

Rev David Brown's First Evening Sermon at Randalstown Free Presbyterian Church, 31 May 2026

“Resisting God’s Will for many years” - New Pastor’s Testimony

REV. David Brown was installed as the new *Minister of Randalstown Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster* (Randalstown FPC) on Thursday, 28 May, and formally began his ministry the following Sunday, 31 May. He had previously served as the Minister of Larne Free Presbyterian Church for 15 years.

As Randalstown FPC has been a faithful supporter of BCN for all of its 24-year history, we decided to report Rev Brown’s first evening service there. He included his personal testimony – up to his call to the ministry – in his address.

So, we were rewarded with a fascinating tale of his conversion at the age of five, and his ups and downs, struggles and successes, before – aged 24 – he finally succumbed to our Lord’s will for him to train for the ministry.

The young David was born at 13 Hyde Park, Ballymena in 1983. He had two elder sisters by then.

His parents were not believers when they were married, but were swept into salvation in the wake of the ‘75 Mission’, a major FPC Gospel campaign, based in Ballymena Town Hall. in the autumn of 1975.

Led by Dr. Ian Paisley as the evangelist, and with Rev. William McCrea providing the singing, the ‘75 Mission’ is widely remembered as an historic period of spiritual revival for the denomination.

EXTENDED

Originally scheduled for two weeks, it was extended to *six weeks* due to the widespread new religious conviction in the area, resulting in hundreds of conversions and significant church growth.

So, from a very early age, David was taught the truths of Scripture.

An especially formative influence was one mother who taught in the Sunday school, Molly Dornan. She spoke from time to time about the eternal fires of hell. When she did so, she would lower her voice, treating this subject with the utmost solemnity.

When one child asked an innocent question, “Who will put the fires out?”, she replied softly, “There is no-one to put the fires out”. It made a deep impression on David’s young mind.

At the age of five, in April [his mother wrote down the actual date at the time, but has since mislaid it] his mother was washing his hair in the bathroom. The young boy asked his mother a serious question, “If I died right now, would I go hell?”

UNDERSTANDING

His mother gave an understanding answer and he went on to pray with his father. This, said David, was “the moment I became saved. I knew God had to forgive me”.

As he passed through primary and secondary school, he lived an outwardly Christian life, going to church, reading the Bible, helping with church activities etc. But he would often ask himself, “How do I know I got saved?”

On one occasion, when he was about 11, an elder boy mockingly asked him, “Are you a Christian?” David replied, sheepishly, ‘No’.



Randalstown Free Presbyterian Church

Credit: Randalstown FPC

He said, “During these days, I often failed my Lord in many ways”.

On another occasion in his mid-teens, Rev Paul Thompson took him aside and gently said to him, “You have good leaven. But you’re not yet ‘born again’, are you?”

David understood. He admitted to himself: “I was failing the Lord in incredible ways; I let the Lord down; I was a hell-deserving failure; I wasted those years” and, “I should have told so many people about Christ, but I didn’t”.

STRONG

David’s conviction of sin at this time was very strong.

He resolved “never again to spend time without actively witnessing for Christ”. Rev Thompson taught him a valuable lesson about witnessing: “Faced with difficult questions from unbelievers, you don’t need to know all the answers. Just tell your enquirers what you *do* know – and if you don’t, admit it, find out for them, or point them in the right direction.”

David had always enjoyed working with wood and took up joinery as a trade.

One of his joys was to witness to as many customers as he could. He enjoyed the trade so much that he never even took time off for holidays, saying, “I lived for joinery and driving cars, trading up, one by one, from a rickety Vauxhall Corsa, to a van, when I was about 20.

ACTIVE

But he remained active in evangelism. He said, “The Lord was opening doors; we went witnessing and tracting in Sligo, Dublin and Monaghan. In Letterkenney, quite a crowd gathered. They began throwing coins at us. One coin lodged in the eye of a boy from Magherafelt FPC and badly damaged it.”

On 31 August 2000, when David was 17½, Rev John Greer was installed as the Minister of Ballymena FPC. David soon came under his good influence.

Rev Greer began his ministry at Six-milecross FPC in 1975, remaining there until 1983, when he responded to the call of God to develop a fledgeling Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, USA. He returned to Ballymena I N. Ireland in 2000, succeeding Rev. James Beggs.

David’s conscience began to trouble him. He felt he was not “doing enough for the Lord”. He was thoroughly enjoy-

ing his work a joiner, but felt he was resisting the Lord’s calling.

GREAT POWER

At one evening service in April 2007, the Lord spoke to him through Rev Greer, with great power. He was mix of many emotions. He ‘knew’ that the Lord was calling him to become ordained as a minister, but he was in turmoil inside, powerfully resisting what the Lord was wanting him to do. He was “running away from the ministry”. The feeling was so intense that he had to walk out of a prayer meeting, and run to the men’s washroom, sobbing.

He admitted to his sympathetic fellow brothers: “I need to surrender to the Lord. I cannot leave the church without surrendering my life to the Lord. I need to go into the ministry.”

A COLLEGE COURSE

Rev Greer said to him afterwards, “David, you must do the entrance exams and get ready for college”.

He agreed, went to college, and successfully completed his pre-ordination course.

But he was still resisting. He immersed himself in anything other than going into ministry: supporting missionaries and churches and finding *other* people to preach the Word around the world.

Later in the year, at a meeting where Rev James McAllister (from Coleraine), the Visitation Officer, was “doing the testimonies”, it was David’s turn to give his testimony. He gave it. He said it was “terrible”.

Then Rev McAllister gave *his* testimony. His story was uncannily similar to David’s; all the wrestling, all the “running away” from what God really wanted him to do.

Then Rev Greer preached. His sermon was based on 1 Kings 18:21 – the passage where Elijah, atop Mount Carmel, cried to the Baal-worshippers before him: “*How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.*”

HEARD

David felt at that moment, “The Lord has heard me”. He knew the Lord was speaking to him, moving him towards the ministry.

He knew that it was long overdue for him to take up the challenge of getting ordained. He began a theological course in the Whitefield College of the Bible in December 2007, completing the course in March 2010. He had now become the Rev. David Brown.

On one occasion that he was preaching during this period, he noticed a young woman in the front row of the congregation, listening with rapt attention to his sermon. She, Lydia Irwin, later became his wife, and they are now privileged to have four children.

He was called to the congregation of Larne Free Presbyterian Church in 2011, and served there faithfully for 15 years until he was installed at Randalstown FPC on 28 May this year.

Having finished off his testimony, he then launched into a powerful sermon, choosing 1 Kings 18:21 as his text, just as Rev Greer had done all those years ago.

WHERE?

He asked: “Where do you stand tonight? You’re in church. I am led to believe that everyone in the church tonight believes there is a God – a God who is in heaven – that there is an eternity – and that what this Book says is worthwhile.

“You are coming to church and listening to me, so I dare say that everyone here would, if they told the truth, say ‘Yes, there’s a God’, and ‘Yes, Jesus Christ is come in the flesh’.

“But is there someone in the room tonight who – although you know that all of that is true, and that God is calling for you to be saved, you are *still* ‘halting between two opinions’?

“Is it because ‘You’re not going to get saved *yet*’? For years, you’ve heard this message, but you’re reluctant, and fighting against the call and resisting it. Resisting the call of the Gospel! For years! “Here’s God’s Word for you tonight. How long will this go on? How long will you go on wasting your time between ‘Yes, there’s a God’ and yet living for the world?”

LISTEN!

“Listen: ‘If the Lord be God, ye follow him!’

“The men of Baal were straddling both there, living for the world while acknowledging, ‘Yes, there’s a God’.

“But that is not enough! If Jehovah is God, then follow Him wholeheartedly! Give your *life* to Him! Give your *all* to him! *Surrender* to Him! And *walk* with God”!

“Why would you waste your time trying to straddle both? You can’t!

“Some call it, ‘Walking on the clean side of the broad road’.

“*There is no ‘clean side’ of the broad road! Are you saved? Or are ye not?*”

“I want that to challenge your heart tonight. If Jehovah is the eternal God, *Elohim*, he is telling

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Rev David Brown,
new Minister at
Randalstown FPC

Baroness Casey: 'Rape Gang Victims must get the full facts — and justice!'

Some victims were prosecuted!

CHILDREN who were groomed, sexually abused and then prosecuted for crimes, including prostitution, are still being failed, Baroness Louise Casey, author of a landmark report on the Asian rape gangs, told the House of Lords on Friday, 12 June. Her speech came a whole year after she published her report, 'Summary of the National Audit on Group-

based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse' (now known as the 'Casey Review'), which had been commissioned by the Prime Minister and Home Secretary to evaluate our understanding of the scale, nature and drivers of child sexual exploitation and abuse by 'grooming gangs' in England and Wales. Baroness Casey called on the government last year to quash

all convictions of victims who were criminalised, e.g. for 'child prostitution', when they should have been protected. But all that has happened to date is that the government has introduced legislation to pardon child prostitution offences. Now she is demanding the quashing of all wrongful convictions for victims. In one notorious case, a near naked girl in a room full

of Asian men was prosecuted for being 'drunk and disorderly'. Baroness Casey said, "The government has failed." Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood, a practising Muslim, said, "We are taking forward Baroness Casey's recommendation to review criminal convictions that may have been shaped by a person's experience of being sexually abused as a child. We



Baroness Louise Casey
Credit: Landsec (Fair use)

encourage all those affected by these convictions to contact to get in touch with the Criminal Cases Review Commission."

CHRISTIAN CONCERN RESPONDS TO BARONESS CASEY

Andrea Williams, CEO of Christian Concern, reacted to Baroness Casey's concerns as follows:

"That survivors of grooming gangs were not only abused as children but then *prosecuted as criminals by the very authorities that should have*

protected them is one of the darkest indictments imaginable of modern Britain.

"It is disturbing that the institutional failures that enabled these crimes have not been fully addressed. For years, vulnerable girls were raped, trafficked and brutalised while police forces, social services, local authorities, care homes, schools and health professionals repeatedly looked the other way. We know this because we have dealt with some of these cases at the Chris-

tian Legal Centre.

"This was a failure of moral vision and courage. A society that loses sight of the God-given dignity of every human being will eventually lose its ability to protect the vulnerable. When we abandon God, we do not become neutral. We lose the moral foundations upon which justice depends. The grooming gangs scandal represented a collapse across entire institutions.

"Time and again, adults in positions of authority saw warning signs...

instead, abused children were treated as offenders.

APPEASED

"For decades, Britain has attempted to retain the benefits of a Christian moral framework while rejecting the Christian beliefs that created it. We have appeased the ideologies that sought to replace it...*we became unable as a community to stand up against a false religion that arises in our midst: Islam*". Professionals were afraid of speaking out against Islamic culture

and values. As a result, some of the victims actually became Muslim, fully veiled, and had multiple children and abortions.

"Proverbs warns that *"where there is no vision, the people perish"* (29:18). We might equally say that *where there is no moral vision, children perish*.

"The continuing failure to clear victims' names and secure proper compensation demonstrates that the *instinct to protect systems rather than people has not disappeared*. Every conviction obtained

against a child who was in fact a victim represents a profound miscarriage of justice. They must be overturned.

"The Christian faith says that when we confess our sins, both individual and corporate, there is a road to repairing institutions: that faith built many of the institutions that once made Britain strong.

If we want those institutions to recover their purpose, we need a Jesus centred Revival and Reformation".

Abridged - Editor

Rupert Lowe's 'Rape Gangs' Inquiry was Devastating. But the Media aren't interested

On 16 June, the following motion was laid before Parliament:

That this House notes the publication of the independent Rape Gang Inquiry Report, established to examine the organised sexual exploitation of children across the United Kingdom;

Pays tribute to the survivors, whistleblowers, parents, campaigners and professionals who gave evidence;

Expresses profound concern at testimony detailing decades of rape, trafficking, violence, murder and abuse, alongside repeated failures by police forces, local authorities, social services, health bodies and successive governments to protect vulnerable children;

Further notes the Inquiry's findings regarding the scale of organised child sexual exploitation and the institutional reluctance to confront its causes and characteristics;

Believes that many victims were failed, not only by their abusers, but by the very institutions charged with their protection;

Calls on His Majesty's Government to formally engage with the Inquiry's findings and recommendations, to provide a full written response to Parlia-

ment, to publish a timetable for action, and to set out which recommendations it intends to implement; and urges the Government to demonstrate that no consideration of political sensitivity, community relations, or fear of causing offence will ever again take precedence over the protection of children.

So far, the motion has just six sponsors:

Rupert Lowe, the MP for Great Yarmouth, four Conservative MPs (Sir Christopher Chope, Sir Gavin Williamson, Wendy Morton and Bob Blackman) and Independent MP Alex Easton, who represents North Down in N. Ireland. A seventh MP, Conservative Charlie Dewhurst, has since signed to support it.

Lowe was elected to Parliament in the 2024 General Election as a Reform-UK MP but was suspended and then expelled from the party after making fierce criticism of its leader, Nigel Farage. Lowe has since founded a new party, Restore Britain, and is now running a strong campaign for the mass expulsion of those who entered the UK illegally.

COMPELLED

He felt compelled to hold his own Inquiry into what he calls

the 'Pakistani Rape Gangs', because he wants the nation to know the depth of the cover-up of tens of thousands of serious crimes against white British girls – mostly by national and local Labour politicians, including former Head of the Crown Prosecution Service, Keir Starmer, whom he accuses of downgrading the offences of the Pakistani perpetrators so they got lighter sentences.

He also believes that the police, social workers and those running children's homes have committed crimes, by aiding and abetting the rapists.

Moreover, Lowe doubts whether the official 'Statutory Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs', chaired by Baroness Anne Longfield CBE will be effective in getting to the truth.

Baroness Longfield announced on Wednesday 24th June that she will begin her Inquiry's investigations in just four locations: Keighley, Bradford, Oldham and London. Pakistani Rape Gangs operated in dozens of British towns and at this rate it may be decades before the Statutory Inquiry can investigate them all. Starmer had promised immediate action on the issue when he came to power

two years ago.

IMPRESSIVE

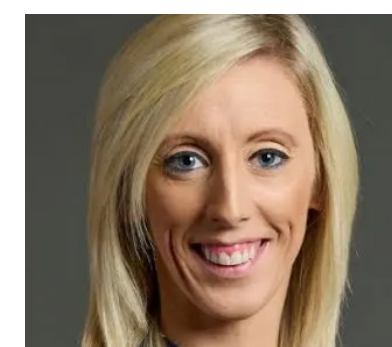
Lowe brought together an impressive 'Inquiry Team', which included three Conservative MPs: Carla Lockhart – the committed Christian and DUP Member for Upper Bann – Nick Timothy and Esther McVey.

Direct victim testimony accounts for 83 pages of Lowe's 219-page report, with five pages of 'whistleblower' testimony. Many potential whistleblowers are still too terrified to give evidence. On page 102, Lowe explains why:

"Whistleblowers who tried to expose the rape gangs were systematically silenced, discredited, and punished. On occasion, their careers and reputations were also tarnished. Social care professionals, campaigners, and public activists who raised evidence of *still ongoing* grooming, trafficking, financial abuse of children in care, and institutional cover-ups...faced *suspension, defamation proceedings, dawn raids, asset freezes, fabricated charges, gagging bail conditions, and career-ending isolation*."

TESTIFIED

One whistleblower social worker, an experienced children's social care professional



Carla Lockhart, DUP MP for Upper Bann: Member of Rupert Lowe's 'Rape Gang Enquiry' Team

Credit: Official Portrait

with nearly four decades of service, testified:

"My specialist work focused on leaving care services and safeguarding highly vulnerable young people...I disclosed evidence of financial abuse of young people, misuse of public funds, unlawful sanctions, illegal evictions, racism towards children in care, and systemic failures to safeguard against sexual and criminal exploitation..."

"I was told that a 'comprehensive investigation' would occur. But responses were delayed, fragmented, and opaque. Senior officers later acknowledged that financial abuse was 'likely', but claimed that

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WORLD NEWS

Pope's Spanish Visit Pleases the Faithful - and Muslim Migrants!

POPE Leo XIV enjoyed the adulation of large crowds again on a 7-day 'Apostolic Journey' (6 to 12 June) around Spain and the Canary Islands. His 1,600-mile tour criss-crossed Spain, taking in the Spanish capital, Madrid, the Catalan capital of Barcelona and the Canary Islands of Gran Canaria and Tenerife.

In Barcelona, he stopped off at the spectacular basilica, La Sagrada Familiar, to inaugurate *yet one more tower* to this striking symbol of the Roman Catholic Church's fabulous wealth.

After his arrival at the Adolfo Suárez Madrid airport, he was welcomed by King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia at the Royal Palace, visited a homeless project and held a youth prayer vigil.

The following day he celebrated a Corpus Christi Mass at the Plaza de Cibeles and later met with culture, arts, and sports leaders.

MILLION

On 8 June he became the first Pope ever to address the Spanish Parliament, then met with the Spanish Bishops' Conference, spoke to volunteers at the IFEMA trade fair centre and later addressed a large rally at Madrid's Santiago Berebú stadium (capacity 83,000), famous as the home of football club Real Madrid.

Over one million attended a Mass at Plaza de Cibeles.



The huge Roman Catholic Basilica of La Sagrada Familiar, Barcelona

Credit: Barcelona Yellow (Fair use)

In Barcelona, Leo delivered a homily at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross and presided over an evening prayer vigil at the Olympic Stadium, visited inmates at Brians Prison, went to the Abbey of Montserrat for a rosary recitation, and blessed the Tower of Jesus Christ at the Basilica of the Sagrada Família – commemorating the centenary of the famous Catalan architect, Antoni Gaudí.

MIGRANTS

Migrants were the focus for Leo on his two days in the Canaries – meeting groups of migrants and then with a host of migrant-supporting organisations. He also addressed the 'crisis' of European mass immigration and spoke of 'global polarisation' between 'left' and 'right'.

Migration has been a key con-

cern for Canary Islanders over the last two decades, who have all but been overwhelmed by having to process, house and care for tens of thousands from mostly African countries, often *en route* to Spain, Portugal and even the UK. Many are unaccompanied minors.

Large numbers attended masses on Gran Canaria and Tenerife.

The theme of the Vicar of Christ's message on migrants was: "All of us are migrants... integration is a powerful force... Yesterday's foreigner may be today's brother and neighbour... we must welcome migrants".

Speaking directly to a group of migrants from the dockside at Arguineguin, Gran Canaria's main port (known popularly as 'The Dock of Shame'), he told them: "You are not numbers



The Pope is adored by his fans in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross and St. Eulalia, Barcelona, Spain, 9 June 2026

Credit: EWTN (Fair use)

or files, you are people. I bow before your dignity. You have dreams that no-one has the right to despise. Your lives must be protected".

COMPASSION

Leo had previously said: "I intend to make the compassionate treatment of migrants one of the hallmark issues of my Papacy."

Migrants to Spain have for many years filled up to 90% of new jobs, especially in agriculture, hospitality, and domestic services.

Similarly, nearby Portugal saw its immigrant population quadruple between 2017 and 2024, accounting for 15% of its total population. But in contrast to Spain, Portugal – in 2024 – ended its "wide-open doors" policy and increased expulsion measures.

The small town (40,000 people) of Torre Pacheco in southern Spain saw riots between local Spaniards and migrants after a 68-year-old local man, Domingo Tomás Domínguez, was battered and thrown to the ground by a group of migrants as he was taking his morning walk. Weeks of protest followed.

Three people of North African origin were eventually arrested after local people used social media to track down the assailants.

Several local anti-migrant groups have since formed across southern Spain. One of them, 'Deport Them Now', called specifically for locals to attack 'people of N. African origin'.

Fears over "extreme left-wing" Michelle Bachelet becoming next UN leader

THERE are now fewer than 6 months to go before the current, controversial UN Secretary-General – the left-wing, anti-Israel, former Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Guterres – leaves office. Guterres will be remembered by many as justifying the Hamas massacre of around 1,250 Jews on 7 October, by saying that "this must be seen in the context of years of suffocating occupation", an absurd comment given that Israel had handed Gaza back to the Gazans in 2005.

Guterres also oversaw the handing over of billions of "aid" to Gaza from 2005 onwards – via the UN, the US, the UK and the EU – most of which went on weapons for the Hamas militia.

He also placed Hamas officials at the Head of UNWRA, the so-called Palestinian Gaza 'relief agency'.

EXTREME

Speculation is mounting that his likely successor may be the extreme leftist, Michelle Bachelet, who was the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2018–2022.

She is a determined ideological



This photo by Forbes [Fair use] was captioned 'Michelle Bachelet Empowers the World'.

activist who has for many years campaigned for:

(a) abortion as an international human right;

(b) the acceptance of radical gender ideology that denies biological reality;

(c) teaching gender theory in the classroom;

(d) the censorship and punishment of lawful speech, and even private thought, by branding mainstream beliefs about life,

marriage, and family as 'hate' or 'misinformation';

(e) transferring power away from voters and parliaments into the hands of unelected UN and WHO officials – overriding Treaties;

(f) imposing 'human rights frameworks' to lock countries into compliance, and

(g) abusing the UN's 'Sustainability and Development Goals' as a tool to impose a progressive agenda on every nation, regardless of what citizens believe or vote for.

DICTATED

According to the Roman Catholic campaign group, *Citizen GO*, her vision is "a world where decisions about your children, your laws, your schools, and your freedoms are no longer made by elected governments, but dictated by global institutions like the UN and the World Health Organisation, which answer to no-one."

When communist dictatorships in Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua and elsewhere imprisoned dissidents, crushed opposition movements, censored journalists, and committed many human rights

abuses, she had the institutional power to lead a clear international response – but *she chose silence*.

The UK, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, is one of the few nations with the right to veto anyone proposed for UN Secretary General.

PETITION

So *Citizen GO* has set up a petition calling on Prime Minister Keir Starmer to block Bachelet should she be nominated for the post.

The petition can be signed via this link: <https://citizengo.org/en-gb/>

The other four candidates are:

Maria Fernanda Espinosa, (former President of the 73rd UN General Assembly), nominated by Antigua and Barbuda;

Rafael Grossi (current Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency), nominated by Argentina;

Rebeca Grynspan (current Secretary-General of UNCTAD), nominated by Costa Rica, and

Macky Sall (Special Envoy for the Paris Pact for People and the Planet), nominated by Burundi.

How does the UN Security Council achieve its left-wing aims?

1. It doesn't announce when it's about to move.
2. There is no public countdown.
3. No open debate.
4. Positions consolidate quietly, in side rooms, in bilateral calls.
5. And when consensus forms, it's done.
6. No appeal.
7. No reversal.
8. The public is kept in the dark while diplomats negotiate behind closed doors. Then, once the decision is settled, ordinary citizens are told it is too late to object.
9. This is exactly how the UN gets away with it.

WORLD NEWS

Trinitarian Translations – Latest from Africa and Asia

KALENJIN is one of many tribal languages of Kenya and is spoken by around two million. It belongs to the Nilotic family of languages, spoken by around 20 million people in the Nile and Great Rift Valleys, ranging from Sudan and Ethiopia in the north to Tanzania in the south.

There is little written material in Kalenjin, and although there is a Kalenjin Bible, it is not translated from the Received Text.

Since 2014, the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS) has been working with a team in Kenya to prepare a faithful new translation of the Kalenjin Scriptures directly from the Biblical languages, with secondary reference to the Authorised (King James) Version and extant Kalenjin Bibles. The New Testament was published last year.

In April, TBS received files for all the Old Testament books. These are currently undergoing final checks on TBS's Editorial System – and a translation analysis. TBS says that DV it will proceed to typesetting the full Kalenjin Bible, with possible publication next year: the first faithful translation of the Holy Scriptures in this language.

Thadou Bible translator, teacher and preacher, Rev. Dr Vumthang Sitlhou, was tragically killed

in a deadly ambush in Manipur State, India, on 13 May 2026, while returning from a church gathering. Rev. Sitlhou was TBS's Thadou reviser, a man of peace and a faithful

servant of Christ who had long devoted himself to strengthening the church through the Scriptures.

Days before the tragedy, colleagues were in contact with Rev. Sitlhou to undertake final checks on the 2nd edition of the Thadou Bible. His son has agreed to finish the project.

The horrific attack came amid a prolonged, complex conflict in the region since 2023, rooted largely in political and land issues. Christians have been attacked and churches burnt.

The Thadou community numbers around 350,000 across Manipur and neighbouring regions, and has seen remarkable Gospel growth since the 1920s, with many now professing faith in Christ.

Rev. Sitlhou spoke at the TBS Annual General Meeting in 2019, highlighting the desperate need for the Thadou Bible. He said: "It may not be excessive to say that the Thadou people are spiritually perishing for lack of the Bible...the Thadou's greatest need is the Holy Bible. *Nothing is more tragic and disastrous for any man or tribe on earth than not to have the Bible*".

One recent success for the project was the completion of an audio recording of the Thadou Bible in Manipur.

Mandarin Chinese speakers, and the churches they attend, says the TBS, need to know and accept the Received Text – because very few are aware of the significant distinc-



Two happy Kalenjin speakers display books printed in their tribal language
Credit: TBS

tion between the Greek Critical Text and the Received Text, and very few adhere to the Received Text. Today, almost all Chinese pastors are influenced by mainstream seminaries that teach and promote only the Critical Text. To highlight the distinctions, TBS has translated articles, designed a website, and published videos.

Since 2012, native Mandarin Chinese translators have prayerfully undertaken a new translation of the Scriptures directly from the Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Received Texts. The aim is to translate the Scriptures into current literary Mandarin Chinese, while utilising the accepted Chinese ecclesiastical and theological terminology.

So far, the New Testament has been published, with the Psalms approved for publication. The publication of the Psalms together with the New Testament is planned, with the Old Testament up to and including 2 Kings already drafted, and the 'Wisdom' books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon now finalised. The team is working on Isaiah and will soon start work on drafting Job.

CANADA: Bill C-9 says "Quoting the Bible will no longer be a defence to hate speech"

CHRISTIANS are up in arms in Canada over a new Bill, C-9, just passed by its Parliament. The government says it is trying to deal with "growing menace of 'hate speech'".

Up to now, the law has said that "if a person charged with public incitement of hatred, wilful promotion of hatred (or wilful promotion of antisemitism) could establish that they, "in *good faith*... expressed or attempted to establish by an argument *an opinion on a religious subject* or an opinion based on *a belief in a religious text*," that would have been a full defence to the charge. The would not be convicted. But Bill C-9 has **removed this defence**, putting Canadians at greater risk of charges for religious speech.

EXAMPLES

Examples might be a Christian preaching in the street, warning people that they would be "cast into hell" or sent to "the lake of

fire", or be "damned". Or a Muslim who quotes verses from the Koran quoting verses telling them they can "kill the Jews and Christian wherever you may find them".

The Bill, the 'Combating Hate Act', will allegedly put a brake on the rise in hatred, but has raised major concerns about its impact on civil liberties and religious speech. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians wrote to their MPs to oppose the bill.

It will be illegal under the Bill to "publicly incite hatred by...statements in any public place (that) incites hatred against any *identifiable group* where such incitement is likely to lead to *a breach of the peace*," and specifically bans "wilfully promoting antisemitism by...condoning, denying or downplaying the Holocaust."

Specific examples of an "identifiable group" include: colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or mental or physical disability. The maximum penalty is two years in prison.

'EXTREME'

The Supreme Court of Canada has defined hatred as "the most extreme forms of the emotions described by vilification and de-

testation...which "seek to abuse, denigrate or delegitimise a group" or render them lawless, dangerous, unworthy or unacceptable in the eyes of the audience."

It adds: "This type of speech goes far beyond merely discrediting, humiliating or offending the victims." The Court, however, identified what it refers to as typical "hallmarks of hatred", such as:

- (a) "blaming its members for the current problems in society", or,
- (b) "alleging that members of a group are a powerful menace", or,
- (c) "labelling them liars, cheats, criminals and thugs", or
- (d) accusing members of carrying out secret conspiracies to gain global control or plotting to destroy western civilisation".

TRUE

But what if a person alleged that there is a powerful group of Islamists, jihadists, imams and Ayatollahs etc., who are actively working right now to convert the whole world to Islam, using persuasion, intimidation, force or slaughter, to achieve a world-wide Caliphate where everyone is a Muslim?

That might breach Canada's new C-9 laws.

But it would be true.

PRIDE MONTH IRELAND: Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) forced to pull explicit content from its website

RTÉ has removed a link to a site promoting adult content on its 'Pride Month - KIDS Book Club' website – after parents complained.

One parent, speaking to the news website *Gript*, said, "I emailed Children's Minister, Norma Foley, in 2023, about explicit books targeted at children in Ireland, including the controversial 'What's the T?' book.

She added, "It is as plain as day that these books are totally unsuitable for children, yet the person who's in charge of what books go on the shelves takes no responsibility."

Another declared, "I have pointed out to this Minister *on a number of occasions* that no parent ever consented to involving our children in the National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy".

The Irish broadcaster had signposted readers to *Children's Books Ireland's* 'Read with Pride: 2026 Reading Guide', featuring the book 'What's the T: The Guide to All Things Trans And/or Nonbinary', which was marketed to children 15 and over, despite containing numerous details of sex acts.

US Vice-President J D Vance joins condemnation of Britain's lax migration laws

The brutal murder of Henry Nowak must lead to major legal changes - and expulsions

THE murder of Henry Nowak shocked the nation, as did the murder of three young girls and the stabbing of 10 others at Southport on 29 July 2024. Of the girls who attended that fatal dance class, 16 were not injured, but continue to live with profound psychological injuries.

Back on 22 May, 2013, British Army Fusilier Lee Rigby was murdered by extremists Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale near the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich.

More recently, two Jews were killed as a result of an Islamist attack at a Manchester synagogue (2 October last year).

These incidents and so many others have one common element: they were committed on white British people by those

In March, Foley announced funding of €1.5 million (£1.2m) to "promote the visibility and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in Ireland as part of the government's 'LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028'.

RTÉ claims that its KIDS Book Club "aims to bring a true reflection of our modern world, featuring stories of characters that represent a variety of sexualities and genders".

The book is on open sale on numerous websites and is described as "Discovering what it means to be a young transgender and/or non-binary person in the twenty-first century in this candid and funny guide for teens" – and as "highly acclaimed".

Peadar Táibín TC declared, "*Children's Books Ireland* should be brought before the Dáil Committee to explain why they are recommending such books to children."

An Ireland's Department of Children explained: "Minister Foley said that it is a matter for young people aged under 18 to decide themselves on what books are suitable."

from alien cultures.

Vice-President J D Vance commented in the same vein when footage of the shocking last moments of Henry Nowak were released by Hampshire Police. He said, "Henry Nowak's death at the hands of Vickrum Digwa was the result of *"a mass invasion of migrants into Britain...he died the same way a civilisation dies: abandoned and handcuffed by authorities, who neither trusted nor cared for him...the only response is righteous anger."*

He added, "Henry would still be alive today if the last few generations of European elites had stood their ground against the politics of self-hatred and the mass invasion of migrants".

This prompted Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy to 'phone J D Vance and tell him, "You are wrong...that killing had got nothing to do with mass migration". Later, interviewed by the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg, Lammy said, "I do not agree with Vance's caricature of Western civilisation and its perceived decline."

The shocking story of how, for over 20 years, mostly Pakistani men raped some 150,000 to 200,000 young British girls, is absolutely a mark of a declining nation and a declining western culture.

LETTERS

Study the Covenants to find out the future for both the Gentiles and Israel

SIR,- I respond to Andrew Forsyth's letter in BCN 538, dated 6/4/26.

The term 'Judaean-Christian' is indeed a relatively modern term used to describe the connection between Judaism and Christianity. It has probably arisen due to the fact that Israel, as a nation of people, is now a very significant factor on the world scene; in fact, the very centre of world attention. Old Testament and New Testa-

ment readers, believers of what they read (2 Timothy 3:16), know the prophecy of Ezekiel Chapter 37, which refers to the resurrection and restoration of the Jews to the land as a nation and to God Himself. **This is very clearly addressed to Israel alone.**

What the term 'Judaean-Christian' does refer to is the **foundation** upon which the Body of Christ is built. That is the **new covenant**, ratified in the sacrificial blood of Jesus, through which salvation from sin is granted to **"the Jew first and also for the Greek"** (Romans 1:16).

This atoning sacrifice is a thread, or 'blood line', which goes from Genesis to Revelation. It therefore incorporates Old Testament (Jewish) and New Testament (Jewish) belief or doctrine. The Gentiles who are redeemed are **grafted into Israel** (Romans 9-11).

TWO COVENANTS

The disagreement (problem!) is based on a lack of knowledge of two of God's covenants with Israel: (1) Abrahamic; (2) Sinaitic/Mosaic.

These are the **four** covenants:

A. The Abrahamic Covenant was/is **unilateral** and **everlasting** (Genesis 12:1-3, plus seven further references to it in Genesis alone). God alone is **the single party** in that covenant.

B. The Sinaitic/Mosaic Covenant was made **between two parties**: God and the people of Israel. It was conditional, dependent on Israel's obeying the terms set out by God, which they agreed to do (Exodus 19:3-8). But Israel failed to do so.

C. The New Covenant, prophesied through Jeremiah (31:31-34) and others, and deals with Israel's sin/disobedience (yet to be fulfilled). Obedience to Him will be

internalised, as it is now for Gentile and Jewish believers through the Holy Spirit. Israel's response to the New Covenant did not require an immediate response at its conception. This is yet to come prophesied, through Zechariah (12:1-4).

NATIONAL REPENTANCE

Once Israel has repented **as a nation**, the cleansing fountain of Jesus' blood will be open for their cleansing (Zechariah 13:1-2; also Isaiah 31:1-14, for the results of this). This **New Covenant** is God's **unilateral** promise. (Jer.31:37-37.) It is affirmed in Romans 11:25-29. Note well: "The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable", an encouraging scripture for every believer.

D. What does this reveal about the Holy One of Israel? He does not break His covenants (Deuteronomy 31:7-8); in Psalm 89:35-37 this is repeated – known as the 'Davidic Covenant', which covenants a

permanent king on David's throne through his progeny - **Jesus!!**

PERMANENT

Compare, e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7, yet to be fulfilled – also Simeon's prophecy, Luke 2:32. Further references to God's covenant keeping can be found in: Isaiah 44:21-22 and 54:7-10 [note; **everlasting kindness**] and Amos 9:14-15. **The current, ongoing return [to Israel] is permanent.** All of these Scriptures relate to Israel. Jesus's words in the New Testament are relevant, e.g. Matthew 23:37-39. Here, Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders of His day. **The context is Israel** as a nation of individuals. It clearly states: Jesus is returning to earth and they will acknowledge Him as they recognise Him they will repent, mourn and be cleansed as a nation of individuals. (Zechariah, Chapters 12 & 13.

R.E. (Northern Ireland)

Name and address supplied

"Rescuing Struggling Fellowships"

The CSF Conference at Otley Baptist Church: June 2026

THE sunny Saturday afternoon of June 13th saw a congregation of some 40 gather in the beautiful and well-kept building of Otley Baptist Church, Suffolk. The occasion was the second conference of the *Church Support Fellowship* (CSF). Several friends from nearby



Pastor Jonathan Northern
Credit: Church Support Fellowship

congregations afforded encouragement to the Church and to the Fellowship and the occasion provided warm fellowship for all present.

The CSF was formed some six years ago to provide help

for smaller churches, some in danger of closing. Other varied needs were identified: pastor-less churches struggling to fill the pulpit; difficulty handling complex legislation; rising costs of maintenance and heating; lack of technical skills e.g. setting up a website. Many needs can be resolved by putting congregations in contact with those who could help.

The Fellowship desires to put heart into smaller causes, to press on in spite of difficulties, to stir up the spirit of prayer for this work and to widen the pool of those available with gifts and talents that might be called

upon when needed.

The service at Otley was led by Roland Burrows. Marcus Keogh-Brown (Friston) read the Scripture from 2 Corinthians 8. Richard Clarke of Plymouth outlined the vision of the work as stated above. He also spoke on behalf of John Landymore (Walsham le Willows) who has been helping at Otley. Philip Hambridge outlined the steps required to set up websites for churches: four having been completed to date. Elisha Masih (Wattisham) led in prayer.

WARM SUPPORT

The sermon given by Jonathan Northern gave an historical view of the way

independent Reformed churches have still engaged warmly in supporting other churches, largely referring to Dr John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, *The Savoy Declaration*, and to the practice of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England and the Welsh Particular Baptists.

He then demonstrated this principle from several passages/principles of Scripture:

(a) Ephesians 4:15-16: every local church is in union with Christ and therefore with all others;

(b) the principle of faith & love:- Acts 15; Acts 11:22-26; 2 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 8; Revelation

2:11: the Spirit speaking to all churches about one. We were exhorted to follow the example of the woman anointing the Lord's body: 'She hath done what she could'.

After the meeting tea was provided and gave opportunity for informal fellowship which can often have a significance beyond its appearance. Philip Hambridge also demonstrated a mobile app for a hymn-tune player, helpful for churches with no organist or even an organ.

Further details of this work can be found on the website www.churchsupport.org.uk

Report by Roland Burrows with thanks

Manx Assisted Dying Bill – Latest

Amendments Approved by Tynwald: Yet to be approved by the government

IN April, the Manx Assisted Dying Bill was returned by the Ministry of Justice to the Isle of Man for changes to be made to make it compatible with the latest case law from the European Court of Human Rights.

As a result, on 16 June, several amendments were tabled to it by the Bill's sponsors, which were approved by 16-6 in the House of Keys and by 5-1 in the Legislative Council.

The Manx Legislature is different from that at Westminster in that when



Peaceful Demonstrators line up against the Manx Assisted Dying Bill outside the Isle of Man's Parliament, 16 June 2016

it sits as Tynwald, as it did on this occasion, both branches sit together; though they vote separately.

The debate was relatively short. Legally, the tabled amendments in these circumstances could not be amended any further. One or two members expressed some concern at this. What this means is that the Bill will now be returned to the Justice Department, with a view to it going forward for the

Royal Assent.

FLAWED LEGISLATION

There is no safe way of framing novel legislation of this sort. However, there were some obvious flaw-lines in the amendments, not to mention in the original Bill itself.

Nevertheless, because of the Standing Orders of the Legislature, these could not be addressed. Therefore

it means that a flawed Bill, over and above the fact that it is contrary to the Laws of God, is now proceeding to the next stage. This is a most unhappy state of affairs.

Earlier in the day, there was a peaceful demonstration of some sixty people outside the Legislature. It was notable that a very large majority were **against** the Bill.

Nevertheless, that did not affect the outcome, any more than the fact that, following a public consultation at the very outset, **the majority of those who responded, by a slim margin, were opposed to it.**

Report by Peter Murcott

* Ros Taisia (pictured), a committed Christian, was the acknowledged co-ordinator of the strong protest group (also pictured) that turned out in force to oppose the Manx Assisted Dying Bill. Her daughter runs the family business. Fenella Cakes. - Editor



Mrs Ros Taisia, Leading Opponent of the Manx Assisted Dying Bill

Credit: Both photos by Peter Murcott, with thanks

OUR LETTERS POLICY

Opinions expressed in the Letters column do not necessarily reflect those of the British Church Newspaper. We are unable to publish all letters we receive but we welcome letters of less than 300 words and reserve the right to shorten letters. We do not publish the full addresses of correspondents unless requested to do so. Email letters should be sent to BCN1611@btinternet.com

Written letters should go to Tony Bennett, 14 Kingswood Road, SHREWSBURY SY3 8UX

Assisted Suicide Bill Revived: Parliament Act may be used to force it through

By Geoffrey Main

AS was sadly predictable, this dangerous and pernicious Bill has been revived and re-presented to the Commons, word-for-word the same as the one that was passed by the Commons on 20 June last year – by 314 votes to 291, a majority of 23. The House of Lords failed to endorse it, due to a huge number of controversial clauses and lack of time to debate them all.

Lauren Edwards, Labour MP for Rochester and Strood since 2024, plans to bring in the same 51-clause Bill that was ‘talked out’ in the House of Lords in the last session. As she came second in the ballot to Sir Desmond Swayne (see page 8) for Private Members Bills, the Bill will inevitably be debated and voted on again.

POWERFUL

Lauren Edwards was born and bred in Australia and has only been an MP for two years, but will be backed by powerful and well-funded pressure groups such as *Dignity in Dying*, which led the charge last time.

She has made clear that in her view the House of Lords should only act as a ‘revising chamber’ and does not have the ‘right’ to exercise its constitutional powers to stop a Bill. This ignores the fact that the Lords has fre-

quently acted as a brake on the careless use by this government of its overwhelming majority in the Commons, to push through some badly thought-out measures.

The Lords use their powers with care and caution, and for the most part operate away from the spotlight of the press.

However, in the wisdom and Providence of God, there is hope that the designs of the secularist lobby may fail again, if the Lord will. This is for two reasons.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

First and foremost, the Lords’ scrutiny, across many hours in the last session, did put the spotlight on practical issues which had been ignored as the Bill was rammed through the Commons.

These include:

- (a) the matter of pregnant women;
- (b) those with anorexia;
- (c) those under 25;
- (d) the disabled;
- (e) those for whom English is a foreign language;
- (f) those with an over-reliance on medical advice – and many others who are regarded as being ‘vulnerable’.

This is even before we get to key issues, such as: ‘When does lawful persuasion by relatives become unlawful coercion?’, and ‘What will be the effect on the medical profession of aid-

ing and abetting suicide?’ Should doctors have the right to opt out?

The majority in the Commons at Third Reading was down to 23. Several MPs who gave their support have since signalled their increasing unease.

OVER-RIDING THE LORDS?

The second factor at work is a reluctance among a few of the Bill’s supporters to make constitutional history by over-riding the Lords in what is, after all, a Private Member’s Bill, *not* a government Bill, *nor was it in Labour’s 2024 manifesto.*

There has been a notable tendency already, in the last two years, to hollow out our Parliamentary democracy.

Last time, Labour MPs split 224-160 in favour. Several MPs have already signalled their dismay at the effect this high profile and deeply controversial measure might have on the working of our system of government.

As an additional factor, the Labour party is in considerable turmoil now that Andy Burnham has won the Makerfield by-election. Should he replace the Prime Minister, who is deeply unpopular? Will it cause civil war in their ranks?

‘DEEPLY FLAWED & UNSAFE’

Responding to the news, Labour MP for West Lancashire, Ashley Dalton, said she was “very sad” to see this “deeply flawed and unsafe” Bill return to Parliament, adding, “We have debated this deeply divisive and flawed Assisted Dying bill for over a year and the Bill’s supporters have refused to listen or to make the necessary changes. This Bill would hand sweeping unchecked powers over life and death and our NHS to future governments, whatever their political persuasion. We should not be using more of our limited time and political capital on something that simply isn’t safe nor a priority for the people who put us in power.”



Labour MP, Ashley Dalton, who will once again oppose this revived Assisted Dying Bill
Credit: Official Portrait

Church of England under attack over 3-year delay in paying slavery reparations

IN 2023, the Church of England (CofE) announced that the predecessor to its modern Endowment Fund had invested heavily in the South Sea Company, a business involved in transporting African slaves to America during the 18th century.



Rt Rev Dr Rosemarie Mallett, the Bishop of Croydon
Credit: Wikipedia

Many of the slaves were sold to British businessmen by wealthy African tribal leaders. Among those involved in this lucrative but inhuman trade was John Newton, a one-time slave ship captain and investor in the slave trade – until his conversion to Jesus Christ.

This followed an earlier revelation in 2019, when the Church Commissioners began to research the origins of a slavery-linked, predecessor fund, ‘Queen Anne’s Bounty’, dating back to 1704.

APOLOGIES

The revelations of the CofE’s profits from slave trading led to demands from the representatives of black people today for ‘reparations’. That year, Archbishop Welby apologised on behalf of the CofE, saying that he was “very sorry”, and set up a £100 million ‘Social Impact’ Fund, sometimes known as ‘Project Spire’.

Welby said at the time that the CofE had made profits from the slave trade equivalent to £1.4billion in today’s money. Those profits were all integrated into the Church’s current Investment Fund. The CofE has national and diocesan investment funds totalling over £17billion.

COMPLAINTS

Today complaints are rising that none of the allocated money has been spent.

The Church Commissioners’ plan is to spend the £100 million over a 9-year programme of funding ‘social impact investing’, grant-making (to black-owned start-up businesses) and academic research – rather than rather than individual compensation, which

some activists would much prefer.

The CofE established the *Oversight Group*, under the Chairmanship of Rt Rev Dr Rosemarie Mallett, the Bishop of Croydon (and CofE lead on Racial Justice), in 2023. It has spent much of

its time arguing that the £100 million ‘Impact Fund’ should be raised to at least £1billion, to “adequately put right the historical wrongs”.

Se said recently, “No amount of money can fully atone for or fully redress the centuries-long impact of African chattel enslavement, the effects of which are still felt around the world today. Implementing the recommendations will show the commitment of the Church Commissioners to supporting the process of healing, repair and justice for all of those across society impacted by the legacy of [British slavery].”

OPPOSED

At the same time, many still oppose any money at all going to ‘reparations’.

Critics argue that the £100 million allocated was legally allocated for clergy wages and the benefit of local parishes.

The conservative ‘think tank’, the *Policy Exchange*, has robustly challenged the legal and ethical basis of the reparations plan on similar grounds. Oxford University theologian Professor Nigel Biggar and the group *History Reclaimed* argue the historical claims linking modern church funds to slavery are overstated and flawed.

Surveys of opinion of the views of Anglican church-goers routinely show that over 80% expect the CofE to prioritise supporting local parishes over funding historical reparations.

None of the £100 million has yet been spent.



Campaigners against the Assisted Suicide Bill outside Parliament earlier this year. Credit: Disability Rights-UK

Credit: Fair use

HOW TO PRAY:

Tips from
R A Torrey

1. “Jesus chose the early morning hour for prayer. The first thing we should do each day should be to go alone with God and face the duties, the temptations, and the service of that day, and get

strength...”

2. “James wrote: ‘Ye have not because ye ask not’. These words contain the secret of the poverty and powerlessness of the average Christian

– neglect of prayer.”

3. “The man who spends little time in prayer, who is not steadfast and constant in prayer, will not be ready for the Lord when He comes. But

we may be ready. How? Pray! Pray! Pray!”

4. “Here is one of the greatest secrets of prevailing prayer: To study the Word to find what God’s will is, as revealed

there, in the promises. Then simply take these promises and spread them out before God in prayer, with the unwavering expectation that He will do what He has promised in His Word.”

THE SIX UNFAIR TRIALS OF CHRIST: PART 1

A legal analysis of why each trial broke the law - by the Editor

BETWEEN about 9/10pm and 6/7am on the fifteenth day of the first month (Abib/Nisan), almost certainly 33AD, our Lord Jesus Christ was subject to six, separate, unfair trials: three Jewish, and three Roman. In this series of three articles, we'll examine how each of these trials was unlawful, in at least one respect.

Before our Lord was even arrested on that fateful Thursday night – that is, at the beginning of the 15th day of Nisan, the first day of the annual Passover Festival – He knew precisely all that was going to happen to Him that day. But also, being God the Son, He had perfect knowledge of the heart and mind of every man, woman and child. Moreover, He would have perfect knowledge of every aspect of Jewish and Roman law.

Jewish law had always been founded on the contents of the first five books of the Bible, the 'Pentateuch'. But by the time of Christ, there had been the accretion of literally thousands of extra laws, sometimes referred to as the 'spoken law', because they were memorised, not written down. Our Lord would know them all.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN

Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, He told them: "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do...ye keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:5-13).

Attempts had been made by Hillel the Elder and others in the first century BC to codify these 'spoken laws', and some scribes kept private scrolls recording them.

These were some of the basic principles of Jewish criminal law at the time of Christ:

RULES OF COURT

(1) A formal 'charge' must be laid before the suspect, specifying what crime was alleged against her/him;

(2) The alleged offence must be tried before a court, either the 'Lesser Sanhedrin', consisting of 23 judges, two clerks (scribes) and two 'ushers', who would administer any beatings...or;

(3) The 'Great Sanhedrin', of 71 judges (Moses had appointed 70 judges, plus the High Priest as President);

(4) In death penalty cases, only



'Lady Justice', the statue above the Old Bailey (Central Criminal Court), London
Credit: Internet

priests and "Levites able to give their daughters to priestly stock" could give judgment;

(5) The court must first establish that it has jurisdiction to hear the case;

(6) There must be at least two witnesses, whose testimony must agree (Deuteronomy 19:15);

(7) With respect to a person charged with crime, (a) there is a presumption of innocence, (b) the verdict must be beyond reasonable doubt; (c) it must be based on the actual relevant facts, not on person's past record, and (d) a simple majority was enough to convict someone;

(8) There usual modes of punishment were: fines; restitution; exclusion from fellowship (from 7 days to indefinite); or corporal or capital punishment; and

(9) Authorised methods of capital punishment were: stoning, burning or decapitation, but not crucifixion. The two chief witnesses against anyone sentenced to death had to carry out the punishment.

THE PLOT

The earliest indication we have that the Pharisees and the rest of the Jewish establishment wanted Christ out of the way appears to come in Mark 3:6. We read that our Lord had healed "a man with a withered hand", and as result "...the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him". It is thought that this incident occurred at the Feast of Tabernacles at the beginning of the second year of His ministry [probably 30 AD – see Luke 3:1-3].

Their desire to have Christ out of their way kept escalating, as they followed Him wherever He went, for the next 2½ years, their fury increasing as He answered all their cunning challenges, His miracles multiplied and as His popularity grew.

The popularity of Christ probably reached its zenith after He brought Lazarus back from Paradise after he had been dead for

four days: "Many of the Jews had seen the things which Jesus did and believed on him" (John 11:45). Then the die was cast, when the Sanhedrin met, and said, "This man doeth many miracles...if we let him alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:47-48).

THE REASON

Caiaphas, the High Priest that year, then gave the Sanhedrin a reason for putting Christ to death: "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not...but that also he should gather together in one the children of God who are scattered abroad." Then, "They took counsel together for to put him to death." (John 11:47-53).

The Pharisees issued an order: "If any know where Christ is: Arrest him. Failure to do so is a criminal offence". Christ then made away, possibly for a few weeks, to a village, Ephraim, on the fringes of the wilderness. He knew His time was about to come, and needed peace and quiet.

Then, for three days, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, 10th to 12th Nisan (the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Days of the Jewish week), Christ preached in the Temple. This was the 'Perfect Lamb of God' being inspected for defects, just as happened before the first Passover (Exodus 12).

THE MEETING AT CAIAPHAS'S PALACE

On 13th Nisan (Wednesday), the Sanhedrin was convened at Caiaphas's palace and "they consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill him". This became known to Judas, who no doubt knew several members of the Sanhedrin.

The members of the Sanhedrin had a problem, however. They dare not arrest and kill Christ "during the Feast of the Passover". They agreed amongst themselves: "Not upon the Feast Day, lest there be an uproar" (Mark 14:1-2). The Feast Day refers to the First Day of the 7-day Passover Festival – Friday, 15th Nisan.

They reasoned that executing a popular figure during a major, crowded festival could spark a massive public uproar. Ironically, so desperate were they to get him executed that, as things turned out, Christ *was* indeed killed on the Feast Day, after all!

Later on 13th Nisan (Wednesday), Christ and His disciples were at the house of Simon the leper at Bethany, two miles from

Jerusalem. Martha served a 'supper' (Matthew 26:1-12; Mark 14:1-11; Luke 22:1-6; John 12:1). At this supper, "a woman" (Matthew and Mark)/"Mary" (Luke) poured a boxful of ointment of spikenard over the head of Christ. Judas objected, "Why was this waste of ointment made?...it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence!" (Mark 15:5, John 12:4-5).

THE BETRAYAL

At this point, Judas left the supper, and hurried to meet the chief priests, who gave him 30 pieces of silver for his promise to betray Christ. His opportunity to do so came the following day, when Christ revealed that He would go with His disciples, after the Last Supper, to the Garden of Gethsemane. During the Last Supper, Judas left, telling the chief priests that Christ was heading for the Garden of Gethsemane.

[A note on Mary: Your editor holds to the view that (a) "the woman who went to the Pharisee's house, and brought an alabaster box of ointment, pouring it out on the feet of our Lord" (Luke 7:37-38); (b) the woman "out of whom went seven devils" (Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2); and (c) "the woman who anointed the head of Christ with spikenard, from an alabaster box, at the supper at the house of Simon the day before the Passover (Matthew 26:7; Mark 14:3; John 12:2)...are all Mary Magdalene. This a minority view, yet has many supporters, see, e.g. an essay by Rev Jeffrey Bütz on the website of James Tabor, here:

<https://jamestabor.com/was-mary-magdalene-the-same-person-as-mary-of-bethany-a-guest-post-from-jeffrey-butz/>

THE ARREST

Preparations for the arrest of Christ had probably been made in a great hurry, but nevertheless were formidable. We know that the chief priests were present, the Temple Guard, a detachment of Roman soldiers and a crowd with swords and cudgels, carrying lanterns and torches; perhaps a hundred, or many more. They clearly envisaged a potentially violent riot. Probably, given that there was a detachment of Roman soldiers involved, Caiaphas had sought permission that evening from Pilate.

Christ asked: "Whom seek ye?" The Pharisees said, "Jesus of Nazareth". Christ answered, "I am he", whereupon they all fell backwards on the ground. Somehow, they all sensed that they were in the presence of

God.

At this point, the disciples fled, though one 'young man' decided to start following Christ. He was soon set upon by other men, and ran off in haste, losing his only clothing, a linen cloth, in the process. All good commentators agree that this was John Mark, author of Mark's Gospel (Mark 14:51), the 'spiritual son' as it were, of Peter.

THE 1ST TRIAL: AT THE RESIDENCE OF ANNAS

They then "laid hands on him". Peter reacted by cutting off the ear of Malchus, Caiaphas's servant. Christ brought peace to the situation by healing his ear. They led Christ away to the residence of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. It seems that Annas's residence was along the way to Caiaphas's palace, somewhere between the Garden of Gethsemane and the Roman fortress of Antonia.

The decision to arrest Christ had been made by the Sanhedrin, but Jewish law was insufficient to have Him executed; only the Romans could carry out a death penalty. As Lord Shaw of Dunfermline observed: "A double trial: two great systems of criminal jurisprudence were called into play to determine his fate".

The house of Annas derived much of its wealth from doing business in the temple. After six months of ministry, Christ had attended His first Passover (30 AD). The Apostle John wrote:

"Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting...He made a scourge of small cords, drove the sheep and the oxen out of the temple, poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables" and said of them that sold doves, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise" (John 2:13-16). Scripture records that "His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up". (John 3:17 and Psalm 69:9).

Probably, Jesus's action had deprived him of much of his income over the three years since then. Almost certainly, revenge was in his heart.

An Apostle, understood by most commentators to be John, went inside the palace to see what was going on. Peter hovered outside. A fire was lit inside, for it was a cold night. John left, and Peter came in to warm himself by the fire.

Part 2 in the next issue DV