

The Free Presbyterian Magazine and Monthly Record

Vol 101

September 1996

No 9

Suffering as a Christian

THE blatant maligning of Biblical Christianity by some sections of the media underlines the fact that the followers of Christ must be constantly and humbly dependant on divine grace to stand fast and not succumb to the fear of man. They are exhorted to be looking to Jesus in the midst of all their trials, so that they will run the race that is set before them and be more than conquerors through Him.

The believer must be looking to Christ to keep him from evading suffering as a Christian by compromising with the world. He knows that if there is no cross here there can be no crown hereafter; he seeks to be obedient to the call of the Master: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." He realises that there must be no let up in watching and praying, lest he weakly succumbs to joining hands with the enemies of Christ in order to escape their cruel taunts and barbs.

In watching against sinfully yielding to the pressures of the world the believer learns more and more that in himself he is weak, and that if left to himself he will even deny the Saviour. Who would have thought that warmhearted and zealous Peter would have collapsed under the challenge of a servant girl, and deliberately disowned his Master with an oath, saying, "I do not know the man." Are we going to fare better? Certainly not, if we be left to ourselves. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

It is especially in time of suffering as a Christian that one is to look to the Keeper of Israel for preservation. The apostle Paul did so. "For which cause I also suffer these things:" he said, "nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Suffering for the sake of Christ also includes, of course, not being ashamed of Him. It was Peter himself who wrote these divinely inspired words, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him

glorify God on this behalf." Peter had learned a lesson not only by divine teaching but also by bitter experience. When the believer capitulates to the fear of man which brings a snare, he must seek grace to be truly ashamed of being ashamed, and to sorrow over his succumbing to mere men. What a great blessing Peter received in being brought to weep bitterly.

Peter had also learned that standing fast and suffering as a Christian would result in great blessing, now and hereafter. "If ye be reproached for the sake of Christ, happy are ye," he said. And why should one be happy or blessed in having such a trial? Peter answers, "For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." "That is," says Poole, "the glorious Spirit of God, or that Spirit of God who is likewise the Spirit of glory in being not only glorious in Himself, but also a glory to them in whom He dwells, and the cause of their future glorification."

It was this prospect of the future glory of the redeemed which strengthened and gladdened the Apostle Paul, and lightened his load of tribulation. "I reckon," he said, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

The believer, as he seeks to live godly in Christ Jesus and consequently suffers persecution (2 Tim.3:12), is to rejoice even. "How can one do that?" asks the child of God, as he faces the burning fury of his persecutors? "Beloved," answers Peter, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The Saviour directs the attention of His persecuted people to the heavenly reward as a ground of rejoicing now. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

It is solemnly true that persecution is in the path of believers, but also it is gloriously true that their Saviour is with them in that path, and therefore they are to be of good cheer. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The believer is promised the present presence of the Lord, as well as future glory. How great is the comfort ministered to the afflicted soul of the tried child of God when Christ says to it by His Word, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Sermon

The Saviour's Joyful Approach

(Continued from page 239 of the last issue)

Rev. Ralph Erskine

THIS is the second part of a sermon, taken with some editing from *Ralph Erskine's Works*, which was preached on Saturday, 27th April, 1734, the preparation-day before the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Abernethy next day. Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), was the son of Henry and the younger brother of Ebenezer. He was minister in Dunfermline and was said to be one of the most popular preachers in the Church. See Church Information in the last issue for a notice about the availability of his *Works*.

TEXTS: "*Lo, I come!*" Psalm 40:7; "*The voice of my Beloved! behold he cometh.*" Song 2:8.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the first part of the sermon the preacher made these introductory remarks: "These two texts being all I propose to speak of at this time, I shall refer the further explication of them to the prosecution of this doctrinal observation: *That Christ's coming to His people graciously in their time of need, is a joyful and delectable coming, both to Him and them* . . . The method I would here endeavour to observe, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, shall be the following; to show:

- I. What comings of Christ to His people are joyful to Him and them.
- II. What makes His coming joyful to Him.
- III. What makes His coming joyful to them.
- IV. What expressions of joy in Him are imported in His '*Lo, I come!*'
- V. The expressions of joy in them imported in their '*Behold He cometh!*'
- VI. Whence is this combination of joys; or, why is it that, like a resounding echo, '*His Lo, I come!*' is answered with a '*Behold He cometh!*'
- VII. Deduce some inferences for the application of the whole."

In this second part he continues as follows:

THE sixth thing proposed was, **to show whence is this combination and conjunction of joys:** or, why is it, that like a resounding echo, His "*Lo, I come!*" is answered with a "*Behold, He cometh!*" Whence is this?

1. It proceeds from the *mutual relation* between Him and His people, between Him and His church. He is the Bridegroom, and she is the bride; He is the Husband, and she is the spouse. He has commanded other husbands to leave father and mother, and to cleave to their wives; and He Himself has done something like that. He that said, "*Thy Maker is thy Husband,*" left his Father's bosom for the sake of His bride, saying, "*Lo, I come!*" The marriage bond being mutual, the church having the Spirit of her glorious Husband, whenever she hears the voice of an approaching Jesus, is obliged to say, "*The voice of my beloved! Behold, He cometh!*"

2. It proceeds from the *mutual sympathy* between Him and them; hence,

what affects Him, does affect them; what touches them, touches Him. "He that touches you, touches the apple of mine eye," says Christ: and they stand kindly affected also to Him. This mutual sympathy and love flows from the union between Christ and them. He is the Head and they are the members of His body; and both Head and members being animated by one and the same Spirit, His joy must be their joy. When they come to have His glorious presence in heaven, they are said to enter into the joy of their Lord, and when they have His gracious presence on earth signified to them with a joyful "Lo, I come!" they have some foretaste of entrance into His joy; this makes them say with joy, "Behold, He cometh!"

3. His gracious coming is joyful both to Him and them because of the *mutual oneness of nature* between Him and them. As He is a partaker of their human nature; so they are partakers of His divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4. Hence, as He knows their frame and what sort of a voice is most suited to their capacity, and accordingly speaks to them by the whispering of His Spirit in the Word, so they know His voice from the voice of a stranger, John 10:5. They know the sound of His feet upon the mountains.

4. His gracious coming is joyful both to Him and them, because of the *mutual agreement in design* between Him and them. His ultimate design is the glory of God in their salvation; their ultimate end is the same, even that God may be glorified in their salvation. Now, when He comes to pursue this design so joyfully, they cannot but welcome him joyfully: "Sing, O heavens; and shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel," Isa. 44:25

5. His gracious coming is joyful both to Him and them, because of the *mutual communion* between Him and them at meeting. He hath always some good news to bring them from the Father, which He is glad to tell them, and they are glad to hear; and they, on the other hand, have something to tell Him which they cannot tell the world. And as they are glad of His coming to have an opportunity to tell him their mind; so He is glad to hear them. "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely," Song 2:14. He has something to do with them, and they have something to do with Him; and therefore, when He joyfully draws near to them, they joyfully draw near to Him; and visit each other with endearing embraces. Truly, indeed, His visits are always visits of kindness, and theirs are ordinarily of business. His business is to give, and their business is to get; but then the visits are most sweet, when they are visits of love on both sides.

6. His gracious coming is joyful both to Him and them, because of the *mutual interest and concern they have both in the covenant of promise*, which is a fountain of joy. It belongs primarily to Christ, in whom the covenant stands fast, and in whom all the promises are yea and amen; and secondarily to believers in Him, who are all the children of the promise. It is promised to Christ, that "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied," Isa. 53:11. And it is promised to the believer, clothed with the character of a meek person, that, "he shall eat, and shall be satisfied," Psalm 22:26. Now, when Christ comes graciously to His people, both He and they must be satisfied; for He comes to accomplish the promise made to Himself and to them. Hence mutual satisfaction cannot but take place.

In a word, His joy is the fountain of theirs. Their joy arises from the powerful influence of His joyful approach, upon their joyful reception of Him. His joyful "Lo, I come!" does instantly create their joyful "Lo, He cometh!" He having put an echoing principle within them, the joyful sound of His "Lo, I come!" cannot but meet with a joyful resounding and rebounding of their "Lo, He cometh!"

VII. The seventh thing proposed, was, **to make some application of the subject, by deducing some inferences.**

1. Is it so, as it has been said, that Christ's coming to His people graciously in their time of need is a joyful and delectable coming, to both Him and them? Truly it is so, and therefore we may *see what it is that would make a sweet communion day among us*, amidst these sad and lowering days wherein we live. We live in sinful and sorrowful days, but Christ's joyful approach with a "Lo, I come!" would make a joyful day among us at this occasion. And O that He would speak powerfully, so that many here may be made to say, "The voice of my Beloved! behold He cometh!" He can make the gospel trumpet convey His voice. Indeed, if the devil and his instruments could get their will, you would not enjoy a gospel ministry; and if our rowers, that have brought the Church of Scotland into deep waters, had got their will, this and some others would have been vacant congregations. There would have been no communion solemnities here when men would have shut the gospel-door. O, may God Himself come and open the door, and open the mouths of ministers, and make His voice to be heard, even His joyful "Lo, I come! I come to give you a little reviving in your bondage. When men are most unkind, I come to show my kindness." As it is said in Daniel 9, verse 25, "The wall shall be built in troublous times." The times we live in are troublous and perilous times, in respect of sin, error, apostasy, and defection from Reformation purity and principles; a time wherein the rights and

principles of poor people are injured, the office of the ministry retrenched, faithful ministers ejected, and the power of Presbytery invaded; a time of confusion in Church and State, at home and abroad; a time wherein God's wrath is threatened to be poured out. These are indeed perilous times, but hath the Lord said, "The wall shall be built up in perilous times"? O, may this perilous time be a building time, according to the word, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory," Psalm 102:16. Let us seek a glorious appearance of the Lord at this occasion: and what do we know but He is saying, even with reference to this very time, "Lo, I come!" O may we hear His voice, and say with joy, "Behold He cometh!"

2. See from our subject the *sweetness of fellowship with God in Christ*. Why, it is partaking of His joy and happiness, His glory and triumph. It is a meeting His joyful "Lo, I come!" with our joyful "Behold, He cometh!" Happy are the sheep of Christ who know His voice! And, Oh! how miserable are you who hear, and yet do not know the joyful sound! Why, it is their hearing His voice therein, His joyful voice, that gives them a joyful heart. But, what makes these same ordinances such a burden and weariness to you, poor graceless man? Why, you have never heard the voice of Christ: His loving voice, His majestic voice, His powerful voice that goes out-through and in-through the heart, and penetrates and ransacks the secret recesses of the soul. What makes believers lament the absence of Christ? When their joy is removed. They are always either rejoicing in His presence, or lamenting His absence, except when they fall into a nap of security till His joyful voice awake them again. But, alas! what makes you, poor Christless sinners, live an unconcerned life though Christ should be never so long away? Why, you are not acquainted with His coming and going, nor with the sweetness of communion with Him. But, O poor soul, may it not stir you up to seek after acquaintance with Him, to hear that the believer's joyful communion is no less than a partaking of the joy of his Lord. Christ's joy is their joy, though not of the same measure: for Christ is anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above His fellows. Yet it is of the same quality, for they have fellowship with Him in His joy, whenever He comes to them.

3. Hence see also *the difference between the law and the gospel*, or between the voice of God in the law and the voice of God in the gospel. His voice in the law is a terrible and dreadful voice, for therein He comes in wrath, with holy threatenings and curses. But the voice of Christ in the gospel is a charming voice, a joyful sound of salvation to sinners, and a door of hope. Whatever word tends to work despair, and to leave a man hopeless, is the voice of the law; but the gospel shows the door of hope in the valley of

Achor, and that with the pleasant sound of grace, mercy, pardon, and pity: "Lo, I come!" Hence, as the law is never preached to good purpose, except in a subserviency to the gospel, so gospel believers are these who first have believed the law, or heard God's voice in the law, which hath made them despair of all help in themselves and of their own righteousness and duty. And next, they have believed the gospel, or heard Christ's voice therein, which has brought them to a lively hope, yea to joy and peace in believing.

4. Hence see *both the nature of faith and of unbelief*. On the one hand, we may, from this doctrine, see the *nature of faith*, in its correspondence with its objects; both its immediate object, the word; and its principal object, Christ, the speaker, whose voice sounds in our ears by this gospel. The word says, "Behold, He cometh!" and faith says, "Behold, he cometh!" Christ says, "Behold! Lo, I come!" and faith says, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!" The gospel is nothing else but a proclamation of Christ's coming; His coming to give life. His coming to save sinners by the price of His blood and the power of His Spirit is a setting the seal to a present "Lo," with a present "Behold." The first act of faith looks neither backward to what is posterior, such as the decree of God or the design of Christ and His intention in dying; nor does it look forward to anterior things, as if it believed a state of salvation that is to come; but it looks to a present truth, a present saying (as the gospel is called, 'a faithful saying') and so to a present "Lo". "Lo, I come! and offer myself to you man, to you woman. Lo, I come! and bring salvation with me." Faith, under the influence of the Spirit, says, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh! I hear the voice of God speaking to me through the Word, and inviting me, the chief of sinners. And I joyfully welcome His coming with salvation unto me." There is a persuasion and appropriation in it to the man's self; and according to the measure of this particular application to itself, such is the measure of joy. There would be no joy at all, if the soul should put away the message from himself. But receiving it to himself, he rejoices in the voice of Christ as his Beloved.

But it shows us also the *nature of unbelief*, on the other hand. The evil heart of unbelief contradicts the word of Christ. Christ says, "Lo, I come!" Unbelief says, "O He will not come. No, no. He will never come to the like of me." Indeed, a believer may say, and hath good reason to say, "I fear my sins provoke Him to stay away, and it will be a wonder if He come to the like of me." But it is gross unbelief to say, "He will not come, I do not expect so much at His hand." And hence unbelief is said to make God a liar: it contradicts and blasphemes. O to get faith this day, to welcome Jesus in His saying, "Lo, I come!" and to expect good at His hand.

I might next make application of the subject for *trial and examination*. What know you of this joyful coming of the Son of God? It is this coming of the Lord Jesus that only can make your coming to a communion table profitable and warrantable. If you know nothing of His joyful approach to you, you cannot approach with His allowance to His table; for, if He never came to you by His Spirit, you never came to Him by faith: and so you are an unbeliever: and if you remain in this case, you never had a right to His table here, nor shall have a share of His table above.

You ask, "How shall I know, if He *ever came* thus to me?"

For helping you in this important inquiry I would ask you these few things following: first, *were you ever made sensible of the dreadful distance* between Him and you; a dismal distance, a damnable distance, an invincible and insuperable distance? Have you seen an utter impossibility of saving yourself from it, unless the Lord had come to you? This is the Lord's ordinary way. When He brings to light, He makes sensible of darkness; when He brings to life, He makes sensible of deadness and lifelessness; when He brings to faith, He makes sensible of unbelief; when He brings to love, He makes sensible of enmity; when He brings to holiness, He makes sensible of wickedness; and when He brings to acquaintance, He makes sensible of estrangement; and before He comes near, He makes sensible of distance.

Secondly, *have you heard His voice* saying, "Lo, I come!" Have you heard, not the voice of ministers only, but the voice of the chief Shepherd? Did you know it to be His voice, by the majesty of it, by the power that attended it, by the sweetness that was in it? Has the gospel come to you not in word only but in power? 1 Thes 1:5. Was there such light, life, liberty, and joy accompanying the voice as made you sure at the time that it was not the voice of man but of God?

Thirdly, *have you seen Him coming*, and apprehended Him by the light of the Spirit? Have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have you seen His fulness, suitableness and sweetness; His glory and excellency; by a light shining not into the head only, but also in the heart? It is a spiritual light. Flesh and blood cannot reveal it, education and external revelation cannot contribute unto it, without supernatural revelation.

Fourthly, *have you joyfully welcomed a coming Jesus*, saying in effect, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold He cometh"? Have you realised the mountains that were between Him and you, particularly the mountains of sin and guilt? Has this accented your joy, that He came over all the mountains, and melted the mountains, and made your heart to melt before Him also, because of your heaping up such mountains between Him and you?

Fifthly, *what communion have you had with Him?* What mutual embracement? Did you get Him in your arms, and wrestle with Him for the blessing? Did you get grace to call him your Beloved, and to lie in His bosom, and melt in tears of joy? I know there may be communion and fellowship with Him, even where this is not the attainment; but something like this joy ordinarily takes place, when He and His people meet together, after some black intervening clouds have kept them long asunder; when His joyful "Lo, I come!" meets with that joyful salutation, "Behold, He cometh! it is the voice of my Beloved!"

Sixthly, *what are the fruits and effects of His coming?* Beholding His glory, were you changed? Surely, if there was never a change wrought upon you, but that you remain as vain, frothy, and carnal in your conversation and deportment as ever, He has not come to you. But has His coming embittered sin, and made you differ with yourself, and submit to His righteousness for your justification, and to His holiness for your sanctification? His great errand is, like His name Jesus, to save His people from their sins; from the guilt of sin, by His merit and righteousness, and from the power of sin, by His Spirit and grace. What joy has His coming raised in you? Surely, the joy of His salvation. As it is a sin-killing joy, so it is a soul-strengthening joy. The joy of the Lord is their strength, Neh. 8:10. Did this joy strengthen you to believe, and strengthen you to pray, and strengthen you to hope, and strengthen you to wait upon Him, and strengthen you to serve Him and to run the way of His commandments with enlargement of heart?

You ask, "Are there any *signs* of His coming? What are the indications of His coming?"

I answer first, It would be a token of His coming, if we were *sensible of, and afflicted for, His absence*, saying, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" and had a longing desire after Him, saying, "O when wilt thou come?" He will satisfy the longing desire.

Another sign of His coming is, *if we were seeking after Him*, and wrestling with Him for the blessing. He is near to them that call upon Him, and those who seek Him shall find Him.

A further sign is, *if we were waiting for Him in His appointed way*, for they who wait upon Him shall have to say, "This is our God," Isa. 25:9.

The fourth sign is, *if we were finding ourselves to have a name to which the promise opens a door of hope*. Is there any hope of His coming for a poor insolvent bankrupt, who fears that the word of the Lord is against him? Why, that man is in the promise: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit," Isa. 66:2. Is there any hope of His coming to a poor,

needy creature, who can find no relief to its soul? Yes, that case is in the promise: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Israel will not forsake them," Isa 41:17.

We shall now shut up the whole discourse with a word by way of *exhortation*. Is Christ saying, "Lo, I come"? O sirs, hear and believe, so as you may cry out joyfully, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!" For *motives*, to hear and believe, consider:

First, *Who it is* that speaketh: it is God in our nature, Immanuel, God with us. The word of salvation is to you, sinners, as well as to you, saints. His voice is, "Lo, I come, to save sinners; I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; yea, to you, O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men."

Consider that He says it with a "*Lo!*" that all the world may give attention to it. "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken ye people from afar," Isa. 69:1. He is speaking to the isles, particularly to the isle Britain, that has long refused to hear His voice. The gospel is to be preached to every creature.

Think also of *the reason* why He is saying to you in this gospel, "Lo, I come to save sinners," is that sinners may welcome Him and say, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!" Even the first welcome of faith may be in these terms, and should be so. His manifesting Himself thus in the word is the ground of faith, though His manifesting Himself by the Spirit is the cause of faith and absolutely necessary to create that faith. But as faith comes by hearing, so hear, O sinners. Hear this word as the voice of the Spirit of Christ: Hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Listen to the Word till you hear and understand that it is the Spirit of Christ; or, Christ, by his Spirit, speaking to you and saying, "Lo, I come to you."

You object, "Christ speaks not here to me, but to His Father, saying, Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God'." I answer, That it is the better for you and me, and the surer ground of faith and hope, for it is a word to His Father concerning us, and about His coming to save us. It were sure enough, if it were spoken immediately to us; but it is still the surer that it is said to the Father concerning us. And He will not retract what He hath said.

Therefore, consider also that His coming in the Spirit, to accomplish salvation by power, *is as surely to take place*, as His coming in the flesh has already taken place. Therefore, when He says, "Lo, I come to save by the power of my Spirit," let faith say, "Behold he cometh to save me."

You object, "But has He purposed to save us all? If not, how can there be ground for us all to believe?"

I answer, Whom He has purposed to save is a secret; but whom He calls to believe and look to Him for salvation is not secret. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isa. 45:22. And faith, as I said before, is not to look to any secret, either past or to come, but to the word of salvation, to a present "Lo, I come!" And if you venture on His word, without more questions, we can assure you, from His word, you are safe. Take Him at His word when He says, "Lo, I come!"

Fifthly, consider this also as a motive to hear and believe: *that mountains are no hindrances to Him*. He comes skipping on the mountains, and leaping on the hills. There is a mountain of darkness in your mind, a mountain of obstinacy in your wills, a mountain of carnality and earthliness in your affections, mountains of guilt lying on your consciences, and mountains of objections, doubts, and fears, in your hearts, but all these are nothing to Him. Therefore, O take His word for it: "Lo, I come!" and say, "Behold, He cometh; skipping on the mountains." He can come over them all with one leap, with one skip.

Sixthly, consider that it is His joyful voice, *both* in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, "Lo, I come!" He was glad to come in the flesh then, and He is as glad to come in the Spirit now, according to His promise. O sirs, will you not gladly welcome Him? O! is He saying so gladly, "Lo, I come?" What are you saying, poor soul? If you cannot say, "The voice of *my* Beloved!" then O will you say, "It is the voice of the Beloved of the Father, who has said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' "? And if you welcome Him as the Father's Beloved, you are quite safe. If you cannot say, "Behold, He cometh!" just now, yet will you say, "He that shall come will come;" and wait upon Him in His own way? He waits to be gracious; and He is a God of judgement; "Blessed are all they that wait for Him," Isa. 30:18. Again, if you cannot say, "Behold, He cometh to my observation," yet you will say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly?" and thus pray for His coming graciously and mercifully, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come to merciful judgement against all my lusts, and prepare me for thy general judgement. Come in the Spirit. Come in power and great glory at this occasion." O He comes skipping and leaping! Let your hearts leap within you at the thoughts of it.

You object, "But I do not feel, I do not see His coming."

I say, "Blessed are they that believe, and have not seen." If you do not see and feel, yet do you not hear Him say, "Lo, I come"? Faith comes by hearing, not by seeing. When you hear His word, you hear His feet upon the mountains; therefore, against hope believe in hope, saying, "Lord, I believe;

help mine unbelief. It is the voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!"

Well, sirs, what think you, will He not come to the feast? Have we no reason to think that He will come? Yea, I think we have. Why, it is a time of need among His poor people; and His throne of grace is erected for a time of need. Therefore we are called to come boldly to it that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

It is a time of trouble and distress, and He is a present help in time of trouble, and a refuge for the oppressed. It is a time wherein many of His people are in a wilderness of darkness and despondency, and He has said, "I will bring her to the wilderness, and there I will speak comfortably to her," or, "into her heart." It is a time wherein many of His people, from all corners, and I hope, many praying people, are met about His means of grace; and He has said, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them." It is a time wherein some of His servants, and many of His people, are like outcasts in the Church, despised and cast out by the judicatories; and He hath spoken His word of gathering the outcasts of Israel, Zeph. 3:18, Isa. 56:8, and Psalm 147:2, "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel."

Why then, shall we not expect His coming, when, at the same time, He is saying, "Lo, I come"?" May faith's joyful echo in our hearts say, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh!"

The Arminian View of Justification

Rev. D. A. Ross

NO religious error pervades evangelicalism today as extensively as Arminianism. This error, which took its name from Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), a theological professor at Leiden in Holland, was not popular when it appeared. His views were strongly opposed by the leading men of the Church. After his death, the vociferous supporters of his teaching protested to the States of Holland and West Friesland that they be allowed a place in the Church without being subjected to examination as to their orthodoxy. The followers of Arminius were not to be silenced. Eventually the States General called a General Synod at Dort (or Dordrecht). It was attended by ministers, theological professors and elders from the Churches in Holland, and representatives from reformed Churches outwith Holland, including those in Scotland and England. At this Synod, great doctrinal matters were debated. The outcome was that this Synod "unanimously

condemned the doctrines of the Arminians, and in their articles confirmed the common Calvinistic faith of the Reformed churches".¹

One of the great errors of Arminianism, and it is only one of a number, is that which concerns the cardinal doctrine of justification. Arminianism makes the faith of the believer, rather than the righteousness of Christ, to be the ground of his being justified by God. The Wesleyan divines, who were Arminian in outlook, "say that *faith* is imputed as the believer's justifying righteousness."²

This error has been pointed out by many orthodox divines. For example, Witsius, who was Professor of Divinity at Leiden University from 1698, addresses believers thus: "Arminius, by his subtlety, frames vain empty quibbles, when he contends that the righteousness of Christ cannot be imputed to us for righteousness... But it is imputed to us, that is, put to our account as if it was ours... This is so true, that it is the sum of the whole gospel." Witsius adds: "It is well known that the Reformed Churches condemned Arminius and his followers for saying that faith comes to be considered, in the matter of justification, as a work or act of ours."³

A. A. Hodge states: "Arminians hold that for Christ's sake the demands of the law are graciously lowered, and faith and evangelical obedience accepted in the place of perfect obedience as the ground of justification. Our Standards and all the Reformed and Lutheran Confessions teach that the true ground of justification is the perfect righteousness (active and passive) of Christ, imputed to the believer, and received by faith alone."⁴ Louis Berkhof makes much the same point when he says: "The Arminian goes contrary to Scripture when he maintains that we are accepted in favour by God only on the ground of our faith or evangelical obedience".⁵

The absurdity of regarding faith as a basis of justification is stated by G. H. Kersten in these words: "However great the value of faith may be, it has no value as ground for justification. How can God, without violating His justice, acquit the guilty sinner and ascribe to him a right to eternal life, except on the ground of the righteousness obtained by Christ when He obeyed the law perfectly and bore its curse?"⁶

Robert Shaw, the excellent expositor of the *Confession of Faith*, says of this error: "Arminians maintain that faith itself, or the act of believing, is accepted as our justifying righteousness. In opposition to this, our Confession teaches that God does not justify us 'by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, as our righteousness.' And in confirmation of this, we observe, that faith, as an act performed by us, is as much a work of obedience to the law as any other; and, therefore, to be justified by the act of faith, would be to be

justified by a work. But this is contrary to the express declarations of Scripture, which exclude all sorts of works from the affair of justification. Gal. 2:16. Besides, faith is plainly distinguished from that righteousness by which we are justified. We read of 'the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ,' and of 'the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Rom. 3:23, Phil. 3:9. No language could more clearly show that righteousness and faith are two different things. 'Nothing' says Mr Haldane, 'can be a greater corruption of the truth than to represent faith itself as accepted instead of righteousness, or to be the righteousness that saves the sinner. Faith is not righteousness. Righteousness is the fulfilling of the law'." ⁷

It is a pernicious error indeed when faith, in any way, is made the justifying righteousness of the believer, thus taking away from, or eliminating the righteousness of Christ as the justifying righteousness of the believer. This is Arminianism at its worst. If we are remiss as to receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation, all is lost. The language of all the redeemed, with regard to Christ and righteousness, has ever been: "In the Lord have I righteousness..." Isa 45:24. Christ Himself is their righteousness. It is of Him that they say, "Who of God is made unto us... righteousness..." 1 Cor 1:30, and, "The Lord our righteousness," Jer 23:6.

How, then, are we to view the relationship between faith and righteousness? The answer is seen in this statement of A. A. Hodge: "The orthodox view is that the active and passive obedience of Christ satisfying both the precept and penalty of the law as a covenant of life, and thus constituting a perfect righteousness is, upon being appropriated by the believer in the act of faith, actually made his, in a legal sense, by imputation. Faith, therefore, is the mere instrument whereby we partake in the righteousness of Christ, which is the true ground of our justification." ⁸

It is abundantly clear that not the least part of any of our graces, gifts or doings can be part of the basis of our being accepted by God as righteous persons. As Richard Baxter said, "No man may look at his own graces as a part of his legal righteousness, in conjunction with Christ's righteousness as the other part. We must go wholly out of ourselves, and deny and disclaim all such righteousness of our own." ⁹

I recall what the late Rev. D. A. Macfarlane, Dingwall, said, when reminding us in his preaching that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Isaiah 64:6. In commending, and insisting upon, the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of our acceptance with God, Mr Macfarlane said that for his part he was resolved never to appear before God with as much of his own righteousness as would go on a "pinhead". We were left in no doubt that the

ground of justification had to be Christ in all His finished work, with nothing whatsoever of man added to that work.

It is tragic that so many in this day of dreadful declension, in one way or another, hold onto something of their own as the ground of their acceptance with God. When a person is trusting in this, instead of in the finished work of Christ in all its fulness, it certainly is not well with him or her in view of death. In order that we be accepted by God, may we, by divine grace, reject the very least of our own works, and wisely rest only on Christ and what He has done for His people. Then all will be well with us for eternity.

1. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, p.105, Banner of Truth, 1972.
2. R. L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, p. 637, Banner of Truth, 1985.
3. H. Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, vol 1, pp. 368 and 375, London 1837.
4. A. A. Hodge, *A Commentary on The Confession of Faith*, pp. 182, 183, London 1870.
5. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 523, Banner of Truth, 1971.
6. G. H. Kersten, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 422, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981.
7. R. Shaw, *An Exposition of The Confession of Faith*, p. 128, Christian Focus Publications, 1983.
8. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, pp.503, 504, Banner of Truth, 1972.
9. R. Baxter, *Spiritual Peace and Comfort*, p. 273. (Quoted in *Dogmatic Theology*, Volume 1, by W. G. J. Shedd, p. 544, Klock and Klock, 1979).

Obituary

Mr Donald William Macdonald, Deacon, Uig

AS we cast a glance over many of our congregations we are reminded of the words, "One generation passeth away and another generation cometh." One of the generation that has almost completely passed away was Donald William Macdonald, 3 Ardrol, a deacon in the Uig congregation. He had attained the advanced age of 95 years when he died in October, 1995.

Donald William Macdonald was born in Kneep, Uig, in February, 1900, and it was in his native parish that he was to spend the greater part of his earthly sojourn. His father, Murdo, was one of those who left the Balnakille congregation of the Church of Scotland to form the present Uig congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1930 and was one of the stalwarts of the movement. So our late friend had from his childhood the inestimable benefit of a godly example and scriptural teaching.

Donald William served in the Royal Navy during the latter part of the 1914-18 War and experienced the rigours of several voyages to Russia during which there was much loss of life. But neither godly example and teaching

nor troubles in providence will bring any to see their spiritual needs, without the saving operation of God the Holy Spirit.

It would appear to have been the death of his first wife after only eight years of marriage which was used by the Lord to awaken Donald William to a sense of his need of mercy. We are not able to give any account of the Lord's dealing with him, except to say that from this time onwards he gave heed to the preaching of the Word as he had not previously done, and joined himself to those whose feet took them to the means of grace on Sabbath and weekday, and at communion seasons.

In 1948 he married Miss Bella Morrison, a lady of known piety, who predeceased him by several years, after many years of unspotted profession.

A Mr Fearing all his days, Donald William was in his 78th year before he felt able to make a public profession. It was not a step which he took lightly, and in spite of all his doubts and fears he was kept to the end. In 1979 he was elected a deacon in the Uig congregation and while able to do so took an active interest in the concerns of that office.

For a number of years he was housebound, but though physically frail his mind was alert and active up till his final brief illness. He was an avid reader and kept himself up to date with all Church affairs. He had a particularly keen interest in the Church's missionary work, notably in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Eastern Europe. In 1989 he was in no doubt where his duty lay and he adhered firmly to the distinctive testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

He was left to mourn many of his fellow pilgrims who had gone before, notably Rev. J. A. Macdonald, Rev. D. J. Macaskill and his brother, Jackie; Norman Mackay, Ness, and the many other godly men and women who frequented communion seasons in Lewis during his lifetime.

It was as a praying man we knew him best. He prayed for the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in its witness for the truth and he seemed to have a particular burden for its ministers. He remembered them in their Sabbath preparations and preaching, in their travels to communion seasons and in their travels abroad as Church deputies. He remembered their families. He prayed for the Uig congregation.

It is our fervent desire that the Lord will yet answer the prayers of His people in again visiting that once favoured parish of Uig with times of refreshing and revival.

Once again we extend our condolences to our late friend's son and daughter in the hope that they will come to know their father's God as their own God.

(Rev.) D. J. Macdonald

The Ethics of Selective Abortion

"God is not the author of confusion"

Rev. Donald M. Boyd

PUBLIC interest in the ethics of abortion has been re-awakened by several recent incidents reported prominently in the media.

First, the public was alerted to the fact that over 3,000 frozen human embryos had to be destroyed according to the rules governing storage of unused embryos. These embryos were created by 'in vitro fertilisation' (IVF) techniques. The British policy is that unused embryos are frozen and then destroyed after five years of storage, unless donors specifically ask for preservation.

Secondly, we were informed that a woman chose to have a selective abortion of one of her twins because she claimed that she could not cope with twins. This provoked an application to the courts for clarification of the 1967 Abortion Act.

Thirdly, a woman is pregnant with eight children, apparently because of inappropriate treatment with fertility-boosting drugs. She has refused to have selective abortion, that is, for doctors to abort some of the children so that the others will have a better prospect of survival. Intense interest has developed because it is the first case of octuplets in the world and because the moral dilemma of selective abortion has been thus highlighted.

Abortion is unscriptural except where a continuing pregnancy will result in the loss of the mother's life. The question arises whether it is acceptable to improve the possibility of saving the lives of some of these children by the selective abortion of some others. Professor Kypros Nicolaides, head of foetal medicine at King's College Hospital, London, who has taken over this case of multiple pregnancy, said that most people faced with a multiple birth opted for selective reduction, and while he said there were no right or wrong decisions, he added: "I am not aware of a single case in history where somebody successfully delivered eight babies." (*The Times*, 13/8/96). In 1987 septuplets were born 26 weeks early and they all died within days of each other.

Abortion ethos

These matters have highlighted the "abortion ethos" which is involved in IVF and some other methods of infertility treatment, that is, those working in these fields of infertility treatment appear to think nothing of destroying embryos. There is an implicit acceptance that those who agree to undergo this form of infertility treatment will allow selective abortion if need be, or

that stored human embryos will in due course be destroyed if they are not used. This, in turn, is making abortion become so acceptable that a gynaecologist and a mother think little of selectively destroying a healthy infant, and some take it for granted that some of the octuplets should be selectively aborted. However, it may be that the developing skills and resources in neonatal medicine will result in a happier outcome than some envisage. This is a medical and a moral judgment.

When our Church responded to the Warnock Report in 1984, we envisaged the events which are only now impinging on the national consciousness. Because of this abortion ethos, we were unable to ascertain what could be legitimately utilised from the IVF programme and we did not recommend it to our people (see Synod Proceedings 1985, pp. 2,17). Whatever good in the future the Lord may bring out of this evil climate, we cannot recommend this form of infertility treatment as long as the abortion ethos pervades it.

The jury is still out on many aspects of this modern revolution in human bio-engineering. In 1984 our Religion and Morals Committee recommended that the deliberate production of spare embryos and embryo freezing should be outlawed. We called for the Abortion Act 1967 to be repealed and legislation enacted to prohibit abortion with one exception: where a continuing pregnancy will result in the loss of the mother's life.

In May 1985, the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland passed a Resolution on IVF which stated: "We also wish to express our strong reservations regarding In Vitro Fertilisation (the test-tube baby technique) and our condemnation of the present IVF programme which includes the destruction of human embryos, which is apparently an essential part of the test-tube baby programme. We urge the Government to introduce legislation as soon as possible to give full protection in law to the unborn child at all stages of its development from fertilisation."

In 1987 the Religion and Morals Committee responded to the consultation paper *"Legislation on Human Infertility Services and Embryo Research"* which concerned the setting up of the Statutory Licensing Authority which now regulates practice in this field. At that time we said:

"We are unconvinced that the magnitude of the problem of infertility (which these techniques are designed to alleviate) warrants the proposed Statutory Licensing Authority. We fear that establishing such an authority will create its own demand by extending the indications for IVF. It will also be an attempt to give an air of respectability to these unscriptural and God-dishonouring practices."

We believed that control could be adequately performed by the Secretary of State who would be more accountable to public opinion than a Voluntary or Statutory Licensing Authority, and who would offer more independent and objective control.

Confusion

“God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor 14:33). The confusion and moral dilemma which has arisen from multiple pregnancies from fertility-boosting drugs — and the confusion and moral dilemma which has arisen from unclaimed or unwanted frozen embryos — is not from God. These moral dilemmas are quite predictable, and it is not good enough for the pedlars of the new ethic to complain, as they often do, that churches are not supplying answers to the ethical problems posed by their technological advances. The opposite is true. It is because we could see these moral dilemmas and the abortion ethos within which this technology was advancing that, over ten years ago, we urged caution and more accountability. They have rushed into this confusing situation, whereas “he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28:16).

Life on Mars?

Rev. K. D. Macleod

SPLASHED across the front pages of newspapers last month was the suggestion that life existed on Mars billions of years ago. “Hidden inside a meteorite, a tantalising trace of life”, declared one headline, with an assurance which is quite unsupported by the evidence.

The reports described a piece of rock found in Antarctica 12 years ago. Could the rock ever have been part of Mars? Certainly the scenario described by the scientists who have investigated it is profoundly improbable — even if one could accept the enormous timescales involved. It is seriously suggested that about 16 million years ago a huge asteroid or comet collided with the planet Mars, exploded with more power than a million hydrogen bombs, and sent some rock fragments flying off into interplanetary space; after orbiting the sun for millions of years the gravity of other planets pulled one of these fragments out of its orbit and sent it on a collision course with the Earth.

But what is the evidence to support the claim that this rock, weighing little more than four pounds, has come from Mars? Largely the fact that the composition of the gases found in tiny pockets inside the meteorite closely match those in the atmosphere of Mars. There could, of course, be many other

explanations why the gases are what they are.

The claimed evidences of life include the images of tiny structures which are seen when samples from inside the rock are examined under an electron microscope. These images resemble fossils found in rocks on Earth. The most striking of these, a tubelike object whose width is only a hundredth of that of a human hair, clearly resembles a living creature. David McKay, the leader of the team at the American space agency NASA who examined the rock, claimed that the evidence points "towards biologic activity in early Mars". But he also had to admit that "there are alternative explanations for each of the lines of evidence that we see".

Other scientists are understandably more cautious. William Schopf, a fossils expert at the University of California, quoted a statement of a modern astronomer, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence". The claims are indeed extraordinary, but the evidence is not. Schopf pointed out that images claimed as fossils show no evidence of cells, and are too miniscule to be analysed chemically or to be probed internally.

NASA has claimed this as "arguably the biggest discovery in the history of science". One cannot help feeling that the massive interest shown in an idea which is based on such slender evidence is due to the hope that it will prop up the theory of evolution. Any likelihood that there is life elsewhere in the universe will be used to strengthen the claim of NASA president Frank Drake: "It confirms what we've always believed - that life arises wherever the conditions are right." If it were accepted that life arose in more than one site it would make the whole evolutionary framework seem so much less implausible.

It has indeed been pointed out that NASA has a vested interest in showing that life once existed on Mars. The more interest that can be generated in the possibility of life on Mars, the more funds are likely to be awarded to the organisation to finance future space missions to the planet. One can only describe the analysis of the rock from Antarctica as conjecture piled upon conjecture. A theory without a foundation is not likely to advance human knowledge in the slightest degree.

A recent book by Phillip E Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*¹, has submitted evolution to a devastating examination. The author is a professor of law in the University of California at Berkeley and specialises in the logic of arguments. During the nineteenth century, evolutionists looked hopefully at

¹ British edition published by Monarch Publications, paperback, 201 pages, £7.99.

the fossils which had then been discovered and, while acknowledging that there were many gaps in the record, expressed the assurance that these gaps would before long be filled up by further discoveries. Johnson observes, however, that "the outstanding characteristic of the fossil record is the absence of evidence for evolution" and that "the fossil problem for Darwinism is getting worse all the time".

Evolutionists have always taken refuge in postulating millions or billions of years to avoid the manifest difficulties of their theory. Yet some present-day observations cast doubt on the vast length of time required for the development of various natural features. For instance, Surtsey, the island produced by volcanic eruptions off Iceland in the 1960s, became within months an apparently mature island, with beaches, pebbles, sand and vegetation.

But it is the Bible that gives us the only information to be obtained about the *origin* of life. God brought vegetation into existence on earth on the third day of creation. He made the creatures of the air and of the sea on the fifth day and those on dry land on the sixth, with man as the last and greatest part of that creation.

To most people today the claim that the creation of the whole universe was the work of God in six days is an extraordinary claim. There is no need to dispute the claim that "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence". For what evidence could be stronger than the work of God today in the new creation, transforming sinners by the power of the Holy Spirit, making them new creatures in Christ Jesus? The words of Paul are relevant here: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). To bring about both natural and spiritual life divine power is necessary.

We need never be disturbed when the claims of science contradict Scripture. Many scientists go to tremendous lengths to cover the weakness of the theory of evolution². We may not see it in our generation but, when sufficient evidence comes to light, it will yet be generally acknowledged that the Psalmist's words of praise to the Most High were fully justified: "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Ps 119:160).

² For documentation see *Darwin on Trial*, particularly chapters 11 and 12.

Book Review

Man's Relations to God by *John Kennedy* — Published by the James Begg Society, paperback, 82 pages, £3.95. Available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

THE eminent son of an eminent father, Kennedy was minister of the Disruption Free Church in Dingwall for 40 years from 1844. His sermons that are still available bear witness to the excellence of his preaching, which was justly held in high esteem by the godly of his time.

In this welcome reprint, Kennedy explores in four chapters man's relations to God: (1) man as created, (2) man as fallen, (3) man as evangelized, (4) man as in Christ. He thus follows man from his original state as perfectly created by God under the covenant of works into that state where "already cursed and always sinning, how hopeless his deliverance from the wrath to come'!" Yet in this fallen world a way of salvation is made known in the gospel. Kennedy stresses that "Christ is the great theme of the gospel", that "it is as Christ crucified He is to be preached" and that "if we ever come [to Christ] it must be as sinners". He goes on, "We cannot exercise faith in Christ unless we realise that we are sinners, nor will we ever seek an interest in Him. It is not a sense of sin which entitles us to trust in Him. We are required to do so whatever be our state of feeling. As an absolute sinner I may trust in Him; but as a whole-hearted sinner I never will."

"It would be well," Kennedy continues, "if preachers of the gospel were more impressed with these great facts. If they preached as men who realised that they carried a message from Jehovah; that the Saviour was the Christ and the Son of God; that His death was the only atonement for sin; that the salvation which is by Jesus Christ is full, free and everlasting; and that their hearers are sinners ready to perish; how impossible would they find it to hesitate about requiring faith from all who hear the gospel!"

In discussing the extent of the atonement, the question of who they are for whom Christ died, Kennedy emphasises the divine intention in the death of Christ. "How can the possibility of my salvation be before the mind of God," he asks, "unless He sees my sins atoned for in the death of Christ?" His analysis of the double reference theory of the atonement was particularly relevant when the book was first published in 1869, for it was the time of the "union controversy", when the Free Church was negotiating on union with the United Presbyterian Church, many of whose ministers subscribed to this erroneous view of the work of Christ for sinners.

As united to Christ, the sins of the believer are fully remitted; there is "a

perfect removal of all that could make him liable to death". And Kennedy points out: "In connection with the 'liberty' into which believers have been called' there is a tendency to 'use it for an occasion to the flesh' (Gal 5:13). This tendency is not in the liberty of their state, nor in the truth of the gospel, but in the old heart. To remove all which it would abuse, would be to take away all privilege and grace. It is a narrow path in which the Christian must walk, between legalism on the one hand, and antinomianism on the other." Kennedy was a master expositor, not only of Christian doctrine, but also of Christian experience.

As he brings his work towards a conclusion, he exclaims, "How safe in the house of God are these adopted ones! He took them in when they were at their worst. He proclaimed Himself their Father then. His zeal for His own glory, as well as His love to them, requires that not one of them should perish; and makes it certain that all of them shall yet be all that the sons of God should be, that their Father's love may be gratified, and His name glorious for ever." And he closes with these majestic words: "Their very groanings, under the burden of corruption, tell that they are sons, and that a Father's hand is on them. It is the support of a Father's arm that has kept them from sinking in the deeps through which they have passed. How often would they utterly faint, unless He graciously revived them! These calm moments of renewed peace, these glimpses of the King in His beauty and of the land that is very far off, these free movements in the ways of God, these triumphs over sin in its mighty lustings, and over Satan with his mighty hosts, are surely tokens of a Father's love - the foretastes of such rest and happiness at last, as shall leave to the child no more to desire, and to the Father no more to bestow."

It must be said, however, that Kennedy's attempt to distinguish between God as Father and as Parent is not successful. He was writing in reaction to the books on adoption by R S Candlish and T J Crawford, which he viewed as in different ways needing refinement. Kennedy did not issue his book as a complete exposition of his subject, and a definitive volume on the doctrine of adoption remains to be written.

The book has been completely reset without any change to what Kennedy wrote except for minor corrections to spelling and punctuation. The cover design is rather unattractive with Kennedy's head perched most incongruously above the roof of his church.

This criticism cannot take away from the excellence of the contents. Here a distinguished preacher and acute theologian brings profound truth out of the deep treasures of Scripture. It is at times demanding reading, but those who

wish more than the milk intended for babes in Christ, nourishing though that milk is, and desire to have the solid meat which the more mature should go on to, ought not to omit such a book as this. *K. D. M.*

African Mission News

Zimbabwe

THIS winter in South Africa, there has been a fall of snow at a much lower altitude than usual, something that has not happened for thirty years. This, no doubt, explains a spell of cold weather they have had in Zimbabwe.

A newsletter has come from Peta van de Ridder from Zimbabwe. Peta says how much at home she feels at Mbumba, which she left in 1983 owing to her mother's illness. She describes a day with the mobile clinic at Lukampa, a few miles from Mbumba.

"I enjoy going to outside clinics despite the fact that we are always extremely busy while there. While I do not feel imprisoned at Mbumba it is pleasant to get outside the Mission gates. On this occasion, having packed a picnic basket with bread and something to drink and so on, we left at 10 am in the lorry, driven by Nkala the driver, and were accompanied by Mloyi, the hospital evangelist, and four African nurses to assist me with the clerical work, dispensing medicines and interpreting when necessary.

"It was just a half-hour's journey along loose sandy roads and through bushy and very lonely countryside. The clinic for child welfare and expectant mothers is held in our Church buildings. Some people had already arrived. Before we began seeing the patients Mloyi took worship and addressed the people from Lamentations 3, verse 40, 'Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord'.

"Apart from a half-hour break at 1.30 pm we were hard at work until 3.30 p.m. We then set off for Mbumba arriving just after 4 p.m. We found the Nursing Sisters preparing a little boy for transfer to the Nkai Government Hospital about thirty miles away. He had been brought in unconscious a few hours before and had not responded to treatment. The hospital was busy and I was required here and there. It was 7 pm before I sat down to a welcome meal of mealie-meal porridge with fried cabbage, onions and tomatoes. Then I was off to bed.

"I am living with Margaret Macaskill and Dr. Hak. Dr. Hak feels much better than she did. It is a great help to have her back for problems which often arise. It was a day off for me after being at Lukampa. Usually we try to

write our letters on our off-day as it is very difficult to do anything personal on a working day.

"Last week the generator broke down. We sent to Bulawayo for help, a distance of around one hundred miles. No one came for five days and we had to work by candlelight. Darkness falls between 6.30 and 6.45 p.m. There was one advantage - we went to bed a little earlier!

"I really enjoy the work but I have been confronted by AIDS. I have been here for four weeks and during that time five adults and one baby have died of the disease. They have no sooner gone than their empty places are filled by other poor, wasted-looking people. Mercifully, some of them have periods of improved health and strength. When we talk to them about the illness, they call it 'the killer disease'. We try to speak to them of life after death but they profess not to believe it. What we need is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit among us all, and especially among these poor people. What need there is to remember them in prayer, and also all who work here!"

Margaret Macaskill and Peta were at Ingwenya for Peta's last weekend in Zimbabwe on this occasion. With the other members of staff they attended some of the communion services at Cameron church, ten miles from Ingwenya, where our people are Fingoes and speak si-Xhosa.

At the time of writing, Marion Graham and Ishbel MacCuish are expected in Inverness, if all is well, on Saturday 10th August. Ishbel will have completed her three months assignment in the John Tallach School which she has very much enjoyed. She and Katie Macaulay were both present at the baptismal service in Bulawayo when Nopel Sibanda, a former pupil, was baptised. The service was much enjoyed and it was an additional pleasure for Ishbel and Katie to see many other former pupils, most of them now married and with families.

The holiday is very busy for the Ingwenya teachers as they process more than one thousand applications for places in the Secondary School in 1997. The children who apply have to sit a test, which the African teachers help to correct, but the final assessment is Katie's responsibility. There are only 160 places available and 40 of those are reserved for local children. Most difficult of all is the interviewing of disappointed parents, chiefly mothers, whose children have not passed the test. Some of them have made application to several schools; so matters may not be as bad as they seem.

J.N.

Kenya

THE Rev. John Goldby and his family arrived safely in Kenya on the last day of July, and he is now getting to grips again with the work of the Mission at

Sengera. It is expected that, God willing, he will be inducted as Missionary by the Zimbabwe Presbytery, on 25th September. Sister Peta van de Ridder has arrived in Sengera from Mbuma.

It was with relief that Mr Ian MacLean, the Mission Administrator, saw, at the end of July, the arrival of the large containers, carrying an ambulance, medical equipment, building materials, etc, which were shipped from Britain last January. It was a matter for gratitude to the God of providence, that the Government there waived the imposition of import taxes, no doubt because the contents of the containers are for the benefit of the Kenyans there.

Mr MacLean says that water is scarce at present and that the Mission has had to transport water from Ogembo, three miles away. The shortage is due not only to lack of rain during past weeks and the considerable diminishing of the supply from the well, but also because the large water tank is still depleted after having burst and been repaired. Also, the ongoing building operations there have used much water. However, it is hoped that the rains will come soon.

The new accommodation for staff (a house for Mr Goldby, two houses for nursing sisters, and an extension to the MacLean's house) will be fully completed by the beginning of this month, D.V.

Of considerable concern to European parents on the Mission is the provision of education, both primary and secondary, for their children. We hope that a teacher will be led to go there to do this important work, as well as to give religious instruction in the local primary School. A notice on page 287 gives more information about this post.

N. M. R.

Eastern Europe Mission

Letters of Appreciation from Eastern Europe Countries

AS well as receiving continuous requests for Bibles and Christian literature from Eastern Europe, we also receive letters of appreciation for the help given by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The following selection of excerpts from letters shows that those who receive Bibles and help in other ways really appreciate the work we do.

A man from St. Petersburg says, "Thank you very much for your letter dated 21st November 1995, and an excellent large print edition of the Authorised Version with metrical Psalms. This superb edition is of great help to me as I use it parallel with my Russian Bible."

In connection with public worship held in Borispol, one person writes: "This time the service in Borispol has been rather encouraging. The people

were interested and asked questions. T.... has invited you to conduct a service again at their place. So, I hope your work here will yield certain fruits. Let us cast this upon the Lord and wait for the result. The Bible teaches us that all our own efforts taken together are vain completely unless God Himself does the work. When recently I was reading the Book of Psalms, I meditated on the words written in Psalm 127:1. 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain'."

One person in Russia who asks for more tracts writes: "I thank you for every thing that you have sent, but I have already given out the tracts. If you can, please do send some more again, so that people may know that there is a God in Heaven..."

A pastor in Kiev, with whom we left a selection of literature, food and medicines, which was distributed to church members, the needy and the oncological hospital, says: "We thank you once again for helping us and praying for us. We are asking God that He may abundantly bless you in future days and in all your ways and doings."

Finally, a Missionary in the south of Ukraine writes: "I got your letter and 'The Children's Catechism'. Thank you very much. 'The Children's Catechism' is a very correct book. We do not have literature like this Catechism. Please sent another 20. 'The Confession of Faith' is a good book too. If you can, please come to organise our church, or send a missionary. We will take him to our house and will help him to organise the church."

It is hoped that we will again make a visit to the Ukraine this year, God willing. Funds allowing, we intend to leave towards the end of October but it is not yet finally decided who will undertake this journey. One thing we especially ask is that prayer would be engaged in on behalf of this work. May the Lord in His good and sovereign mercy, for the sake of the Redeemer, and by the power of His Holy Spirit, prosper the work.

D. A. R.

Protestant View

Our Protestant constitution endangered by proposals for the monarchy

THE Prime Minister has been having talks with the Queen and the Prince of Wales about radical proposals to reform the monarchy. Of particular concern is the proposal to repeal the 1701 Act of Settlement, which bans the heir to the throne from marrying a Roman Catholic and provides for the Protestant succession to the throne. This is not a surprising proposal when we observe

the increasingly friendly relationship between the Royal House and the Roman Catholic hierarchy in this country.

Nor are we surprised to read that Prince Charles is reckoned to be the driving force behind the proposals, which include the proposal to disestablish the Church of England. He has already expressed his wish to be known as the Defender of Faiths rather than the Defender of the Faith — that is, of the national Protestant faith “by law established.” Disestablishment would no doubt open a route for the Prince to escape from some consequences of his marital unfaithfulness and to marry again.

The press welcomes especially the proposal to repeal the Act of Settlement. One columnist says repeal of the Act is “reasonable, desirable and, many would say, long overdue”. He also peddles the current lie that “the Catholics now form the largest religious group in the country” when in fact Protestants outnumber Roman Catholics by 10 to 4.

While we are not surprised at these constitutional developments, we are deeply concerned. The ecumenical agenda is dominant, the multi-faith ethos is powerful, and Roman Catholicism is viewed favourably. On the other hand, the Reformed, Protestant, Biblical religion of our forefathers is written off as not only an anachronism but also as offensive and anti-social. History shows that it is not a long step from the marginalising of true religion to the persecution of those who persist in promulgating it.

We are bound to voice our concern about these dangerous proposals. Any attempt to repeal the Act of Settlement “would engender howls of protest from the deeply Protestant corners of the United Kingdom,” says *The Times* — and so it should. But our most urgent duty is to pray more earnestly for the preservation of our Protestant constitution, with all its associated religious and civil liberties. These, by the grace of God, have been purchased at the cost of even the blood of those who “loved not their lives unto the death”. We dare not let these privileges disappear by default.

Notes and Comments

Abortion of one of a pair of twins

Any abortion that is contrary to Scriptural principles is barbaric, but some cases are more barbaric than others. It came to light recently that several weeks ago an obstetrician in a London hospital killed an unborn twin child in the womb because the mother claimed she could not face the burden of looking after two more children.

We are totally opposed to abortion except when the mother is in danger of losing her life if the pregnancy continues. The killing of this perfectly healthy twin is a particularly clear demonstration of the inhumanity inherent in unjustified abortion.

Abortion is wrong because, as our Synod stated some years ago, it is a gross violation of the divine law, "Thou shalt not kill". The deliberate killing of children in the womb is an act of barbarity unworthy of a civilised nation. Furthermore, the practice of abortion by medical and nursing staff, other than on the ground mentioned above, is undermining the high standard of medical ethics for which this country was renowned. The present practice of abortion brings awful guilt upon our nation and exposes us to the righteous judgements of God as the blood of those unborn infants cries to heaven for vengeance.

Drug abuse in Scotland increases

THE recently released results of a national survey show that more teenagers in Scotland have tried illegal drugs than teenagers anywhere else in Britain. Almost two thirds of 15 and 16-year-old Scottish boys have smoked cannabis, while 14 per cent have taken Ecstasy.

Dr Patrick Millar, of Edinburgh University's alcohol and health research group which conducted the survey, said that there has been a sharp increase in all drug use among this age group recently, but that cannabis use has gone up enormously over the past few years.

The survey confirms that high levels of cannabis use among youngsters are associated with poor school performances. Although not mentioned in the newspaper report, the use of cannabis usually leads to the use of more dangerous drugs, such as Ecstasy.

These survey results are another pointer to the fact that Scotland, once the land of the gospel, has become a godless nation, and that the rising generation needs nothing so much as the gospel of the grace of God.

Church Information

Induction at Staffin

ON Tuesday, 23rd July, 1996, the Skye Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland met to induct Rev. B. Whear to the pastoral charge of the Staffin congregation. The Presbytery were heartened to see so many gather from near and far to witness this solemnity. The presence of five visiting

pastors from the ministerial ranks made its own impact, and reminded us of the bonding power of the Presbyterian form of church government. It was agreed that these ministers be associated with the Skye Presbytery.

The preliminaries over, the Moderator, Rev. G. G. Hutton, conducted public worship, and preached an apposite and animated sermon from Romans 10:15. Public worship being ended, the Clerk pro tem gave a resume of proceedings leading to the Call to Rev. B. Whear. The Moderator then put to Rev. B. Whear the usual questions asked of ministers at their Induction. These Mr Whear answered satisfactorily, and thereafter signed the Formula in the presence of the congregation. The Moderator then did, in the name of the Presbytery, and by authority of the Divine Head of the church, induct Rev. B. Whear to the pastoral charge of the Staffin Congregation. The Moderator gave him the right hand of fellowship as did the other members of Presbytery. Mr Whear was then fittingly addressed by the Moderator, and the Congregation by the Clerk pro tem.

Thereafter, the Moderator invited all the other ministers present to speak. Finally, to the gratification of all present, the Rev. J. R. Tallach, who was Interim Moderator of the Staffin congregation, made his own contribution, in a few choice words. Letters of goodwill from the Revs. A. McPherson, Clerk to the Southern Presbytery, and J. A. T. van Dorp, Clerk to the Australian and New Zealand Presbytery, were read by the Clerk pro tem.

The ladies of the congregation, with typical liberality and efficiency, furnished a most enjoyable repast.

We earnestly pray that the ministry now begun will redound to the glory of God in the ingathering of souls, and the edification of His people. Our weak and weary hands have been strengthened by Rev. B. Whear being added to the Presbytery.

F. Macdonald, Presbytery Clerk, pro tem.

Committee Meetings

THE following Synod Committees will meet in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church as follows, God willing:

Tuesday, 1st October

11.00 am - 1.00 pm	Foreign Missions Committee
2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	Welfare of Youth Committee
2.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Finance Committee
5.00 pm - 6.00 pm	Sabbath Observance Committee
5.00 pm - 6.00 pm	Outreach Committee
6.30 pm - 8.00 pm	Publications Committee

7.00 pm - 8.30 pm Dominions and Overseas Committee

8.00 pm - 9.30 pm Bookroom Committee

Wednesday, 2nd October

9.00 am - 11.00 am Religion and Morals Committee

11.00 am - 11.30 am Training of the Ministry Committee

11.30 am - 1.00pm Church Interests Committee

Meetings of Presbytery (D.V.)

NORTHERN: At Dingwall on Tuesday, 8th October, at 2.00 pm.

SOUTHERN: At Glasgow on Tuesday, 12th November, at 6.00 pm.

WESTERN: At Laide on Tuesday, 3rd September, at 6.00 pm.

SKYE: At Portree on Tuesday, 5th November, at 11.00 am.

OUTER ISLES: At Stornoway on Tuesday, 3rd September, at 1.00 pm.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND: At Auckland on Friday, 24th January, 1997, at 2.30 pm.

ZIMBABWE: At Sengera, Kisii, Kenya, on Wednesday, 25th September, 1996, at 11 a.m.

Secretarial / Administrative Assistant

Applications are invited for the full-time position of Secretary / Administrative Assistant to the Church's General Treasurer, to be based in Glasgow. In order to fulfil the wide-ranging duties envisaged for this role, the applicant should be:

- an accomplished typist, preferably with audio typing skills
- computer literate, especially in word processing
- proficient to a high standard in written English
- polite and helpful, with a good telephone manner
- motivated, disciplined, reliable and of undoubted integrity
- in full sympathy with the principles of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Remuneration, which can include membership of a non-contributory pension scheme, will be dependent on qualification and experience. For an application form, please write to or telephone Mr R. A. Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE (Tel. 0141 332 4271). Closing date for applications: 30 September, 1996.

(Rev.) *K. M. Watkins*, Convener, Finance Committee

Teacher for Missionaries' children, Kenya

At the Sengera Mission, Kenya, there is urgent need for a teacher to teach the

missionaries' children in both primary and secondary subjects. There are several children to be taught at present, and the course followed for children at all stages is the Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) curriculum. It would be necessary for the successful applicant to become familiar with the A.C.E. system, which is an integrated package, before going abroad. The new teacher will also have the opportunity to give religious instruction to the African children in the large Mission-sponsored primary school.

For further information please contact the Clerk of the Foreign Mission Committee, Rev. J. R. Tallach, Free Presbyterian Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB. Telephone No. 01478 660216.

Donald A. Ross, Committee Clerk pro tem.

Acknowledgements of Donations

THE General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library: Anon, Harris, (Gift Aid), £100.

Eastern Europe: Where Most Needed, Can \$100; J.L.G., £100; Anon, Inverness Postmark, £60; J.D.A., (Gift Aid), £300; Anon, Harris, (Gift Aid), £200; Anon, "For Transport", £100.

Foreign Mission: Anon, Can \$100.

Outreach Fund: Loughbrickland Reformed Presbyterian Church, N.I., £50 per Rev. G. G. H.; Anon, for Tracts, £6 per Bookroom.

Sustentation Fund: E. MacIennan, Fort William, £20.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Aberdeen: *Sustentation Fund:* For pulpit supply from friend of the cause, £40, per envelope in collection plate.

Daviot - Stratherrick - Tomatin: *Stratherrick Communion expenses:* A friend, £10, per E. I. Fraser; A friend, £20.

Edinburgh: *Congregational Funds:* Passerby, £20, envelope in plate. *For chairs for church hall:* Anon, £1,500, envelope in plate; *Church repair fund:* Anon, £20, in collection box.

Inverness: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon £20, £30, £10, £50, £20, £100, £30, £10; *Church Bus Maintenance:* £10, per D.J. McD; *Kenya Mission Fund,* £60, per F.S. *Communion Expenses:* £20, per R.M; all per envelope in collection plate.

London: *Congregational:* for BT Account, £5;

North Harris: *Door Collection:* Friend, Kyle, £20, per Rev. R.McL; *Bus Fund:* M.M., Cluer, £10, envelope in plate; Anon, Cluer, £6, envelope in plate; *Where most needed:* Friend, Stockinish, £20, envelope in plate; *Where most needed:* Friend, Stockinish, £30, per Rev. R.M.L. *Home Mission:* Anon, £10, envelope in plate.

Portree: *Bus Fund:* Anon, £6, envelope in plate; *Where most needed:* Friend, £20, per S.Y.M.; Friend, £10, per S.Y.M.

Raasay: *Sustentation Fund:* Alexandrina Macleod, £100, per M. Ferguson; *Where Most Needed:* B. Nicolson, £40, per Treasurer; Interested, £100, envelope in plate; *Car Fund:* Job 38: 31, £10, per Rev. J.R. Tallach.