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The General Assemblies

The Church of Scotland

The new Moderator of the Church of Scotland was Rev. Prof. Robert Davidson, Principal of Trinity College, Glasgow. As already reported in the pages of our Magazine, Prof. Davidson had already indicated where his sympathies lay by making an attack on fundamentalists who believed in an infallible Bible. Lord Ross, Lord Justice Clerk, represented the Queen as Lord High Commissioner. Referring to the happenings in Eastern Europe, he suggested that these events were surely a clear manifestation of humanity's longing for freedom. He reminded the Assembly of Scotland's long tradition of freedom but made clear that freedom brings responsibility and must be used sensibly so that others may be able to enjoy their freedom also. Of the Church he had to say that further changes will be needed if the Church is to continue to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Scotland. The same theme of the need to be receptive of change was emphasised by the Moderator when he preached in Glasgow Cathedral.

A Tayside minister, Rev. John Cameron, asked the Assembly to support the legalisation of the use of drugs. He claimed that efforts at control of drugs abuse had failed. The Assembly rejected his proposal as one would expect. The Assembly deplored the fact that the Government refused to listen to Presbyteries that had opposed proposals to let off-sales open on the Sabbath. The Convener of the Board of Social Responsibility said that the Board were deeply worried about attempts to further relax the licensing laws.

The Assembly decided to review its rules on eligibility for baptism. At present one parent has to be either a communicant or agree to become one. Hamilton Presbytery had sent an overture to the Assembly proposing that it should be sufficient for a parent to have been baptised and to profess the Christian Faith. It appeared from the debate that different standards prevailed in different parts, and as we know very well in the

Highlands, Church of Scotland ministers have been very ready to give baptism to those refused baptism in our Church where the standards are higher. The Kirk's Panel on Doctrine were asked to examine the issue fully and report to the next General Assembly.

The givings of the people in the Church of Scotland showed an increase of £3.7 million although the membership of the Church had declined by 18,500. Givings per member amounted to £44.81 per annum. This is a very low figure when present day incomes are considered.

Rev. David Levinson told the Assembly that marriage was one of the most important questions facing them. Britain had a higher rate of one parent families and children born out of wedlock than other nations. He also referred to the rising number of abortions and the spread of AIDS which was causing concern. The Assembly agreed to review the Church's theology on marriage. The Chief Rabbi who addressed the Assembly referred to the family break down today. He said we need to intensify the reverence for human life.

A new draft Statement of Faith is to go to congregations and presbyteries for consultation. This statement has been produced because of concern over aspects of the Westminster Confession of Faith but is not intended to replace it. It refers to Christ's resurrection but has no reference to the Virgin Birth.

The Assembly had a proposal put before it to abolish Synods. The Convener of the Committee responsible said that Synods had outlived their usefulness and should be abolished. This was attempted in 1978 but the proposal at that time did not get the two-thirds majority needed for implementation. The new proposals have been sent to kirk-sessions and presbyteries and if approved could become law in 1992.

A Roman Catholic delegate is to be allowed to attend all the debates of the Assembly and also have the right to speak. For the last twenty years or so a Roman Catholic observer attended meetings of Assembly but this proposal is even more far reaching. Rev. David Wright, Stornoway opposed the proposal stressing the opposing views of the two Churches on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It was also agreed to seek discussions with the Roman Catholic Church over the question of communion for non-Catholics. Rev. David Levinson said it was a step towards that richer, greater, completer Church that is surely coming. So the Church of Scotland continues to follow the path which ultimately leads to the absorption by the R.C. Church. In the debate the leader of the Iona Community confirmed that in Iona Abbey Roman Catholics had received communion from non-Catholic clergy and that in the ecumenical setting of

Iona, Roman Catholic priests had opened up their table to members of other denominations.

The Assembly also dealt with a great number of social and political issues. On the question of Church worship, Rev. Andrew Herron opposed the view put forward in the outline of a revised Book of Common Order that communion should be included in the service every Sabbath. He moved that the Panel revising the book be instructed to reflect the normal practice which was a morning service without communion. Prof. Whyte said that the tradition of the Kirk since John Knox and the Westminster Confession was based on infrequent communion.

On the second last day of the Assembly, the Lord Chancellor, Lord MacKay of Clashfern, addressed a lunchtime public meeting. He told the meeting that when churchmen put forward detailed views to the Government they should always be ready to quote the Scriptural basis for their opinion. The Church can say 'this is what Parliament should do because this is what Christ has taught us'.

The Free Church of Scotland

At the Free Church Assembly Rev. Alasdair Gollan, Lochcarron, was appointed Moderator. The Assembly broke with tradition by opening on the Monday evening. Mr Gollan in his opening address said that it was his profound conviction that a genuine spiritual revival was the great need of the Church today. He stated that the Church has little influence on the lives of the great majority of their people. He referred to the deterioration in morals in the land. One great obstacle to a revival of religion he found to be in the spirit of worldliness among professing Christians. His view was that a genuine revival would transform the nation as well as the Church. He reminded the delegates that this is the only century since the Reformation which had not witnessed revival on a wide scale. Revival, he emphasised, begins with prayer.

In the debate in the Assembly on public questions and religion and morals, Rev. Maurice Roberts, Ayr, called for a return to the Christian attitudes of Victorian times. He went on to expose homosexuality as flagrantly sinful, and in the terms that God has given in Holy Scripture it is an abomination. The Convener of the Committee stated: "We are horrified that some Churches appear to be condoning it by allowing self-confessed 'gay' clergymen to continue in the ministry, as is the case in the Church of England." Rev. Kenneth Cameron welcomed the tightening of the law regarding human embryos and said that for too long society had regarded the unborn child as sub-human.

On the question of Church finances, the Assembly were told that only

a desperate appeal for funds saved the Church from incurring a deficit of at least £170,000. The Convener, Mr John Sutherland, while viewing the response with profound thankfulness, said that special appeals were no way to run a Church. This difficulty over finance seems to be a perennial one in the Free Church and must reflect upon the membership of the Church. There is no doubt that there is plenty of finance within the membership of the Free Church to adequately meet all the requirements of the Church, if only there was a willing mind.

The Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland visited the Free Church Assembly and addressed it. He pointed out that it was 60 years since the Lord High Commissioner first visited the Free Church Assembly, and that it was 300 years since the passing of the Act which established the Presbyterian form of worship in Scotland. He also stated that while the law and the Church were complementary, the primary duty of all was to God.

On the last day of the Assembly the case of Rev. Robert Smith, minister of Greyfriars Free Church in Inverness was dealt with. The Assembly upheld the decision of the Presbytery of Inverness which advised Mr Smith "to resign his charge and seek a new field where his undoubted gifts can be exercised." If he should not resign by 1st September the Presbytery was directed by the Assembly to proceed to dissolve the pastoral tie. The Congregation was to be informed of the Assembly decision and was to be assured of the Assembly's prayers for their unity and peace. Mr Smith remains a minister in good standing in the Church.

The Father's Drawing

by Rev. J. Kennedy, D.D.

Preached at Dingwall

"No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." — John 6: 44.

These words were spoken by "Jesus," "the Son of man," and their teaching is therefore *gracious*; "by the faithful witness," and therefore they are *true*; by Him who is Himself Jehovah, the Eternal Son, and therefore they are *divine*.

He did not deliver the doctrine of the text, in His sermon to the congregation which assembled to hear Him beside the Lake of Tiberias, till He had first spoken regarding the necessity, in order to salvation, of coming to Messiah; the excellence of Him to whom they were called to come; the blessedness of those who came; and the warrant to come to Him, as

given to all who hear the gospel. He insisted on the *necessity* of faith at the outset of His discourse, teaching them that what they needed, as sinners having an endless existence, was not "meat which perisheth," but "meat which endureth unto everlasting life," that this enduring meat "the Son of man" alone could give to them, and that this meat was received and enjoyed only by those who believed on Him whom God has sent. He then speaks of the *excellence of Him* who was sent, as "the bread of God" "which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." This is followed by a description of the *blessedness of all who come to Him*. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" — "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" — "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." And after insisting on the necessity of faith, on the excellence of Him who is its object, and on the blessedness of all who have come to Messiah, *He tells them of the warrant of faith* as given in the command of God to believe in His Son. "This is the work of God," He tells His hearers, "that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." This is the one way of securing the favour of God, and the faith by which this is attained He requires us to yield to Him whom He hath sent.

It is in connection with these truths we are required to consider the doctrine of the text. At first sight it would seem as if this part of Christ's sermon had rendered it impossible to derive any encouragement from all the rest of it. It would seem as if it were cruel to tell a man that he must believe or he is lost for ever, and then to tell him he can't believe. What matters it how excellent Christ is if I cannot come to Him? To speak to me of the blessedness of those who believe, if I am unable to join them, is but to tantalise me. And of what advantage to me is it to have a warrant to come if I cannot make use of it? So some may be disposed to speak regarding such a doctrine, in such a connection, as that of the text. I may have something to say to those who thus regard the doctrine of this passage; but meantime I would only say that no one can quarrel with the doctrine of the text without quarrelling with Christ, for it is His mouth that uttered it, and it was He who preached the truths in connection with which it stands before us here.

In addressing you from this text, I would direct your attention to the spiritual impotence here declared — to the drawing of the Father — and to Christ's perfecting of the salvation of all whom the Father causes to come to Him.

1. THE SPIRITUAL IMPOTENCE HERE DECLARED. It is inability to come

to Christ as He is revealed and offered in the gospel. And this spiritual impotence is universal, for Jesus saith — “*No man* can come to me.” And He very plainly declares every man’s inability to come to Him, for the words “*can come*” can have only one meaning assigned to them, and might be rendered “is able to come.” Such is the plain import of Christ’s teaching in the first part of this verse, whatever view may be taken of man’s impotence, and in whatever way it may be attempted to reconcile this statement with those which insist on his responsibility. Let us take the explicit teaching of Christ, so far as it goes, and let not our reception of it as true depend on our being able to reconcile it with all other parts of His teaching. To refuse to receive His teaching as true simply because it is His, is to lapse into rationalism, and to allow our own conceptions of the fitness of things, and not the revelation of His will by God, to determine the form and measure of our faith.

Coming to Christ is a *willing* movement of the heart. He must be so known and regarded by him who comes to Him that He is heartily desired. The soul coming to Christ is willing to accept of Him, on the terms according to which He is offered in the gospel, as a Saviour from all sin. And this coming to Christ is an exercise of *faith*. There is in it a *trustful*, as well as a *wistful*, feeling towards Christ, resulting from receiving as true God’s testimony regarding Him, and from discovering, in the light of that testimony, the suitableness, as well as the divine appointment, and personal excellence, of Christ, as a Saviour. It is to come thus to Him that Christ declares every man, without exception, to be unable, without the drawing of the Father.

Such a doctrine as this is not pleasing to “the natural man,” and he either openly rejects it, or, while professing to receive it, wickedly abuses it. The old heart’s pride, with its strong dislike of being indebted to the grace of God, rises against it. And one’s love of ease combines with his pride in securing its rejection; for if one realised that his salvation was dependent on the will of God, he could not be at ease; but when he thinks of it as a matter that is in his own hand, then he can sleep on imagining that when “a convenient season” comes he can secure his salvation. Not such is the feeling of the poor captive, who in his madness barred and bolted the door of his cell thinking it was a palace, but who has been awakened to find himself in bondage, with no power to remove the bars and bolts wherewith he himself shut the door, because he has no strength to reach them, and finds sentinels posted to keep him in his prison. He now feels assured that he cannot escape unless an order for his release is issued by him at whose instance he is confined, and that the only key

by which the door can be opened is in his hands. He cannot now sleep quietly in his cell, dreaming of finding escape whenever he inclines to go out. His sleep is broken and his vain dreamings are at an end.

And there are others who, while professing to receive the doctrine of man's spiritual impotence, at the same time abuse it, and do so also from the desire to be at ease. "No efforts of ours," they say, "are of any avail, therefore we will do nothing, and enjoy our ease till the Lord does His work — the only work that can avail for good to us." It is as if one who was declared to be dying, and was told that there was only one physician who could cure him, continued quite unmoved, made no effort to secure the attendance of the only one who could treat with success his case, and continued to take the kind of diet by which his sickness was induced. The man who could act so must have been insane; but still more insane is the sinner, who makes his utter dependence, on the sovereign grace of God, a reason for continuing at his ease in sin. But let men reject or abuse this doctrine as they may, it is plainly stated in the text, and let us now proceed to consider the grounds on which, besides the statement before us, it may be based.

1. *The sinner is spiritually impotent because he is spiritually dead.* "Dead in trespasses and in sins" is the description given of every one as he is "by nature." Now if there is any exercise that is impossible to a spiritually dead sinner, it is a movement towards God — it is coming to Christ. This was the doctrine of Christ to Nicodemus. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, *he cannot enter into* the kingdom of God," though Christ, as revealed in the gospel, is "the door," and though it is by faith in Him the kingdom of God is entered; and this is plainly declared in the words which tells us that "as many as received" Christ, even they "that believed on His name" "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This is an abundantly strong confirmation of the doctrine of the text. We have a direct affirmation of it thrice over in the gospel of John within its first six chapters, and frequently elsewhere, and he is mighty in his strength to resist Scripture evidence, who refuses to receive this doctrine as true.

2. *Coming to Christ is opposed to all man's "natural" tendencies.* Coming to Christ implies *willingness to be indebted to the grace of God for salvation*. That must be expressed in every exercise of faith bearing on the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is quite opposed to the pride of man's heart, which is such that never can it cease to be ambitious of being independent of God. How then can a man come to Christ unless the Father draws him? And coming to Christ is *an exercise of faith in the word of God as the*

only warrant of his hope of salvation. This word, and this word alone, presents to him the object of his faith, gives the only light by which he can be guided to Him, and is the only cord by which he can take hold of Him when he comes. But nothing is more natural to a man than to think that nothing is real which he cannot see or handle, and that to trust in the word of God as true, is to act the part of a vain dreamer. Specially is this true as to his state of feeling towards "the word of the truth of the gospel." So far as the truth of the word of the law is concerned, he has some warrant in believing in its divine authority, from the operation of his conscience, which testifies on the side of the divine law in its claim and in its curse. But he has no such help in accepting as true "the gospel of the grace of God." The good news is such that he can have no anticipation of it. So new and so wonderful is it, that he feels as if he must be furnished with evidence that will reach him through all his senses ere he can realise it as true. But to him who is coming to Christ no other warrant of faith than the simple word of God, as written in the Bible, is given, and on that he must hang the whole weight of his case as a sinner. How then can he, so resolved to "walk by sight," ever come to Christ "except the Father" "draw him?" And coming unto Christ is *coming to Him for salvation from all sin*. Every man by nature loves sin, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God." I cannot be a hater of God without being in love with sin, to which He in His holiness is infinitely opposed. To what he loves the sinner will cleave, and never shall he willingly come to Christ for salvation from it.

3. *Coming unto Christ is opposed by all the powers of darkness.* "The god of this world," with the great army under his command, is ever busy in endeavouring to keep souls away from Christ. He is ever active in "blinding the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This is surely most formidable opposition. Think of the might and malice of such an army, think of the opportunity of successful working the reigning power of sin in the heart affords, and think, too, of the many weapons furnished to the great enemy in the things of "a present evil world," and then surely it must be manifest that the words of Christ are true when He says, "No man can come to Me except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him."

4. *It is altogether inconceivable that there can be any coming to Christ without some action on the part of God.* As to the extent of that action, in order to the result of faith, there may be differences of opinion, but as to there being some measure of it, all who pretend to be evangelical

must be agreed. If faith be an actual coming unto Christ in desire and trust, must there not at any rate be a revelation by God to the coming one of His Son, and must there not be a reception of him when he comes? If the giving of the word sufficed as a revelation, why was Christ unknown since first the gospel reached us? And can we reach Him and lean on Him without meeting with such a reception as encourages us to do so? The presence even of our Queen is guarded, and, when there is a reception, those who are introduced expect the Sovereign to take some notice of their presence and obeisance. And are we to be admitted to the King of Glory except according to an authoritative exercise of His will? and if He reveals not Himself to us, as He does not to the world, how possibly can we trust in Him? If we add this reason for divine action being necessary, in order to the coming of a sinner to Christ, to those previously stated, how abundantly true appear the words of Him who said — “No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.”

II. THE FATHER'S DRAWING. “No man can come to me *except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.*” These words tell us that what is indispensable, in order to the coming of a sinner to Christ, must come from the Father; that we are to regard the Father in this connection as He by whom Christ was sent; and that the power of the Father is exerted as a *drawing* power, bringing the soul to Christ.

1. *The drawing that brings a sinner to Christ comes from “THE FATHER”.* “The Father” is the distinctive name of the First Person of the Godhead. This is His name because of His relation to the Second Person, who is called “The Son” on account of His relation to the First, while the Third is called “The Spirit” because of His relation to the Father and to the Son. He (the Father) is the representative of the Supremacy of the Godhead. He is so without being personally greater than, while essentially one with, the Son and the Spirit. To His sovereign will must, therefore, all salvation be ascribed. “All things are of God,” the Father, through the Son and by the Holy Ghost; and to Him, therefore, must ultimately be ascribed the bringing of a sinner to Christ.

How great an event, when viewed in its relation to the Father's action, is the coming of a sinner to Christ! He who wields the authority, and is sovereign Lord of all the resources of Jehovah, alone can secure a meeting between Christ and a sinner! Each act of faith bearing upon Christ is the result of an exercise of His sovereign will, and of the operation of His Almighty power. How infinitely great, therefore, is the coming of a sinner to Christ! How small it seems to the eye which does not rest on the action of the Father! And when a sinner does come, how well warranted

is his faith! He is acting according to the call, and because subject to the drawing of the Father. Can anything be more legitimate, therefore, therefore, than faith in Christ?

2. *But the text requires us to consider the Father, in this connection, as He by whom Christ was sent.* The sending of His Son as His Anointed by the Father is the highest display ever given of His sovereignty; the highest commendation ever given of His love; and is such as must be followed by the drawing unto Messiah of all whom He sent Him to redeem.

(1.) *The sending of His Son is the highest display of the Father's sovereignty.* This must be before our minds when we think of His drawing a sinner to Christ. How could there be a higher display of His sovereignty than in the mission of His Son "to seek and to save that which is lost?" How could His absolute supremacy more gloriously appear! Under what law, arising necessarily from what He was or out of any antecedents of His action, could He be requiring such action as this? Surely we cannot ascribe it to the operation of any unavoidable constraint that such a one as Jehovah the Son should be sent to obey and die in human nature on the earth. And there could be nothing in the Father's relations to those whom He sent His Son to redeem requiring such a gift in order to their salvation. The mission of the Son abundantly proves that, in the view of God, those whom He sent Him to redeem were death-deserving sinners, and that He, therefore, could be under no obligation to provide deliverance from death for any of them. But "it seemed good in His sight" to purpose the salvation of His chosen, and, in order to the fulfilment of that decree, He sent His Son in order, by "the sacrifice of Himself," to redeem them. It is in pursuance of this scheme of sovereign grace He *draws* a sinner to Christ, and, in connection with this action, His absolute sovereignty must be recognised and acknowledged.

The last foothold, on the ground of a covenant of works, that must be abandoned by a sinner is the idea that he can, to any extent, be independent of God, for the exercise of saving faith, that he has any plea to urge for the gift of faith, and that he can escape from feeling absolutely dependent on the sovereign will of God for that faith in the exercise of which he can come to Christ. But it would be utterly inconsistent with His mission by the Father, with the relation in which, as Mediator, He stood to Him who sent Him, and with His zeal for His Father's glory, as well as with His love to His people, not distinctly and repeatedly to claim this acknowledgment of divine sovereignty in connection with the gift of faith. And He claims it still. And He cannot but claim it; for if sinners are such as the word of God describes them, they must be told

the truth regarding themselves, and if the coming of a sinner to Christ is the result of the Father's drawing, this must be declared to the praise of Him "of whom are all things."

(2.) *Think of the Father as giving, in the mission of His Son, the highest commendation of His sovereign love.* A higher there could not be given. And this would appear to us if we by faith realised the divine glory of Him who was sent, His relation, as the "Only Begotten Son," to Him who sent Him, the humiliation to which He, when sent, was subjected, and the designed results of His death to the hell-deserving ones whom He was sent to redeem. The marvellous love thus expressed in the mission of Christ, is further expressed in the drawing of blood-bought sinners to their Redeemer. This must never be forgotten.

But it may be asked, "In what relation do sinners, who hear the gospel, stand to the Father and to His love? There are two relations, at any rate, in which they stand to the Father. They are the subjects of His government, and are quite at the disposal of His absolutely sovereign will. This they are as rational beings. And as sinners they are in such a relation to Him as "Judge of all" that they are under a sentence of condemnation to eternal death. Let neither of these relations to the Father be ignored by any of us. "But," it may be asked, "how are we, who hear the gospel, related to the Father's love?" Not so, that you have any warrant to conclude, because of what the gospel tells you of His love, that it now, and as you are, embraces you. It speaks to you of that love, it exhibits the glorious proof given of the sovereignty, freeness, and riches of that love, in the mission and death of the Son, as the Christ and "the Lamb of God," but it cannot, by any possibility, assure you of being an object of that love till you first come to Christ, and be embraced by it in Him. Aught else would be utterly inconsistent with the mode in which His love was revealed, as well as with the source whence it flows. Love, that could not approach a sinner except through Christ's rent body and shed blood, cannot, apart from Christ crucified, be approached by a sinner. It cannot come but through divine blood to you, and you must not attempt to come to it except through the same channel. Let there be movements in desire and faith towards it as it is revealed in Christ, but let there be no attempt to embrace it, as a loved one, till first, as a sinner, you embrace "Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the gospel."

The revelation of the Father's love, in the mission of His Son, is not a declaration that all to whom the gospel comes are loved by God. This cannot be; for if so, all who are in a state of nature on the earth must be equally regarded as objects of the Father's love, whether they have heard

the gospel or not. And how can we conceive of those as objects of His love to whom He has never told of His love, and who derive no opportunity of benefit from it? But if the revelation of the gospel declares sinners who hear it to be loved by God, must we not ascribe this advantage to the sovereign will of God, and, thus from the marshes of Arminianism be constrained to repair for a firm footing to the sure ground of Calvinism? Thus far, at any rate, must the sovereignty of God be acknowledged. The distribution of the gospel is quite as unaccountable, except by referring it to the sovereign good pleasure of God, as is the salvation of some and not of others to whom the gospel has been sent. The mode in which God distributes the gospel is a palpable exhibition of the sovereign grace of the salvation of which the gospel testifies.

But any sinner who is required to acknowledge the Father's sovereignty *is entitled to contemplate the Father's love*. O what a privilege it is to be told that the drawing of a sinner to Christ is in the hands of Him who commended His love in the mission of His Son. He to whom you are shut up in your impotence to believe, as the only One who can help you, is He who so loved the world as to give His Son to make atonement for sin by "the blood of His cross." That is one grand association with the Father. "Yes," you say, "but what encouragement can I derive from thinking of the Father's love, unless I may think of it as love to myself?" At any rate, you may think of it as love to sinners, while you regard it as sovereign love to each one of all who are its objects. Being love to sinners you may appeal to it as the fountain of all saving grace. Friend, your difficulty arises from your thinking so much of yourself, that you are disposed to regard yourself as an ill-used man, if God does not, without any regard to His holiness, and to the honour of His Christ, come to tell you where you are, and as you are, that you are an object of His love. You would surely act more wisely if you took before the Father, your place as a sinner, at the disposal of His sovereign will, and appealed to His love as love that was expressed in sending His Son, as "the Son of man," "to seek and to save that which was lost."

(3.) *To the Son, whom the Father sent, is due by Him who sent Him the drawing of sinners unto Him*. He owes Him this fulfilment of His promise given to Him when He covenanted with Him as to the salvation of His chosen, and in reward of "the travail of His soul" in their behalf. The fulfilment of that promise, and the giving of that reward, are absolutely certain. This furnishes ground of rejoicing to all who love Christ and who love souls, for there is security for Christ being satisfied, and for all His redeemed being saved.

But the Father's way of fulfilling His promise to the Son was to invest Him as the Covenant Head with all authority, and to anoint Him with the fulness of the Holy Ghost, in order that the power of the Mediator might be a security for His obtaining His reward. It is on this account you hear Christ saying that He Himself "will draw all men unto" Him. You may then think of the sovereign love and supreme authority of the Father as evidenced in making Christ the author as well as the object of faith. And if the Father calls you to come to His Christ, in whom all fulness of saving grace is to be found, may you not come *for faith* to Him when you cannot come *with faith*, and ask Him, as the Father's Anointed One, to do for you all that is required to your coming to Him, as well as to save you with an everlasting salvation when you come. Take Christ as a faith-giver, in the presence of the Father who appointed Him to be so, and if you do not, then you are utterly excuseless if you perish in your unbelief.

3. *The Father's drawing.* This is, and must be *gracious, attracting, and effectual*. *Gracious*, infinitely gracious, it must be, as it bears on a mean, guilty, loathsome, hostile sinner. Gracious, beyond all conception, must be the drawing which brings into a relation of everlasting union that sinner to His glorious Son. Gracious enough to be matter of eternal wonder and praise is this action of the Father, resulting as it infallibly does in the everlasting salvation of the sinner on whom it takes effect. And it is drawing by *attraction*. He who comes is "*made willing*" in a day of power. It pleases God to bring, by His quickening Spirit, the dead soul alive, and to reveal His Son in Him, and by His excellence and love to draw the soul, now spiritually alive, to His Christ. There is no *dragging* though there is drawing. It is *attraction*, not *compulsion*, that overcomes the sinner, into submission, and wins his acquiescence in the terms of the gospel. This drawing is and must be *effectual*. No power can successfully resist the drawing of the Father. The three Persons of the Godhead act, each His part, in bringing the soul to Christ, and what possible combination of influences can withstand action of which this is true? The wildest rebel He can subdue, the most ignorant He can enlighten, the most hostile he can make friendly, the most oppressed He can deliver, the man who has been longest "dead in trespasses and sins" He can quicken "together with Christ," and the most timid He can "persuade and enable" "to embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the gospel."

III. CHRIST'S PROMISE OF COMPLETING THE SALVATION OF ALL WHOM THE FATHER DRAWS TO HIM — "*And I will raise him up at the last day.*" This is the third time this promise was given by Christ in His discourse.

It is a promise bearing on all who come to Him, whenever and whatever they may be. It specifies only the crowning act of salvation — it is a promise that He shall “bring forth the headstone of the building, with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it” — but surely this implies a promise of doing all that is required in order to prepare for this. “The headstone” cannot be brought forth, till every stone is laid in the wall on the foundation — till the building is ready for the headstone. Christ, by these words, engages to see to it that all sanctifying grace is given, that He shall instruct and guide, and preserve and comfort to the end all whom the Father draws to Him; that He shall receive their souls at death, when He has purged away all their corruption, to their place in the “Father’s house,” and that however long their bodies may lie asleep in the grave, He will at the last day quicken and transform them, so that, perfectly like Himself, they may be prepared for being for ever with Him.

O what a promise this is? *It is infinitely rich.* There is nothing wanting to it that can be required by a soul from the first moment of faith in Christ till he enters everlasting glory. And it is as *true* as it is *rich*. Sometimes among men we find those who make promises which they never intend to fulfil. A small promise, if true, would be better than all the large promises which these may offer as a ground of hope. But in Christ’s promise there is the bounty of infinite love with the certainty of infallible truth. And this is His promise to all who come to Him, and an interest in all the grace of this unfailing promise shall be yours, if, as a sinner, you come to Him as He is revealed and offered to you in the gospel.

This promise is one of those with which we repeatedly meet in the word of God, in which the grace of all the promises is gathered up, and nothing besides is left to be asked beyond their fulfilment. On this, believer, you have to be drawing during all your life in the wilderness. The promised grace is all in Him in whom “the promises of God are yea and amen.” From His mouth comes the promise, and in Him is stored the grace. And by such a word as this He makes you free to make use of all He is, and has, and has done and suffered. He gives Himself over, to the faith which He has begotten, in order to the plenishing of the sinner whom He loved. And He does even more than this, for He not only assures those who have come, that He shall be unto them according to the measure of their faith, but that He shall see to their having the faith, as well as the supply which is secured through faith. O what rest would be yours and mine, if we implicitly trusted in Him, and left our whole case in His hands!

APPLICATION. 1. *We have in this text what is a marked feature of Christ’s teaching all throughout — He traces up all salvation to the*

sovereign love of the Father who sent Him. It is this which is so marked in the words, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." And He thus ascribes all the praise of salvation to the Father's sovereign love while He declares "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father." If He who was the Son, essentially one with, and personally equal to, the Father, was thus careful to refer all salvation to the sovereign good pleasure of the Father, as "Lord of heaven and earth," surely all who follow Him as preachers must be careful to do the same, even when, like the Master, they are addressing mixed multitudes.

2. *We may learn from this text that a doctrine, because distasteful to hearers, or because liable to be abused by them, ought not to be withheld.* If it is part of "the whole counsel of God" it must be preached, however offensive it may be regarded, and to whatever extent abused. "The chief end" of the preacher ought to be to glorify God by exhibiting Him as He has revealed Himself. This must be done whatever may be the issue. There must be no new aspect of His character presented to men — nothing but His name as He Himself has revealed it — no representation of His scheme of redemption that does not accord with His mind in the word, no modification of the bearings of doctrine to suit them to the taste of unrenowned men, nothing that "thus saith the Lord" does not cover. In combination with the zeal which makes one careful to keep the glory of God, as the great end of his preaching, in view, there ought to be, as there was in the Master, yearning pity towards the sinners to whom Christ is preached. Carefulness to be exact in stating doctrine, *according to a system*, there may be where there is *no due deference to the word of God*; but there can be no pity like Christ's in the heart of anyone who is not anxious in his preaching to conserve the honour of the divine name, while guided solely by the light of the divine word. *Cold dogmatism* or *blind earnestness* are not the only alternatives in preaching. The true preacher is he who is like Christ in glorifying Him who sent Him by ascribing all salvation to His sovereign will as "Lord of heaven and earth," and who is like Him also in His pity, as expressed in His weeping over doomed Jerusalem.

3. In the light of this text we may see how desirable coming to Christ is. Look at it as the fruit of the Father's love, and as the result of the Father's drawing, and how great does faith in Christ appear to be! And then think of it as the means of securing an interest in a perfect salvation, and how gracious and rich a boon the gift of faith, as a gift from God,

appears! Does it so appear to you? Has this drawn forth your desire in prayer to God for the precious gift of faith? Has it made you anxious to "win Christ and be found in Him?" Or have you chosen as the objects of your desire only such things as first cheat, and then utterly destroy, the soul.

4. *What debtors to God are all who have come to Christ!* They are under debt for their coming, and when they come they incur debt to grace as great as a perfect and everlasting salvation! They are under debt to the Father for drawing them to Christ, and they are under debt to Christ for the "righteousness and strength" which they found in Him, and they are debtors to the Holy Ghost for fulfilling in them "the good pleasure" of God. O, friends, seek to see and feel and acknowledge more and more the obligation under which you lie to "the God of all grace," that you may be kept more lowly, more thankful, more zealous, more faithful, as your days in the wilderness are passing away. And remember that it is only by incurring fresh debt that you can attain to fresh growth — debt to Christ, "without whom you can do nothing," debt to the Father for drawing you to Him "in whom it pleased Him" "that all fulness should dwell," for during all your life you must know that "no man," spiritually dead or spiritually alive, "can come to" Christ "except" as the Father draws him; debt to the Holy Ghost, without whose gracious operation you cannot receive according to the Father's giving, and to the right and pleading of the Son. To be a debtor for salvation *through* faith your old covenant spirit deems to be a hard thing, but it still more vehemently rebels against your being a constant debtor *for* faith to God. You sometimes think you could bravely get on if you could only be master of your faith, and go to the storehouse when you please. But to be dependent on the Father's drawing, for each act of faith, during all your life on earth, leaves to self no ground of glorying. And this is the arrangement that is best for you, and it is so just because it is mortifying to your pride of heart. You never feed except when self is starved.

5. *The text forbids any one to imagine that he came to Christ if he has not been taught that he could never come unless the Father drew him.* This is a lesson which Christ insisted on being learned when He dealt in secret with an inquirer such as Nicodemus was, and when He preached to a multitude beside the Lake of Tiberias. You, therefore, cannot be in His school if you are allowed to skip this lesson over. It cannot save you from being deceived that you do not like the doctrine, because you prefer a view of your relation to God which would spare you the self-mortification which it inflicts. It is not what suits your taste, but what suits your state

you need to be told to you; and if it be true that such is your actual condition, that you cannot come to Christ unless the Father draw you, what but evil can result from your shutting out that truth from your soul? But you will be disposed to say, "If I believed that to be true, I could have no hope." Certainly not in yourself, but that is just the reason why you are called to believe it. Another may say, "If I believed that, I would fold my hands and cease from all effort." And if you did, what a strange reason you would assign for being listless! your being so lost that you could not escape from destruction without being drawn to Christ by the Father! This is to be your opiate, is it? If so, it is the most extraordinary inducement to sleep that was ever heard of. Another asks, "How can this spiritual impotence to believe consist with my being accountable to God for my unbelief?" That is an old question, to which no new answer can be given. Both things are consistent in the view of God, and let that suffice. It is high time for you to know that depravity of heart cannot excuse iniquity of conduct, for your guilt occasioned your depravity, and the state of your heart cannot, therefore, excuse the guilt of your actions.

6. *There is encouragement in the text to all who fain would reach Christ, and who find that nothing that the Father's drawing can bring them to Him.* Friends, if a sense of the power of unbelief is your burden, while a sense of the guilt of it is your shame — if the one makes you bow, while the other makes you blush — this flows from some revelation of Christ by the Father. But having given this, He will give more. And is it not well for you that it is the Father, as representing the authority, grace and power of the Godhead, whose work it is to draw? There can be no gift too great for His love, no work too hard for His power, and whatever it pleaseth Him that He hath the right to do. And when your hope of help is faint, look to Him through the given Son. Remember that "all that the Father hath is" His, and that if you may claim Him as the gift of God, you will find in Him, as the provision of the Father's love, enough to meet you in your impotence, and a warrant to cleave to Him as you ask Him to help you in your time of need.

7. *Are any of you afraid of not being drawn to Christ?* If so, do not smother that fear; do not let it press you to despair; be sure to tell it to God; and give "no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids" till you are drawn by the Father to Christ. I say to none of you "be not afraid of not coming," for it is an awful thing not to come, and certain you are not to come if the Father withholds from you His grace. Nor can I tell you that you have any claim on God, or that you can offer any prayer, so long as you are "dead in sins," and apart from Christ that is not "an

abomination in the sight of the Lord.” But neither can I refrain from bidding you to pray, as even Simon Magus was commanded, though he was “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” And if you realise that you are called by God to come, and that the authority of that call shuts you up to Christ, and are, at the same time, conscious of your impotence to come, while you know yourselves to be without any right to expect that the Father will draw you, and to be at the disposal of Him who “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and who hardeneth whom He will,” do not despair, but hold on and still cry, for you are less likely to perish than when you were at your ease; and as you are beginning to feel the straitness of the gate, through which alone the way of life is entered, there is some reason to hope that you are going through; and, if your soul is agonising to enter, who knoweth but you are passing through the throes of that new birth, because of which alone one can, by coming to Christ, enter the kingdom of God.

(This sermon has been printed in pamphlet form by the Westminster Standard Publications, New Zealand).

Steadfastness in the Truth

by Rev. D. Beaton

The many exhortations to steadfastness in the truth addressed to us in the Scriptures are abundant evidence, if any were required, of one of the most common of human shortcomings — the tendency to depart from the truth. The whole drift of the Apostle’s pleading in the Epistle to the Hebrews is a sustained and powerfully persuasive argument to hold fast that which the Hebrews had so gladly received in the day when they were willing to make great sacrifices for Christ. “Call to remembrance,” he says, “the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” But these days a warmhearted enthusiasm had passed away, and given place to the chilling and deadening effect of indifference, and the men who marched forward with firm step showed decided signs of wavering. The practised eye of the Apostle immediately detected the defection, and, as a wise and skilful leader of men, he gives a clear trumpet call to rally the wavering ranks: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense

of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.' The keynote to the line of argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews is to be found in the fact that it is addressed to a people not only ready to halt, but ready to go back on a noble profession they had at one time wholeheartedly made. The steadfastness inculcated in the Epistle to the Hebrews meets us time and again in reading the Bible. The people of God are not to give up the truth of God if they themselves or others change. Circumstances may arise which make it difficult to hold fast that which one time was heartily received as the very truth of heaven, but changed circumstances are no justifiable ground for forsaking the truth.

Again, in the lapse of years the early enthusiasm of the Christian's early start on the great journey may have cooled to the dangerous stage of cold formality, which exercises a paralysing effect on the hold of divine truth. And when accompanying this there is persecution, or even unpopularity, there is the greatest danger of letting slip the things which we have heard. But in none of these cases is the believer justified in casting away his confidence.

It is important in estimating what is meant by steadfastness in the truth to notice that it implies steadfastness in God's truth — the truth set before us in the Word of God. This implies that we have knowledge of that truth, and this knowledge can only come to us through the *enlightenment* of the Holy Spirit. At one time of the believer's life this truth may have been nothing, or at least nothing more than that it was held and maintained by those in whom he had confidence that they were the followers of Christ, and, therefore, he rightly cast in his lot with them. But now, it is not because those in whom he has confidence believe the truth, but because he believes it himself as the very truth of God that it becomes something that is not to be lightly given up.

In all true steadfastness there is also *love* to God's truth. That love, in thousands of cases, has proved stronger than death. It has encouraged the martyrs to lay down their lives rather than renounce the truth as it is in Jesus. This love of the truth is quite compatible with the manifold corruptions of the depraved heart and the subtle temptations of Satan seeking to destroy it. It is this love that beautifies Steadfastness, and enables all who stand steadfast to be willing to make sacrifices, if need be, rather than let the truth be given up. Hence all such considerations as to what the world will think, what it will mean to our reputation or our feelings if given consideration to for a time, are ultimately set aside as not worthy to stand in the way. The apparent sternness that accompanies steadfastness

is apt to be misunderstood by the looker-on as indicative of an unfeeling nature, in which pugnacity and obstinacy have more place than love. But this is a superficial view, and its injustice will be apparent to those who look at these matters, not merely as they appear on the surface, but as those who have learned that Truth and the Love of Truth often appear very stern to superficial observers. Steadfastness in the truth is to be clearly distinguished from obstinacy. Here again the verdict of superficial observers is that there is practically no difference, and the sneering taunt is unfeelingly flung at many who love God's truth, and are not shaken like reeds before every wind that blows, that it is the natural obstinacy of their nature that makes them so unyielding. We do not deny that the two words may be used interchangeably and fitly describe the disposition of some men, but the steadfastness of which we are speaking is a very different thing. The *steadfast* man is so, not because it is his particular view or that of many men, but because it is God's truth. This is the determining factor in his line of conduct. In the case of the *obstinate* man this element does not enter into the matter at all; he is regulated in his conduct by the fact that this is his opinion, and it is not a question whether it is God's truth or not. In other words, he is not influenced by a moral, but by a selfish motive. There is no lack of determination and force of will in obstinacy. The obstinate man may happen to be right, but it is not the rightness of his cause that makes him determined. The same determination is seen when he is wrong. Bunyan has drawn with a masterly hand the respective characters of Steadfastness and Obstinacy in his *Valiant for Truth* and *Standfast* on the one hand and *Obstinate* on the other. *Obstinate* did his best to get Christian back when the latter set out on his great journey to the Celestial City, and in Christian we see exemplified that beautiful steadfastness which in all the vicissitudes of his life kept his eye ever towards the goal. But it is particularly in *Valiant for Truth* and *Standfast* Bunyan has portrayed in his inimitable way the Christian grace of steadfastness. One of the most beautiful passages in the *Pilgrim's Progress* is his description of Standfast's passing through the bridgeless river. "When Mr Standfast", he wrote "had thus set things in order, and the time being come for him to haste him away, he also went down to the river. Now there was a great calm at that time in the river; wherefore Mr Standfast, when he was about half-way in, stood awhile, and talked to his companions that had waited upon him thither; and he said, 'This river has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me. Now, methinks, I stand easy; my foot is fixed upon that upon which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood, while Israel

went over Jordan (Jos. 3: 17). The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, doth lie as a glowing coal at my heart.

'I see myself now at the end of my journey, my toilsome days are ended. I am going now to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spit upon for me.

'I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself.

'I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there have I coveted to set my foot too.

'His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet; and his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun. His word I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings.

'He has held me, and hath kept me from mine iniquities; yea, my steps hath he strengthened in his way.'

"Now, while he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed, his strong man bowed under him; and after he had said: — Take me, for I come unto thee, he ceased to be seen of them.

"But glorious it was to see how the open region was filled with horses and chariots, with trumpeters and pipers, with singers and players on stringed instruments, to welcome the Pilgrims as they went up and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city."

Letter

by Rev. Archd. Cook

Daviot Free Manse
26th November, 1849

My Dear Brother,

I received your kind letter for which we longed. I am glad you all enjoy health. Regarding myself I often feel that I am mortal; this world is getting empty to me. I might see much of the Lord's goodness since I had a being, especially since I professed His name, but my folly and barrenness make it empty, and now it becomes more so every day. I see the world will not make one happy; that nothing will do but a new creation. This is the work of God, — our own duties will not do it (but rather harden without the influence of grace). Only when one feels that such is the case, will he in these be waiting at the pool for the troubling of the water.

The Lord created the world out of nothing, by the word of His power. The same creating word is necessary for us, changing the heart of stone into an heart of flesh, giving a new bent to the spirit, to the Lord and to eternal things. Eternity will show that those only are happy people whose God is the Lord, whose sins are pardoned, whose iniquity is covered, and to whom the Lord will not impute sin. They have the promise, not only of the present life, but also of that which is to come, and that all things will work for their good though not easily believed at times. "What I do now ye know not, but ye shall know hereafter" and they shall be made at last more than conquerors, through Him that loved them. When God in His providence places His people where they cannot easily get to the ordinances, then He shows them that He is not bound to the ordinances. Sometimes He will feed them with bread of tears, at other times with crumbs of the Bread of Life, which come from Heaven and give life to the world, at other times, through the promises in corners, in the field and in the wood.

This made the Psalmist remember the "Land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and of the hill Mizar" even when the Lord's waves and billows were gone over him.

I am now beginning my catechising. I feel it heavy from the great number of people I have to go through, yet find it pleasant. I have four diets every week. Mr Alick is in health. He was for two days with me last week at the catechising. The people are very fond of him. All here join me in our affectionate regards to you all. I remain your dear brother.

Yours Sincerely, Archd. Cook

(This letter was sent by Rev. Archd. Cook to Alex. Cook, Arran)

A Forgotten Great Scotsman

Rev. Alexander Comrie, Holland.

Reading lately in the *Catholic Presbyterian*, a periodical now defunct, we lighted upon an interesting biographic sketch by Rev. Dr. Kuyper, of Holland. His subject is Alexander Comrie, an eminent Calvinistic minister who flourished in Holland between the years 1728 and 1774.

Alexander Comrie was a young Scotsman whose parents had sent him to pursue a commercial career in Holland that they might thereby divert his mind from an inclination towards the ministerial office. Unwittingly, however, they but paved the way for their son's true life work, because through a wonderful providence Alexander became parish minister of Woubrugge, near Leyden, and was instrumental in doing notable service

there both as a pastor and a witness for truth, in so much that while his fame lasted he seems to have been a Dutch edition of Dr Kennedy, of Dingwall. His first introduction to this life work was on a certain evening in 1728 when, travelling by sea to a certain place, he was shipwrecked and cast ashore in straits. Lighting upon a certain farmhouse he desired shelter for the night, and was admitted with some degree of suspicion. He was accommodated in a room where his procedure could be watched. His first movement was to kneel down and give thanks in an audible voice for God's good providence towards him and to invoke a blessing upon the farmer whose kindness was so opportune.

"Fancy," says the biographer, "the farmer's astonishment as he saw the poor wanderer, as soon as he imagined himself alone and unobserved, uncover his head, put off his coat, and, falling upon his knees, pour out his soul in a touching, fervent prayer to the Lord, giving thanks for his guidance and for the kindness he had met with. During his prayer there rose such a holy expression from the young man's face that the farmer already felt quite ashamed of his unfavourable conjectures, a change of opinion ending in making him feel himself entirely his inferior, as placing his ear once more to the hole he heard the lad pleading most earnestly and fervently before the throne of grace that, if his entertainer might not be as yet converted to eternal life, the divine mercy might be bestowed upon him also and upon his family."

It is related that this incident was the occasion of a gracious change on the farmer who had thus entertained "an angel unawares". The object of Alexander's journey to this place was to see with his eyes a work of revival that was in progress in the parish of Woubrugge. After a long interval of dead orthodoxy the Power from on High had visited that region and was raising up children to Abraham.

"There had been in this village for years and years, as Comrie himself afterwards told, nothing but a dead outward show of religion; there was much orthodoxy, and even knowledge leading to a historical faith, but the power of the Lord was not manifested, the operation of the Holy Spirit did not show itself. It was the stillness of the tomb, not the sparkling of life and the beaming of light such as should be in a Christian community. But then there came from Benthuyzen, a little place two hours off, a God-fearing workman, who had been brought to know of the resurrection power of Christ by the faithful ministry of Van Noorden, a father in Christ for the whole neighbourhood. This plain workman felt as if the Lord had bound the whole village of Woubrugge upon his heart. He tried by every means to rouse the people from their lethargy, stirred up young and old

to abandon their false trust, and never ceased to carry the souls of all around him before the throne of divine mercy in his prayers. Thus he went on for eight years, but without the least shadow of success, till finally, after nine years of quiet waiting, the Lord came down to answer his petition: now the seed had ripened, and Klaass Jansse Poldervaert — such was his name — hardly knew how to satisfy all the demands for spiritual direction that came to him day by day from different parts of the parish. So prominent and striking did this work of the Lord then appear that, many came up every Sabbath from different places in the neighbourhood to witness the outpouring of spiritual blessing. And although the Rev. Mr Blom, minister of the parish at that time, at first began by opposing the movement as throwing his ministry into the shade, still the revival proved so general and so continuous, and maintained such a high character, that he finally gave way, became a partaker of the unspeakable blessing for his own soul, and until his death in 1734 bore public testimony from the pulpit to the great and glorious work the Lord had done in his parish in his days, though without his instrumentality.”

Being introduced to two of the principal men of the parish — men of social standing as well as religious eminence — they were much taken with the stranger’s gifts and graces, and resolved that these should not be buried in a counting-house. Mr Comrie had already received a good classical education, and they made proposals that he should proceed further and complete his college course with a view to the pastoral office. To this Alexander gladly agreed, and the result was that he became pastor of this same parish of Wunbrugge, and in spite of calls to other places he remained there till his retirement through physical weakness in 1773.

“From miles and miles in the neighbourhood all God-fearing people came to hear this godly man. And when he left his manse on the 4th of April, 1773, to spend the rest of his life in Gouda, Woubrugge and all its environs felt that in Comrie there had been granted to the Reformed Church a great man before the Lord, not only for Rhineland, but the whole United Provinces; a man not likely to be soon forgotten or easily replaced.

For a few months only was he to enjoy the sweet rest of retirement from office. His health had been already broken when he left his favourite village, and his weakness, as often happens, was soon aggravated by the want of his usual employment. Before the next year had reached its close, on the 10th of December, 1774, Comrie was borne away to the heavenly mansions in the 66th year of his age, sweetly resting his wearied soul on the bosom of His Saviour.

In accordance with his wishes his burial was conducted in the simplest

way. Not even an inscription was to indicate his tombstone in that huge city of Gouda, no doubt known to many of our readers for its uncommonly beautiful glass paintings. In his will he had expressly stipulated that no biographical notice should be entered in the "Church Review" after his death, so averse was he to all glorification of the creature and to the vanity of human pomp. And though we cannot but regret that, owing to this sober-mindedness, we are left in perfect ignorance of the further particulars of his life, still we submit not unwillingly to this deeply-felt want, glad as we are to find in Comrie once more the image of a genuine Calvinist — one who showed his detestation of all glorification of the creature, not merely in his sermons, but more severely still in what concerned his own life."

His life was a lonely and studious one. He married in 1736 Miss Ivann de Heyde, a God-fearing woman, whose brother, Ian William de Heyde, was a favourite preacher at Rotterdam, but she died two years afterwards, and he did not marry again. A remarkable fact illustrating the power and spirituality of his ministration is the case of a criminal who was guilty of several acts of fire-raising in the village. It is reported that he was brought to public confession and true repentance by the fascinating and touching manner in which Comrie pled before the Lord, not against him, but for the salvation of his soul.

Mr Comrie's zeal for pure and undefiled religion is evidenced by the books which he was instrumental in circulating in Holland. He wrote several volumes himself on the subject of Justification and Saving Faith, and he translated or edited for the benefit of the Hollanders the following works:— Boston's "Covenant of Grace", "Marshall on Sanctification", Shepherd's "Ten Virgins", Voetius' "The Power of Godliness", and "Chauncey's Westminster Catechism, Illustrated".

The most strenuous element, however, of Comrie's life work was his public controversy with a band of errorists in the high places of the Church, men who were bringing in pernicious heresies to the virtual undoing of the whole work of the Reformation. At first these novel opinions were circulated in Latin, and were accessible only to the learned. At last, however, they found their way into the pulpit, and the whole sound, God-fearing section of the people were alarmed. A second-rate preacher, Van den Os, was the first who broached the new views in the native tongue.

"He did not hesitate," says Dr Kuyper, "to attack successively, in his very first sermons, the eternal generation of the Son, the punishment of eternal death as the consequence of the first sin, the hereditary debt of Adam, and the judicial side of justification. All these questions, however,

he treated more in an exegetical way, as if depending merely upon a correct understanding of such texts as — Micah 5: 2; Ps. 2: 7; 1 John 5: 26; Gen. 3: 22, and Rom. 3: 23; hence these extravagances did not rouse the suspicion of the people at large. But when at last he did not shrink from declaring that our justification before God was a *mere consequence or result of our individual faith*, the godly people at once perceived that their inexperienced pastor was *slipping the poison of rationalism into the Confession of their fathers*, and that the error of Pelagianism was again obscuring the true relationship between God the Saviour and the saved sinner; and they determined not to leave the decision of the conflict to science and dialectics, but to take it in hand as an ecclesiastical body. In a few weeks this apparently local conflict spread all over the country, and very soon divided almost the whole nation into two hostile camps. On one side were arrayed all the power and influence of the magistrate and State university, and on the other the real spiritual power of the godly amongst the people, the ministers, and the ecclesiastical government. The town council of Zwolle, the provincial council of Overijssel, and even Prince William IV of Orange stood up, not so much for Van den Os himself, as for the unfettered progress of rationalism; while the Theological Faculty of Leyden apologised for the heterodoxy of the extravagant young minister, as not so much exceeding the boundaries of the articles of the Church. On the other hand the defence of the old Scriptural truth was conducted in a fair, vigorous and decisive manner, first by almost all the colleagues of Van den Os; secondly, by the kirk-session of Zwolle; thirdly, by the classical and provincial synods or assemblies, and more powerfully still by the two sagacious and able theologians, Alexander Comrie and his friend Holtius.”

Dr Kuyper relates that the agitation carried on by the sound party was successful in bringing about the suspension of Van den Os from the ministry. But the controversy, especially regarding the right place and office of faith in justifying the sinner, went on for a number of years in much the same manner as the contemporaneous Marrow Controversy in Scotland, and the Boston of the Dutch Church was Alexander Comrie. The point of this debate may be fine, but nevertheless the issues depending thereon are practical and important in the highest degree. The one party maintained that faith justifies because it is a commanded duty, and because it contains in itself the germ of a complete, obedience to the law of God, and the other maintained that faith justifies not from any merit in itself as an act, but solely because it is the empty hand that receives the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ.

This position and the related doctrines of Calvinism in connection

therewith, were expounded and defended with great zeal and ability by Alexander Comrie and several of his associates during this campaign, and they procured to themselves a good degree. Comrie, as we stated, retired from his active service in 1773 and died in 1774, aged 66 years. His fame endured for several generations, and by Dr Kuyper's articles in the "Catholic Presbyterian" twenty years ago, and this notice in the "Free Presbyterian Magazine" is providentially rescued from oblivion, and some fulfilment is thus made of the word, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

(*F.P. Mag.* Vol. 8)

J. M'N

Book Reviews

SATAN CAST OUT. A Study in Biblical Demonology, by F. S. Leahy, Banner of Truth Trust, £2.95.

This book of under two hundred pages is a reprint of the first (1975) edition, the author being a minister of the R.P. Church of Ireland. He opens with a review of the work of angels — good and evil — passing on to deal with Satan's present position and workings, and then briefly reviewing demonic activity in Old and New Testament times. The concluding part of the book reviews demonic activity in more recent times and warning against spiritist meetings, healing meetings, drug taking and pop music as providing an easy entrance to demonic forces. Spiritism called forth the judgment of God in Scripture, and a decline in spiritual life coincided with an increasing interest in the occult.

Demon possession was a stark reality in New Testament times, although many modern theologians have their theories for discounting the Biblical account (p 130).

The Jews practised exorcism, but Christ expelled demons — never to return. As to whether we see demonic possessions in our day, we do not get a decisive answer in this work, though he does tell us missionaries in Brazil, Ethiopia, and Borneo are confronted with the challenge of Satan worship, demon possession, and exorcism. Of course every unconverted soul is under the power of Satan as far as The Most High permits. Against the background of his subject the Author has some useful comments to make on the physical phenomena seen in times of revival.

He draws our attention to the views of Luther, Calvin and others on this subject. Prof. Leahy's remedy for the evils he writes about is a firm belief in a personal God, acceptance of the Bible as our only rule of faith

and practice, the daily practice of prayer, and the fellowship of the Christian Church. To this the reviewer would add faith in the Person and work of Christ, prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and strict obedience to the Ten Commandments.

While this work has its merits, there are one or two blemishes which must be mentioned.

1. In speaking of demons as instruments of punishment (p.67) and referring to Psalm 78: 49 he prefers the term "misfortune bringing angels" to "evil angels" as we have in the A.V. — surely a term out of keeping with the subject of the book — to say the least.

2. Pentecostalist **brethren** is a term which would be better omitted. (p.69).

3. Item 10, p172, "Being filled with the Spirit — a prerequisite for service in an area where demonic presence is obvious . . .". This can all too readily be taken up by the Pentecostalists for their own purposes and misapplied.

Readers familiar with the history of the Free Presbyterian Church, and especially with attempts made by the present Free Church at union in the early years of this century will be interested to read Prof. Leahy's comment on "Demonic Possession in the New Testament" by Dr. W. M. Alexander, which work was the subject of controversy at the time as Dr. Alexander was appointed to a chair in the Free Church College. The comment is ". . . but at times his handling of Scripture betrays an approach bordering on rationalism, . . . it needs to be read with discrimination". The fathers of our Church were not alone in the view they took of the above book.

Prof. Leahy's work exposes the dangers of occultism and merits study by young readers and any others who have come in contact with this evil subject.

R. K. M.

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH by Thos. Witherow.

Free Presbyterian Publications have just reissued *The Apostolic Church* by Thomas Witherow. Our Church has kept in print for over 35 years now this useful book on the subject of church government, but this edition appears in a new format, completely reset and with an attractive cover in full colour. It costs £2.50.

We are a Presbyterian Church because we believe that this is the form of church government taught by Scripture, and it is important that all who belong to the Church should be aware of the Scriptural basis of

Presbyterianism. Witherow studied the matter deeply, and gives his conclusions in this book in a brief and easily-read form.

The author began his study of the subject somewhat doubtful if the Presbyterian system could bear detailed scrutiny in the light of Scripture. But, before he was finished, his doubts had vanished in the face of a thorough investigation of Scripture evidence. And in the course of his study he had read all the writings of the ablest advocates of opposing systems. No wonder then that James Begg, himself no mean writer on Church issues, described this book as "very able and satisfactory."

After a ministry of 20 years in County Londonderry in Northern Ireland Thomas Witherow (1824-1890) spent the remainder of his life as a Professor of Church History in the city of Londonderry. He was the author of several other works, including a much fuller work on this subject. *The Form of the Christian Temple*. It seems especially appropriate to issue this edition of *The Apostolic Church* in the centenary year of his death.

K. D. M.

Notes and Comments

Attempt to extend Hours for Licensed Premises.

It is gratifying to know that in recent times the Licensing Authorities at Inverness and at Badenoch and Strathspey have refused extensions past midnight to applicants of licensed premises. At Inverness a nightclub applied to extend its bar opening times into the early hours of Sabbath. At Aviemore there were requests to sell drink until 1 a.m. from a variety of applicants. However all these requests were turned down. At both hearings the police opposed the granting of licences. At Inverness Supt MacDonald said it would make it very difficult for the police to clear the town centre of young people until well into the early hours. In the other cases Chief Insp. MacKay said the police were concerned with the continuing problems of disturbance leading to serious incidents and a large number of arrests. It is good to realise that the Licensing Authorities are acting in this way.

IRA Activity

It would appear that the IRA are stepping up their attacks outside Northern Ireland, both in England and in Europe. The people of Northern Ireland have had to bear with these attacks for many years and perhaps did not always receive the sympathy they should have had. However these latest attacks bring home to people outside Ireland what evil men they are who are involved in the commission of such wicked and violent crimes.

Little do these men of violence realise that they must answer for their evil deeds before the judgment seat of Christ. Some of them have already gone to their account.

Iranian Earthquake

The terrible Iranian Earthquake in which it is feared over 50,000 souls perished is another loud warning to the nations of the earth. The voice of God is in it to the children of men if we would only lay it to heart. How near we are to eternity at all times while walking on the thin crust of this earth. Sad to relate in this earthquake, most, no doubt, of those who perished were followers of the false prophet Mohammed. May the Lord hasten the day when those who are deluded by this false religion will be set free by the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Crime in Scotland

A recent report shows that crime has risen in Scotland by 5 per cent over last year. Lord James Douglas Hamilton said that the figures gave cause for concern. These figures, of course, reflect the low spiritual state of the nation. When the Word of God and the law of God is discarded we can expect moral deterioration in the nation and that is what has been happening progressively over many years.

Embryo Bill

An amendment to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, now before Parliament, to prevent the creation of human embryos for research was defeated in the House of Commons by 246 votes to 208. The amendment if it had been carried still would have left the door open for provision for infertility. The House of Commons in April voted to allow research. What the outcome will be, who can tell? What is very clear is that Britain's liberalising of its laws in this and other fields is always in a direction opposed to the divine law.

An amendment was also moved to the Bill which would allow an abortion in the first twelve weeks if one doctor certified it was necessary. Those opposed to abortion spoke strongly against it and Rev. Ian Paisley protested against it on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland. What vigilance is required by Members of Parliament in order to prevent those in favour of liberalising the law from gaining the day! The Methodist Church in a Committee Report comes out against abortion on demand but does not rule out embryo research under 15 days. The report will be discussed by churches.

Sabbath Trading Bill

Mr David Mellor, Minister of State at the Home Office, told the Commons that a new Sabbath Trading Bill is to be introduced by the government as soon as possible. He said the Government was prepared to consider reform, if a widely acceptable solution could be found which could be enforced. From Mr Mellor's reply to questions put to him it would appear that he favours removing restrictions to Sabbath trading.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 4th September at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 11th September at 6 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 18th September at 6 p.m.

Canadian: At Inverness on 2nd October at 9 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 9th October at 2 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 16th October at 11 a.m.

Mission News

Miss Marion Graham has resumed her work at Ingwenya as Headmistress of the John Tallach Secondary School. She returned to Zimbabwe in June after she had recovered from her illness. In the kind providence of the Lord she has been restored to health and strength again.

Mr Dick Vermuelen has been engaged for the last number of months in his work of overseeing the Missions in Kenya and Malawi. In August he will complete the six months service which he promised to give and is due to return to New Zealand at that time. It is to be hoped that the Lord may in His providence raise up suitable workers for this part of our Church's work. A further appeal is included in this issue of the Magazine. A Minister of the Gospel to labour in those countries is most essential. There is there a large field of usefulness for a dedicated servant of Christ to spend and be spent in the Master's service. The Lord is able to direct the mind of one of His servants to undertake this task in Africa for our Mission there.

A Deputation from Zimbabwe was expected to visit Kenya and Malawi in July. We trust that their visits to both countries will have proved successful in further establishing our witness as a Church there.

Urgent Appeal for Foreign Mission Staff

At Ingwenya, at John Tallach Secondary School, there is an urgent need for teachers having Mathematics or Science at degree level. Persons not having teacher training will be acceptable.

At Sengera in Kisii Province in Kenya there is urgent need for a doctor or nurse to supervise the setting up and running of the Hospital Clinic which has recently been built.

Again we would urge suitably qualified persons to give prayerful consideration to the above appeal. Anyone willing to respond to these needs should contact the Clerk to the Foreign Missions Committee, Rev. Dr. J. R. Tallach, Free Presbyterian Manse, Raasay, Kyle, IV40 8PB.

The Foreign Mission Committee wish it to be known that while it was agreed at the Synod that the provision of **further** medical and educational facilities in Kenya and Malawi be left in abeyance for the present, yet the Foreign Mission Committee would be happy to hear from suitably qualified persons for the work already established there.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The Treasurers of the following Congregations acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:—

- Barnoldswick:** Joel 2: 27, £10 for Manse Bdg. Fund; Macedonian Mission Trust, £50 for Congr. Fund.
- Beaully:** Mrs J. & W. S., Wick, £50 for Beaully Congr. Funds, per Rev. D. B. M.
- Breasclete:** Mrs S., £20 for Sust. Fund and £10 for Door Collection; Anon., £40 for Sust. Fund and £40 for Door Collection.
- Daviot:** Anon., £20 to be used where most needed.
- Dingwall:** Mrs M., Strathpeffer, £15; Mrs G., Dingwall, £20 for Sust. Fund.
- Dumbarton:** Glasgow Friend, £20; Miss M. McA., £10, both for Congr. Fund, both per M. H.
- Edinburgh:** A Friend, Glasgow, £15 for Congr. Funds.
- Gairloch:** Friend, Kyle, £20 (£10 for Gairloch, £10 for Opinon) per Rev. A. MacDonald; Friend, Gairloch, £30 for Congr. Purposes; Friend, Gairloch, £100, where most needed.
- Glendale:** E. K., £20 (collection plate); C. M. G., £10 (collection plate), both for Comm. Expenses.
- Kames:** Anon. Friend, Glasgow, £50 for General Purposes; Anon. Edinburgh Friend, £15 for Congr. Funds.
- Kinlochbervie:** Lovers of the Cause, £50; Passer By, £30, both for Scourie Congr. Funds; Lovers of the Cause, £50 for Kinlochbervie Congr. Funds.
- Lairg and Bonar:** Mrs S. and W. S., Wick, £50 for Bonar Church and £50 for Lairg Church; Anon., £40 for Comm. Expenses; Mrs B., Fourpenny, £10; Mrs R. Camore, £5.
- Portree:** Anon., £4 for Church Bus (envelope in plate); Two Friends, £40 for Sust. Fund, per F. M.
- Shieldaig:** Stornoway Friend, £20 for Congr. Fund; Miss C. F., £6.50 for Door Colls.; Anon., £10 for Comm. Expenses.
- South Harris:** Friend, Northton, £20; Friend, Geocrab, £10, both per Rev. K. MacLeod; Friend, Glen, £20 per D. MacKenzie; Friend, Northton, £20, per A. MacCuish, all for South Harris Congr. Fund.
- Stirling:** Anon., £100 for Congr. Fund, per J. N. M.
- Stornoway:** Two Wick Friends, £100 per Rev. J. MacLeod, for Congr. Funds; In Church Plate, £60 for Sust. Fund, £20 for Home Mission and £20 for Foreign Mission; where most needed, £3 in Church plate; Glasgow Friend, £50; M. M., £20, both for Sust. Fund, both per Rev. J. MacLeod.