

# The Presbyterian Banner

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EPA

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## FROM THE EDITOR

In this, the last issue of *The Presbyterian Banner* for 2019, our ever-helpful Taree minister, George Ball, provides a topical sermon. George and Rhoda, along with many others, had to evacuate to the beach at Wallabi Point to avoid the fires in the area.

Australia is prone to extremes of temperature and to fire. Some examples: In Victoria the 13 January 1939 fires burned 2 million hectares, destroyed 3,700 buildings on a day when a temperature of 45.6 (114.1F) was experienced. Seventy-one people died. The causes were largely human - careless burning, campfires, graziers, sawmillers and land clearing. The Ash Wednesday fires on 16 February 1983 affected Victoria and South Australia and resulted in 75 deaths including 17 firefighters. It followed prolonged drought and was preceded some days before by a memorable dust storm that blacked out Melbourne. . About 418,000 hectares was burnt with thousands of people left homeless and heavy stock losses. The causes were often short-circuiting power lines. The Black Saturday fires in Victoria on 7 February 2009 burned 450,000 hectares, destroyed over 2,000 homes while the human death toll was 180. Powerline issues, arson and carelessness were factors, and always there seems to be an element of arson. Since September this year 1.6 million hectares has been burnt and 668 homes have been destroyed in the NSW/Queensland fires and six people have died in NSW.

It is quite obvious that in many cases we ask for trouble by building in appropriate places. The way the aboriginal inhabitants managed the land avoided massive build-up of forest floor litter, and it is clear we still have much to learn about land management.

*What about the situation being out of our control because of global warming and the consequent climate change?*

The science is there to establish warming and cooling patterns over the centuries. To what degree warming is caused by humans is a matter of controversy. If temperature is increasing globally because of CO2 emissions, it's not entirely clear to me that reducing or eliminating Australia's contribution to such emissions will make much difference given the contribution of US, China and India. Still it won't hurt and indeed it is our duty to do what we can to be careful stewards of God's creation rather than rapacious exploiters. However, the science, imperfect as it is, is heavily, very heavily, in support of the proposition that human activity is now the major driver.

We certainly can't treat climate change flowing from global warming as a left-wing hoax. Nor can we say care for the earth doesn't matter because God is in control and in any case the end is coming soon. God is in control but that only heightens our responsibility to look after the world as responsible creatures. Certainly being more careful in the use of carbon-based fuels is desirable if only to cut down pollution that chokes many cities. I would even say it is urgent, only we need to keep things in perspective. Extinction Rebellion harnesses the idealism of youth and the concern they share with academics and others. But generally their actions have been counter-productive, suggesting their rebellion has something of an extreme religious-like quality.

What will 2020 bring? We do not know but we know, as part of Christian commitment, we can participate in thoughtful debate to address some of these issues, always undergirded by confidence in the good hand of God.

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**Editor: Rev Dr Rowland S. Ward, 2 Hadlow Drive, Wantirna 3152 T:0421 823 231 E: rsw@pcea.org.au**

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## Lessons from the Bushfires

Rev. George D. Ball, PCEA Taree

Preached 17 November 2019

**B**ushfires have always been part of Australian life, but the bushfires this past week have been the biggest natural disaster ever to hit our area. The scene around Wallabi Point is like out of a sci-fi movie - complete devastation. The destruction cannot be measured in mere economic terms; it has also taken a huge emotional toll. We sympathise especially with those who have lost a loved one and lost their properties. I'm not sure of the final tally of local homes destroyed, but state-wide the number is in excess of 300.

Are there any lessons to learn? I don't mean to enter the politically charged debate about climate change or hazard reduction. I leave that for others to discuss. What I mean is: does the Bible have anything to say to help us at such a time as this? Is there a word from the Lord? Happily, there is. It tells us that we live in a broken world; a place where there is much sorrow and suffering, loss and tears. It tells us that this world is groaning, waiting for the renewal. It tells us that this world is passing away (1 Jn. 2:17). Nothing is permanent. All the things we treasure can suddenly perish. It tells us that one day this world will be burned up. It also tells us that life is precious and precarious; it takes a lung full of smoke to snuff it out. As David said, 'There is but a step between me and death' (1 Sam. 20:3).

The local ABC have done a good job keeping us informed about the condition and movement of the fires. They remind us we should have our properties prepared and have an evacuation plan, which is of course, good advice.

The Bible also gives us much essential information and warning about fire. It mentions fire about 500 times. I want us to think this morning about what the Bible says about fire. Obviously, we can't say everything in the limited time available. But there are three things in particular I want us to know. If we know these things and respond accordingly, we will be prepared for any emergency and have the necessary evacuation plan.

### 1. Fire - a Sign of God's Holy Presence.

Fire is not perhaps the first thing we think of when we think of God. God is Love. God is Light. God is Spirit.

But God is also a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). He often revealed His presence through fire. It's one way of getting our attention. You can't ignore an approaching fire - or you do so at your peril! Through these fires God is wanting our attention. C. S. Lewis wrote, 'God whispers in our pleasures; speaks in our conscience; but shouts in our pains. It's His megaphone to rouse a deaf world'. Sadly, many are blind and deaf to His call.

The Lord appeared to Abram by fire (Gen 15). Abram was told to take certain animals; kill them; cut them in two; and lay them in two rows on the ground. That night Abram saw a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch (symbolising the presence of God) pass between the pieces. This was the Lord's unique way of confirming His covenant promises to Abram. The Lord was saying in effect, '*May this be done to Me if either of us does not fulfil our covenant responsibilities*'. Can you 'join the dots'? It leads us to the ultimate sacrifice at Calvary.

The Lord led the Israelites through the desert by a pillar of fire at night (Ex. 13:21). He appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai when it was wrapped in smoke (Ex. 19: 18). The fire on the altar was to burn 24/7 symbolising, among other things, the Lord's presence (Lev. 6: 9). When Solomon had finished praying at the dedication of the Temple fire came down from heaven and the glory of the Lord filled the temple (2 Chron. 7:1-3). He revealed Himself by fire to Elijah and the false prophets on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18: 24, 38). The prophets often compared the Lord to a blazing fire (Isa. 10: 17, 30:27, Dan. 7: 9-10).

On the day of Pentecost when the believers were all together in one place there was the sound of a mighty rushing wind and divided tongues of fire appeared to them and rested on them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 1-4).

As Presbyterians we should all remember how the Lord appeared to Moses at Horeb (Sinai) in the burning bush (Ex. 3: 1-3). (The burning bush is the Presbyterian symbol). Moses was looking after his father-in-law's sheep. He may have seen a bushfire or two before. But as he watched this bush, he realised it was different. Though it was burning, it was not burned up. It just kept burning. This was clearly unnatural. God was revealing His presence to Moses through the fire and was calling him to lead His people out of Egypt.

More specifically the burning bush revealed something of His **sovereign power**. The Lord who established the laws of nature also has the power to suspend them, as and when He chooses. He is the Almighty. What a consolation for Moses as he prepared to face Pharaoh! And for us too - to know that there is One who is more powerful than the mighty fires!

It also revealed something of the **self-sufficiency** of God. The fire didn't need the bush for fuel. Neither does the Lord depend on the universe for his existence. If the universe passed into oblivion, God would continue to exist.

The bush also revealed something of His **holiness** (verses 4-5). Moses was to keep his distance and take off his sandals – as an expression of his respect and submission. There was no way a sinful man could come near an infinitely holy God.

You don't mess with fire! You treat it with respect and caution. The same is true of the Lord, because Moses tells us that, 'The Lord your God is a consuming fire' (Deut. 4:24). We don't mess with Him! We must treat Him with honour and respect. The Lord gave Moses many detailed instructions about how He was to be worshipped (occupying much of Exodus and Leviticus - the bits we usually skip over!). We tend to think that many of these details were giggling, unnecessary, and excessive. But we miss the point. Every detailed instruction sent a clear signal that obedience to God's word was the most important service that Israel could render. The Lord must not be worshipped in a slipshod manner. He is a consuming fire – He must therefore be approached with caution, reverence, obedience, humility and awe.

There are people today who say, '*Well, it's very different now. That was Old Testament worship. God was serious and particular about worship then. But now we can pretty much do whatever we want!*' Spontaneity, lack of preparation, flippancy and informality are seen as signs of spirituality. Could this be right? We gladly recognise that New Testament worship is a lot simpler than in the Old Testament; but it's no less serious. The God revealed in the Old Testament as 'a consuming fire,' is the same consuming fire in Hebrews 12:29.

## **2. Fire – a Symbol of God's Righteous Judgment.**

Fire devours and destroys everything in its path. That's what we witnessed last weekend. The terrifying wall of flames was like a giant mobile incinerator devouring everything before it. In the Bible fire is often a sign of the righteous judgement of God. Think of a few Old Testament examples: - Gen. 19: 24 - 'The Lord rained down brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah'. Numbers 11:1 - 'And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp'. Numbers 16:35 - 'And fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men offering the incense.' (They were supporters of the rebellion led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram). Joshua 6:24 - 'And they burned the city (Jericho) with fire and everything in it'. Lev. 10: 1-2 - 'Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron . . . offered unauthorised fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord'. And Deuteronomy 28:20-24.

Turning to the New Testament there was no one who preached more about hell than Jesus. Roughly 13% of His preaching focused on hell and judgement. Just two examples: - He told a parable about the Rich Man and Lazarus to explain what happens when we die. The Rich Man died and was buried. Though dead he was still conscious. Jesus says, 'in torment in Hades he lifted up His eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame' (Luke 16: 23-24).

Jesus warns us what will happen on the Day of Judgement. 'Then He (the King) will say to those on His left, Depart from Me, you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Matthew 25:41). The ultimate horror of hell is its everlastingness. John describes the fate of those who worship the beast, 'The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever' (Rev. 14:11).

Peter describes the Day of Judgement in 2 Peter 3:10-13. He tells us it will be a day when everything will be exposed. The bush beside Saltwater carpark was completely burned. It exposed hundreds of beer bottles and cans that had been tossed into the undergrowth. So, the fiery judgement will expose everyone's work. Paul states, 'Each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it; because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is' (1 Cor. 3:13).

Fire is an instrument of judgement that the Lord has used in the past and He will use it again. Are these bushfires God's judgment upon us? Is He punishing us because of the passage of the abortion and same-sex marriage laws? We can't infallibly know. Droughts and bushfires have always been part of the Australian landscape. Nonetheless the Bible makes it clear that natural disasters may be part of God's judgment on a sinful nation. The fact that He has not completely destroyed us like Sodom and Gomorrah is evidence that we are still living in the day of grace. He continues to offer forgiveness and salvation to everyone who repents and puts their trust in the Saviour. In the midst of wrath there is mercy.

## **3. Fire – a Symbol of God's Refining Work.**

The prophet Malachi spoke of Jesus when he said, 'Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire . . . He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver . . . And purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering of righteousness' (Mal. 3:2-3). We need a refiner because we need cleansed, purified and refined. We are contaminated with impurity and rebellion and unbelief. But Jesus came to refine us and make us pure. In ancient times a workman would take a rough piece of ore hewn from the earth, crush it in pieces and place it in

a crucible, and expose it to the flames. The heat would melt the ore, the impurities would rise to the surface, which could then be skimmed off. The refiner knew his work was complete when he saw his reflection in the molten ore.

That's what the Lord is doing in our lives. The purification process begins when we are 'washed in His blood.' The process continues throughout life. He wants us to grow in Christian character that we might reflect his image. He uses His Word and providence. Paul states, 'We know that all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son' (Rom. 8: 28-29). The 'all things,' may include the refining fires of affliction, pain, tribulation, distress, persecution, and famine, etc. But the Lord's painful fiery blasts are well intentioned. That's why James can say, 'My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience' (James 1: 2-3).

The bushfire appears to be an irreparable disaster. Yet we know the gum tree needs fire to germinate its seed. What seems to be a disaster will in time (with the blessing of rain) lead ultimately to the renewal of the bush. We will look back to the bushfires of 2019 and recognise how it was good for the forest. And the day will also come when we will be glad of the Refiner's work. Peter writes, 'These trials will show the genuineness of your faith. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold – though your faith is far more precious than gold. So, when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring much praise, honour and glory at the return of Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 1:7).

What is the Lord saying to us through these bushfires? Be prepared and have an evacuation plan. We need to flee from the wrath to come. If you haven't yet fled to Christ and asked Him to save you, you need to do that now. He is the only safe evacuation centre. But the fire also reminds us of the passionate love the Lord has for every one of His people. After the two disciples from Emmaus heard Jesus exposition of the Scriptures, they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road and while He opened the Scriptures to us' (Luke 24:32). They immediately returned to Jerusalem. In the midst of gloom and despondency they had good news to tell. The Lord is risen! He can make all things new. We have the same message – let us tell it with a burning heart! #

## Huldrych Zwingli (1485-1531) - *the not to be forgotten Reformer*



*An informative and readable introduction to the great Reformer by Dr Byron G. Curtis, Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pa.*

**H**uldrych Zwingli is the greatest Reformer no one's ever heard of. He was indeed something like the first Reformed Presbyterian. The year 2019 marks the Zwingli 500. That's five hundred years since the start of what we now call the "Reformed" branch of the Protestant Reformation. Zwingli started that. Not John Calvin. Not John Knox. It was Huldrych Zwingli.

Of the truly great Reformers, those whose legacies embrace vast families of today's churches worldwide, Zwingli is the least known. He rates but a single sentence in the *Philosophers and Religious Leaders* volume of *Lives and Legacies: An Encyclopedia of People Who Changed the World* (ed. Christian D. von Dehsen; Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1999). Likewise for *World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored and Explained* (ed. John Bowker; DK: London, 2006). Pity the poor editors, for Huldrych Zwingli was indeed a world-changer whose great work invites exploration.

Born the year after Martin Luther (1483–1546), whose fame preceded his; murdered while John Calvin (1509–1564) was still a Roman Catholic; Zwingli is overshadowed by these better-known "greats." Though his ministry proved tragically brief, fair-minded accounts of the Protestant Reformation pay him heed. For years I've used Timothy George's *Theology of the Reformers* (Broadman & Holman, 1988) as a textbook at Geneva College. The first edition of that well-crafted volume offered four biographies: Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, and Menno Simons. A revised edition (2013) added only one more figure: William Tyndale. Zwingli rates as one of those few. In that sixteenth century, his was the voice that first sounded out the doctrines and piety that, in fuller form, are cherished by Reformed Presbyterians.

Pastor, preacher, poet, and politician, Huldrych Zwingli is perhaps best remembered as preacher. On a Sunday morning 500 years ago, January 1, 1519, his thirty-fifth birthday, this newly appointed "People's Priest" made a shocking announcement to the congregation of Zurich's Great Minster Church. He proposed to preach through the

New Testament page by page, and in sermons he himself had prepared!

Why the shock? In those days bishops preached, not priests. Priests were the local representatives of the bishops; and bishops the actual pastors of the church. In their lowly role in parish work, most priests were satisfied to recite the text of the Roman Mass—the Latin service of the Lord’s Supper—and be done. Ill-trained in Latin, many priests could scarcely get through the Mass. Poorer churches routinely heard Mass in half-memorized, half-bowdlerized, and less than half-understood Latin. If there was a sermon at all, it was read from a book of homilies published by the bishops. Those sermons weighed heavily on moral duty, Roman sacraments, devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Saints, and the duty to obey—always—Holy Mother Church.

Preaching had fallen on hard times. In the early sixteenth century, bishops rarely preached. Though the duty was theirs, especially in their mandated Sunday-by-Sunday visitations to the congregations of the diocese, many bishops neglected both the visits and the preaching. A few well-educated priests sometimes took up the preaching task. But only with the bishop’s permission.

For Zurichers assembled in the Great Minster Church that auspicious January day, preaching by priests was odd, but not without precedent. Zwingli pressed the oddity beyond all precedent. He’d preach, but not the homilies published by the bishops. The sermon that Lord’s Day expounded the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1:1–17. A genealogy’s an unlikely text for a spellbinding sermon, but Zwingli proved himself a spellbinder.

Week by week, sermon followed upon sermon, all on Matthew’s Gospel. Report spread of this unusual priest who put wings on words and made Matthew sing. His preaching soon drew listeners from far and wide. Even Pope Leo X, Luther’s nemesis, heard about it and smiled. Master Huldrych Zwingli was, after all, a known and devout priest, skilled in Latin and Greek, a friend of the great Erasmus, and, unlike that Saxon rebel Luther, a loyal son of the Roman Church. So, the Pope indulged him, even extending him a stipend for his work.

Zwingli preached what we now call “expository sermons.” His sermons explained and applied the sacred text, page by page, in what the ancient church called *lectio continuo*, “continuous reading”—no skipping troubling texts! He treated faith, doctrine, and piety with a winsome wit and an evangelical clarity that Zurichers had scarcely known.

After Matthew’s Gospel, he turned to the book of Acts, showing how the Apostles themselves preached. This helped explain to doubters why Zurich’s “People’s

Priest” preached as he did. Then, to clear up the raging question of the relationship between faith and works, he took up Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians. Soon Zurich’s city council commanded all the priests in the canton to preach only what they found taught in Holy Scripture, just as Master Zwingli did. By 1525, his skills in Hebrew now strong, the Great Minster’s preacher turned to the Old Testament.

What made him so ready to buck the system? What forces formed his soul?<sup>1</sup> Born in a devout and modestly prosperous family in an Alpine village with the rustic name of Wildhaus, the young Huldrych showed himself a precocious child. His proud parents sent him off to study with his uncle, a priestly academic, who guided him well. Studies in the wealthy Swiss cities of Basel and Bern and at the great university of Vienna advanced his Latin and exposed him to the new movement in scholarship we now label *Renaissance humanism*.

That name is easily misunderstood. The *Renaissance* (“Rebirth”) started in wealthy Italian cities around 1350 AD and slowly spread throughout Europe, occasioned by new economic prosperity, a strange thing called “leisure time,” and a vast increase in opportunities for education. *Humanism* was its hard-to-define companion in intellectual life, characterized by deep interest in the high civilization that had preceded the allegedly “dark” Middle Ages: the classical world of Greek and Roman antiquity.<sup>2</sup> Humanists wanted to improve society by recovering the best of that ancient past.

The Renaissance humanists’ motto, *Ad Fontes*, “Back to the Sources,” rallied their efforts to discover the roots, the *fountains*, from which flowed the best values and virtues in human life. Those fountains were found not only in Cicero and Seneca, but also in Holy Scripture. The Renaissance humanist was typically devout, a lover of ancient languages, and ablaze with desire to improve the world by Christian wisdom. Hence, the Renaissance humanists’ Bible was not the *Vulgate*, the antique Latin version made by St. Jerome in his Bethlehem cave. Rather, in true *Ad fontes* spirit, their Bible came in its Greek and Hebrew originals, now increasingly available in printed (!) form; or in translations made from those same Hebrew and Greek originals.

Zwingli completed the Master of Arts degree at Bern in 1506. He then travelled east to the lake-town of Constance, his bishop’s city, where he was ordained to the priesthood. A journey up-country took him back home to Wildhaus to say his first Mass, proud family in attendance. He was all of 22 years old.

Humanism and the care of souls now occupied his days and nights.<sup>3</sup> His first pastoral charge in Glarus, an Alpine valley town not far from home, lasted ten years. In Glarus, he tells us, he had time to study theology and Greek. Lots of Greek. His skills grew steadily. So did temptations. Called

<sup>1</sup> For biography, see G. R. Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); or, more briefly, Ulrich Gabler, *Huldrych Zwingli: His Life and Work* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986); or, briefer still, the Zwingli chapter in Timothy George’s *Theology of the Reformers* (2013), 112–68.

<sup>2</sup> Most historians have nixed the nasty name “Dark Ages.” The Middle Ages were not “dark”; they were vibrant in their own distinctive way. Among their stellar achievements are the founding of the first western

universities, the development of corporate capitalism, and the rise of empirical science. See Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House), 2005.

<sup>3</sup> See the chapter “Humanisme et Cure d’Âmes” in Jacques V. Pollet, *Huldrych Zwingli et la Réforme en Suisse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 17–23.

to a more important charge in Einsiedeln in 1516, he found the Pope's rule of priestly celibacy a tyranny he could scarcely endure. Sexual scandal nearly ruined him, but influential friends vouched for the sincerity of his penitence.

March, 1516: an extraordinary book arrived at the bookshops from Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus was Europe's most famous scholar, and the first European to make his living by his books. This latest offering? — a two volume work with the odd title, *Novum Instrumentum omne*. This "New Instrument" really was a New Testament, a *printed* New Testament, and a New Testament unlike any seen before: It was Erasmus's own Latin rendition in (modest) dispute with the long-authoritative *Vulgate*. Moreover, printed on facing pages, culled from a few medieval Byzantine manuscripts, was the *Greek New Testament*. Astounding!

Before March 1516, if someone wanted to read the New Testament in its original Greek, they'd have to find some wealthy monastery, or a royal library, or an aristocratic bishop's study, where these rare and likely incomplete manuscripts were kept under lock and key.<sup>4</sup> After March 1516, you could go to a city bookshop and *buy your own*. Among the first to read Erasmus's *Greek New Testament*? — two important names: Dr. Martin Luther and Master Huldrych Zwingli. Perhaps too poor to buy his own, Zwingli read the copy in a monastery library. Reluctant to abandon such treasure, he wrote out a full transcript of the Pauline Epistles in Greek, dated March, 1517. Friends mention him reciting those Greek letters from memory, punctuated by a joke or two. He'd memorized all of them.<sup>5</sup>

Renaissance humanism helped form devoutly Christian scholars who could challenge old and mistaken ideas on the basis of older and better ideas. *Ad fontes*, "To the Sources," freed the Bible from its long Latin confinement. It meant that the New Testament's message of faith and repentance could no longer be hid under Roman vestments. This bold faith brought an end to the regime of fear, for, as Zwingli discovered, "Christ is the pledge of grace; nay, he is grace itself."<sup>6</sup>

Today we well know how media technology can redirect an entire world. In those days the world-changing tech proved to be Johann Gutenberg's moveable-type printing press. Gutenberg produced only one book—a grand edition of the Vulgate Bible (1456)—and promptly went bankrupt. But by 1500, European printers had produced millions of books. The best-selling topic was Christianity. By 1525, the now un-cloistered Luther shone: the best-selling author in the world. Like hit songs from *Elvis*, *The Beatles*, and *The Beach Boys*, his writings and his German Bible went platinum. The skill of literacy and the thrill of books

overwhelmed Europeans. They could read for themselves the truths of God, or warm to the hot disputes against them.

In Zurich, reform marched slowly. It almost didn't march at all. In August of 1519 Bubonic Plague—the Black Death—struck the city. Many fled the city. Vacationing at the time, Master Huldrych Zwingli, the "People's Priest," bravely sped back to the city to treat the sick, comfort the dying, and bury the dead. Brave it was, but a virtual death sentence. Alas, both he and his brother Andrew contracted the disease. Andrew did not survive. Nor did 2,000 other Zurichers. The trauma drove Huldrych nearer to God:

Help me, O Lord, / My strength and rock;  
Lo, at the door / I hear death's knock.

Uplift thine arm, / Once pierced for me,  
That conquered death, / And set me free.

Yet, if thy voice, / In life's midday,  
Recalls my soul, / Then I obey.

In faith and hope / Earth I resign,  
Secure of heaven, / For I am thine.<sup>7</sup>

He rose from his sickbed more trusting of the Gospel's truth, more trusted by Zurichers, and more willing to test the trust of Rome.

March 1522: Did the Pope rightly command Christians to fast from meat during Lent? Was his law trustworthy? Rome had long declared breaking the Lenten fast a sin meriting damnation. Some devout Zurichers, now bound to the Word of God alone, dared defy the Pope by eating sausages. Zwingli's meaty sermon that Lenten Lord's Day, March 23, supported the dissenters. Did a Christian have the *liberty* to fast in Lent? Zwingli answered, "Yes." Did a Christian have the *duty* to fast in Lent? Zwingli answered "No." At that daring "No," we might wonder that the Great Minster's rafters didn't shake with a violence felt as far as the Vatican.

By April he'd expanded that sermon into a published treatise: *Concerning Choice and Liberty Respecting Food*. In it he developed twin doctrines for the life of the Church: (1) the Christian is free from all duties invented by the Church without divine authority; (2) the Christian is bound by all duties prescribed by God in Sacred Scripture.

Meanwhile, convinced of the error of a Church-imposed celibacy, in 1522 Zwingli had secretly married a lovely and devout widow who had settled in his congregation, Anna Reinhardt. But secret marriages rarely remain secret. To avert further scandal, a public wedding was held in 1524, making Zwingli the first Reformation-minded Roman Catholic priest openly to marry. In that he bested Luther's marriage to Katherine Von Bora by a year. The closing remarks of his tract on *Choice and Liberty in Food* set forth the Protestant principle, as apropos to the tyranny of enforced celibacy as to enforced fasts: "Church officers

<sup>4</sup> The Vatican Library in Rome held one of the very few complete Greek Bibles in the West: the impressive manuscript called *Codex Vaticanus*, from about 400 AD. Today it is regarded as one of the Vatican's greatest treasures.

<sup>5</sup> *Ulrich Zwingli: Early Writings* (ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson, 1912; reprint, Durham NC: Labyrinth Press, 1987), 55. Henceforth cited as *Ulrich Zwingli: Early Writings*.

<sup>6</sup> *Commentary on True and False Religion* (ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson 1929; reprint, Durham NC: Labyrinth Press, 1981), 99.

<sup>7</sup> These are the first stanzas of Zwingli's *Pestlied*, "Plague Song," begun during the illness, and finished after his recovery. For the complete poem with translation, see Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VIII: 44-45.

have not only no power to command such things, but if they command them, they sin greatly.”<sup>8</sup>

If Reformed Presbyterians find that sentence agreeable, no wonder. It’s the soul-liberating doctrines of *Sola Scriptura*, and the *Regulative Principle of Worship*. Zwingli’s 1522 treatise on food gave them perhaps their earliest *Reformed* expression in print. *Sola Scriptura*? The Bible is the only infallible rule of Christian faith and practice. *The Regulative Principle of Worship*? “Whatever is not commanded in the worship of God, by [Scriptural] precept or example, is forbidden”<sup>9</sup> Within this mortal world, only Sacred Scripture stands indefatigably worthy of trust.



That worthy trust did not win all. Loud opposition roused the city’s magistrates. Did this married Master Zwingli teach true or not? Zurich’s magistrates led the way, convening public disputations on the hotter questions. In this they acted without the Bishop of Constance’s authority.

Bishop Hugo, a Zurichers himself, and a jovial fellow, usually turned a blind eye to Zwingli’s daring deeds. But these actions overtaxed his patience. At the *First Zurich Disputation*, convened on the cold 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1523, more than 600 citizens, priests, and guests crowded into the assembly hall. High on the agenda was a Zwingli text called *The Sixty-seven Articles*. Bishop Hugo’s representative, unprepared for debate, commanded everyone to go home. To no avail.

With huge folios volumes of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin Bibles at his side, Zwingli replied, “I say that here in this room is without doubt a Christian assembly; there is no reason why we should not discuss these matters, speak and decide the truth.” Was Zurich’s assembly just as authoritative as the councils of Rome?—Yes, and even those of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.<sup>10</sup>

Zwingli’s *Sixty-seven Articles* won the majority vote. He himself was commanded “to continue to preach the holy gospel as heretofore, and to proclaim the true, divine Scriptures until he was better informed.” This resolution perfectly matched the preacher’s own resolve, to preach Christ *ex fontibus*, “from the fountain,” and thus to inject *purum Christum*, “the pure Christ,” into the souls of his hearers.<sup>11</sup> A modest Protestantism *within* Roman Catholicism was now officially underway, with Zurich’s church and city-state stepping in tandem.

A *Second Zurich Disputation*, October 1523, gained popular support against both the Mass and the adoration of sacred images, but with a stern command: no churches were to be despoiled of their art. The magistrates waited while the public grew accustomed to the idea of plainer worship. Then in a single week, all the church buildings of Zurich closed for repainting. Reopened, the churches displayed whitewashed walls absent of images. Nothing should distract the congregation from the worship of the invisible God.

In April, 1525, city council abolished the Mass. A simple table now replaced the Great Minster’s high altar. On the Thursday night before Easter, the first Reformed Protestant communion took place. The break with Rome and Pope was now complete. A fully Protestant Zurich was well on its way to becoming a *bibliocracy*, a city ruled by the Bible.<sup>12</sup>

Alas, Master Huldrych Zwingli, Protestant Pastor of the Great Minster, Zurich, had but six years left of life. His Zurich reformation continued its steady march, but Zwingli was not the one to lead it to its clearer expressions of faith and practice. A sword took him. Nonetheless, in the dozen years allotted him as Zurich’s pastor, 1519–1531, he laid the foundations for the piety held dear by Reformed folk far and wide. Here’s a sample:

- ◇ God’s mystery of providence encompasses every event, without exception.
- ◇ Bound by sin, humans need a grace from God that frees the will and converts the soul.
- ◇ In the mystery of predestination, the triune God elects individual sinners to receive grace.
- ◇ God has appointed preaching to be the principal means of advancing the Gospel.
- ◇ God justifies sinners by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- ◇ Church government is neither by *bishops*, nor by *congregations*, but by *synods* of pastors.

<sup>8</sup> “Concerning Choice and Liberty Respecting Food,” *Ulrich Zwingli: Early Writings*, 112. Here Zwingli made use of Luther’s not-quite-hot-off-the-presses 1520 treatise, “The Freedom of the Christian Man.” See *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* (ed. Timothy F. Lull, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 386–411.

<sup>9</sup> *The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, §21.2

<sup>10</sup> The first four Ecumenical Councils convened at Nicaea in 325 AD; Constantinople in 381 AD; Ephesus in 430 AD; and Chalcedon in 451 AD. *The Nicene Creed* hails from the second of these.

<sup>11</sup> Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VIII: 40.

<sup>12</sup> Robert C. Walton, *Zwingli’s Theocracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967); Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 137–41.

- ◇ There is one Gospel and one Covenant of Grace in both testaments, Old and New alike.
- ◇ Baptism is the New Testament's sign of God's covenant upon the whole church, adults and children alike, and equivalent to Old Testament circumcision.
- ◇ In the Lord's Supper Jesus Christ is made present to the believer, not crassly and *bodily*, but truly and *spiritually*, manifested to faith and to faith alone by the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

Providence sometimes works a hard mystery. On October 11, 1531, much remained to be achieved—but not by him. In the aftermath of a lost battle for Protestantism, Huldrych Zwingli rested under a tree with other wounded Zurichers. There the famous man was recognized by the enemy and struck through with a sword. His last words: “You may kill the body, but you cannot kill the soul.” Clerics of the winning side subjected his corpse to a mock trial for heresy and ordered his body hacked to pieces and burnt. He was 47 years old.



His unfinished work fell to others. Among them we may name a few: in Zurich, Zwingli's abler and gentler disciple, Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575); in nearby Strasbourg, a prodigious monk whom Luther had turned to Protestantism, Martin Bucer (1491–1551). Across the Alps in Geneva, it was a soon-to-arrive wonder from France: John Calvin (1509–1564). In England, it was the brilliant translator, theologian, and martyr, William Tyndale (c1494–1536), and a host of Puritans; in Scotland, a fiery preacher with an astonishing power to exalt the humble and to humble the exalted. His name?—John Knox (c1513–1572). #

#### **Ulrich, Hyldrych, Huldrych or Huldreich?**

What's in a name? In polyglot Switzerland, the favoured northern language might be labelled “German,” but pronunciation and spelling were up for grabs. Zwingli's regional dialect is tagged *Sweizerdeutsch*, “Swiss-German.” Luther thought it “barbaric.” Moreover, native Zurichers spoke one dialect of *Sweizerdeutsch*, the Bernese another; natives of Basel, still another, etc., etc. No less than six dialects exist.

In an age when the printing press was new, spellings bent toward local usage. In Germany, *Hyldrych* was *Ulrich*. Between *Hyldrych* and *Ulrich* lay two compromise forms: *Huldrych* and *Huldreich*. The name derives from two elements in Old High German: “noble heritage,” and “rich.” Our *Huldrych*, perhaps with twinkling eye, said it meant “rich in grace.”

## Doing Church with Autism Spectrum Disorder

*Darren Delgado*

### Imagine this scenario:

You're in a crowded room with people who bump into you or gently touch you with their hands to “sneak by,” without realizing that every touch sends your mind into panic mode. On top of this, your brain begins to be overwhelmed by the different smells surrounding you. While you're still trying to adjust, music begins playing over the sea of noise. You freeze as you fight to not let your anxiousness overcome you. Would you volunteer to have such an experience? Would you believe it if I said enduring such a scenario is actually good for you? Well, that's a depiction of the first five minutes of a typical church service for some people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Someone like me.

### What Is ASD?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (referred to as ASD going forward) is a neurological disorder commonly characterized by difficulties with social interaction, communication, and sensory sensitivity. Typically, someone with ASD is unable to read body language or distinguish things like jokes or sarcasm. They also probably exhibit a lack of eye contact during conversation and struggle with handshakes. Thus, having to face social interaction can cause anxiety that only compounds as the people in an area increase. People with ASD also typically have a topic they find extremely interesting that they could talk about for hours. Personally, mine is video games.

*However, ASD isn't a cookie-cutter disorder, meaning it doesn't manifest the same in all people on the spectrum. This article reflects my experiences, but others who have ASD can experience church differently.*

### Why Church Matters for Everyone

The opening scenario only focused on sensory sensitivity, so you can imagine what it would be like when communication and socializing are thrown into the mix. But while a church service has many levels of difficulty for someone with ASD, the command of Scripture is clear: “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another” ([Heb. 10:24–25](#)). As Christians we can't forsake the meeting of the saints, and we must have fellowship with the congregation since “as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” ([Prov. 27:17](#)). There are times when this is easier said than done, but we have to persevere. The church is vital for our spiritual growth and encouragement;

sacraments is given detailed exposition here.

<sup>13</sup> W.P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Zwingli's long-elusive doctrine of the

likewise, our participation in the church's life also encourages those around us.

### Approaching Church with ASD

It certainly can be tough for those of us with ASD to push through a church service, but there are some practical steps we can take to help ease the burden (at least, here's what I do):

- The night before I try to get good rest, since going to church with a tired mind is sometimes an immediate "game over."
  - I tend to talk to one-on-one, since it's easier to focus on the conversation. Focusing on one conversation helps drown out some of the background noise.
  - Most importantly, I pray throughout the whole service for strength to endure, that my mind will be at ease, and that I will be able to communicate with others.
- There might be times you attend and have to leave immediately afterward because it's too much, and there is no shame in this. Often in these situations, I talk it out with friends. By God's grace I find the strength to move forward, and that's where our reliance needs to be anyway.

### Connecting with Someone Who Has ASD

For fellow church members who find it difficult to connect with those who have ASD, understand it may take patience and time.

When I first started interacting with a particular couple at church, Katie would smile and say, "Hey Dave, how's your week been?" to which I would respond plain-faced, "It's David, and it was all right." Bill would later walk by and ask, "How was the drive to church today?" and my answer was always, "It was okay." Their takeaway from our brief conversations was that I disliked them.

They didn't stop initiating these interactions, however. Over the course of months God put it on my heart that I needed to grow in fellowshiping with the church. It took a lot of effort, but with Katie and Bill already extending themselves, it was easier to approach them, and what followed is a lasting friendship.

Keep this in mind if your conversation feels like it's going nowhere. Continue to approach the person and lift them up in your prayers.

### How Do We Deal with Hospitality?

Small groups and informal household gatherings pose another challenge. God wants church members to be a part of each other's daily lives. But for those with ASD, the idea of going to another person's unfamiliar house can be daunting when you don't know what to expect. Though it can be tempting to turn down invitations to someone's house, there are so many blessings when we persevere.

There are small things that people with ASD can do to make accepting hospitality easier. One is to be honest with the host about your challenges or needs ahead of time. If you're struggling while you're there, it might be hard to say something in the moment—so talk about it

beforehand. You don't have to go into more detail than you want.

While fellowship with other believers is necessary, don't push yourself to a breaking point. Be patient and do what you can; over time God can build you up to handle more.

### Hosting Someone with ASD

If you are having someone over whom you know has ASD, here are some suggestions on how you can lovingly serve them:

- The first time they come over, just invite them and maybe one of their friends. If you're inviting others, make the person aware so they know what to expect.
- Ask for any food preferences. Certain smells and textures can be extremely uncomfortable for someone with ASD, so find out what they like.
- Odds are the person probably has a subject they're extremely passionate about, so engage for a while. I have put Katie through hours of conversation about video games. She isn't a fan, but she listens and then says she doesn't really get it, but she's glad I'm excited, and then we move on.

### Let This Encourage You

Several weeks ago, I was invited to a surprise party for a member of my church. I didn't follow my own advice—I got only about five hours of sleep the night before. When I arrived and was surrounded by 20 to 30 people in a smaller house, it didn't take long for my anxiety levels to skyrocket. I felt unable to enter any sort of conversation. It took everything in me to not run out of the house. Fortunately, one of the hosts, Rachel, approached me and calmly started a conversation. By God's grace, I was able to push my attention to her and block out some of the craziness going on around me.

As my anxiety dwindled a bit, her husband then invited me to join a card game in a less-occupied area of the house. This helped tremendously, and I was able to make it through the night.

God can use you to help someone with ASD, and you may not even realize it. And for those with ASD, take comfort in the fact the God loves you, knows you, and cares for you. Take hold of the truth of God's Word and, when facing a challenge, remember this: "God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" ([Phil. 4:19](#)). #

*This article comes from:*

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/church-autism-spectrum-disorder/> A version of this article originally appeared at [Hospitable Homemaker](#). You can find more resources from David and Katie in the [resource library](#) by subscribing to her newsletter, including "5 Specific Ways Your Church Can Come alongside Those with ASD" and "5 Specific Ways Those with ASD Can Get Started Building Community."

## A judge who remembered the Supreme Judge

Judge W. Shipman condemned Nathaniel Gordon (b. 1832) to death under the 1820 *Piracy Act* for slave-trading involving 897 West Africans, the majority children, whom he preferred to take because ‘they could not rise up to avenge his cruelties’). They were packed under deck in Gordon’s 500 ton vessel the *Erie* in appalling conditions. He had deceived his crew of his intentions, loaded the Africans near the mouth of the Congo River and set sail for Cuba. The *Erie* was apprehended by a US war vessel the next day when it was found 18 Africans had already died of suffocation. The *Erie* was towed about 3,000 kms to Monrovia in Liberia, the American colony for freed slaves and the Africans given medical attention. Abraham Lincoln refused to pardon Gordon and he was executed 21 February 1862, but he was the exception, being the only man hanged for such crimes in America.

Here is a major part of what Judge Shipman said:

*Let me implore you to seek the spiritual guidance of the ministers of religion; and let your repentance be as humble and thorough as your crime was great. Do not attempt to hide its enormity from yourself; think of the cruelty and wickedness of seizing nearly a thousand fellow beings, who never did you harm, and thrusting them beneath the decks of a small ship, beneath a burning tropical sun, to die in of disease or suffocation, or be transported to distant lands, and be consigned, they and their posterity, to a fate far more cruel than death.*

*Think of the sufferings of the unhappy beings whom you crowded on the Erie; of their helpless agony and terror as you took them from their native land; and especially of their miseries on the passage from the place of your capture to Monrovia! Remember that you showed mercy to none, carrying off as you did not only those of your own sex, but women and helpless children.*

*Do not flatter yourself that because they belonged to a different race from yourself, your guilt is therefore lessened – rather fear that it is increased. In the just and generous heart, the humble and the weak inspire compassion, and call for pity and forbearance. As you are soon to pass into the presence of that God of the black man as well as the white man, who is no respecter of persons, do not indulge for a moment the thought that he hears with indifference the cry of the humblest of his children. Do not imagine that because others shared in the guilt of this enterprise, yours is thereby diminished; but remember the awful admonition of your Bible, ‘Though hand joined in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.’ #*

## Managing Money

The Bible makes many references to the wise use of money, and in fact Jesus poke about it a great deal. According to Jesus we receive the things of this world as a trust to be used wisely and ultimately we will have permanent possessions (Luke 16:1-12).

In this world the distribution of resources is very varied. Some have little but give more sacrificially than those who have much (Mark 12:41-44). Some have much but don’t think beyond their family. Of course it is right to provide for dependents, but it is also good and right to seek to further the cause of the Gospel and not only during one’s life here.

The capital costs of establishing ministry in our growing cities is very high, while there are other needs as well. In Melbourne it cost \$900,000 to buy land and erect a modest building and that was a modest cost as land costs have escalated since. Knox paid for the Carrum Downs building as was also done for Narre Warren in 1989-90. We have only one manse in Melbourne and four churches so there are real immediate needs. Our Brisbane Congregation is hoping to secure a manse but can only do so because of funds from the sale of the old Armidale property held by Synod.

### FORM OF BEQUEST

Here’s an example of a form of Bequest and further details can be found in the Handbook of the PCEA on the website: [knoxpcea.org.au/downloads](http://knoxpcea.org.au/downloads)

If a person wishes to designate a particular congregation, parish, project, activity, agency or institution within the Church the following clause can be used:

*Clause C where the capital gift is to be made directly to the particular part of the Church:*

“I GIVE DEVISE AND BEQUEATH .....to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia for the general work and activities of ..... of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia provided that should that work or activity of the said Church have ceased prior to my death or thereafter cease, the said sum shall be used in such other manner as determined by the Synod of the said Church. the receipt of the Secretary or other proper officer for the time being of the relevant corporate trust body of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia shall be a sufficient discharge to my Trustees”.



Some of Knox PCEA ladies on 2 November 2019 who shared fellowship around afternoon tea, were treated to a piano recital by Calvin White, and spent time praying together, was a special privilege for all of us who were able to attend at Janine and Chris White’s home in Upwey. – CD

**CARRUM DOWNS**

The Rev. Ian Hall, who has served the Southern Presbyterian Church in Launceston since 2014 made application to be received as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. This application was considered by the Southern Presbytery at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October when Mr Hall and his wife Jennifer met with the Presbytery. They have four children aged 3-12.

1. Presbytery resolve that the examination of Mr Hall, particularly with regard to his familiarity with our history, doctrinal position, church polity and form of worship is very satisfactory, and none of the supporting referees raise any relevant concerns as to his adherence to the Reformed faith or his conduct as a minister. Presbytery judges that his academic preparation coupled with his experience well meet the requirements for admission to the PCEA ministry. The applicant has the full support of his wife and family, and Mrs Hall is willing and able to assist in Sunday School teaching. Presbytery records Mr Hall’s desire to engage in the developing work in Carrum Downs to commence ministry in February 2020, and the readiness of the Knox

Congregation to support the work financially as occurred in the earlier case of Narre Warren in 1989.

2. Mr Hall is ready, willing and able to provide evidence of good standing as he leaves the SPC, current Working with Children Check, become a member of the PCEA, and sign the formula of subscription without qualification.

3. Presbytery forward the application and relevant minutes to the Training of Ministry Committee expressing the desire that such steps be taken promptly to secure his admission to the ministry of the PCEA upon meeting the conditions in point 2 above, so that planning for the move may occur. The Presbytery is ready to confer with the Committee to secure this result by circulating Synod members for their concurrence and formal ratification at Synod 2020 or to do otherwise for this object as may seem best.

At time of writing 28/11, The Training of Ministry Committee are unanimous in support of the application, and we are waiting on response. Mr Hall is well and favourably known to Synod members - RSW