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NATIONAL CHURCH

VOTES AGAINST BLESSINGS FOR SAME-SEX PARTNERSHIPS

At this month's General Assembly it will be reported that presbyteries have voted against such blessings by 1563 votes to 1007.

Last year the General Assembly narrowly approved the above idea in principle, but after fierce opposition it agreed that each of its 46 local presbyteries would have to ratify the vote.

No doubt Forward Together, an evangelical group within the Kirk, will be delighted with the vote while the liberal wing including the incoming Moderator will be accusing the evangelicals of denying them their freedom of pastoral conscience.

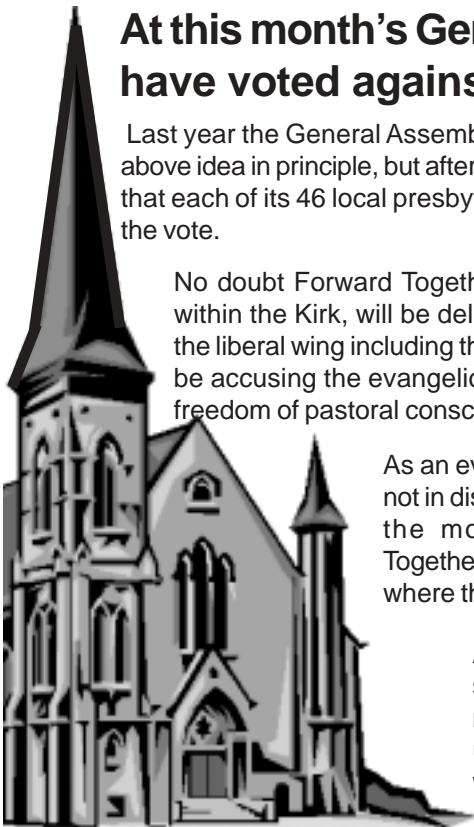
As an evangelical Protestant I am not in disagreement obviously with the moral stand of Forward Together, but I am in disagreement where that stand should be made.

Any church that debates such an issue as before not only brings shame upon itself, but the very wrath of God.

Let me remind the Kirk's evangelicals of the Word of God. *'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?'* 2 Corinthians 6:14. **By Mr Jack Bell**

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MARINE ICON DOES THE ROUNDS



Bishop Peter Moran, Deacon Brian Kilkerr, and Fr Patrick Rice with the icon, which is currently touring the north of Scotland parishes

SCOTLAND'S northernmost diocese has welcomed the icon of Our Lady Star of the Sea, which is on tour in ports and parishes across the country.

The icon, with the Latin name Stella Maris, arrived in the Diocese of Aberdeen at the end of March and is expected to stay there until April 26.

On arrival, Bishop Peter Moran of Aberdeen received the icon during a Lenten Station Mass at Holy Family church in Mastrick after it spent ten days at the cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption in the city.

At the end of Mass, Deacon Brian Kilkerr spoke briefly about his role ministering at ports in Aberdeen and the northeast.

"Our work is to care for seafarers when they visit our ports a long way from their homes and families," the deacon stated.

"Just as Jesus accompanied his disciples in their vessels, helping them in their work and calming storms, so the Church accompanies seafarers, caring for their practical and spiritual needs," he added.

The icon was commissioned by the Apostleship of the Sea, an

organisation offering welfare, hospitality, and spiritual support to those working extended periods at sea.

It is painted in a neo-Coptic style by renowned iconographer Stephane Rene has since been taken to the churches of Our Lady of Aberdeen in Kincorth and St Joseph in Woodside, Aberdeen. From there it will be taken to Thurso, Invergordon, Inverness, Buckie, Fraserborough, Peterhead, and Ellon before returning to three more churches in the Granite City.

Bishop Moran said: "Around the hundreds of miles of Scottish coastline, small ports welcome ships big and small - workaday freighters, sophisticated survey ships, comfortable cruise-liners.

"On all of them, multinational crews spend weeks, perhaps months, away from home.

"The Apostleship of the Sea meets those seafarers and offers them the love of God and a link with the Church.

"Around the parishes of Scotland, the Stella Maris icon reminds us of that work of mercy.

Scottish Catholic Observer
20.04.07

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The tour of the icon of our Lady Star of the Sea across Scotland, as the Roman Catholic calls it, is another example of Rome promoting Mariolatry which in turn dethrones Christ and enthrones Mary in the hearts of people encouraging them to pray to her for safety.

Let me quote from an ex-nun in order to understand the devotion given by Roman Catholics to Mary. "The thought of praying to Christ for any special grace without the intercession of Mary never occurred to me".

Wherever in the New Testament the eyes of the church are directed to the abundance of grace, there is no mention of Mary which in itself should be a rebuke to those who build a system of salvation around her. Although Mary is worthy of honour as a woman, godly in character and being blessed among women as the mother of our Lord, she cannot intercede for us.

Protestantism at the Reformation restored the honour of Christ as the only mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 6:5). Let us remember the great issues of Protestantism: by grace alone, by Christ alone, by scripture alone, by faith alone, which all pointed to salvation being to God's glory alone.

**ALL ARTICLES IN
THIS MAGAZINE
REPRODUCED AS
EVIDENCE**

**THE ENTRANCE
OF THY WORDS
GIVETH LIGHT**

PSALM 119: 130



Isaiah 10:1 WOE UNTO THEM THAT DECREE UNRIGHTEOUS DECREES, AND THAT WRITE GRIEVOUSNESS WHICH THEY HAVE PRESCRIBED

It is generally expected that Tony Blair will resign from being Prime Minister some time throughout the summer. Now is the time to look back over the last ten years since he was first elected and to see what kind of legacy Tony and his 'New Labour' have left behind particularly in the moral realm. When he first took office in 1997, the outgoing Prime Minister, John Major, stated, "This incoming government will undo in 1,000 days what took 1,000 years to set up." Whatever we may think of John Major, these seem to have been prophetic words. Legislation based upon the Christian foundations of our nation have almost been destroyed by 'New Labour' to the extent that Britain is now not merely multi-faith and pluralistic, but also anti-Christian. 'New Labour' have increased legislation that

by Mr Jack Bell

effectively silences freedom of the Christian voice, the most recent being the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation Regulations) 2007 which was passed in the Commons by a majority of 210. One of the saddest things was the agreement across the political parties to push the legislation through. The words of the homosexual organisation Stonewall are very relevant. "What was heart-warming, however, was that the sexual orientation regulations were supported solidly by the front benches of all the three main parties." Not long ago the new 'Incitement to Religious Hatred' law, if not for the House of Lords' amendments could have meant that Christian ministers would not legally be allowed to state that 'Christ is the only way

to God'. Increasingly 'New Labour' has pursued a course of discriminations against Christians in order to appease minority groups. If we go further back to the year 2000 we find Tony Blair calling opponents of his plan to repeal Clause 28 nothing other than anti-gay bigots. If we add the Civil Partnership legislation, plus its opposition to a private members bill to stop euthanasia by starvation and dehydration, we can see that 'New Labour' under Tony Blair is a machine to destroy the concept of the Christian family. And would you believe that it claims to support family values? Psalm 2 "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 bands asunder and cast away their cords from us."

Blair sings the praises of leading homosexual group Stonewall and does a little skip

"Thank you very much, thank you. Thank you very much indeed. It is a real honour to be with you here this evening at the Stonewall Equality Dinner," said Mr Blair acknowledging a rousing and sustained round of applause and cheering as he stood to make a speech to the homosexual organisation on 22 March.

'IT BROUGHT REAL JOY'

He continued: "Just before I came here tonight, I actually got out one of my old speeches and re-read it. It was a speech back in 1994 on an amendment to create equality of the age of consent. The thing that really struck me, re-reading the speech this evening, was just how a whole lot of things that nowadays we would more or less take for granted, you had to start literally from the very first principles, including arguments like: 'how do you stop people being persuaded to be gay?'"

"Then you fast forward to last night [the vote on the Sexual Orientation Regulations] in the House of Lords and the fact is the vote was won, which is incredible.

"Our achievement on civil partnerships is really the thing that doesn't just give me a lot of pride, but it actually brought real joy. I don't know whether you remember the very

first day - and I don't by what bizarre circumstance - the first set of ceremonies were actually in Northern Ireland, but it was just, sort of just so alive, and I was so struck by it. I remember seeing the pictures on television, and it is not often you do a little sort of skip around in my job - I can assure you. The people were so happy. You just felt that one major, major change had happened.

'CIVILISING EFFECT'

"The fascinating thing - and this is my second reflection about it all - is that what has happened is that the culture of the country has changed in a definable way as a result of it. And here is what I think is really interesting, that the change in the culture and the civilising effect of it has gone far greater than the gay and lesbian community. By taking a stand on this issue and by removing a piece of prejudice and discrimination, it has had an impact that I think profoundly affects the way the country thinks about itself. The one thing that I think is really important about any country that will succeed in the future is that you make the most of the talents and abilities of your people, and if you allow discrimination to fester, that is the complete

rejection of that modernising and civilising notion..." [Loud applause]

'GREAT ACHIEVEMENT FOR OUR COUNTRY'

"You see here at the Stonewall Equality Dinner that the interesting thing is that at a lot of the tables there are some of the best known names in business and commerce, and this is part of the diversity agenda now of these big companies, and all of that is fantastic.

"Sometimes people have said to me: 'well now that all the political parties are in favour of this, you know there is going to be greater competition for the so-called gay and lesbian vote'. And I say actually it is a fantastic thing that all the party leaders today are in favour of equality - we should be actually glad of it; it is a great achievement for our country.

"I am deeply grateful for what I regard as a real honour in coming along and being able to address these words to you. I want to say thank you to you, because we couldn't have done it without you. And when I do look back on it, with pride, I think I should acknowledge rightly - that the pride and the honour is shared with you".

British Church Newspaper

Sheila Kesting and the Supreme Rule of Faith and Life

By Andrene Bamford

It's not been easy being a member of Zion Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, independent, separatist and Bible-believing. It's not much fun standing with my fellow members protesting outside theatres, cinemas, churches, you name it, with the wind slicing through me and the rain whipping my cheeks while I grip my cardboard protest slogan. It's not been a barrel of laughs knowing that our beloved Pastor has been misquoted, misjudged and misunderstood, and that by association we were the butt of all jokes of the evangelical world. It's been easy to feel that our small band of likeminded members are fairly isolated, and at times we've longed for the weight of a denomination behind us for support. But I tell you, it's been an absolute breeze compared to the plight of the Lewis Presbytery of the Church of Scotland.

The Lewis Presbytery have voted 100% against blessing homosexual marriages, but as part of the national church, they have to face up to the fact they are part of a massive organisation with a huge element that has no problem with this concept. This year, the Moderator-Designate is Miss Sheila Kesting. Miss Kesting is a minister who backs blessing homosexual marriages and wants to make a priority of ecumenism.

All Church of Scotland ministers are asked at their ordination: "Do you believe the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the supreme rule of faith and life?" As a minister, Miss Kesting must surely have answered "yes".

In Zion Baptist Church, we have been well taught. We have been encouraged to be Bereans – seeking the scriptures for

ourselves, and we have had the privilege of sitting under Pastor Glass' ministry, a man who left no stone unturned to find the truth, and delighted in expounding difficult passages of scripture. We were also taught to take the Bible as a sacred and holy book – God's word to us on earth. It is not to be taken from or added to, and man's "interpretations" are to be treated with caution. It seems to me, that if Sheila Kesting answered "yes" to her ordination question, then there are a few scriptures that she has overlooked.

As I've already mentioned, Sheila Kesting backs blessings on homosexual marriages, much to the Lewis Presbytery's chagrin. There is much debate over liberal views versus traditional views, but if the Word of God is the "supreme rule of faith and life", then there is only one view – God's view. So, what do the scriptures say about homosexuality and can its preachers possibly bless it?

Both the Old and New Testaments make comments on homosexuality. For the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness, God explained to them in no uncertain terms how he wanted them to live their lives in order to be safe, happy and to please their God. On the subject of sexual behaviour, it openly states in Leviticus 18:22, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." From this scripture, God's point of view is made abundantly clear – he hates it. It is an "abomination", detestable and awful. Many may argue that the Old Testament was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and quite rightly, that we are "no longer under the law", so we look to the New Testament for further insight into God's opinion. Romans chapter 1 outlines the fall of man from God's ideal as he created in Adam to what he is now, despite

revelations of his love and power. One of the examples of the depths of sin that man has sunk to is outlined in verses 26-27: "For this cause God gave them up to vile affection...men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another..." The Bible's damning tone of this practice is felt through the use of the word "vile" – and it is perfectly unambiguous. Miss Kesting may argue that Jesus Christ never spoke about homosexuality. That is true, but he certainly held to the moral law of the Old Testament. Jesus loved sinners. At times he risked his own reputation to befriend women who were classed as immoral and unclean. The woman at the well in John 4 was an adulteress with "five husbands", and Jesus certainly did not gloss over this fact at the expense of winning a convert. Jesus rescued the adulterous woman of John 8, whom the Pharisees wanted to stone, but he told her in verse 10, "Go and sin no more." Thus, Jesus counted adultery as a sin. Where was his evidence for this? It is Leviticus, the same book that condemns homosexuality. As Christians, we copy Christ: love the sinner but hate the sin. We value the word of God and we can't pick and choose what we believe in. It makes us seem unpopular and "un-PC" – but a Christian who holds God's word is high esteem must accept that this is truth.

Miss Kesting is the secretary of the Church of Scotland's Committee on Ecumenical relations. She wishes to make a priority of forging links with the Roman Catholic Church. Many Catholic practices are traditionally different from us "Protestants", but tradition is neither here nor there. What does the Bible say? This article would soon become a tome if I were to list every verse that jarred with RC dogma, but I will concentrate on one theme to illustrate that as a Bible-believing Christian is concerned,

it would be unscriptural to be linked to the Roman Catholic Church. The worship of Mary the mother of Jesus is something very precious to the hearts of millions of Roman Catholics. Mary, according to their doctrine, was also born of Immaculate Conception and remained a virgin until she, like Jesus, was transported without dying. From our reading of Luke 1 it is obvious that Mary was a woman worthy of admiration. Humanly speaking, she faced – at worst – being stoned, and – at best – being pregnant and alone in order to carry out the will of God. However, **no** information is given in the Bible about her parentage, therefore any notion of her Immaculate Conception is completely unfounded. The Bible easily refutes Mary being a virgin throughout the rest of her life. The following scriptures reveal plainly that Jesus had physical brothers and sisters: Matthew 13:55-56, Mark 6:3, I Corinthians 9:5 and Galatians 1:19. At no point does Jesus ever exalt Mary or draw any special attention to her. In fact, whenever he is around her, he seems quicker to lovingly rebuke her. In Matthew 12:46-50, When Mary and his brothers came to speak to Jesus while he was preaching, he told the people quite bluntly – his mother and brothers were those who do the will of God, not the fleshy relationships. When Jesus was on the cross, he finally relieved Mary of her duties of mother, and he gave her John as a son. Her death (or otherwise) is not recorded at all. In the light of this evidence, we cannot seek to join ourselves to a denomination where they hold values that are unscriptural if we are claiming to hold the Bible as the “supreme rule”. But saying such things is deemed anti-Catholic and bigoted. I acknowledge there are lovely, kind, generous people in the Roman Catholic Church – but I can’t worship with them if I believe their doctrine is unscriptural.

The third area of Miss Kesting’s position that we will examine to see if it stands up to the test of scripture is her ordination to be a minister in the first place. Paul states in I Corinthians 14:32 that women are not permitted to speak in church, and to Timothy (I Timothy 2:12) he warns, “Suffer not a woman to teach.” Paul has been criticised for many years for being misogynistic, but the simple fact of the matter is that the Bible is patriarchal. The leadership of men is God’s order. God revealed is Father and Son, not mother and daughter. Jesus drew attention to women in various circumstances and had a great love for women, but he was a man, and his handpicked 12 disciples were men. This is

not to say that there is no place for women in the church, or that they can’t have a ministry, but not preaching to men. Deborah led men in battle, but only because of the failure of the men around her – and her success was used to highlight their disgrace.

If Sheila Kesting is a Church of Scotland minister, never mind Moderator, then presumably she had agreed that the Bible is the “supreme rule”. She is a woman who has studied theology, and therefore has an intimate knowledge of the Bible, so how does she explain these scriptures that I have pointed out? Is she wilfully reneging on her vow, or does she have a special dispensation that allows her to side step these scriptures? As we live in the world today, we come into contact with homosexuals and Roman Catholics who may be nice people, and we are instructed to show the love of Christ to all men, but as people of the Word, we cannot shrink from God’s truth. I am a Christian saved by God’s grace. I dare not presume to know my God according to my own imagination and ideas. With trembling I approach God’s Word to know his mind on every matter. I do this as a church member and certainly not as a minister – Miss Kesting is very bold if she leads a congregation according to her own reasoning and opinions. It has been difficult as times to be a member of Zion Baptist Church, hearing the more challenging aspects of God’s truth come thundering from the pulpit, but at least we are sure it is God’s truth. No man is permitted to stand in our pulpit unless he stands on the Word of God. We have no fear of facing God knowing that out associates are preaching a muddled version of the Bible, risking God’s judgement by that association. The Lewis Presbytery can’t say this – not with Sheila Kesting as their Moderator.

Virginia Tech

The shooting at Virginia Tech was awful, and it could happen in our country tomorrow. The world struggles to account for such doings. They probe the past history of the culprit. They examine the circumstances of the college. They talk of the influence of violent films and videos and computer games. They demand that guns be outlawed. They call for more sense of neighbourliness.

There is a saying in medicine that the more remedies there are for a condition, the more sure you can be that none of them work.

People are puzzled and confused and slightly desperate. What, they ask, are we coming to? What on earth can you do with people like that about?

The truth is that the world is being forced to face the reality of evil. Human beings are not just the product of their environment. Original sin is a real thing.

People do not like that conclusion for several reasons. Firstly it suggest that I too am not basically good but a congenital sinner. If that is so, then we need a spiritual remedy, an indwelling principal stronger than myself, to bring my fallen nature under control. Moreover it demands punishment of the evil doer and deterrence of others. Nothing less than the death penalty, as prescribed in Scripture, rings true.

The secularists simply cannot cope with an incident of this sort. It shakes the foundations of their beliefs. Perhaps that is why God allows it to happen.

British Church Newspaper April 2007

Mexico: more threats to Protestants

Small town political bosses are set to meet on April 23 with representatives of 65 Christians they have threatened to expel in a show-down that could influence religious rights throughout the region.

The rulers of Los Pozos near San Cristobal De Las Casas, in Chiapas state, Mexico, decided to drive 13 Christian families from their homes last December for refusing to help pay for alcohol drenched “traditionalist Catholic” festivals. State and federal officials intervened, and on February 28 the town bosses verbally agreed to a pact pledging they wouldn’t expel the evangelicals, whose

water lines and electricity they have cut since January. But Christian leaders told Compass that the rulers have signalled that either they will not sign the accord ‘ or will exact fines before signing, or will sign it with plans to renege on it.

Leaders of both the evangelicals and the traditionalist Catholics, who practice a blend of Roman Catholicism and Tzotzil Maya customs, view the showdown as their Waterloo.

(Compass Direct)

British Church Newspaper April 2007

Blind faith in the blind watchmaker

by Ian Murray

Recently proclaimed one of the world's three most influential intellectuals, Richard Dawkins continues his crusade against belief in God in his latest book, 'The God Delusion',

But far from being the objective, rational argument based on scientific reasoning we might expect from an Oxford academic, it is little more than a bigoted rant against religious people. Dawkins denounces faith as 'blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence'. Christians are 'mad, deluded people'. Some things he says about God cannot be repeated.

Central to the Dawkins dogma is his belief that science inevitably leads to atheism. Now, this is clearly not the case. Recent research carried out by Rice University in the US has found that nearly 2/3rds of scientists believe in God.

In fact, the golden age of atheism appears to be fading. The more we learn about nature and the fundamental structures and laws of the universe, the more evidence we are uncovering for the existence of God. The more we discover about the origins of the cosmos, the closer we get to God.

The irreducible complexity of life

Materialist science declares that life began through chemical reactions producing amino acids which formed into protein molecules which then formed by some process and extraordinarily good fortune into complex living cells. Dawkins calls this the 'blind watchmaker'. But life at its most basic level – the unicellular organism – is fantastically complex, full of tiny 'organs'

each as essential as a heart, lungs or brain is to a human. Even those microbiologists who are atheists and peer through rose tinted microscopes will tell you that.

And it can't be assembled over a period of time. Without these essential components, a cell would just die, so the first living cell must have been assembled instantaneously – **not** by a series of small modifications over a long period of time. The traditional 'take 1 pint of primordial soup, add a dash of lightning bolts and simmer gently for 3 billion years' recipe for life simply won't work. Yet atheists stubbornly contend that life sprang into being by sheer chance, just blind luck.

Imagine you find a perfectly functioning Rolex watch. How did it come into being? Observing the whirring intricacy of the mechanism, the precision engineering of the complex components, or noting that it appears to have a useful purpose – telling the time – would tend to indicate that some Swiss clever clogs had designed and manufactured the watch.

Or, I suppose, you could argue that the watch was created by sheer chance – a combination of iron ore and some extraordinarily lucky lightning strikes. The argument would go something like this: Violent explosions mangled random fragments of metal into the precisely engineered components. Then along came a whirlwind and the chaotic maelstrom carefully assembled the tiny parts into a fully working, Swiss timepiece – keeping perfect time of course. However, that's ludicrous. But not if you happen to be an atheist evolutionary biologist trying to piece together an argument against the existence

of God. Then it's called Science.

The atheist would reply with another analogy. Given an unlimited number of monkeys with typewriters and an infinite period of time they would eventually type out the complete works of Shakespeare (perhaps it was one of these monkeys who wrote 'the God Delusion'). But the universe has clearly been in existence for a limited period of time and the sheer complexity of the simplest form of life makes the improbability of life occurring through chance simply unimaginable.

Dawkins may call Christians 'mad, deluded people' but I wonder if atheists also believe that their car was constructed by a hurricane in a scrap yard. Or their house was built by a passing sandstorm. Is it any less plausible?

The Big Bang

Curiously, the 'big bang' theory is often trumpeted as evidence against the existence of God. In fact, the big bang came as a severe shock to atheism. Before this, they believed that the universe had always been and had no beginning – so there was no need for a beginner. As the evidence began to emerge in the early 20th century, astronomers and other scientists bitterly opposed the 'big bang' simply because it meant the universe must have had a beginning – as Genesis says.

The difficulty atheists have is this, if the universe began with a big bang, then where was the big banger? If the universe had a beginning, then it must have had a cause – that's what the basic scientific principle of cause and effect demands, that *every* single effect in the universe must have a cause. So what or Who caused the big bang? You're surely not going to tell me it was nothing, or, God forbid, not chance again!

The extraordinary fine tuning of the universe

The more we learn about the universe, the more we realise that the laws and constants of physics are extraordinarily 'fine-tuned', and astonishing 'coincidences' have occurred to allow for the existence of life. In fact, this fine-tuning is so obvious, and the coincidences are so numerous that a host of scientists now admit that the universe is 'too contrived' to be the outcome of mere chance.

An example is the cosmological constant. If it were just a little lower, stars would not be able to form, a little higher and the universe would collapse under its own mass. It has

been fine-tuned to one part in a hundred million billion billion billion billion billion. And there are around thirty similar cosmological ‘settings’ that have been similarly fine-tuned to allow the existence of life.

Michael Turner, astrophysicist at the University of Chicago and Fermilab, puts the fine-tuning of the universe into perspective with an analogy: “The precision is as if one could throw a dart across the entire universe and hit a bull’s-eye one millimetre in diameter on the other side.” Another illustration would be winning the lottery every week for the rest of your life. The simplest and most obvious solution is that the universe was carefully designed and planned from the start for intelligent life to live and thrive in it.

Why believe in the blind watchmaker?

Given only a few examples of the overwhelming balance of evidence favouring a designed universe, why do atheists continue to proclaim that the universe and life came about through chance? Is it not much harder to believe in the dart hitting that millimetre bulls-eye, or the Rolex watch being formed by lightning and whirlwinds?

Quite simply, it takes *faith* to believe that there is no God. *Blind faith* in a blind watchmaker. In fact, it takes far greater faith to believe in miraculous chance than in a Designer/God. Atheism can be described in exactly the same terms Dawkins uses in the God Delusion - ‘blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence’.

Being fundamentally a faith based belief system, atheism – and certainly the fundamentalist atheism that is beginning to emerge – should be treated as a *religion*, and a sinister religion at that. Dawkins has become what he professes to hate - the high priest of a dark religion possessing all the worst attributes of the worst religions.

Darwin is elevated to the status of *infallible authority* while intelligent design is *persecuted* as scientific *heresy*. Dawkins himself spearheads a new *inquisition* to eradicate it peddling the lies that only religious crackpots think the universe was created. Schools, universities, the media *indoctrinate* the masses into the *dogmas* of atheism and materialism – sponsored by the state.

And there are *intolerant bigots*. Dawkins speaks of it being evil for a parent to bring their children up to believe in God. He calls it a form of child abuse. Would any other

religious figure be allowed to make these obscene statements? Dawkins calls religion evil but we must not forget that it was Darwinian and atheist ideologies that underpinned Nazism and Communism. Their final solutions, race wars and pogroms combined to kill sufficient millions to rival that most persecuting, murderous genocide factory, the Roman Catholic Church.

The truth is, intelligent design is not resisted because of the lack of evidence, but because of the inevitable conclusion and implications of that evidence. People simply do not like the idea of a God. It makes them afraid that they will be accountable for their lives, that there may be some rules they should be obeying. It makes them think of what happens after death.

A reasonable and confident faith

I have a confession to make. My belief in an designer/creator is not the result of objective consideration of all the available scientific evidence. It’s based on experience of God. I had an encounter with the living God who burst into my life and opened my eyes to the glory of His grace and the depth of His love. My faith is grounded on that experience of God, but it is a reasonable and confident faith that is consistently validated by scientific evidence.

The worlds top scientists admit the design of the universe

Fred Hoyle (Astrophysicist): ‘A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that **a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology**, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion **almost beyond question**.’

Stephen Hawking (astrophysicist): ‘The laws of science... contain many fundamental numbers, like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron... The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers **seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life**’ (A Brief History of Time).

Paul Davies (Astrophysicist and science writer): ‘There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all....It seems as though somebody has fine-

tuned nature’s numbers to make the Universe....**The impression of design is overwhelming**’.

Paul Davies: ‘The laws [of physics] ... seem to be the product of **exceedingly ingenious design**... The universe must have a purpose’.

Alan Sandage (winner of the Crawford prize in astronomy): ‘I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. **God to me is a mystery but is the explanation for the miracle of existence**, why there is something instead of nothing.’

John O’Keefe (astronomer at NASA): ‘We are, by astronomical standards, a pampered, cosseted, cherished group of creatures... If the Universe had not been made with the most exacting precision we could never have come into existence. It is my view that these circumstances indicate **the universe was created for man to live in**.’

George Greenstein (astronomer): ‘As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency - or, rather, Agency - must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, **we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being?** Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?’

Arno Penzias (Nobel prize in physics): ‘Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and **one which has an underlying (one might say ‘supernatural’) plan**.’

Roger Penrose (mathematician and author): ‘**I would say the universe has a purpose**. It’s not there just somehow by chance.’

From an Old Bailey bomber to Northern Ireland ministry

By Ian Drury

AN IRA bomber has been rewarded with a ministerial post in Northern Ireland's new government.

Gerry Kelly was found guilty of bombing the Old Bailey 34 years ago, an attack which left one person dead and 180 injured.

He is one of three convicted IRA members who will become Sinn Fein ministers when power sharing returns to Stormont next month.

The other two are Martin McGuinness, who will be the executive's Deputy First Minister, and Conor Murphy.

The Old Bailey blast was caused when a bomb inside a parked car exploded on the afternoon of March 8, 1973. It hurled nearby vehicles into the air, wrecked a pub and smashed hundreds of windows.

One of the injured was barrister James Crespi, 45, who was pictured being led away by a rescue worker.

The image came to symbolise the horror of the attack.

The bombers chose a day when thousands of commuters were forced to drive into central London because strikes had hit public transport services.

Miraculously only one man - Frederick Milton, a 60 year old caretaker from Surrey was killed. But scores of office workers were cut down by flying glass or hit by falling bricks.

The blast and the screams of the wounded alerted staff from nearby St Bartholomew's Hospital, who ran to the scene to attend to the injured.

Kelly, 54, was convicted of causing explosions and conspiracy to cause explosions after he planted four car bombs in London in March 1973.

He received two life sentences plus 20 years and went on hunger strike for 205 days.

In 1983, he led an escape by Provisional IRA members from

the notorious Maze prison - the biggest breakout in Europe since the Second World War.

During the escape a prison officer was stabbed and later died of a heart attack. Kelly was on the run for three years until he was recaptured in Amsterdam.

He was suspected of playing a role in the IRA's terror campaign aimed at British Army bases in mainland Europe.

At the time of his arrest, Dutch police found maps, fake passports and the keys; to a storage container holding 14 rifles, 100,000 rounds of ammunition and substances

He has been the party's police and justice spokesman and is tipped to be a junior minister in the Executive's Office of First and Deputy First Ministers. Kelly's post is expected to be confirmed when power sharing resumes on May 8.

Lord Tebbit, who was seriously injured when the IRA blew up Brighton's Grand Hotel during the 1984 Tory Party conference, said the appointment cast a shadow over the executive.

The former Conservative Party chairman whose wife Margaret was permanently disabled in the blast added: 'If you talk to

such a high office.

'I don't think it comes as a great surprise. If you put the IRA/Sinn Fein into office, naturally they will bring their friends along.'

During the assembly election, the spectre of Mr Kelly taking charge of a policing and justice ministry at Stormont was used as a scare tactic by unionist parties. However, these powers will remain under the control of Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Hain.

Conor Murphy served five years for possession of weapons and membership of the Provisional IRA, while Martin McGuinness has admitted being an IRA leader at the time of Bloody Sunday in Londonderry in 1972.

Among the other Sinn Fein ministers will be Michelle Gildernew, MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, who sparked anger recently by insisting that if she had information about republican weapons dumps she would not pass it to police.

The final Sinn Fein minister will be Caitriona Ruane, 44, who led the Bring Them Home campaign for three men found guilty of teaching IRA combat techniques to guerillas in Colombia.

Sinn Fein has chosen to oversee the education, regional development and agriculture ministries.

First Minister Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party selected finance, economy, environment and culture.

Daily Mail 4.04.07



Gerry Kelly: As he looked during his IRA days (left) and now

which could be used to make explosives.

Following his release from prison in 1989, he became a senior member of Sinn Fein.

During the party's first talks with the Government more than a decade ago, he was said to be the IRA's 'adjutant general'.

people who think there should be a commitment to the normal values of a democratic country; then obviously they would think this brings the executive into disrepute.

'It is probably the first time in this country's history that a man with such a conviction has held

EDITORIAL COMMENT

No doubt the blackmail and threats which the British Government brought to bear upon Ulster over the last few months were as real as they were despicable. The DUP under the leadership of Ian Paisley will claim there was no alternative to sharing administration with Sinn Fein, however unsavoury it might be, nevertheless the whole situation is a sad day for Ulster.

No doubt a feeling of betrayal will be felt by some with some resignations taking place. Ian

Paisley is quoted as saying, "My determination to secure the Union and defend our people is undiminished". One cannot help but think that the present situation may yet undermine the Union in the long term. Oh for a Protestant leader to stand up and say, "Let us trust in our God to take us out of this situation and "No surrender". Where are the Protestants who will take up the old battle hymn:- No peace with Rome shall be our cry while Rome abides the same, we'll let her know that Ulster's sons will not disgrace their name.

FEAR NOT – GOD IS WITH US

Things aren't getting any better! World tension continues to grow as the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan are embroiled in conflict. North Korea and Iran have raised their nuclear profile. In August, airports in the UK and beyond were thrown into chaos with the revelation that terrorists planned to blow up several planes over the Atlantic. In parallel with these things, we are faced with a tragic, but constant, decline in our nation's moral standards. The "human rights" and "equality" agendas seem, in large measure, to be merely flags of convenience for the promotion of a post Christian humanist society in which God's law is trampled upon and cast aside. Ecumenical and liberal "Church leaders" are rarely able or willing to speak with authority. Faced by all this, it is so easy for believers to despair, but, over and over again, God's Word exhorts us not to. Indeed, it encourages us to have confidence in our sovereign God and to rest in Him. In Psalm 37, David, in his old age, reflected upon the prosperity and success of the wicked, but he exhorts us not to fret or be jealous of them (v 1). He says that he saw the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree, but eventually that power and arrogance disappeared and the wicked man "could not be found" (v 36).

Another passage which takes up a similar theme is Isaiah 41. The scene here is that of a courtroom where God is the judge. He summons the nations to appear before him, but He also invites His own people to observe proceedings. What a contrast between the two sets of people!

Firstly, we see the **utter hopelessness of the enemies of God (v 17 and 21-29)**. In v1, God reveals His patience and goodness as He urges the nations to "renew their strength". He warns of judgment, but He calls the nations to himself. He also reveals His sovereignty in v 24. Oliver Cromwell once said that "if one maverick grain of sand could behave without God's permission, then it would frustrate the course of history". In v 5 7, the nations of the earth respond to this great God by turning to false gods and idolatry. How familiar this is today, when, as men reject God and His Word, they enthusiastically embrace false religions, cults, astrology, the occult, humanist psychology etc. We read some very sad words in v 28 where God says that there was no counsellor or adviser who could give an answer. On the contrary, they were "all vanity" (v 29). When people turn from God, they inhabit a world devoid of light and wisdom. God warns them that their determination to persist in rebellion will lead

A Study in Isaiah 41

to sure and certain judgment. In words similar to those in Psalm 2, God says in v 25 that they will be smashed as "the potter treadeth clay". On July 7, 2005, AI Quaeda brought death and destruction to London, and there is ongoing concern about international terrorism. These things cause fear and panic, but they are mere shadows of a much greater judgment to come. Speaking of this Judgment, Christ said "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

Secondly, we see the **unparalleled hope of a redeemed people (v 8-20)**. In our courtroom scene, God speaks words of comfort to His own people. They have been justified by faith alone in Christ alone and have become the children of God. Reader, has that been your experience? Have you accepted Christ as your own and personal Saviour? If you haven't, do so today. Don't put it off until some more convenient time, for you don't know what lies ahead. But if Christ is your Saviour, then you are in a most blessed and happy condition.

There is much comfort in these verses. Note that we have been chosen (v 8-9). In v 8, God refers to Jacob, described as a "worm" in v14, as the one whom He has "chosen". As we look at ourselves, we see sin and rottenness, and we often wonder why we were called to faith in Christ when others remain unsaved. We were dead in sin, but God called us to Himself and gave us the gift of eternal life. It is all of grace and not of works, lest any of us should boast (Ephesians 2:9).

Christians also have the assurance that the Lord is with them and will never forsake them. In v 10, God says, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness". Yes, He will be with us in the good days and also in the dark days of trouble, persecution, affliction, sorrow, sickness and death. We often feel so weak, both individually and collectively. The world mocks the church today and laughs at its apparent insignificance. When the apostle asked the Lord to take away his bodily weakness, God told him, "my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" Paul therefore decided to gladly glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest

upon him. V 10 and 13 refer to the Lord's hand upholding us and also His hand holding ours. The holding of a hand speaks of love, affection and care. We often hold our children's hand to keep them safe from danger. Just a few weeks ago, my dear uncle suffered a severe heart attack and spent some time in intensive care. He couldn't speak because of the tube in his mouth and, when I called to visit him, he communicated by the movements of his eyes, mouth and head. But what struck me was the way in which he held my hand tightly throughout each visit. He knew he was very ill and he was seeking comfort and strength from a loved one. Just a day or so after my last visit, he passed away, and I know that the Lord held his hand as he made that journey through the valley of the shadow of death into the immediate presence of his Saviour.

We also must note that we are assured of victory against our enemies (vs 11-12, 15-16). In this spiritual battle, God provides His soldiers with effective weapons. Each 13 July, the Battle of the Boyne is re-enacted at Scarva, and, each year, King William wins! The outcome is not in doubt! The battle in which we are engaged will end in certain victory for the cause of Christ and the Gospel. These verses, like so many others in Scripture, assert that the enemies of Christ will not only be defeated but they won't even be found. In this battle, let us be sure that we are relying entirely on spiritual weapons such as prayer, and the Word of God which is sharper than any two edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).

Finally, the Lord promises to revive us (v 17-19). We so often feel parched and weary, and we see so little positive response to our outreach, witnessing and preaching. However, we must keep praying for days of refreshing and revival. God promises to "open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys" (v18). Let us not become weary, for the Lord will bless us. But He will do so in His own time so that we will give all the glory to Him (v20).

The people of Judah in Isaiah's day faced a dark and uncertain future. Soon, they would be carried into captivity into Babylon, but eventually they would return home. Isaiah, however, saw beyond all that, to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must look beyond today, tomorrow, next week or even the next few years, and never forget that God is in control. He "knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:6). Christian, God is with you. Fear not and press on!

Ulster Bulwark October – December 2006

“A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD”

Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation

By Rev WJ Malcolmson, President, EPS

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

This text, taken from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church at Rome, made Martin Luther, and created, along with other great Biblical passages, that revival of true religion which we call the Protestant Reformation. In converting Luther to Christ, this text, by the sovereign Hand of God, changed the face of history. It closed the period known as the “Dark Ages”, and, through Luther’s personal experience of saving faith in Christ alone, the windows of Europe were thrown open, modern history began, and the church was re born, because the Gospel of the grace of God had been re discovered.

It all began almost 490 years ago, on 31 October 1517, when a small monk of the Augustinian Order walked up the cobbled streets of old Wittenberg in eastern Germany to nail his 95 theses, or heads of argument, on the parish church door, protesting against the sale of Papal Indulgences for the pardon of sins. Prior to Luther’s action, the medieval Roman Church controlled emperors, kings, princes and all the civil laws of Europe. She chained the Word of God and withheld the Gospel from the people. At this time, Luther was lecturer in Theology at the new University of Wittenberg and town preacher. He was 35 years of age when he made his attack on

the Romish system of selling Indulgences. He did not set out deliberately to break with Rome, but was endeavouring to call attention to a grave scandal inside the Church. Pope Leo X was building and furnishing the great Church of St Peter at Rome. He needed money, which was obtained by the selling of indulgence tickets all over Europe. By this system, the purchaser received pardon for the commission of sins which had been named, valued and paid for. Tetzel, the Dominican friar, who was appointed to sell the Indulgences, cried “as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, another soul from purgatory springs. The pardon makes those who buy it cleaner than baptism and purer than Adam in his state of innocence in Eden”.

Luther’s protest against the sale of Indulgences was to be the first step which led to the “re-formation” of the Church of the New Testament. It was to be the agency used to clear away all the abuses by which the Papacy had concealed the truth of the Gospel from the people. The nailing of the Theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg had attacked not merely Indulgences, but the entire Papal system itself. But the story goes even further, as we shall see.

Luther’s Spiritual Pilgrimage

Martin Luther was born on 10 November 1483 at Eisleben, to coal mining parents. He was a young man of great natural abilities, so his father put him to the study of law, of which he became a master. His career might very well have gone in this direction had it not been that on a certain day in July 1505, aged 22, he was very nearly killed by a thunderbolt on the parched road approaching the little Saxon village of Stodderheim. He was terrified and, struggling to rise, he cried in terror “St Anne, save me, and I will become a monk. He had come to face to face with death and was not ready for it. He kept his vow and that same year entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt. In 1507, he celebrated his first mass and felt an overpowering sense of unworthiness to handle, as the Church taught, the actual body and blood of Christ Himself. He was deeply concerned about his sin. He desperately sought peace with the Holy and Almighty God through all the facilities offered by the Church, from prayers to self imposed and inflicted pain, but all to

no avail. He was a man under conviction, and Rome could not give him peace in his own soul. In 1508, he was appointed Professor of Theology at the new University of Wittenberg, but despite the onerous duties, his mind was still plagued by the uneasiness of conscience caused by the continuing sense of conviction of sin. In 1510, he was sent to Rome in the hope that he might find peace there by the sight of the “eternal city”. Instead of a city of saints and scholars, he found in the impiety and profanity of the Roman priests a little colony of hell itself. He returned to Wittenberg in 1512 and was made prior of the local Augustinian Monastery. During this whole period, he had one recurring problem how can I find peace with God? How can I be assured that God has forgiven my sin? How can I find peace in my heart? Luther was deeply concerned about his eternal salvation. He was to find the answer in the Bible.

Luther’s preparation for his lectures to the students at Wittenberg and also for his public preaching led him to examine the Book of Psalms and Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. In the letter to the Romans, Luther found the light he needed. The truth broke in upon him that “the just shall live by faith”. A particular experience in the Tower of the Church at Wittenberg clinched the issue. He was reading, meditating and praying, and trying to understand Paul’s theology, especially that part of our text where Paul states that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. It was then that “the truth broke in upon me. God does not expect us to be righteous in our own strength, but He pardons us freely and accepts us for Christ’s sake”. The Roman Church had taught that the just shall live, by fear of the church, but the Scriptures taught Luther that the just shall live by faith in Christ alone. He said, “When I understood this, I felt born again like a new man. I entered through the open doors into the paradise of God. Henceforward I saw the beloved Scriptures with new eyes. ‘The just shall live by faith’ became the gate of heaven to my soul”. The first thing the Reformation re discovered was that the way of pardon is by God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ, and not by human merit or the purchase of a ‘Roman Indulgence certificate’

*Extract from the Ulster Bulwark
January-March 2007*



Martin Luther

WHAT IS TRUTH ?

*Pilate saith unto Him,
"What is truth?"
John 18:38*

by James Pedon

Elsewhere in John's Gospel we read "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," (John 8:32) "and the spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth." (John 16:13). When one is guided into all truth, it is that God, by His Spirit, has revealed the word of God to his heart. When the word of God comes in a saving manner it first makes known our condition before God that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). To read the scriptures or hear them faithfully preached and not become conscious of our sinnership before God means that it has not been profitable to our souls.

When it pleases God to send His word with

power into our hearts then we cry with the psalmist: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned," (Psalm 51:4), for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20). We are living in a day when the truth is not desired. We could take up the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter." (Isaiah 59:14). It is a day of campaigns and missions. We have professions and decisions, but if one was to speak of the truths of the gospel experimentally known in the heart many would ask the question with ungodly Pilate, "WHAT IS TRUTH?"

This is why the Church has lost her defence: if the whole counsel of God is not declared true conversion cannot take place, then it is an outward profession with no inward possession. She is "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine". (Ephesians 4:14).

As we read the history of the Christian Church, we come to know about the great battles that were fought for truth and of the sufferings and death when rivers of blood flowed from the veins of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. Why? Because they knew the truth had made them free (John 8:32) and they were determined not to be entangled again in the yoke of Romish bondage.

When Hugh Latimer was going to the stake he said it was because he would not go amassing: to go to mass would have been to deny the truth. During mass a Roman priest would claim the power to bring Christ from His exalted position on His Father's throne, King of Zion, and offer Him again on the Roman altar for the sins of the quick and the dead – O what blasphemy! But the truth had come to the reformer of that this man (Jesus Christ) after He had offered one sacrifice for his sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:26)

O that the truth of the gospel was again proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit and that people would come to the knowledge of the truth. Then with Paul they would say: "For I know in whom I and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (1 Timothy 1:12).

And this one he knew and believed in was Christ Jesus, who came to the world to save sinners. Paul himself confessing to be the chief. (1 Timothy 1:15).

And Christ declares in the word: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the father but by me" (John 14:6)

Ulster Bulwark October – December 2006

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Hello Boys and Girls,

Someone left a bookmark on my church's booktable recently and I thought it would be helpful if I reprinted it for you.

TEEN CREED

*Don't let your parents down
they brought you up.
Be humble enough to obey,
you may give orders some day.*

*Choose companions with care;
you become what they are.
Guard your thoughts;
what you think, you are.*



*Choose only a date that
that would make a good mate.
Be master of your habits;
or they will master you.*

*Don't be a show-off when you drive;
Drive with safety and arrive.
Don't let the crowd pressure you;
stand for something or you'll fall for anything.*

There's good advice in this bookmark and all of it can be backed by word of God.

God bless you all. Love from Mrs.Glass

WOMEN'S VIEW

Hello Everyone,

Since my trip to Grace Childrens Home in India last August I find that India is never far from my thoughts. When I was praying about the Home the other day, and India in general, I remembered how that even in the filthiest of places you would come across a huge billboard with words of wisdom and I reprint some of them below. They may not be the word of God but even the Apostle Paul quoted from pagan poets in Acts 17:28.

Happy individuals create a happy society

Love ever, hurt never

Teamwork means more WE and less me

*No one can predict what heights they can soar
Even you will not know until you open your wings*



Please remember all the work being done by Christians in India as the government is talking about stopping all overseas aid and that would be quite tragic as the Grace Children's Home and many others are dependent on this aid.



Love and God Bless.

M.Glass

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