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The Danger of Resting on a False Foundation

The Word of God clearly reveals that there is only one true foundation on which a soul can build for eternity. That foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ. All other foundations are of necessity false. Speaking in another figure the Saviour declared: "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: But the sheep did not hear them." "For", as the Word of God declares, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3: 11. He is the chief corner stone, He is the sure Foundation. He is the Rock of ages which shall never be moved to all eternity.

Christ had to lay the foundation for the salvation of His people in His own sufferings and death on Calvary's Tree. No foundation was ever laid like this one. In order that His people might have their hope grounded and settled in Him, He must die their death for them and bring in an everlasting righteousness. It was because He was the One whom He was — the eternal Son of God — that He was able to lay the foundation of His people's salvation in Himself in His atoning work. Seeing it was the eternal Son of God who in our nature suffered and died, this gave infinite efficacy and worth to His atoning work. In Him the soul may find a sure resting place, knowing that none perish that Him trust. It is through faith in His Name that the soul comes to have a resting place in Him for eternity. It is by the Holy Spirit's work in their soul that they are enabled to close in with Jesus Christ in the gospel of His grace. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to the soul as the one Foundation laid in Zion, and the renewed soul most willingly rests the weight of their soul's salvation upon Jesus Christ. This foundation Stone is a tried stone, as surely as it is a chosen stone and a sure foundation. Never was any foundation so tried, and never did any foundation prove so secure as that which is laid in Jesus Christ.

Man left to himself will never build on this Foundation. Men will always seek some other foundation on which to rest for eternity. Christ is a despised stone. He was rejected of the builders at the first and is so still, yet He remains the only sure Foundation. The wisdom of man will never lead him to Jesus Christ to build on this one Foundation. The wisdom of man — natural wisdom — is wholly inadequate to lead men to place their hope and trust in the Saviour for eternity. Man will look to other sources for help, and will ground his hope for eternity upon saviours that will never prove a true foundation. The deceitfulness of man's heart is such that he thinks all is well when, in reality, things are far from well. What folly is in the natural heart of man, what self-deception to think that he can build for eternity on a foundation of His own righteousness and good works. The Bible makes clear that our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags and our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked beyond what we can know. How then can we rest upon such a false foundation as our own righteousnesses, our own good works, our own religious duties? All these are marred by sin so will never prove adequate to our need.

What need we have to consider on what foundation we are building for eternity. We are told to examine ourselves to see if we be in the faith. Building on wood, hay or stubble will prove fatal at last. We need a well grounded hope in Jesus Christ who is the only true Foundation. Let us earnestly seek to be found in Him not having our own righteousness but the righteousness which is of Him by faith. All who have built upon this one Foundation are secure for eternity, for none perish that Him trust. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

Sermon

by Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale, Skye

(Preached in Vatten on Sabbath evening of the Communion, 26th August 1945. The forenoon service and the administration of the Lord's Supper were held in the open air as the Church could not contain the congregation)

"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Numbers 10: 29 (last part).

We see from the beginning of the Book of Numbers that the incident brought before us in our text took place at the beginning of the second year after the children of Israel came up out of Egypt. Moses realised that they needed a reliable man to "be to us instead of eyes," in order to show

them the best way to encamp in the wilderness. Moses here did not show any mistrust in God's guidance, but as one taught of God he knew it was his duty to use all available means. Hobab the son of Raguel was unwilling to go with them but Moses solemnly assured him, "It shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." Verse 32. The words of our text, spoken by an Israelite to a Midianite, may be understood as having a far wider signification than as the language of one man to another. It is the language of those who are already in the kingdom of grace, to those who are yet "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," and it is in that way that we would seek to draw your attention to them this evening. We may consider them in a special manner as the language of the Lord's people who were sitting here at His Table today.

In considering the words in that light we would seek, as enabled, to draw your attention to four things in particular:—

- I The Journeying;
- II The Destination;
- III The Invitation;
- IV The Encouragement

I The Journeying.

(1) Those who are brought before us in our text are a people who were beginning a long and wearisome journey through the wilderness, and who, when setting out on that journey, had left Egypt. This is true of the Lord's people for they left the Egypt of a state of nature. It was a land where they had misery and danger, and as the Israelites in Egypt had to a great extent fallen into ignorance of God, and knew not His ways, so the Lord's people, in their natural state, gave many clear evidences that they "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." In their walk and conversation they could not be distinguished from others. They were walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," and had nothing higher in view than, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" As for God, they knew Him not, neither desired they to learn His ways. The Word of God and their consciences were telling them that they would have to meet with God, but in this matter, they were resolved to take "a leap in the dark." The pleasures of a natural state were the only pleasures which they knew, and these, being sweet to their carnal tastes, they were resolved not to part with them, but God in His infinite mercy opened their eyes

to see their danger, and then they began to take another view of their situation.

As the children of Israel, after Moses and Aaron came to them with a commission from God, found that they were in a land of bondage, so the Lord's people found that their state by nature was a state in which they were in bondage to sin and Satan. They were disillusioned as to the freedom they supposed themselves to have, and found that they were captives with no power to set themselves free. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life were as task-masters, demanding now more than they were in the habit of asking, or were like the two daughters of the houseleach saying, "Give, give." Prov. 30: 15. There was no pleasure now in giving as there was a realisation of the fact that the end of these things was death, even eternal death. Oh sinner! when considered impartially, in the light of what the Scriptures reveal as to the deserts of sin, where is the pleasure of sinning against God, and where is the freedom of it? Is not sin a king that reigns despotically and tyrannically over its slaves, so that they cannot get a moment's respite from sinning? They cannot "cease from sin."

Egypt also was the land of idolatry. God was not known there with the exception of the little knowledge which the children of Israel retained of Him, and Oh! child of God, was this not the case with yourself? In the circles in which you moved God was not known, and, to come to yourself personally, how much did the Lord take up of your time and thoughts? In your works you did not acknowledge Him, and as to your thoughts, you may be classed with those of whom it is written, "God is not in all his thoughts." Psalm 10: 4. At the same time they were not like a sheet of clean paper upon which nothing had been written, for the throne of their heart was occupied by the world, the devil and the flesh, and these three could put plenty of idols in front of them to which they bowed down. Their thoughts, their time, their strength and their means were set at the feet of these idols so that, day in and day out, they were living in idolatry, "having no hope, and without God in the world." Ephes. 2: 12.

(2) We are just now, however, considering them as having left Egypt and all that pertained to it, and pursuing their journey through the wilderness. That journey was not without its great dangers, but to face these dangers was preferable to returning to the land of bondage and idolatry. "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Heb. 11: 15, 16. They had considered their past life and their present condition, and in the light of the hope which they have as regards their future prospects they prefer the dangers and discomforts of their present condition to what they previously thought was the only thing worth living for. Each of the Lord's true people, after weighing the past, the present and the future in the light of what is revealed in Scripture, with Moses of old chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

In their wilderness journey they have to contend with enemies without. These, like the Higher Critics, would rob them of that precious heritage, the Bible, which is the only rule which God has given "to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him." They have to contend with men of unsound views and practices of whom the Apostle warns them as he warned others before them. "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." Philip. 3: 2. They encounter the spirit of persecution sent forth by a hostile world sometimes under the cloak of a religious profession. Again, no less dangerous is the world, as an enemy, when it professes to favour religion, and with the subtleness of the old Serpent showing an outward regard for religion, but waiting for every opportunity to bring it into reproach. In connection with this it may be said that the greatest enemies of true religion are those who make the greatest profession of strictness, and in their life are so loose that even children can see that they are not what they profess to be.

Again, those who have truly left Egypt and are journeying through the wilderness of this world have to contend with the enemies that are within. It was the enemies who were within the camp of Israel that approached Aaron to make the golden calf in the wilderness, and again who hankered after the flesh-pots of Egypt and who murmured against God's dealings with them in the wilderness, thus provoking Him to visit them with His fierce anger so that many of them were consumed. The Lord's true people are in like manner troubled with such enemies within themselves. None of them are perfect, and will not be as long as they are in this world. They have a desperately wicked heart and a God-hating nature. This is the body of sin and death which they carry about with them and of which they would fain be rid, but of which they will not be rid as long as they are in this world, and thus they are often constrained to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Every day of their life here they are to experience much of its depraved appetite, its Satanic rebellion, its whorish propensities and the foul savour of its cor-

ruption, so that they abhor themselves, and wonder that God has not also abhorred them and cast them off. Often, under these circumstances, they are constrained to say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

(3) In their journey they are privileged to see much of God's goodness to them. It was He who called them out of Egypt and set them on this journey, and much of His goodness is seen there in choosing them from among their neighbours, and separating them from those things which were for their destruction. His goodness in calling them and bearing with them during the time that is past is used by Himself in order to strengthen their faith and confidence in Himself. Thus the Psalmist in viewing God's character, and His dealings with himself in the past, could say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Ps. 23: 6.

His goodness is to be seen in protecting them. The enemies without and within, which have been alluded to already, are bent on their destruction. They have greater strength and power than that they can be combated by human powers and wisdom, and it is vain to think of taking refuge in flight. Man's extremity in these matters is God's opportunity for showing His Almighty power. He has decreed concerning them, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." They have sweet experiences of His protecting power at times when they were convinced that no earthly power could save them, and that for anything they could do themselves, their enemies would have swallowed them up quick. In the light of these experiences to which they often look back, they are constrained to sing to His glory, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. . . . Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as to prey to their teeth." Psalm 124. Thus their faith is strengthened to say, "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." They are in themselves as weak as water, tossed about with every tempest, and, to all who leave God out of account, their survival is a mystery which cannot be comprehended, for they weather the storm, elude their would-be captors, they "quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Hebrews 11: 34. All this takes place as a direct fruit of faith in God, in whose ability and willingness to protect, they believe.

Again, in their journey through the wilderness the Lord manifests His goodness in guiding them, and, child of God, has it not been your experience that which the Psalmist records, "And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation?" Psalm 107: 7, when perplexed and almost on the borders of despair, not knowing what to do, or where to turn, realising the importance of doing the right thing and feeling how unequal you were to the occasion, you have been led in a way that you knew not. Force of circumstances compelled you to take a certain line of procedure; it was not the line which you would, if left to yourself, make choice of, but you had no alternative. You were carried along by a force which you could neither resist nor control; each step was taken in complete ignorance of what the next step might be, and you had to resign to the inevitable. These steps were not taken in obedience to a blind force where there was no design, nor were they following each other at random without a guiding and controlling principle. No, they were all the fulfilment of God's sure promise, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Isaiah 42: 16. The whole life of the child of God is made up of such matters, and each time he looks back on what he has travelled of his journey he has to acknowledge to the praise and glory of God that "He hath done all things well."

On this journey God's goodness is manifested to them in the wonderful way in which He feeds them. Jacob's seed, literally, were miraculously fed in the wilderness with manna. "And he rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels food: He sent them meat to the full." Ps. 78: 24-25. He also quenched their thirst by water from the rock. The Lord's people, in every age of time, are fed in a manner suitable to their needs and circumstances. Like people who are on a journey they cannot expect to sit down in the same place always and partake of that which would satisfy their needs. Now, they may partake of a diet in secret duties, then they get something during the hearing of the gospel preached, and again at a communion season they are enabled to taste of the "feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." After each diet they may have to go a long time in the strength of it on their wilderness journey as Elijah had to go forty days and forty nights to Horeb in the strength of that of which he partook under the juniper tree at Beersheba. 1 Kings 19. In spite of the long fasts which they may experience God makes their

bread and their water sure to them, for they have it all by covenant right in the Rock that was smitten for them, for it may be said of all the children of God in every age of time, that they "did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. 10: 4.

(4) This journeying must continue to end. It will not do to begin the journey and then return. "But if any man drew back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb. 10: 38. They may meet with discouragements and opposition; carnal reason may suggest to them to take the line of least resistance against sin, and show them that they will have more ease and comfort if they do not face the dangers of the way; enemies may try to frighten them, and, well-meaning, but weak-kneed friends, may try to dissuade them from incurring the odium attached to an unwavering stand for the truth as it is in Jesus, but all these things do not move them, and to such weak friends they must be ready to say with Paul, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts 21: 13. Thus, in the strength of God-given grace, they are enabled to pursue their journey to the end, for they know that it is "he that endureth to the end" that "shall be saved."

II The Destination.

I now come to the second thing that has been proposed, that is, the destination to which these are travelling. It is referred to as "the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." You have been privileged in this congregation today to see a few people sitting down at the Lord's Table to testify, before men, angels and devils, to what He has done for them. In their action they spoke loudly to those who were sitting on the hill-side round about them, and in language, louder and more eloquent than with an audible voice, they were proclaiming to their fellow creatures that they were going to heaven. They had turned their backs on the world and what it contains to fascinate and beguile poor unstable human beings, and they are facing Zionwards. They are found in the very posture of the Church in the Song of Solomon when the question was asked, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Song 8: 5.

(1) In their proclaiming to you today that they were going to heaven, they were not doing so in a vain, empty, boasting spirit. They were doing it in all humility, for they are a people who realised, and feel keenly, that there is no worthiness in themselves. At the Lord's Table they would be

remembering what they had been as slaves to Satan and their own lusts, and Satan himself would not be slow to remind them of how attached they were to his service. Incidents would come vividly before their minds, which they thought long ago buried out of sight, and oh! how the remembrance of these incidents would cause the blood to surge to their heads and the crimson blush of shame to mount up on their cheek, and give fresh life to their indignation against sin. Everything they do, or ever did, is polluted by sin so that they are constrained to say, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isaiah 64: 6.

(2) Though they had no confidence to say that they were going to heaven because of anything in themselves, yet because of God's gracious covenant they have a right to say it. When there was no eye to pity them or arm to save them, God revealed that from all eternity He had made a Covenant on their behalf with His own eternally begotten Son, and in that covenant, of which the Son of God is the Surety and the Mediator, there is laid up for sinners a provision which, if they close in with it, will infallibly bring them to heaven. It is when they are enabled to hope that they have closed in with the terms of this Covenant that they have, in some measure, boldness to say that they are going to heaven, and their profession today at the Lord's Table was that they had closed in with the terms of the Covenant. They look away from their own unworthiness to the Covenant, and to Him who is the Surety, and the Priest, and the Sacrifice of the Covenant, and say with David of old, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." II Sam. 23: 5.

(3) The people who have this destination in view are looking to God's promise, and in doing this they are looking to a promise that never fails. The promises of a fellow creature may fail through the fickleness of human nature or inability to perform that which is promised, but the promises upon which the Lord's people rely are given by Him who is the Almighty and of whom it is true that no obstacle can stand in His way. Satan and unbelief often try to rob these people of the consolations of the promises of God, and the fact that they are sometimes kept long in waiting for the fulfilment, adds force to the adversary's suggestions, but the promise is given by the God who cannot lie, and, therefore, they must wait on Him and learn by experience that His time for performing the promise is the best time.

These promises on which they base their hope that they are going to heaven are said to be yea and Amen in Christ Jesus; they are true, faithful and certain, for Christ fills them all, and He Himself is the Truth. He has fulfilled all the terms of the Covenant of Grace, and thus procured for the Lord's people the fulfilment of all the promises of God to them. The promises are said to be "Amen" in Him. The word "Amen" is used as an affirmation which seems to partake of the nature of an oath. Thus the Lord was pleased to confirm His promises by His oath. "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Heb. 6: 16, 17.

The fulfilment of these promises is far above the expectations of the Lord's people. They will be praying for the fulfilment of the promises, but oh! how dark are their conceptions of what is contained in these promises. While in this world, let them think of the greatest measure of happiness a human being is capable of experiencing; let them meditate on what the Word of God reveals of the happiness of heaven in connection with the wonderful fellowship that is there, the delightful service of worship unmixed with sin, the ravishing views of Christ when they behold Him as He is, the wonderful concord between the music of the angels that never sinned and that of the spirits of just men made perfect, and the fact that these celestial joys shall continue throughout eternity, and yet after the most profound thoughts that a human being is capable of in this world with reference to these things, it can be said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. 2: 9.

(4) Their destination is a place of wonderful rest. We are strangers to rest in this world of hurry and bustle, and, therefore, ill-fitted to conceive of the rest that waits for the people of God in heaven. The Lord has given as an earnest of it in the Sabbath-day, for that day is set apart in order that we may withdraw from our worldly employments and recreations, but alas! how imperfectly we are enabled to do that. In the measure, however, in which we are enabled to withdraw from the world, and are delivered from its distractions from within and without, and permitted to worship God from the heart, we have, in this, a faint picture of the rest which the Lord's people enjoy in heaven. In this world we are like the children of Israel in the wilderness. They went from place to place without a sure abode, and the Lord's people here cannot find rest, but when they get to their destination they have a place of eternal rest.

In the place to which they are going they shall have an eternal deliverance from sin. It is true that in the day of justification they were delivered eternally from the power and dominion of sin, for sin shall not have dominion over them any more. Nevertheless, their cry in this world is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. 7: 24. This shows that they are not delivered from the corruption of sin. When they get to their destination the body of sin will be forever separated from them, and it is in the light of this fact that the Apostle was saying, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". I Cor. 15: 57. They are more than conquerors over sin, Satan and the world through Christ, who finished transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness, who destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," and who says to those who are journeying to this destination, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16: 33.

There shall be no sickness there. This world may be compared to a great hospital where some are sent out of it cured, and others, because they rejected the remedy, are sent out of it to be buried. All the sickness to be found in this world is the direct fruit of sin, and because all have sinned, all are suffering in some way or another. When any become conscious of sickness all efforts are put forth to get a cure, but there is no permanent cure for sickness in this world. The Christian may be burdened with a very diseased body, and a diseased soul, going through this world, so much so that his incessant complaint is, "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart." Psalm 38: 5-8. He will, however, at the end of his pilgrimage be made perfectly whole in his soul, and in his plunge into the dismal waters of the Jordan of death, he will leave behind him his diseased body to be purified in the grave and raised up incorruptible on the Resurrection morning, to join his glorified soul, both to take up their abode eternally in heaven, freed from every form of sickness and sorrow.

Heaven is the place of eternal fellowship. They know what it is to have fellowship with the Lord's people in this world and can testify that it is sweet fellowship, for their fellowship at times is a foretaste of heaven, constraining them to say, "What must the fountain of this fellowship be when the streams are so pleasant?" It is, however, their painful experience, at times, that these pleasures are derived from streams which often dry

up. Many a thing will separate chief friends, even among the Lord's people. They will have their misunderstandings and differences of opinion, and even sharp contentions like Paul and Barnabus, so that they separate, and the joy which they had together is a thing of the past. These things belong only to time, for in Heaven, all the Lord's people will be gathered together and they shall have only one thing in view, that is, to praise and magnify the wonderful love which was the source of their election, redemption and sanctification. Moreover, they shall be in close fellowship with Him who sits on the Throne, and they shall be able to experience His fellowship and communion as only the "spirits of just men made perfect" are capable of. They shall never leave His presence world without end, and there "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7: 17.

(To be continued)

Where is the Lord God of Elijah?

by Rev. K. D. MacLeod, South Harris

Elijah's lifetime was a dark period in the spiritual history of Israel. But he, by the grace of God, was a remarkably bright light, even among that galaxy of saints of whom the world was not worthy, whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament. Elisha, raised up by God to be Elijah's successor, must have felt very conscious of his godliness as he accompanied him in the service of their Master. How empty then must Elisha have felt when Elijah was taken from him, by a whirlwind into heaven. And how liable to tremble for the cause of God in Israel he would have been, especially considering how weak that cause already was.

But Elisha at once showed that he knew that Elijah's God was still the same. Elijah had been taken away, but the Lord God of Elijah still ruled in heaven. And His power to work miracles remained unchanged also.

To get across Jordan to the place from where he was to be taken to heaven "Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the waters, and they divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground." Now that Elijah was gone, how was Elisha to get back across Jordan? It was enough to remember that God was still the same. So Elisha asked, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And, in the faith that He was still the same, Elisha did exactly what Elijah had done, "he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and smote the waters . . .

and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over.”

As one taught by God himself, Elisha well knew that it was not in his own strength that Elijah had worked miracles. There were indeed times when Elijah was left to feel his own weakness. That was especially true after his victory — in its essence a spiritual victory — on Mount Carmel over the priests of Baal and of the groves. He fled from the threats that Jezebel made against his life away into Judah and on into the wilderness, where he pleaded that God would take away his life. God sustained him there even in his body; the angel of the Lord came twice to show him a meal which had been prepared for him and which was to sustain him for forty days in the wilderness. And we can quite safely take this as an illustration of how God provided for his servant’s soul also, just by enabling him to feed on spiritual food. So, of course, we also are instructed by Christ Himself, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (Jn 6: 51).

James indeed reminds us in his Epistle that Elijah “was a man subject to like passions as we are”. But he at the same time makes clear to us where his great spiritual strength lay; “He prayed earnestly”, he tells us. That great prayerfulness was itself but the expression before God of a specially great degree of dependence on God; he was going up through the wilderness leaning very, very firmly on his Beloved. In everything we too must say to ourselves, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3: 5). God had proved Himself all-sufficient in the life of Elijah; what we see Elisha now laying hold of is that He could be all-sufficient in his life also.

For it was most certainly not in despair that Elisha asked his question, “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” It was in confident expectation of an answer. But let us stop for a few moments to consider the question itself. God Himself supplies an answer to such a question by asking, “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jer. 23: 24). Elisha’s question, however, goes further than this, for when God at this time gave him an answer it was not to declare His omnipresence. The question took to do with God continuing to work as He had so wonderfully done in the times of Elijah. Fundamental to Elisha’s whole attitude was his knowledge of the unchangeableness of God, who is “unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth” (Shorter Catechism Q6). This is the God who was to reveal Himself in the words, “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3: 6). And the particular way in which Elisha was

able to apply to himself his knowledge of God was to realise that God is unchanging in His ways of working.

Elijah's question is still a topical one, and capable of many relevant answers, answers which vary according to our state of soul. So if the unconverted ask where God is, the answer must be that "they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from any one of us" (Acts 17: 27f). Now that is not something that is to be done blindly, for God has indeed revealed Himself. And in our unbelieving generation this fact needs all the emphasis that can possibly be given to it, that the only source for any reliable knowledge of God is the Bible, inspired as it is throughout by God the Holy Spirit, and therefore in the whole of its contents perfectly infallible, perfectly reliable and totally authoritative. In the Bible we have been given an accurate and reliable revelation of how we may come to God though we are the sinners that we are. It may be summarised in the words of Paul, "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1: 15).

God's children may feel the need to ask Elisha's question, particularly in times of darkness or difficulty. He most graciously assures them that "the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" (Ps. 145: 18). Though they may be conscious that the ways that they must follow in the world are ways that they knew not and paths that they have not known, yet these paths are not unknown to the God that is always nigh to His children, and, however long it may be before they get a consciousness in their souls that He had heard them, the fact still remains that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry" (Ps. 34: 15).

So when the Church of God asks this same question she may well listen to the assurance, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early" (Ps. 46: 5). However low the cause of Christ may become in any particular generation it is by God's help alone that she never disappears out of existence altogether. God's Church is never completely left to herself.

But when shall that help be given so that the Church generally will be powerfully revived? When shall the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ? The answer quite simply must be, "Right early". But we must allow the Lord Himself to determine when it is that He should work in that way. Besides, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3: 8). We have to learn, whether we think of the Lord's dealings with ourselves or

in wider spheres, that always "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. 4: 35).

We have already noted Elisha's confidence that God would make a passage for him through the Jordan on his return. But what was his confidence based on? Quite simply, that he had been given a double portion of Elijah's spirit, for he fully expected that God would fulfil Elijah's prophecy, "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." He could thus go on in the confidence that God, not only would be with him in a miraculous way at that point in time, but that throughout his whole time on earth God would never leave him or forsake him. It was with that attitude of mind, then, that he asked the question, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" It was no echo of the taunt of the heathen, "Where is now their God?" It was asked in the confident expectation that God would indeed appear.

We must bear in mind that Elisha not only shared the miraculous power of Elijah, but he also shared in his godliness. He too was a man who held exceptionally close communion with God; it seems to have been something quite out of the ordinary that, when the Shunammite woman's son died, he could say, "The Lord hath hid it from me and hath not told me." So when he would raise the son from the dead it was perfectly natural for him to pray unto the Lord. A sense of dependence on God is always necessary, a dependance that will lead us to say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Ps. 71: 16). God's children are always to have a prayerful eye to the promises, such as, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13: 5f).

So often God's command of long ago is still relevant, "Speak unto the Children of Israel that they go forward." The Israelites at that point were hemmed in on both sides, so that escape seemed impossible. But what God was doing in issuing the command which he gave was to indicate the only path of safety. They were to go on without overmuch regard to outward circumstances, but to give implicit obedience to God's directions. Time and again individual believers have found that the only safe course of action was to go on in reliance upon God, although they could not see that their path could lead them to safety. And He has shown in the event that His hand was not shortened that it could not save — and it never will be.

Even in our age, Elisha's attitude is to be the attitude, not only of individuals, but of the Church as a whole also. Today more than ever the

Church should ask, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" — not in any despairing spirit, but in the full knowledge that the Lord God of Elijah is still the God of the whole earth and that He is completely unchanged in His ways of working and in His purposes. And His purposes for His church on earth have in some measure been revealed in the Scriptures. One thing He has made known is that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16: 18). Therefore, however strong the forces of atheism, false religions, Roman Catholics and all the mass of heresy in the Protestant Church, may become, we can be quite sure that the Church of God will not be overcome. The truth is, as Elisha realised when he saw the huge Syrian army which had come against Israel, that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (6: 16). When God's time will come for reviving His Church nothing will stand in the way. In particular, nothing will prevent the universal spread of the gospel at the time that God has appointed. The means that God will then use to turn the hearts of multitudes of sinners at once to Himself will be exactly the same as are now used in the conversion of ones and twos; the means will be the gospel of the grace of God applied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Church of God is thus to go on trusting in nothing but the power of the Lord God of Elijah to bless His own Word. She is to go with Elisha's attitude, confident that God is in the midst of His Church and that His Word will not return unto Him void but that it will accomplish just what He pleases. Thus there is no need whatever to resort to any unscriptural methods of spreading the gospel. The crucial factor in the spread of the gospel in apostolic times was plain Scriptural preaching applied by the power of the Holy Spirit. It has been the same in every subsequent revival, including the Reformation. It will be the same in every future revival, and in particular at that time we know as the Millennium, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11: 9). Thus, whether in a particular generation the blessing is great or small, it can be said to the servants of God, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15; 58).

Anecdote of Dr. Colquhoun, Leith

Dr. Colquhoun was one of the most noted of the preachers of the gospel in the first half of last century, and his preaching was highly appreciated by the most experienced of the Lord's people. He found himself at times,

as the following anecdote shows, in deep waters, and this may explain how he was so helpful to others in their times of trouble:— He was at one time under a heavy temptation as to the certainty of the existence of the Divine Being. God's omnipresence and omnipotence, and especially His omniscience, were to him mysteries, which the more he tried to think of them the more impossible and the more incomprehensible they seemed to become. One evening he was in such a dejected state of mind that he felt quite unable to prepare the usual portion for his congregation on the following Sabbath. He was walking to and fro in his study, thinking that such an unbeliever as he was ought not to stand up and declare to others truths that he did not receive himself, when the door opened and the servant maid announced that a woman of the congregation wanted to see him. Glad to be drawn aside from his own thoughts, he asked the woman to be shown in. On being seated, she disclosed to him that she was in great agony of mind on account of blasphemous thoughts regarding God — that she could not believe that He was or that He was not what the Scriptures said He was, and that she feared every hour of the day that the Lord would punish her for what she knew was sin against Him. The Doctor heard her complaints with amazement, seeing her case to be so similar to his own, although he did not mention that to her, but quoted passages of the Word and also the words of Christ Himself, which were fitted to give her relief. Then he took another course. It was a winter night, and the blinds were drawn and the shutters closed, so he rose and opened the shutters and drew the blind. The moon was shining brightly, and turning to the woman he said, "Come here, woman! Can you doubt the being and power of Him who created and sustains that beautiful ball of light, which lights up the entire surrounding darkness? Look, also, at these innumerable stars. How are they upheld in the firmament if not by an Almighty Hand?" This did not give her any relief and she made no reply. After the Doctor engaged in prayer she left. There was a small garden in front of the house, to the gate of which Dr. Colquhoun usually accompanied his visitors, and he did so at this time also. On her getting outside the gate, the woman, instead of proceeding on the highway, flung herself into the ditch by the side of the road, and exclaimed in a voice of despair, "Oh! wilt Thou not give me to believe that Thou art. Oh! give me to believe that Thou art." The Doctor, who was fastening the gate inside, stood transfixed, and looking upward he repeated mentally the woman's petition. Suddenly his bonds were loosed, and on re-opening the gate he said, "Oh! woman, blessed be the Lord. The power that accompanied and followed your cry has been the means of loosing my bonds. Come back!

come back! and help me to praise Him for His mercy." They returned to the study, and, kneeling together, adoring and weeping, they praised the Lord — the everlasting God.

C.R.A.

The Way of the Lord is strength to the upright — Proverbs 10: 29.

David Dickson was ordained minister to the town of Irvine in 1618. Some years later the bishop of St. Andrews pronounced his sentence in the words: "We deprive you of your ministry at Irvine and ordain you to enter Turriff in the north in 20 days." "The will of the Lord be done", said Mr Dickson; "though ye cast me off, the Lord will take me up. Send me where you will, I hope my Master will go with me, and as He has been to me heretofore, He will be with me still, as with His own weak servant."

While in Turriff, he was employed to preach by the minister there, but he found greater difficulty both in studying and preaching than formerly. Some time after, his friends prevailed on the Archbishop of Glasgow to repon him, upon condition that he would take back his declinature, and for that purpose wrote to Mr Dickson to come to Glasgow. He came, as desired but though many wise and gracious persons urged him to yield yet he could not be persuaded. At last it was granted to him that if he and any friend would go to the Archbishop's castle, and either of them should lift the paper from off the hall-table and take it without seeing the Archbishop at all he might return to Irvine. Mr Dickson saw that to be but juggling in such a weighty matter, in point of public testimony, and resolved not to meddle but to return to his confinement. Accordingly he began his journey, and was scarcely a mile out of town till his soul was filled with such a joy and approbation from God, that he seldom ever felt.

All the time of his absence, many Christians from Irvine and the west were pleading earnestly with God for his restoration. Among the rest a godly woman Margaret Campbell having been long at prayers, and then meeting a Christian acquaintance asked what hopes there were of the minister's return. He said there was no hope at all. She then said: "I shall not believe that, for just now I got assurance of it in prayer."

He returned to Irvine and was instrumental in the conversion and confirmation of many, and was the means of godly young men being trained for the ministry.

In December 1662 when Mr Dickson was lying on his death-bed, his close friend for nearly 40 years, Mr John Livingstone, went to visit him, and on enquiring how he found himself, Mr Dickson replied: "I have taken all my good deeds, and all my bad deeds, and cast them together in a heap before the Lord, and have betaken myself to Jesus Christ, and in Him I have full and sweet peace."

From: WODROW'S CORRESPONDENCE

Marks of Grace

(Notes of marks of grace given by Mr F. Beaton, at the Fellowship Meeting at Beaulieu Communion, July, 1969).

Question: Isaiah 6: 1, 2.

We think that it is a mark of this man that he knows that our God is a consuming fire and because of this, and knowing also that he is a sinner having an evil heart, he would like to get a mark that he has a new heart as well as an evil heart. It is a mark of this man that he cannot give over trembling at the Word of God and searching the word of God in the hope that God will meet with him in His own word. The world never does that. The psalmist was calling upon God to search his heart, and try his reins which the world will not dare to do. He has a poor and contrite heart which the world knows nothing about. Sometimes in the midst of trial and difficulty they will be afraid they do not have a new heart at all. They know their need of a mediator and that God says to them "Be ye holy even as I am holy". He is a consuming fire and yet a reconciled God in Christ. They are conscious of sin but they know the Lord Jesus Christ in His three offices as prophet, priest and king. They come to Him as their High Priest, the one and only atonement for sin. They will not be satisfied with a mere building — even the temple which Solomon built. We are glad to be inside this building, but it is the desire of this people that the Lord Jesus Christ would dwell in their hearts. They desire that they would have what a certain godly man said when he heard the late Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, Lochcarron, preach a sermon on the wise men from the east seeking the babe. They searched many places and at last they came to the stable where they found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger, which he compared to the preaching of the gospel where the child of God found Christ in the manger of his own heart wrapped up in the swaddling clothes of the promise. This people desire to know that Christ is formed in them the hope of glory. They are pain-

fully conscious of sin, and they cry out to their High Priest — “Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.” It is with the God-man this poor man has to do. The world knows nothing at all about this. This people describe themselves as the chief of sinners. It is their hearts this people are concerned about — their religion is a heart religion. Their minds go to eternity with God in Christ as a reconciled God, and they have a good hope through grace because God must have glory of the work in the hearts of his people. They cry to the Lord that He would have mercy upon them and, like David, their prayer will many a time be for a new heart and a right spirit and desire to be washed in the blood of atonement. Christ is a risen and living Saviour and His people are concerned that Christ would speak to their souls. They will be reading the Word and hearing the gospel preached but many a time the Bible will be a blank Word to them. At other times they will say that they are a little better of reading it.

This people desire to be conformed to His Word and they seek to be prepared for the heavenly country to which they are going. They fear they will grieve the Holy Spirit, and wonder that He would dwell in such creatures as they. Too often their prayers are only empty words, but at other times when He manifests himself to them in the graces of the Spirit they rise up with wings as eagles and they desire to ascribe praise and glory to Him who sat upon the Throne of God and of the Lamb.

Luke Heywood

During the middle part of last century, the parish of Resolis was blessed with one of the most eminently useful and laborious ministers that the Church of Christ has ever seen. When the name of Mr Hector McPhail meets the eye of the more northern reader, it will recall to memory not a few of those striking anecdotes current among the older inhabitants of the district in which his labours were best known, and which may be stated generally as lying along the shores of the Beaully and Cromarty Firths. This remarkable man is said to have been awakened to spiritual concern after he had entered on the work of the ministry, and to have continued under deep distress for a period of no less than seven years, during three of which his mental sufferings were so great that he never knew what it was to have a night's complete rest. While in this state of protracted anxiety — or, as the Gaelic people expressively term it, while under “law-work” — he made a solemn vow that should the Lord be pleased to grant him

a sense of pardoning mercy, and clear views of his personal interest in Christ, he would never pass a sinner, with whom an opportunity for conversing should occur, without directing his attention to the great concerns of eternity, and urging upon his acceptance that Saviour whom he himself had found. So religiously did Mr McPhail observe this vow, that his little white pony, the unfailing companion of his almost endless journeys, learned in no long time to halt of his own accord whenever it overtook a traveller; and not unfrequently, amid the bewildering darkness of night, as the icy blasts swept down from the hills over the wild solitudes of the Maol-bhui, did the sagacity of his four footed Highland bearer remind the faithful servant of Christ that a fellow-sinner was at hand, to whom he had pledged himself to deliver a Saviour's message, and on whom he was bound to urge the acceptance of the Saviour's love. With him the salvation of souls was a perfect passion, calling forth a self-denial and devotedness almost apostolic in its type. Not unfrequently has he been known to draw some Highland herd-boy to his side, and after leading his mind to the awful importance of divine things, to purchase, by the gift of a small sum of money, the boy's promise to form habits of prayer in future — a method by which, he conceived, the youth was bound to implement his promise, according to the principles of common honesty, as well as by the sacredness of a solemn pledge. It is said that, on one occasion, when riding in the company of a brother minister, the travellers were over-taken, near Inverness, by the equipage of one of the Lords of Justiciary, who was to preside in the Circuit Court about to be held that day. Mr McPhail suggested to his brother minister that this might be a glorious opportunity of doing some spiritual good to an influential man of the world, and urged him to assist in improving the precious and unlooked-for moment. His companion, however, being most probably one of those rule and plummet ministers, whose favourite Scripture maxim is, "Let everything be done decently and in order," was not carried away by his zeal beyond the bounds of propriety, and politely declined the invitation. But Mr McPhail had long learned to "be instant", not only "in season," but also "out of season;" so the willing propensities of the white pony were again put in requisition. Riding forward to the carriage, Mr McPhail respectfully addressed his Lordship, and, after a prefatory remark or two, reminded him that the proceedings in which the Court was to engage were emblematic of another judgment-seat, at which his Lordship must appear, not as a judge upon the bench, but as a panel at the bar; entreating him, at the same time, with respectful but affectionate earnestness, to weigh well the nature of his case, and to commit it in time

into the hands of the great Advocate with the Father, who can never be an unsuccessful pleader, because Himself the propitiation for our sins. His Lordship appeared impressed with the address which he had heard, thanked Mr McPhail most warmly for his ministerial faithfulness, and invited him to become his guest at the close of the Court.

Many such anecdotes are told of this amiable and laborious man, and numerous were the instances in which these "out-of-season" efforts in his Master's cause were savingly blessed to the souls which, "by *any* means," he sought to win. Among the rest, the following is perhaps one of the most remarkable:—

The parish of Resolis is situated on the southern shore of the Firth of Cromarty, lying immediately to the east of the well-known Ferintosh. In order to reach it from the coast of Nairn, one would require to cross the Ferry of Fort George, and strike athwart the peninsular district known by the name of the Black Isle. After a journey of some eight or nine miles over an immense wilderness of the most dreary moorland, lying along the entire back of the peninsula, you reach the church and manse of Resolis, situated in a spot which has lately been rendered a little more civilized-looking than the desert around. At the period of our story, Fort George was garrisoned by an English regiment, which partook of the unusually profligate and debauched character of the British army at that time. As the neighbouring town of Campbeltown is at some distance from the Fort, wooden shambles had been erected close to the water's edge, immediately below the garrison, to serve as a flesh market for the convenience of the military. Having occasion one day to travel homewards by the route which, for more than one purpose, we have described. Mr McPhail was detained for some time below the Fort by the delay of the ferry-boat, which had to be summoned over from the opposite side. While he was standing at the water's edge, with his inseparable white companion, a soldier came into the shambles to purchase some meat, and asked the price of a quarter of mutton. The butcher named the sum. With a frightful oath, in which he pledged the everlasting salvation of his soul, the man refused to give the price, but ultimately, after a good deal of wrangling, agreed to the butcher's terms and took up the meat to go away. All this while Mr McPhail, who was standing outside the shambles, overheard the conversation within, and, shocked at the awful jeopardy in which the soldier had placed his soul, was watching for an opportunity of addressing him upon the imminent danger of his condition. No sooner, therefore, had the man left the flesh market than Mr McPhail contrived to throw himself in his way, and to engage him in conversation.

"A fine day, soldier."

"A fine day sir," replied the man, touching his cap.

"Do you belong to the Fort?"

"Yes, sir, and a dull enough place it is; nothing but drill and the blues."

"You are an Englishman, I see; what is your name?"

"Luke Heywood, your honour."

"That seems a nice piece of mutton you have got."

"So it is sir, and cheap too."

"What did you give for it, may I ask?"

The soldier named the price.

"Oh! my friend" replied Mr McPhail, "you have given more than that."

Luke Heywood looked astonished. "No, sir, I gave no more; there's the man I bought it from, and he can tell you what it cost."

"Pardon me, friend; you have given your immortal soul for it. You prayed that God might curse your soul if you gave the very price you have just named; and now what is to become of you?"

The ferry-boat was announced as ready, and Mr McPhail stepped on board; while Luke Heywood walked off with his purchase, and entered the Fort. Throwing off his cap, he sat down upon a form in the barrack, and in a short time his reflections turned upon his conversation with the stranger at the ferry. The gentleman's parting words were still fresh in his memory: "You have given your immortal soul for it; and now what is to become of you?" "Really," thought he, "the stranger was quite right. I have a soul, though I had almost forgotten it, and I have pawned it for a bit of mutton too. Well, I didn't mean that, but I have done it though; and now what is to become of me?" The thought, even to a profligate, was anything but an agreeable one, so he tried to banish the occurrence from his memory. But it would not do; conscience was at its work, and refused to still its voice. The words of the stranger were pealing in his ears like the death-knell of his soul: "You have given your immortal soul for it; and now what is to become of you?" In a perfect agony of terror he started from his seat, rushed bare-headed from the Fort, and arrived, all flushed and breathless, at the ferry in quest of Mr McPhail.

"Where is the gentleman?" cried Luke to the butcher.

"What gentleman?" inquired the other.

"The gentleman dressed in black clothes, and with a white pony, who told me that my soul was lost."

"Oh! you mean Mr McPhail; he's the minister of Resolis, and you will have to go far enough till you catch him, for he has crossed more than half-an-hour ago."

The ferry-boat being about to make a second passage across the water, Luke Heywood entered it, with the design of following the stranger with whose words he had been so painfully impressed. Inquiring of the ferry-men the route he must follow, Luke leaped from the boat as it touched the point of Fortrose, and started afresh upon his intensely exciting pursuit. We know not the feelings of the agitated traveller as he rushed bare-headed through the little town of Rosemarkie, or toiled all flushed and heated across the weary solitudes of the Maol-bhui; we have not been informed regarding the astonishment of the shepherd or the cotter as an excited soldier hastily inquired whether he had seen anything of a clergyman upon a white pony — which was all the description he could give. He arrived, however, towards evening at the manse of Resolis, and on demanding eagerly to see Mr McPhail, was immediately admitted. We know not how to reconcile the statement with the rules of military discipline, but so it was, that Luke remained at Resolis all that night and the two following days, during the greater part of which time he was closely closeted with the minister. Mr McPhail's study was not a confessional, albeit many a poor soul had gone thither to ask counsel at the man of God; and if the walls of that little old room had but retained a transcript of the experiences of which the minister had been called to listen, how interesting the record they would now have presented of the spiritual difficulties which Mr McPhail had to meet — how useful to those who are entrusted with the same momentous office, and have the like responsible duties to fulfil! Numerous, however, and varied as were the spiritual cases on which this singularly godly man had been consulted, it may be questioned whether he had ever been called to deal with an experience such as Luke Heywood's. His was, indeed, a rare case; for into those two short days was condensed, as to its leading facts, the history which, with Mr McPhail, had stretched over a period of more than seven years. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." How strikingly was this passage illustrated within the study at Resolis as the minister and the soldier knelt down together on the evening of the second day! Both were extreme specimens of the two great modes of conversion — the gradual and the sudden. He whose voice you now hear uplifted in holy thanksgiving laboured for seven long and weary years under a "horror of great darkness," unable to appropriate as his own the Saviour of sinners; while he who kneels beside him, and weeps with joy unspeakable over a newly-found peace of God, but two days ago was foremost in the ranks of profligacy; his curse was

loudest and deepest; his revelry the wildest and most unbridled even amid the sottish jollity of the canteen; and yet of him it can be predicted just as certainly as of the other, that he is now "born of the Spirit." Doubtless, the gradual method of conversion is the Spirit's usual way; it is, if we may use the expression, more consistent with the structure of the human mind to *adjust it by degrees to the exercise of a perfect faith*, and to lead it through a course of careful anxious, all-absorbing inquiry, to the full realisation of a saving interest in the work of Christ; so that the progress from "grace in the blade" to "grace in the ear" may be very gradual and very slow. This, we repeat, is the Spirit's usual way; and, for our own part, we are far more disposed to trust the depth and genuineness of the ordinary than of the extraordinary manifestations of a work of grace, in so far, at least, as this is to be judged of by its symptoms. But still it cannot be doubted, without doing great violence both to Scripture and observation, that there have been, and still are, cases in which the omnipotent Spirit of God has dispensed with the employment of ordinary means: and like the wind, which "bloweth as it listeth," does not always breathe in soft and balmy zephyrs, but anon, though seldom, bursts forth with the fierceness of the tornado to annihilate, with almost lightning suddenness, every obstacle that would arrest its tempest path; even such is the unfettered agency of that free, sovereign Spirit, who will not only "*have* mercy on whom He will have mercy," but who will also *manifest* His saving grace in whatever *way* He pleases. Both the minister and the soldier were, we have said, types of the two opposite methods of conversion; and as they knelt down together to offer up their parting prayer, might not each have felt how true were the words of one who had himself been changed like Luke Heywood, rather than like Mr McPhail, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all?"

But we must leave Mr McPhail in the study of Resolis, and accompany Luke back to the garrison of Fort George. Happy we if we can join him in the "new song" with which he wakes the echoes of the moorland wilds on his way back through the Maol-bhui—

"He took me from a fearful pit,
And from the miry clay,
And on a rock He set my feet,
Establishing my way."

Like the woman of Samaria, Luke Heywood now began to feel a love for the soul of others, and, with David, to say to his comrades, "Come, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul." The word was "as fire within his bones," and he "could not but speak the things which he

had seen and heard." He accordingly began to hold small prayer-meetings in the barracks, and to expound the Scriptures to his fellow-soldiers. By degrees, however, the piety and zeal of the former profligate became known throughout the district; the people of God were amazed when they heard that, like Paul, he that had scoffed at them, "in times past, now preached the faith which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in him." His prayer-meetings attracted others than the military, and the people began to flock from the neighbouring parishes to hear the expositions of this wonderful man. An old relation of the writer used to come down among the crowd from the parish of Ardclach, a distance of about *sixteen miles* from Fort George; and his informant was personally acquainted with a godly old schoolmaster who had been a fellow-soldier of Luke's (and a very wild and thoughtless young man he was), but who, along with many others, owed his conversion to these prayer-meetings among the garrison.

But matters could not long continue thus without exciting the enmity and opposition of the ungodly. The captain of Luke's company was particularly active in his hostility to these meetings, and often threatened the pious soldier with the lash. Sending for him on one occasion, he told him that he was going from the Fort that day, and added, with a tremendous oath, that if on his return he should hear that Luke had been holding any more of these conventicles, he would order him so many lashes. On hearing this intimation, Luke was silent for a few minutes; then looking at his officer, he replied, "Sir, if you ever return alive, God never spoke by me;" an answer almost identical with that of the prophet Micaiah to Ahab, "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me." The issue proved that the Spirit of God was even then speaking by the lips of Luke. The captain and a brother officer went to shoot in the neighbourhood of Culloden, and as the former was crouching behind a hedge, in the act of watching the approach of some deer, his comrade (a younger brother of his own, as we have been informed), mistaking him for large game, took a hasty aim at the moving object, and shot him dead upon the spot.

The regiment was soon afterwards ordered to England, and it was reported that Luke purchased his discharge from the army, and became an eminently useful Dissenting minister. He ceased to be a soldier of King George, that he might become a soldier of the Cross; and we have no doubt that the walls of his meeting-house would often echo with the words, "I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer,

and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

News from Malawi and Kenya

It has been interesting, although sad, to read a letter written by Mr Vermeulen describing conditions in Malawi and Kenya.

In the Thyolo District of Malawi there are many refugees from Mozambique. Four Dutch nurses, who attend our services there, have been telling Mr Vermeulen something of the conditions in the hospital wards where they work. There are very few beds and when there are no mattresses available the patients lie on the bare floor. There are mothers with sick children, brothers, sisters and relatives strewn on the floors and it is sometimes difficult to tell which are the patients.

In many cases Mothers do not take their children to hospital until they are very seriously ill, and being already under-nourished, they have little hope of recovery. The death-rate of children from birth to five years of age is very high.

In Kenya, Kisii District, the Dispensary at Sengera is now ready for use. All that is now required is a doctor or nurse. We trust the Lord will open the heart of some Christian doctor to undertake this worthwhile work. Mr Vermeulen has been taking patients as far as Kisii Hospital. The nearest dispensary is R.C. and can deal only with uncomplicated cases. It is a long way to take seriously ill patients all the way to Kisii.

An interesting project is underway of opening what are known as Nazereth Schools, for pre-school children. The school opens at 8 a.m. with prayer and Bible reading, and finishes at noon. Lessons in Bible are given, in reading, writing and arithmetic. Some Bible stories have been translated into Kisii. Mr Vermeulen hopes to continue opening these schools at the various preaching stations.

Two of the preachers have long distances to travel to reach their congregations. Mesech took three hours on foot each way. Paul also had a long way to go. Mr Vermeulen decided to buy them second-hand bicycles, but finished up buying them new bicycles. One can imagine the pleasure of the men!

Three deputies from Zimbabwe have visited Malawi and Kenya. They are the Revs. B. B. Dube, Z. Mazvabo, and Mr Neil Murray.

We look forward to hearing of their experiences.

J.N.

Notes and Comments

Death of Irish Nun

In a landmine explosion in the Armagh area of Northern Ireland, three policemen died when their vehicle was blown up by the IRA. A nun who was passing in her car at the time was also killed. Dr. Cahal Daly, the Roman Catholic bishop of Down and Connor spoke of the bombing as a ruthless and irresponsible act. The Roman Catholic nun was the first nun to die at the hands of the IRA during the troubles in the last 20 years in Northern Ireland. *The Times* had a heading covering the event: "Northern Ireland expresses anger and grief at IRA killing of nun." Perhaps this sad event, in which three policemen as well as the nun died, will bring home upon the R.C. Church that it should give no countenance whatsoever to the men of violence in their murderous campaign for a united Ireland. When the Lord's time comes for Ireland to be united it will not be by bomb or bullet but by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ preached with the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Murder of British MP

Mr Ian Gow, a strong opponent of the IRA, was murdered through a bomb placed under his car. He was not the first MP to die at the hands of the men of violence. It shows that the IRA will stop at nothing in their futile attempt to gain their own ends. This was seen also some years ago in the murder of Mr Airey Neave and also in the attempt made on the lives of the Prime Minister and her Cabinet. So far the Government has failed to achieve a political settlement in Northern Ireland, partly because of its insistence on giving the Southern Irish Government a say in the negotiations. Perhaps this sad event will give further impetus to the Government's expressed desire for a lasting settlement and make the Government see the futility of making the Eire Government a party in any way to these negotiations.

The Methodists and Homosexuals in the Ministry

The Methodist Conference delayed for a year a decision on the question of homosexuals in the ministry, overwhelmingly rejecting demands that practising homosexuals should not be considered for ordination. A report submitted to the Conference admitted that the burden of biblical evidence was to reject homosexuality yet maintained that no one should be excluded from the ordained ministry simply on the ground of their sexuality. How far the Methodists have moved away from their early begin-

nings! Surely the judgments on Sodom and Gomorrah should be sufficient to make plain to all men God's attitude to the sin of sodomy.

A Kenyan bishop, Alexander Muge, when on a visit to the U.S.A. in May of this year was prevented from preaching in an Episcopal Church in California when he insisted on condemning homosexuality in his sermon. He was accused of holding the views of a typical 19th Century Evangelical. Bishop Muge declared: "We have to make it plain and clear that Scripture condemns all sorts of immorality," and pointed out that God calls upon sinners to repent and be put right with Him. "We need," he stated, "to go to the foot of the Cross for the salvation of Christ." He urged Christians to pray for the reviving of the Spirit in order to restore the integrity of the Church. Ordaining homosexuals, he said, is signing the death certificates of our churches. It takes, it would seem, a voice from one of the Churches of Africa to warn a backslidden Church in America.

Scottish Certificate Examinations in Religious Studies

Last year I commented in this magazine on the unacceptable nature of the syllabus which had then been produced for the new Standard Grade Examination in Religious Studies. There has now appeared, in draft form, a syllabus for a Revised Higher Grade Examination in Religious Studies, which follows on immediately from Standard Grade. There is no doubt that this new syllabus is rather less unsatisfactory. For one thing there is no *obligation* to study a false religion, such as Islam or Hinduism, though those who wish to do so may study any one of four such religions, in addition to Christianity. Again there is considerably more use of the actual text of Scripture. And it is possible that a reasonably satisfactory presentation of Christian doctrine could be given on the basis of the passages which are to be studied. Whether that could in fact happen in practice is largely dependent on the way the course is actually taught. The religious climate in this country generally, and in education in particular, has drifted so far from a position that gives any authority to the Bible as God's revelation to mankind — the position which treats it as the only accurate source of religious knowledge. So far is this syllabus from taking God's revelation as its foundation that one of its principles is "the human condition as the starting point of religion". Thus the sad fact is that one cannot often be at all hopeful of our children profiting religiously within the education system.

As organised religion has moved away from a serious concern about spiritual matters — the salvation of the soul most importantly of all — so it has tended to concentrate on social issues. It is therefore not surpris-

ing to find a large section in the syllabus which considers "Christian ethics in a secular context". Here pupils choose to study one of the following: "Rich and Poor", "Gender roles and Relationships", "Ecology (ie, the environment) and Stewardship". Our point is not that such issues are unimportant in themselves, or that Christianity is not to form our attitudes in these areas. Indeed we are always to be governed by the Scriptural principle, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God". Our point rather is that it is so symptomatic of modern religion to concentrate attention on man's relationship to man and to forget the absolute priority of man's relationship to God, and one feels that in what have certainly become fashionable areas of concern there is almost bound to be a much greater input from secular and humanistic thought than from the Bible. A further major section considers "Christianity: Critiques and Challenges". Here pupils are to study the challenge of one of Humanism, Science and Marxism to Religion. It is only necessary to say here that there seems to be more scope given for the challenge than for the response.

At almost the same time syllabuses for a collection of Moral, Social and Religious Education Short Courses have been issued, to be studied either in schools or in Further Education. They are thoroughly unsatisfactory. Here one is even more conscious than in the Higher syllabus of the need to emphasise that Christianity is not just one religion among many and that we are altogether dependent on revelation from God for true knowledge in the sphere of religion, and in its sub-sphere of morals. There is no need to comment on the units in detail. It is, however, specially alarming in the light of what has just been said to note a unit on non-Christian religions entitled "Choosing a Religion", and more especially because it does not include Christianity, on the basis that it may be studied in other units. Again the unit "Living in a Plural Society" seems to put religious and cultural differences on a level, suggesting that the first are no more important than the latter, and can actually enhance our quality of life.

One should be able to welcome any means of instructing school children in religion, but this particular set of Short Courses is so lacking in Scriptural content and a Scriptural mentality that it cannot be expected to make any positive contribution to children's religious development.

— K.D.M.

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.

Committee Meetings (D.V.)

The following Committees will meet at Inverness Church:

Tuesday, 2nd October

9.00 a.m. - 10.00 a.m.	Church Centenary Committee
10.00 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.	Church Interests
11.00 a.m. - 12 noon	Church Magazines
12 noon - 1.00 p.m.	Publications
2.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m.	Welfare of Youth
2.00 p.m. - 4.30 p.m.	Finance
3.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.	Sabbath Observance
4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.	Dominions and Overseas
4.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.	Religion and Morals
7.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.	Foreign Mission

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.

Non-Delivery of Magazines

Will subscribers please contact the General Treasurer if magazine(s) are not received.

Fort William and Oban Communion

There will be no Communion in Fort William and Oban in September and November this year. The next Fort William Communion will be on the 2nd Sabbath of April 1991 (D.V.).

Aberdeen Services

Students intending to study in Aberdeen next session should notice that services are now held in Alford Place Free Presbyterian Church, 2 Alford Place, near the Holburn Junction end of Union Street.

The services are intimated in the local press, usually fortnightly. Anyone interested can contact Rev. D. Boyd, Inverness (0463 712872).

Correction

in the July issue of the Magazine on p202, line 20 and 21 "Stiching Hulp Oost Europa Group" should read "Russian Reformation Foundation, Colorado."

Acknowledgment of Donations

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

Dingwall: Mrs C., Invergordon, £15 for Church Funds.

Edinburgh: E.K., Glendale, £20, where most required; Anon., £20 for Outreach (envelope in plate).

Gairloch: Anon., Kyle, £25; M., Stornoway, £30, both for Congr. Funds; M.M., Stornoway, £20 for Communion Expenses, all per Rev. A. MacDonald.

Glasgow (St. Jude's): Anon., £250 for Congr. Fund, per Rev. D.M.; Matth. 6: 3 (3 donations), £30 for Bus Fund; Anon., £2; P.W., £3; Anon., £10, all for Sust. Fund; Anon., £5 for Home Mission; Anon., £5; Anon., £20, both for African Mission Appeal; I. and R.G., £25; Anon., £50, both for Sponsor a Blind Child.

Inverness: Famine/Blind, £25; T.B.S. £4; Upkeep of Church Mini Bus, £50; Anon. — to be used where most needed, £80 (all per envelopes in plate).

North Harris: Friend, Cardonald, Glasgow, £20, per R.M.C.; Anon., Tarbert, £10 (envelope in plate); Friend, Stockinish, £5; Friend, Stockinish, £10; D.M.L., Stockinish, £3; Friend, Stockinish £5, all for door collection, last four per R.M.C.; Anon., £10 for "Hearing Aid Repairs" (envelope in plate).

Raasay: In memory of loved one, £50 for Sust. Fund; Envelope in plate, £10 for Manse Central Heating; Envelope in plate, £10 for Car Fund.

Staffin: From Ferguson, Miller & Partners, Solicitors, Portree, £500 Anonymous Bequest to Staffin F.P. Congregation to be used for Congr. Purposes; Envelope in plate, £100 for Church Door Collection; Anon., £10 (Portree Postmark) for Communion Expenses, per Rev. A.M.C.

Stornoway: M. & C. £100; Miss K. A. MacLeod, the Cottage, Callanish, £50, both for Sust. Fund, both per Rev. J. MacLeod.

Uig (Lewis): Anon., £10; Anon., £10, both for Sust. Fund; Friends, Ness, £10, for Minister's Petrol, all per Rev. D. J. MacDonald; Anon., £10 for Communion Expenses; Mrs C. M., £10 for Church Fund; Friends, Uig, £30 for African Mission; Anon., £20 for African Mission; Anon., £20 for T.B.S., (last five all in Church plate); In memory of Mrs D. Buchanan, £22 for Church Funds, per J. Buchanan.