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Change

On June 27 Gordon Brown swept into Downing Street for the first time as Britain's new prime minister. Before entering No 10, he made a short speech in which he emphasised the need for change – particularly in the areas of health, schools and affordable housing.

Clearly there is much need for change in modern Britain, and far beyond the policy areas to which Mr Brown has pointed. Yes, after several years when house prices have soared incessantly upwards, there is a great need for affordable housing for the less well off. And, although many in the world of education may yearn for a period of stability, free from the pressures of continuous change, no one will deny the need to tackle widespread indiscipline in schools, which is becoming ever more serious. No doubt the roots of indiscipline lie in the wider society, but the secularised nature of modern education does a profound disservice to today's children. The directive: "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov 22:6), is not merely for parents; it applies also to all involved in education. In what direction should a child go? Surely that indicated in the Bible. The most helpful change that either the UK Government or the Scottish Executive could bring about in education is to restore the Bible to the place it ought to have in our schools.

One of the saddest features of the conduct of government in Britain for many years now is a studied refusal to acknowledge God. When did a Cabinet minister last say in reference to any issue: I must pray about it? In sharp contrast, Solomon at the beginning of his reign asked the Lord for wisdom. Whatever the defects of his later life, he started well, and God granted his request. There was no mention of God, however, in Mr Brown's speech; no acknowledgement that the Most High is ruling in all the affairs of this world; no expression of a sense of dependence. Instead the Prime Minister declared: "I am convinced that there is no weakness in Britain today that cannot be overcome by the strengths of the British people".

And he made a promise "to all the people of Britain" in the words of the motto of Kirkcaldy High School, where he received his secondary education, "I will try my utmost". No one can complain about an undertaking to carry

out conscientiously the difficult duties of the office he has inherited; in any case, his capacity for hard work cannot be gainsaid. But while no one, in this secular age, need be surprised at the absence of any reference to God and to dependence on Him, that absence should be a matter of concern. The Prime Minister must expect to meet many situations when to try his utmost will just not be sufficient. But how appropriate, for everyone in a position of responsibility, is King David's prayer: "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Ps 61:2).

Yet Mr Brown has been described (on the epolitix website) as "a committed Christian". But he "rarely speaks of his faith"; he "appears keen to keep his religion a private matter". So what does his religion amount to – if it can sit quietly in the background of his life? He told the last Labour conference that his parents had provided him with a moral compass which taught him that everyone has a duty to make use of their talents. His father was Rev John Brown, a Church of Scotland minister, described by his son as "more a social Christian than a fundamentalist. His sermons were about charity, good works." This seems to suggest that Mr Brown senior was not committed to the infallibility of the Bible and that its doctrines did not loom large in his preaching but that his was a form of the social gospel.

Of course, good works must feature prominently in the life of every truly committed Christian. But what, in scriptural terms, are good works? We may note two points, in the words of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*: (1) they are "done in obedience to God's commandments", and (2) they are "the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith". And the second point implies that good works cannot in any way be a *foundation* for salvation; too often ministers who would distance themselves from fundamentalist Christianity have encouraged their congregations to depend on good works as the price they need to pay to enter heaven. But, in the words of Walter Marshal, the Puritan, "though we are not saved by good works as procuring causes, yet we are saved to good works as fruits and effects of saving grace, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them".¹

Where will the new government take Britain? It is difficult to believe that it will set a course very different from its predecessor, of which Gordon Brown was such a prominent member. Yet *The Independent* newspaper of May 28 reported that "he has not voted on a single one of" what it calls "the 18 pro-gay measures" brought in by the Blair government, "although he did once vote for an equal age of consent in 1994". This was in contrast with Mr Blair himself who claimed to have done "a little skip" when he saw pictures of the first "civil-partnership" ceremonies in Northern Ireland – this at an

¹Quoted in E F Kevan, *The Grace of Law*, p 208, from *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*.

“equality dinner” held by the homosexual activist organisation Stonewall, when £230 000 was raised. Indeed one significant part of the change that Britain very much needs is to sweep away all the legislation of recent decades which is in opposition to the demands of God’s law – in particular those laws which encourage homosexuality and treat “civil partnerships” as virtually equivalent to the God-given institution of marriage, when one man and one woman come together in that most intimate of human relationships.

Yet, however much Gordon Brown might have said about families during his 10 years at the Treasury, his focus was not on supporting *marriage*. And when another political party suggested a small degree of financial support for marriage, the newly-promoted Cabinet minister Ed Miliband claimed that the Government would not “discriminate against some children” in its tax policy – although many might consider that its present policy discriminates against the children of married parents. He went on to say, “I don’t think it’s right for politicians to come on and preach”, which seems to be an objection to any statement with a moral basis, especially one which has support from the Bible. It is clear that the whole approach of the Government needs to change – and this would be true whatever political party was in office.

In fact, more fundamentally, the whole nation needs to change. While governments have a duty to rule by Scripture principles and, in every way proper for them, to promote the true religion, the people have corresponding responsibilities. In Jeremiah’s time, the Lord asked, “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit” (2:11). Britain had great privileges as a professedly-Christian nation. But these privileges have largely been squandered, and our leaders despise the glory of true religion as they speak of a multi-faith Britain. Yet in practice, the official religion seems to be tolerance – for everything except firm beliefs, especially that “there is one God and one Mediator” and that there is a unique moral code.

Change is necessary. But the kind of change that is most needed is beyond the power of any individual or government or church to effect. It can be brought about only by the Word of God as applied by the Holy Spirit. As we look around today and see the ineffectiveness of the Church, it is easy to despair, but the power of the Holy Spirit was what brought about a tremendous change in the government of Judah when Manasseh was brought to know that Jehovah is the one true God. It is not too hard for Him to bring about a huge change in the spiritual health of nations; He thus encouraged His people at a time when religion was at a low ebb in Israel: “Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Is 66:8).

Small Days but Great Words¹

Synod Sermon by Rev Keith M Watkins

Zechariah 6:12-13. And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

The *days* of Zechariah and the *words* of Zechariah were very different things. His days were dark but his words were very bright. His days were discouraging, but his words were encouraging. His days were full of man's work – and man was failing in his work. But his words were full of Christ and His work – and His success in that work.

The days of Zechariah saw the temple in Jerusalem in a sorry state. Re-building had begun, but almost nothing was left of its former glory. The work was going on very slowly. It had been neglected for many years while the people went about their own activities. Those were the days of Zechariah. But his words directed the people of Israel to One who would come and build the temple. "Even He shall build the temple of the Lord". He was not speaking of a building made of stone and mortar, but of born-again souls – the Church of Christ, a temple for the Lord to dwell in.

The days of Zechariah were days of small things (see 4:10). Everything was small. But his words were full of great and glorious things, to lift up the hearts of God's people. They were directed to be looking unto Jesus, the Man in our text: "Behold the Man". Our own days are very similar: dark and discouraging. But the words of Zechariah are still here in our Bibles. The God that gave these words still lives and speaks, to lift up our hearts and thoughts.

Let us look then with the Lord's help, firstly, at the days of Zechariah, and secondly, at the words of Zechariah.

1. Zechariah's Small Days. Everywhere you looked, things were small. The *numbers* were small. For 70 years the Children of Israel had been away in captivity in Babylon. After the proclamation of Cyrus, some had returned to Jerusalem. Their houses were ruined, the city walls were ruined, the temple was in ruins. They people came back to build. But they were not many, in comparison with the past, when the city streets had been thronged. They had filled the houses. They had filled the temple with their sacrifices and praises. But it was not like that in the days of Zechariah. Things had changed. These

¹The substance of the sermon preached by the retiring Moderator at the opening of this year's Synod, in Inverness.

were now days of small numbers. The application to our own day is obvious. We have heard of – some have seen – full churches, people thronging to hear the Word of God preached in truth. But it is not so today. The numbers are small. God’s people are a remnant, a residue – what is left after the majority has been removed. Only a remnant is willing to follow the truth in its fullness, and to stick to the old paths and the good ways that the Lord has put in His Word.

The number of *labourers* was also small. There was so much work to be done – on their own houses, on the walls of Jerusalem, on the temple. There was work to do to re-establish the worship of God as He had appointed in the feasts and sacrifices. There was so much work to be done, but the labourers were few. In our own day, if we were to lift up our eyes and look around – not spend all our time looking within to our own problems – we would see all around there is a work to be done in a generation that does not know God and does not care for the things of God. We are doing very little to tell them, very little to reach them. That is true at home and abroad – we are in days of small things. The labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will thrust forth labourers into the harvest. Lift up your eyes and look: much work to be done but the labourers are few.

Vital godliness was also small in those days. In chapter 7, the Jews ask about the fasts of the captivity. They had fasted at that time. Should they continue those fasts? Should they go on with them, now that they were back in Jerusalem and the promised land? The Lord then reproves them for their formality: “When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto Me, even to Me?” (v 5). God was asking whether they did it for Him? They went on with the appointed ordinances, which were very appropriate for the seventy years of captivity, but did they ever do it for Him? Did they at all fast unto Him? Was *any* of it for the Lord? *Vital godliness* was at a very low ebb. There was outward conformity; they were continuing the ordinances. The inward, heart religion of doing what was done as unto the Lord, and for the Lord, and in fellowship with the Lord – that was so much lacking. We too live in days where the grace of *vital godliness* is rare. And where there is grace, that grace is often small. Where there is faith, it is often small. These are days of small things in comparison with the past and in comparison with the Word of God.

As a result, the Israelites’ *efforts* were small in the things of God and in the work that God had given them to do. This is clear in the prophet Haggai, who was prophesying at the same time as Zechariah. The two prophets go together. We must look at those days through the eyes of Haggai as well as of Zechariah. The people were saying: “The time is not come, the time that

the Lord's house should be built" (Hag 1:2). There was a reluctance to put their hands to the work. Their efforts were small in the building work that needed to be done, especially on the temple. They neglected it; they put it to one side. After they had come back from the captivity they had started with diligence, but they had quickly become discouraged. For a number of years, nothing had been done to carry on the good work that had begun.

Why was so little effort being made to build the house of God? Because they were so busy with their own houses: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Hag 1:4). The Lord's house lay waste, but they had been busy with their own houses. They had even put the finishing touches to them. Now they had not just the roof, they also had the ceiling. The Lord complains: "Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house" (v 9). Small efforts are made in the things of God, when great efforts are made in men's own things – when they are absorbed with the world and their place in the world and their pleasures in the world and their profits in the world. It was not sinful in and of itself to be building their own houses but, when they were absorbed with that as their main interest, it had become the sin of worldliness. They were seeking first their own things instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We live in days when many run to their own interests, and the interests of God come second.

Zechariah's days were days of small *obedience* to the commandments of God. "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor" (7:9,10). These commands told the people the way they should be. "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear" (verse 11). They were days of small obedience to the will of God. In our days also, disobedience to the will of God abounds. Where is that tenderness to the will of the Lord, that we read of in our books, that we meet with in Scripture, that we speak about and pray about? Where is it in our hearts? These are days of small obedience, days of little tenderness, where walking carefully with the Lord and abiding closely by His every precept are rare.

There was small *unity* among the Jews in Jerusalem. One thing that the Lord commanded was: "Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (7:10). Let no one be suspicious of his brother with "evil surmising". Let no one be starting to cause divisions among the brethren. Be careful to preserve your unity, to be of one mind, one heart. We have one Lord; we have one faith; therefore let us be one in mind, one in heart. Let no dissensions, divisions or separations rise up. If you allow these things, there

will be small unity. But that is what had happened: “They refused to hearken”. They would not listen. They imagined evil against the brethren. Look at the trouble that will cause in any church.

Very solemnly, the Lord says, “I set all men every one against his neighbour” (8:10). The Lord was not the cause of the disunity, because disunity is sin. But in His wise purposes, He had permitted it to take place as a chastisement for other things that were not right. Small grace had issued now in great disunity.

In the midst of small unity, there could only be small *blessing*. “O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?” (1:12). They had suffered 70 years of the Lord’s displeasure in captivity – removed from the promised land, the temple and the instituted worship. But how long will the wrath of the Lord be seen among them, now that they are in Jerusalem again? For ourselves, where are the mercies and the compassion of the Lord, as we face difficulties and troubles at this juncture in our Church’s history? We see little blessing – little blessing upon the Word preached, upon our testimony, upon our ordinances. Results are small.

The Book of Ezra records that the younger ones were shouting with joy when the foundations of the Lord’s temple were laid again. But not the older ones who had seen the temple of Solomon in all its glory. The noise they made was equal in volume, but they were crying out in anguish and weeping, because they could see that the work of their days was so small compared with former days. The Lord asks: “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now?” (Hag 2:3). Is it not as nothing in comparison? And in our day, even where there are blessings from the Lord, and one is brought to Him in faith and repentance – even where we have encouragements – we live in days of small things in comparison with what our fathers have told us about the great works of the Lord in the past. The Lord has not completely forsaken His people nor has He gone back on His truth. He is still blessing it, His elect are still being gathered in. But without a doubt these are days of small things.

Now it is into those dark days of small things that God sent the prophet Zechariah preaching great things, directing them away from the difficulties and disappointments and discouragements, and setting their minds on the great things of Christ.

2. Zechariah’s Great Words. Our text contains great words. They speak of Christ. “Behold the Man” – words that Pilate used of Christ. “Whose name is The Branch”. Already the Saviour had been prophesied under this name: “For, behold, I will bring forth My servant the Branch” (3:8). The words of

Zechariah are full of the great things of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To none other can these words apply. In days of small things, look unto Jesus – that is the message of these words.

Look unto Jesus firstly as the great *Builder* of the Church. Who will build the temple? “He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord.” Whose work is it to build the Church? Whose work is it to take dead stones and turn them into living stones, so that the walls of Zion may be built up? It is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We were told of a godly lady, to whom someone was expressing great concern about the state of the cause of Christ, and how dark and discouraging things were. The wise old lady said, “Do you think you care more about the cause of Christ than He does Himself?” Can our concerns for building the Church be greater than His? This great burden of building the Church does not lie on us alone. We are fellow labourers together with God in Christ, who said, “I will build My Church”.

If it depended upon our building skills and efforts – just as if it had depended on Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the Jews’ leader in those days – all would indeed come to nothing. But thanks be to God, Christ is the Builder. “Even He shall build the temple of the Lord”. He will build it exactly in accordance with the eternal plan. Not a stone will be out of place. He will build it perfectly. None of the opposition or the difficulties or the failures of the workers whom He uses will overcome His powerful and gracious purposes to build His Church.

These are great words for those who are concerned about this day of small things. Let them lay hold on Jesus, the great Builder of the Church. He has not lost His skills: He has not lost His power. He built His Church on the day of Pentecost by adding 3000 through one sermon, and He can do the same again. The building is in safe hands. His people will be born again and be united to Him; they will be raised up a spiritual building, a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Are the labourers few? They are, but the Lord is able to raise up labourers: “And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord” (verse 15). The Lord can bring from nowhere those that will be used by Him in the great building work. He will gather His labour force to do this work as they are needed.

Secondly, we are directed to Jesus as the great *Saviour* of the Church. “He shall be a priest upon His throne.” The temple in Jerusalem was where the priests worked: bringing the sacrifices, gifts and offerings. So now in the spiritual temple there must be a priest – and it is Christ who is the priest, a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, a merciful and faithful high priest in

things pertaining to God. He had gifts and offerings to bring – not the blood of bulls and goats, not the burnt offerings morning and evening – but Himself, saying: “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me”. The Saviour was coming as a priest to offer up His own blood unto God, to satisfy divine justice and reconcile His people to God.

Days of small things like Zechariah’s were days of great sins – little godliness but great wickedness. For the temple to be built, they needed to be right with God. There was no way to be right with God without the sacrificial work of the priest. The animal sacrifices offered by Old Testament priests found their fulfilment in the work of the High Priest from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ and His once-for-all offering at Calvary’s cross. An atonement for sin, to reconcile a holy God and sinful men, was needed to make those that are in the spiritual temple right with God – not by anything they do themselves, but through the work of their High Priest on their behalf. To Christ we must look, to Him who makes peace by the blood of His cross.

“Behold the Man . . . a priest” – who was taken in the garden of Gethsemane, who was whipped, upon whose head was placed a crown of thorns, who was nailed to the cruel, painful, shameful cross, who hung on Calvary’s tree, despised and rejected by men, and from whom heaven turned away, who cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” who went down to the dust of death. He was working as a priest to take away sin, to make every member of His temple right with God, to remove their sin by the blood that He shed, and to bring them into acceptance with God as righteous, through His righteousness imputed to them.

Look to Christ as the priest upon the throne of heaven now, as He keeps all things right between God and the people He died for. Look to Him as He declares His will before His Father that, on the grounds of His finished work at Calvary, all the sin of His people should be covered, that they should all be washed and counted as righteous in His sight.

Thirdly, Zechariah points out Jesus as the great *Leader* of the Church. There was no king when they came back from captivity. No one was anointed king any more. The days of the kings had passed. But who would lead them now? Who would rule over them? Who would defend them? Who would guide them in all things? Who would be their chief commander now? Who would stir up this people to get on with building the temple? To whom could they look? “Behold the Man” Christ Jesus, who “shall sit and rule upon His throne; and . . . be a priest upon His throne”.

The One who was the priest was nailed to a cross and laid in a grave, but rose again and ascended up on high and sat down at the right hand of God in the heavens. He sat down in His throne. He rules over His people as king,

defends His people as king, guides His people as king, leads His people as king. The Church's Leader is in heaven, sitting upon the throne. Do not look to men; do not look to Zerubbabel; do not look to Joshua the high priest. But look to Jesus, who is king and priest together. He is the great Leader. All power, all authority in heaven and in earth, is given to Him. To Him we need to look.

The priest Joshua had been crowned as if he were both priest and king. Wonderfully the two offices are put together: "The counsel of peace shall be between them both". We do not think this refers to two people, but to two offices – the office of Christ as a priest and the office of Christ as a king. To have Jesus as your Saviour is not separate from having Him as your Lord. We live in days of very pernicious doctrines, where people think they can receive Christ as their Saviour, but not as their king. Jesus on a cross they like, but they have no interest in Jesus on a throne. Indeed, they have no true interest in Jesus at all. It must be a whole Jesus or no Jesus.

"A priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." There is no contradiction between being a great Saviour to die for people, and a great Leader to rule over them, as every child of God knows. When they are brought to trust in the saving work of Jesus – to trust in the blood of the Lamb – the Spirit works in their hearts to make them love Him. The love of Christ constrains them to want to live for Him. He gave His life for them. They now give their lives to Him and submit to all His ordinances, as He is the Leader of the Church. We can look to Him to guide and direct us.

Fourthly, they were to be looking unto Jesus as the great *Life-giver*. He is called the Branch. "He shall grow up out of His place." As a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground, He shall grow up and He shall be the Branch. The fruit grows on the branch, drawing its life from the branch. All its sweetness comes along the branch, all the goodness of the tree is conveyed to the fruit through the branch. The Lord says in Hosea: "From Me is thy fruit found". For a Church to be fruitful in good works and useful to the Lord, maintaining the sweetness of fellowship with Christ and walking in His paths, it needs to be drawing constantly upon the goodness of the Branch.

"Christ, who is our life." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." By His Spirit, Christ conveys spiritual life to His people. In this day of small things, there is a lot of spiritual death, and little spiritual life in the spiritually alive. But there is life to be obtained from Christ. Grace for our souls is available. Christ is the Branch, from which all the sweet fruit of the Holy Spirit will come. We need spiritual life in our souls, our congregations and our ordinances, so that our fruits would

be sweet and God-glorifying. Where will that life come from? From the Life-giver, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Branch.

Fifthly, we are to be looking unto Jesus as the *Glory* of the Church. "He shall bear the glory." The glory belongs to Christ. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The glory belongs to the great Builder, Saviour, Leader and Life-giver of the Church. To Him, and to Him alone, be all the glory.

"When Sion by the mighty Lord built up again shall be, in glory then and majesty to men appear shall He" (Ps 102:16, metrical version). The building up of the Church will not redound to the glory of preachers or people or denominations, but to the glory of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He will have all the glory, and He will not give it to any other. The Lord's people love to have it so. Jesus will carry the glory. It will all be placed upon the head of the lovely Jesus, the glorious Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess, that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. All glory then to God through Jesus Christ.

The temple of Zechariah's days seemed so small that they wept, but the Lord promised that the glory of this latter house would be greater than the former. How could that be? Outwardly, it was so small and it did not have the gold and the silver of Solomon's temple. However, it would be more glorious because the Saviour would come to it. The Lord visiting His temple – that is the real glory. In our days also, it is when the Saviour comes to the Church that the glory of God is displayed. Emmanuel – God with us – He shall have all the glory in His Church.

Days of small things were Zechariah's and they are ours, but words of great things were given him to encourage the people. Surely they are given to us also, for our encouragement now. Let us be looking unto Jesus.

Christ's Will for His Church¹

1. What Is the Church?

Rev H M Cartwright

***I*ntroduction.** Whether or not this subject interests us may depend to some extent on whether we see the Church as just a human institution or as Christ's body on the earth. But even some who know and love the Lord think that the government of the Church is a matter of expediency, about which the

¹This is the first section of a paper given at the Youth Conference in 1999; it had the subtitle: "What the Bible says about Church Government".

Bible has nothing much to say – so that people can adopt Presbyterianism, Episcopacy, Independency or whatever, according to their own preference, or what seems most suited to their situation. It might be useful to approach this subject by asking – and trying to answer – three questions: (1) What is the Church? (2) Does the Bible tell us anything about how the Church is to be governed? (3) If it does, what does the Bible tell us about how the Church is to be governed?

1. What is the Church? The common word for Church in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, from which we get *ecclesiastical*. The word itself just means an assembly *called out* or convened for any particular purpose. This might be for a secular purpose, as in Ephesus over the effect of the preaching on the worship of the goddess Diana (Acts 19:32,39,41). In the Greek version of the Old Testament, *ekklesia* is used to translate the Hebrew word *kahal*, which is translated in the AV as the *assembly* or the *congregation* of the Lord (Deut 4:10; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16; Ps 22:22). Basically the word used for the Church focuses on it as the assembly or congregation or gathered people of God, called out of the world by Him.

In the New Testament the word *ekklesia* is used with different applications. It is used of the Church viewed as the people of God from all ages and places: Christ “loved the Church and gave Himself for it” (Eph 5:25f); “And He is the Head of the body, the Church” (Col 1:18). It is used of the universal Church on earth: “God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers . . .” (1 Cor 12:28). It is used of the Lord’s people over a wide area, or in a city, consisting of thousands of people and a number of congregations: “Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified” (Acts 9:31); “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was at Jerusalem” (Acts 11:22); “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor 1:2). It is used to identify a very small group of Christians, such as the church which was in Nymphas’ house (Col 4:15). The term is applied in different ways, but in each case *ekklesia* identifies the people of God as a people called by Him out of the world around.

There are many other terms in the Bible which fill out the meaning of *ekklesia* and help us to understand what is meant by the Church. For example, in 1 Peter 2:9,10, we read: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”. The Bible refers to the Church as the kingdom of God, the body of Christ, the building of God, the temple of God,

the family of God, the flock of Christ, and so on. No one term can adequately describe the Church.

When we think of the Church we must think of it primarily in its *relation to God*. It is not a humanly-devised society with merely-human origins and aims but a divine institution. Witsius describes it as “the Church which the Father has elected, and the Son redeemed, and which the Spirit unites to Christ, and seals unto the day of complete redemption”. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* begins its chapter (25) on the Church with this statement: “The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”.

We must also think of the Church as the *communion of saints*. The communion of those who have been gathered in to the Church is primarily with Christ Himself – and then with one another in and through Him. “All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory. And being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces; and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.”² “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:12, 13). Sinners are saved individually but they are not saved in, or for, isolation, but in a way that binds them together as members one of another and makes them useful to each other.

Calvin spoke of “the Church *as it really is before God*” by which he meant the Church as it is essentially and eternally, which he described as “the Church into which none are admitted but those who by the gift of adoption are sons of God, and by the sanctification of the Spirit true members of Christ”.³ There is a real difficulty over the discrepancy between the Church as we see it and the Church as it is described in terms of election, redemption, regeneration, communion with Christ and with one another. The difficulty is not lessened by the fact that the Church as we see it is the body addressed by the apostles in such glorious terms. Paul addresses one of his epistles “unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon

²*Westminster Confession*, 26:1.

³*Institutes*, 4.1.7.

the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor 1:2), though he recognised that there were those among them who ought to be excluded from church fellowship because of their wicked conduct.

The classic Reformed solution to the discrepancy between the Church as we see it, and the Church as it is described in terms of election, redemption and regeneration, is the doctrine of the visible and invisible Church. Having described the invisible Church as the elect of God, united to Christ, the *Westminster Confession* goes on to say: “The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all these throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto. The catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible” (25:2,3).

It is obvious that the Church as we see it in the world is not co-extensive with the Church of God’s elect, which Christ redeemed by His blood, and the Holy Spirit regenerated and sanctified. Yet the Church as we see it is addressed as the Church by God and it is the visible expression, the earthly embodiment, of the Church of God. It is not merely a voluntary coming together, even of those in whom God has created the social instincts of grace. The Church as a visible entity, as an institution in the world, exists as a result of divine ordination. It is God’s revealed will that there be unity in public profession of faith, in weekly assemblies for worship, in observance of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, in mutual helpfulness in spiritual and temporal things, and in support of and submission to regularly appointed office-bearers. “And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47)

The invisible Church and the visible Church are not identical in their membership but they are not unrelated. The visible Church is the form in which the invisible Church comes to expression in the world but there are differences between the two. Some of these differences are because of the sin and weakness of men, others because it is God’s will that persons be admitted to membership of the Church on the basis of a profession and understanding and way of life which conform to biblical requirements, as far as men can judge, and that the children of those who are members of the Church should also be admitted to membership through baptism. Whatever the precise relation of the visible and the invisible, the chief distinction, or

the one most easy to grasp, is in the fact that membership of the invisible Church belongs to those who are elect, redeemed, regenerate, believing, whereas membership of the visible belongs to those who “profess the true religion, together with their children”.⁴

When we speak of the government of the Church, what is in mind is the Church as it appears in the world.

The Dunnottar Covenanters of 1685¹

5. The Voyage to America

Rev D W B Somerset

Following their removal from Dunnottar Castle on 13 August 1685, the prisoners were brought before the Privy Council in Leith on August 18, and those who refused to take the oaths were sentenced as follows:

“Forasmuch as the persons underwritten [here follow the names of 51 men and 21 women], at present prisoners in the Tolbooth of Leith, being convened before the Lords of His Majesty’s Privy Council at the instance of His Majesty’s Advocate² for several crimes and irregularities, refusing the Oath of Allegiance or to own the King’s authority or take the Oath of Abjuration in manner at length libelled; and all the said persons being men having judicially, in presence of the Council, refused to take or sign the Oath of Allegiance, and the women abovesaid having altogether refused to own his Majesty’s authority or to take the Oath of Abjuration, the Lords of his Majesty’s Privy Council have banished and hereby banish the haill [all the] forenamed persons, men and women, conform to the act of Parliament, to his Majesty’s plantations abroad, and discharges them ever to return to this kingdom hereafter without the King or the Council’s special licence under the pain of death to be inflicted on them without mercy.

⁴*Westminster Confession*, 25.

¹In the previous two articles, we gave an account of the prisoners’ return from Dunnottar to Leith. In this article we follow many of them in their disastrous voyage to America.

²Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh (1636-91) was the King’s Advocate from 1677-86. He is generally known as “Bloody Mackenzie” on account of his persecution of the Covenanters. On 30 June 2003 his mausoleum in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh, was broken into by a drunken youth, and a head was removed from a coffin and used as a puppet. There were four coffins in the mausoleum, and the identity of the head is not certain. Vile as the crime was, it does not compare to the behaviour of the dragoon Peter Inglis in 1685 who, having killed the Covenanter James White, cut off his head and played football with it. Richard Cameron’s head was similarly used; see Patrick Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant*, London, 1901, vol 2, pp 114-5.

“And further ordains the haill forenamed persons, as also the persons underwritten formerly sentenced to the plantations, and now prisoners in the Tolbooth of Leith, [here follow the names of a further 16 men and seven women (two of whom had already been included among the 21 above)] to be delivered to Mr George Scot of Pitlochie and by him transported to his Majesty’s plantations in East New Jersey in the ship lying in the road of Leith now bounding thither, upon his finding sufficient caution to transport the haill forenamed persons to the foresaid plantation, and to report a certificate of their landing there from the Governor or Deputy Governor of the place once in September 1686 . . . under the penalty of five hundred merks for each one of them in case of failure, sea hazard, mortality and pirates being always excepted, and discharges the forenamed persons formerly and now ordered to the said plantations ever to return into this kingdom without licence and under the certification as aforesaid. And the said Lords do hereby give order and warrant to the baillies of Leith and keepers of the Tolbooth thereof to deliver the haill forenamed persons to the said Mr George Scott of Pitlochie when he shall require them conform to the warrant to be given him for that effect, and to be concurring and assisting to him in putting them aboard, and if need be recommends to General Dalzell to allow him such a party of his Majesty’s forces as he shall think fit for that effect.”³

Others of the Dunnottar prisoners were released at this time, or their examinations were postponed on account of sickness. One woman, Janet Fulmerton of Edinburgh, “flatly and boldly in face of council denied the king to be lawful sovereign, and his authority”, and was ordered to be “processed before the justices for her life”. She was well known to Patrick Walker, who describes her as a “singular Christian, of deep exercises, high attainments, and great experience in the serious exercise and solid practice of godliness”. She was about 50 years old, unmarried, and had “spent much of her time in visiting prisoners and sufferers, doing good to them and for them, especially on the murdering bloody days of their deaths, going amongst friends, getting coffins and winding sheets, and managing of their headless and handless bloody corpses, many of them being hashed and hagged off”. Eventually she was delivered to Pitlochie for transportation and died on the voyage.⁴

It is difficult to know exactly how many prisoners were on the ship with Pitlochie. He had been given 67 men and 27 women above (including Janet Fulmerton), and he received further grants of seven men on August 21, three

³*The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland 1685-6*, third series, vol 11, Edinburgh, 1929, pp 154-5; Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, ed R Burns, Glasgow, 1830, vol 4, pp 221-222.

⁴*Six Saints*, vol 2, pp 96-101.

on August 25, another man (a criminal rather than a Covenanter) on August 26, three more men on August 27, and another on September 3.⁵ On the other hand, the Council on August 25 appointed a committee “to go to Leith and consider the condition of the several women prisoners sentenced to the plantations, and to keep back such of them as are married women and with child, and send them prisoners to the Tolbooth of Edinburgh”. Furthermore, the following day the Council had received a supplication from Pitlochie to the effect that, having already lost £250 “through the disappointment he hath met with of wanting forty men promised him by the Council,” he was now also informed “that there is aboard of his vessel by the Council’s order six aged infirm men and as many women, who will be altogether useless to him, yea he hath certain information from such as hath been in these places that beside the paying of five pounds for each of their freights he must resolve to allow ten pounds yearly for their maintenance wherever they land,” and he craved to be released from this burden. The next day the committee ordered four men and three women to be taken off the ship.⁶

Two of the prisoners given to him (Patrick Walker and Robert Goodwin) had escaped before they could be put on the ship; another (Alexander Dagleish) had probably died; and another (James Reston), though willing to go, was aged 69 and was presumably not wanted by Pitlochie.⁷ The records show that several more of Pitlochie’s prisoners did not in fact go with him, for whatever reason. Two of them (Thomas Russell and John Henderson), who were described as “notorious rogues”, mainly because they would not own that the assassination of Archbishop Sharp was murder, escaped from the Leith Tolbooth at the end of October “by cutting through the back wall into a cellar”; while five others (four men and a woman) are mentioned among the 19 Dunnottar prisoners brought from the Leith Tolbooth and put in irons in the Old Edinburgh Tolbooth on October 31.⁸ The total number of prisoners, therefore, who set sail with Pitlochie seems to have been something over 90. Of these Wodrow lists 22 who died on the voyage, to whom must be added Janet Fulmerton mentioned above, so the number who eventually reached New Jersey must have been about 70.

⁵*Register of the Privy Council 1685-6*, vol 11, pp 159, 162-3, 165, 167-8, 173. Another prisoner, Walter Ker, was delivered on September 3 to “John Johnston, druggist,” who travelled with Pitlochie on the ship, and who subsequently married his daughter, *Register*, p 173. A similar grant on the same day is mentioned in *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, Edinburgh, 1923, vol 12, p 177.

⁶*Register of the Privy Council 1685-6*, vol 11, pp 163, 165-6.

⁷*Register of the Privy Council 1685-6*, vol 11, pp 154.

⁸*Register of the Privy Council 1685-6*, vol 11, pp 154, 203; *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* vol 12, p 184.

Wodrow continues his account of the prisoners on the *Henry and Francis* as follows: "Several of their testimonies and letters they wrote to their friends toward the end of August are before me; and particularly an original letter, from about twenty-eight of them, dated Leith Road, August 28th, 1685, directed to their friends, too long to be here insert. In short they signify,

"That now being to leave their own native and covenanted land by an unjust sentence of banishment, for owning truth, and holding by duty, and studying to keep by their covenant engagements and baptismal vows, whereby they stand obliged to resist, and testify against all that is contrary to the Word of God and their covenants; and that their sentence of banishment ran chiefly because they refused the oath of allegiance, which in conscience they could not take, because, in so doing, they thought they utterly declined the Lord Jesus Christ from having any power in His own house, and practically would, by taking it, say He was not King and head of His Church, and over their consciences; and on the contrary, this was to take and put in His room a man whose breath is in his nostrils, yea, a man that is a sworn enemy to religion, an avowed papist, whom by our covenants we are bound to withstand, and disown, and that agreeably to the scripture, Deut 17:14-15.' They go on to leave their testimony against the evils of the times, and for the preaching of the gospel in the fields and houses." The letter was signed by 22 men and 6 women.⁹

"In the same ship likewise were Mr John Fraser, and that excellent gentleman Robert M'Lellan of Barmagechan, of whom more just now, William Niven in Pollockshaws, with a good many others who had endured Dunnottar cruelties. And it is mostly from Mr Fraser and Barmagechan's account of this voyage that I am to frame the following narrative of it. Several likewise in the vessel, who retired from their native country to settle in America, as the reverend Mr Archibald Riddell we had in the former part of this history, and his wife, and several of the relations of such who went over.

"The prisoners lay some time in the road of Leith, before all was ready, and sailed the 5th of September. Informations before me bear that Pitlochrie tampered with some of them, particularly James Forsyth, to get money before they sailed, offering for five pounds sterling paid now, to set him at liberty as soon as they came to land. But James answered he would give him no money to carry him out of his native land, adding he had done nothing worthy of banishment. After they had turned the land-end, the fever began to rage in the ship, especially among such who had been in the great vault of Dunnottar. Not a few of them were sick when they came aboard, and no wonder, considering the barbarous treatment they had met with; besides,

⁹One of the signatories was Jean Moffat; see Article 6 in this series.

much of the flesh which the captain of the ship had provided for the prisoners began to stink before they sailed out of Leith road, and in a few days it was not eatable. In a month's time the fever turned malignant, and few or none in the ship escaped it; in so much that it was usual to cast over board three or four dead bodies in one day.

"Most of the ship's crew, except the captain and boatswain, died. Pitlochie, who had freighted the ship, with his excellent lady, died likewise,¹⁰ and so enjoyed nothing of the produce of near a hundred prisoners gifted him by the council; and near seventy persons died at sea. I have before me a list of the passengers and prisoners who died at sea. It concerns the design of this history only to record the names of the prisoners, and they are as follows [he gives 22 names]. Perhaps several of the passengers might be likewise sufferers, but able to pay their freights; but I have not set them down, for shortness. I find further in the list, Mr John Vernor and his wife;¹¹ Pitlochie and his lady; and the Lady Aitherny;¹² Mrs Riddell; Mrs Eupham Rigg, Lady Aitherny's daughter; William Rigg, her son;¹³ Mr William Ged;¹⁴ and Mr William Aisdale, minister.¹⁵

"Notwithstanding of this raging sickness and great death, much severity was used toward the prisoners at sea, by the master of the ship and others: those under deck were not allowed to go about worship by themselves, and when they essayed it, the captain would throw down great planks of timber upon them to disturb them, and sometimes to the danger of their lives. We have heard of the badness of their provisions already.

"Many were the disasters of this voyage. The ship was at the utmost hazard by the breaking up of a leak at two several times. They had several

¹⁰His will was dated October 31; by then his wife was dead. See Edith H Mather, "George Scot of Pitlochry", *Proceedings of New Jersey Historical Society*, vol 7 (1922), pp 276-7.

¹¹Margaret Spence, "relict of John Vernor", made her will on board the ship on November 1, "forasmuch as I am now presently lying under a grievous fever, and it being apparent that I am more likely to die than to live," William A Whitehead, *Early History of Perth Amboy*, New York, 1856, p 29n.

¹²Lady Athernie, as far as we can gather, was the widow of William Rigg of Athernie, whose father Thomas was a half-brother of Pitlochie's wife.

¹³William Rigg made his will on November 27. His mother and sister were already dead, and their jewellery he left to Eupham Scot, Pitlochie's daughter, *Perth Amboy*, p 29n.

¹⁴In May 1682 there was a riot in the parish of Dron in Perthshire over the settlement of an Episcopalian minister, see Wodrow, vol 3, pp 374-5. For his connection with this, William Ged had been imprisoned, along with others, in the Edinburgh Tolbooth, and then fined, *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, Edinburgh, 1916, vol 8, p 128.

¹⁵We have not been able to identify Mr Aisdale. Another minister who seems to have been on board the ship was David Simson, who had been minister of Southend, Kintyre, *Register of the Privy Council 1685-6*, vol 11, p 149.

calms, and some pretty severe storms. The captain, after Pitlochrie's death, began to tamper with Mr Johnston, his son-in-law, who now had the disposal of the prisoners; and it was projected to carry them into Jamaica or Virginia, and the master offered to take all the prisoners there from him, and pay him in bulk. It was urged for this that the markets were much better there for servants than at New Jersey. When they are thus treating, and near an issue, very much for the advantage of the passengers and prisoners, the wind turns straight for New Jersey, and they were forced to sail with it. There they arrived about the middle of December, after they had been about fifteen weeks at sea. At their landing many of them were sick; and Mr Fraser observes that a worthy gentleman from the west of Scotland died among their hands as they were carrying him ashore.

"The same person observes, that 'partly of such who voluntarily offered themselves to go abroad from the kingdom of Scotland, and partly of such who were persecuted by banishment, there were upwards of 60 died at sea, whose blood (adds he) will be found in the skirts of enemies, as really, as if they had died at the cross and Grassmarket of Edinburgh'."¹⁶

The Changeless Saviour¹

Charles J Brown

If anyone will notice carefully the context here, he will find that the Apostle is marking a glorious contrast in the text. He had said in the previous verse: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation". In this verse it is: "Jesus Christ the same". It is as if he had said, Your spiritual counsellors and guides, the most esteemed and loved of them, must be taken from you, as so many of them have already been. But Jesus Christ, the centre of their faith and life and teaching, does not die – Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and for ever. "Be not carried about", he continues, "with divers and strange [or foreign] doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats" – those things of a temporary and now-superseded economy – "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar," the one unchangeable altar, "whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle".

¹⁶Wodrow, vol 4, pp 331-3.

¹Based on: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8), and reprinted with some editing from *The Christian Treasury* of 1863. Brown (1806-1884) was minister of the New North Free Church in Edinburgh; some of his books are in print today.

1. I would observe quickly here that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever, in contrast to the different successive dispensations or administrations of the one covenant of grace. The economy of the patriarchs, with its simple promises and sacrifices, was succeeded by the legal, the Mosaic, economy with its costly and complicated ritual – its whole “law of commandments contained in ordinances”. And this again, in the fulness of the time, was succeeded by the Christian economy, with its sublime simplicity of worship and fulness of revealed grace and truth. All along, however, there has, for substance, been but one covenant of promise – one religion. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me” – Jesus Christ, under whatsoever diversities of administration, the same yesterday and today and for ever.

2. He is the same in contrast to the endless changes, fluctuations, uncertainties of this present world. But what is there in the world that does not change – that possesses any stability? What are all the things around us but like the shifting scenes of some panorama? “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.” Infancy gives place to childhood, childhood to youth, youth to manhood and manhood to old age – unless indeed death comes in, as it continually does, to break the sequence at an earlier stage. Health departs from us; loved friends are taken away; our schemes are turned upside down. There is nearly as much change in our individual position and circumstances as in the condition of the nations, where all is like the troubled sea that cannot rest. Yea, this earth itself, so stable compared with the race that walks on it, will not last. “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed”; “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”.

But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. We may visit some city, after an interval of years, where we once dwelt. But the old familiar faces are either away or strangely changed. A new generation has sprung up. Our own hair has grown grey in the meanwhile; and the sentence, “Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away,” is hastening to become our history, as it has been of the myriads before us. But, believers, not only is Jesus Christ the same in Himself, yesterday and today and for ever, He is the same also to you – the same righteousness to you, the same husband to you, heritage, portion, undying friend.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth”, He said; “but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” You die, but you die in the changeless One, a part of His very body; and “because I live”, said He, “ye shall live also”. O let all the changes, the endless uncertainties, only endear the unchanging One all the more to you and make you cling the closer to Him. Say with the Church in the Song: “His locks are bushy and black as a raven” – that is to say, time effects no

changes on Him; it impresses no marks of decay. “The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock”; “My heart and my flesh faileth; but Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” – Jesus Christ the same, the same!

3. He is the same in contrast to very great variations also in feeling and condition within. A thousand things are liable to affect the feelings of the Christian. Natural temperament has not a little to do with them. The state of bodily health will influence them materially. Any great change of outward circumstances will seldom leave them exactly the same. No doubt they would be affected much less by such things if there was more of the simple, humble, trustful, obedient spirit of the weaned child.

Still it is absolutely necessary to distinguish, broadly, between changing feelings and a changed Saviour. If we could only reach it, it would be our high wisdom here to walk, not by feeling, any more than by sight, but by faith. When, believers, you are dull, heavy, dispirited, Christ has not changed. It is one thing for your knees to tremble on the rock; it is another thing altogether for the rock to tremble beneath them – never, never!

You have seen the mists resting, for weeks together, over the mountains, so that no trace of them was visible. But the mists gradually cleared away, and the sun burst through and revealed them in unchanged grandeur. I think you may say of your variable frames what David said of his house: Though it is “not so with God” – not as it once was, might be, or ought to be – “yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure”. “Ye now . . . have sorrow,” said Jesus to His disciples; “but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.” “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” “When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I” – Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and for ever.

4. The context suggests a further contrast between Jesus Christ the same, and an unworthy instability and fickleness of mind respecting the doctrines of the faith. The Apostle obviously points to this in the words which follow the text: “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace”. How desirable, brethren, that in this our day of truly divers and strange doctrines, these words of the Apostle be fixed deep in our hearts – that, as he speaks elsewhere, we be not “children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive!” It is very unworthy of the disciples of an unchanging Saviour to be thus carried about – tossed to and fro, unstable as water. So, let them remember, one grand secret of steadfast adherence to the truth, to the whole

counsel of God, is to keep one's eye continually on Him who is the centre of it all, in whom all its great lines meet, who is the truth as well as the way and the life – Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and for ever.

6. Once more, the context suggests another contrast between Jesus Christ the same, and the departure of even the most valued under-shepherds, the ministers of the Word – their past or rapidly-approaching death. “Remember them which have had the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end”, the close, “of their conversation.” Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. What the Apostle had, in a previous chapter, said of the priesthood of the law holds true here also for substance: “They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood”.

The very fact that pastors and teachers are not suffered to continue, by reason of death, surely proclaims with a loud voice that, while they are to be used and valued in their place as instruments – esteemed “highly in love for their work's sake” – they are no exception to the rule: “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils”. And we are to beware of placing our trust in them, idolizing them, putting them in the room of the one Prophet, Priest, King of the Church.

How interesting an incident we have in the Gospels: “The next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” They heard him speak and they left him and began to follow after Jesus, to whom he bore witness – unlike others of John's disciples, of whom we read that they came to him and said, “Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him”. Which of the two classes of disciples the teacher most approved comes gloriously out in his reply. “John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”

It must have been a deeply affecting scene among God's ancient people when Moses was instructed: “Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into mount

Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron died there on the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.” And very soon that voice was heard, “Moses My servant is dead”. Next Joshua died. And under the new dispensation, the Apostles all, one after another, depart. How touching are Peter’s words: “I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me!”

But what a contrast – O to learn its lessons – “He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death”. Jesus Christ, who holds the stars in His right hand, the Minister of the sanctuary, the great Shepherd of the sheep, is the same yesterday and today and for ever!

I have endeavoured to apply the subject somewhat to believers. I will now briefly address those among us who are altogether strangers to Christ and His grace. Where is your rock amid the changes – amid the endless, confessed, utter uncertainty of all things here? You are in a world where, as you must needs more and more acknowledge, nothing is stable – where almost the only thing that can be much depended on is death, which is hastening to sweep you from this life altogether. You have no rock beneath your feet, being strangers to Christ and His grace; but recollect that expression of Scripture, “the wrath of the Lamb”. He is the same, not only in His undying friendship and love to His people, but also in His holy wrath against those of His enemies who remain impenitent. He will indeed not change that word: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”; but no more will He change that one: “Ye must be born again”; nor that one: “Except ye repent, ye shall . . . perish”; nor that one: “He that believeth not shall be damned”; nor that one: “Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched”.

As yet, however, it is our blessed privilege to invite, to beseech, to implore you to seek refuge in the clefts of the smitten Rock of ages. It is our privilege to proclaim to you the unchanged freeness of His salvation – the unchanged perfection and sufficiency of His atonement and righteousness for all who will betake themselves to Him in very deed.

However dark the day in the Christian life, at evening time there shall be light. His life is a twilight, but it is the twilight of the morning, that shall brighten and broaden into a day that has neither sunset nor night; whilst the twilight of the sinner is that of the evening, that shall thicken and blacken into that long and gloomy night that knows no morning.

T V Moore

Book Reviews

The Blessing of God, previously unpublished sermons by Jonathan Edwards, edited by Michael D McMullen, published by Broadman & Holman, hardback, 400 pages, obtainable at £17.99 from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

Here is a collection of 22 sermons, on a wide variety of subjects, copied from manuscripts preserved in Yale University. They begin with a discourse on Jacob wrestling with the angel, entitled, “The way to obtain the blessing of God is not to let Him go except He bless us”. The final sermon is on “Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . .” (Rev 3:20), with the title: “Nothing else is required of us in order to our having an interest in Christ but that we should . . . be willing that Christ should be ours and we His”. “His knocking at our hearts”, Edwards explains, “implies His seeking”. And again: “Our opening the door to Him implies our being willing to be His, a giving up ourselves to Him as . . . sometimes . . . at the first inauguration of a king”.

Evidently a great deal of effort was involved in deciphering Edwards’ handwriting, with its many abbreviations. It is good that the preacher is very much left to speak for himself, though one feels a little sensitive editing would sometimes have been helpful. There are a number of slips in the production – for instance, “to wash their slops in butter” (p 257) should have been identified as a reference to Job 29:6, where the word is *steps*, not *slops*.

However, in spite of such blemishes, these sermons are no doubt typical of those which were blessed to such a remarkable extent in Edwards’ Northampton congregation in eighteenth-century New England. May they again be blessed in our very different world in the twenty-first century!

The Hand of God: The Comfort of Having a Sovereign God, by Frederick S. Leahy, published by the Banner of Truth Trust, hardback, 223 pages, £6.00, obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

Professor Leahy, a minister and theological professor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland, died on the evening of the day in January 2006 when he posted the manuscript of this book to the publishers. It was his aim in his last published work “to show that the sovereignty of God, as revealed in Scripture, is a comforting truth”. Rev Geoffrey Thomas, in his foreword, classes this volume among those “books that make the great truths of Christianity accessible to contemporary people without triteness”.

Explaining that “God speaks to us in our own language in a manner we can understand – just as we speak as simply as possible when communicating with a young child”, Professor Leahy concludes that “when we read in the Bible of God’s ‘hand’, ‘arm’, or ‘countenance’, we are to think of God Himself” (pp 1,2). More precisely he asserts that, “when we read of God’s hand

in the Bible, we are to think of His invincible sovereignty in action” (p 169). In 10 helpfully-subdivided chapters he considers the sovereignty of God under the image of the hand that creates, governs, provides, redeems, keeps, guides, chastens, blesses, enables and judges.

While a sound Reformed theology underlies and comes to expression in these chapters, they are written in a popular and practical style, perhaps somewhat discursive, and are extensive rather than intensive in their approach. They are easily read even by those who may be weary and need the pick-me-up which they are intended to provide.

Three brief appendices underline the author’s commitment throughout the book to the Genesis account of creation and his repudiation of “the baneful influence of evolutionary theory” and of the “open view of God” which “distorts and undermines the doctrine of God’s sovereignty”, as in the writings of Clark Pinnock, who asserts that “the all-powerful God delegates power to the creature, making Himself vulnerable”.

Illustrative quotations are drawn from over 70 different sources. There is constant appeal to the Word of God. It may be unlikely that our wish that the publishers would make consistent use of the AV in their publications will be granted, but there is no harm in repeating it!

While personally inclined to question a few points which come up incidentally, such as the dogmatic assertion of the prospect of “a purged and renewed earth” (p 16) and the particular way in which the matter of the old man and the new is disposed of (p 53), we have no hesitation in commending this book. As Mr Thomas suggests, it provides “simplicity without banality . . . respect for the immensities of the divine revelation of God without impenetrability . . . an affection of tone without sentimentality and a directness without offence” (p xi). *HMC*

Obituary

Mrs Dirkje MacPherson

Dirkje Heikoop was born on 15 February 1930, the third in a family that would number eight children, all born in the Netherlands. At first the family lived in The Hague but moved to Scheveningen in 1935 where the parents conducted a fruit and vegetable business.

The hard times of the depression that commenced in 1929 held Holland and much of the world in its crippling grip. That period was followed by the even harder times of World War 2. When the trying period of German occupation had come to an end, many Dutch citizens migrated to more

peaceful shores, at a distance from the cold war that followed the peace treaties of 1945. The family of Mr and Mrs Johannes Heikoop and seven of their unmarried children set their eyes on New Zealand. Even in those early days they managed to make contact with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in New Zealand. Mr and Mrs Murdoch MacPherson, then farming at Tokomaru Bay, north of Gisborne, were very helpful to the Heikoop family in facilitating their emigration plans.

Migration transport was still mainly by ship, which in 1952 took the Heikoop family as far as Sydney. After a voyage of about 5 weeks, there followed a five-hour flight by seaplane over the Tasman Sea, from Sydney Harbour to Auckland Harbour. One thing the family had left out of their reckoning whilst still in Holland was the much greater distances in New Zealand compared to what they were used to in the Dutch Lowlands. Having landed in Auckland they managed to engage two taxis to take them to their final destination. They little realized that about 350 miles and ten hours separated them from the MacPherson's home at Tokomaru Bay. (It was in the schoolhouse at Tokomaru Bay that the Rev J P MacQueen had preached the gospel in 1935 and baptized the MacPherson children.)

Having overcome tremendous obstacles of distance, the final barrier of language was a great problem for Mr and Mrs Heikoop, who were now in their fifties and did not know English. In spite of this hurdle they were always attentive on the public means of grace set up in Gisborne in the 1950s. However, they always complained that they could not understand the preaching, which was a great trial to them. But during one service, when Rev William MacLean was officiating on the Saturday of a communion, Mr Heikoop found, to his great astonishment, that he could understand every word. He got such encouragement from the Word preached that he applied to the Kirk Session and was permitted to sit at the Lord's Table the following day.

The new language, however, was only a small hurdle for the younger generation. Dirkje became friendly with Ken MacPherson and they married in September 1954. Initially Ken carried on his farming activities north of Gisborne, where they were far removed from the means of grace and educational facilities. Eventually he managed to purchase a farm at Ngatapa, which is about 30 minutes from Gisborne by car. From then on Mr and Mrs MacPherson and their growing family were able to attend the means of grace regularly. Dirkje came before the Kirk Session on 14 April 1979, as she had for some time been spiritually exercised about her duty to remember the Saviour's death. The truth, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28), had been blessed to her soul. The text on this particular day of preparation, "Say unto my soul, I am thy

salvation” (Ps 35:3), also became a great encouragement to her. She was admitted to full membership and was enabled to be a consistent witness for Christ until the day she died.

With chest pains developing over a long period of time, she at last needed a coronary-bypass operation. However, the operation was not very successful and further problems developed, and she needed further surgical intervention. She was able to sit at the Lord’s Table for the last time on Sabbath, 22 October 2006. The next day she was flown to Hamilton, where she was admitted to Waikato Hospital for proposed surgery. However problems occurred during pre-operation procedures and, after lingering for three days, she passed away on Friday, October 27, to, we believe, her eternal rest. Her remains were interred in the Taruheru Lawn Cemetery, Gisborne on November 1.

Our sympathy is extended to Dirkje’s husband Ken, an elder in the Gisborne congregation, her only surviving sister Annie, her daughter Ann and her seven sons and her many grandchildren. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Rev 14:13). May the children and grandchildren be partakers of the same grace!

(Rev) J A T van Dorp

Protestant View

The Onward March of Rome

John Bunyan was somewhat precipitate in anticipating the early demise of Giant Pope. With his iron fist concealed in a velvet glove he still strides though the United Kingdom in pursuit of the aim spelled out by the former Anglican churchman – later Roman Catholic Cardinal – Henry Manning (1809-1892). Addressing the Jesuits, he said concerning England (by which no doubt he meant the United Kingdom!): “It is an head of Protestantism, the centre of its movements and the stronghold of its power. Weakened in England, it is paralysed elsewhere. Conquered in England, it is conquered throughout the whole world. Once overthrown here, all else is but a war of detail. All the roads of the world meet in one point, and this point reached, all the world is open to the Church’s will” (see Michael de Semlyen, *The Foundations Under Attack*, p 30). We know that truth will triumph in the end but it may lie in the street for many days.

Even though the hold of Rome on those brought up within her bounds in Scotland has been greatly reduced and the present upsurge in those attending chapels is the result of immigration from Roman Catholic parts of Europe, the influence of Romanism in the corridors of power and in the popular media is still strong. The former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has certainly not been

governed by biblical Christianity in his public policy, and has acted in contradiction of the official stance taken by Rome on several moral issues. But it seems that he has been nurtured by Roman priests in his endeavour to find his spiritual home ultimately in Romanism and no doubt, if that is his intention, Rome will find a way by which to accommodate him and secure the resulting publicity coup.

Mr Blair has been a regular attender at Roman Catholic masses, although allegedly prevented from "taking communion". One of his final acts while prime minister was to visit the Pope, bringing him no fewer than three portraits of Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), who did so much to Romanise the Church of England through the Oxford Movement, before defecting to Rome. While in Rome he also achieved the distinction of being the first prime minister to visit the College in Rome which trained priests for underground mission work in England in post-Reformation times. Recently the present Prime Minister presented the Pope with a volume of sermons preached by his father. No doubt the Pope appreciates any token of respect from those at the head of nations, though some may suit him better than others.

Meanwhile the new First Minister of Scotland has, in the *Scottish Catholic Observer*, undertaken to try to persuade Gordon Brown to incorporate in his proposed Bill of Rights the removal of the Act of Settlement from the Statute Book. He asserts that, even if there is no Bill of Rights, this Act, which secures the Protestant character of the Throne, should be repealed, "because it is a blot on our culture". It appears that Mr Salmond has been campaigning on this issue for a number of years and that he engaged himself to Cardinal O'Brien to use his influence to this end. Now we can guess why the spokesmen of Rome in Scotland swung behind the Scottish Nationalists in the recent election and why the Cardinal is now advocating the extension of the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

The breaking up of the United Kingdom, the disestablishment of the Church of England of the 39 Articles, the removal of the Act of Settlement, and further incorporation in the European Union, achieved by the deceit which has characterised the movement all along, are no doubt all part of the one process on the way to the achievement of Cardinal Manning's aim. Whatever God has in mind for our people in the short term, we are thankful that it is written that the day shall surely come when "that Wicked shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess 2:8-10). We pray that many souls will be delivered from this and all the other delusions which stalk the land today. *HMC*

Notes and Comments

Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

The May 2007 *Free Presbyterian Magazine* contained a copy of a statement on the above subject sent by the Southern Presbytery to the then Prime Minister, Home Secretary and Scottish First Minister, drawing their attention to biblical principles governing personal relationships.

Responses received from various officials on their behalf were virtually identical. The line taken was that the Government's decision had been informed by a wide-ranging debate and by careful consideration of the many points raised and that a right balance had been reached between the competing rights of individuals to hold and manifest a religious belief and the right to live free from discrimination. The response from 10 Downing Street made the astounding claim that "the Government's approach will ensure that nobody will be required to act in a way that contravenes their core religious beliefs". The others said that it "will ensure that nobody will be required to change their core religious beliefs". At a subsequent meeting, the Presbytery agreed to convey to these politicians their dissatisfaction with the Government's failure to take account of the arguments presented and to recognise the existence of moral absolutes.

Our legislators have rejected the religious and moral absolutes of Scripture as the touchstone to which human laws and social practices must be brought. As a result we have laws which defy God, the Christian constitution of our land, and the Bible – which our chief magistrate the Queen has sworn to uphold and govern by. Consequently those who are discriminated against are those whose "core religious beliefs" require them to live in keeping with the prescriptions of God in the Bible and the imperatives created within them by grace. Such "core religious beliefs" cannot be changed where they are sincerely held, whatever governments may decree. But it is dishonest to claim that these laws and regulations ensure that no one will be required to act in a way which contravenes them.

Adoption and fostering agencies and bed-and-breakfast establishments may be most affected by this particular legislation, but the general tendency of legislation in recent decades makes it increasingly difficult for Christians to function both conscientiously and legally in a wide range of lawful occupations. The government view is that religion is a private matter and that government is competent to determine what should be regarded as "core religious beliefs" and whether these should be allowed to determine the conduct and relationships of those who hold them.

Yet followers of religions alien to Christianity are applauded and their

religions praised as essentially beneficial, however much some of their devotees may undermine the foundations of society. At the same time, those who endeavour to pattern life and society on the principles of the Christ of the Bible are denounced as bigots whose convictions can be disregarded. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Is 5:20,21). Whether the new personnel in the governing bodies of the United Kingdom and of Scotland will escape this woe is sadly doubtful, though we must ever give heed to the exhortation of 1 Timothy 2:1,2: "I exhort therefore, that . . . supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority". *HMC*

Immoral Perversions

It is clear from daily experience that some people are more prone to certain sins than others are. We each have our own way of departing from God: "We have turned every one to his own way" (Is 53:6). David had his particular iniquity, which he had to watch against: "I kept myself from mine iniquity" (Ps 18:23). This principle, that each sinner has areas of special weakness, holds true with regard to the immoral perversions which have become widespread in our day. Some people are far more inclined to sins such as homosexuality and paedophilia than others. At the same time, the Word of God tells us that there is often an element of judgement in such sins. When men reject God, He may give them over to the lusts that are already in their hearts: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts" (Rom 1:23).

It is important to recognise, however, that all are liable to sins of this sort and indeed of every sort. No one is immune. We may say with Hazael: "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" (2 Ki 8:13), but we are warned, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12). Robert Murray M'Cheyne said "I am tempted to think that there are some sins for which I have no natural taste, such as strong drink, profane language, etc, so that I need not fear temptation to such sins. This is a lie – a proud, presumptuous lie. The seeds of all sins are in my heart, and perhaps all the more dangerously that I do not see them."

The way into sinful practices is often gradual. One fall into sin leads on to another; and where lust is indulged, it increases. Its nature is always to seek for some further evil gratification beyond what it has already attained. The prophet Habakkuk speaks of the man "who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied" (2:5). Doubtless it was by gradual steps that the men of Sodom and of Gibeah descended to the depths of depravity they reached (Gen 19:5; Jud 19:22).

In Britain at present, the sin of homosexuality is encouraged, whereas that of paedophilia is supposedly discouraged. We have no doubt that the promotion of homosexuality will ensnare some who would otherwise escape, but we have no expectation of success for the attempts to curb paedophilia. The steps which lead to this sin (that is, the various gradations of pornography) are legal and, as long as this remains the case, the legislation on such matters as lists of offenders and “disclosures” will prove ineffectual. What our rulers ought to do is introduce stringent laws against all pornography, and then these lists and “disclosures” should become unnecessary. But our rulers are reluctant to tackle pornography, and one reason is that the homosexual lobby is deeply involved in pornography, both for gratification and for purposes of “recruitment”. We can only pray that the Lord will remember our nation as He remembered the immoral city of Corinth in the days of the apostle Paul (Acts 18:10 with 1 Cor 6:9-11). *DWBS*

Judgements and Mercies

Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle, has been reported as stating that the recent floods which left thousands of people homeless were a judgement from God on the moral decadence of British society. “We are reaping the consequences of our moral degradation”, he said. Mr Dow, described as a leading Evangelical, said that people should heed the warning that the downfall of the Roman Empire was a consequence of its immorality. He drew particular attention to recent pro-homosexual legislation. “The Sexual Orientation Regulations are part of a general scene of permissiveness”, he said. “We are in a situation where we are liable for God’s judgement, which is intended to call us to repentance.”

We entirely concur with such a warning. At the same time we should note with profound thankfulness that God has been merciful to Britain in the foiling of the recent bombing attempts, apparently by Muslim terrorists, in London and in Glasgow. This is the third major attack in two years, and the second which has ended in complete failure. We pray that the goodness of God in this matter would lead our fellow countrymen to repentance (Rom 2:4). *DWBS*

Church Information

Jewish and Foreign Missions Fund

By appointment of Synod, the second of the year’s two special collections for the Jewish and Foreign Missions Fund is due to be taken in congregations during August. *R A Campbell, General Treasurer*