

Free Church

Witness



MAY 2008 ISSUE

Christ's Thirst

Rev James Clark



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 Beauly, Strath

18 Rothesay

June:-

1 Tarbat

8 Tomatin, Staffin, Aultbea

15 Kiltearn, Brora

July:-

6 Snizort

13 Bracadale, Washington

Troubled Hearts

There are lots of troubled hearts around. Many things could be worrying you. Maybe your stomach is in a knot. You are conscious of your blood pressure rising. Panic is setting in. How will you cope? Jesus has words of comfort for you. He says: 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me' (Jn.14:1). Later He says, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' (v27).

Troubled Hearts

Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die. He must leave them and they were anxious. For the last three years he was with them constantly, teaching, guiding, advising, directing and providing for them. They had grown dependent upon Him and their whole lives revolved round Him. How could they survive without Him? Perhaps you have just learned that a loved one is terminally ill. Maybe death has already entered your home. How can you go on?

Specifically Jesus has been telling of how Peter will deny Him. But Peter has been such a devoted disciple. What could make him do that? Something awful must be about to happen. A terrible temptation is about to come. Do trials and temptations worry you? Have you learned your own weakness? Are you afraid that you will disgrace your own family, your Church and your heavenly Father?

Is death and judgment just round the corner? The Bible tells of those who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb.2:15). This is natural for the unconverted. Every effort is made to pretend that death will not happen. It is a taboo subject. Funerals are celebrations, a kind of entertainment, and coffins are covered with beautiful flowers, but death will not go away. 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment' (Heb.9:27). There is no escape. The instinct of self-preservation is strong yet one day death will come. Are you afraid to die? Are you afraid of what comes after death?

Faith is the Answer

You believe in God. Most people do. Even if publicly you deny it, yet deep down inside you, in your conscience, you know there is a God. He is the supreme Being, the Creator, Sustainer, Ruler and Judge. Keep on believing in Him. But more, believe also in me – the Saviour. I too, am God, the second Person of the Trinity. I became man, lived a perfect life and I am going to die. You saw my miracles, you beheld My glory and know Me to be the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Believe in Me. Trust in Me to obtain forgiveness for your sins, to make you perfect, to obtain a heaven for you. Trust your future to Me and you will have no need to

fear. Move from fear to faith. Replace anxiety with peace. The trouble with you is that you are looking inward. You are looking to yourself and to your own resources or rather lack of them. Look to Me in trust and expectation. Pray to Me. Cast your cares and burdens upon Me. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Mt.11:28). Further, the rest that I give will remain (Heb.4:9). It will last forever.

I Go to Prepare a Place for You

'In my Father's house are many mansions' (Jn.14:2). There is lots of room there. I go to prepare a place for you. If you trust in me I will not let you down. If there was a shortage of places in heaven I would have told you. There is a mansion beyond the grave for everyone who believes in me. I am going to die. Later this night I will be arrested. I will be tried, falsely condemned, mocked, beaten, led out of Jerusalem and crucified. This is necessary. I am going to prepare a place for you. I will do it through my atoning death on the cross. My blood shed for you will buy an apartment for you in paradise. Having died I will rise on the third day and will ascend up with the price to claim these rooms for you. I will continue to intercede for you all your life, so that although you sin you will be forgiven. Whoever perishes, those who trust in me never will.

I will Come Again

Once your place in the house of many rooms is ready and once you are ready for this reward, having finished your life's work in this world, I will come for you. What is death? In some ways it is a horrid monster entering your home and taking away a loved one. For the unconverted nothing is more awesome than death. In hell they will lift up their eyes being in torment. But for the Christian death is simply falling asleep. The Saviour comes with a kiss and wakens you as a mother would a darling child. And when you look up it is into the eyes of your beloved Redeemer. You are surrounded with the heavenly throng. The saints who have already gone home are there and so are the angels. They are worshipping the Lord and delighting in Him. What a thrill will fill your heart that moment and it will only get better from then on. You were engaged to be married spiritually to Christ and now at last the wedding day has arrived. The labours and trials of life, the battles and bruises, the temptations and distresses, the wanderings and weariness of the pilgrimage are behind, and the crown of glory is now yours. Well done good and faithful servant, enter in to the joy of your Lord (Mt.25:23). 'My peace I give unto you... Let not your heart be troubled' (Jn.14:27).

William Wilberforce II

Jonathan Gulliford

What did the Commons do with the Slave Bill in 1789? They wanted more evidence. More years of tireless effort. More passionate speeches from Wilberforce and Pitt, but no victory.

In 1796 the motion passed the first two readings. Then came the all-important third reading. Wilberforce's diary entry says it all – 'March 15. Dined before House. Slave Bill thrown out by 74 votes to 70, ten or twelve of those who had supported me [were] about in the country, or [away] on pleasure. Enough [were] at the opera to have carried it'. His opponents had given free opera tickets to those they knew would support the Bill.

Devastated, stressed into ill health and weary, Wilberforce wrote to John Newton stating that he was considering retiring from public life. Newton's reply bears a long quotation: 'It is [not] possible at present to calculate all the advantages that may result from your having a seat in the House at such a time as this. The example, and even the presence of a consistent character, may have a powerful, though unobserved, effect upon others. You are not only a representative for Yorkshire, you have the far greater honour of being a representative for the Lord in a place where many know Him not, and an opportunity of showing them what are the genuine fruits of that religion which you are known to profess.

'Though you have not, as yet, fully succeeded in your persevering endeavours to abolish the slave trade, the business is still in [process]; and since you took it in hand, the condition of the slaves in our islands has undoubtedly been already [improved].

'It is true that you live in the midst of difficulties and snares, and you need a double guard of watchfulness and prayer. But since you know both your need of help, and where to look for it, I may say to you as Darius to Daniel – "Thy God whom thou servest continually is able to preserve and deliver you". Daniel likewise was a public man, and in critical circumstances; but he trusted in the Lord; was faithful in his department, and therefore though he had enemies, they could not prevail against him.

'Indeed the great point for our comfort in life is to have a well-grounded persuasion that we are where, all things considered, we ought to be. Then it is no great matter whether we are in public or in private life, in a city or a village, in a palace or a cottage. The promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee", is necessary to support us in the smoothest scenes, and is equally able to support us in the most difficult. Happy the man who has a deep impression of our Lord's words, "Without me you can do nothing"... May the Lord bless you ... may He be your sun and your shield, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing.'

Newton's letter helped Wilberforce to see that he needed to stay the course. Eleven long years lay ahead, but he had come through his crowded hour. Every year he suffered setbacks with defeats and deferrals. In January 1806 Pitt the Younger died. Wilberforce had lost one of his closest friends. One year later, 23rd February 1807 was one of the most significant nights in British political history. The motion was once more debated and speaker after speaker stood in favour of abolition. As they rose to their feet, head in his hands Wilberforce wept. At 4am the vote came – 283 for, 16 against. The slave trade was abolished.

Reformation of Society

The 'reformation of manners' was the second objective that Wilberforce had committed to his diary twenty years before. He had himself undergone a great change, and his commitment to Christ showed him what his duties were to God and to his fellow citizens: 'to promote the happiness [that is wellbeing] of his fellow creatures to the utmost of his power'. Wilberforce believed that if he did all that he could to help others come to faith the ripple effect would spread throughout the kingdom. One by one, more of his countrymen would have the hope of heaven in their hearts. They would also be taught by their faith how to show, in practical terms, that they had the welfare of others close to heart. The love of God would best teach them how they could demonstrate their love to fellow human beings.

Wilberforce therefore did three things (alongside his work on slavery):

1. Established the Society for the Reformation of Manners.
2. Worked to introduce sound doctrine into educational establishments.
3. He wrote his book, *Real Christianity*.

1. The Society for the Reformation of Manners

Wilberforce had seen at first hand the havoc gambling could cause. Fornication, adultery, dueling, bribery and corrupt practices were common. The poor who flooded to the factories suffered from dangerous working conditions, overcrowding and squalor; cheap gin was poisoning people. The church was plagued by immorality and apathy, and mere nominal belief in the Bible was commonplace. Many of the clergy preferred hunting and card playing. High, middle or lower classes – it made no difference – there were crying needs to be met throughout the kingdom.

Wilberforce worked for change. He was involved in organisations like the Bible Society and the Church Missionary Society which distributed the Bible and encouraged evangelism. Schools for the deaf and the blind were established. So too were lending libraries, trade schools

and colleges. Public health initiatives were undertaken such as the promotion of smallpox vaccination. On top of this Wilberforce distributed his money to individuals. He visited prisons with Elizabeth Fry. He secured the release of many imprisoned for debt. He visited the sick and he funded hospitals. In order to do this he economised in his personal life wherever he could. His was a life devoted to others.

2. Sound Doctrine

In 1825 the Mechanics Institute and London University were founded. Wilberforce wanted to establish a seat of Christian instruction and learning. He wanted courses in Christian apologetics. He wanted students to understand the Christian faith and to halt the spread of unbelief. The response from the universities was all too familiar to our ears. 'Instruction in religion was incompatible with the first principle of receiving alike men of all faiths or of none'. Wilberforce was robust in his response – '**Exclusion in the name of toleration produces intolerance, as well as undereducated students**'. How we have seen the truth of this in our own times! But he did not win this battle. London University agreed to incorporate in their curriculum a lecture on the evidences of Christianity but it was not compulsory and was poorly supported.

3. Real Christianity

The full title has 24 words(!) It was published in 1797 and was a best seller. He asserts that many who preach 'do nothing to bring the glorious work

of Christ to the attention of their hearers. They are heard with little interest like the legendary tales of antiquity ... dismissed from our minds until next Sunday'. Wilberforce sets out that it is only through the grace of God in granting repentance and faith that sinners can be justified before God. And it is only this salvation that leads to a true Christian life which is evidenced in 'loving our neighbours as ourselves'. Real Christianity, he asserts, is not Sunday show; it is an entire way of life that requires diligence and study and that should affect every aspect of the Christian's public and private life. This was what made Wilberforce act as he did. This was his motivation and his driver. It is exactly the same salvation with the same God that we enjoy.

Death

William Wilberforce died at the age of 73, but not before one more great event. On 26th July 1833, the bill for the complete abolition of slavery (the law of 1807 had made the slave *trade* illegal) was passed by the House. The news was rushed to Wilberforce – the last word he ever received from Parliament – fifty years after he had begun the fight. The following morning he seemed to rally, but then his condition worsened. When the pain grew great he said to his son Henry: 'I am in a very distressed state'. 'Yes', Henry replied, 'but your feet are on the Rock'. He died at 3am on Monday 29th July 1833.

Application to us

We can look at this mere scratching of the surface of his life and see the challenges from those around him: his aunt and uncle, **Hannah and William who were** faithful Christian people and sought to lead a child to God; **Isaac Milner** although intellectually and analytically a pygmy compared to Wilberforce, yet was still prepared to present the gospel and give a reason for the hope he professed, and **John Newton** who gave wise counsel and encouragement in some of the darkest moments and supported Wilberforce in regular prayer.

How does one rightly begin to capture the significance of **Wilberforce's life and labours**? Only God knows. But what a challenge he is to us as we live in a society just like his – a society which is racked by inequality, a global society where the problem is magnified untold times, a government which is corrupt to the core and laws which are repugnant beyond words and which cause such suffering to mankind and are an abhorrence and stench to God. Examples abound – two which are topical:

1. Abortion

186,400 unborn babies were murdered in England and Wales in 2005. In Scotland there are 1000 abortions per month. Just as 200 years ago slaves were not considered as people – rather as a commodity – so the unborn child is in our own society. Who will be today's Wilberforce for the unborn child? Do we even care? What are we doing about it?

2. Education

The education that children and young people receive in this country is lacking in every aspect of the Christian heritage that gave us the very education system we enjoy. Attempts to have alternatives to the theory of evolution introduced into schools have been lambasted by the authorities.

The Truth in Science campaign designed school teaching packs which include Intelligent Design as an alternative to be placed before the children to allow them to assess this against evolution. The government has said that they are: 'inappropriate and not supportive of the science curriculum'. The chairman of the parliamentary science and technology committee, Phil Willis (Lib Dem), said it 'elevated creationism' to the same level of debate as Darwinism and that there was no justification for that. Dr Evan Harris, Lib Dem science spokesman, said it was worrying that some schools were giving 'this nonsense' any credence. This just proves correct Wilberforce's assertion that 'exclusion in the name of tolerance produces intolerance as well as undereducated students'.

What are we doing about it? The very least we can do is support Prof Stuart Burgess and the others involved in Truth in Science with regular prayer and encouragement, as Newton did for Wilberforce. We can write letters to our MP's. In his day, Wilberforce was God's tool for social justice.

And it was all based on God's grace.

The General Assembly 2008

Rev John J Murray

As one who has attended General Assemblies for over fifty years I can testify to the fact that some have been uplifting and encouraging and others have left one depressed. I have heard some people dismiss the General Assembly as routine and boring. Far better, they would say, spend the time getting on with preaching the Gospel to the lost and building up the church.

We must not forget that the General Assembly has a vital part to play in the fulfilment of these objectives. It has the task of reviewing the business of the congregations and presbyteries of the Church over the preceding year and of formulating strategy for the future. Reports from the various Committees of the Church are considered and debated by the commissioners (ministers and elders sent by their Presbyteries). The Assembly provides an opportunity to hear what is happening in the denomination as a whole. As delegates from sister churches at home and overseas bring greetings we are given the chance to catch up with what is happening in the church in other parts of the world. It gives us the wider perspective.

The most encouraging times in the Assembly in the last fifty years have been the evenings of the presentation of the Reports from the Welfare of Youth, the Foreign Missions and the Church Extension. It was not unusual to see the public gallery full, especially on the evening when the missionaries were to speak. The members of the Church expressed their support and it was a stimulus to those involved in these areas of the Church's work.

We felt something of that kind of support and encouragement in the attendances at meetings and at the General Assembly

in the days following the division of 2000. People rallied to encourage those who stood for truth and righteousness. It meant a lot to the ministers and elders at the time. In the last year or two there has been a falling off in attendance at the General Assembly. Have people become weary of being shuffled around because of long legal debates? Has the conduct of some commissioners in previous Assemblies put some folk off? Or did the decline in numbers mean a falling away of interest in the testimony of our Church?

Whatever the cause, the Assembly Arrangements Committee are making a renewed plea for ministers to encourage their people to attend the meetings in May, especially at the evening sessions. The stand we took is no less justified and the cause we have espoused remains as relevant as ever. As the situation in the professing church continues to decline a clear testimony to our Reformed Faith is needed more than ever. Let us seek to be wholly committed to that testimony and give every encouragement to those who are seeking to advance it.

Provisional Timetable

<i>Monday evening:</i>	Retiring Moderator's Sermon;
<i>Tuesday morning:</i>	Moderator's address;
<i>Tuesday evening:</i>	Welfare of Youth;
<i>Wednesday evening:</i>	Home and Foreign Missions & Address from visiting delegate;
<i>Thursday morning:</i>	Public Questions.

Probe Your Soul with Questions

George Whitefield (1714-1770) was the best-known evangelist of the eighteenth century and one of the greatest itinerant preachers in the history of Protestantism. Before he went to bed each night, he opened his journal and probed his soul with questions such as these which he'd placed in the flyleaf:

Have I,

1. Been fervent in prayer?
2. After or before every deliberate conversation or action, considered how it might tend to God's glory?
3. After any pleasure, immediately given thanks?
4. Planned business for the day?
5. Been simple and recollected in everything?
6. Been meek, cheerful, affable in everything I said or did?
7. Been proud, vain, unchaste, or enviable of others?
8. Remembered in eating and drinking to be thankful? Temperate in sleep?
9. Thought or spoken unkindly of anyone?
10. Confessed all sins?

Andrew Bonar - The Death of His Wife

Diary of Andrew Bonar, 1864



Saturday, September 24th.— This morning about eight o'clock a daughter was born to us. In our ordinary reading last night *Christ at Bethesda* was read, and this took hold of me; the true Bethesda [mercy] in the house, for body and soul. Lord, may this little one be another of Thy saved, a precious stone in Thy breastplate, one in whom Thou shalt be glorified.

Saturday, October 15th.— O what a wound! Last night most suddenly, after three hours' sinking, my dear, dear Isabella was taken from me. Lord, pour in comfort, for I cannot. It needs the Holy Ghost to work at such a time. Lord, what innumerable kindnesses Thou gavest me through her: a true wife, a true mother, a true mistress, a true friend. She passed away so gently that, till I held her and touched her cheek, I could scarcely believe it was death. I have needed this affliction. It brings to my remembrance sins of many, many kinds: neglected prayer, neglected thanksgiving, self-indulgence, my life too much a life for myself and family. Lord, let me not love Thee less, but more, because of this stroke, and from this day may I work more for the ingathering of souls. I had been reading between dinner and tea my usual verse. Nahum 1:7 was that for the day. 'The Lord is good,' etc. Oh, little did I think how I would need it half an hour after! Lord, Lord, make this a time of the Spirit being poured out upon my family!

Sabbath, 16th.— Have been reading to my children Revelation 7. But oh, the shadow is deep! The Lord made Robert M'Cheyne's death a means of great blessing to me; may this not be less, is all my prayer.

I have at times felt it a happy consideration that fifty-four years of my life are over, and that I am necessarily nearer the entrance into glory. It will be more than ever present to me. And somehow I have more hope than I could before cherish, that if I continue praying for my dear, dear children, every one of them will be found in Christ. Dear, dear Isabella was a most true, sincere, unpretending believer. In *small duties* she was specially to be found careful and attentive. O what I have lost! I have been thinking of her in glory, perhaps with little Andrew [son who had died earlier] beside her, and how they will meet me!

Some people pass through life having touched the hem of His garment without any public demonstration. Some again, like Bartimeus, openly follow Jesus in the way, so that all

see their deeds. But both classes are alike safe. The domestic follower is of the former class, most heartily on the Lord's side, but not acting on every one; though, if you come into contact, you find what a true, thankful, loving spirit is cherished toward the Lord Jesus. I see, too, when a believer seems to be doing little, it often seems to be just this, that that believer has not the same gift as others around, and so is not going forth in that direction. But the stream, being thus checked, does flow forth in some other ways; if not by words, then by the life, the letters, the little acts, etc. My brother John said yesterday, 'What a surprise she would get, when she suddenly found herself not amid her family, but amid the redeemed above!'

I have been thinking again, may the Lord make her memory to be to me and my children what Robert M'Cheyne's death was to the public. She passed away in three hours after we got alarmed, and, as our old family servant said, 'slipt into glory' at a quarter to ten. I was bewildered. I said to her, a few minutes before she departed, 'I know you are leaning upon Christ'. She tried gently to say that she was, but was almost unconscious all the three hours. I had just prayed aloud, 'Lord, receive her spirit', when life was gone, and we had had our fill of uncontrollable weeping (for all the children were there, and the servants). I prayed with them as I could. The time will never be forgotten. I am beginning this afternoon to be able to learn a little from it. There are many praying for me, I know. It is a relief to me to write down a little of what I feel and see as the hours of this solemn, solemn day pass on. My dear boy James has been with me most of the day. They all feel their dear mother's loss, with bursting hearts, so that I cannot often bear to think upon their loss. My Lord and Saviour is henceforth to be to me instead of what I have lost.

He is to take the place of my dear Isabella when I go into her chamber, or find her sweet look and converse recalled by the place she used to make so pleasant by her presence. Ezekiel 24:15 is my case. The Lord told me He was taking her away only a few hours before it was done! It was, indeed, a stroke! In the evening my wife died. Well does He know what has been blighted with her. But He does not forbid me to mourn. Nor will He forget to bless.

Tuesday, 18th.— Much interrupted yesterday, and yet helped, too, by the occasional visits of friends. 'Purged, that it may bear more fruit', was given me by one. I felt it difficult

to keep from some hard thoughts of God, or rather, from doubts of my being loved by Him. Now I am delivered from this temptation, and can stand upon the Rock and look at the waves. 'Ye have dwelt in this mountain long enough' has been in my mind. Some very wicked letters sent me ten days ago now help me strangely. My enemies have been compelled to forward my soul's interest.

Wednesday, 19th.— A day I little thought to come to, the funeral day of dear Isabella. Mr Somerville prayed, and read Song 2:10-17, Matt 25:1-13, and then Dr Miller prayed very fervently and fully. Today has been stormy and wet all through, and not less at the grave. There she lies beside our little boy. The occupation and the presence of so many friends prevented the true realization of the solemn and bitter fact that now she has left us to feel by experience of her absence all she has been so long by her presence. I was able to listen to the Word and join in each prayer. My brother Horace remained with us; the rest went each his own way. Resurrection has been much before my mind. I believed we were this day committing to the earth the 'seed' of an incorruptible body, glorious, spiritual, immortal. Saviour, be everything to me till that day come.

The very many letters of sympathy that have come to me are so many tokens of how the Elder Brother has been thinking upon me, touching these hearts and saying, 'Go, speak in My name.' I see this also, that with all but a very few, the place of the dead is soon filled up otherwise, so that it is our wisdom to live upon the smile of Christ *alone*. When I depart, let me be remembered by Christ my Priest, my Brother, my God.

Thursday, 20th.— Little comfortable rest last night. I see how this sore grief will recur in many ways. My dear children will feel it from time to time, I can see, in ways they little think of now. But what mercies mine have been in having such a wife, whole-hearted every way, without a single drawback to our affection during these sixteen years. How often I felt my whole heart resting in her sweet love and wise management! On looking back I can see very many lessons she has taught me as to how I should feel toward the Lord Jesus, and how truly He may come into the place which He has seen good to leave empty.

This morning I came upon the two books she was last reading in her bed. The one was Hill's *Deep Things of God*, the other, Bridges on *The Proverbs*. Doctrine and practice were both combined in her life. *Little things* were remarkably cared for by her. My brother's book, *The Way of Holiness*, had greatly delighted her at Kirn. Sitting at home today,

though it was the Fast-Day, I have been going over the past and learning to bless the Lord for His marvellous ways. I sometimes tremble for future days lest I fail, or lest I do not live up to what this chastisement of divine love is meant to bring. One of the first hymns she enclosed to me, after we began to know each other and to correspond, had this verse marked with her pencil very strongly :

'Through many a danger, toil, and snare,

I have already come ;

'Tis grace that led me on thus far,

And grace will lead me home.

And she is at home now! Our marriage day was looked forward to with immense desire, but not less shall be (through His grace) the marriage day of Christ, when we shall meet together for ever.

Saturday, 22nd.— The torrent is now settling into a calm river. My soul is finding real sweetness in the Lord and in the hope set before me. Many most interesting notices of Isabella's state of mind have come to light. Many letters from friends speak of her so warmly, so tenderly, and with such assurance of her oneness with Christ. The Lord's kindness

to me in many ways has been quite remarkable. I have had very many letters full of sympathy, and really most helpful, for they were just messengers from my Lord's presence to carry me cups of His new wine. About forty such I have received. And then, so many prayers! My children too have

drawn round me so affectionately, I have got access to them in a new way. James especially has never sought to be away from me this week, and many talks we have had. The Lord could not have done this thing more tenderly and with more alleviation. Besides all which, the personal and direct presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, has been in my soul. Let me then gird up my loins and meet all that is in the future. The thoughts of resurrection have been unspeakably sweet and the most sustaining of all; and that day is ever coming nearer and nearer.

Sabbath, Nov. 6th.— The baptism-day of dear baby, Mary Elizabeth. My brother John most fervently commended her, as motherless, to divine care and sympathy. He spoke of baptism preaching all the promises of God to the believer. He spoke of our depositing the child in the bosom of the Godhead. There were circumstances of deep solemnity. I saw my children were all deeply moved. I came home feeling all the way an indescribable sadness, and yet as if a hand were underneath holding me up.

**"Through many a danger, toil, and snare,
I have already come ;
'Tis grace that led me on thus far,
And grace will lead me home."**

Christ's Thirst

John 19:28

Rev James Clark



There is a great mystery in this term 'I thirst'. Christ suffered on behalf of His people. His sufferings evidenced His true humanity, (Heb.2:17), and the intensity of His pain (Ps.22:15). This thirst is a combination of the pains of soul and body. The Second Person had undertaken in the Covenant of Grace to experience all the suffering which His people deserved according to divine justice. This cry was one of His last acts of obedience. What was agreed in eternity was now fulfilled in time. The Scriptures were given in time as a record of Christ's transaction in eternity (Ps.40:7), to suffer in soul and body, to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil.2:8). He suffered and He thirsted.

The Thirst of the Sufferer

The fire of God fell upon Him as the sacrifice for His people (Nah.1:6, Lam.1:13). He thirsted vicariously in the experience of damnation under the burning wrath of God. The rich man in hell thirsts (Lk.16:24) but Lazarus does not thirst (Jn.4:14; Rev.7:16) because Christ thirsted in his place. The Rock was drained when smitten so that He might 'pour water upon him that is thirsty'. The cup which He drank, unlike any other cup, caused Him by its ingredients to thirst as He shed His blood in satisfaction to divine justice. Hell is a place of thirst, a place of judgment. 'To spare us sinners the thirst ... He submitted to such torment in His mediatorial capacity. O what a well of consolation has He opened for us by His thirst!' (Krummacher). His thirst brought our satisfaction (Is.12:1-3).

'I thirst, but not as once I did
The vain delights of earth to share.
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.'

The Thirst of the Warrior

After his battle with the Philistines Samson cried out to God in his thirst (Judg.15:18-19). A greater than Samson is here, meeting a greater foe – 'the strong man armed' with his legions. Christ must fight for His people's salvation. It was on the cross that He spoiled principalities and powers and triumphed over them (Col.2:15); which means that He had been engaged in a battle. This was their hour and the power of darkness; demonic forces unleashed their venom against Him without restraint. Their aim, as always, was to deflect the second Adam from the path of obedience, the obedience (active and passive) which the Lord required for

our salvation. Satan had made many recorded attempts, eg in the wilderness and from the spectators at the cross urging Him to 'come down'. There had also been an attempt to lessen His sufferings by giving Him an anaesthetising drink – which He refused (Mt.27:34). He would suffer all that was required. Now He emerged from the darkness 'wounded for our transgressions' but 'mighty to save'! After the battle Christ thirsted. Samson slew all enemies and saved none alive. Christ defeated Satan and saved many – the many who were once His enemies. Now He would drink and lift up His head in triumph (Ps.110:7), marshalling His strength for the cry of the Victor, 'It is finished!'

The Thirst of the One Set Apart

When Christ cried, 'I thirst', it was just before He died. He had come from the Father (Jn.13:3) and now, having finished the work, He expressed in these words His desire to go home (cf Ps.42:2; 63:1). He had been judicially deserted by the Father in the darkness on the cross. He thirsts for restored communion: 'Turn unto me ... hide not thy face ... Draw nigh unto my soul' (Ps.69:16-18). Krummacher also highlights the vicarious aspect of His ascension. 'He longed to be again received into fellowship with God because His reception into it would be a pledge of theirs' (cf Heb.2:13). This is the thirst of love, a thirst which draws to the fountain, to the full experience of that which is desired. It was this thirst which empowered Christ to endure the suffering and the enmity on the cross. There was a joy set before Him and He knew 'that His hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father' (Jn.13:1).

Indwelling sin has a hardening effect, against which we must watch and pray. Hardness leads to pride. One way to maintain humility is to contemplate the suffering of Christ for our individual sins, as Anselm expressed himself: 'How do Thy sufferings, O Lord Christ, burn into my conscience! For it was indeed I who mingled that bitter cup of which Thou didst drink. My transgressions caused Thy death, my sins Thy wounds. O the grace of Him who delivered Thee up! O the love of Him who died!'

If you do not see that the sufferings of Christ were necessary for your salvation, then it will be necessary that you suffer for your own sins. If you do not thirst for Christ, then you shall have cause to thirst for ever where 'the fire is not quenched'. If you thirst for Christ, that thirst shall be satisfied – by Himself.



News

All Age Holiday

The 2008 All Age Holiday will be running in the fully-catered Carronvale House in Larbert on the 21st-26th July, Monday to Saturday (shorter than in previous years). The costs are: Adults £145, Concessions £130, Teenagers £105, Children £50. Under fives are free. The speaker will be the Rev John Keddie.

The application brochure is currently available to download on the FCC website:

www.freekirkcontinuing.co.uk/FCC/News/Entries/2007/12/20_All-Age_Holiday_Booking_Form.html



Ian Paisley to Step Down

The ultimate Ulsterman, Rev Ian Paisley, has announced his intention to step down as First Minister and head of the Democratic Unionist Party. The move follows his decision to leave the moderatorship of the Free Presbyterian Church. According

to published reports, many in the FPC and the DUP simply could not understand – or forgive – Paisley’s warm relationship with Sinn Fein deputy first minister Martin McGuinness. Ian Richard Kyle Paisley was born in Armagh on 6th April 1926, and brought up in Ballymena, Co Antrim, by his father, the Rev J Kyle Paisley, a dissident Baptist minister, and his Scottish mother, Isabella. After school in Ballymena, Paisley set out to follow his father’s footsteps and went to South Wales Bible College and the Reformed Presbyterian Theological College in Belfast. He was ordained in 1946. He was involved in the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster and served from its beginning in 1951 until this year, as moderator.

Government Policy on Alcohol

Christian Institute

Doctors have called for a reform of the Government’s policy on alcohol, saying drink-related problems are ‘unacceptably high’. A new report from the British Medical Association recommends shorter opening hours and a clamp-down on alcohol consumption among young people. The report notes: ‘Despite the evidence that increased opening hours and availability of alcohol are associated with greater consumption and alcohol-related problems, recent and proposed changes to licensing policies in the UK have favoured extended trading hours’. Professor Sir Charles George, Chair of the BMA’s Board of Science, says current strategies reflect ‘an over-reliance on popular but ineffective policies as well as liberalisation of the

major drivers of alcohol consumption: availability and price’. He adds: ‘It is essential that the UK Governments implement alcohol control policies that are evidence-based and proven to reduce alcohol-related harm’.

Blasphemy Laws

Christian Institute

The House of Lords has voted 148 to 87 in favour of repealing the blasphemy laws, although several Peers spoke strongly against the move. Baroness O’Cathain presented Peers with strong arguments for keeping the laws, urging them ‘to pause and consider that the freedom we have today was nurtured by Christian principles and continues to be maintained and guarded by them’. Lord Kingsland QC added: ‘Christianity has been absolutely fundamental to the development of our constitutional freedoms and I worry a little that this is no longer understood in our society’.

However, arguing in favour of repealing the laws Government minister, Baroness Andrews, said: ‘To all intents and purposes the law is unworkable, as evidenced by the fact that very few prosecutions have been brought. It is a law which serves to protect neither the divine nor the individual believer’. There have been no successful prosecutions for blasphemy since 1977, when the editor of the *Gay News* received a £500 fine for publishing a highly offensive pornographic poem about Christ. By contrast, the Government wants to outlaw ‘incitement to homophobic hatred’ punishable by up to seven years in prison. Repeal of blasphemy has yet to be voted on by the House of Commons.

Desk



Casinos

Christian Institute

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has warned that the increase in casinos is 'irresponsible'. The Government's gambling watchdog has confirmed that there could be over 200 casinos in Britain – despite Government promises to limit the number to 150. Following enquiries made by the Christian Institute, the Gambling Commission has confirmed the total number of casinos could reach 226 if pending applications, made under the old 1968 legislation, are all successful. There are currently 144 casinos operating in Great Britain. When the Gambling Bill was being debated in 2005, the Government promised: 'there will be no more than 150 casinos. There could be fewer'. News of a potential explosion in the number of casinos comes soon after the Government confirmed the go-ahead for 16 huge new 'regional' casinos – the largest casinos yet allowed to operate in the UK.



Covenant College Appeal

This photo shows the Covenant College vehicle. It was brought up from South Africa by the Rev David Fraser and is now nearly 10 years old. It has been driven over terrible roads and tracks transporting missionaries and helpers. However, it has now reached the end of its useful life. The Mission needs a vehicle to cope with the rigours of visiting bush schools for teacher training and teaching conferences and for general visitation on a regular basis. In recent times they have relied on Phil Bailey's vehicle, which he offers when he can. However, this is no longer a practical nor a desirable option, as he has many commitments elsewhere.

The Mission work with the Christian Schools Association in the bush villages is growing, and is already proving successful. In charge of this work is the dedicated and highly qualified Dutch educationalist, Miss Marjanne

Hendriksen. It would be irresponsible to allow a single lady go into the bush with an unreliable vehicle. It is firmly agreed by all concerned that this ministry is very important and will, by God's grace and providence, help to raise up well-taught and godly children to play their part in establishing the kingdom of God in Zambia.

An appropriate new vehicle would cost in the region of £14,000. This vehicle would be used primarily for the schools' ministry but could also be used to help in the work of the College and the farm. We appeal to your generosity, as congregations or as individual donors, in this matter.

All donations should be sent to Mrs Mary Gillies, 7 Oliver's Brae, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis HS1 2SS and marked 'Covenant College Vehicle Appeal'. Cheques made payable to: 'Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)'.

Rev John J Murray,
Convener, Missions Committee

AIDS Rates in Northern Ireland up by 300%

UK LifeLeague

Northern Ireland's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, has reported a 300% rise in HIV and AIDS cases during the past decade. Of course no mention is made of the fact that homosexuals are responsible for the vast majority of this rise. We strongly condemn HM Government, groups like Terrence Higgins Trust and especially Gay Pride Belfast – without whose de facto policies and campaigns, none of this would have been possible. The LifeLeague says: 'Society has been bludgeoned by political correctness into intentionally ignoring the truth about AIDS and sodomy. It is time for truth. Deluding ourselves helps no one, especially those who now face a horrible death.'

A Record 3,000 Late Abortions in Britain

UK LifeLeague

The number of late abortions in Britain has reached a record level. Almost 3,000 were carried out on women who were at least 20 weeks pregnant, according to the latest annual figures in England and Wales, representing a 44 per cent increase in less than a decade.

The LifeLeague says: 'This lays to rest pro-abortionism's "urban myth" that, by making early abortions easier and more accessible, we reduce the number of late abortions. This has been shown to be an utter fallacy. Making early abortion easier and more accessible merely serves to push up the overall number of abortions; it doesn't accomplish anything else.'

Laos arrests 58 Christians, Sentences Churchmen

Compass Direct

Laotian officials arrested 15 Hmong Christian families in Bokeo district on 22 February, a day before a court sentenced nine area Hmong church leaders to 15 years in prison for conducting Christian ministry and meetings that had grown beyond acceptable levels for Communist officials. The day before the sentencing,

Laotian authorities arrived in Ban Sai Jarern village in Bokeo district with six trucks in which they hauled away eight Christian families. Authorities also arrested at least seven families from Fai village three miles away. The nine church leaders sentenced for conducting prominent Christian ministry and meetings had been rounded up during a police and military sweep of suspected rebels last July that left at least 13 innocent Christians dead.

The Heidelberg Catechism Was Wrong

CRC News

After 10 years of study, dialogue, and debate, the Christian Reformed Church in North America has released its final report that clarifies the CRC's stance on the Lord's Supper as it relates to the Roman Catholic Church. Recently posted and made available on the CRCNA website, 'The Lord's Supper and the Catholic Mass' is the result of extensive evaluation and discussion between CRC and Catholic educators and theologians. At issue had been the Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism. In the answer portion, the catechism says the Catholic Mass 'is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and a condemnable idolatry'. The report finds that the Catechism did not accurately represent the Catholic Church's beliefs on the topic. It is sad to see how this once great Church denies its Protestant heritage.

Charity Commission Consultation

Christian Institute

The Charity Commission has launched a consultation which specifically focuses on how the new 'public benefit' test will apply to religious groups. A general consultation on 'public benefit' ended last June. This second, more specific, consultation will close on 30th June 2008. The Charities Act 2006 removes the presumption that religious groups are for the 'public benefit' and are therefore charitable. In the future, a religious group will have to demonstrate 'public benefit' in order

to be a charity. The question is, how will 'public benefit' be interpreted for religious groups? That is what this new consultation will specifically examine. Its conclusions will, therefore, be crucial.

New Psalmody CD

Isobel Scott

The Free Church (Continuing) hope to release Volume 4 in their Psalm-singing series, *Worthy to be Praised*, in time for the forthcoming Assembly. This double CD continues to follow the twelve-year teaching programme that has been produced by the Church. The 'Listening Disc' in Volume 4 includes four of the more familiar Psalms which are now set for younger singers. These are sung by the children of one of our Sabbath Schools. Also included are the two Gaelic Psalms set as an option for Gaelic speakers. As in former years this disc has twelve Psalm portions sung, unaccompanied. Many people enjoy listening to unaccompanied Psalm-singing in harmony and this recording has been lovingly prepared by people in the pew. As an aid to devotion and as an encouragement to praise, this CD is to be commended. With its focus on God's grace in the gospel of His Son and its richness in Christian experience, the Book of Psalms has provided a truly catholic manual of praise spanning the ages.

The second disc is a teaching one, designed to assist people in learning to sing the twelve tunes and any of the four harmony parts. There are four sections, for the tune, alto, tenor and bass. Within each section each tune part has two tracks. On the first track the tune/part is heard sung in Solfa. On the second track it is heard again but with the other three parts sounding in the background. Those with no knowledge of Solfa just need to hum along with the singing. For those who are willing to learn new tunes and learn the parts, this CD should prove helpful.

This quality double CD costs £10.00. For all interested in promoting unaccompanied Psalm Singing and for those who enjoy listening to the Psalms sung well, this is a must-have volume. May God use it for His glory and may He who is worthy to be praised

be honoured by many making melody in their heart to the Lord.

Volumes 1, 2, and 3 are available from Mrs Isobel Scott, 36 Pinewood Place, Blackburn, West Lothian, EH47 7NX. Volume 4, God willing, will be available in May. More details about these can be found at www.fccontinuing.org where a sample of volumes 1 and 2 can be heard.

Prayer and Walk

C H Spurgeon

'Thy paths drop fatness' (Ps.65:11)

Many are the paths of the Lord 'which drop fatness', but an especial one is the path of prayer. No believer, who is much in the closet, will have need to cry, 'My leanness, my leanness; woe unto me'. Starving souls live at a distance from the mercy-seat, and become like the parched fields in times of drought. Prevailing with God in wrestling prayer is sure to make the believer strong – if not happy.

The nearest place to the gate of heaven is the throne of the heavenly grace. Much alone, and you will have much assurance; little alone with Jesus, your religion will be shallow, polluted with many doubts and fears, and not sparkling with the joy of the Lord. Since the soul-enriching path of prayer is open to the very weakest saint; since no high attainments are required; since you are not bidden to come because you are an advanced saint, but freely invited if you be a saint at all; see to it, dear reader, that you are often in the way of private devotion. Be much on your knees, for so Elijah drew the rain upon famished Israel's fields.

There is another especial path dropping with fatness to those who walk therein; it is the secret walk of communion. Oh the delights of fellowship with Jesus! Earth hath no words which can set forth the holy calm of a soul leaning on Jesus' bosom. Few Christians understand it, they live in the lowlands and seldom climb to the top of Nebo: they live in the outer court, they enter not the holy place, they take not up the privilege of priesthood. At a distance they see the sacrifice, but they sit not down with the priest to eat thereof, and to enjoy the fat of the burnt offering.

But, reader, sit thou ever under the shadow of Jesus; come up to that palm tree, and take hold of the branches thereof; let thy beloved be unto thee as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and thou shalt be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

Oh Jesus, visit us with Thy salvation!

Arbroath Youth Weekend - February 2008

James Boyd

A group of over fifty attended the Youth Weekend this February (8th to 11th) in the Windmill Christian Centre in Arbroath. The weekend was a wonderful time of fellowship and teaching. Talks were given by the Rev Gavin Beers (Ayr) on the subject 'Breaking Down Strongholds'. He set himself the daunting task of summarising 'Post-Modernism', 'Materialism' and 'Relativism' and produced three masterful talks.

Friday's introduction dealt first with our need for apologetics – a defence of the Gospel. He then explained Post-modernism and the history of thought through the past millennia until now, when there is no absolute truth but rather people trust their feelings.

Saturday morning's talk was on 'Materialism', which is the belief that matter is all that there is. Mr Beers explained how this supposed great intellectual advancement is nothing of the sort, but rather what Paul encountered among the Epicureans. Implications of this belief, and an explanation of how to counter materialists were given. Questions were set for the group study and discussion on materialism and were partly philosophical and partly biblical in nature.

Saturday evening's talk was on 'Relativism' – the idea that truth is what is true for you. Implications and how to recognise it were explained. The Lord's Day services were on 'Tearing Down Strongholds and our Warfare' (2Cor.10:3-5), and on 'Christ the Truth' (John 14:6).

Worship was taken morning and evening by one of the young folk. Testimonies were also given by Fiona Taylor, Irene MacKinnon, David Wylie and Scott Maciver. It was wonderful to hear of how the Lord had worked in the lives of these young people, and how the Lord had helped them.

The weekend was of great blessing to those who attended, with many new friends being made and many profitable discussions. A question and answer session each night allowed anything to be asked of Mr Beers who also answered very well. We give thanks to God for our wonderful weekend, and the ability to meet together with freedom of religion in this land. Thanks to Rev Gavin Beers for his talks, sermons and all his hard work. Thanks also to Murray Mackay and the Glasgow YF for organising the weekend, and to Mrs McQueer and Mrs Boyd from Inverness who kindly stepped in at the last minute to the role of cooks, and did a superb job.

All talks and sermons are highly recommended and are online at www.Bible-Sermons.org.uk.



A Search for Atoning Blood

Diana Kleyn

In the spring of 1898, an evangelist was holding some Gospel meetings in San Francisco. He had a special interest in the salvation of the Jews. He had just returned from a trip to Israel, and was giving presentations in various churches around the city. His purpose was to prove from Scripture that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah. Once, when he finished his speech, he asked if there were any questions, or if anyone had a testimony. He especially welcomed Jews to ask questions. At last an old man stood up and told his story.

‘This is Passover week among you, my Jewish brethren,’ he said, ‘and as I sat here, I was thinking how you will be observing it. You will put away all leaven from your houses; you will eat the *motah* (unleavened wafers) and the roasted lamb. You will attend synagogue services, and carry out the ritual and directions of the Talmud.

‘But you forget, my brethren, that you have everything except that which Jehovah required first of all. He did not say, When I see the leaven put away, or, when I see you eat the *motah*, or the lamb, or go to the synagogue, I will pass over you, but His Word says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Exod.12:13). Ah, my brethren, you can substitute nothing for this. You must have the blood!’

After a moment’s pause, the old man went on, ‘I was born in Palestine, nearly 70 years ago. As a child, I was taught to read the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. I attended the synagogue, and learned Hebrew from the Rabbis. At first I believed what I was told, that ours was the true and only religion, but as I grew older and studied the Law more intently, I was struck by the place that blood had in all the ceremonies, and was equally struck by its utter absence in the rituals I was brought up in. Again and again I read Exodus 12, and Leviticus 16 and 17. The latter chapters made me tremble, as I thought of the great Day of Atonement, and the importance of the blood. Day and night one verse would ring in my ears, “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev.17:11). I knew I had broken the Law. I needed atonement. Year after year, on that day, I beat my breast as I confessed my need of it, but it had to be made by blood, and there was no blood!

‘In my distress, I at last opened my heart to a learned and respected Rabbi. He told me that God was angry with His people. Jerusalem was in the hands of the Gentiles, the temple was destroyed, and an Islamic mosque was built in its place. The only place on earth where we dare shed the sacrifice, in accordance with Leviticus 17 and Deuteronomy 12, was desecrated, and our nation scattered. That was why

there was no blood, he explained. God Himself had closed the way to carry out the solemn service of the great Day of Atonement. Now, we must turn to the Talmud, and rest on its instruction, and trust in the mercy of God and the merits of the fathers.

‘I tried to be satisfied, but could not. Something seemed to tell me that the Law was unchanged, even though our temple was destroyed. Nothing else but blood could atone for the soul. We Jews dared not shed blood for atonement anywhere else but in the place the Lord had chosen: “But in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee” (Deut.12:14). So we were left without an atonement at all, I reasoned. This thought filled me with horror. I consulted other Rabbis with my burning question, “Where can I find the blood of the atonement?”

‘I was over thirty years old when I left Palestine and came to Constantinople with my soul exceedingly troubled about my sins. One evening, I was walking down one of the narrow streets of that city, when I saw a sign informing passersby about a meeting for Jews. Curiosity led me to open the door and go in. Just as I took a seat, I heard a man say, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jn.1:7). It was my first introduction to the gospel, but I listened breathlessly as the speaker told how God had declared that “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb.9:22b) or forgiveness of sins, but that He had given His only begotten Son, the Lamb of God, to die. All who trusted in His blood were forgiven all their iniquities. This was the Messiah of Isaiah 53; this was the Sufferer of Psalm 22! Suddenly it all made sense. My long search was over. I had found the blood of atonement at last! I trusted then and there in the blood of the Son of God! His blood has been shed for sinners. It has satisfied God, or He would not have raised Christ from the dead, and it is the only means of salvation for either Jew or Gentile. Dear brethren, the Messiah has come. He has made atonement with His blood. Turn to Him and acknowledge Him as the “Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29b). You will have no peace or salvation until you trust in Him.’

Have you found the blood of atonement? Are you trusting in God’s smitten Lamb? Or are you trusting in your good works, in your church attendance, or Bible reading and prayers, or your good behaviour? All these things are good, but they do not provide the blood of atonement. Flee to Jesus Christ with all your sins, for only in Him is found forgiveness of sin.

The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth, October 2005



The Riches of the Psalms

IV

Rev Malcolm H Watts

6. Groupings of Psalms

If we take account of the fivefold division of the Psalter, we shall find that there is a particular Messianic emphasis in each book:

- Book 1 (Psalms 1-41) – Christ's humiliation
 - Book 2 (Psalms 42-72) – His exaltation
 - Book 3 (Psalms 73-89) – The rejection of Israel and the establishment of the Christian church
 - Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) – His mediatorial reign
 - Book 5 (Psalms 107-150) – Our Lord's heavenly glory
- Also, when the Psalter is viewed Messianically, certain Psalms will group together: eg Psalms 1-3 – life, death, resurrection; 22-24 – death, resurrection, and ascension; 108-110 – Seeking a people, He is neglected by Jews and accepted by Christian believers. Consider also the 'Passion Psalms': 22, 25, 41, 55, 69, 109; and the 'Royal Psalms': 2, 18, 20, 45, 61, 72, 110.

There are, however, other clear groupings in the Psalter:

(i) Alphabetical Psalms – there are *nine*. Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145. The finest example is Psalm 119, formed of 22 stanzas, arranged acrostically according to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These psalms are mainly didactic and were probably composed in this form to aid the memory.

(ii) Penitential Psalms – there are *seven*. Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. They have been so called since Origen's time. Each expresses contrition and contains confession of sin. There are others, however, which have something of this character.

(iii) Imprecatory Psalms – there are *four*. Psalms 7, 35, 69, 109. Other psalms contain imprecations (eg 5:10, 55:9, 83:9-17 and 137), but these are characterised throughout by curses on enemies. They are useful when referring to judgment. Luther tells of a man driven by these denunciations to seek pardon and safety in Christ.

(iv) Thanksgiving Psalms – there are *six*. Psalms 113-118 (the Hallel). These were used on festive occasions, especially the Passover when two were sung before partaking of the lamb and four afterwards (cf Mt.26:30). They describe God's mercy (Ps.113); a greater redemption (Ps.114); the necessity of faith (Ps.115 – 'Trust thou in the Lord'); eternal life in possession (Ps.116); the universality of the Gospel call (Ps.117); and the Kingdom of Heaven open to every believer (Ps.118:19ff).

(v) Songs of Ascent – there are *fifteen*. Psalms 120-134. They were probably sung when making pilgrimage to Zion

('ascent' or 'going up' – 1Sam.1:3; Ps.122:4; Zech.14:19). They are also sometimes called 'Pilgrim Psalms'.

(vi) Nature Psalms – there are *four*. Psalms 19, 29, 104, 147. Psalm 104 is based on the six days' work of creation, beginning with the breaking forth of light on the first day, and concluding with a Sabbath day's meditation on God's works. 'The first chapter of Genesis set to music' (Christopher Wordsworth).

(vii) Historical Psalms – there are *six*. Psalms 68, 78, 105, 106, 135, 136. They rest on the principle of the unity of the church in all times, and the fact that we should identify ourselves with our forefathers. They are also acted 'parables' (Ps.78:1-3, ie typical representations of spiritual truth).

(viii) Judgment Psalms – there are *six*. Psalms 9-14. These are verses of judgment, finding consummation in Psalm 15, a vision of the eternal dwelling place of God and His people. 'He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead' (The Apostles' Creed).

(ix) Sovereignty Psalms – there are *three*. Psalms 93, 97, 99. They begin with 'The Lord reigneth', and they anticipate the day when all shall be placed under His feet (Rev.11:17;19:6).

(x) Hallelujah Psalms – there are *ten*. Psalms 106, 111, 112, 113, 135, 146-150. All commence with 'Praise ye the Lord', and they are ideal for teaching on worship. For example, in Psalm 150: 'Praise God', or equivalents, occurs 12 times, representing perhaps all God's people (12 tribes/12 apostles).

Taking 'praise' as the theme of Psalm 150, we could develop this by asking a number of questions:

- a. What is praise? The main duty of life (v 1).
- b. Who? The great Jehovah (v 1).
- c. Where? In sanctuaries in earth and Heaven (v 1).
- d. Why? His mighty acts (v 2).
- e. How? With all our powers – sincerely, penitentially, joyfully, enthusiastically, wholeheartedly, beautifully, and devotedly (vv 3-5).
- f. When? All life long – Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord (v 6).

7. Titles and Inscriptions

Altogether, there are 116 Psalms with titles or inscriptions: the other 44 are sometimes called 'orphan Psalms'. These headings – about the precise meaning of which there is some uncertainty – appear to deal with such matters as:

- (i) Authorship:** eg 'A Psalm of David' or 'of Asaph'.
- (ii) Nature:** 'Maschil' – 'teaching' ie 'A teaching Psalm'.

cf Psalm 32:8 – a cognate, or kindred verb is ‘to instruct’ (eg Ps.32, 78, 142); ‘Michtam’, possibly from ‘to cover’, and therefore a Psalm with a hidden meaning, or a Psalm revealing some great mystery (Ps.16, 56-60).

(iii) **Setting:** eg Psalm 3 – ‘A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son’; ‘Upon Mahalath’ – ‘sickness’ or ‘disease’ (cf Ex.15:26) – possibly the spiritual condition, which suits the contents as in Isaiah 1:5 (Ps.53). Compare ‘Upon Mahalath Leannoth’ – ‘sickness, or disease, in order to humble’ (Ps.88).

(iv) **Classification:** ‘A Song of degrees’ or ‘of ascents’ (Psalms 120-134), probably sung as pilgrims ‘went up’ to Jerusalem at the time of the annual festivals cf 1Samuel 1:3; Psalm 122:4.

(v) **Music:** ‘On Neginoth’ – ‘With music of stringed instruments’ (Ps.4, 6, 54, 55, 67, 76); ‘Upon Neginah’ – ‘With music of a stringed instrument’; and ‘Upon Nehiloth’, ‘with music of wind instruments’ (Ps.5). ‘Upon Gittith’, a feminine adjective of the Philistine town ‘Gath’, and so possibly an instrument (or tune?) which came from there (Ps.8, 81, 84).

(vi) **Voice:** ‘Upon Alamothe’ – literally, ‘virgins’ and therefore ‘sung by sopranos’ (Ps.46); ‘Upon Sheminith’ ‘the eighth’, perhaps an octave lower – tenor or, more probably, bass (Ps.6, 12).

(vii) **Tune:** ‘Shiggaion’, derived from a verb ‘to wander’, possibly a tune with changing rhythm (Ps.7); ‘Upon Muthlabben’, ‘the dying of the son’, the name of a tune or the opening words of a song associated with a particular tune (Ps.9).

(viii) **Subject:** ‘Upon Jonath-elem-rehokim’, could be the name of a tune called ‘The silent dove afar off’ (Ps.56) or it could describe the contents, the expression of how David felt when in Gath, far from the Sanctuary and silent as to public praise; ‘Upon Aijeleth Shahar’, again could be a tune, ‘The hind of the morning’ (Ps.22), but it could also be (as Martin Luther thought) a reference to Christ, the innocent and lovely hind, who was hunted and driven to the ground, but who, before daybreak, rose up and leapt to the very heights; ‘Upon Shoshannim’, ‘the lilies’, and, since lilies were the emblem of sacred love (Song of Sol.2:1, 2; cf 1Kgs.7:19, 22, 26), suggests a Psalm concerning the excellence of our Lord’s person, beauty and love (Ps.45, 69; cf ‘Shoshannim Eduth’ – ‘Lilies, a testimony’, Ps.80), and ‘Shushan Eduth’ – ‘Lily of testimony’, Ps.60).(ix) **Purpose:** ‘To bring to remembrance’ (Ps.38, 70).

(x) **Occasion:** ‘At the dedication of the house of David’ (Ps.30); ‘For the Sabbath day’ (Psalm 92) – Jewish authorities tell us there was a Psalm for each day in the worship of the Temple: Psalm 24 for the first day, 48 for the second, 82 for the third, 94 for the fourth, 81 for the fifth, 93 for the sixth, and 92 for the seventh.

Titles are Inspired

These titles should be taken seriously and included when the Psalms are read in public. There are solid grounds for believing that they are parts of the inspired text:

a. An inscription of some kind would certainly be expected on lyrical compositions (Ex.15:1; Deut.33:1). This was the

custom (Is.38:9).

b. In the Psalm of Habakkuk 3, a title appears as part of the Scripture: ‘To the chief singer on my stringed instruments’ (v19).

c. David’s 18th Psalm also appears in 2Samuel 22, but it is noteworthy that the descriptive heading is there incorporated as part of the actual chapter: ‘David spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul’ (v1).

d. The psalmist, under the Holy Spirit’s direction, was in the habit of prefixing titles or superscriptions to his compositions, as, for example, in 2Samuel 23:1 – ‘Now these be the last words of David...’ (cf 2Sam.1:17 – ‘And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son...’).

e. References in the historical books confirm the truth of the titles. 1Samuel 21:13 reads, ‘And he (David) changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad’, and the heading of Psalm 34 is as follows: ‘A Psalm of David when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech...’.

f. The information in the titles often corresponds quite remarkably with the contents of the Psalms to which they relate. Psalm 90, for example, has for a title, ‘A prayer of Moses the man of God’, and he is so described in Deuteronomy 33:1: moreover, in that Psalm there are allusions – if not actual citations – to Moses’ own words recorded elsewhere in the Scriptures – ‘dwelling place’ (Deut.33:27), ‘all generations’ (32:7), ‘repent thee’ (32:36), ‘thy work’ (32:4), and ‘thy glory’ (33:17).

g. Our Lord and His apostles treated them as Scripture. Our Lord quotes from Psalm 110, entitled ‘A Psalm of David’, and says, ‘How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?’ (Mt.22:43,44), and the apostles, when quoting Psalms 16 and 110, also make reference to the name given in those Psalm titles (Acts 2:29-36; 13:34-37).

Scholars agree that the titles are ancient, existing when the Septuagint (the Greek Version of the Hebrew Old Testament) was written about 200 BC, but account should be taken of the following facts: (1) the information in these titles was not produced by process of deduction; (2) many of the Psalms do not have any such superscription; and (3) pious Jews, through conscientious scribes, would never have added to what was written in the Holy Scriptures. We firmly believe therefore that these titles are vital parts of God’s inspired Word.

Helpful Truths in Titles

Many helpful truths can be gleaned from them:

(1) ‘To the Chief Musician’ is prefixed to fifty-five Psalms, most of which are Davidic (eg Ps.4, 5, 6) ‘There can be little doubt that the word...means the *precentor*, or *conductor* of the Temple choir, who trained the choir and led the music...’ (A F Kirkpatrick). (a) The Lord Jesus Christ leads us in our worship (Heb.2:12); (b) all the people should unite in these sacred songs; (c) the most excellent of sacred

praise should be offered to our God.

(2) 'Neginoth', derived from 'to play on stringed instruments', appears at the head of six Psalms (eg Ps.54, 55, 67). In Temple worship this typified the music in the believing heart (Eph.5:19 - literally, 'plucking the strings of your hearts to the Lord'). (a) Worshipers praise the Lord inwardly and sincerely; (b) they need to be in a right spiritual state, in tune; (c) the Holy Spirit must strike the chords of our affections.

(3) 'Nehiloth', derived from 'to bore', refers to wind instruments, and it appears with only one Psalm (Ps.5). Again, it is typical of the great joy in a true worshiper's heart (Ps.89:15; 98:6). (a) Believers are God's workmanship (Eph.2:10); (b) they should be emptied of self and filled with the Holy Spirit; (c) in praise we should sound out the glories of the Lord.

(4) 'On Alamoth', 'virgins', meaning sopranos, occurs in one Psalm (Ps.46); 'On Sheminith', 'eighth', bass. (a) Experiences vary and our singing should reflect this; (b) whatever our state our souls should turn to the Lord our God; (c) a rich diversity makes the melody of true worship.

5) 'Upon Aijeleth Shahar', 'the hind of the morning' appears with just one Psalm (Ps.22). (a) The Son of God is distinguished by tender beauty and grace; (b) He had reason to complain of the wicked who, like dogs, pursued Him (verse 16); (c) on the third day He comes forth from the shadows of a dark sepulchre before the dawning of the day.

(6) 'Shoshannim', 'lilies', the symbol of sacred love,

prefixes two Psalms (Ps.45, 69), although 'Shushan Eduth', 'the lily of the testimony' is found at the beginning of Psalm 60 and 'Shoshannim Eduth', 'lilies, a testimony', at the beginning of Psalm 80. (a) Christ Jesus is the great Lover of our souls; (b) believers are joined to Him in perfect love; (c) nothing is more beautiful than His love for us.

(7) 'Jonath-elem-rechokim', 'the dove of silence among those afar off', is in the title of one Psalm (Ps.56). (a) The Lord, for our sakes, flew to the land of estrangement; (b) it was there that He offered himself a sacrifice for sin; (c) in the sorrows of death He held His peace.

Selah

Although 'Selah' is not in any actual title, it is a word found 71 times in 39 Psalms. This may be the best place to comment briefly upon it. 'Selah' appears to be derived from a root word which means 'to elevate' or 'to raise', and it may therefore indicate a lifting up of hearts in a silent pause for meditation. Archibald G. Brown, in one of his sermons, said: 'The best interpretation of the word we have ever come across is this: "Think of that!"' He went on to say: 'Do you see what a glorious vein of gold we have? All Scripture is precious, but isn't it good to know what God would specially call our attention to? Isn't it unspeakably delightful to have certain passages marked by God, and concerning which God says: "Whatever else you may forget, be sure and remember this; whatever else you may overlook, pay particular attention to this". It is God's call to "Think of that!"'

Congregational Remittances - March 2008

	2008 Mar	2008 Total	2007 Total				
Presbytery of Sutherland				Presbytery of Lewis			
Brora	1,300	3,600	3,600	Cross	2,137	5,604	6,003
Assynt & Scourie	0	900	1,200	Harris - Leverburgh	1,000	3,000	2,600
Total Sutherland	1,300	4,500	4,800	Harris - Scalpay	1,540	4,620	4,680
Presbytery of Inverness				Knock & Point	850	2,550	2,400
Duthil-Dores	1,560	4,098	4,865	Stornoway	5,266	14,341	18,708
Inverness	2,000	6,000	6,000	Total Lewis	10,793	30,115	34,391
Total Inverness	3,560	10,098	10,865	Presbytery of Lochcarron			
Presbytery of Ross				Glenelg & Arnisdale	166	416	392
Kilmorack & Strathglass	1,000	3,300	3,900	Lochalsh & Glenshiel	987	3,068	2,885
Kiltearn	1,700	5,100	5,100	Poolewe & Aultbea	953	2,519	2,579
Tarbat	750	2,250	2,250	Total Lochcarron	2,106	6,004	5,856
Total Ross	3,450	10,650	11,250	Presbytery of Skye & Uist			
Presbytery of Edinburgh				Bracadale	1,000	3,000	3,000
Aberdeen	500	3,050	1,350	Duirinish (Waternish)	400	1,200	1,200
Edinburgh	6,000	6,000	5,000	Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1,300	3,900	3,900
Total Edinburgh	6,500	9,050	6,350	North Uist	800	2,400	2,100
Presbytery of Glasgow				Portree	1,200	3,600	2,040
Ayr	0	1,500	200	Snizort	1,650	4,950	4,950
Arran	171	964	941	Strath	0	0	1,800
Dumfries	0	0	0	Total Skye & Uist	6,350	19,050	18,990
Glasgow - Partick	0	3,500	3,800	Total From Congregations	36,501	101,529	104,843
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	600	2,000	Other Donations	850	3,044	5,637
Glasgow - Thornwood	2,270	5,248	4,900	TOTAL	37,351	104,573	110,480
Rothesay	0	250	500	Tax Recovered on Gift Aid		0	0
Total Glasgow	2,441	12,062	12,341				

Zambia Report

Cammy Macleay

In September I set out once more for a six-week trip to Zambia. The fares were fluctuating so greatly that I went a week later than expected. Had I travelled the previous week the fare would have been almost double. To my surprise, I found that my ticket was designated as Stornoway to Lusaka via Edinburgh and Heathrow. As a result, once my hold baggage was put on in Stornoway, I didn't see it again until Lusaka airport. The weight allowance in Stornoway was generous (I won't say how generous) and it all arrived safely. Also I was granted an upgrade to business class on the ten hour flight from Heathrow to Lusaka so I arrived at 7.00 am quite refreshed. However as soon as I stepped out of the plane at Lusaka the familiar wall of heat hit me. Both I, and another west coaster, Joy Mackenzie from Gairloch, were picked up by Christine Macdonald and driven to Don and Christine's new abode, 'Old Macdonald's Farm' on the outskirts of Lusaka.

Old Macdonald's Farm

The Macdonalds now have 36 boys living on the premises so it was a great help to Christine to have Joy there to help with domestic arrangements. Some of the older boys, whom I knew, had already left to go into employment and they manage for themselves in some of the townships. Some keep returning for visits and it was lovely to see them again and to see how they had progressed. Also out helping Christine were two other young ladies, Christina Macritchie from Inverness and Maureen Macleod from Ness. Christina has just finished her sixth year and is going in for nursing next year and Maureen, who works for the BBC in Glasgow, is taking a year off work to go round the world. The place sounded like the United Nations with English, Scottish, Nyanja, Bemba and Gaelic being spoken. The new house and grounds are extensive. Beyond the wall, on the farm, there are smaller houses where the older boys and some of the helpers sleep. On the farm they have goats, pigs, hens, rabbits and are expecting more livestock: some, such as the strange, darkish non-fleeced sheep, I had not seen before in Zambia. There is also a vegetable area and while I was there the ground was being prepared for maize, by the 'God's Way of Farming' method. More about that later. The rains are expected in November and all has to be prepared by the time they arrive. As usual, the Macdonalds' place was a hive of activity. Preparations are ongoing for various events from dawn till well after dusk. Two Scottish MSPs were there one day and the Macdonalds were also involved in another homeless project being opened by ex-president, Dr Kenneth Kaunda. Because there are so many boys at the farm now, it is difficult to transport them all to the local church on Sabbath. Consequently, representatives from Kabwata Baptist Church,

where Rev Conrad Mbewe is pastor, hold a morning service for them in their native languages, in the house. Prayers are held every night at 8.30 pm.

It was lovely to see again Mr Banda and Yvonnee who have been faithful helpers with the Macdonalds for many years. They act in many ways as mother and father figure to the boys and they can speak to them in their native tongue, although most of the boys speak fairly good English. It was also good to see how well Maureen and Christina got on with the boys and helped them with their school work. Almost all the boys attend school or vocational college now and I saw a marked improvement in them from a year last June when they were taken up from Manda Hill for a Sunday lunch. On that occasion they looked bedraggled, lost, malnourished and some were high on glue (Bostik). In the evenings, I would help the older ones with Maths and Science and they came eager for help. They realise that the way out of their plight is through good basic Christian education and they are keen to learn. They treat education as a privilege. Phil Bailey, as well as overseeing farm work at Covenant College, oversees much of what happens here. There is a marvellous work being done by the Macdonalds and this description of it is inadequate.

Covenant College

I had to wait five days with the Macdonalds before getting a lift to Petauke and to Covenant College. Cees Molenaar was then returning from Holland after visiting his wife, Mirjam, and children. Mirjam's health is slowly improving but she will not be back on the mission till next March. Remember them please. Also accompanying us were the Rev Heindrick Zwemstra and his wife, Jacomein, from South Africa. They were visiting for a week with a view to coming to stay at Covenant College to lecture. They seem a very gracious couple and we pray that they will find out soon if the Lord is calling them there. On our arrival at the mission, I met the lecturer who was holding the fort while Cees was in Holland: the Rev Johannes Aucamp, from Mukhanyo College in South Africa and, of course, I met our old friend, Phil Bailey, again.

Developments

I was staying in chalet 1, the first building to be built on the mission. This brought back memories of when I first stayed there in March 2004, when it was piled roof high with boxes, furniture, mice, lice and dust. The only remaining inhabitant was a little scorpion that took a most unwelcome dislike to me. I certainly felt the bite, as soon as I sat down! There was plenty room to move in the chalet, however, even with beds, table, kettle, toilet, basin and shower. A lot of building

work has gone on since I was there last. Owing to a kind gift from a supporting church, there is now a satellite dish which relays broadband so there is an internet café in the library where up to four people at a time can use the internet. What a blessing this is for communication with the outside world! Also the mission is now connected to the main grid. So instead of having the noisy, expensive generator on for two hours a night, they have power all the time. As someone said, "It is wonderful to have light without noise." It was so good to see Justin Phiri, an ex-student and now administrator at the College, back working in the library after his illness. We pray that his good health will continue.

Students

It was wonderful to meet the students whom I already knew, although most had left, having finished their course. And it was thrilling to meet the great number of new students. There are 25 students at the college now. Again there are some coming from long distances – one from 55 miles away. He travels in every Monday and returns home on Friday to be with his family again and to undertake his pastoral and preaching commitments. There are also students from Chipata, on the Malawi border in the east, and a student from the northwest of Zambia, from Kitwe in the Copperbelt. Their zeal to study the Word is a lesson to us all. During the week, they must work hard. The day begins at 7.00am with worship; then they have five 55 minute lectures until lunchtime, followed by studies, hospital mission, farm work or building help. Now with mains power, they can study all evening. They also have at least one evening a week when one of them preaches while the others listen and comment on what was preached. The principal, Cees Molenaar, as well as carrying the brunt of the lecturing, has made it his business to visit every student in their own village and to preach there also, on weekends. This is no mean achievement considering the distances and the state of the roads.



Graduation

The big event at the end of the session was the graduation which has certainly focussed more attention on the College. After some singing by students and a choir, and the introduction, Cees Molenaar read from Timothy, reminding the congregation of the importance of bringing up children in the fear of the Lord. He also pointed out that the students who were graduating were the watchmen and guardians of the truth. Chief Mumbi arrived with his entourage and gave a stirring speech to his people, having read to them a portion from Romans. The District Commissioner's representative gave a glowing report on the College and the role it played in the wider community. David Tembo, the District Commissioner, had been called away on urgent government business. He is an elder in a Petauke Baptist Church and is a great friend and help to Covenant College. The local government education department is

also very supportive of what the College seeks to achieve in the schools project. The graduating students were presented with certificates and Matthew Henry's full commentary, donated anonymously by a supporter in Scotland. They also received gifts from friends and relations. Thereafter, all partook of an excellent meal of chicken, goat and pork with relish and mountains of schima, prepared by Nelson and his crew. Among the seven graduates, I was delighted and humbled to see again Lucas Sitole who had travelled from Mozambique, where he is now a pastor. The journey would have taken him six days in total. He is such a gracious man. Please remember the Sitole family as Mrs Sitole has not been well since the birth of their last child.





Arbroath - February 2008

Left to Right: James Boyd, Careen Mackay, Derek MacLean, David Wylie, Michael Reeve, David Woods, Norman Fraser, David Lachman, Scott MacIver, Dafydd Spencer, Jennifer Little, Murray Mackay, Janis MacKinnon, Naomi Lowery, Nathan Roberts, Ruth Martin, Becky Wilson, Benjamin Lowery, Richard Venton, Fiona Smith, Partheepann, Alasdair MacLeod, Helen Brannigan, Alasdair Morrison, Janet Matheson, Fiona Taylor, Anne MacAulay, Iain Taylor, Caroline Morrison, Nina Matheson, Irene MacKinnon, Megan, Kate Black, Kerry Martin, Christine MacLeod, Suzanne Morrison, Murdo MacLeod, Esther Boyd, Esther Semmens, Sian Spencer, Rhiann Spencer, Mrs Isobel MacQueer, Rachel Venton, Sandra Mackay, Mrs Elizabeth Boyd, Sandra MacAulay, Rev Gavin Beers.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7