathan the prophet told him what was afoot, he wasted no time. He made sure the nation knew what was the will of the LORD. Zadok anointed me and proclaimed me king of Israel.

And I wish that that were the end of it, but those involved in the plot to take the throne were to prove troublesome. My father warned me about it, he told me to deal decisively with them. He knew all about such trouble in his own life, so I took his advice to heart. He may have been old, but he could spot trouble brewing a mile away! Adonijah tried another cunning plan to usurp the throne, he even involved my mother, but she told me what he was up to and so I swore to the LORD that he would die, and he was executed. When General Joab heard that news he tried to escape, running to the altar of the LORD for refuge; but he was unrepentant so there was no forgiveness, he suffered the same fate.

Those days were chaotic and everything felt very fragile, but I see it now clearly. The LORD was in charge, He is of course the High King of Israel, I'm only His Vice-Regent. My father taught me a song about God's sovereign reign; it goes like this:

'Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.'"

It's such a comforting song for me to remember and sing, and it's also intriguing because it doesn't stop there. It must speak of a greater king, greater than me and my father, a king begotten of the LORD, a king described as God's own Son, a king who will inherit all the nations and the very ends of the earth! So while things are very good in Israel today – there are bigger and better days to come under that King!

Ben-Israel:

That is something for us all to look forward to, in fact it's something for all the world to look forward to. That song certainly sets something burning in our hearts and we'll look forward with anticipation to His coming! Those songs of your father are becoming well known, and I find there's a song for pretty much any occasion; whether one is full of the joy of the LORD, or down in the dumps, or facing trouble, and even when our conscience convicts us of sin – I've heard people say "There's a psalm for that!" Do you have a favourite?

King Solomon:

That's a hard question for a different reason; they all have their own place and my favourite can change even with my circumstances. That said, I love number 103, a great psalm of praise for all of God's mercy. [Solomon breaks into song] "Praise God, my soul! With all my heart, let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits; His praise, my soul, in song proclaim. The LORD forgives you all your sins, and heals your sickness and distress; Your life he rescues from the grave, and crowns you in his tenderness."

I've been crowned by the tenderness of the LORD, He is the One who truly satisfies – all the gold of Israel doesn't satisfy, and believe me there's plenty! It's only the LORD. He is the One who renews our strength – yes, I've got governors who well supply the nation with everything they physically need, but in truth – it's the LORD who renews our strength! He is merciful and kind – none else can forgive our sins, only the LORD! He is slow to anger and full of grace. He loves us! He loves us the way a father loves his child! And to those who fear Him, His love is everlasting!

Ben-Israel:

Perhaps you could tell us more about that "fear of the LORD", a good number of your proverbs speak about it. One of them says "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom", and you've already said that wisdom is the key to your success. How does fear of the LORD produce wisdom?

King Solomon:

First of all, I must give credit to my father – he gave us that proverb first! It's in one of his psalms, number 111 by memory. But it's certainly worth repeating and living by. To fear the LORD is to know Him. Not just know about Him – but to live in relationship with Him.

Again, my father taught me this near the end of his life. He said to me “Keep the charge of the LORD your God, walk in His ways, keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgements and His testimonies.” To fear Him is to stand in awe of who He is and live the life He wants you to live.

It is to know His heart, to see even the edges of His immense love, to hear that love in His promises, and even to feel it in one’s own soul. We out of all the nations are so blessed, to us has been given the very oracles of God! We have the Torah! We know how we’re here – The LORD God, our God, created the world and all that is in it. We know why things are not always perfect in the world, we know why there are wars and disputes, we know why nature is red in tooth and claw; the Torah tells us all these things are the result of mankind’s fall into sin. It also tells us that the LORD has promised to send a rescuer to put things right – maybe that’s what my father had in mind when he wrote psalm number 2. The rescuer will be the King!

Those words from the LORD also tell us that we as God’s people are exceedingly precious to Him. He has entered into covenant bond with us, He has promised to be our God and we will be His people. God entered into covenant with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and that same bond of love was renewed with my father David. Knowing God’s heart, knowing that amazing grace; living in that amazing grace – that’s the fear of the LORD. It changes the way we live. When we stop and consider the LORD’s sovereign loving hand, it brings wisdom.

I want to live His way; I want to reign in a way that reflects His great wisdom. I see His wisdom displayed even when I study my trees, reptiles, birds and fish – their design, the way they are suited to their various habitats, the way they interact with other species – God’s wisdom is wonderful, God’s ways are wonderful. There is no one like the LORD our God!

Ben-Israel:

It’s plain for me to see, Your Majesty, that you really love the LORD. Indeed, it’s something that is said of you: you “love the LORD and walk in the statutes of your father David.” I find it a challenge personally, because I too would class myself as a faithful Israelite, but I sometimes wonder if my friends and colleagues would say it about me: “Ben loves the LORD.” So perhaps you could tell us about your relationship with the LORD, I think it’s something our readers would really benefit from, me included.

King Solomon:

This is personal alright! But that doesn’t mean that it’s private, I’m glad you asked about this. Sometimes we in Israel are far too slow to talk about our relationship with the LORD! We can talk about Him, we can talk covenant and theology, we can talk Torah, but clam up when it comes to our daily walk with the LORD. And that’s what it is; it’s a day by day walk with Him who loves us.

We talk. I pray to Him and He speaks to me. There have been special times when He has spoken to me directly, but ordinarily I hear Him in His Word, in His statutes, His commandments, His judgments and His testimonies. His Words are not dead, but living and active – He speaks, and He speaks to me.

I’m also learning to listen, I know I haven’t always listened to His word, I sometimes still sacrifice and burn incense on the high places. I know that’s a Canaanite thing, I know the LORD hates it, but it’s easy and everybody does it... And yes, I know I need to get building a house for the LORD, my father has made many preparations already, but I’ve got side-tracked into building my own house. Maybe you know what it’s like, when you just need to get something done and then, yes then, I’ll devote my time to the LORD’s work. I know that it’s not right to do things this way, but it’s just the way it’s fallen out... And let me give you one more flaw in your king, I’ve taken the daughter of Pharaoh to be my wife – it’s a good political move, peace with Egypt is a good thing, it’s something for all Israel to enjoy, who doesn’t like peace?! And yet, in this thing, I suspect the LORD isn’t too pleased.

I don’t want to treat this interview as some sort of confessional, but I’m just being honest, my love for the LORD may be spoken about on the street, but I know it’s flawed; it’s still real, I still love Him, but it’s far from perfect.

Ben-Israel:

Thank you for your openness, Your Majesty. You’re right, we often struggle when talking about our walk with God, and perhaps all too often we are less than honest, especially with regards to our inward struggles and sins. You said, you’re learning to listen, but what about speaking with the LORD? What about prayer? Any pearls of wisdom?

King Solomon:

Pray to the LORD not only as His child, but as His little child. People expect me to have all the answers. I'm Solomon the Wise after all! But the truth is I have bowed before the LORD God and said "I do not know how to go out or come in." I've told the LORD, "you put me here in the midst of your great people – I need your wisdom." I have cried to God "I'm a little child – your little child."

And the LORD was pleased. He is my Father in heaven, and He is pleased when I reach for His almighty hand, when I cry to Him for help. So, when you pray, Ben, and your faithful readers – know this, you're His little child, He wants what is best for you, and He loves to hear your prayers. Pray in the certain knowledge that our God will supply all your needs.

Ben-Israel:

Thank you, Your Majesty for your words of wisdom. I'd love to chat again about your plans for this new Temple, a House for the LORD to dwell in!

King Solomon:

As soon as it's finished, Ben, I'll get you booked in! Till then, Shalom.



Robert Johnston is minister of Knock congregation in East Belfast. He is married to Julie and together they are blessed (and kept busy!) with three children; Ben (14), Luke (13) and Sophie (10).



Update from Jackie and Chris

My hand was shaking as I (Chris) handed my notice to my shocked boss back in March 2018. I had just received my confirmation letter for Bible College. It was not easy to walk away; after all, it had been 11 years in Italy, 10 of which I had been a Christian. It felt like giving up the only earthly security I knew. Yet God showed me time and again: I was not stepping into the void, but onto His open hand.

Meanwhile, some 1500 miles north, in Craigavon Hospital, Jackie was having a very similar conversation with her manager. Baffled, her colleagues shook their heads as she told them of her plans to leave her salary and move to The Netherlands - with one month's notice. Yet for Jackie God's call was clear, this was just another leap of faith into the arms of a faithful God. However, she had no idea what surprises were ahead.

We both look back now on these daunting yet defining moments as the start of a deeper, wonderful journey of faith. After meeting at college in August 2018, we soon discovered that God was nudging our paths together. What followed were two years of intense growth, development and God working in our lives in many wonderful ways.

In June 2019, only a few months into our relationship, God starting putting South East Asia on both our hearts. This was a new and surprising path for both of us. It felt like God gently, yet continually gave us pieces of a grand puzzle, until we could not argue that this was His divine leading.

2020 has been especially intense, yet so memorable for us. In March, Chris proposed at the height of the pandemic outbreak, while unexpectedly in Thailand on our re-directed college internship. We finally managed to fly back to Europe before many borders closed, we graduated from college

in July, and, scraping through lockdowns and quarantines, moved to Northern Ireland. Then, on 12th September we were married by Rev Gareth Burke, before God and 28 of our nearest and dearest. God has been so faithful through it all.

Now in lockdown, we enjoy much time to reflect and grow in our marriage, while also preparing intensely for the future. Chris is in the process of joining a mission organisation and has started language learning. Jackie continues in her profession as a midwife, updating her practice and trying to learn some German. We hope that by the end of 2021 we will be able to start the next adventure and move to South East Asia.

In that regard, we are praying towards four important aspects of our future work:

- 1. Physical Access:** Borders within South East Asia are still closed. We pray that by Summer 2021, this situation will change.
- 2. Legal Access:** an initial and a long-term visa.
- 3. Community Access:** we pray already for the community in which we will live, for trust being built and good relationships formed.
- 4. Spiritual Access:** we pray for open doors and open hearts to the Gospel (Acts 16:14, Col 4:3).

Thank you for being with us in this incredible journey with the Lord. Stranmillis EPC and the wider church family has been such a blessing and encouragement to us. Together may we continue to faithfully proclaim God's fame to the ends of the earth.

If you wish to receive our regular updates, please message us at 0790 290 1422.



Looking Outwards in a Lockdown

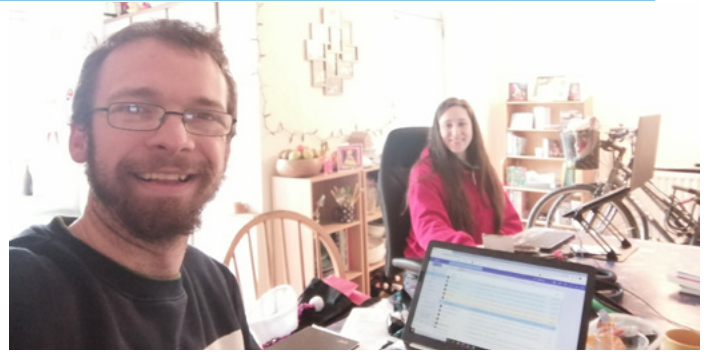
As I write, I'm inside my kitchen in the terraced house that we rent here in Dublin city. It's where I'll be for most hours of most days this month, as we go through another 5km lockdown. Next to me each day at the kitchen table with her headphones on, my wife Neus. It's been a strange first few months of married life!

But as we prepare to be sent as cross-cultural workers by our churches (Stranmillis EPC and Grosvenor Road Baptist Church, Dublin) to a place in the world which doesn't have any local church, the cross-cultural challenge we currently face is a different one! The pandemic has changed life for us all, over-shadowing all of life, restricting our ability to connect with others, robbing us of embodied life and pressing in on us mentally and emotionally.

How do we continue to live in light of our Good Shepherd, who leaves the 99 to find the 1? How do we continue to reflect the outward-looking-ness of Jesus, who defied all social norms to spend hours with people who were radically different to him? How do we join God's heartbeat for the outsider – for those that lie in darkness, without church or Bible – when we can't even meet as a local church during this month?

[Even as we ponder such things, it has been remarkable in lockdown to see two church plants starting in unreached parts of North Dublin. One, a joint initiative between Presbyterians and Anglicans. Another, two CU graduates who went to university with Neus, sent by a Baptist church. Both already growing and reaching out in their geographical area. Who would have thought that in an era of travel and cars, local community would be yearned for again?!

But now, a knock comes on our front door from the family of one of our elders who have walked over to say hello from a distance, dropping us enough scones and jam for both us and our two neighbours whom we asked for prayer for, because we're struggling to get to know them. We can see why up to a third of our regular local Bible study (on Zoom) comes from outside our church family, as they watch on and see a community that serves each other so well (in legal ways) during the pandemic. "You've only just moved here – how come you know so many people?" asked one of my local



running club. "I'd love to come to your Christmas service," said one member of our local environmental group who picks up litter with us each week (from a distance) and bumped into us when we were carolling outside.

Moving to a new city, looking for work in a pandemic and wrestling with lockdown after lockdown has not made life easy as we start married life together. But along with around 15 other graduates from the Christian Unions across the island whom we're in touch with, we're determined to keep looking outwards to the least reached peoples of the world by keeping on preparing to move overseas when the world opens up again. God is not in a rush. And what joy it is to feel His heartbeat for the 'outsider' regardless of where we live!

For more updates on their journey "Towards the Unreached" contact Peter & Neus (pgrier@hotmail.co.uk or www.aljabr7.wordpress.com)

Please pray for:

An enjoyment in sharing God's heartbeat, even in the hard circumstances we all face.

3 people close to faith after a Christianity Explored course online before Christmas.

That local people might come to a Life Explored course starting online this month.

Neus as she continues to work this year with the Christian Union mission teams on campus

Us as we prepare for living overseas (location not mentioned for security reasons)

Other churches across the island as they also sacrificially send these 15 other graduates to Unengaged People Groups.



Richhill Update

In our previous update, Spring 2019, we focused on what we were doing to maintain the work at Richhill during a difficult period. We noted the denominational involvement of Presbytery and the Church Development Committee (CDC) with the Richhill Interim Session in plans to advance the work, while we introduced two Sunday afternoon services each month in place of the existing single monthly service. Following Presbytery's lead, we called our congregations to pray, particularly for the future direction of the work. So, on looking back, that update presented a picture of our efforts to sustain our Richhill witness through Sunday afternoon services while church bodies looked for guidance for the way ahead through the church's prayer.

That prayer has been answered. The joint efforts of CDC and the Richhill Session made specific progress and, in the autumn of 2020, after spending time coming to assurance about the move, Rev. Mark Johnston accepted Presbytery's call to become Minister at Richhill EPC for a second time. He was the first minister and effectively the church planter of Richhill EPC, serving for ten years, 1984-94. Since then he was called successively to ministries in Grove Chapel, Camberwell, London, Proclamation Presbyterian Church (PCA), Philadelphia, and Bethel Presbyterian Church in Cardiff. Mark also serves on the Boards of Banner of Truth Trust and Ligonier Ministries, UK. He has authored and contributed to a number of books.

Mark has unbounded enthusiasm to get back into the work for which he has great vision and expectation. He had hoped to arrive back in Richhill early in January 2021, but lockdown restrictions in Wales delayed the completion of conveyancing and his move until February. Meantime, we prepared the church building for his new ministry, particularly the refurbishing and equipping of his study—located in the area above the entrance doors. Richhill has a lovely building and site with excellent facilities for all aspects of a developing work, but parts of it now require significant renewal or upgrading, both inside and outside, during the coming months. One of the major features Mark has been working on is a Richhill website and he has brought it through a series of development versions working with a professional web service and in consultation with the Richhill session.

Compared with the previous article, this update is landmark indeed and offers specific grounds for looking forward expectantly to a new era in Richhill EPC. Let us be careful to return our fulsome thanks to the Lord for bringing us to this point. But that point is just the beginning. The work of re-building the church lies ahead and there is every indication that it will require hard, sustained, patient work. It will not succeed without the church's prayer for the project as a whole and for Mark, Fiona and Lindsay personally. It will need practical help to become established and to reach a level of self-sufficiency. For example, there will be an initial 'infantry' advertising campaign to the homes of Richhill and surrounding villages and hamlets. Mark intends to continue the Sunday afternoon services before moving to a normal morning and evening schedule. Help may be required at that time to supplement the congregation by visitors. CDC and the session will have to provide constant support for Mark in a number of areas. Congregations usually have a range of resources within them; Richhill will be very resource-deficient at first.

We wish to thank, most sincerely, all the Richhill friends and EPC visitors, who have faithfully sustained the work during the past few years and who have lived in the hope of a new day. We include in our thanks: all our ministers who have preached during this period of vacancy, Presbytery and CDC for their engagement with us, Presbytery and friends in England, Wales and United States who have expressed their support by grants and donations towards our start-up costs. Two verses press their instruction and encouragement on us as we begin: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain." (Ps 127.1) "Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." (Rev 3.8)

ECB



Update from David Trimble

Last year I finished two years spent as a ministry apprentice. The first year was with St Andrews Free Church which I attended as a student, the second at a new plant in Glasgow called Christ Church Glasgow (or CCG). Over both of these years I studied at Cornhill Scotland in Glasgow.

I must confess I had never considered ministry before I was guided towards the two year apprenticeship by the pastors in St Andrews. Nevertheless, not long after I had started the apprenticeship, I recognised the Spirit leading me to pursue ministry training. And so, in September, I began my studies at Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS) as a ministry candidate for Free Church of Scotland. In conjunction with this I have also stayed at CCG where I serve as a minister-in-training.

This means that half my time is spent working with CCG (the practical training) and half at ETS (the classroom training). Classroom is maybe not quite the right word as all teaching has, so far, happened over Zoom! Although this has made it harder to get to know my classmates, it is a blessing that teaching is still able to happen.

This year I am taking classes in Practical Theology where we have thought about mission and discipleship, Old Testament where we have learnt about covenant theology and the Pentateuch, and Greek. It's been a joy to have spent a semester learning more about God's word and its application. I even surprised myself by enjoying Greek (although perhaps not the number of words one has to learn!).



These classes continue in 2021 alongside work at CCG which includes preaching, running the student group and writing Bible study material for our community groups, amongst other responsibilities.

Having the opportunity to serve in the church alongside the work for ETS has been incredibly helpful. It has meant the academic rigour of seminary has been balanced out with learning what the work of a pastor looks like on the ground.

The hope is that I will continue training part-time like this for four years, after which, God willing, I will receive my licence.

This year has not been without its challenges, of course. Covid has made everything trickier as we all know too well. Nevertheless, although work and study are perhaps more arduous than before, and meeting people much harder than before, there is much to be grateful for. I'm particularly grateful for the hard work of the lecturers at ETS and the wise mentorship of Jonathan de Groot, minister at CCG.

I would value prayers that I would continue to learn and grow, and that I would honour Christ in my learning, preaching and every other arena in which I have work. I would also value prayer for CCG as we continue to navigate our way through the pandemic (as we all are!), and for my wife, Ashton, whose first year as a junior doctor has had more challenges than usual given the coronavirus.

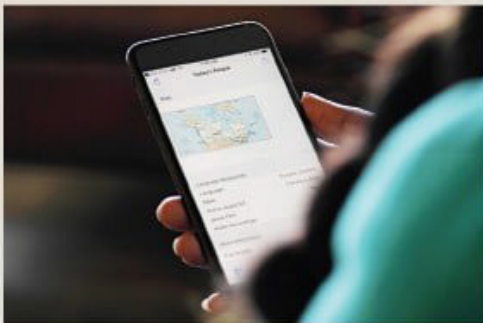


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Obituary of Mrs Lily Logue (Stranmillis EPC)



The congregation of Stranmillis received the sad news on Tuesday 29th December of the home-call of Mrs Lily Logue. Mrs Logue, along with her husband Ivan and their family, joined the Stranmillis Church in 1980. Mrs Logue was a wonderfully faithful member who, while health permitted, never missed the Sunday services or the midweek prayer meeting. She was born in the Shankill district of Belfast on 8th May 1934. Converted to Christ while a young girl of twelve years of age, she was gifted with a good singing voice and in her youth sang in various mission halls and churches. The hymns which she sang remained with her all her life so that even in her latter days when, sadly, her memory was seriously declining she was able to recall the words of these gospel songs.

On 30th May 1953 Lily married Ivan Logue and the Lord was to bless them as a couple with four daughters, Mildred, Jennifer, Sharon and Ruth. Mrs Logue was a loving wife and a caring mother, but throughout her life she knew much trial and suffering. Her mother died when she was just a very young girl and for many years she experienced days of ill-health and weakness. Her husband, Ivan, died on 12th July 1999 and, tragically, her eldest daughter, Mildred, was killed in a road accident on 12th January 2001. Despite the deep seated pain which she knew throughout her life, she persevered in her faith and in her love for Jesus Christ, her Saviour.

At her funeral service in Stranmillis Church, Rev. Gareth Burke reminded the family members who had gathered there, and those in the United States and Australia who were joining by means of a livestream, that 'the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us' (Romans 8:18). At the graveside service in Roselawn cemetery, Rev. John Roger spoke of the glory of heaven which is set before us in Revelation 7. It is our prayer that the family will find comfort in the knowledge that Mrs Logue is now experiencing this glory as one who was so clearly walking with Christ.

To her daughters Jennifer, Sharon and Ruth, to her sons-in-law Gary, Billy, Stephen and Andrew and to her many grandchildren and great grandchildren we tender our deepest sympathy.

GNB

PRAISE & PRAYER

Praise God for his faithfulness during 2020 and pray for his all-sufficient grace for 2021. Pray this for yourself and for your brothers and sisters in the Lord. Join in worshipping the Lamb who is Lord of lords and King of kings. (Rev 17:14)

Praise God that Rev. Mark Johnston has accepted Presbytery's call to become minister of Richhill EPC. Thank God for those who have worked, helped and prayed along the way, and pray for Mark and his family as they move from Cardiff and settle into life and service here.

Pray for the Lord's blessing in building up the Richhill congregation, reaching out to homes in the area and moving to a normal schedule of Sunday morning and evening services.

Ask God to come to the aid of faithful ministers of his word in these trying days. Pray for their encouragement and spiritual stamina. Pray that God would raise up more ministers and elders to serve our own denomination, but also across the nation.

Thank God for leading David Trimble into ministry training, and pray for him that he would continue to learn and grow and honour Christ in every part of his life.

Give thanks for health care workers and for the blessings of medical research and progress. Pray that Christian medical staff will display something of the wisdom, compassion and righteousness of Christ.

PRAISE & PRAYER

Praise God that he is not limited by lockdown restrictions. Praise him for news of church plants in North Dublin and for news of young adults preparing to go to the least reached peoples of the world.

As COVID-19 continues, pray that we would not become disheartened and lethargic in spiritual things, but that we would be salt and light wherever the Lord has placed us. Ask God for evangelism opportunities.

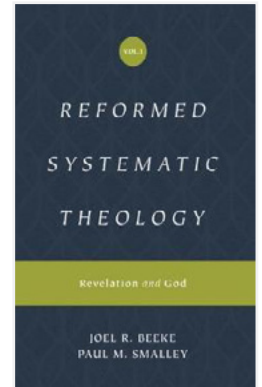
Thank God that he continues to be the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 to find the one. Pray for people in the world who are unreached by the gospel and for Peter and Neus Grier as they prepare for living overseas.

Join Chris and Jackie in praising the Lord for his gracious leading in their lives. As they make plans to move to SE Asia, pray that the problems of closed borders and the need for visas will be overcome. Pray that God would already be at work in the community where they will live, preparing hearts to receive the gospel.

Pray about the difficult situation facing church camp leaders as they make plans amid much uncertainty. Ask the Lord to direct their thoughts and decisions. Pray that children and teenagers who missed out on last summer's camps will have opportunities for Christian teaching, friendship and growth.

Pray for some who have heard the gospel from their youth, but have rejected it. Praise God that, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us... and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Title: *Reformed Systematic Theology Volume 1: Revelation and God*
 Authors: Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley
 Publisher: Crossway
 RRP £47.99 Our Price £35.99



Good doctrine is the life blood of good preaching and the proper fuel for worship and holy living. We need well-crafted theology in order to understand God, how we can have a relationship with him, and how we can live faithfully for him. In that regard, books that summarize the principles of our faith are of crucial importance. It is a difficult thing, however, to provide rich theological explanation that is neither too shallow to be helpful to people who have been Christians for some time, nor too technical for typical Christians to access. Paul Smalley and Joel Beeke have made a profound contribution along these lines, and their series of books *Reformed Systematic Theology* is projected at four volumes in its complete form.

This first volume covers the two doctrinal topics of revelation and God. The first section outlines what theology is and how we go about the task of theology. The tone is helpful in that it balances being traditional with being grounded in good reading of the biblical texts in light of modern biblical studies. This introduction will serve readers well in helping them understand why another book on doctrine is needed, and why this one is useful. The next major section is about revelation, which explains how we can know God. Since God is above the universe, he must make himself known to us. He must speak and tell us what we need to know. God does make himself known through general revelation, which is how we know God through creation, but also through special revelation, which is his overt speaking to his people, which we now have in the Bible. The latter half of the book is about the doctrine of God. The doctrine of God includes a discussion of God's attributes and the Trinity.

This book has numerous strengths and it will be profitable for all readers. It is not overly technical, so it is accessible to most Christians. It is lengthy, but that should not deter typical Christians from thinking it is manageable. Still, it is well-researched, so that it is not superficial or disconnected from the Reformed tradition and even recent research. In an unusual way, this book strikes the middle ground of being informative but also accessible to everyone at all levels of study.

Sometimes pastors shy away from buying big books, since the busyness of sermon preparation and pastoral work does not frequently allow for loads of time for excess reading. I would urge pastors to invest in this collection of books though. Volume 1 is very well organized, so it is very easy to find the discussion about the exact topic that you need. That has not been the case with every recent systematic theology text. Further, there is a good mix of biblical exposition, historical awareness, and practical relevance. These features make this book a helpful tool in the pastoral library. You may not read this book straight through. But it will be a welcome friend for preparing for Sunday school lessons, for refreshing your mind about the nuances of an issue, or finding a few helpful passages to drop into a

sermon to support a point. It is well worth obtaining these books as a standing resource.

Harrison Perkins

Title: [The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism and the Road to Sexual Revolution](#)

Author: [Carl R Trueman](#)

Publisher: [Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2020](#)

Pages: 425

RRP: £27.99 Our Price: £21.99



Whilst I was reading this book, news media were carrying reports of comedian Eddie Izzard, who had previously used the line 'I'm a lesbian trapped in a man's body' in his stage routine, having announced that it was to be 'girl mode from now on'. I suspect that Izzard's former comment, made in 1994, had been assumed by many to be a joke. What are we to make of this more recent statement? This is the question that Carl Trueman aims to answer in this book: how, in such a short space of time, has this concept of a 'woman trapped in a man's body' become a commonly accepted part of the social landscape? Trueman's book is a history of the concept of the self but, as the subtitle of the book states, it is a history of the self in the context of the sexual revolution.

In the introductory chapters, Trueman introduces us to the term *sittlichkeit* which can be roughly translated as the "ethical life" or "ethical order" of a society. For this, he uses the work of three contemporary philosophers, Charles Taylor, Philip Reiff and Alasdair MacIntyre, to build the framework he will use to analyse the situation. This involves Taylor's concept of the social imaginary, that is 'the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surrounding... not based in theoretical terms but carried in images, stories and legends.' To this he adds Reiff's analysis of cultures. First and second worlds justify their moral systems by an appeal to the transcendent: the first world is pagan, based in myth, whilst the second world morality is based on faith; e.g., Christianity. However, in the West we have moved to a third world morality. Third world moralities have no basis in the sacred or transcendent and so justify morality on the basis of themselves. Finally he calls on Alasdair MacIntyre's observation in *After Virtue* that modern morality is pure emotivism. With this framework in place Trueman now explores the historical development of the modern concept of self and its close connection with ideas of sexual liberation and the overthrow of Christian morality and indeed the Christian faith itself.

Trueman begins his historical enquiry with the writings of Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jaques Rousseau. Rousseau introduces the idea that it is an individual's internal life that is their authentic self, but that society constrains the individual and so they cannot be truly free. This thought is reflected in the poetry of William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Blake, who sought to use their poetry to effect a societal change, a 'moral transformation', but a moral transformation based on sentimentality and not the 'misery and servitude' they saw in Christian morality.

In the next section Trueman surveys the philosophical and psychological developments as found in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Charles Darwin. Nietzsche challenges the Enlightenment thinkers- if they want a world without God then they must accept that they must give up Christian ideas of good and evil and forge their own morality. Among other concepts, Marx states his view regarding the need for 'the abolition of religion' to facilitate freedom. And Darwin, as Richard Dawkins once remarked, made it intellectually acceptable to be an atheist.

The third section of the book looks at how the focus of self identity becomes sexual. Not surprisingly the influence of Sigmund Freud is discussed, as are members of the Frankfurt School, such as Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse. Also significant are the development of critical theory and the new interpretations of Marxism and cultural revolution in the writings of Antonio Gramsci. Again, these men view the church as the enemy of progress.

The final section of the book considers how these currents of thought form the contemporary Western *sittlichkeit* with particular regard to sexual freedom, gender issues and transsexuality. Examples are given where the new morality is now enshrined in law and may cause particular difficulties for those who hold to traditional Bible-based moral principles. Most of these examples relate to the USA. The spirit of the age is one which holds an individual's sense of identity, in particular their sexual identity, as key. And this identity is not given - not by genetics, nor biology nor society - it is self-determined. It is important to realise that those who hold such views simply do so as they are now part of the Western social imaginary, part of the *sittlichkeit*. Whilst Trueman states his aim as providing a history, in a postscript he reflects on how the church might respond. His suggestions include: recognising the influence of the aesthetic in contemporary culture, resisting the tendency to give in and instead to rest on transcendent truths of the Biblical narrative; to act as a community; and finally to recover the concept of natural law and maintain a high view of the physical body.

So, does Trueman succeed in answering his question? I think so. He clearly explains the primacy of personal identity in contemporary thought and moral reasoning. It is well referenced - Trueman has done an impressive amount of reading in order to pull together the material required for this book. I am aware that my summary may seem like a list of unfamiliar names but these are the thinkers who have given shape to the modern Western mindset. It is hard to do justice to the breadth of literature that Trueman has summarised. I would especially recommend this book to those involved in educational, social or political roles. As an educator whose remit includes ethics, I found this to be a useful resource. I would also recommend it to anyone who seeks to understand the present times. At over 400 pages it is not light reading but then again it is half the length of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*. Those who would like a shorter work covering some of the same themes could consider Melvin Tinker's [That Hideous Strength](#) (a book to which Trueman has provided the forward).

Michael Trimble

Best of the Blogs

Don't Quarrel Over Opinions But Welcome One Another (Warren Peel)

<https://gentlereformation.com/2020/10/16/stop-quarrelling/>

"These are critical days for our churches. The Devil is always prowling around like a hungry lion, looking for opportunities to sow division between the people of God. He has been doing this since the beginning and is very very good at it. We shouldn't underestimate our Enemy. The covid pandemic has provided him with a perfect storm of circumstances that he is surely trying to exploit to his full advantage."

How do we deal with the end of the world? (Kyle Sims)

<https://gentlereformation.com/2020/12/08/how-do-we-deal-with-the-end-of-the-world/>

"Last week, my barber asked me about a prophecy preacher on Youtube. He was sincere in asking me questions. It would have been easy for me to push it aside, but it got me thinking about what should be our response to people thinking about the end of the world. In fact, over the last few weeks, several people have been asking me about the end of the world. The Pandemic, coupled with social and political unrest, have Christians thinking about Christ's Second Coming. For many, it is a scary time."

Union with God the Trinity (Sinclair Ferguson)

<https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2013/02/union-with-god-the-trinity/>

"Have you ever imagined what it would be like to be within hours of death—not as an elderly person, but as someone condemned to die although innocent of every crime? What would you want to say to those who know and love you best? You would, surely, tell them how much you loved them. You might hope you could give them some comfort and reassurance—despite the nightmare you yourself were facing. You would want to open your heart and say the things that were most important to you. Such poise would surely be praiseworthy. Of course, it would be human nature at its best—because this is what Jesus did, as the Apostle John relates in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17)."

My Favourite Books of 2020 (Tim Challies)

<https://www.challies.com/resources/my-favorite-books-of-2020/>

"We have just about arrived at the end of another year—a year in which I did quite a lot of reading across a variety of subjects. Today I want to offer my picks for the top 10 books of 2020."

A Short Biblical Theology of Sickness

<https://makingandmaturing.com/2020/12/10/a-short-biblical-theology-of-sickness/>

"For me the occasion of being sick in a year when all anyone is talking about is being sick allowed time for reflection on a biblical theology of sickness. Maybe you've wondered if COVID is God's judgment on the world. Maybe you've wondered where Jesus is in the midst of this crisis. Maybe you've just been miserable. God has clearly spoken about sickness in the Bible so that we would be prepared for the inevitable. Perhaps these truths are just the firm foundation we need in the midst of this storm."

Calvin and Piety (Mark Johnston)

<https://www.placefortruth.org/blog/calvin-and-piety>

"John Calvin, the great French Reformer who devoted most of his ministry to the church in Geneva, ranks amongst the most influential theologians of all time. His legacy to the church – and, indeed to the world – goes far beyond what many realise. But out of the many aspects of his legacy there is one that stands out more than others that has probably been given less attention than it deserves and that is his emphasis on piety."

