Good News

Have YOU found the Saviour?

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

CONTENTS

Page

Good News 3

Testimony - R. Bartle 5

Climate Change 7

Truth about Evolution 8

Testimony - J. Butcher 10

Sohana's Story 11

Don't try by Guess-work 12

How to STOP going to Church 14

Testimony - S. Mackay 16

The Beautiful Gift 17

The Six Dials 18

RC Nun's Conversion 19

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Good News!

Why call our magazine 'Good News'? Simply because we have good news for you. Yes, whoever you are, we have great news to tell you. In fact we have the very best news you could possibly hear. You are cynical. You say, 'What has the church to tell me? If you were to say I had won the lottery, that would be good news; or that I was to get a dream job; or that I was to get a luxury holiday; or that I was to marry a handsome man or a beautiful woman; or that my football team was to win the UEFA Champions League, that would be good news'.

Drink of Water

Imagine yourself lost in a desert. All you can see around you is sand dunes. The sun is beating down and the heat is intense. You have been walking for hours and are exhausted. Your mouth is parched. You are dying for a drink. Surely in that situation there could be no better news than to have someone appear and give you a glass of water? Any other day a glass of water would mean little to you but when you are parched it would be a great delight, indeed vital to your survival.

Great Feast

Think of yourself having just had a big meal. Someone comes round and invites you to another. You are not interested because you are full. Think if you were suffering with a fever and nausea. Someone takes you out to an expensive restaurant but the very sight and smell of food makes you gag and is intensely unpleasant. However imagine yourself having forgotten to take a packed lunch and you spend all day climbing in the mountains. By night you are ravenous. The smell of cooking food and the sight of even a bowl of soup or a plate of mince and potatoes is good news.

Money

If you are working, making good money and managing your finances well an extra £10 here or there would make little difference to you. But what if you were unemployed, had been sectioned by the Social Security

so that you were getting nothing, had borrowed from friends and spent it all, had no money for food and were destitute? Would it not be good news if someone came along with a tenner and gave it to you?

A Visit

Sometimes life can be too busy and you have no peace. You are living in a house with friends or family but it's so noisy. You have a room-mate who is always talking. You long for peace and quiet. But change the picture and imagine you are living in a flat on your own. You can't get out because you are sick or old. You are lonely and scarcely see anyone from one week to the next. Would you not welcome a visit? Would it not be good news to find out that someone was coming round just to chat?

A Rescue

Some years ago I was out walking in the countryside and fell and broke my leg. There was no mobile phone signal in that area but thankfully there was someone with me. Think what it would be like if you were out alone. You couldn't walk and there was no one around. Night was falling. You wonder what is going to happen? Will you be there all night? You are cold and desperate. Then a collie dog comes bounding up followed by his master. What good news that would be!

Cancer

Imagine you have gone to your doctor feeling an odd pain. He has taken X-rays, performed certain blood-tests and now tells you in a quiet and serious voice that you are suffering from a terminal cancer. You are deeply shocked as he tells you that you have just weeks to live. You go home and share the news with your family. But then the phone rings. It is a consultant contacting you to say that he had just discovered a wonder-drug that could cure you. Would that not be good news?

Too Late

Thankfully you felt that pain and went to see the doctor. The consultant tells you that there are others suffering from the same condition and they don't know it. They are walking around feeling quite healthy and with no sense of illness. The cancer is working away secretly inside them until it is too late and cannot be treated. They are in need but do not realise it. They hear on the News about the wonder-drug and they are thankful for those whom it helps but do not realise that they need it themselves.

Great Need

Most people don't realise it but we are actually all needing help. There is a terminal cancer at work in every one of us. It is spreading through us and destroying our vital organs. Soon we are going to die. You feel fine but there is a problem. Sometimes you feel strange aches and pains. There is a longing for something, an emptiness, a guiltiness and a fear. At times you feel like going to the 'doctor' but you put it off and never seem to get round to it. Maybe there is a terrible disaster, a sudden death, a loved one passes away and it makes you think deeply, but then the serious thoughts wear off. The longer we live the more the cancer of sin pervades our bodies and souls.

Sadly it doesn't just lead to natural death, it causes misery after death too. There is life after death. Our loved ones who have died have not ceased to exist. If we die suffering from this disease it will continue with us forever. It will be like a worm gnawing away inside us and a raging fire burning us. The Lord Jesus Christ warned us of that state, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (Mark 9:48).

Good News

When you know that you are sick it is good news to discover that there is a cure. This magazine is all about the cure. Of course if you don't realise that you are spiritually sick then this magazine will not be good news to you. You might feel thankful that it helps others but you yourself don't think there is anything wrong. Sadly if that is the case we cannot help you. Our *Good News* magazine will be as useless as the miracle cancer cure for the one who has cancer but doesn't realise it.

The Cure

Yes there is a cure. Jesus is the great Physician. He can heal. In a sense He is also the medicine. The Bible says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31). He came into this world to save those who suffer from the cancer of sin. The religious leaders of His day were mostly hypocrites (just as they often are today). They were surprised that Jesus would eat and drink and associate with sinners. But our Saviour responded, 'They that are whole (healthy) need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Luke 5:31-32). It is a first step to realise you are sick and needy. The Son of God came from heaven into this world to find a cure for His people. He died on the cross that we might have eternal life. Trust in Him and He will heal you.

When you know that you are sick it is good news to discover that there is a cure. This magazine is all about the cure.

A 'Christian' Becomes a Christian

Roy Bartle

I am Roy Bartle: a final year Masters' student of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Aberdeen, and constituency MSYP (Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament) for the Western Isles. Yet who I really am is defined by my union with Christ. I am a Christian: 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' (Gal.6:14).

At home, my mother read to me from the Bible, taught me to pray and to count on Christ as a present help in time of need (Psalm 46:1). There was not a time in my experience where I consciously disbelieved in the existence of God, or of Jesus Christ. Yet Christianity was, for me, a badge; just as a person interested in conservation might be 'an environmentalist' or a person who shunned meat 'a vegetarian', I was interested in doing right and so was a 'Christian'.

In Maths, at secondary school, I was seated next to Alasdair, a Christian with whom I would dispute. He would tell me that God created the world in six days (Genesis 1), and I would scoff at him. Thinking myself also a Christian, I assumed a position of intellectual indignation, seeing no contradiction between evolution and the existence of God. 'Yes', I would say, 'the Bible says that the world was created in six days but surely it is acceptable to consider this as six time periods?' I would teach him Maths, and he would bring Scripture truths to my blinded soul. I left school in 2008 to study Geography and Modern History at St Andrews University. After only a few days there, I concluded that I would not obtain a suitable career by studying humanities and returned to Lewis to commence a course in engineering. Hindsight, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, has since enabled me to view this action of providence as the Lord returning me to a place where the gospel is still widely preached and believed.

Over the next year, Alasdair would continue to tell me of what the Bible had to say about God, about the world, and about me and my life. I continued to argue with him and he continued to ask me to hear the Bible preached in public worship. Eventually, I accepted the invitation. The impression made by the worship was that it was regulated by Scripture. I knew from the irregular Bible reading of my childhood that, although unpopular with society at large, there were certain outward practices (like abortion and homosexuality) that the Bible condemns as sins. This congregation believed what I understood to be the Biblical teaching on these issues, and this persuaded me to return. Irregularly at first, I would attend on an evening; each time listening to God's Word preached and each time impressed that, whatever statements were made in the preaching, they were reinforced by Scripture. I heard theological terms and concepts such as 'election', 'justification', 'sanctification', the necessity of being 'born again' (I thought that it was only 'happy-clappies' who wanted to be 'born-again'!), and how salvation was a sovereign gift from God and beyond the ability of any man to attain for himself. I bought a Bible, read of how the Christian Sabbath (Sunday) was to be kept, and concluded that it would be wrong of me to

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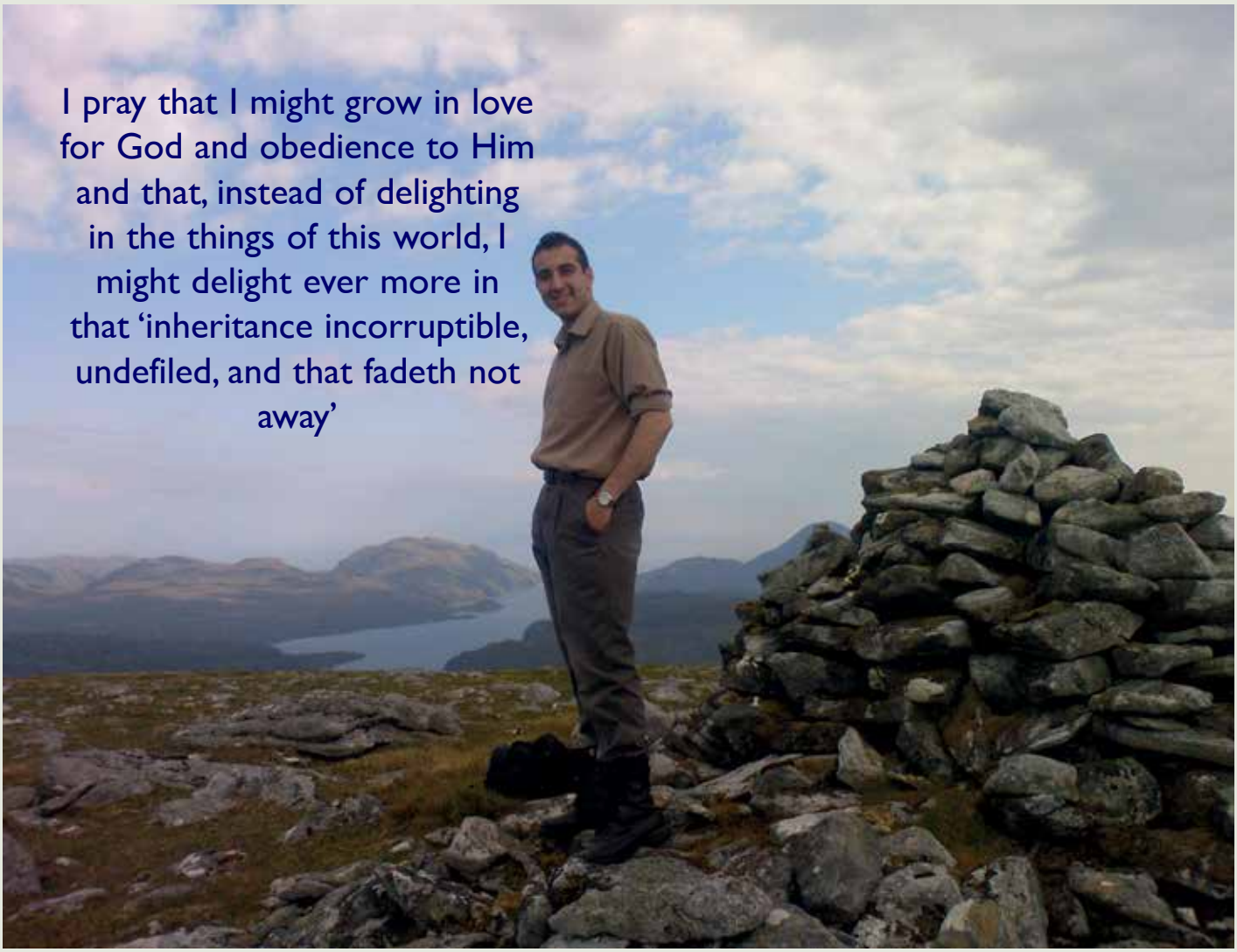
drive past the congregation nearest my home in Point every Sabbath to attend that of my friend in Stornoway. Over the next six months, I was shown my status as a sinner (Romans 3:23) under the penalty of death (Romans 6:23) and in danger of everlasting separation from God (Revelation 20:10), that Christ is the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12) and therefore I needed Christ. I required His atonement on the cross to pay the penalty for sin, His shed blood to cleanse me and so enable the Holy Spirit to dwell within me, and His obedience unto death imputed to me so that I might be righteous in the sight of the Father.

The Word applied by the Spirit showed me that, knowing these things, believing, trusting and submitting to Christ as Lord and Master, it is my duty to profess this publicly. Accordingly I submitted myself to the Kirk Session. Two questions asked of me at that time continue to be an especial encouragement to me: (1) 'Do you love the Lord above all else?' asked an elder. Yes, I do; albeit not perfectly, and this saddens me, 'O wretched man that I am!' (Romans 7:24). But, when pressed, I cannot but love the Lord above all things, for who He is and all He has done for me (Psalm 103:1-2). (2) 'Where are you looking for assurance?' asked the minister. I said, 'at myself, and I see much that still offends God'. 'Ah, assurance doesn't come by looking only at yourself, but by looking at Christ as He is revealed in His Word', he replied.

In Proverbs 3:5-6, we find encouragement: 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths'. John writes, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments' (1John 5:1-2), and this also helps, 'looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith' (Hebrews 12:2).

As for me, I pray and hope to graduate this summer and find employment, and the Lord truly provides for every need. But, much more, I pray that I might grow in love for God and obedience to Him and that, instead of delighting in the things of this world, I might delight ever more in that 'inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away' (1Peter 1:4) reserved in heaven for the Christian. What wonderful joy will be found in dwelling, free from sin, in the presence of God evermore!



Climate Change

What of It?

Rev John Keddie

I was sort of shocked recently to see a headline in my daily newspaper which read: 'God may be our answer to climate change'. The statement was made by the President of a very eminent Association of scientists. 'A supernatural punisher may be part of the solution'. Well, well!

People don't think much about God these days. Do you? Why should you? That's a big question. Obviously I think you should. Why? Well, for one thing because God, as revealed in the Bible and through Jesus Christ, gives meaning to our lives. It is the conviction of Christians that the Bible gives a right view of human life and death. God is creator, but sin has come into the world so that all the actions and philosophies of men are tainted by sin. The simplest definition I know of sin is this: 'Sin is any want [lack] of conformity unto, or transgression [breaking] of the law of God'. The law or word of God is found in the Bible.

Is sin serious?

Is sin serious? Well, yes. It means we are not right with God and need to get right with God. How does the Bible say that we can get right with God? By confessing sin and believing in Jesus who died on a cross to pay for the sins of those who believe. And what if we don't bother with this? Obviously we must face the consequences. As the Bible tells us: 'We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ', to give an account to God hereafter. People may choose to ignore this or think it unlikely or whatever. But I think it was a famous writer, G K Chesterton, who said something like: 'If there is nothing to it, you have lost nothing. If, however, it turns out to be true – and you cannot prove that it cannot be true – then you are in big trouble!' Because in Bible terms there is eternity to face – there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. Without a living faith in Jesus as Saviour and sin-bearer here and now, this side of the grave, there can only be 'a fearful expectation of judgment'.

This may not be an attractive proposition, but the point of Christian Biblical faith is not whether it is attractive or not, but whether it is true. We commend the Bible to you as true, and as important to consider and read and ponder over. Though it may be against the trend, I would encourage you not to turn your back on God or Christ or the church. Of course Bible-believers will be careful for the creation in which they live. According to the Bible we are stewards of this creation. But, if we're not answerable to a Creator, why should we bother? Of course the Bible does speak of the end of the world.

The End of the World

Listen to these words: 'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Peter 3:10-13). That seems a good reason to believe in God and trust in Christ whilst you have opportunity.

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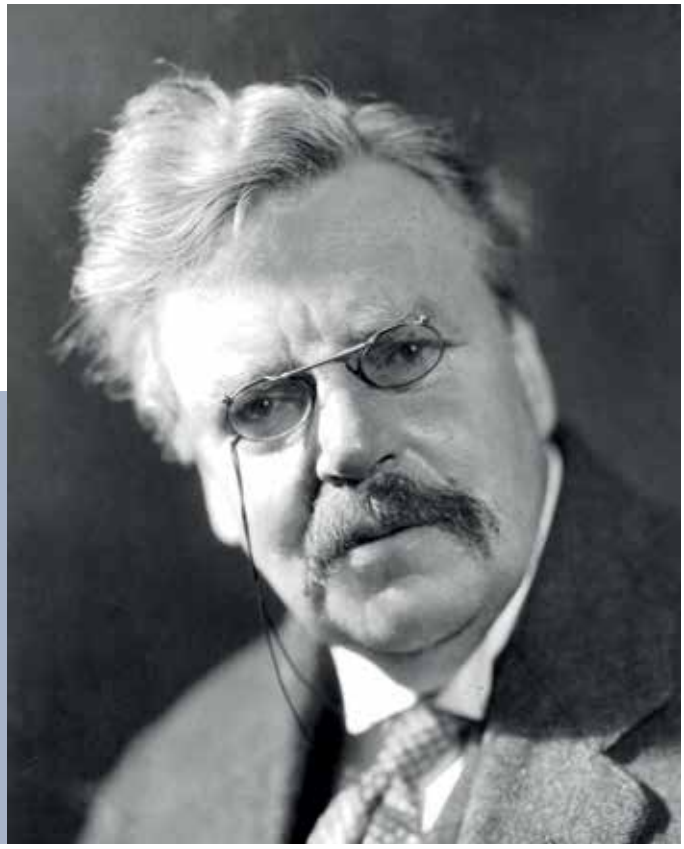


A World-Famous Scientist Tells The TRUTH about Evolution

From time to time we hear that no credible scientist doubts evolution. It is supposed to be a fact and as obvious as that the earth rotates around the sun. Actually there are many scientists who doubt evolution. Indeed evolution is a huge deception and will in due course be demonstrated to be such.

Professor James M Tour is one of the ten most-cited chemists in the world. He is famous for his work on nanocars, nanoelectronics, graphene nanostructures, and green carbon research for enhanced oil recovery. He is currently a Professor of Chemistry, Professor of Computer Science, and Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Rice University, USA. He has authored or co-authored 489 scientific publications and his name is on 36 patents. Professor Tour, along with over 700 other scientists, took the courageous step back in 2001 of signing the Discovery Institute's 'A Scientific Dissent from Darwinism' which states: 'We are sceptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged'.

On Professor Tour's Website, there's a very revealing article on evolution and creation, in which Tour bluntly states that he does not understand how evolution could have happened, from a chemical standpoint:

'Although most scientists leave few stones unturned in their quest to discern mechanisms before wholeheartedly accepting them, when it comes to the often gross extrapolations between observations and conclusions on macroevolution, scientists, it seems to me, permit unhealthy leeway. When hearing such extrapolations in the academy, when will we cry out, "The emperor has no clothes!"? … I simply do not understand, chemically, how macroevolution could have happened. Hence, am I not free to join the ranks of the sceptical and to sign such a statement without reprisals from those that disagree with me? … Does anyone understand the chemical details behind macroevolution? If so, I would like to sit with that person and be taught, so I invite them to meet

with me'.

In a more recent talk, entitled, 'Nanotech and Jesus Christ', given on 1 November 2012 at Georgia Tech, Professor Tour went further, and declared that no scientist that he has spoken to understands evolution – and that includes Nobel Prize winners! Here's what he said when a student in the audience asked him about evolution:

'I will tell you as a scientist and a synthetic chemist: if anybody should be able to understand evolution, it is me, because I make molecules for a living, and I don't just buy a kit, and mix this and this and get that. I mean, ab initio (from the beginning), I make molecules. I understand how hard it is to make molecules. I understand that if I take Nature's tool kit, it could be much easier, because all the tools are already there, and I just mix it in the proportions, and I do it under these conditions, but ab initio is very, very hard.

'I don't understand evolution, and I will confess that to you. Is that OK, for me to say, "I don't understand this"? Is that all right? I know that there's a lot of people out there that don't understand anything about organic synthesis, but they understand evolution. I understand a lot about making molecules; I don't understand evolution. And you would just say that, wow, I must be really unusual.

'Let me tell you what goes on in the back rooms of science – with National Academy members, with Nobel Prize winners. I have sat with them, and when I get them alone, not in public – because it's a scary thing, if you say what I just said – I say, "Do you understand all of this, where all of this came from, and how this happens?" Every time that I have sat with people who are synthetic chemists, who understand this, they go "Nope". These people are just so far off, on how to believe this stuff came together. I've sat with National Academy members, with Nobel Prize winners. Sometimes I will say, "Do you understand this?" And if they're afraid to say "Yes", they say nothing. They just stare at me, because they can't sincerely do it.

'I was once brought in by the Dean of the Department, many years ago, and he was a chemist. He was kind of concerned about some things. I said, "Let me ask you something. You're a chemist. Do you understand this? How do you get DNA without a cell membrane? And how do you get a cell membrane without a DNA? And how does all this come together from this piece of jelly?" We have no idea, we have no idea. I said, "Isn't it interesting that you, the Dean of science, and I, the chemistry professor, can talk about this quietly in your office, but we can't go out there and talk about this?"

'If you understand evolution, I am fine with that. I'm not going to try to change you – not at all. In fact, I wish I had the understanding that you have. But about seven or eight years ago I posted on my Website that I don't understand. I said, "I will buy lunch for anyone that will sit with me and explain to me evolution, and I won't argue with you until I don't understand something – I will ask you to clarify. But you can't wave by and say, "This enzyme does that". You've got to get down in the details of where molecules are built, for me. Nobody has come forward.

'The Atheist Society contacted me. They said that they will buy the lunch, and they challenged the Atheist Society, "Go down to Houston and have lunch with this guy, and talk to him". Nobody has come! Now remember, because I'm just going to ask, when I stop understanding what you're talking about, I will ask. So I sincerely want to know. I would like to believe it. But I just can't.

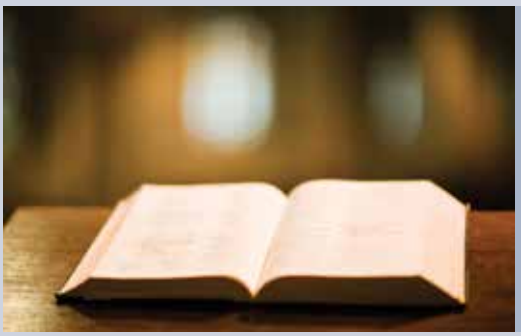
'Now, I understand microevolution, I really do. We do this all the time in the lab. I understand this. But when you have speciation changes, when you have organs changing, when you have to have concerted lines of evolution, all happening in the same place and time – not just one line – concerted lines, all at the same place, all in the same environment … this is very hard to fathom.

'I was in Israel not too long ago, talking with a bio-engineer, and [he was] describing to me the ear, and he was studying the different changes in the modulus of the ear, and I said, "How does this come about?" And he says, "Oh, Jim, you know, we all believe in evolution, but we have no idea how it happened". Now there's a good Jewish professor for you. I mean, that's what it is. So that's where I am. Have I answered the question?'

Professor Tour's online talk is absolutely fascinating as well as being deeply moving on a personal level. One interesting little gem of information is that it was Professor Tour who was largely instrumental in getting Nobel Laureate Richard Smalley, winner of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, to reject Darwinian evolution and accept creationism, shortly before he died in 2005. It was Tour who persuaded Smalley to delve into the question of origins. After reading the books Origins of Life and Who Was Adam? written by Dr Hugh Ross (an astrophysicist) and Dr Fazale Rana (a biochemist), Dr Smalley explained his change of heart as follows:

'Evolution has just been dealt its death blow. After reading Origins of Life, with my background in chemistry and physics, it is clear evolution could not have occurred. The new book, Who Was Adam?, is the silver bullet that puts the evolutionary model to death'. Strong words indeed, for a Nobel scientist.

Now that Professor Tour has informed the world that even Nobel Prize-winning scientists privately admit that they don't understand evolution, a layperson is surely entitled to ask: 'Well, if even they don't understand it, then why should we believe it? How can we possibly be obliged to believe in a theory which nobody understands?'



Searching and Finding

Justin Butcher

First I want to thank the Lord for being gracious to me a sinner. I come from an unchurched, yet relatively happy family. I was brought up in Glasgow. As a child I was always asking the 1001 questions which my parents couldn't answer concerning the things of life and beyond. I was brought up to believe in God but not in a religious way though I was baptized in the Church of Scotland.

Illness & Drugs

I was a happy, ordinary child who had lots of friends. I played football in youth teams, winning and losing medals and trophies. This was something of which I was very proud. But then my health began to give me serious trouble. I developed bronchial asthma at the age of fifteen. I started to think about the things of God and how imperfect I was. The asthma led to hospital admissions.

I eventually drifted into the wrong crowd and began attending pubs and nightclubs. From the age of sixteen I began experimenting with every type of recreational drug for an answer and an escape. This continued on and off for the next fourteen years. Eventually, as time went on, I realised that this was no answer and no fun. I was in a very dark place spiritually, mentally and physically. I wanted out as there was just too much introspection.

False Religion

For a period of years I studied and practised some of the world's religions: Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Lao Tzu, Tai Chi, Hinduism Bhagavad-Gita, Jeet Kune Do, astrology, psychology and various philosophies.

I met a Hindu man and got speaking to him about the things of life, science and God. He seemed such a happy character and I agreed to go to a meeting. During a period of two or three years I built up my meditation to one hour a day. I met many different people, including three young Christians who agreed to come to a meeting on their terms. In the Hindu tradition they sit on the floor when talking about the things of God but these young Christians did not, and spoke quietly about their faith. At the time I didn't really understand what they said, but I was attracted by their presence.

Eventually I lost interest in the Hindu meditation, only to come back to it two years later with the intention to devote my life to it. This time though it was more than meditating that I witnessed – I observed the group worshipping an image of their god. This put me off and deep down my conscience knew it to be wrong. 'The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them' (Psalm 135:15-18). Knowing this led me to have a conversation about the mechanics of the mind and the purifying of the heart. The Hindu view was that once the heart has been purified by meditating we can see God and feel peace, I began to question: Why does God not come down like one of us? I felt myself going down into the depths of darkness the more I was meditating.

Turning Point

In God's providence, I got speaking to a Hindu lady at the meeting who had a daughter that became a Christian. This sent alarm bells ringing - that I too should be in a church. During this time I was watching Christian channels on satellite television where I heard them preaching that Jesus was God. 'God was manifest in the flesh' (1Timothy 3:16). That was it! I was in the presence of the truth. I asked the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive me of my sins. 'Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear' (Isaiah 59:1).

I drove to Edinburgh to meet the aforementioned lady's daughter for advice. She advised that I go to different churches and follow my heart as to the one best for me. I followed her advice for a time, but to no avail. I was at my wits' end. I realised I needed a real born-again Christian minister. 'Ye must be born again' (John 3:7). I just simply prayed to meet a born-again Christian minister and God answered immediately.

It happened that on a Saturday afternoon I had a church in mind to attend on the south side of Glasgow. As I drove past Crow Road I about turned and headed to a Church of Scotland at the top of the street. Just as I looked to my left, I saw a minister at the bottom of Crow Road helping some of the congregation onto a bus outside the church. I stopped and he introduced himself, and I asked him if he were a born-again Christian. I think

he was a little taken aback. He went into the church (Partick Free Church (Continuing)) and obtained for me a Bible. He folded over a page to mark the words: 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). I began to attend the church.

Found

I believed I found God. It was at that point, as I looked back, that I could see that God was for some time moving in my life. I had two cousins who had been Christians for decades but I was only sub-consciously aware of their position. Deep down I knew the true God was the God of the Bible. I just could not pray and believe – I didn't know how. I would watch the 'Songs of Praise' programme, but it didn't speak to me. It didn't seem a serious religion. I had to identify with it for it to be real. The young Christians witnessing in the Hindu meeting at a crucial moment was another sign post - a witness to Christ. Thankfully the day came when I knew that I personally was born again and that Christ was my Saviour.

'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10).

Sohana's Story

I was born in Bolton, England in 1970 and moved to Glasgow in 1990. As I was growing up I knew 'Jesus the baby'; however, my Dad passed away when I was seven and therefore we were brought up in the Muslim faith. My mother is Indian. Sadly Jesus was forgotten and so was religion by the time I was in my teens. There are so many religions, which one was I to follow? Who was speaking the truth? There are so many questions, so I didn't bother and went my own way.

At the age of twenty I ran away from home in Bolton and came to Glasgow, and, looking back, I can see now that the Lord brought me out of that situation. He helps us even when we don't know it and are not aware of Him. I got married in 1995. I was living in sin before then. I loved being in the world, going to pubs, clubs and parties. Yes, life was good!

But then in December 2000, after a visit to the opticians, I was diagnosed with a benign tumour behind my eye. It was 30mm in diameter. The doctor said it had been growing since birth and had to be removed but promised he would do all he could to save the vision in the eye. Although I had rejected the Lord, I prayed for the first time. It's so true when things go wrong that's when we ask Him for help. I wasn't attending church at the time and had no-one except my husband and his family to support me.

I underwent major surgery in February 2001 at the Southern General Hospital. They fractured my skull to remove the tumour but cut the optic nerve which resulted in the loss of vision in my left eye. Again I see now that the Lord was continuing to speak to me but I continued with life, partying hard, but there was a sense of something not being right.

I became increasingly close to my husband's Aunty Betty, but she passed away in 2007 and is with the Lord. She always spoke about church and God and salvation but my heart was hardened. Sadly, the first time I went into a church was to attend her funeral. Shortly after that I got divorced and started questioning why God takes good people away.

Then in August 2007 a Christian friend suggested that

I would maybe like to attend her church, Riverside Evangelical Church, in Kirkintilloch where I live. That was the first time I picked up the Bible, and also was introduced to my dear friend Cathie. She brought me to various Bible studies. There was so much to take on board and understand. Finally in April 2009, I was enabled to give my life over to Jesus and was baptised in October 2009 and with the help and nurturing from Cathie, my faith in the Lord was strengthened. I was now adopted into the family of Christ.

I went on a mission trip to Italy in 2010 and this brought me even closer to Jesus. Life is good in the Lord. Being a Christian is not easy; the devil is always ready to attack. In May 2011 Cathie moved away up to the Island of Lewis but we continued to stay in touch: letters, phoning and texting. She's never far away and neither is the Lord. The tumour grew back by February 2012 which resulted in another major operation. I thought I could leave it as it was doing no harm, but it was spreading over to my good eye and I was warned that it could lead to total blindness. So I prayed, my church family prayed, and even though Cathie was far away, she has been and still is a real encouragement, showing me nothing but warmth and kindness and her love not only for me but for our Saviour.

For a whole year I wore dark glasses and it seemed my life was in darkness and that I was on my own, though I know that is not so. Although I had support from the church, depression was creeping in and I still do struggle. However if I didn't have the Lord in my life, guiding and strengthening me, I could not imagine where I'd be today. I really believe that the Lord uses people like Cathie for spiritual feeding as even my church life was beginning to waver. If mothers were flowers, I would definitely pick her. When on a visit down to Glasgow, Cathie asked if I would like to accompany her to Knightswood Free Church (Continuing). I enjoyed it and continued to attend when meetings didn't clash with those in my own church. I really feel we need spiritual feeding during the week, not just on Sundays. I love talking and hearing about the Lord and there's so much more I want to learn. Mr and Mrs Macleod have been very warm and welcoming.

I'm back at work now but in 2013 I underwent more surgery after which I developed a nasty infection in the bad eye. I was admitted back into hospital in January 2014. I'm healing well in the Lord's hands and feel His presence daily in my private devotions. He never leaves us but is always there upholding us. God is so amazing and it's good to be on a high every day praising and worshipping our Saviour.

He has blessed me so wonderfully with the vision in my good eye and the tumour is now away. I'm still undergoing treatment and need your prayers, dear reader, for healing. My general health is good and this hasn't stopped me from driving. The doctor says my long distance vision is better than someone with two eyes, all thanks to the Lord. We forget that He has already gone through suffering and trials for us. He carries our sicknesses and infirmities. He is wonderfully sympathetic. How amazing is God's love in giving His Son to be my Saviour! It is my sin that nailed Jesus to that cross and kept Him there. He died for me but He is now risen again. He is a living and mighty Saviour. Ask Him to come into your life.

Thanks for your time in reading this, and I would like to leave you with this verse where Paul speaks of the hope he has in Christ, 'because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us' (Romans 5:5).

Don't Attempt To Get To Heaven By Guess-Work!

Rev Maurice Roberts

When people dream up some way of investing their money they normally take care to see their facts are right. Admittedly they cannot be absolutely certain they will get a good return on their money. But at least they have the good sense not to go purely by guess-work. The sad fact is however that lots of people in our modern society are content to pin their hopes of heaven on what is nothing more than pure guess-work.

Allow us a moment to put the case to you that hoping for heaven by guesswork is a perilous business. All sorts of things in people's minds give them the idea that it is safe enough to hope for heaven without any certain foundation.

God is love

One idea is that if God is love all people will surely get to heaven. Now this is a half-truth. It is true that God is love but not true that therefore all who die will get to heaven. The Bible makes it clear in scores of places that no one will get to heaven if they are not spiritually qualified. To be spiritually qualified means that we must repent and believe in Jesus Christ as our own personal Saviour if we are to have a sure hope of heaven.

Good deeds outweigh bad deeds

Another guess about getting to heaven which people have is that we shall be fit enough for heaven provided our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds in the end. But this is nowhere to be found in the Bible. The fact is that none are fit for heaven if they have any unforgiven sin to answer for when they come to die. And the obvious truth is that we have all sinned and all need God's forgiveness. Let me put a few urgent problems to you. God is absolutely holy and hates all sin. If a person dies with any unforgiven sin to answer for they will by no means enter heaven when they die. So the most urgent problem we all have is to make sure we are forgiven all our sins in this life. Do you know how to get forgiveness for your own sins?

No Sins

Of course this problem leads to another. Lots of people just try to make out that they have no sins to answer for. But that is rather foolish because our very consciences tell us all that we have all sinned. And this is exactly what the Bible tells us. All of us are sinners and need God's forgiveness.

One easy trick which appeals to some people to get round this problem is to say that they do not believe the Bible to be important in this whole discussion. But this is just to put your head into a hole in the ground and to pretend there is no problem. The Bible is the revelation of God to mankind. It is given to us all to teach us the way to get God's forgiveness and so to get to heaven at last. It is a sure and certain way not to get to heaven if people deny what God Himself tells us. God calls the Bible His divine revelation.

Heaven and Hell

Let me offer you a serious argument if you have any genuine wish to get to heaven at last. It is absolutely clear from God's revelation in the Bible that there is both a heaven and a hell. Check this out for yourself. Read any one of the four Gospels of the New Testament or any other part of the Bible and you will quickly see that God has made a heaven at last for those who have their sins forgiven; and that He has made a hell at last for those who have not got His forgiveness in this life.

What you find is that God tells us we are all sinners and are all unworthy of heaven but that through faith in His Son Jesus Christ we can have God's gracious pardon and His promise of heaven at last.

The Bible makes it very clear that there is no end to heaven for those who are counted worthy to get there. And there is no end to the sufferings of hell for those who die with unforgiven sin in their lives. Surely this is such a serious set of facts that we dare not drift along in life without any sure and certain basis for our hope of heaven in the end?

But sadly many people are content to hope for the best even though their basis of hope is nothing but thin air. This must surely be a species of madness when the consequences of being wrong are so momentous. Not to get to heaven after death is to go into outer darkness and to be in torments eternally. Check out these statements for yourself from the Bible but you will find this is exactly what God tells us in His Book.

Sins will be blotted out

Let us turn to the happy side of what God tells us. He says that all our sins will be blotted out and eternally forgiven on the condition that we repent and believe in His Son. The Son of God is Jesus Christ who lived two thousand years ago. His mission for mankind was to die for us on the Cross and to rise again. He died so as to pay the price for our salvation. He suffered on the Cross so that He might pay to God the debt which we owe to Him for our sinfulness. This was an act of wonderful love on the part of God and of His dear Son Jesus Christ.

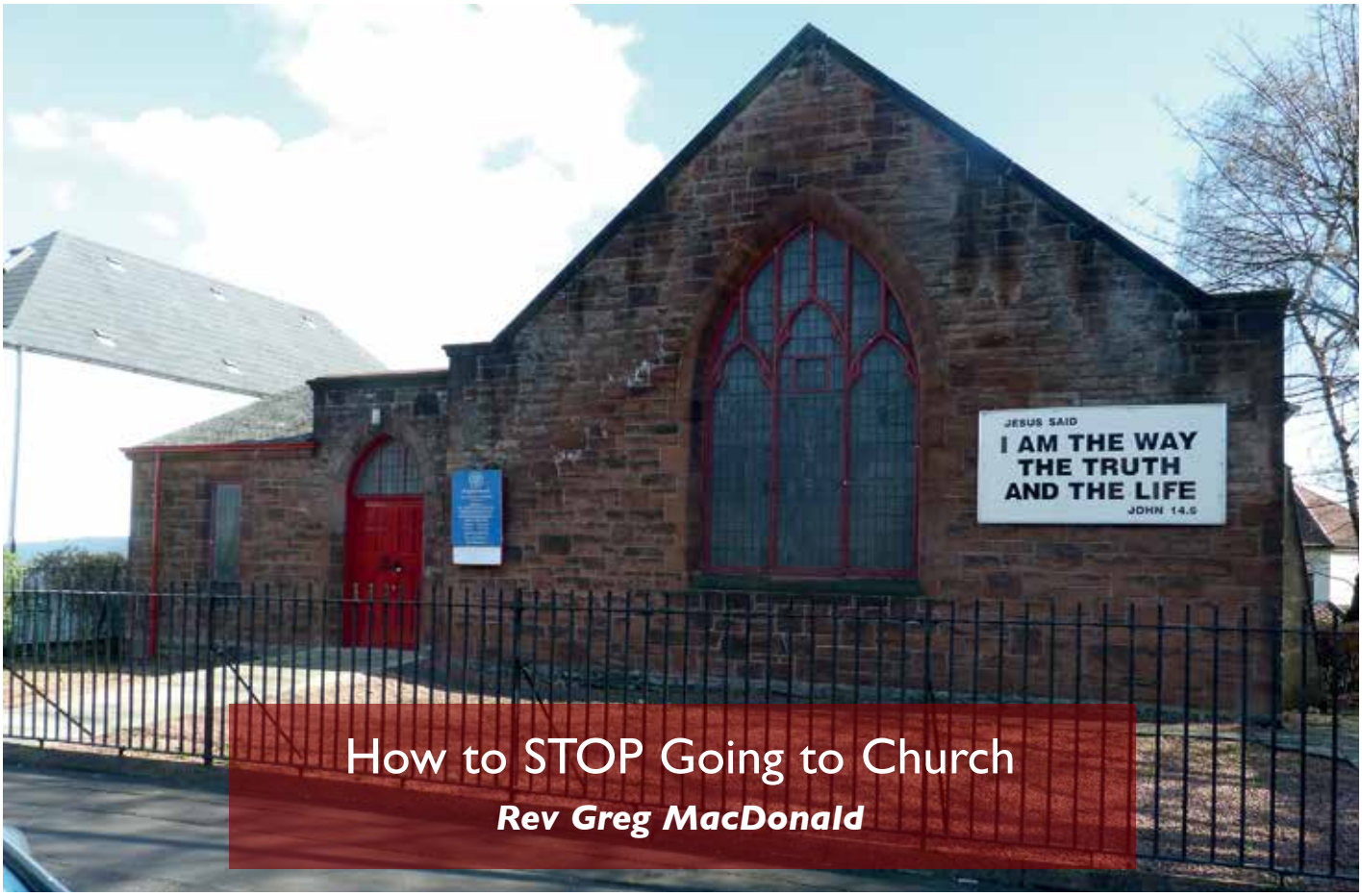
But forgiveness is not automatic for all mankind. The God who has shown such love demands that if you and I are to enjoy personal forgiveness we must become real Christians by believing in His Son Jesus Christ. God is absolutely reliable in all that He tells us. He is delighted to give forgiveness to those who sincerely come to Him for it. If anyone wants to have their sins forgiven He will assuredly forgive them on the condition that they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Perhaps it seems to you to be too good to be true. Perhaps you say to yourself, Surely God requires more of me than this. Perhaps you ask, How can God be so ready to forgive me if all I have to do is to believe in Jesus? The answer is that Jesus has done all things necessary to put us right with God. Jesus suffered immensely on the Cross in order that we might have forgiveness and eternal life. So when we take God on His own word we find He is absolutely true and faithful. God forgives all those who believe in His dear Son Jesus.

Make sure

You do not need to drift on in a state of uncertainty. Let's face it, soon we are all going to have to die and enter into another world. Does it not make perfect sense then to listen to God's word to mankind? Dear friend, our motive in telling you these things is a very good one. We want you and all like you to be sure of heaven. Put an end to your guess-work and be sure of the way to heaven. Let me put it in God's own wonderful words: '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' (John 3:16).

Why not pray to God right now that He would open your eyes to see the truth of this grand old gospel message? Many have done so and are now happily in heaven and in glory with God forever. The most precious thing you have, after all, is your own soul.



How to STOP Going to Church

Rev Greg MacDonald

There are 'how-to' guides for nearly everything now. From guides showing you how to replace the cracked screen of your phone, to leaflets that walk you through the finer points of growing your own greens in a window box.

Yet you would struggle to find a guide teaching you how to stop going to church. I suspect the reason for that is because people are already pretty good at stopping church all by themselves.

No doubt very many people who read this magazine once went to church. You have either stopped completely, or have become very erratic. How does that happen? How did it happen for you?

Here is a rough guide.

Step One - Find a flaw

The first thing to do, to eventually stop going to church at all, is to find a flaw and not let it go. In all honesty, this is the easiest of steps. There are so many flaws to choose from! Maybe the sermons are too long. Maybe they are too boring. Maybe they are too hard, too harsh. Or perhaps the church is too old-fashioned or even too modern.

Or it could be a problem with the people. They appear self-righteous. They are hypocrites. You imagine they look down on you. They are not welcoming enough. Or they never leave you alone.

It might even be something that the church does. You can be put off by infighting in the church. There may be people there you don't like. You might feel neglected in pastoral care. No-one ever visits. No-one seems to care, unless it is to ask for donations. Perhaps you feel you were given a hard time by the church. You have a grievance.

Fix on one of the many flaws that exist in every church and make that your reason.

Step Two - Test run what it's like to miss church

Now you have an answer to that nag of conscience, telling you to go to church on Sunday. Now you can quieten down that sense of guilt. You can counter your own conscience with a glaring issue. Why should I go? No-one speaks to me. No-one visits me. They only want my money. They're all hypocrites. They look down at me. So when your conscience, or your upbringing, says, 'You should be in church!' you are ready with your answer.

And so you have begun on the road to church non-attendance. Once you have missed once, and justified it to yourself, you then waited for the reaction. But nothing happened. Maybe no-one asked why you weren't there? No-one called to see you or phoned. Nothing dreadful occurred. You were waiting for something, anything.

Step Three - Get used to missing church

Because nothing happened and no-one challenged you, it only seems to confirm your reasons. See - they don't care! And with renewed zeal missing church gets easier and easier.

But even all this is not enough to keep you away for good, not enough to really confirm you in non-attendance.

Step Four - Believe you would be a hypocrite

The key to really committed non-attendance is to make non-attendance a matter of personal integrity and morality. That is the icing on the cake. If you can believe that to attend church would actually be a lie, a delusion, and a deception in your case - well then you can even train that once nervous conscience to turn itself on its head. Surprisingly you can get your conscience to convict you even over thinking about going to church!

'After all, to go, that would be hypocritical. I'm an honest man. I must be true to myself. I've lived this way for so many years. I can hardly turn around now and start going to church. I'm not two-faced'.

Of course - none of this is what should happen. But for whatever reason it is easy to stop coming to church. And seemingly very hard to start.

How clever Satan is - to turn what was once a shameful absence from God's House on God's Day into a matter of conscientious objection! How blind the human heart is, to believe that honesty forbids you from seeking mercy from God for your sins, and salvation for your soul!

How do you begin something like going to church?

How to START going to church

Step One: Find the right church

If you are thinking of going to church, presumably it is because you want to worship the real, living God. The only way to get to know God is through His revelation of Himself. He makes Himself known in the Bible. So you would want a church that treats the Bible seriously, believing it, explaining it and practising it. Sadly, there are some ministers who don't believe what the Bible says. It is the fault of some churches that they have put this obstacle in your way, and I must apologise for it. But how can you, as someone who doesn't go to church, find out if a church believes the Bible? If you know someone who is a serious Christian, ask them for advice. If you don't have anyone to ask, or anyone you would feel comfortable asking, then you will have to try to find out for yourself. A church web-site can be helpful or even a church notice-board. It will only ever be worth your while going to church if they believe and preach what God says in the Bible. The only way we can know God and salvation is through the Bible which God has given us to tell us about Himself and the way to please Him and be saved.

Step Two: What to expect

What really happens once you enter a church?

You will be welcomed by two or three people who stand at the door for that purpose. Churches love new people. Usually those at the door will offer you a Bible. You will find a contents page at the start of the Bible listing all sixty-six books that make up our Bible. This ensures you can follow along with the reading. Each book is sub-divided into chapters (large sections) and verses (short paragraphs or sentences).

Singing, prayer and Bible reading take place. Prayer is when we speak to God. One person, usually the preacher, will pray and we listen. The prayer asks for God's help and mercy, and praises Him for sending his Son to be the Saviour. Praise is singing to God. Feel free to sing along. But if you feel self-conscious about singing, or are in any way unsure, no one forces anyone to sing. The Bible will be read of course. This is God's time to speak in the service. Reading the Bible first helps everyone to understand that the message (sermon) comes from God's Word, not the mere imagination of the preacher.

The sermon is usually the longest part of the service (25-45 minutes). This is when the preacher helps us understand what this part of the Bible means, why it matters and what God expects us to do. Central to the Bible is Jesus Christ, and a true and faithful preacher will show the connection between the passage and Jesus and encourage you to trust in Jesus as Saviour.

Step Three: What to look out for

What effect should you expect in yourself then?

Should you expect to see a bright light or hear a voice from heaven? No, and don't think anything is wrong if nothing particularly dramatic happens. That's not how to assess your experience. What you are looking for in a service can be summarised in just two things: faithfulness to the Scriptures and care for your soul.

First - was the message true to the Bible? Did the sermon preached come from the Bible? Was it a fair explanation of the passage on which the sermon is based? This determines if you were listening to God's commands or just a man's ideas. If you go to church you have the right to expect to hear from God, to hear what He thinks of your life, what He threatens, what He requires, what He promises and what He has done for sinners. The question is not - did you like the message? Sometimes you might and sometimes you won't. The key is: was it true to what God says?

Secondly - did the preacher care about the souls in front of him? Don't judge this too hastily. It might take a few weeks before you get a sense of this. But it matters greatly. Someone can preach with a deadness and heartlessness that betrays a lack of care for souls. It's not about whether he said nice things, or is entertaining. The issue is far greater: Is he concerned for your everlasting happiness?

If you find a church that combines explaining the truth with a loving care for your best interests, then you have found a spiritual home for your soul. Value such a church and attend it as regularly as you can. You have found a spark of divine light in the bleak darkness of this world. You have found a church worth going to.

My Testimony

Stuart Mackay

Religion had not played a great part in my life before I was saved. Neither of my parents attended church although my Mum attended a Sunday school in the Church of Scotland when growing up in Edinburgh. Family life therefore was the same as many families living in Scotland at that time, and still today; inclined to a type of moral uprightness but falling far short of God's standard.

My first knowledge of God was through a Good News Bible I was given when I was at school in Edinburgh. Then later on in life, after moving to England, much to the surprise and disappointment of my Dad, I stopped playing football on Sundays and joined a Church of England choir which meant having to take confirmation classes to be accepted.

I remember nothing of the instruction that I was given and still my life was really untouched by my years attending church. I was however still inclined to the moral uprightness that had been my upbringing through my youth. I didn't drink or smoke, I didn't do anything particularly bad or so I thought.

When I was nineteen I joined the R.A.F. and it was here that God really dealt with me.

As with most new recruits beginning their military career, the 'social' aspects of service life come to the fore very quickly. Evenings spent drinking soon became part of my life and had God not intervened I'm sure it could have been my downfall as it is with many others.

It was through the work of the Soldiers' & Airmen's Scripture Readers Association (SASRA) that the good news of the Gospel was first presented to me.

One afternoon in the barrack block I had just come back from the shower to my four-man room when the SASRA reader, who had been speaking to my friend, asked me a curious question.

'Was there anything I wanted to ask him?'

It was a curious question as I had never met the man before nor did I really know anything about who he was and what he was doing.

After asking who he was and him explaining, in the providence of God, I did have a question to ask him about a friend at home who had told me of a religious meeting she had attended. Having answered the question the Scripture Reader left and over the coming weeks and months became a regular in our room answering our questions and challenging our beliefs.

I began to attend the Bible Study which he held on camp and slowly but surely the truth of the Bible became more and more real to me. Over the coming months more and more the truth was revealed to me through the Holy Spirit and more and more I believed it.

However, there was still one aspect of my life that God needed to deal with and that was my belief in my moral uprightness, my good life, being good enough for God.

I remember at one of the Bible studies being told that I could not please God with my life no matter how morally upright and good it might seem to me. I thought 'No, I think I'm quite a good person and if I continue in this way then God would be pleased with my life'.

How wrong I was!

Very soon after this meeting, maybe a matter of days or weeks later, God showed me that even if my life was outwardly OK I couldn't continue to hold even that mediocre standard. I fell into sin in such a way that it shook me from the notion that my life was good enough for God.

Previously if I had committed the same sin I wouldn't have batted an eyelid but now it caused me a great deal of sorrow.

A friend called the Scripture Reader who came and explained to me that there was forgiveness with God for sin and also there was salvation through One whose life was perfect and acceptable to God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I confessed my sin before God, repented of it and accepted His perfect righteousness in place of my filthy rags.

My life is still not perfect, far from it, but through Jesus Christ I am accepted by God through His uprightness and not my own.

Don't be fooled by your own goodness; compared to Christ's it is like filthy rags.

The Beautiful Gift

Rev David Blunt

'Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God' (Acts 3:6-8).

This remarkable incident took place at the temple in Jerusalem, at one of its twelve gates. The gate bore the name 'Beautiful'. This was very appropriate for there a needy man received a beautiful gift: he was healed from the lameness he had suffered since birth. The man was looking for money but he got the true riches of everlasting life instead.

It was the time of afternoon prayer. Two of the apostles, Peter and John, were on their way to the temple when they met the lame man. The Spirit of God prompted them to speak to him and Peter uttered words which led to his healing. It was done in the name of Jesus Christ and it was really the work of Christ. The miracle testified to our Saviour's gracious power; indeed Peter turned it into a sermon which he preached to the people who flocked to the scene. As Christ bestowed the gift of bodily health so He can bring salvation to our souls. Our greatest need is to be converted to Christ.

The call to conversion

We see here the call to conversion. Peter says to the lame man, 'rise up and walk' (v6). Now the man's utter inability to take even a single step was very plain. Although our handicap, being spiritual, may be less obvious it is no less real. The guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to his offspring and so we enter the world in a corrupt state, disabled from all good and unable to go in the way of God's holy law. Yet it remains our duty to glorify God by walking in the paths of righteousness – even though we cannot do this.

Although the lame man was unable to comply with Peter's command he was still obliged to get to his feet, for the call came with all the authority of Christ. We are responsible to turn to God when we hear the good news of a Redeemer, even though we cannot of ourselves repent and believe the gospel. The summons comes from God, not man. We must remember that we are accountable to God at the last: we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ who will either admit us to heaven or send us to hell.

The power of conversion

We see also the power of conversion. Peter took hold of the man's right hand and lifted him to his feet (v7). Yet the power which enabled the man to stand up was not Peter's but the Lord's. Though friends are praying for you and faithful preachers are pleading with you to turn to the Saviour as a helpless sinner you need something more if you are to rise out of your spiritual death and enjoy the life more abundant: you need the hand of God. What is meant by God's hand? Consider these verses from the Bible: 'Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself' (Psalm 80:17); 'O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory' (Psalm 98:1); 'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God' (Mark 16:19). The right hand of God signifies Jesus Christ who hung on the cross to pay the price for sin, rose again from the dead and ascended triumphantly into glory! It is through Christ that we get God's saving grace. Salvation is by Christ's name and through faith in His name.

The signs of conversion

We see finally the signs of conversion. After Peter lifted the lame man to his feet he was found 'walking, and leaping, and praising God' (v8). What an extraordinary change! The walking was a witness to the new life which had begun in this dear man's soul, a life of fellowship with the Lord and following Him. The leaping was an evidence of his joyfulness over sins forgiven and the hope of heaven. The praising was a token of his thankfulness to God for His free and undeserved and unimagined grace.

When the people saw what had happened to the lame man 'they were filled with wonder and amazement' (v10). There is no doubt that the lame man was thrilled at what he had experienced but others marvelled too! Conversion to Christ means a change which cannot be hidden and which the world cannot deny. Are you walking in newness of life? Have you received God's beautiful gift?

The miracle testified to our Saviour's gracious power. As Christ bestowed the gift of bodily health so He can bring salvation to our souls. Our greatest need is to be converted to Christ.

The Six Dials of the Universe

Rev Alasdair Macleod

The Astronomer Royal in the UK, Martin Rees, recently published a book explaining that there are six numbers in the universe, six constants, which must be correct to allow the existence of galaxies, stars and of life itself. An example would be the ratio of gravity to electromagnetism, which allows particles to come together to form larger objects. These numbers have been described as the 'six dials of the universe'.

Consider this: if any one of these six numbers were even marginally different from what it is, the universe, as we know it, could not exist. The measure of nuclear efficiency, for example, has a value of 0.007. If this figure was 0.006, there would be no other element than hydrogen, the smallest atom of all, rendering life impossible. If it were 0.008, there could be no hydrogen at all, which again makes life inconceivable – there would be no water!

We live in a universe that has been perfectly tuned for the functioning of chemistry, of planets and orbits and stars, and for life itself – for us. Does that suggest that this Universe is just an accident, life itself just the result of random interaction of particles, human thought and study just the electrical activity of a blob of biological matter – a hunt for meaning in a meaningless world?

The atheist, of course, has an answer to this challenge. It is the multiverse theory, which argues that this universe is just one in an infinite pile of possible universes. Thus there will be an infinite number of other universes with the six dials set at different 'settings', and the fact that we as life exist in this universe, is just because this universe has the correct six figures.

It is an astonishing thought: an infinite pile of universes, with every conceivable arrangement of the particles of the universe. But just think about what this theory involves: there will be a multitude of universes with a different you, making different choices, experiencing your life differently. One writer points out that a world is conceivable where every person has 'evolved' with a purple moustache – it is conceivable, therefore such a universe actually exists! It has to exist, as part of the infinite pile of possible worlds!

Do you see that this is not science? It is ridiculous: it is science fiction! There is not a scrap of evidence to support this theory, or to explain why such an infinite pile of universes should exist – it is just sheer speculation, and desperate speculation at that, to explain away the clear evidence of design in our universe. A wise man remarked: 'When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing—they believe in anything'.

We live in a strange world, where Richard Dawkins can go on television talking about multiverse theory, which requires the existence of the purple moustache universe, and be treated as a scientist explaining a scientific theory, despite having no evidence whatever. Yet a Christian arguing for intelligent design, with all the evidence in the universe at his disposal, will be excluded from the discussion as 'unscientific'!

The reason, you see, is that people are not rational beings hunting for the truth, they are intelligent but wilful beings who want to live life as they please. If they are forced to acknowledge that God is real, that He is their creator, they are forced then to accept that they are responsible to the God who made them for how they live their lives. Desperate to avoid this conclusion, that they must obey God's Law or face His judgment, human beings desperately scrabble around for excuses not to believe. They will construct and believe any clever argument conceivable rather than concede the truth of God's existence and authority – and their own obligation to obey Him.

What about you? Will you go through life believing science fiction rather than fact, just to avoid being confronted with the reality of God? The Apostle Paul, one of the first Christian preachers, expressed this very forcefully in writing to the Christians in the city of Rome. He says: 'For the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse' (Romans 1:20).

Paul is right: people can see from the world around them the reality of God, and they have no excuse for not believing in Him, and for not obeying Him. The tragedy is that those who do not seek a relationship with God will be judged by Him, and punished by Him, for all the wrong that they have done.

You can see the reality of God. You can see that He exists, and you know that He made you. Will you seek to know God, while you have the opportunity? God says in the Bible: 'I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me' (Proverbs 8:17). Eternal blessing and safety is found only in the one living and true God, and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent. I hope you find this out for yourself.

RC Nun's Conversion

Jacqueline Kasser

Forty-five years of my life were spent as a Roman Catholic; twenty-two of them as a nun in an enclosed convent dedicated to adoration, reparation and suffering. I believed it was a nun's calling to be a miniature saviour of the world like Jesus Christ.

After attending Catholic primary school for eight years and memorising the catechism which is the Roman Catholic textbook, I believed in my heart that a family having a son or daughter become a priest or nun would receive God's favour and special blessings. I decided to enter the convent when I was old enough to leave home. This was my goal while I was still in my teens. On my twenty-first birthday I entered the convent against my parents' wishes. My belief in my calling to be a nun superseded my parents' vehement opposition.

Even though it broke my heart to leave my parents, I consoled myself in the fact that I was doing God's will by making this sacrifice for the salvation of my family and all those outside the Catholic faith who I believed were doomed to hell. At first, I was in awe of the solitude, structural beauty and peacefulness the convent seemed to have. I was taught to do penance such as sleeping on a board, prostrating myself at the door of the dining room as an act of humiliation, and beating myself as a means of appeasing God's wrath. This taught me to believe in a punishing, unapproachable and unloving God. I feared Him at every turn of my life. As time went on, emptiness filled my heart and hopelessness engulfed me. I became depressed, often crying while I raged with anger at authority and hatred for the rules and customs in the convent which were very cruel. My body developed all kinds of illnesses and I found myself with a tremor that only Valium could help. All the time, the medication was dulling my mind and taking away my ability to think and reason.

I was so hungry to know that God loved me and so wanting to know Him that I started reading mystical writings which taught that you could attain mystical union with God, thereby achieving supernatural knowledge of Him which led to perfect holiness. This path directed me to supernaturalise not only the Bible and Jesus, but anything to do with my religious life. Step by step I lost my ability to reason and deal with reality, for reality was too painful for me to face.

Still feeling hopeless and so despondent, I cried out to God. In His mercy and grace He heard my prayers. A distant cousin who had become a Christian brought an evangelist who was visiting New York to the convent. He was holding a street meeting at a nearby Catholic parish. I received permission to go and for the first time I heard the true Gospel. It certainly was Good News! 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, (Jesus Christ) that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). I learned that Jesus died for sins, past, present and future. I was enabled to accept Him as my Lord and Saviour and repent of my sins. He made my dead spirit alive and He began a personal relationship with me.

This is the gift of God to those who believe – 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast' (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is vitally important to know that we must individually trust and believe in Him. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved' (Romans 10:9).

After personally accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour, I started to read my Bible and pray directly to God. Two years later I left the convent and started on my quest to know the truth. God's Word became my only authority and everything else was measured against the Bible. But this was just the beginning. I did not realize the serious harm false doctrines and beliefs had created in my body and mind.

Through a friend, I met a Christian who helped me see that being a doer of the Word brings healing to the body and clarity to the mind. Through the new birth we can have the mind of Christ. It has not been an easy road, but it has been one filled with God's love and blessing.

The Lord has been faithful to me in the promises of His Word. He promised, 'And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten' (Joel 2:25). This enabled me to begin a new life filled with joy and a true inner peace that neither the world nor religion can give.

It is my hope and prayer that I might have the privilege of sharing the love and goodness of God by telling all who hear that He is mighty to save. He adopts us as His children when we receive the gift of salvation by believing in His Son.

As it is written, '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 Corinthians 2:9).

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,
Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:3

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