

The Free Presbyterian Magazine

Vol 112

October 2007

No 10

Why Sorrow?

We live in a world where sorrow repeatedly enters. Indeed, at any given moment, multitudes all over the world are experiencing sadness for all sorts of reasons. Death follows illness, accidents and disasters into families and leaves sorrow behind. And death, however unexpected – however unwelcome – is irreversible; no one returns from the eternal world. If we were to focus seriously on death, as it carries away our friends and loved ones from beside us, we might be overwhelmed with grief.

The world has its own ways of coping with bereavement, and present-day funerals seem to be a massive exercise in denial when, instead of mourning the loss of a loved one, the occasion is treated as a celebration of his or her life and a church is turned into a pop-music venue rather than a setting for the worship of God. How appropriate rather on such an occasion to acknowledge the Lord's providence in the event, however sad it in fact is!

Few have experienced such a devastating set of circumstances as Job, when, in a very short space of time, he lost all his wealth and, even more distressingly, all his children. Yet his response was: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). This was not the stoical response of a man without feelings; it was the response of a man who had a deep sense of God's kindness to him in the past. Moreover he had a profound sense of the continuing goodness of God, and could therefore trust Him to support him throughout the rest of his days in this world.

In much of the Western world, people generally refuse to believe in what they cannot discern with their bodily senses; they refuse to accept the existence of an eternity beyond this life. They find it convenient to deny that there is a hell; they do not take the trouble to consider heaven seriously as a place of perfect holiness; and they will not face up to the reality of God's existence, for they do not wish to submit to His authority over them. This means that, when confronted by the death of loved ones, they have no prospect of the comfort which comes to the bereaved when they cast themselves on Jesus Christ, the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother". And they have no sense that God is in control of everything – sad events as well

as joyous, dispiriting as well as encouraging. Without a sense of God's control of providence, they cannot realise that life – with all its ups and downs – is meaningful, and that it is meaningful because nothing occurs but what a holy God has ordered in infinite wisdom.

But why do we have to face sadness and loss in a world which was pronounced “very good” immediately after its creation? The answer is that this is a fallen world, a world into which sin has entered. The Fall is a great mystery, but it is an undoubted fact. And the result of sin for Adam was, as the Lord told him: “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; *in sorrow* shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life”. Adam's descendants too are born into this fallen world under the same curse. And just as Adam was further told: “Thorns also and thistles shall [the ground] bring forth to thee”, so various troubles, difficulties and sorrows are, to a greater or lesser extent, bound up with the circumstances of every individual in this sinful world.

In any given instance, sorrow – and the trouble which causes it – may be understood in a number of ways. We will consider three of these.

First, sorrow may come in the way of punishment for sin. Take King Jeroboam as an example. He committed a very serious sin when he forsook the authorised worship of God at the temple in Jerusalem and set up instead the idolatrous worship of golden calves at Dan and at Bethel. It was particularly serious because he was leading astray the people over whom he ruled. But how bitter the sorrow which entered his house when his son Abijah fell sick and then died! Yet, when the prophet Ahijah foretold the boy's death, this tragedy was only a small part of a devastating message he gave, predicting the destruction that was to befall Jeroboam's entire household – because of his great sin. Every such instance of sorrow is a warning to sinners alienated from God by wicked works that they are on the way to eternal, unmitigated sorrow. And it is a call to repentance. Thus Ezekiel, as God's messenger, told the Jews who were in captivity in Babylon because of their sin: “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die?” (Ezek 18:30,31).

Sorrow may also come through chastisement. The one that suffers is a child of God who has done wrong. He must therefore undergo what is analogous to the pain a human father would inflict lovingly on a child to influence his conduct for the better, while showing fatherly displeasure. So when David, godly man though he was, wandered far into sin, he had to learn anew that disobedience “is an evil thing and bitter”. Chastisement included not only the death of the child conceived in his illicit union with Bathsheba but also spirit-

ual affliction. He had to say, “Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (Ps 32:4). The outcome was: “I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” The chastisement had the desired effect; God followed it by a gracious work of repentance in the heart of His child. David experienced “godly sorrow [which] worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of” (2 Cor 7:10).

The third way we will consider is when sorrow comes because of God’s purpose to test His saints. The outstanding example here is Job. His three friends completely misunderstood the reason for that whole sequence of desperate sorrows which he had to experience, and their foolish statements only added to his sorrow. But God was to demonstrate clearly that, in spite of all Satan’s malicious attacks on Job, He was altogether able to sustain faith in His servant’s soul. And Job was even able to look forward to an eventual full deliverance; he could say, “But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

These instances, and many more, are left on record in Scripture for our instruction, support and direction. Whatever our circumstances, whatever our state of soul, sorrow should send us to the throne of grace. To go there, in the name of Christ, the great High Priest, is to acknowledge that God rules over all that takes place and that He is able to deliver us from all our sorrows. Yet we should realise that our sorrows may be intended to bring spiritual blessings in their train, and so we should be more concerned to obtain such spiritual benefit than to have the cause of sorrow removed.

Few people today, however, are willing to bring the light of Scripture to bear on the difficulties of life and the sorrows that accompany them. Few are willing to face the fact that, because we are sinners, we do not deserve happiness; we do not deserve an easy life. The focus, almost universally, is on the things which are seen and temporal. The constant question is, How can I find enjoyment? not, How can I obtain good for my soul? But one important purpose of sorrow is to turn our attention away from the things seen and temporal towards the things which are unseen and eternal – to turn our focus away from the good things and the hard things of *this* life to the ultimate realities of suffering and blessedness in eternity. We are to learn that sin will be punished in a lost eternity. We are to lay hold on eternal life through a crucified Saviour. The children of God, even in the midst of their sufferings, must never lose sight of the endless, gracious reward in heaven which is promised to all who look to Christ for salvation. They have the assurance that “all things work together for good” to them (Rom 8:28).

Jesus the Only Saviour (1)¹

A Sermon by James Begg

Acts 4:12. *Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*

There are two remarkable circumstances connected with this passage of Scripture: (1) It forms part of a sermon by Peter, who thrice denied his Master, this very Jesus, and who said, with cursing and swearing, "I know not the man". He has now been so completely changed by the downpouring of the Holy Ghost, so inspired with faith and courage that he is forward to declare that there is salvation in no other. (2) The sermon was first delivered in the hearing of the judges and murderers of Jesus. "Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest," were present when it was preached; and it must have brought strange tidings to their ears. When Jesus stood before their tribunal, he told them: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven". And when the sacred writer speaks of His second coming, he says, "Every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him".

Now it must have been a foretaste of this fearful judgement when His apostles stood in the presence of these apostate rulers, after the death of their Master, no longer despised fishermen, but bold and eloquent, working miracles, speaking with tongues and telling them: Ye indeed delivered Him up from envy, and desired a murderer to be granted to you; ye crucified the holy One and the just, and ye imagined that all was over. But lo, ye were mere instruments in fulfilling the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; the grave has not retained Him; He has burst its gloomy fetters and risen to the power of an endless life. We are His witnesses; these miracles are wrought by His power, these strange tongues are the gift of His Spirit. "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." From the cross He has passed to the crown, from the grave to the mansions of glory; earth and heaven equally obey the commands of Him whom ye took and hanged on a tree. "Neither is there salvation in any other", nor is there any other "name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Let us now consider the truth itself – that there is only one way to heaven,

¹This is the first part of a sermon which is reprinted, with slight editing, from *The Free Church Pulpit*, vol 2. Begg (1808-1883) was latterly a minister in Newington, Edinburgh; he was a leader in opposing declension in the nineteenth-century Free Church. The message of the sermon is particularly important today, when the uniqueness of Christ as a Saviour is so strenuously rejected in so many quarters.

and that Jesus is that way. In illustrating this subject, let us *first* remove an objection which naturally arises in the minds of some men when such a truth is announced; *second*, let us further explain the truth itself as here stated; *third*, let us establish and apply it as one of the most momentous truths of Scripture.

1. A difficulty arises in the minds of some men when such a doctrine is announced, as if it savoured of intolerance. They think it becomes them to rest satisfied with the general idea that Christianity is true and important, but do not habitually feel that it is the *only* divine religion on earth, and that all other superstitions are the delusions of the god of this world. They do not live under the conviction that, unless they are savingly united to Christ, they shall be bound together with the tares and cast into eternal fire, and that there is no other mode of escape. And they call their own loose and careless views on this subject by the name of charity and imagine them to be more consistent with the goodness of God than those which He Himself has revealed.

Now, whether they believe it or not, their views are not only false and unscriptural, they are precisely those of the ancient heathens. The idolaters would have allowed an image to be erected for Jesus in their temples as one amongst many idols. What they found fault with was the universal demand of the first Christians that every idol should be destroyed, and that Jesus alone should be regarded as the object of worship and the author of salvation. But this is evidently the very spirit of Christianity. No blood can cleanse away sin but that which was shed on Calvary; no spirit can sanctify the depraved heart but the third Person of the eternal Trinity. No power can open the gate of heaven but that of Him who has the key of David, opening so that no man can shut and shutting so that no man can open. No power can overcome the "strong man armed" – who by nature has possession of our souls, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" – but the power of Him who binds Satan in chains and bruises him under the feet of His people.

In a word, it can only be from superficial views of the plan of redemption, and of what is implied in bringing men out of darkness into light and from the power of Satan to God, that any man can imagine that there is more than one way of salvation. The most wonderful truth in the records of time – as it shall be in the records of eternity – is that "God spared not His own Son", that Jehovah, in human form, walked this earth, spoke with a human voice, and suffered and died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God". If men would only meditate on this solemn truth, they would see that it implies not merely infidelity, but something approaching blasphemy, to imagine that the salvation of man can be secured in any other way. If so, God would have spared His only-begotten Son. Hence you will find that the views to which I have been referring are only entertained by men who have

no well-grounded conviction of the truths of the Word of God, and who wish to make a broad way and a wide gate to heaven – only that there may be the better prospect of their own admission, although they are resolved to continue in sin whilst grace abounds.

Nor is there any ground for imagining that the doctrine of the text is at all inconsistent with just views of the benevolence of God. Such an idea proceeds from the most superficial views and is the very reverse of just. Suppose a body of men were cast ashore on a desert island; suppose them smitten with disease and famishing for lack of bread; suppose nothing before them but the prospect of certain death. Suppose that in such circumstances one solitary ship was seen making towards the island and that it was loaded with bread and carried an infallible physician who, on its arrival, offered not only to supply the needs and heal the diseases of the people but also to carry them to a land where they should hunger no more, neither thirst any more, where none should say, I am sick, and where there should be no more death.

What would you think of the perishing men if they objected to the bread and the medicine and refused to go with this gracious benefactor, and preferred to starve and die on the barren island, because there was only one ship by which to escape, only one physician, only one supply of bread – because vessels had not been sent to all sides of the island, with bread of various kinds, and physicians of various qualities? Would you not think them insane and deeply ungrateful? Now this is the very case before us, only much stronger. The whole race of Adam has been cast away on this distant world to perish and die. They have no spiritual food and they are smitten with a disease which is rapidly hurrying them away to the second death.

But lo, one vessel of hope comes from the bright shores of the eternal world; it bears a divine Physician, the bread of life and the balm of Gilead. An offer is made to every soul, not merely of a full supply of all their spiritual wants and a perfect cure of all their diseases, but also of a safe passage to that land where “the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne” leads and feeds His people by “living fountains of waters” and where God the Lord wipes away all tears from their eyes. And what are we to think of those who object to this solely on the ground that God has not sent many deliverers instead of one; who, instead of hailing the glorious offer and labouring to prevail upon everyone to do the same, stand by callous and indifferent and imagine that somehow or other they will escape, although death and famine are raging around, although the cold grasp of the destroyer is on them already, and although they neither enter the ship of safety that is lying in the harbour or see another sail over the whole sweep of the horizon – nay, although they are assured by the Divine Saviour Himself that this is the only opportunity they

shall ever have of deliverance? Yet these are the ways that those act and think who are not alive to the doctrine of the text.

Again, to make this point clearer, let us suppose that men were already where all sinners will soon be who do not flee to Christ – in the place of punishment. Let us suppose that the gates of perdition were finally shut upon them and that, in looking round upon that region of outer darkness, not one ray of light could be seen. Let us suppose that, like the rich man in the gospel, they looked across the hopeless gulf which shall for ever separate the spirits of light from the heirs of condemnation and saw no way of escape. Let us suppose that, in answer to their cry of agony, one door of hope was opened, by which they might make an eternal escape – one messenger of peace was sent to intimate that for a very short period they might still flee, by this one door of escape, from that tormenting flame.

Do you think it would occur to them to object to this arrangement, on the ground that there was not more than one way of escape opened up? Do you not see that they would be overpowered with joy that there was any way of escape at all? And yet the case is nearly as strong with a world lying under condemnation. The men are under sentence of a broken law, for there is none righteous, no not one; and “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”. They are as completely surrounded here with Jehovah’s power, and as unable to escape from it as they shall be in the place of woe. If they do not repent and flee to Jesus, they are as sure to be cast into outer darkness as if they were already there.

If they were not blinded by Satan, they would see that it is a special mark of God’s wondrous love that there is *one* way of escape, *one* Redeemer, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, and who has declared: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”. This one way of escape is of such a kind as at once to teach us the difficulty of our deliverance, the impossibility of more plans of salvation than one, and the matchless and adorable love which condescended to regard us at all in our low and lost estate, while the angels that sinned were cast down to hell and confined to chains under darkness to the judgement of the great day.

2. Having thus cleared away a natural objection of practical infidelity, let us now explain the precise meaning of the words of the text. The language is particular, although the general idea conveyed strikes the mind of every reader at once. We are said here to be saved by the *name* of Christ, a word obviously used to signify Christ Himself. This is a mode of expression sometimes used in Scripture; as, for example, “the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe”, where by the name of the Lord is meant God Himself. This mode of expression has been transferred

to our own language. We speak of the “greatest names” of antiquity, and of men filling the world with the “terror of their names”, when in both cases we mean, not the names, but the persons. And so we are saved by Christ Himself, although in Scripture we are said to trust in His name. “In His name shall the Gentiles trust” – that is, in His merits, in His perfect righteousness, in His finished work and exalted intercession. “This is His name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness.”

The form of expression in the first part of the verse is also particular: “Neither is there salvation in any other”. The Apostle does not represent Christ giving salvation as a thing without Himself, a thing disconnected from Himself, but as a thing existing in Him, as a great treasure-house of spiritual blessings – in Him as the head of His mystical body; in Him from whom all the members united to Him by faith derive strength, nourishment and salvation.

Here, therefore, not only a general but a special doctrine is taught. The general doctrine is that Christ is the only Redeemer. As He was the Creator, He – and He only – is able to create us again, in glory and perfection, as He was to make us at first. The special doctrine is that this fulness of mediatorial power is laid up in Christ, as in the head of His Church, and that it descends from Him upon all His members, like the holy anointing oil from the head of Aaron, which flowed down to the skirts of his garments. The general truth is that Christ alone has removed the curse of the law and silenced the accuser of the brethren. He died, “the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”, and is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. The special truth is that it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell, and that we become partakers of all the blessings which He has purchased only when by faith we become branches of the true vine, living stones in the spiritual building of which Christ is the chief cornerstone. In a word, this statement embodies not only the general truths of the gospel, but a declaration of the special method by which the blessings of the gospel are applied.

The blessings of the gospel are laid up “in Christ” as the infallible Head of the Church. The blessings of the first covenant were laid up in Adam, but he sinned, fell and squandered the inheritance of all His children. The second Adam can never fall, neither shall any pluck His children or their hopes of salvation out of His hand. The inheritance of many children is entrusted to parents who abuse the trust, lose the patrimony and leave their children to beg; but in Christ our inheritance is safe, and therefore “He is able to save to the uttermost”. We do not know the blessings of which we stand in need and, insofar as we do know, we are not in earnest to procure them. We are not only miserable but blind; but Christ knows our needs, and in Him there is provision for them all. He is the great storehouse of spiritual blessings, and

all the promises of God are in Him yea and amen, so that if any man lacks blessings, temporal or spiritual, let him ask of Him who "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not".

These blessings are in no other. "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering". The merits of saints only exist in the imaginations of blinded idolaters, for every saint is by nature a child of wrath, even as others; and if the saints reach heaven themselves, it is only because they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. If we desire blessings we must go to the Master of the house direct, for none of the servants can supply our needs. We must become members of His family – nay, of His body – and then all things will become ours, whether things present or things to come, or life or death; all will be ours, for we will be Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Christ's Will for His Church¹

3. How Is the Church to Be Governed?

Rev H M Cartwright

What principles may be deduced from Scripture regarding the government of the Church?

(1) The **first** principle is *that Christ is Head of the Church, and that the Church's affairs ought to be governed by the revealed will of God*. As already noted, this means that those to whom Christ may entrust the government of His Church are not independent lords over God's heritage but are simply to interpret and apply the will of their Lord as they find it in His Word. What we have to consider is how the Bible connects the Headship of Christ with the government of the Church by men.

(2) A **second** principle is *that God has ordained that there should be office-bearers in His Church*. We have to recognise that there were offices of a temporary nature in the early Church – apostles, prophets and those known as evangelists, who seem to have been deputies of the apostles. Accordingly there cannot be a place in the ongoing government of the Church for persons with the authority which such men as the apostles exercised. As Bannerman puts it: "Their use and function ceased when the Church of Christ, through their instrumentality, had been firmly settled and fully organised, and when it had attained to the condition of its ordinary and permanent development".²

¹Last month's section of this paper gave a positive answer to the question: *Does the Bible Tell Us How the Church is to Be Governed?* This is the last article in the series.

²*The Church of Christ*, vol 2, pp 215-6.

Cunningham considers that it is not difficult to prove that “the apostles, in establishing and organising churches, committed the ordinary administration of divine ordinances, and the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, not to the body of the ordinary members of the church, but to rulers or office-bearers; that these office-bearers, settled and constituted by the apostles in the churches which they founded, were of two classes: namely, presbyters – called also bishops – and deacons; that no other class of functionaries was introduced by them into the administration of the government of the Church, and especially no class of ordinary functionaries of superior rank or authority to the ministers of the Word – the pastors of congregations; that these presbyters or bishops were divided into two classes, one who both taught and ruled, and the other only ruled, but did not ordinarily exercise the function of public teaching; that while these presbyters alone administered the spiritual affairs of the church, they all, in conjunction with the deacons, managed its temporal or secular affairs”.³

The distinction between those whom we call ministers and those whom we call elders finds support in such passages as 1 Timothy 5:17: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine”. The existence of permanent office-bearers within the Church of Christ is also indicated by the description of certain men in the Church as ministers, ministers of Christ, elders, bishops (or overseers), ambassadors, stewards, shepherds, labourers. “And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor 12:28). “And He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11,12).

Several further points may be made in support of the assertion that God has ordained that there should be office-bearers in His Church:

(a) There are various passages which assume the existence of such office-bearers or provide for their appointment: Philippians 1:1: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons”; 2 Timothy 2:2: “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”; Titus 1:5: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee”.

(b) *Provision was made for the election of office-bearers by the Christian*

³*Historical Theology*, vol 1, p 75.

people and their ordination to office by those in office before them. One of the words translated “ordained” – for example in Acts 14:23: “And when they had *ordained* them elders in every church” – literally means “chosen by show of hands or by receiving the votes”. That is illustrated in Acts 6:2-6 with regard to those whom we normally call deacons: “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose [seven men] whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”

The call of God and the election of the people did not render unnecessary the setting aside to the work by those already in office – even at Antioch, when “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them”. For “when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3). Compare 1 Timothy 4:14: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery”; 2 Timothy 1:6: “Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands”. The call of God, the choice of the people and the appointment of the office-bearers are attested in ordination.

(c) *There are passages which describe the qualifications and the duties of office-bearers.* When Paul had reminded Titus of his responsibility to ordain elders in every city he went on to describe their qualifications: “If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:6-9).

Christ has given to the office-bearers of the Church what is for convenience called the power of the keys. The term and the idea are derived from Matthew 16:15-19, Matthew 18:15-18 and John 20:19-23. Of course, Romanism has made its interpretation of these passages the basis of its claim for the primacy of Peter and his alleged successors, for the doctrine of confession, penance and absolution, and for the powers of the priesthood. What is referred to in these passages is the authority given to the office-bearers of the Church to administer the affairs of His house by the ministry of the Word and the

exercise of discipline. “To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word and censures, and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.”⁴

(d) *There are passages which exhort the members of the Church as to how they are to regard their office-bearers.* There is, for example, Hebrews 13: 7,17: “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. . . . Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you”.

All these facts indicate that God has ordained that there should be office-bearers in His Church.

(3) A **third** principle is *that there should be a plurality of office-bearers, that they should meet in local and wider assemblies for the management of the affairs of the Church and that these assemblies have real jurisdiction.* At the local level, the government of the Church is not left to one man. Elders, in the plural, were to be ordained in each church and were to have equal power. The elders in each congregation are to meet together for the administration of its affairs. And the ministers and elders from more congregations than one are to meet together for the consideration of those matters which are of concern to the wider Church. One biblical example of this is the Council which met at Jerusalem (Acts 15) to consider a matter which was troubling the church at Antioch, and elsewhere. The underlying principle is that the unity of the Church should find expression in its government and discipline as well as in its doctrine and worship.

Professor John Murray summarises this in his “Government of the Church”:⁵ The headship of Christ is over the whole Church and gives unity to its government. Under Christ the apostles in their plurality and parity had rule over the Church, and that gave it its unity. By their authority, elders were ordained in all the churches, and the eldership is the only level of government left in the Church. Are we to suppose that each local eldership exists independently of every other local eldership? The eldership is the highest level in the Church’s hierarchy now on earth at which the Church’s unity in government can find expression. It is contrary to the unity that belongs to the Church to suppose that, since the death of the apostles, solidarity in government has come to an end.

⁴*Westminster Confession*, 30:2.

⁵*Collected Writings*, vol 2, pp 336-344.

The office-bearers of the Church, met in council, have more than an advisory role in the Church. Their rule is limited by Scripture and by the rights of the members, but they do rule and decide issues authoritatively. They are not the representatives or delegates of the people but exercise authority in the name of the Lord.

We have not directly considered how Popery, Prelacy, Independency, Congregationalism, or Presbyterianism conform to these principles. Presbyterianism alone exemplifies all the principles of Church government set out in Scripture: the existence of ordained ministers, elders and deacons, the plurality of office-bearers in a congregation, and the expression of the Church's unity in meetings of the wider ministry or eldership. We claim that the principles of Presbyterianism are those authorised and required by Scripture. We do not claim, for example, direct scriptural authority for the precise point that a minister and two elders constitute the minimum required for a kirk session meeting, but do claim that this requirement conserves the biblical principle of the plurality of the eldership and the necessity that decisions be made in the light of the Word. Presbyterianism is founded on the Word of God and agreeable to it.

What does all this mean for us? John MacPherson, in *The Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology*, explains the prominence which the doctrine of the Church had with the old Scottish divines: they considered that “we can no more conceive of Christ apart from the Church than we can conceive of the Church apart from Christ. . . . It was their concern for the glory of Christ and for the preserving inviolate of all His prerogatives that made them spend their strength and give their days to the unwearied vindication of that conception of the Church, in which alone, as they thought, Christ had scope to exercise His rights as their Head, their King. . . . The studies which these divines prosecuted were Christological rather than ecclesiastical. When they argued about the Church it was in order to exalt Christ”.

The Covenanters, for example, were prepared to lose their lives for Presbyterian Church government. That was not because they were fanatics, but because they realised the importance of the Church being conformed to the will of her Lord in every respect – for both the glory of Christ and the good of the Church. Both of these considerations should weigh with us. The Church is precious to Christ and, if Christ is precious to us, we will want to see Him glorified in the Church being governed according to His mind and will. Our concern for the welfare of the Church and of souls on the way to eternity will also make us want to see the Church governed in a biblical way; we ourselves will endeavour to fulfil our functions within the Church in a way that shows regard to the will of the Lord revealed in His Word.

The Accepted Offering¹

Henry Law

Leviticus 9: 24. *There came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat.*

A train of solemn rites preceded the priests' admission to their functions. The entrance path was long and holy. None might draw near uncalled, uncleansed, without atonement made through blood, without the sprinklings of anointing oil (Lev 8:24,30). Through a whole week the victims died, and consecrating services flowed on. During these days the sacred tent enclosed the devoted band. They might not pass its separating gate. The world was left. A barrier parted them from common life. They dwelt shut out from man, shut in with God (Lev 8:33).

Here is a teaching voice for all who boast that they are Christ's. The priestly office shadows out their calling. They have high employment. Their rank is "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9). They have new natures and they do new work. All in God's household minister.

Reader, have you approached by rightful steps the servant's place? The path is here marked out. Is the blood used as your atoning plea? Is there the Spirit's inward witness of adoption to the family of grace? Is the world shunned as mire? Is life regarded as a dedicated walk? They who are truly called pass this admission-gate.

In heaven a perfect priesthood serves in perfect praise. But consecration here is prelude to that bliss. Say, have you more than an empty name? God's service is reality. Is your heart really His? Perhaps you doubt. O then, awake and strive to enter by the only door. Space is yet yours. But it is on the wing. It may have almost sped away. Alas the woe, if death shall find you not a priest of Christ! Are your signs clear? All who serve Him wear livery – washed in His blood, bright in world-shunning grace.

The seven days of dedication passed. The eighth dawn saw the services complete (Lev 9:1). There is no more delay. The holy office is assumed. The life is now one cloud of incense to the Lord. From morn to night the willing priests discharge foreshadowing forms.

Ministers of Christ, your work may differ, but should your zeal be less? Altars no more are raised; all vanished in the cross. Victims no longer die. No lights are lit and no incense burns. The Sun of Righteousness has risen. Twilight ordinances fled from its glorious orb. But still wide fields of labour open. Your life is to proclaim the Lamb of God, the blood once and for ever shed. Souls are undone because they know not Christ, the true end of rites.

¹Taken, with slight editing, from Law's *The Gospel in Leviticus*.

Your voice must never cease the cry: Behold the truth; bathe in this stream; trust in this death; plead this atoning cross. Shame would it be if your hands wearied in uplifting the grand substance, Christ, yet legal priests relaxed not typifying work.

In this first day of priestly work a striking circumstance occurs. When all the offerings have been duly made, Moses and Aaron seek the holy tent (Lev 9:23). For a short season they retire. They leave the busy scene. It is their wish in stillness to seek God's clearer face. He was before them in the public rite. But calm retreat would give more calm approach.

The true believer labours in the open day. In busy haunts of busy men he strains the toiling nerve. The world is the wide field. There are the precious souls which need the wholesome warning and the faithful word. There sin abounds and misery dwells and ignorance spreads its blinding veil. There Satan rules with deathful sway. In this wild waste the good seed must be cast. In graceless crowds grace must be manfully displayed. But private hours gain strength for public zeal. When all is still, the opening heavens pour down their dew.

In quietude the soul draws nearer to Christ's arms. Then tender whispers testify of love. Then truth unfolds the wondrous page and promises assume substantial form and distant prospects brighten to view. It is apart from men that grace takes deeper root, temptations wither, the world's false glitter fades, the inner man is strengthened to resist, and loins are girded for the battlefield. The soldier of the cross goes forth from solitude to fight his fight. He who seeks God alone has God in public by his side.

Moses and Aaron soon return. But they come not with empty hands; they are enriched with the best gifts. Here is sweet evidence of gainful commerce with the Lord. Laden with good, they haste to scatter good around. Their souls are redolent of heaven. "They blessed the people" (Lev 9:23). The blessed of the Lord bless earth. And they are the most blessed who most throng the mercy seat. The wise, the rich, the learned and the strong are tools employed by God to move the world's machine. But it is piety which strews real good on men. They who descend from Zion's heights are as the clouds which drop refreshing rain.

And now a sudden marvel fills all minds with awe. While blessings fall from blessing saints, heaven brightens with resplendent signs. Glory shines round. Fire is sent forth. But why? Is it to seize the guilty sons of men? Is it to hurl on them deserved wrath? Far otherwise. It comes with olive branch of peace. It seals with heaven's own seal the atoning rites. It settles on the altar. It feeds on the victim as its feast. Thus it brings evidence of God's delight. Thus it fills hearts with tranquil peace. The flame with blazing tongue

proclaims: Here is the sacrifice which God selects, approves, calls men to bring, and never will refuse.

This is the fact which now addresses you. The altar victims were the shadow of Christ. The attesting fire speaks God's acceptance of His dying Son. Faith therefore loves this scene. It is one of the wells from which it gladly draws new joy. It is one of the meadows of its richest food.

But faith soon asks, what is the antitype of the descending flame? It opens the clear gospel page. There distinct testimonies answer to this approving sign. Let some now pass before delighted gaze. The mighty God has scarcely taken human frame when heralds speed from the high courts. An angel's shout announces tidings of transcendent joy – a Saviour given, a Saviour born, a Saviour in man's home. The host of heaven take up the wondrous strain. The echoing skies cast back the chorus: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men" (Luke 2:14).

The sealing fire here falls. Can evidence be more complete? Here is the assurance that the Infant lives, sent by the Father to save souls. It must be so, or wherefore do those joyful wings expand? It must be so; that messenger cannot mislead. Then venture on the incarnate God. Commit your soul to Him. You may appeal to God: I take Him, because Thy signet stamps Him as Thy chosen Lamb.

The day arrives when Christ must be distinctly shown. As surety of His flock, He must fulfil each righteous ordinance. Therefore He hastens to the baptismal stream. Let all eyes now behold. While He uplifts His soul in prayer, the heavens above cast back their gates. The Spirit, like a dove, flies to the lowly suppliant, and the Father's sovereign voice is heard: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Luke 3:21,22). The fire again descends. O precious token! The Father and the Spirit join to seal and to anoint our Lord.

Rich is the mercy of this pledge. The thought will sometimes rise: Is Christ indeed sufficient? Sins are a mighty load. Can He sustain them? The claims of justice are a long roll. Can He pay all? The Father's voice decides. It leaves no spot on which a tottering doubt can rest. He cries, "Well pleased". Reader, will not you respond, "Well pleased"? Receive Him with adoring love. Cling to Him with most holy rapture. In Him you cannot fail. In Him you must prevail. He is Salvation by the Father's will, the Father's word. Cleaving to Him, you cannot be cast out. He is the Father's chiefest joy. And, seen in Him, the Father loves you as He loves His Son.

As time rolls on, select disciples view a wondrous sight. Jesus withdraws the veil which hides His glory. He stands before them in more than brightness of the midday sun. His visage and His robes outvie all light. Here is full

proof that Deity is His right; Jesus transfigured must be very God. But now a superadded testimony sounds. The fire again descends. The Father again speaks. The note is still the same: "This is my beloved Son".

My soul, here is another call to you. Take Christ as your beloved one. Haste to respond: Great Lord, each inmost fibre is pure love to Thee. Each pulse is an adoring throb. The voice adjoins, "Hear Him". Heed the wise counsel. He whom the Father thus attests is worthy of all notice of all ears. Happy, thrice happy he, who can reply, I hear the good Shepherd's voice. I gladly follow. He leads me to His wounds, and I am clean. He calls me to His side and whispers peace. He bids me climb a heavenward path. He soon will seat me by His side.

Approach the bitter garden scene. Here all the waves of anguish beat on the Redeemer's soul. His every look and every cry make known that He is wrestling with extremest pangs. Each pore weeps blood. But whence this overwhelming grief? The hour is still. The place is deep retreat. No hostile bands appear. None but His loved ones are in view. It is an unseen arm which now arrests Him. The sword of hidden wrath now really pierces to the quick. The fire from God's right hand now truly falls and fiercely deals with the self-offered Lamb. Each inward travail shows that God is now exacting debts from Him, until the boundless price is paid. My soul, intently gaze. You see wrath visibly outpoured on Christ. Then be content – the cup is drained. No drop remains for you.

Another scene is near. The death is died. The grave contains its precious captive. The stone is rolled. The seal is fixed. The guard is set. The hand of justice has borne Jesus off. The prison gates are closed. Where are our hopes?

Are claims all satisfied? Will God declare that He demands no more? Will there be manifested proof that all His people are redeemed? Draw near and witness. The grave restores the mighty dead. Jesus appears released – alive. Here the fire of satisfaction falls. The topstone of acceptance is brought forth. The pyramid of God's approval is complete. Christ is accredited as the full Saviour of the fully saved. When Israel's host beheld the fire from God, what was their feeling? "They shouted and fell on their faces" (Lev 9:24). Sweet joy was theirs. Deep adoration warmed each heart. Exulting praise burst forth. Profoundest worship was their instant act.

Believer, do the like. God sends His Son to seek, to save. He lays on Him your every sin. He gives you every pledge that He approves, attests, receives, delights in the accepted Offering. Witness after witness from His courts assures that pardon, acquittal, release from every woe, admission to the home of heaven, are yours. O then let every breath praise God. Let every hour of every day be inward worship.

Motives for Love to Christ¹

Thomas Vincent

What are all these motives to draw forth love to Christ? It is union and relation unto Christ, and interest in Him by faith, which puts life into these motives so that they may indeed attract love. O then be persuaded, without further delay, to endeavour after this interest in Christ! You must have it, or you are lost irrecoverably; you will be miserable eternally, and yet you may attain this interest. Others have attained it who are as lowly and as vile as yourselves, and you too are called unto Christ. O be persuaded, then, to come unto Christ and join yourselves by faith unto Him, so that you may have an interest in Christ and in all His benefits!

If you ask me what this faith is that gives an interest in Christ – what it is to believe – I answer out of John 1:12 that it is to receive Christ: “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name”. Be persuaded, then, to receive Christ, and accept Him upon the terms of the gospel. Receive and take hold of Christ by the hand of faith. And that you may do this:

(1) You must let go your hold of sin. If you hug sin in your bosom, if you harbour base lusts in your hearts, you cannot receive Christ there and give entertainment to Him. You must thrust sin out if you would let Christ in.

(2) You must let go your hold on the world. I do not say you must throw away the estates which God has given you, unless you are called to leave all rather than to forego Christ or any of His truths. But you must let the world go out of your hearts; the world must not sit upon the throne of your hearts; that seat must be reserved for Christ. Chief love and inordinate love to the world and to things in the world must be taken off.

(3) You must let go your hold of self. You must part with your own righteousness and all self-confidence. You must be humbled, and emptied of yourselves, if you would be prepared for receiving Jesus Christ and receiving the fulness which is in Him. Then receive Jesus Christ as your High Priest to reconcile you unto God, trusting alone in His merits and mediation. Receive Jesus Christ as your Prophet to instruct you and lead you in all truth by His Word and Spirit. Receive Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and King to rule you. Receive Jesus Christ as your Captain to tread down your spiritual enemies under your feet. Receive Jesus Christ in all His relations of Shepherd, Friend, Brother, and especially in the relation of a

¹Taken, with slight editing, from *The True Christian's Love to the Unseen Christ*. Vincent, a Puritan who lived from 1634 to 1678, is best known today for his *The Shorter Catechism Explained from Scripture*.

Husband, and join yourselves to Him, and make over yourselves to be guided, guarded, provided for and governed by Him. This is to receive Christ, and this is to believe. This gives union and relation and interest in the Lord Jesus. And if you do thus join yourselves to Christ by faith, you will quickly feel love to Christ to spring forth, to work and act – vigorously – and to bring forth such fruit in the life as shall evidently show that love to Christ is rooted in the heart.

(4) If you would attain steadfast love to Jesus Christ, be diligent in the use of all those means which God has appointed for the working of it. I shall instance only two means:

(a) Be diligent in hearing the Word preached. As faith comes by hearing, so love to Christ is wrought by the same means. “Hear, and your soul shall live,” said the Prophet (Is 55:3); and, I may say, Hear that your hearts may love – that where the eye cannot affect the heart with love to the Lord Jesus, the ears may. While Lydia was hearing Paul preach, her heart was opened (Acts 16:14); and while you are hearing ministers preach of Christ, your hearts may be opened to receive Him and to embrace Him in the arms of your dearest love. See Acts 11:15: “As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning”. While Peter was preaching, and the Gentiles were hearing, the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven and fell upon them; and so, while you are hearing the Word, God may give forth His Spirit to work this grace of love to Jesus Christ in your hearts.

(b) Be diligent and earnest in prayer unto God for this love. Confess and bewail before Him your lack of this love; tell Him you deserve a double anathema because you do not love Christ; and, moreover, tell Him you cannot, of yourselves, love Him, that you can as easily lift up a mountain to heaven as lift up your hearts unto Christ. But desire that He would draw up your love to Christ by His Spirit. Beg Him that He would put out the fire of lust, and all inordinate creature-love, and that He would kindle a fire of love in you to this most lovely Jesus, which no corruption in your hearts may be able to extinguish. And, in your prayers, present your hearts to the Lord Jesus. Offer them up freely to Him, and desire that He would accept them, that He would take hold of them and take possession of them, and erect His throne in them as an everlasting habitation for Himself.

During the whole of His state of humiliation, Jesus was under the curse of the broken law; and, from the time that He arrived at the age of discernment, He was always conscious of it. The painful feeling arising from this consciousness of imputed guilt must have been great, in proportion to the extent of His knowledge of the malignity of sin and of its high demerit. This accounts for His being, at every period of His life, “a man of sorrows”.

George Stevenson

Mbuma Zending Meeting 2007

Address by Rev S Khumalo

It was very kind of the Mbuma Zending Board to invite me and my wife to attend this important event and to give me the opportunity of addressing you. I used to hear about Mbuma Zending when I was a schoolboy at Mbuma and today I am privileged to be part of this Mbuma Zending Mission Day. I feel humbled when I think of how much I have benefited personally, both spiritually and materially, because of your unwavering support of our Mission in Africa. I wish to convey to you the greetings and thanks of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Scotland, Zimbabwe and elsewhere for your continued support of our Mission work in Africa; without it, our activities in Africa would be greatly curtailed. Most of all we value your prayers.

I would like to address you briefly from these words in Luke 24:47: “And that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”. This was a commandment from the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to His Apostles, who were chosen by Him. He sent them with this great gospel message after His work had been completed – especially the heaviest part of it, in His suffering the cursed death of the cross – and He had risen from the dead.

(1) We notice that they were instructed to preach in the name of Christ. The work of Christ, the only redeemer of God’s elect, who came into this world – “who, being the Son of God, became Man, and so was and continueth to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person, for ever”. He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross and was buried, but rose from the dead on the first day of the week, as was witnessed by those who came to the sepulchre. It was said to them: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen” (Luke 24:5,6). They were to make known the gospel truth concerning Christ, that salvation has been purchased, that the sacrifice for sin has been accepted. This is what we try to do by the grace of God as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, wherever we are – to lift up Christ crucified, to preach in His name.

(2) The gospel duty of repentance. This must be preached in the name of Christ. It is a duty set before sinners in the gospel of Christ. This was emphasised by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:7). This repentance is unto life, turning to God with a true sense of sin and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. So the sinner, with grief and hatred of his sin, turns from it unto God. This must be preached to all people, as was emphasised by the apostle Paul in Athens: “But now commandeth all

men everywhere to repent". This gospel duty is what is emphasised and witnessed to by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in all her pulpits; thus is what the Lord Jesus Christ commanded. It must be done in Christ's name, by His authority.

(3) The great gospel privilege, the remission of sin. Guilty sinners of the race of Adam are condemned by the law of God but they cannot help themselves. But those guilty sinners who turn to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, depending upon His blood, shall receive remission of sins. By the blood of animal sacrifices, there could be no remission of sin. It is only through the blood of Christ, which was shed on Calvary's cross, that remission of sin is received by those who come by faith to Christ. So it is said: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin", but "when I see blood, I will pass over you".

These are the riches of Christ, which are to be preached to poor sinners. This is the good news of the gospel which needs to be heard by all. And those that believe shall receive the benefits of the covenant of grace and be made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, when it is effectually applied to them by the Holy Spirit. The price of the redemption was the blood of Christ. Through His blood, remission of sin is received and the preaching of the gospel is seen to be the wisdom and power of God. This is the message to be proclaimed to our own people, our nations and the world at large, as the Lord commanded "that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem". "And ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

In our Zimbabwe Mission we have churches, schools, a hospital and a children's home. In our churches, the trumpet of the gospel is sounded every Sabbath and at weekday prayer meetings – and in our schools, where pupils receive knowledge for this life. No effort is spared to give them the spiritual knowledge which makes one wise unto salvation. In our hospital, excellent service is rendered to the sick. Every effort is made to warn all patients, and others who come in contact with the hospital, about the spiritual disease of sin and to point them to the great Physician, who is Christ, and to the great remedy, which is His blood. It is so also in our home for children; all endeavours are made to mould them by the Word of God. The work done in all our institutions is very much admired by the communities and by Government authorities. Our prayer is that our witness as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and our institutions as handmaids of the gospel, may by the grace of God bring about the desired end: that sinners may come to a saving knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I believe that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is used in some measure in Africa, both in Zimbabwe and Kenya, to this end, and that it has its part to play in the glorious purpose of the Most High to save a multitude which no man can number. Thus it pleased the Most High to put it in the hearts of our friends in Holland to support the work of the Mission in Africa by supplying funds which God is pleased to use in spreading the Word. This is what you, our friends in Holland, have in God's providence been engaged in for many years; so by God's grace you are contributing to His great and ever-merciful purpose of gathering in His elect from the four corners of the earth. How wonderful are the Lord's doings! He has put in your minds to go beyond the boundaries of your country to support, financially and materially, the Mission work in Zimbabwe and Kenya. Most of all we value your prayers at the throne of grace for the success of the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God" (1 Cor 3:8-9). "We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor 6:1). What a great honour the Lord bestows upon His people in engaging them in this work, when they are called "labourers together with God", "workers together with Him", in bringing sinners unto Himself. These scriptures should assure us that our labour is not in vain.

We are living in times when the enemy seems to be powerful, when the cloud of darkness is drawing closer, when the world has become so wicked. This must not discourage the people of God; they must take encouragement from the Word of God and its promises. "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt 28:20). Moses was encouraged by the Lord Himself: "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward" (Ex 14:15).

Finally, we have accepted with sorrow and regret the retirement of Rev P Mzamo, due to bodily infirmities, but we also thank the Lord for giving him to us for the work of the gospel. In faithfulness to his Master, he has preached Christ and Him crucified up to his retirement from Mbuma and continues to do so when his health allows him. We are also thankful that Mr Nopel Sibanda was received by the Zimbabwe Presbytery as a student for the ministry. We are very thankful to the Most High for His goodness and His never-failing promises. May the blessing of the Lord be on you for time and eternity!

The secret breathing of the heart is real prayer and is often heard and answered.

Archibald Alexander

Visit to Zimbabwe

Rev J R Tallach

For the period 11-24 July 2007, I was in Zimbabwe to attend the ordination of Rev A B MacLean and his induction to the mission charge of Ingwenya – at the invitation of the Zimbabwe Presbytery and the request of the Foreign Mission Committee. Arriving on a Wednesday, I held the weekly prayer meeting on the Thursday morning.

Later that day, Rev J MacLeod arrived safely from London. The next day was the ordination and induction, when Mr MacLeod preached on Acts 26:22,23: “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day” to a congregation of about 800, 600 of whom were pupils. The call had been signed by 40 members, and 41 adherents had concurred. After his ordination to the ministry of the Word and induction to the charge at Ingwenya, I addressed Mr MacLean on the basis of the words in 2 Corinthians 5:14: “The love of Christ constraineth us”, and Rev P Mzamo addressed the congregation. No doubt a fuller account of the day will be given by the Presbytery.

I travelled to Mbuma the next day and kept the services there on the Sabbath. About 150 people were out at each service and about 20 hospital staff attended a Bible study, held on the verandah of the hospital after the second service. This meeting is held by Mr G Nkiwane, a teacher at the local primary school. Mr Nkiwane has been appointed Hospital Evangelist and is due to take up this post in December, DV.

On the Monday I had a conducted tour of the hospital with Dr Snoek. With the relentless advance of AIDS, a large amount of medical effort has to be directed towards the community. I was glad to hear that the O U (Opportunistic Infections) unit, recently built and forming the hospital base of the community work, has finally been approved by the Government. I went from the hospital to the school, where Mr M Dube, the headmaster and an elder in the church, told me about some of the difficulties and expectations of the school. The Government have introduced pre-school classes which, at the moment, meet under a tree in the school grounds, but it is hoped to renovate an old classroom for their use. Mr Dube introduced me to his grade 7 class and I asked them questions based on John 3:16.

I returned to Ingwenya on the Tuesday, and on the Thursday Mr MacLeod left for Britain and the Cameron communion began. Cameron is named after the late Rev Neil Cameron, Glasgow, and is situated in the Fingo location a few miles from Ingwenya. The Fingos are one of the seven tribes which make up the kingdom of the Xhosa people. A preaching station was opened

at Cameron a few years before a primary school was set up in 1938. Mrs Mzamo, a communicant member aged 93 and the widow of Rev P Mzamo's brother, attended all the services. Mrs Mzamo can recall the distress caused by the death of Rev J B Radasi at Bembesi railway siding on 4 November 1924. She also has a clear memory of sermons preached and communions held under ministers and missionaries over the intervening decades. Attendance ranged from 25 to 60 adults and a number of children, and there was a degree of attention to the Word. "The Day shall declare it."

I returned home safely on July 25 and would record my thanks to the Mission staff and members of the indigenous church, all of whom made me feel very welcome throughout. We are indebted to the Lord for all travelling mercies and every expression of the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

Book Review

The Foundations Under Attack, The Roots of Apostasy, by Michael de Semlyen, published by Dorchester House Publications, paperback, 248 pages, £10.00, obtainable from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

This reviewer's knowledge of author and publisher is more or less confined to this book. It consists of 15 chapters in three parts: (1) History and Prophecy, (2) The King James Bible and Modern Versions and (3) Arminianism: A Man-Centred Gospel. An "Epilogue", occupying almost 70 pages, contains "Notes from a former Charismatic to Christians in the Charismatic Movement"; "Papal Rome and the EU"; "The Foundations Under Attack", an address from which the book seems to have developed; "The Monarchy in Peril"; and the "Testimony of a New York Homemaker", on how understanding the doctrine of election changed her life.

Believing that much of the declension with which the book deals is due to the movement of the Church "from historicism to futurism – that is, from an historical to a futurist understanding of Bible prophecy" the author sets out "to demonstrate how important the knowledge of history is". Unlike Praeterism (the view that the Book of Revelation refers to first-century events) and Futurism (which holds that it mostly refers to the time of the second coming of Christ), Historicism sees it as covering the whole range of history between the first and second appearances of Christ. The first part of the book contends that the adoption of Praeterism and Futurism, even within Protestant circles, is largely accounted for by the influence of Jesuits and of the Counter-Reformation, and has diverted attention from the Papacy as the Antichrist to some more-or-less identifiable figure or movement in the past or in the future.

We agree with the general thrust of the author's thesis without always concurring in his interpretation or application of specific scriptures or in the ever-risky calculation of times and seasons. He asks: "If we are to live in a manner that Scripture clearly requires, in the daily expectation of the Lord's return, how can it be that there is supposed to be so much unfulfilled prophecy in the Bible?" (p 12). As Historicists we would not use this as an argument against Futurism, believing as we do that, however many centuries may yet elapse before the coming of Christ brings history to its conclusion, faith and hope make His coming a daily and influential reality in the lives of God's people (for example, 1 Thess 1:10, Titus 2:13).

The second part highlights practical disadvantages following the widespread departure from the Authorised Version as the most faithful English translation of the preserved Word of God – such as lack of certainty as to the possession of the Word of God, weakness in evangelising those of other religions who have no uncertainty as to the text of their authoritative books, loss of the clarity and authority which characterise biblical English, and greater difficulty in memorising. Attention is focused on the substitution by modern textual critics of a largely subjective amalgam of Greek texts for the Received Text which underlies the AV, and on the implications of this for the doctrine of the providential preservation of a pure text of the inspired Word of God.

We believe that the *Westminster Confession of Faith* provides us with a good starting point and guide in our consideration of the inspired text and the necessity for accurate translations: "The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope" (1:8).

The wide-ranging third part investigates the origin of Arminianism (which accords with the natural religion of fallen man) and seeks to demonstrate that for many Evangelicals it has been, along with the Charismatic movement, a contributor to the growth of ecumenism and a half-way house to Roman Catholicism. Pelagius and Augustine, Erasmus and Luther, the Synod of Dort,

the “new revivalism” of Finney and Moody, the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, Vatican II, the National Evangelical Anglican Conferences at Keele (1967) and Nottingham (1977) and *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (1994) are among topics swiftly passed under review. How persons and bodies professing contradictory doctrinal positions on matters at the heart of the Protestant Reformation can come together as one is explained by “widespread ignorance and neglect of Church History” and “shared ‘spiritual’ experiences and Arminianism” (p 151).

The “Epilogue” further elucidates some of the points made in the book and emphasises the truth that doctrine should determine experience rather than the reverse and that nothing should be allowed to undermine the centrality of the death of Christ. There is a useful summary of how desires for peace after the wars in Europe developed from the Treaty of Paris, through the EEC, EC and EU, to the idea of a “sovereign federal state”, with implications not merely for the sovereignty of the UK but also for the continuance of our Protestant throne and constitution.

Here is much information in small compass and a readable form, a much-needed alarm to Church and nation, and a pointer to where the remedy is to be found, if only we would hear: “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jer 6:16). HMC

Notes and Comments

Blasphemy at the Fringe

The Edinburgh Fringe Festival disrupts normal movement in the centre of Edinburgh in August. Hordes of visitors pursuing pleasure fill the streets and pavements. From reports in the press many of the shows presented for their entertainment pander to what John describes as “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Much irreverence is shown towards religion. Those who endeavour to distribute Christian literature and speak to those who pass by are to be commended.

Sadly, some of the venues are in church property. We were grieved by a report that a show which takes “a questioning, satirical look at the Son of God” was located in St George’s West Parish Church. Even more shocking was the enthusiasm with which the minister welcomed and commended this production, which not only had an actor impersonating the Lord but denied His divine Sonship and absolute holiness and treated the most sacred things

in a profane manner. He found the show “very funny” and enjoyed it very much. The claim that Jesus is the Son of God he regarded as a metaphorical way of describing a relationship which Christ had with the divine. He thought that “progressive Christians” respond well to this show because they cannot accept literalist understandings – they belong to the church of the rational mind – and they do not want to leave their intellect in the vestibule but to worship as a whole person. He wished to engage with the contemporary world through the arts and to show that side of religious belief which “wants to celebrate life, to encourage people to embrace fulness of life” – which he considered to be “what the Christian faith is about”.

This minister complained that most people who write against such productions have not seen them and he suggested that they ought to, so that they could enter into the kind of discussion he was having with the man behind this show. Is it necessary, when “Poison” is written on the bottle, that people try it for themselves before coming to a conclusion about the contents? It is sad indeed that, not only are such pernicious productions being performed in buildings which were erected for the preaching of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, but that pulpits are occupied by men who repudiate what Peter meant when he said: “Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69).

When Robert Candlish, the first minister in this building, preached from 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, *the man Christ Jesus*”, he made these points: “The man (1) made, as to His human nature, by special miracle, in the unbroken image and likeness of God. The man (2) who comes forth from God, bearing His commission to negotiate peace. The man (3) who in respect of His divine nature, unchanged, unchangeable, is one with God – the Son dwelling evermore in the Father’s bosom” (*Sermons by the late Robert S Candlish, DD, 1873, p 36*). Does the contrast not illustrate the depths to which we have been brought in the Scottish Church and nation by that movement away from commitment to the infallible Word of God which accelerated towards the end of the nineteenth century? “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (Jer 9:1). *HMC*

The European Union and the Death Penalty in Texas

On August 21 the Presidency of the EU (currently with Portugal) issued a press release about an execution which was due to take place in Texas. It urged the Governor of Texas to exercise his powers by halting all forthcoming executions, and then went on to make the following statement: “The European Union is unreservedly opposed to the use of capital punishment under all circumstances and has consistently called for the universal abolition of the

punishment. We believe that elimination of the death penalty is fundamental to the protection of human dignity, and to the progressive development of human rights. We further consider this punishment to be cruel and inhumane. There is no evidence to suggest that the use of the death penalty serves as a deterrent against violent crime, and the irreversibility of the punishment means that miscarriages of justice – which are inevitable in all legal systems – cannot be redressed.” We were glad to see that the Governor of Texas treated this piece of insolence from the EU Presidency with appropriate disdain.

The death penalty for murder is a biblical injunction, and in issuing its press release, the Presidency of the EU was setting itself in defiance of the Word of God: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man” (Gen 9:6). Indeed in the biblical teaching it is the death penalty that is “fundamental to the protection of human dignity”. It is because man was made in the image of God that murderers are to be executed. Capital punishment avenges the death of the victim, addresses the conscience of the murderer, and issues a warning to the rest of society. The rejection of the death penalty in Western Europe has coincided, not with an increased regard for human life, but with the reverse, as can be seen from legislation on abortion, euthanasia and embryo research.

Opposition to the death penalty within the EU is not as “unreserved” as the Portuguese Presidency would claim. Recent opinion polls have shown that 70% of the population of Poland (including the President) favour the death penalty; in the Czech Republic there is a majority in favour; and in Britain exactly 50% support the reintroduction of capital punishment for murder.

We have no doubt, contrary to the press release, that the death penalty does act as a powerful “deterrent against violent crime”. Common sense tells us that it would act as a powerful deterrent against anything, and why violent crime should be an exception one cannot imagine. The problem in Texas is that while there have been 400 executions since the reintroduction of capital punishment in 1976, there have in that time been about 50 000 murders. The murderer who was recently executed had committed his crime in 1998. What is needed in Texas, to conform to the biblical pattern, is not fewer executions but far more, and with less delay. No wonder the deterrent loses much of its effect when it is so seldom administered and so long postponed.

The issue of miscarriage of justice in the case of the death penalty is one of great concern. The answer, we believe, lies in the fact that judges and juries ought to pray regarding their judgements, especially where human life is involved. If they reach their decisions prayerfully and conscientiously, they have discharged their duty before God. He is the one who has appointed the death penalty for murder, and we think that there would be very few such miscarriages of justice if a public acknowledgment of God and of Christ were

made in the trial and execution of murderers. We read in the Old Testament of idolaters securing a false conviction before the stoning of Naboth (1 Ki 21:13), but never of the people of God mistakenly putting anyone to death.

The death penalty by itself will not greatly reform society because the main instrument for that is the gospel. The law is “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3). But one of the purposes of the death penalty is to keep men in mind of the Day of Judgement, so that they realise their need of the gospel. What Satan is doing in Western Europe is to take away both law and gospel. We pray for a day when our rulers will no longer bear “the sword in vain”, but when each of them will be “the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom 13:4). *DWBS*

Protestant View

Where is the Church Founded by Christ? (2)

Under the above heading last month we noted recently-reaffirmed claims by the Roman Catholic “Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith” that “as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church”, that only the body in full communion with the Pope has all the elements essential to the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church, and that any experience of salvation outwith that body is due to “that fulness of grace and truth which has been entrusted to the Catholic Church”. Protestant bodies are not really Churches. They do not have apostolic succession, the “sacramental priesthood” and “the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery”.

A very different and Biblical position is taken by the *Westminster Confession of Faith*: “This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will. There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God” (25:4-6).

Roman Catholic claims for the primacy of Peter among the Apostles, the existence of a succession from Peter of men having primacy in the Church,

and the perpetuation of that succession in a line of Roman bishops, are without basis in Scripture (for example, Matt 16:15-19) or history – a contention of the Reformers supported by the biblical exegesis of men recognised as early fathers of the Church and by more objective Roman Catholic historians (see William Webster, “Did I Really Leave the Holy Catholic Church?” in *Roman Catholicism*, Moody Press, 1994).

The claim that truth has been maintained inviolate from apostolic times within Roman Catholicism is demonstrably false. To support it, resort is had to “tradition” which supplements and distorts biblical doctrine and to a theory of development which allows deduction from Scripture statements of doctrines and practices directly contradicting the alleged sources. The appeal to rational and earnest persons of a religion which is so irrational and deceptive would be amazing were it not that human nature is as in those to whom our Lord said: “I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5:43). “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” (1 Thess 2:9,10).

While Roman Catholicism professes adherence to the Scriptures and to the ancient creeds of the Church, every Biblical doctrine affirmed is undermined and vitiated by traditions and interpretations, as in the Judaism of Jesus’ time on earth. It supplants the authority of Christ with that of “the Church” and its Pontiff. It subjects Scripture to tradition. It practically replaces the High Priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of all believers with a pretended priesthood of sinful intermediaries between men and God. It puts Mary between the soul and Christ. Whatever terminology it adopts, it denies the doctrine that sinners are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Rom 3:24,25). In its place it puts a process of “sanctification” dependent on the mediation of the Church, the use of the sacraments and the individual’s own works – without which the blood and righteousness of Christ will not avail for the sinner’s salvation.

An easily-accessible volume which introduces readers to doctrines which counteract the basic deviations of Romanism from biblical Christianity, and which contains appendices that document the historical and theological claims made, is William Webster’s *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995). In his concluding appeal to Roman Catholics “struggling with the implications of true faith in Christ” to follow him out of Rome, this American business man says: “A commitment to Christ means a commitment to truth, especially the truth of the gospel. Paul makes it clear in

Galatians 1:6-8 that to be identified with a perverted gospel is to desert the person of Christ Himself. But the gospel taught by the Church of Rome is a perversion of the gospel of grace. Therefore to stay within Roman Catholicism is to be identified with a system that denies the sufficiency of the work of Christ alone. One cannot be true to Christ and remain in a system that is so fundamentally opposed to Him in teaching and practice”.

The *Scots Confession* of 1560, while providing us with the biblical marks of the true visible Church, cautions us against resting in a merely-outward connection with it: “Although the Word of God truly preached, the sacraments rightly ministered, and discipline executed according to the Word of God, are certain and infallible signs of the true Kirk, we do not mean that every individual person in that company is a chosen member of Christ Jesus. We acknowledge and confess that many weeds and tares are sown among the corn and grow in great abundance in its midst, and that the reprobate may be found in the fellowship of the chosen and may take an outward part with them in the benefits of the Word and sacraments” (chapter 25). Even where the Church of Christ is found, association with it must not be a substitute for saving union with Christ. *HMC*

Church Information

Theological Conference

This year’s Theological Conference will be held, God willing, in St Jude’s Free Presbyterian Church, Glasgow, on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 4 and 5. It is expected that the following papers will be read, with the final one in public:

Robert Bruce on the Lord’s Supper	<i>Rev David Campbell</i>
Law and Gospel	<i>Rev J R Tallach</i>
The Divine Decrees	<i>Rev H M Cartwright</i>
Richard Baxter	<i>Rev K D Macleod</i>
The Covenanters	<i>Rev Roderick MacLeod</i>

(Rev) J R Tallach, Convener, Training of the Ministry Committee

Free Presbyterian Services in Manchester

Since the beginning of March this year services have been held on a Sabbath evening in South Manchester. These services have been organized by the Kirk Session of the Barnoldswick Congregation, both as a church extension work and because a number of members in the congregation live in that area.

Manchester in the past was a centre for English Puritanism, where the leading ministers were Henry Newcombe, John Angier of Denton and John Chorlton. It was also the city to which Gustavus Aird of Creich retired when

he resigned from the ministry. At the present time, after London, the city of Manchester with its five universities has the largest student population in the United Kingdom. Accordingly, it is an ideal centre to seek to begin church extension work. It is also hoped that, with services in the city, young Free Presbyterians will consider the Manchester universities among their options for places of study.

This is not the first time that the Free Presbyterian Church has held services in Manchester. In April 1920 meetings were held in the Co-operative Halls in Ardwick when Rev Alexander Mackay, Oban, preached in both English and Gaelic. A year later the first editor of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Rev James S Sinclair, held services in the Longsight Presbyterian church, which had been loaned for an afternoon service. The evening worship was held in the home of one of the Free Presbyterians living in the area. In the afternoon Mr Sinclair preached from Ephesians 3:8: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ". Afterwards he administered the sacrament of Baptism.

The meetings are usually taken by the Barnoldswick elders. However, two ministers have also conducted the services in Manchester in recent months, Rev K M Watkins and the current editor of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Rev K D Macleod. The services are held at 6.00 pm in a room in Trinity Church in Cheadle, South Manchester. Trinity Church is on Massie Street, which is off the A560. The A560 is accessed from the A34 and is called Gatley Road which then becomes the High Street in the centre of Cheadle. Entry is from the car park at the back. *Roy Middleton*, Session Clerk

General Treasurer

Mr William Campbell has been appointed by the Synod to the post of the Church's General Treasurer. He is to take up this position on October 1, DV, and replaces Mr R A Campbell, who is retiring. On behalf of the Finance Committee, public appreciation is hereby expressed for the latter's conscientious work since his appointment. *(Rev) K D Macleod*, Convener

Synod Agenda

All items of business intended to be placed on the Synod agenda for its meeting on November 13 must be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by October 16. *(Rev) John MacLeod*, Clerk of Synod

Dominions and Overseas Fund

By appointment of Synod, the Special Collection on behalf of the Dominions and Overseas Fund, is due to be taken in congregations during September.

R A Campbell, General Treasurer