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The Ministry of the Gospel

The ministry of the gospel is of divine institution. It would be the height of presumption on the part of any man to assume such an office as if it were merely a man-made office. We read of the Saviour that "when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." The Apostle goes on to declare: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." All the offices in the Apostolic Church were of divine institution, as well as the continuing offices of pastors and teachers.

As it would be presumption for any man to set up an office in the Church of God that was not of divine appointment, so it would be presumption on the part of any man to assume an office in the Church which is of divine appointment without being divinely called to that office. Men who presumptuously entered the prophetic or priestly office in Old Testament times without divine warrant exposed themselves to great danger and we read of divine judgments overtaking some of them immediately. The apostles received a direct call from the Saviour to their office and a divine commission to go forth to preach the gospel to their fellow-sinners — "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." So, too, must every true servant of Christ be directed by the Saviour Himself through His word and Spirit to the work of the ministry. So clearly and powerfully must this be applied to their minds and hearts that they will have to say, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Seeing then that the ministry of the gospel is of divine institution and the servants of Christ divinely called to that work, what a blessing the ministry of the gospel should prove to the Church of God.

Many are ready to despise the ministry and the preaching of the gospel not realising that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save

them that believe." Many despise the instruments because they are but earthen vessels. Yet it has pleased God to make use of such earthen vessels for His own glory. The Apostle could say "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." If men were more ready to plead for the servants of Christ that God would use them mightily in His service then men might see what God can do with such weak instruments.

What is the substance of their preaching who are true servants of Christ? The Apostle again gives the answer — "We preach Christ crucified." Christ is central to their preaching — "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake." To this all the true servants of Christ will put their 'Amen'. What need there is in such a day as this for such preaching. When some men are looking for a new gospel in the hope that by it they will capture the hearts of men, the true servants of Christ continue to proclaim the old gospel, which is ever new. It is Christ whom they proclaim in all the glory of His Person as the Eternal Son of God and in all the wonder of His finished work. This is in accordance with the Saviour's own declaration — "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me." And Christ lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel will draw sinners to Himself out of all nations, kindreds and tongues. This is through the drawing power of the cross.

As it is our duty to plead for an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon His true ambassadors, so it is our duty also to plead that He would send forth labourers into His harvest. The Lord has left on record in His word: "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He may send forth labourers into His harvest." And when the Lord sends them forth He will also make them a blessing to those to whom He sends them.

Sermon

By the Rev. C. J. Brown

(Preached to the Free Church General Assembly, 16th May, 1844*)

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd" (Hab. 2: 1).

Fathers and Brethren — In endeavouring to fulfil the duty which has been assigned to me, I would bear in mind that the object of our assembling today is not so much to speak to one another as to speak unto the Lord our God, to pour out our hearts before Him in sorrowful confession of our many, many shortcomings and sins; in order that, betaking

ourselves to the fountain of Emmanuel's blood, and taking hold of the strength of the good and Holy Spirit of Christ, we may humbly and heartily offer ourselves to the Lord, that if He have any delight in us, and if we have found grace in His sight, it may please Him, in infinite mercy, to make some use of us as His instruments, as workers together with Him in the great work on which His own heart is set, and for which the Son of God died. And thus I think that I may best fall in with the character and design of this service if I shall make it the simple object of these remarks to suggest some things which may form the materials of our after devotions; and, specially, if I endeavour to mark, successively, some of the chief lines of our exceeding guilt and shortcoming before the Lord, first in reference to the Ministry, and then, more briefly, in reference to the Eldership and the People.

I. I would first call upon myself, and every Minister present, every watchman on the walls of Zion to take up the language of the text, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me." "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." I will watch to see what Thou wilt say unto me of mine iniquities and sins, as one set by Thee to "watch for souls as they that must give account."

1. And I feel constrained to begin, as the root and spring of all our sins as Ministers together, with the low state of our souls as Christians, the low state of religion in our own hearts. I assume in this, fathers and brethren, that we are Christians, that we are converted men; although the Lord is witness that I assume it not as thinking it a matter of course in reference to myself, at least: and I do believe that it were a very salutary thing this day, be our state and character before God what it may, if we were bearing solemnly in mind that a man may preach the gospel to others and be himself a castaway; that Ministers are in singular hazard of deceiving themselves in this matter; that many will say another day, Lord have

* This remarkable sermon was preached to the Free Church General Assembly, 16th May 1844. In addition to the members of Assembly present, there was an audience of 3000 persons in the hall of Canonmills, "deeply impressed, interested and devout," so runs the report. The sermon made a profound impression. "The impression produced," says the account, "was very great. Many, both in the Assembly and among the audience, were affected even to tears. The leading sins of the ministry were enumerated and laid bare, and charged home with an impressiveness of scriptural appeal, and a searching power, which all very evidently felt. The attention of the audience, from the beginning to the close, was unbroken. When Mr Brown had concluded, the 11th, 12th, and 13th verses of the 51st Psalm were sung, after which Dr Duncan being called upon, offered up an earnest, copious, and most suitable prayer."

we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, to whom He will answer and say, I never knew you, depart from Me; that Judas was the last of all the twelve, when the announcement was made, "One of you shall betray Me"; to put the question, "Lord, is it I?" O it were well if we this day heard that great and gracious One addressing the inquiry to each of us, with which He thrice prefaced the command, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Blessed if we shall be able, with humble hope, to answer, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

As we ought not to be Ministers at all, however, if we be not Christians, regenerated men, so, assuming this, I believe that one of our chief sins, and the parent of all other evils in the really Christian ministry together, is to be found in the low state of godliness, of the life of God, in our own souls. I am aware that this statement is liable to be misunderstood; and all I can afford time to say, to obviate misapprehension, is just this, that I am not here comparing us with our former selves.

In this view, perhaps, we may have made some happy progress; and this, that we are not quite so far off as before, may just be the secret of our seeing more distinctly today our fearful distance from the mark. I am comparing our spiritual state with such words, such notes of a lively and prosperous Christian as the following:— "Our conversation is in heaven — Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it; and it was to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart — To me to live is Christ — Enoch walked with God — I press towards the mark — My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

Now let me try if I can bring out, in a sentence or two, the vital connection between this state of the soul and the discharge of the whole work of the ministry. See it, for instance, in that word of Paul (2 Timothy 1: 12), "I suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for" — mark the secret of his heroic bearing; we talk of the magnanimity, the heroism of Paul; but observe the secret of all his labours and toils and sufferings — "for I know," says he, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Ah! that is what will make a man go through the flames for Christ, that element deep and strong in his soul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." Or, see the same in the words of David we were just singing, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee"; then — Lord, how shall I teach Thy ways, unless

I am seeking to walk close and straight in them myself — unless, restored and upheld by Thy good Spirit, I am both discovering and loathing my own ways, and carefully and constantly seeking to tread in Thine? Or take it thus — Our themes, fathers and brethren, the hinges of the ministry, are Sin and Christ. Well, how shall a man discover the sins of others, solidly and tenderly, not harshly, but tenderly and lovingly, who is not seeing and weeping in secret places over his own iniquities? And as for Christ, the very idea of the Christ, the Beloved of the Father, His “elect, in whom His soul delighteth,” is one of the heart and soul. It is not to be taken up by mere intellectual apprehension. “The love of Christ constraineth us,” says Paul, giving the spring of his whole labours. “Lovest thou Me,” Peter? then “Feed my lambs,” “Feed my sheep” — thou can’st never feed them otherwise. “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Or take this view of it. The Word is our instrument, our sword. But the way to get into the very heart of the Word, and to get the Word into our heart, so as to have it wrought into our very being, is nothing else than our living on it in secret; praying over it, weeping, rejoicing over it. Thus it becomes our own, and we come to use and wield it with facility. Otherwise, the Word is to a man what Saul’s armour was to David when he said, “I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them.” It is a cumbrous, clumsy thing hanging about a man which he can make no use of. The theme, in short, is endless. If we are not prospering in soul, living much in secret prayer, we are cut off from the fountain of all our strength for the ministry together. What guilt lies on us in this whole matter! What mischief have we thus done to souls! What good have we not failed to do! What endless opportunities have we lost! We, who ought to have been “ensamples to the flock” — we, who have had so many and peculiar advantages for walking with God (for I can never admit that our familiarity with divine things, often as we suffer it to become a snare to us, is not in itself a mighty privilege and advantage), alas, our distance from Him has all but paralysed our ministry! We have not dwelt in the secret place of the Most High. We have not lived under the powers of the world to come. We have not walked humbly, and softly, and mournfully before the Lord. We have not gloried in the cross of Christ. His Word has not dwelt richly in us. We have not “spoken because we believed.” I have no doubt we have spoken what we believed, but too little because — because we “could not but speak the things which we had seen and heard.” Thus have we been too much in our own work like some nervous, sickly man that must work, rather because he is yet upon his feet. But we have

wanted the spring, and vigour, and elasticity of the ministry, which comes from a sound, healthy state of the soul before God. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."

2. If we have felt anything, beloved, of this parent guilt — this inner, central iniquity — I may mark more briefly a second line of ministerial sin coming necessarily out from that centre. I refer to very faint impressions of the character and great objects and ends of our ministry. Take these, for brevity's sake, in that one word, "Come with me, and I will make you fishers of men" — "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Now, there is one simple way in which, I think, it may come out this day, by the Lord's blessing to our painful and sorrowful apprehension, how faint have been our impressions of this the great character and end of our work. I allude to the little concern we have felt, comparatively (and here I cannot speak without trembling and dismay), the little real hearty concern we have felt, provided we were carried in some comfortable manner through our work, about the spiritual fruits and results of it — whether souls were verily saved by it or no. Ah! the truth here comes out too undeniably in such a contrast as that, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." "My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you." "Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord." I would venture to ask ministers who know what prayer about their work is, whether they are accustomed to pray much for the success of their sermons after they have been preached, when the work of the day is over, as we say. I fear the fact on this head will be found to disclose some painful things, evincing that, even when we have prayed, the object of concern with us has more been, at bottom, the assisting and carrying through of the messenger than the saving success of the message.

Some one perhaps will say that issues are God's and duty only ours. No doubt issues, issues from death, are God's, to accomplish them: but O! they are ours to long, and strive, and pray and pant after them. And, in truth, we never can do our duty till we are in that spirit; till we feel, in some measure, about the souls of unconverted men, as we should about persons intoxicated and lying half asleep in a house in flames. "I became all things to all men," says Paul, "that I might by all means save some." It was the intense desire of saving some, pulling them out of the fire, that

impelled him to the using of all possible means, now this one, and now that — “to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” And elsewhere in his writings (1 Thess. 2: 8), “Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us”; anything to save your souls — “for ye remember,” he adds, “our labour and travail; for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.” A few verses before he had said, “we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention”; again, immediately, “we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” But whether it were the boldness of the lion, or the gentleness of the mother and nurse, the secret of each lay there, “so being affectionately desirous of you,” etc., “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” Look how it is in any other matter. If a man goes to negotiate some affair at a market, or with a mercantile house, it is little comfort to him that he has gone to the place and made his proposals if the bargain is not closed — if the gain is not secured, the affair brought to a successful issue. Ah! souls are our gain, fathers and brethren, our hire and wages. “He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.” Why are we so indifferent about our profits and gains? “My dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown” — “what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” “Compel them to come in,” says the Lord. The counterpart of that is not “doing our duty,” in the ordinary sense of the word, but it is the giving men no rest, and “giving the Lord no rest” — pleading with men for God, and with God for men — longing, agonising to pluck souls as brands from the burning — labouring in the spirit of these words, “whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” “I acknowledge my transgressions, Lord, and my sin is ever before me” — “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

3. Let me mark a third line of ministerial guilt, inseparably connected with these, in our little, little realising of the exceeding weight and responsibility of the Ministry. One verse here is a volume. “We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of life unto life, and to the other the savour of death unto death.” No wonder if Paul adds, “and who is sufficient

for these things?" No wonder if he speaks elsewhere of being with the Corinthians "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Alas, that there is so little of this trembling among us — that we can enter our pulpits with so light a heart, especially when we have got our preparations pretty well completed. Ah! surely that were just the time, if we felt aright, to be most of all weighed down in spirit by the recollection "to the other the savour of death unto death." No doubt we cannot make the word to be the savour of life unto life to any soul. But what if it fail of this through our fault — what if, through our fault, it become the "savour of death unto death?" Can we, indeed, deceive ourselves so far as to doubt that in many, many cases it actually has? "O Lord, have mercy upon me" — "deliver me from blood-guiltiness, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness!" How lightly have we often spoken in the public prayers of the word not returning to God void! Doubtless it shall not. But what if it have found its issue and fruit, through our neglect, in the aggravated destruction of our hearers? I find Dr Kalley of Madeira, in a letter addressed a few weeks ago to a society in this country, speaking of the Word of God, under the figure of "a conductor for the galvanism of heaven." "It stretches forth" says he, "from God into our world, and when its point is directed to the soul of man, there is a transmission of power, compared with which that of all the batteries on earth is nothing. It may consume — it may become the savour of death unto the soul, adding the most agonizing torments to the eternal misery of an immortal spirit. With what feelings — with what care and prayer should we employ so tremendous an engine, lest through our fault it destroy." That is in the spirit of the apostle, "who is sufficient for these things?"

4. This leads me to mark a fourth great line of ministerial guilt, in our very faint impressions of where the strength and sufficiency of the Minister alone reside. Ah! we are too little with thee, Lord — too little in thy secret place — too little conversant with the great end of our ministry — the quickening of the dead, raising souls from the grave of trespasses and sins, bringing sinners into vital union and communion with Jesus Christ — to enter much into that word, "the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God"; "our sufficiency is of God"; "when I am weak, then am I strong." For the ends we are practically very much satisfied with, our own strength may well enough suffice. It may be enough for preparing a suitable sermon and preaching it; but it will not suffice to save lost souls; and what we need is to go to our sermon, and to our pulpit, feeling, Lord, I go, under thee to pluck men as brands from the burning — to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light — to espouse sinners, in an

everlasting betrothment, to Christ Jesus — to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Who is sufficient for these things? In such a work weakness is strength. Strength is but deep-felt weakness linking itself to the arm and word and love of Jehovah. Here the little child is truly the “greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.” “My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

How little have we known of that baptism of suffering and humiliation, which Moses underwent, and Joseph, and David, and Paul — Luther, also, and Zwingli, and all that have been greatly blessed of God in any age! We have known little of the mystery of combining the careful use of all appointed preparations and means, with the renunciation of all — of using them, and yet, in the very act, paradox though it may seem, renouncing them — aye, and the more complete they are, the more renouncing them, and the more simply and singly looking to the Lord alone. “What was felt most,” (writes Dr Duff in the account of his memorable shipwreck), “as being to him irreparable, was the entire loss of all his journals, notes, memorandums, essays, etc., etc., the fruits, such as they were of the reflection and research of many years when he possessed special opportunities which he could never expect again to realise. ‘But they are gone,’ was his own written declaration at the time, ‘they are gone’; and blessed be God I can say ‘gone’, without a murmur. So perish all earthly things; the treasure that is laid up in heaven alone is unassailable. . . . The only article which was recovered, in a wholly undamaged state, was a quarto copy of Bagstar’s Comprehensive Bible and Psalm Book. . . . Ah! the lesson and the schooling of a mysterious Providence seemed now complete; and its designs and intentions perfectly developed. . . . It seemed as if the heavens had suddenly opened, and a voice from the Holy One had sounded with resistless emphasis in his ears, saying, ‘Fool that you are, to have centred so unduly your cares and anxieties and affections on books and papers! So intense and devoted was the homage of your heart towards these in the eyes of the heart-searching God, that, as there seemed no other method of weaning you from them, your heavenly Father, to save you from the doom of an idolater, has in mercy to your soul removed the idols — sinking them all to the bottom of the deep, or scattering them in useless fragments on this desolate shore — all, all save one, and that is, the ever-blessed Book of life. Here is the Bible for you — grasp it as the richest treasure of infinite wisdom and infinite love — a treasure which, in the balance of heaven, would outweigh all the books and papers in the universe. Go, and prayerfully consult that unerring chart — that infallible directory — humbly trust to it, and to your God; and never, never will you have reason to regret that you have been violently severed from

your idols, as thereby you become more firmly linked by the golden chain of grace to the throne of the Eternal." How little, thus also, through ignorance of our own utter insufficiency, have we known of prayer! As for Luther's three hours of prayer, daily, it is now rather an anecdote we tell, than a thing at all approached to. And yet we fail less seriously in the time, than in the spirit of this exercise — the spirit which would come out of the soul's being intensely set on the end of the ministry, in the excellency of it, the exceeding difficulty of it, and the divine promise of it — the spirit of Jacob's wrestling with the Angel of the covenant, and of Moses' strange unearthly pleading upon the Mount — of Jacob's "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," and Moses' answer to the Lord's, "let me alone" — "remember, Lord, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swearest by thine own self," etc., etc., (Exodus 32: 9-14). How little do we know of such pleading as that in Exodus 33: 12-15, divinely applicable to the ministry, throughout, "and Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me known whom thou wilt send with me: yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto Him, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." How wanting have we been, alike, in pleading with God for our people, and with our people for God! "Hide thy face, Lord, from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

(To be continued)

Our God Still Lives

by Rev. Kenneth MacLeod

Some thoughts on 2 Kings 13: 21 "And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet."

We can well imagine the godly in Israel, however few they may have been at that time, feeling very downcast now that Elisha had died. They could remember the wonderful things which Elisha had done and they could remember how he had spoken so powerfully in God's name. Some of them could probably also remember Elijah; at least they would have heard what an amazing man he was — how he too had acted and spoken

in such a remarkable way in the name of the Lord God of Israel. And Elijah had gone to heaven in a way altogether in keeping with his wonderful life. Now God's people could look around and see how weak the cause of God had become, and very likely there was no longer anyone of significance to speak for God.

Yet it was in this situation that this unusual miracle was performed. In the emergency, having been surprised by a hostile band of Moabites, the funeral party disposed of the corpse in Elisha's tomb, and at once the corpse came alive when it touched Elisha's bones. How are we to view the incident except as a message from God to that generation? Elijah had performed his miracles, and Elisha had performed his miracles, by the power of God. Both were now away from the earthly scene, but here was a testimony from God that He still lived, and that His power was unchanged.

Elijah had indeed made a tremendous impact on the whole nation when he had gathered Israel together to Mount Carmel and had proved that Jehovah had power which Baal altogether lacked — to send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, and even the twelve barrels of water which had been poured on and around the sacrifice. The result was that, "when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" (1 Ki 18: 39). Doubtless this was, in most cases, no more than the natural effect of the miracle acting on their minds and consciences, but the fact remained that a notable act of witness had been made in the name of the God of Israel, and it made a profound impression on everyone.

No one in Israel could altogether ignore the reality of the existence of God, or His power, while Elijah was alive, but he, faithful servant of God that he was, had been taken home to heaven in a chariot of fire. There was, however, someone else to take his place. Of him it was truly said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha" (2: 15), when he took the mantle of Elijah and repeated the miracle which his former master had performed in crossing the Jordan on dry ground. Elisha asked, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And the miracle which God worked in answer to the cry of Elisha was a clear demonstration that He still lived.

But the time came also when "Elisha died, and they buried him" (v20). While he lived no one could deny the reality of God's power, but the fact remained that Israel continued very much in a course of wickedness. Time and again the Books of Kings speak of the kings of Israel, that they continued in the sinful ways of Jeroboam, their first king as a separate nation. And the subjects followed in the steps of their rulers. The whole history

of Israel was: "They departed not from the sins of Jeroboam who made Israel sin, but walked therein" (v6). They went on in their idolatry, ignoring the worship of the true God, ignoring His authority and their duty to seek Him. That must have been painful to the children of God, even while Elisha and Elijah were still alive, but they would have had some hope that the Lord would yet bless His Word as spoken by these His gracious and powerful servants, and that He would thereby work a mighty transformation in the land.

How dispirited then they must have felt when Elisha followed Elijah to heaven! Doubtless the words of Ps 74: 9 sum up their feelings: "We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet." Other prophets did indeed follow at a later date — great men like Isaiah and Jeremiah — but there was a uniqueness about these two men, Elijah and Elisha; they had no clear successors in the Church on earth.

Today the state of religion is low, and the cause of Christ makes very little impact on society. Although we have to thank God that we still have the Gospel and that His Church has by no means died out, yet the fact remains that the great men of other generations, of whom we have heard and read, have all been taken to heaven, and we have to mourn that they have so few successors. Where is there anyone today, in Britain or anywhere else, who makes an impact on society because of his faithfulness to the Word of God? So, seeing the absence of God's power we also may ask, as they did of old, "Why withdrawest Thou Thine hand, even Thy right hand?" (Ps 74: 11a). In other words: Why dost Thou not work in the way that once Thou didst? Not that God will reveal to man all the reasons for His way of working. We may think of our sin, our carelessness and wilfulness, and point to them as valid reasons why God does not work now as He has done in the past. But there are other reasons unrevealed, reasons which are bound up with His perfect sovereignty. Yet, whatever God's ways of working are, we can be sure that all He does is for His glory in the end, and when the heavens and the earth will have passed away it will be seen that the Lord was glorified in it all.

The whole spiritual scene in Israel at the time of Elisha's death resembled the scene described in Ezekiel's vision, the scene in "the valley which was full of bones . . . and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry" (Ezek 37: 1f). In Israel there was so little spiritual life; instead there was so much deadness and dryness. Is it not the same today, even in communities where the gospel once flourished? There is so much resistance to the Word of God. Indeed, by and large, it is past the stage of resistance; the Word of God is simply ignored. When

an army is mobilised, there must be something to resist; the leader works on the assumption that there is significant opposition. Thus, to the extent that the devil does not mobilise his troops in outright opposition to the Church of God, it is because he feels that the Church may with reasonable safety be ignored and in this way his purposes be more effectively accomplished — as it avoids what is for him the danger of drawing attention to what God's Word and messengers have to say. And when so few consciences are touched by the Word of God people can feel quite at ease in ignoring the truth of God and ignoring God Himself.

It was in that kind of situation that the miracle of restoration of a corpse to life was performed; the Lord gave this testimony to the fact that He had not abandoned Israel. He had not abandoned His Church, He had not abandoned the world; He was the same God still. The God of Elijah was still alive, the God of Elisha was still alive, and His power was unchanged. The miracle was a testimony to the fact that "the Lord is the true God, He is the living God and an everlasting King" (Jer. 10: 10). It was a testimony to the fact that His power was as great as ever and that He still had everything under His absolute control. If Elisha was still alive he could have raised the man from the dead, had that been God's will, just as he had brought back to life the son of the Shunamite woman. But the miracle was only possible by the power of God Himself, and He could work without Elisha; His power to work miracles was unchanged. Although great men had been removed from the Church, God was still with His Church.

Now as then, God will be faithful to His promise, "The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it hath pleased Him to make you His people" (1 Sam. 12: 22), and He demonstrated this to Israel by the miracle. His honour involves Him continuing His presence with His Church. Men in our time may blasphemously express the thought that God is dead but, although God may allow His Church become small, He will go no further than this — He will most certainly never allow that Church to pass out of existence. Absolutely not! At particular times in the history of the Church in this world He may remove more individuals into the Church in heaven than He brings as replacements out of Satan's kingdom to be His followers on earth. That part of the Church which is on earth may indeed become smaller, but God's power is unchanged. And we are to believe that God will yet bring about a greater expansion of His Church than ever before.

God's wonders are not now performed by contact with one who is dead, though the Lord may use the writings of those who are long since dead

and buried in that greatest of all miracles, bringing sinners out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Great as were the miracles recorded in Scripture: the feeding of the five thousand, for instance, the stilling of a storm on the Sea of Galilee, or the raising of someone from the dead, none of them is as great a miracle as when one sinner is born again. And every time a sinner is born again it is a testimony to the great and wonderful fact that God still lives and that His power is absolutely unchanged. The world today is by no means without that testimony. The number of those who are truly born again today may be so small that the world can generally ignore it — but they ignore it at their peril. God still bears this testimony to His existence — and to His unchanging power — on every occasion that He plucks a sinner out of Satan's kingdom. The time has passed when we may expect miracles such as restoring a corpse to life, but the time has certainly not come when God will cease to perform the greater miracle of regeneration — not until the last of God's elect has been made spiritually alive.

The miracle of salvation takes place, not by contact with someone who is dead, but by living contact with a living Saviour. But the living Saviour was a crucified Saviour. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15: 3). This must be at the centre of the message borne by everyone who goes out as an ambassador for Christ. Apart from the death of Christ there could be no salvation, and this generation stands desperately in need of learning that tremendous fact. This Saviour, who is the only Saviour, died — but He rose again. He is a living Saviour, for God "raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1: 20).

Accordingly the Church is not a dying force, however weak she may become at any stage of her existence. Therefore, as she goes on with the work of preaching the gospel, she may do so with the confident assertion, "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. 74: 12). Paul had repeatedly seen the power of the gospel; not only had he seen the wonderful effects of the preaching of Peter and John and others, but he had seen the powerful results of his own preaching, as it was accompanied by the Holy Spirit. So he could claim, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1: 16).

Many were the testimonies which Paul could bear to the power of the gospel — even in conditions of personal weakness and in difficult cir-

cumstances, In Philippi, for instance, when it was past midnight and after spending some time in close imprisonment, he saw the power of the gospel when he told the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16: 31). What Paul and Silas saw was the gospel becoming the power of God for the salvation of this man and his household. So Paul went out daily with the gospel, strong in faith of the goodness of God, for he believed that God is indeed willing to use the gospel to the salvation of sinners.

However little influence the gospel has today, we do not need to be ashamed of it — provided we continue to preach the same gospel as Paul preached. Although we do not have an Elisha or a Paul to preach the gospel today, it is not the qualities of the preacher that are primarily significant in the success of the gospel. It is the sovereign purpose of God to work by the Holy Spirit that results in a blessing for the Church on earth. This is not to deny that there are those, like Elisha and Paul, who are specially fitted with grace and with gifts to be particularly useful in the Church of God. But there is always the real possibility of coming in contact with Christ, however inadequate the messenger may in fact be — provided he does proclaim the gospel. Even Paul was in himself inadequate, but he found the power of Christ sufficient for him in his weakness, and time and again he proved the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

Though Philippi, spiritually, was as dry as the valley of dry bones — and that was true of Thessalonica and Corinth and every other area Paul went to — it made sense to him to obey the instruction, "Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord" (Ezek. 37: 4). And it makes sense for the ambassadors of Christ today to preach to dead souls also though, if there was no other power than that of man to be expected, the act of preaching the gospel would be as pointless as that of Ezekiel in prophesying to the dry bones. What gave point to the command to Ezekial to prophesy to the dry bones was the further instruction, "Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live" (Ezek. 37: 9). In the same way, if there is to be fruit from the preaching of the gospel, a miracle is needed; it needs the almighty power of divine grace so that even one sinner may be converted. In Ezekiel's vision the wisdom of the instruction to prophesy was seen, however absurd it appeared at first sight, when bone came to its bone and at last there stood up an exceeding great army.

At the creation God "breathed into (man's) nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul!" (Gen. 2: 7). It is the same power, only of a higher order, that brings alive an unconverted sinner — the Holy Spirit breathing life into the dead soul. And when a sinner is thus born again the same Spirit applies the Word of God to his soul. The preaching of the gospel — prophesying to the dry bones — is the special instrument used in the conversion of sinners. However inadequate preaching in itself is to work such great effects, we have every reason to believe that God will, to a greater or lesser extent, give the Holy Spirit at all stages of the existence of His Church.

The Church of God must therefore go on discharging the duty of presenting the gospel to dead sinners. Yet preachers are not called to be successful, only to be faithful. They are to preach the whole counsel of God, but this especially: that Christ died and rose again. As they thus obey the command of the living God, who sent them out, they may express the confidence, "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion" (Ps. 102: 13), and even express the confidence that God will show His mercy to His Church to the extent that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11: 9). Though in our generation the Church of God is as weak as it is, never has there been a time when the Scriptures have been so widely scattered, and that cannot be without effect. Thus there are now those who believe the gospel in so many more parts of the world than ever before.

One vital responsibility which falls on every believer in connection with the spread of the gospel is the duty of prayer. This is illustrated for us by that last recorded incident in Elisha's life. King Joash was told to take his bow and arrows and shoot, which he did. He was told again to shoot, and he shot three times. But he was rebuked by the prophet with the words, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times" (v19). Joash should have been more willing to continue; he should have entered more into the significance of what he was doing — deliverance from Israel's enemies — and he should have been more willing to submit to God as the only One through whom that deliverance could be achieved.

It is our duty to seek to understand the importance of persevering prayer in connection with the prosperity of Christ's kingdom on earth, and so to engage in what corresponds to firing five or six arrows rather than only three. The people of God are to plead in particular that the Holy Spirit would come to themselves so that they might be given greater nearness to God and greater holiness and, of course, that a multitude of souls would

be rescued from the power of Satan and made the subjects of redeeming grace.

The Church of God today is to go on in the same spirit as Elisha when he asked, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" (2: 14). He asked the question in the expectation that the God of Elijah would hear his cry too. It is so easy to be absorbed by the fact that today's Church lacks the great men of the past, that there is no Elijah or Elisha, that there is no John Knox or Andrew Melville or Alexander Henderson, or anyone of that spiritual calibre with the capacity to make an impact even on the ungodly of the generation. But, whenever one sinner is converted, God is bearing testimony to these unspeakably significant facts: that He is alive, that the power of the Holy Spirit to quicken spiritually dead sinners is unchanged, and that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son still cleanses from all sin.

They who asked in days of old, "Why withdrawest Thou Thy hand, even Thy right hand?", had also a plea to make, "Pluck it (Thy right hand) out of Thy bosom" (Ps. 74: 11b). So we may plead with God that He would show His power in the salvation of sinners and in building up His own people in the faith, and we may ask that He would work on a greater scale than ever before. We are to take the Lord's promises to Him and cry that He would thus have mercy on His Church, even in our dark day. If our God still lives, and He does; if His power is unchanged, and it is — then we may expect to see the effects of that power demonstrated in His good time. God still directs His Church, "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things" (Joel 2: 21).

The Free Offer of the Gospel

By Rev. John Colquhoun

When our Lord sent forth His disciples to preach the Gospel, after His resurrection, He said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark 16: 15, 16. Again, immediately before His ascension, He said to them, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1: 8. This clearly teaches that the gospel is to be preached to every creature of the human race, whatever their nationality, colour, or creed may be. That the meaning of these words was clear to the Apostles need not be doubted, as they were quite familiar with the free offer of the gospel in the Scriptures of the

Old Testament, for the benefits of the gospel are freely offered to all sorts of sinners there. If we take Christ speaking as the Wisdom of God in the Book of Proverbs we find Him saying, "How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: Behold I will pour my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Prov. 22: 23. That the preaching of the Apostles was in accordance with this is equally clear. If we take Peter on the day of Pentecost we find him saying to the whole congregation, "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2: 38. Again, Paul in addressing the Church in Corinth, says, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." II Cor. 5: 18-20. Here we have the offer of Christ in the gospel to those who were not yet reconciled, and who gave no indication, as yet, that they were of the elect.

The Hyper-Calvinist's View. — Generally speaking, the free offer of the gospel is found in the Christian Church down through the ages; the exception is found among a scattered minority, known as Hyper-Calvinists. Though these are found chiefly among certain sections of the Strict Baptists in England, yet they are not wholly confined to them. Hyper-Calvinism may be said to be the swing of the pendulum from Arminianism. Its upholders maintain that there is no warrant in Scripture for a universal call to come to Christ to all sinners to whom the gospel comes, and that Christ should only be offered to those only whom the Holy Spirit effectually calls. Such passages as "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isaiah 55: 1, are referred to as implying "a living gracious thirst," totally ignoring the fact that those invited to come to the waters are asked, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Verse 2. Surely a living gracious thirst cannot have for its object "that which is not bread," and "that which satisfieth not." This extreme view became common among a certain section of professed Calvinists in opposition to all shades of Arminianism, and the result was that they denied that there was any warrant in Scripture for an offer of

Christ to all sinners, and that He is held forth or offered as a Saviour only to those who are effectually called, and they have gone the length of referring to all of the opposite view as Arminians.

Based on man's inability to believe. — This position is maintained on the ground that man is a bankrupt, spiritually, making it impossible for him either to repent or believe. To take up the position that Christ should not be offered to any but to those who are convinced sinners is quite as unscriptural as that of the Arminians who maintained that those who are called have a certain ability, and that this ability limits man's responsibility. Both positions are unscriptural because the sinner is responsible for his inability. His inability is his sin, and he shall be held accountable to God for that inability, for God has a right to demand of the sinner that service and obedience which man in a state of innocence had power to render. His becoming unable to render that service and obedience did not change the unchangeable God. If we take as a good example of Hyper-Calvinism the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Denomination of Strict and Particular Baptists we read in Article 26: "We deny duty-faith and duty repentance — these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritual and savingly repent and believe. We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that man in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God." No conservative theologian will deny that there is no power in man in a state of nature to do any spiritual good whatever, but what has happened to the doctrine of man's responsibility which is so clearly taught in the Scriptures? As there are no Scripture proofs given to the above Article except proofs which show man's inability the only logical conclusion that one can come to is that the statement "We reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or return to God," is based on a wrong inference drawn from the doctrine of man's inability to believe or return to God. That this inference is contrary to the plain revelation which God gives in His Word, and ignores the many truths which show that the opposite is the case, is very evident.

On this point the late Principal Cunningham makes the following clear statement: "The sole ground or warrant for men's act, in offering pardon and salvation to their fellow-men, is the authority and command of God in His word. We have no other warrant than this; we need no other; and we should seek or desire none; but on this ground alone should consider yourselves not only warranted, but bound, to proclaim to our fellow-men, whatever be their country, character, or condition, the good news

of the kingdom, and to call upon them to come to Christ that they may be saved — the Bible affording us sufficient, yea, abundant materials for convincing them that, in right reason, they ought to do this, and for assuring them that all who do, shall obtain eternal life. But this has manifestly nothing to do with the question as to the ground or warrant of God's act in making unlimited offers, and in authorising us to make them." Historical Theology, Vol. II. p.347-348.

Scottish Theology and the Free Offer. — In Scotland, prior to what is known as the *Marrow Controversy*, there was among certain divines a tendency to emphasise that offers of Christ and salvation should only be to convinced and penitent sinners, yet, even among these, there was a setting forth of the duty of all men to believe in Him as God commanded, and a warning to those who continued in their sins of the consequences of unbelief and impenitency. This tendency to confine offers of Christ to the awakened, no doubt, was behind the opposition to the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* by Principal Haddow of St Andrews and others, which ultimately led the General Assembly to condemn the book. In spite of all this opposition to the *Marrow*, it left an indelible mark on the preaching of the Evangelical School in Scotland, so that the free offer of the gospel and the proclaiming of man's duty to believe took the place of a species of Calvinism which has been described as "narrow, rigid and cold." Thomas Boston, in his *Memoirs*, tells us that after his settlement in Simpin, he had several convictions of legality in his own practice. This legality probably was introduced into Scottish Theology through the writings of some of the Dutch divines, whose writings were widely read in Scotland. After Boston digested the contents of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* he says, "I found it to come close to the points I was in quest of, and to show the consistency of these, which I could not reconcile before: so that I rejoiced in it, as a light which the Lord had seasonably struck up to me in my darkness." Thus Boston became noted as a preacher who preached a full-orbed gospel. This light illuminated other godly ministers in Scotland, and here we quote from the Introduction by Dr C. G. McCrie to the last published edition of the *Marrow*. "Boston was a member of the General Assembly of 1717 when the case of Simson of Glasgow was ended, with as he thought 'great softness to the Professor,' and when the *Auchterarder Creed*, intended by its framers to oppose the errors of the heretic in the west, was condemned by a majority of the court, diffidence which he found it impossible to overcome prevented the Etterick commissioner speaking out when he felt he ought to have lifted up his testimony; but, sitting beside the Rev. John Drummond, minister of Crieff,

in the assembly house, he delivered his soul to that worthy Auchterarder presbyter on the subject of the gospel offer as it is set forth in such passages as the fifty-fifth of Isaiah and the eleventh of Matthew. In the course of the conversation Boston mentioned the *Marrow*." Here the learned editor quotes Boston himself as to the result. "Hereupon he," the brother from Crieff, "having inquired in the shops for the said book, at length got it; and from him Mr James Webster getting it was taken therewith; and afterward, Mr Drummond himself being hardly allowed time to read it through, it came into the hands of Mr James Hog, minister of Carnock; and in the end was reprinted in the year 1718, with a preface by the said Mr Hog, dated at Carnock, 3rd December 1717."

The author of the *Marrow* states, "God the Father, as He is in His Son, Jesus Christ, moved with nothing but with His free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of free gift and grant to them all, that whosoever of them all shall believe in his Son shall not perish, but have eternal life." Thomas Boston, in his *Notes on the Marrow*, says on this point, "This deed of gift and grant, or authentic gospel offer, is expressed in so many words, John 3: 16. 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' Where the gospel comes, this grant is published, and the ministerial offer made: and there is no exception of any of all mankind in the grant. If there was, no ministerial offer of Christ could be warrantably made to the party excepted, more than to the fallen angels; and without question, the publishing and proclaiming of heaven's grant unto any, by the way of ministerial offer, presupposeth the grant, in the first place, to be made to them: otherwise it would be of no more value, than a crier's offering of the king's pardon to one who is not comprehended in it. This is the good old way of discovering to sinners their warrant to believe in Christ; and it doth indeed bear the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ for all; and that Christ crucified is the ordinance of God for salvation, unto all mankind, in the use-making of which only they can be saved; but not an universal atonement or redemption." In connection with John 3: 16, cited by Boston, Hyper-Calvinists maintain that the "world" there, merely means Gentiles as well as Jews. That meaning can be attached to it, but it is not the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile of which the Saviour is treating at the time, but of the necessity of the New Birth, and of the revelation of God's love, which made it possible that sinners might experience the New Birth.

The Marrow-men's distinction between the giving of Christ in this "deed of gift and grant" to the whole world, and the giving of Him in posses-

sion to the elect, was at the root of their giving the free offer of the gospel. Whatever may be said of the view, peculiar to the Marrow-men, on this point, the free offer is most consistent with God's revelation of a definite atonement, and that none shall be saved but those who have been elected. That atonement is suitable and sufficient for all sinners, but all sinners will not have it. "The Lord Jesus, in order to secure the salvation of His people, and with a specific view to that end, fulfilled the condition of the law or covenant under which they and all mankind were placed. These conditions were (1) perfect obedience; (2) satisfaction to divine justice. Christ's righteousness, therefore, consists of His obedience and death. That righteousness is precisely what the law demands of every sinner in order to justification before God. It is, therefore, in its nature adapted to all sinners who are under the law. Its nature is not altered by the fact that it was wrought out for a portion only of such sinners, or that it is secured to them by covenant between the Father and the Son. What is necessary for the salvation of one man is necessary for the salvation of another and of all. It is also of infinite value, being the righteousness of the eternal Son of God, and therefore sufficient for all." *Hodge's Essays*, pp. 181, 182.

In the Larger Catechism, in answer to the Question, How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant? the Westminster Divines say, "The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that He freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by Him; and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in Him, promiseth and giveth His Holy Spirit to all His elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces; and to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thankfulness to God, and as the way which He hath appointed them to salvation." This statement shows clearly God's love and mercy in providing a Mediator, and life and salvation by Him, the necessity of faith, which is God's gift, and God's provision to work that faith in the sinner in order to enable him to receive Christ as the gift of the Father and to rest upon Him alone for salvation.

Dr John Love of Glasgow, one of the brightest ornaments of the Church of Christ in Scotland says with respect to Christ as a gift to sinners:—"In Psalm 50: 16, the Lord is not speaking against the right of the wicked, as sinners, to receive Christ and believe on Him, but against their claiming an actual interest in him, as if they already received him, and were in covenant with God. To convince them of the contrary, several evidences are given, but with this very end — to warn them against self-deceit, and stir them up to seek actual faith in Christ. But, if they had no right to

Christ, it would be to no purpose to expostulate with them in this manner.

“There is a real gift of Christ made in the word to sinners, whereby they are warranted to take Christ. Then the Divine command comes forth, requiring them to make use of this gift, and to take Christ. If they plead inability, either to believe the gift or to embrace it, then there is in the word absolute promises, that some shall receive Him. These they are allowed to plead with God: for, though they cannot peremptorily conclude from these, that they shall be made to receive Him, yet there is a possibility, yea, a probability, that in this way they shall come speed: and the uncertainty ought to stir them up to greater anxiety and restlessness, to have it put out of doubt. In the meantime, they are to be attempting to believe the undeniable truth, that Christ is given to them, and to prize and receive Him. And when there is a beginning of the accomplishment in them of the absolute promises, and they are enabled to believe the gift of Christ, and to receive Him, then they may conclude, peremptorily, that all that is contained in the absolute promises shall be made good to them; since, having Christ in actual possession, they have now a right to this. *Love's Memorials Vol. I. 286.*

(To be continued)

Notes and Comments

Financial Upheaval

The Government received a serious set-back in their policy on Europe when, through a run on the pound sterling in the money markets, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was forced to withdraw Britain from the E.R.M. This resulted in a virtual devaluation of the pound. Notwithstanding the Government's efforts to get Britain's economy moving again matters seem to be working against them. May it not be that the Prime Minister and Government ministers are looking to their own wisdom to deliver Britain out of recession, instead of looking to the One who is ruling in heaven and in the earth? May it not be that the Lord is speaking to us as a nation in our present plight? As a nation and in the high councils of the land we have left God out of account. Is it any wonder then that we are brought so low? Let us turn as a people, high and low, to the Lord and then we may see ourselves delivered out of our present plight. If we refuse to do so, our situation may become even worse than at present.

Northern Ireland

The Secretary for Northern Ireland has been doing all in his power to bring the different parties in Northern Ireland together. For this purpose

he has set up talks in which the Eire Government has a part. The most recent of these was held in Dublin. Rev. Ian Paisley withdrew from the talks earlier because of the refusal of the Eire Government to address the question of the Eire Constitution, which claims jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. Until this is changed the Protestant parties in Northern Ireland see little hope of a settlement. The Eire Government wish to use this false claim as a pawn to obtain concessions from the Protestants in Northern Ireland. It should be clear to everyone that what Eire wants is conquest and not recognition of Northern Ireland's right to adhere to the United Kingdom. No doubt it is the hope of the Eire Government that they may win by subtlety what the IRA have failed to win by their campaign of terror and murder over many years. However, the battle is not man's but the Lord's. He has preserved His Cause in Northern Ireland because He still has a people there who fear Him, however few they may be. He will continue to maintain His Cause for their sake. Let them not despair. The Lord will yet arise and build Zion. Only then will the people of Eire be delivered from the Romanist bondage in which they have been held so long. The way may be open then for Ireland to be united as one people, serving one Lord.

APC women and head coverings

After comments in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* on the practical outworkings of the false views of liberty held by the Associated Presbyterian Churches, it is possibly only fair to comment on what appears to be an attempt at reining in the bolting steed.

It is common knowledge that the APCs have introduced practices that are very different from the Free Presbyterian Church which they left. One of the obvious areas which needs adjustment, to enable the APC to take up their place alongside current evangelical churches and groupings, is the area of worship. If it were not so tragic, it would be ludicrous to detail in all its farcicality the adjustments being made in the Aberdeen APC public worship: standing in prayer on Sabbath in the church; sitting in prayer in the anteroom during the prayer meeting; at some prayers advising those in danger of standing that they do not need to do so; and much more.

However the latest subject to trouble the brethren, and the sisters, is the question of women wearing a head covering during public worship. Differing views were expressed on this subject at a private meeting of the APC Assembly. Now it appears that the Rev. Alexander Murray has stolen a march upon his colleagues and put forth his view in the September issue

of the *APC News Update*. He inserts two large extracts from commentaries on 1 Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 2 to 16 and 17, which, on balance, support the view that women should wear a head covering. Anticipating the objections which were only too familiar to our ears when the APC's were once in the Free Presbyterian Church, Mr Murray counters the expediency of skipping over these verses in an age of "equal opportunity". Countering the charge that the subject is seemingly trivial, he asserts: "I judge the subject to be of such intrinsic importance, as well as being of contemporary concern for the churches, that it is deserving of somewhat expanded treatment." Well do we remember the insinuation of "triviality" and the supercilious disdain with which APCs treated such subjects when they were once among us. It was a device: they hoped to win their case by default. They are still at it, and Mr Murray is not for it.

It bodes ill for Mr Murray that one of the ministers opposed to his view is the Rev. John Tallach of Aberdeen. Mr Tallach's congregation contains the APC legal adviser and several others intimately involved in the inner workings of the APC. This congregation, shortly after the split, rejoiced in the fact that a new Church was born, which is unlikely to be the way Mr Murray views matters. Mr Tallach appears to have consulted his Kirk Session and he has decided to counter the point of view put forward in the *APC News Update*. Mr Murray will be pleased that Mr Tallach does not treat the matter as trivial. It seems to be so important that, in the copies of the *APC News Update* distributed in the Aberdeen Church, an insert is enclosed. While the Aberdeen Kirk Session "does not wish to increase discussion of an issue which, in their opinion, is unlikely to prove edifying to the church," Mr Tallach takes the opportunity to bring forward his view. "It seems to me," he writes, "that we cannot simply transfer what Paul says about the wearing of veils in Corinth to the wearing of hats in another culture and at another time. . . . Because I do not see that Scripture insists on women wearing hats during public worship, I feel unable before God to ask them to do it."

However, Mr Murray's stance reminds us of the late Professor John Murray's ineffectual attempt to prevent the decline from purity of worship in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America. One of the lessons from the 19th and 20th centuries is that decline in worship goes before the open manifestation of the theological decline which covertly precedes it.

Mr Murray will not be taken in by the charge of triviality, but he may be induced to silence by *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* turning the spotlight on one of their known differences of opinion. It is possible that this notice will lead to APC closing of ranks and calls to let the issue die

— the less public discussion about their changes in practice the better — under cover of the formula that “it is unlikely to prove edifying to the church.” This will work to the advantage of the liberals in their midst who will cast the more conservative members in the rôle of contentious persons. Don’t we know these tactics only too well. Indeed, we know them so well that there may be attempts to turn the fire elsewhere and identify as the trouble-maker the one who is drawing attention to their problems. To forestall the charge of contentiousness and to cool emotions, Mr Murray finishes with a sop on unity: “Meanwhile the rule is: ‘In essentials, unity; in doubtful questions, liberty; in all things, charity’.”

There are a few in the APC who were beguiled into leaving the Free Presbyterian Church and, as time is progressing, they are seeing that they have more in common with the church they left than with the new group — they find themselves in.

D.M.B.

Letter from Kenya

Dear Friends,

As you know, I left Scotland some weeks ago now, in the company of Rev D. B. MacLeod and his wife, to begin work on the Church’s mission in Kenya, and the time has now come for me to let you know a little about what has happened since I left.

We left home on Monday, August 3, and had a pleasant, but uneventful flight to Nairobi in Kenya. I am sure you can imagine the mounting excitement as we landed, and I experienced my first time on African soil.

We were surprised and delighted to be met at the airport by Mr Simeon Rianga, who is one of the evangelists employed by the church, and Jephitha Mochumbe who is our mission driver.

On our way from the airport, we lost our way, and ended up in a rather unsavoury part of the city, where we were accosted by a group of rough looking characters who did not take too kindly to our refusal to give them a lift! Thankfully, we were able to drive off without any trouble, but not before they had slammed the car door on Mochumbe, catching his leg in it, but not causing any great injury.

We drove on, and eventually arrived safely at the guesthouse. Lying in bed that night, I had to say with Nehemiah, that we had been brought to our destination “according to the good hand of my God upon me”.

The following day we spent attending to some items of business in Nairobi. It was fascinating to be in Africa at last, and I could not help

thinking of the enormity of the task facing the church in trying to bring the gospel to a small part of this vast country.

On Wednesday we set out for the area where our mission is situated. It is about 250 miles west of Nairobi, in the Kisii district, near the shores of Lake Victoria. This lake is the largest fresh water lake in the world, and is reputed to be large enough to cover the whole of Scotland!

The district is the home of the Gusii people, who are one of Kenya's many tribes. They speak their own language, although many can speak English and Swahili also. There are about three million of them, so consider what a great door has been opened up for us, among these people alone.

The main town in the district is also called Kisii, and is likely to be marked on any reasonably detailed map of the area. An hour's drive south from Kisii, along undoubtedly the worst roads I have ever seen in my life, took us to Sengera, the village where the mission's activities are centred. This is where the dispensary has been built, and where we hope to establish the administrative headquarters of our efforts in Kenya. In addition to Sengera, the church holds services in other surrounding villages called Maiga, Ogembo, Getumbe, Riamang'ato, South Mugirango and Ichube, giving us seven stations in all. The last two, which are further away, are supervised by Mr Riango, and the remaining five by Mr Mesheck Nyarang'o, the other church evangelist.

The rented mission house is in a beautiful setting, surrounded by maize fields and round, thatched African mud huts, and with tea plantations growing right up to the door. It is quite basic, with no electricity or running water, but it is amazing how easily one can do without these western 'necessities'.

The climate is quite surprising. It has not been any hotter so far than a hot summer's day in Scotland, and some nights it has been quite chilly, especially in Nairobi. In Sengera, it rained every day, usually at night, which explains the green appearance of the place.

The people are on the whole very friendly and pleasant, and the little African children spend a lot of time staring shyly at the strange white people!

On Thursday we went to look round the dispensary which has been built. It is quite impressive, and is a credit to all those who worked on it. It is in a large area of land which allows plenty room for future expansion. At the moment it is just an empty building, but once my wife arrives, we hope to be able to start clinics and a dispensary service, eventually leading up to a small hospital, God willing.

We decided we should try and visit as many of the outstations as possible while we were at Sengera, so after our visit to the dispensary, we set off for Maiga.

It is about ten miles from Sengera, and is a flourishing community with a large primary school which is under the auspices of the church. The government provides most of the teachers, but we are responsible for the religious education of the children, and there is no restriction on what is taught. There are about 375 children there at the moment, so consider what a great opening that is in itself. The school consists of several tiny classrooms, built with mud walls and thatch roofs. There are eight classes at the moment in the school, seven standards (like Scottish primary classes) and one pre-school class. There are 100 pre-school children all crammed into one classroom measuring about 20 feet by eight! Open windows provide the only light, and the children all sit on the floor since there are no desks. The people are really making the effort to improve their lot, and have made bricks and collected river sand for building permanent classrooms, but the project cannot begin because they lack finance. The major cost to them is the builder (although the local men provide the labour free of charge, they still need a builder to supervise) and the corrugated iron sheeting for the roofs. One of the present buildings has big gaps in the roof because they cannot afford three iron sheets each costing about 200 Kenya shillings (usually written 200/=). That is about £9.75 in total! A little money by our standards goes a long way out here! The headmaster called an assembly, and we had an open air service. Mr MacLeod preached standing under a tree from Numbers 32:23 "Be sure your sin will find you out", and Mesheck translated. The congregation, consisting mostly of barefooted little children all in green school uniform, sat on the grass, and most listened quite intently. What an event it would be for Kenya, and even for the whole world, if God were to work among them, and raise them up a generation to serve Him. We cannot but feel that He has a purpose in sending our church here and opening such a door, and how glorious it would be if part of that purpose was to bring many of these little ones to know Himself. With complete discretion to teach religious instruction in these schools, we really have a great opportunity to work amongst the people. There is a shortage of qualified teachers here, and we must pray that the Lord will raise up qualified and godly people to fill the gaps.

The following day we went to another station called Riamang'ato. Here there is another school, and possibly the most impressive community initiative scheme I have ever seen. The people have built their school mostly

of mud, but with the help of the Church in Scotland they have constructed two permanent classrooms. They have also built a pastor's house and a lovely bright airy three roomed clinic both of permanent brick. Now all they need is a pastor, a doctor and some nurses! The school opens from 8 am to 5 pm, two hours longer than the government requirements, in order to give the pupils extra tuition! Here, education is regarded as a privilege, and nobody seems to waste their time by being lazy. In the Standard 2 classroom there was a heap of soil in a corner on the earthen floor, with things growing in it. We were told this was a "nature corner" where the children were taught how to plant crops and could watch them grow! The classrooms were again very short of furniture, with three children having to share a desk about four feet in length. These desks cost only 150/ = (£2.25) when made locally. Mr Ndebele preached on "Suffer little children to come unto me" and again, most of the school's 120 pupils sat on the grass to listen. We were asked for help in a number of areas, including the most unusual request I have heard so far. The community leaders asked that we give them a name board for the village, so that "Riamang'ato will be known as a Free Presbyterian Mission Village"! Imagine a village in Scotland asking for that!

On Sabbath the services were held in the dispensary by Mr MacLeod. The morning service was attended by about 140 people, about half of them children, who all sat together at the front, and behaved very well. One little boy of four or five had his little sister fast asleep on his lap! We began at about 10 am with a catechism class where Mesheck examined the congregation. It seemed like a splendid idea to me, as everyone was learning together, producing a feeling of unity among the congregation. Our text in the morning was the glorious declaration of God's love in John 3: 16. Sitting amongst our African friends, so many miles from home, the worldwide application of the offer of the gospel was brought home to me in a new way.

On Monday we visited the last of our large outstations, South Mugirang'o, where they have built a little mud church, and are trying to construct classrooms. Mr MacLeod preached on Hebrews 11: 24. There were about eighty present, including many children. Some of the people were quite pathetic looking, including one poor man with only one leg, and a ragged little boy with flies in an open sore on his leg. What an opportunity we have been given to bring the word of life to these people, and to minister to their bodily needs also, in health and education, those honourable handmaids to the gospel. We met some fine folk among them, and it was heartening to think that although I had left so many dear fellow

believers behind in Scotland, yet God has his people all over the world, and they are united in one body even if they have never met in the flesh. The fellowship of the people of God transcends all barriers of race, colour, tribe, people, nation and tongue. What a glorious prospect for mankind, that our Creator, against whom we have sinned, has been pleased to choose a number that no man can number from out of every kindred, in order to bestow His salvation upon them freely. Truly we should say with the Psalmist, with all that is within us, "the whole earth let his glory fill, Amen so let it be."

One thing the people asked us to do is to teach them some new psalm tunes. We started off with Martyrdom, Evan and St Andrews, and are making slow progress, but sure.

I must finish here for just now. I hope that I will be able to write again soon to tell you of our experiences in Malawi, and how the church is faring there.

I would ask for the prayers of all the friends in all parts of the world, that our efforts would be blessed, and that the Lord would pave the way for us, as our God and guide, and that He would be pleased to send forth His Spirit to work mightily here, and in all the world. Pray also for labourers sent by Himself, for the fields are already white to harvest. Many souls in all countries are dying every day, going out in darkness into eternal night never having heard of a Saviour who came to seek and to save the lost. This should move us to do what we can for those who are yet on mercy's ground.

With best wishes to you all,

Donald MacDonald

Mission News

Having seen pictures of that part of the Kenya countryside in which we are particularly interested one marvels at the lush green foliage and the abundant crops in the fields, in contrast with the bare, sandy, burnt appearance of large parts of Malawi and Zimbabwe. The proximity of the great expanse of Lake Victoria ensures that there is no shortage of rain, and an abundance of food.

In one part of Kenya where our young men hold services the people have already built a school, a building to be used as a clinic, and a pastor's house, awaiting a pastor to occupy it, and begin missionary work among them. Such is the interest that in another district the people have donated a large tract of land where the church has set up a preaching station. A church and a school have been built.

However, one must not anticipate what Donald MacDonald and his

wife, Dr Christine will have to tell us of the prospects of missionary work. It is a remarkable fact that the way has been opened up for us, in the Lord's Providence, to develop missionary work in Kenya among a people who are most ready to welcome the missionary. The great need is for the blessing and guidance of the Most High, and for young men eager and willing to participate in so great a work.

At Mbuma the skill and strength of David Ndlovu and his men have been tested to the utmost in two different operations. The first was the necessity for a new generator in the hospital. The generator was secured, but the agents in Bulawayo assured David that a hoist was absolutely necessary to remove the generator, which weighed around five tons, from the lorry. There was no hoist available, but with ingenuity and the greatest possible physical effort the generator was transferred to the engine room.

Three weeks later, a huge water tank was transported from Bulawayo to Mbuma, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. The same problem presented itself. After many hazards and difficulties, and wires snapping, and other small catastrophies, the tank was put in place without mishap, and to the great relief of the workmen and the entire staff. We owe a great deal to David and his men and to a kind Providence that no one was injured.

There has been an outbreak of measles in the hospital, the first for some time as immunisation has been effective until now.

In cuttings from the "Bulawayo Chronicle" sent in a letter by Miss Katie Macaulay it is recorded that five million people have registered as requiring food, almost half the population of the country. Eight hundred thousand children under the age of five require supplementary feeding.

The water situation in Bulawayo is still serious. The government has not been able to grant foreign currency to purchase the pipes and equipment necessary to bring the water from the Nyamandhlovu aquifer.

There will be sympathy throughout the church for the Rev and Mrs Ndebele and family over the death of their daughter, Zodwa, who was ill for a considerable time. Mr Ndebele went to Kenya to meet the Rev D. B. MacLeod despite his keen anxiety over his daughter. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted."

J.N.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Northern: At Dingwall on 10th November at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 17th November at 6 p.m.

Western: At Laide on 8th December at 6 p.m.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Rod Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:—

Foreign Mission Fund: Larne plate £15; Larne plate £100, both per J.A.F., both for Binga; Neth. Reformed Cong., Ontario \$50 for Mbuma; Anon., Canada \$100; Anon., Applecross £80, both for African Famine Relief; Malawi Famine Relief per Dr C. MacDonald £1500.
Eastern Europe Fund: Mrs C. MacPh. £50; Anon., Tolsta £10; Larne Plate £15; Larne Plate £10; Larne Plate £10, all per J.A.F.

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

Breasclete: Friend of the Cause N.T. £20; Mrs S. £40, both for Comm. Exps.; Mrs S. £40; Anon., £30, both for collections; Anon., £40 for Sust. Fd.

Dumbarton: Dingwall Friend £50 for For. Miss.; Miss Mcl. £20; Anon., £10 (in plate); Anon., £20; Anon., £20; Anon., £20, Mrs McC. £5, all for Congr. Fds.

Gairloch: Portree Friend £50 for Congr. Purposes; Skye Friend £10 for For. Miss.; Skye Friend £30 for Congr. Fds; Stornoway Friend £10, all per Rev. A. MacDonald.

Laide: A Friend, Edinburgh £30; Lewis Friends £100; A Friend, Glasgow £10; Edinburgh Friend £20; Lairg Postmark £50; The Harmony Trust £150; From a Friend £50; Anon., Shieldaig Congr. £20; Friend, Edinburgh £30; D.M.C.M., Glasgow £300; J.H.C. £150; Tabor £100; Anon., South Harris £50; Stornoway Postmark C.H. MacD. £20; T. & E.N. £30; Isle View Nursing Home £5.35; Bank Draft (where needed in middle Eastern Europe) Inverness Postmark £400; Friend, Inverness £1; Friend, Broadford £100; Friend N. Tolsta £50; Inverness Postmark £30; Friend, Lochcarron (to spread the word of the Lord) £100; A.G. Glasgow £20; Isa. 41: 10 £30; M.M., Ness £50; Friend, Inverness (for purchase of Bibles or any Christian literature) £90; M.M., Tolsta £10; Friend, Stornoway £5; M.M., Applecross £20; Friend, Kenmore £10; Friend, Aberdeen (visit to Eastern Europe) £50; F.M., Inverness £20; Friend, Ullapool £100; M.C.C. £25; M.R., Inverness £50; Friend, Aultbea £30, all per Rev D. A. Ross; In Coll. Plate £20; In Coll. Plate (for Romania) £10; R.M., Aultbea £16; A.M. £5; Mrs MacL., Aultbea £30; A.M. £10, last four per C.R., all above donations for Eastern Europe Mission Fund; Friend, Aultbea £30 for Italian Mission per Rev. D.A.R.; In Coll. Plate for Sust. Fund £5 and £6.50; Aultbea Friend for Ch. Fds £20 per Rev D.A.R.; In Coll. Plate £6.50 for Jewish and For. Mission Fd; Friend, Ullapool £5 for tapes; Envelope in plate £10 for Laide Tapes; Jan D., Holland £70 for Free Distribution at Laide; Friend, Barnoldswick £10 for Tape Fd.; Miss W.O.B. £5 for Tape Fund; Friend, Stornoway £15 where most needed (envelope in plate) to Sust. Fd.; Friend, Holland £10 for Tape Fd.; Friend, Skye £20 for Comm. Exps.; Anon., Stornoway £10 for Church Door Coll. per C.R.; Friend, Aultbea £20 for Church Fds; Friend, Tolsta £10, where most needed, to Church Door Coll.; last two per Rev. D.A.R.

North Harris: Anon., £5 for Loop System Repairs and £5 for Bus. Fund; Friend, Leachlee £40; Anon., £10; M.M., Tarbert £10, last three by envelope in plate; S.M.L. & M.M. £20; Anon., £10; Friend, Grosebay £10, last three per Rev J. McL., last six for Comm. Exps.; M.M., Tarbert £5; M.M., Cluer £10; M.A., Tarbert £5, last two by envelope in plate, last three for Bus. Fd.; Friend, Stockinish £5 for Door Coll.; Friend, Stockinish £10 for Congr. Fd., both per Rev. J. McL.; M.A., Tarbert £5 where most needed; Anon., £10 for upkeep of Loop System (envelope in plate).

Portree: Anon., £12 (envelope in plate); C.M. £20 per N.B.; Friend £50 per S.Y.M., all for Centenary Fund; Friend £50, where most needed per S.Y.M.; Friend £10 where most needed per F.M.; Anon., £6; Anon., £20, both for Bus. Fd., both by envelope in plate; Friend, £10 per S.Y.M.; Anon., £10 (envelope in plate); Anon., £8; Anon., £10.50, all for Door Coll., last three by envelope in plate; Friend £10 for Sust. Fd. per S.Y.M.; Tolsta Friend £10 for Congr. Purposes per F.M.

Staffin: Anon., £10 for Sust. Fd and £5 for Minister's Car.

Stornoway: Miss K. A. Macleod, The Cottage, Callanish £30 for Sust. Fd.; M.J. £50 for petrol; Anon., £20 for Comm. Exps., all per Rev. J. MacLeod; Anon., £10 for Comm. Exps per Church Plate.