

In the Year of Our Lord: Reflections on Twenty Centuries of Church History by Sinclair B. Ferguson, Reformation Trust Publishing, York, PA: 2018. (46 quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. No Unthinking Admiration for Historical Christians.

But even our heroes have feet of clay, and it is important to try to see professing Christians in the context in which they actually lived. Christian faith knows only one perfect man and one perfect work--Jesus Christ. Every saint, every work, every movement is a mixture of God's gracious operations and are often sinful and inadequate actions. So, none of the figures featured in these pages was perfect. Some of them did much good, wrote much that is helpful, and demonstrated enormous courage. But sometimes they also did harm by their inadequate or confused teaching about the Christian faith or by the style in which they lived it. Like us, both personally and intellectually, their sanctification was not complete. So what we can honor and imitate we should, but we ought never to be blinded by unthinking admiration. [page 5]

2. Privileged to Have Multiple Copies of Scripture.

... that it is possible to have hearts that have been washed cleaner than our heads. Sometimes it will be hard for us to appreciate why Christians did not better understand the gospel. But then, we are often unaware of the privileges we have enjoyed because of the context in which we have lived our Christian lives--where each of us has our own copy (probably multiple copies) of the Scriptures and access to Christian literature and a wide array of helpful biblical teachers. [page 6]

3. Building the Church in Enemy-occupied Territory.

Jesus is always building his church. He has been creating his new covenant community for two thousand years. And He has been doing so in enemy-occupied territory. The gates of Hades may withstand, but can never prevent, His ultimate triumph. [page 6]

4. 20th Century Growth and Death of Christians.

It is not insignificant that the twentieth century may have witnessed more martyrs for Christ than any century since the beginning of the church. Yet at the same time, more people have become professing Christians than ever before. [page 7]

5. Christ Has ALL Authority.

Christ died for our sins. But in addition, through His obedience and sacrificed, He defeated the Evil One in regained the dominion that Adam forfeited. That is why “all authority in heaven *and on earth* now belongs to Jesus and is to be realized through the church’s mission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18). [page 15]

6. The Gospel Faces Opposition.

The Apostles themselves tasted the first fruits of the harsh persecutions that became a keynote of the closing decades of the first century and the days that followed. Right from its inauguration, the Church of Jesus Christ has been built on territory formally under the sway of the Evil One (1 John 5:19). Not surprisingly, wherever the gospel advanced, it faced opposition, intimidation, and suffering. [page 17]

7. “The Blood of Christians Is Seed.”

On one occasion Nero had Christians covered in pitch, raised upon poles all around Rome, instead ablaze in order to light the city with dying believers.

Reflecting on these days, Tertellian, the second-century Latin author, wrote in his *Apology* for the Christian faith that the gospel was triumphing not only despite the opposition but, in the purposes of God, partly because of it. He wrote to the Roman emperor, “We are but of yesterday, yet we fill your cities, islands, forts, towns, councils, even camps, tribes, decuries, the palace, the senate, the forum; we have left you the temples alone.” As he looked back on the previous decades, he wrote, “The blood of Christians is seed.” [page 17]

8. Opposition against the Church and Individuals.

Matthew 16:18, as we have seen, is a pivotal text in the New Testament. It tells us not only that Jesus will build His church, but that He will do so in enemy-occupied territory.

Satan does not yield ground easily, however. Wherever Christ builds, opposition will develop. As we read about the Christian centuries and live in the contemporary world, we need to learn this: gospel advance always evokes opposition. That is as true in our personal lives as it is in the life of the church.

In the second century, opposition to the Christian faith came in two different forms. [page 23]

9. Suffering and Martyrdom.

Paradoxically however, as Tertullian wrote, “The blood of Christians is seed.” Jesus Christ has built his church through the centuries by permitting suffering and martyrdom. Did he not say, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24)? [page 23]

10. Over Time, Christianity Becomes Like the Culture Around It.

Whenever we interpret the gospel for a culture, there is always the danger of syncretism--adapting our message for the receiving culture and in the process diluting

the message we convey. Thus, when people respond, they meld the gospel to their previous convictions. The result is a mixture of the gospel and paganism.

Syncretism is always a danger. It happens easily in the first communication of the gospel, and it can happen again and again even when the gospel has taken root. Thus, for example, the message of the cross transforms manners, for Christian love brings with it gentleness, grace, thoughtfulness, kindness, putting others first, and so on. But when the power of the cross is diluted, its fruit often remains for a season. But then it is confused with the thing itself--as though Christianity were identical to culture. [page 26]

11. Not Fearing False Teaching.

We modern Christians tend to assume it is the other way around. We have little fear of false teaching but considerable fear of persecution. And yet, of all the generations, perhaps ours is the one that should have learned to think most clearly and biblically. Think of China in our own time and compare it to any country in Europe. The church in China has not been destroyed by suffering. Rather, the blood of martyrs has been seed. But in Europe? The church has been largely shielded from persecution. In the process, it is naively tolerated what has been well described as “the cruelty of heresy.” There has been much false teaching. The consequences are visible for all to see in a powerlessness of a church whose views are often becoming indistinguishable from those of the world. [page 28]

12. Living at Peace with Others in Society.

Christians are called to live at peace with others in society (see Romans 12:18). But despite the church’s desire to contribute to society and live at peace, persecution continues. Rarely do emperors or dictators grasp the fact that Christians will be their very best citizens. Tragically, rulers often see totalitarianism as preferable to grace in its effects. [page 41]

13. Living in the World Sacrificially.

Paradoxically, both of these influences--persecution and monasticism--had the potential to destroy the witness of Christians. If either the darkness overcomes to light or the light is removed from the world, the world goes dark. If we take the salt out of the world, moral and spiritual decay is inevitable. These desert monks, then, despite their remarkable asceticism, stand as a warning to us that Christ has called us not to leave the world but to live sacrificially in it. [page 43]

14. Bishop Ambrose Was Kind to Augustine.

One of the most fascinating statements in *The Confessions* is the comment Augustine made about Ambrose. He was describing the time in his life when he came to Milan.

What was it that impressed him about the Bishop? He tells us in his prayer-soliloquy to God: “I began to like him, at first indeed not as a teacher of truth, for I had absolutely no confidence in your Church, *but as a human being who was kind to me.* ... Nevertheless, gradually, though I did not realize it, I was drawing closer.” [page 45]

15. God Delights in Using the Hidden and the Forgotten.

We have seen that Justin Martyr was brought to Christ by an otherwise unknown elderly Christian taking a quiet walk along the shore; Augustine came to faith through an eloquent bishop’s kindness and a mother’s prayers. Justin’s name lives on in the history of the church--but the old man who pointed him to Christ is forgotten. Many Christians are familiar with the name of Augustine. Fewer know the name of his mother or the name of his minister, Ambrose.

There is a pattern and a lesson here. As we read the lives of men and women who have been strategically used by Christ in building his Kingdom, we note that the names of those through whom they were brought to faith in Jesus Christ are often forgotten or lost. But their significance is incalculable. God delights in using the hidden and the forgotten.

This is, surely, a tremendous encouragement to people like us who live our Christian lives in relative obscurity. We did not expect to find our names in any church history book. And yet, it may be that someone to whom we are kind because we love Jesus will be taken up and extraordinarily used by God to build the church of Jesus Christ.

Faithfulness is far more significant than fame when Jesus is building His Church. [page 46]

16. God Loves to Do Things in Obscurity.

We know very little about how Christ began to build his church in Scotland before the sixth century. As we have seen, God loves to do things in obscurity. The incarnation and early years of our Lord’s life underscore that principle. The One who created the heavens in earth out of nothing has no need for publicity. [page 62]

17. Being Witnessing and Being Together.

But in the New Testament, “witness” is less a specific activity and more a state of being, set within the context of the life of the church as a community. Jesus sent the apostles to *be* witnesses rather than to “*do* witnessing.” It is not the occasional active isolated individuals. In fact, in the New Testament, we read relatively little of the witness of *individual* Christians.

The New Testament letters were largely addressed to their readers in the second person (“you”) plural. Understandably, our English Bible translations rarely indicate this. It

would be ungainly to read a text constantly punctuated by “you (s.)” and “you (pl.)”. But it would underline that the instructions and exhortations of the New Testament are usually addressed to “you (pl.)” All that each of us is called to be in Christ is what we are meant to be together, in fellowship with one another, not as isolated individuals. [page 64]

18. The Church Is Living in the Power and Grace of the Spirit.

One of the most telling of these passages is found in the paradoxical statement he makes about Jerusalem church in Acts 5: “*None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multiples of both men and women*” (Acts 5:13-14). These statements seem at odds with one another. How can it be that, on one hand, people did not dare join the early Christians, and on the other hand, held them in high esteem? And how can people not dare to join, while more and more people are joining?

Luke sees this as an illustration of the church is living in the power and grace of the spirit. The paradox is a hallmark of a living fellowship of God's people. Even while the costliness of commitment to Christ makes outsiders drawback with a deep sense of being unworthy or fearful, there is nevertheless something overwhelmingly attractive about the new community that makes being a part of it so desirable. It is not unusual for an individual to hate or despise the convictions Christian share, only to find that it is a compelling integrity and “rightness” in their lives and especially in their fellowship with each other. Only in the powerful presence of Christ explains this. How very different from the vision that has often dominated thinking about church life, worship, in evangelism in our own day! [pages 64-65]

19. Churches Making Little Impact.

When we build churches in location where few of the members actually live, it should not surprise us therefore that *as communities* our churches often make little impact in the context in which they are set. [page 66]

20. God Delights in the Obscure.

We should never forget that the actual fact most of the history of the Christian Church remains unwritten, precisely because God delight to use the obscure. [page 68]

21. Church Planners as Mobile Gospel Cell Groups.

Another lesson we learned from both Ninian and Columba is that the power of the gospel is best expressed in community life, no matter how small. The Apostle Paul was rarely alone. He did not travel around the ancient world as an individual but as the leader of a mobile gospel cell group. The gospel message and its manifestation in the life of the church go hand-in-glove in New Testament evangelism. How odd, then, if

our churches persist in sending individual church planners instead of a cell group to begin a new work. [page 68]

22. Growing Closer, Deeper, and More Local.

There is a contemporary pattern of growing bigger churches. In turn, this means bigger buildings, often bigger financial loans, and the necessity to grow even bigger in order to finance the bigness of things. We need a different goal: to grow closer, deeper, more local, and more visible in the community, if the gospel is to make its true impact on our Western world. [page 68]

23. Children Growing Up as Servants of Jesus Christ.

Sometimes Christian parents speak of rearing their children “to be the next generation’s leaders in our society.” That is not a New Testament vision. Rather, we are called to nurture them to be servants--servants of Jesus Christ who are willing to be servants of others and therefore willing to reject the values of this society for those of the Kingdom of Christ in the need of the world. [page 68]

24. Islam and Fatalistic Submission.

The name *Islam*, meaning “surrender” or “submission”, in the character of its activity underline what lies at the very heart of the religion--belief in one god, whom the Qur’an describes as one “to whom one may appeal from mercy”, but in relationship to whom the essential issue is a total and, it appears, fatalistic submission. Hence the often-used expression “If Allah wills it.”

Muhammad rejected cardinal elements of the Christian faith. In particular, he reduced Christ to the level of other prophets. He denied that Jesus actually died on the cross--a substitute had taken His place, it was claimed. Clearly, then, Muhammad's Christ was neither Christ of the New Testament nor was He One who could provide salvation.

Islam called first submission to the will of Allah and offered the prospects of heavenly rewards for righteousness. There is nothing here of the pardoning, restoring, transforming grace of God in Jesus Christ, nothing of the great transaction between Christ and the heavenly Father in which Christ bore our sins and offers the assurance of salvation. In other words, Islam belongs to the category of world religion that lack both a God of infinite holiness and infinite love and the hope of salvation for deeply sinful man. [page 77]

25. Islam in Direct Opposition to Christianity.

And to regard Christianity and Islam as essentially the same is simply another expression of the contemporary mantra: “Don't all roads lead to God?” But this question fails to grapple with another more important one: “On what basis can we

stand in His presence when we get there?” Islam is a way of submission and good works. There is no good news there. By contrast, the gospel is a message of God's grace, of faith and hope and love--a message about God's seeking us and finding us. Nor should we lose sight of the stubborn fact that until the days of Constantine, the remarkable spread of Christianity took place exclusively by the preaching of the gospel and never by military activity. We are dealing here with not with two variants but two antithetical views of God. [page 78]

26. We Are Dead; Therefore, Are Incapable of Contributing to Our Salvation.

Augustine had been captivated by the biblical teaching that we are not merely spiritually sick and in need of medicine. We are “dead in our trespasses” (Ephesians 2:5). If we are to come to faith, and receive salvation, it can happen only and entirely by God's grace. It is not a matter of cooperation between God and man, each making his (or her) appropriate contribution. If I am *dead* in my sins, then I am incapable of contributing anything to my salvation. [page 100]

27. Power and Corruption.

Lord Acton famously wrote, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” [page 107]

28. Superstar Ministers.

... we are already on the way to creating superstar ministers whose spiritual success is measured by the size of the morning congregations who come to hear them. Magazine interviews with ministers are rarely with pastors who serve the same small congregations for thirty years, know and love every member, and faithfully feed and nourish them with a diet of biblical exposition and pastoral love. Rather, they are with the “successful” ministries of congregations with memberships in the thousands. What a casual reader might easily fail to notice that the credit lines often give the lie to the degree of the “success”. Dr. X, we read, is minister of a congregation of twelve thousand members. But elsewhere we discover that he preaches to seven thousand people every Sunday morning. Where, we are inclined to ask, are there missing five thousand? Does Dr. X find it difficult to sleep at night knowing he has the pastoral oversight of so many thousands who have professed Christ but declined to praise Him Sunday after Sunday? Their “success” is in fact a massive burden that crushes the genuinely sensitive and faithful heart. [page 109]

29. Day-to-day Devotion to Jesus Christ.

Throughout the history of the church, it is always been those who have given themselves to the simplicities of day-by-day devotion to Jesus Christ who have made the deepest and most enduring impression for Him in the world. [page 111]

30. Reliable Scholarly Work.

The term *scholastic* is often used in a demeaning, pejorative sense--dry, irrelevant, excessively and pedantically intellectual. But strictly speaking, it indicates only an approach to reality that involves serious thinking and careful and critical analysis, involving the development of concepts and technical language, and the use of clear and logical exposition of complex issues, expressed by carefully nuanced distinctions in thought--features of all reliable scholarly work. [page 119]

31. The Crusades and Western Islamic States.

Doubtless, the gospel was unnecessarily sullied by the granting of indulgences to participants in the Crusades and perhaps by the prospect of worldly fame to be one in the name of Christ. But we would be shortsighted if we thought the Crusades were exclusively expressions of crass military imperialism. For what prompted the Crusades was Islamic military expansionism--the invasion of entire nations where Christian faith had once flourished. As has happened again in our own time, Christians face few alternatives, none attractive: conversion to Islam, flight from their homes, the payment of fines, second rate citizenship, or death. No doubt motives were mixed; trade routes and finances were at stake. But on the other hand, the Crusades involved massive financial expenditure and much sacrificed in their efforts to respond to the calls of beleaguered Christians for fellow believers in the West to come to their assistance.

We cannot avoid being citizens of two worlds. But we endanger the gospel if we confuse these two worlds. And doubtless, to some extent, this was true of the Crusades. While that is a matter for regret, a righteous desire to preserve the right to life, liberty, in the pursuit of happiness of those who lived in other nations, by military means if necessary, is a sentiment shared by many Christians today who believe there is such a thing as a "just war" even if it is a terrible necessity. In the case of the Crusades, more than one historian has judged that had the Christian West done nothing, far from enjoying the development of democracy in centuries that followed, the West would consist today of Islamic states.

History, even where professing Christians are involved, is always messy. [page 124]

32. Following Jesus as Our Example.

We need to learn again to bow at the feet of Jesus as our example as well as our Redeemer in adopt his counterculture lifestyle. He has set us up in the world to witness to it, and there we must remain until we take our leave of it. [page 133]

33. Getting God's Word into All Peoples.

Wycliff was a man with a passion that the Bible might be read and understood by everyone. In one sense, his memory is an inspiration to evangelical Christians. But the story of this "Morning Star of the Reformation" (as he came to be known) also causes us to look away in shame. Most Christians own not only one translation and copy of the Bible but several. Meanwhile, numbers of languages and dialects have little or no Scripture. And we who have many copies, do we read them with a devotion and sense of privilege that we should?

If we learn anything from Wycliff's life, we must learn the importance of getting the Word of God into the hands of people and explaining its message simply and clearly to them. [pages 148-149]

34. Jan Hus's Testimony.

On July 6, 1415, Jan Hus was brought to the cathedral of Constance dressed in his priest robes. Allowed no defense, he had his garments torn from him, and his tonsure was completely shaved--thus he was defrocked from his earlier ordination. A paper crown with demons portrayed on it was placed on his head and he was forced to watch the public burning of his own books before he himself was chained to the stake to be burned to death. He was heard to pray Stephen-like "Lord Jesus, it is for you that I endure this cruel death with patience. Have mercy on my enemies, I pray." He died reciting the Psalms.

The name *Hus*, as it sounds suggests, means "goose". Often taunted that he was indeed a silly goose, he is said to have responded with prophetic insight: "God has sent among you just a silly goose, but one day he will send among you an eagle." It was a Erasmus of Rotterdam who was later charged with having "laid the egg that Luther hatched" (to which he replied that he had "expected a different kind of bird"). But it might be near the truth that it was the egg of the goose that Martin Luther fully hatched. [page 150]

35. Fruit of Faithfulness.

We seek to be faithful to Jesus Christ. We may not see the fruit of that faithfulness. We do not live or die to ourselves but to Christ. The gates of hell cannot keep us down. As we carry gospel seed, we may feel tears in our eyes because there seems to be so little fruit. But if we do not live to see the harvest, others will. Jesus has promised, and that is enough for us. Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy. Those who are

steadfast and immovable are always abounding in the work of the Lord. Their labor is not in vain (Psalm 126:5; 1 Corinthians 15:58). [page 151]

36. God, the Creator of the Universe.

Thomas Kepler, along with a litany of other believing scientists, saw himself as simply “thinking God's thoughts after him,” and noted, “Since we astronomers are the priests of the highest God in regard to the book of Nature, it befits us to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather, above all else, of the glory of God. [page 163]

37. Five Reformation *Solas*.

But what did Luther teach? His main emphasis are aptly summarized in the well-known Reformation *solas*: (1) *sola Scriptura*: we come to know God through Scripture alone, not through the traditions of the church as such; (2) *sola gratia*: we come to receive forgiveness by God's grace alone, not because we are able to earn merit; (3) *sola fide*: we receive justification by faith alone, and not by faith plus something else; (4) *solus Christus*: all of God's riches are given to us in Christ alone; (5) *solī Deo gloria*: the goal of all of life is the glory of God alone. [page 168]

38. Plain Style Preaching of William Perkins.

[William] Perkins' teaching was marked by what is usually called the “plain style.” The description is self-explanatory: it stood in sharp contrast to the preaching that employed the most appealing features and techniques of classical rhetoric in oratory. In this ornate style, impression was often more important than exposition. Perkins believed preaching should conform to the Apostolic touchstone of being “the open statement of truth” (2 Corinthians 4:2). In exemplifying this biblical model, his preaching was characterized by biblical exposition delivered with “great plainness of speech” (2 Corinthians 3:2). Such preaching was not lacking in rhetorical power. But it aimed at the mind, the conscience, the will, and the affections--in a word, at the “heart.” Its concern was not to affect admiration of the sermon at the conversion of the hearer. [page 175]

39. Removing Leaders for Due Cause.

John Witherspoon (the Scottish minister who as president of the College of New Jersey, later to be Princeton University, signed the Declaration [of Independence]) believed the old Scottish doctrine that lesser magistrates could remove the greater magistrate for due cause. When someone doubted that the situation in the colonies was “ripe” for such a revolution, he responded, “Ripe, man...it is rotten!” His motives, he believed, were steeped in the application of Scriptures, which he knew intimately, and in which he held that Knox, and to a lesser extent Calvin, would at least in principle have regarded as legitimate. [page 186]

40. Like-minded Believers Bring Revival.

There is a deep mystery attached to revival. But one of its features often seems to be the way in which God prepares and brings together a number of like-minded people in prayer, commitment to holiness, and a deep burden for those who do not know Christ. [page 189]

41. George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards.

As he listened to Whitefield preaching in Philadelphia on one occasion, Benjamin Franklin carefully calculated that he was being heard by around twenty thousand people. In due course, Whitefield met and became friends with Jonathan Edwards and others in the colonies whose ministries were being freshly empowered by the Spirit. Edwards wept the first time he heard Whitefield preach; Whitefield in turn needed the theological wisdom of Edwards in order to grow into a clearer understanding of the ways of God. [page 189]

42. Charles Simeon and Henry Martyn.

Newton's younger contemporary and fellow Anglican Charles Simeon (1759 -1836), although often preaching throughout the British Isles, devoted his entire ministry to one particular congregation, in his case Holy Trinity in Cambridge. Here, especially in his early days, he faced much opposition to his expository biblical preaching. His great burden, in addition to serving his flock, was to exemplify and encourage such biblically based preaching. Thus, his own ministry became a training ground for generations of young students, many of whom served in pastoral ministry or on the mission field.

One of these was the remarkable Henry Martyn (1781-1812). An outstanding mathematics scholar at Cambridge University, Martyn was laid hold of by God, became a missionary to India in 1805, was involved in translating the New Testament into Hindustani, Arabic, and Persian and died of tuberculosis in Tokat, Armenia, in October 1812 while en route home. His life constitutes one of the great heroic stories of the Christian Church. [page 190]

43. Carey and Missionary Expansion in the 19th Century.

William Carey (1761-1834). Carey was originally a cobbler by trade and yet a man of extraordinary intelligence and vision. From his cobblers bench he saw the need to evangelize the world. He left England for India in 1793. Within five years he had learned Sanskrit and translated the whole Bible into Bengali. By the end of his life, he had supervised edited translations of the Bible into thirty-six different languages and had become a catalyst for the great missionary expansion that was to characterize the nineteenth century. [page 190]

44. W.C. Burns' Obscure Ministry in China

To those who are familiar with the experiential Christianity, the names of M'Cheyne and Bonar are well known. Why is W.C. Burns name relatively unfamiliar? He sensed that God was calling him not continue to serve in Scotland, or indeed, anywhere in the United Kingdom. In 1847, he sailed into obscurity to China, where he spent the rest of his life preaching the gospel. There he met and befriended James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), the founder of China Inland Mission (the adjective "inland" is significant) and moved into the interior. They made a radical decision to apply Paul's principle to be "all things to all people that by all means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22) and adopted Chinese dress. Briefly imprisoned in Guangzhou, Burns died later unheralded in obscurity after two decades of largely hidden ministry among the Chinese people.

One wonders if contemporary Christians would have insisted that Burns stay at home where he could do so much good. But then, perhaps, we remember China today in wonder how many W.C. Burns tears and prayers were store in the divine bottle that has been uncorked in a massive turning to Christ that has taken place in that great nation. God's ways and thoughts are not ours. They are, indeed, much higher; they extend further. They also last much longer. [page 198]

45. Spurgeon's Evangelism.

Among many other from the time of the Reformation onward, Spurgeon gives the lie to two false rumors. The first is that Calvinism kills evangelism. His ministry proved the contrary. The second is that evangelism is concerned with people's soul while liberals are concerned with their bodies. Spurgeon held to a much better biblical doctrine of God, Christ, man, the gospel, and the church. He was concerned for the salvation of people. It was because he knew they would last for eternity in the presence of God or forever apart from it that their status before God always took priority. But he was constantly concerned about suffering and privation in their lives now.

Spurgeon died in 1892. In a sense, his death marked the end of an era in England. Within a quarter of a century, the Western world would be engulfed in the First World War (1914-1918) and experienced the highest loss of life since the Great Plague. But the century to come would also see a yet greater loss of church life, fueled by yet more menacing plague of its own rejection of the gospel. So it remains now to turn the page into the final chapter of our journey through the Christian centuries. [page 200]

46. The Blood of Martyrs Is Seed.

There are far more Christians in the world today than in any time in all the previous centuries. It is also true that there appear to have been more people martyred as professing Christians in the twentieth century and perhaps in all other centuries put together. But if we recall Tertullian's famous words in the second century that "the

blood of martyrs is seed”, we will understand that in the economy of heaven, these two things are not unrelated. As death works in believers, Christ works life in unbelievers (see 2 Corinthians 4:10-12). “The government of the Church of Christ has been so constituted from the beginning,” Calvin wrote, “that the cross has been the way to victory, the death the way to life.” [page 207]