

Free Church **Witness**



MARCH 2013 ISSUE

Access by One Spirit

Rev John Macsween



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No More Death

Death is a horrid reality. It breaks the closest bonds in this life – a father and son, a mother and daughter, bosom friends and even a husband and wife. The first human relationship was that between Adam and Eve. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. He formed a wife for him and performed the first marriage. Their love was deep, their marriage was made in heaven, but it was only ‘till death us do part’.

There is no escape from death. Sooner or later it catches up with all of us. Some put up a valiant fight against heart disease, cancer or whatever. They take all the medicines prescribed, they submit to all the treatments, they remain positive, hoping and expecting to get better, yet eventually the inevitable happens. When fighting death there can only be one winner. The ‘grim reaper’ cuts down young and old. Many tears are shed but the body of our loved one, and eventually of ourselves, has to be laid in the grave. We are all sinners and the wages of sin is death. The best of food, the best of exercise, the best of climate and the best of medical care will not save us. Death triumphs.

Yet for the Christian that is not the end of the story. There is a Saviour. Christ has triumphed over death and so shall we through Him. His death was ‘the death of death’. Actually the Christian doesn’t really die. He just falls asleep in Jesus. The sting and curse has been removed from death. They close their eyes on this world and open them in paradise, looking into the face of their beloved Saviour. The former things are passed away. Paul looked forward to death for he could say that it was simply, ‘to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better’ (Phil. 1:23). Heaven is wonderful.

What is heaven like?

‘No more death’ (Rev. 21:4) will be a great part of the blessing of heaven. Sin has turned this world often into a kind of hell – a foretaste and a warning. When our first parents broke God’s covenant which He made with them death entered the

world in all-conquering power. The first child born into the world became an instrument in death’s hand. He murdered his godly young brother Abel. One by one everyone dies. Some die in the womb, some in childhood, some in youth, some in middle age and some in old age. It is not just human beings, the original sinners, who die. The curse of a holy God upon man’s sin reached to all creation. Animals, birds, fish, insects and even plants all die. Death reigns supreme. Even while we are alive it is already at work in the human body. From the moment Adam ate the forbidden fruit the cells in his body began to die and the ageing process started. We are constantly fighting against decay – in food, clothes, cars and homes. But heaven is different. It is bursting with life because there shall be ‘no more death’. There will be the river of the water of life and the tree of life on either side of the river and ‘the leaves of the tree ... for the healing of the nations’ (Rev. 22:2). There will be no sickness nor old age in heaven. It is the place of eternal life. The inhabitant will not say ‘I am weary’ and there is no night there. Death will be banished to hell forever. Here we live in the land of the dying but the Christian is journeying to the land of the living. Will you be there?

What is death?

Death could be defined as the heart stopping beating and the lungs stopping breathing. Medically it is defined as the absence of life and that, in modern times, is concluded to have taken place when all activity of the brain ceases. Sometimes mistakes are made and people are thought to have died when they have not. The Biblical definition of death is the separation of the body and the soul. This is truly the end of a person’s life here. The body may stop breathing and yet the breathing can be started again. Similarly the heart can stop beating and paramedics are able to start it again, but when the soul departs it will not return again till the resurrection. A body may appear to live on a life-support machine which pumps the blood through the body and oxygen into the lungs but actually the person



'Death is before us all and is inevitable yet most cope by ignoring it. They consider death to be so far into the future as not to require any serious thought or attention at this juncture. Are you in denial about the fact that you are dying? Actually we are all terminally ill. Is God saying, though you cannot hear Him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee' (Lk. 12:20)?'

is dead. Death is before us all and is inevitable yet most cope by ignoring it. They consider

death to be so far into the future as not to require any serious thought or attention at this juncture. Are you in denial about the fact that you are dying? Actually we are all terminally ill. Is God saying, though you cannot hear Him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee' (Lk. 12:20)?

Where did death come from?

We have already touched briefly on where death came from. It was not created by God in the beginning. In the garden of Eden there was no death. In fact in the middle of the garden there was the Tree of Life. God made a wonderful, gracious covenant with our first parents, promising them life and fellowship with Him, but also warning them that if they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil they would surely die. Satan entered the garden, they believed his lies and ate the forbidden fruit. Just as God said, that moment death entered human experience and the world in which man lived. What happened? Immediately man died spiritually. He died to God and the loving relationship he had with his Maker ended. Man is now born into this world dead in trespasses and sins. But also physical death began. Disease, pain, accidents, ageing, decay, weariness and weakness entered the lives of mankind. Death like a lion stalks his prey, or like an eagle hovers overhead waiting for his moment to pounce.

How could God get rid of death?

God in His great love and mercy made a new covenant with man. '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' (Jn.3:16). He looked for a substitute who could take the sinner's place and the only one who could be found suitable was His own Son. Willingly the

Second Person of the Holy Trinity agreed to come to save sinners. He took our nature, body and soul, lived a perfect life though tempted in all points like us and then offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He suffered the punishment we ought to have suffered. He satisfied all that divine justice demanded. This is a glorious doctrine. Liberals hate it. Modern so called 'evangelicals' also despise it. Steve Chalke of the Evangelical Alliance calls it 'cosmic cruelty' because he has no understanding of the holiness of God, and the wickedness of sin, and the necessity that God be just while justifying the sinner. God is infinitely just and the cross wonderfully glorifies God's justice as well as His grace, love and mercy. One has to be truly blind not to see the vicarious atonement which is to be found on every page of Scripture. 'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2Cor.5:21). The sinless One who does not deserve to die, dies the death we deserve for our sins so that we will have everlasting life. His purpose was that 'through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil' (Heb.2:14). His death was in fact 'the death of death' for His people.

Why do Christians still die?

If the price for our sins has been paid and Jesus has fully suffered the punishment which we deserved, why do we still die? It cannot be as a punishment otherwise there would be injustice in God - demanding punishment twice for the same sin. Death for the child of God is discipline and training which shows us the seriousness of sin. It is also a trial which He has designed for our purification. For the wicked it is punishment but for the child of God it is but the doorway to glory. So radically has the nature of death been affected in the experience of the Christian that the Apostle can say: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1Cor.15:55-57). We have victory through Christ over death. He has for us disarmed the serpent of death by sucking out all the venom into himself. Hallelujah what a Saviour!

Who are to get to Heaven?

Many people assume when loved ones die that they have

gone to heaven. The attitude seems to be that if a person didn't do anything too bad, were respectable and kind, that God will receive them into heaven. Is He not a loving God? How could He possibly send John or Mary to hell? But rather than arguing, 'How could he possibly...' let us consider what He Himself says in His Word which is our only sure guide to God's mind. The Scriptures record that Jesus said 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). Surely that is plain. The new birth is essential and those who have not been born again are told in no uncertain terms that they will not enter heaven nor even see it. In another place the Bible states that Jesus said, in response to a disaster in which many lives were lost, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish' (Lk13:3). Unless people repent and are converted they will not get to heaven. Who gets to heaven? 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him' (Jn.3:36).

What happens to the unbelievers?

God has given us His Son to be our Saviour. Those who refuse to repent and believe in him will be lost. It is sad but completely just on God's part. He need not have saved any. For the devils there is no gospel nor salvation. But God in His great mercy, and at immense cost to Himself, has provided us with a Saviour. If we despise Him and refuse to believe in Him we deserve to perish. Those who are without the Saviour, immediately they die their soul enters the prison of hell. There they will suffer till the end of the world when their soul will return to their body again. It will be resurrected and they will have to stand before the Judge. From Him they will receive their final sentence which will be, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt.25:41). Individuals think they can escape from pain or suffering or trouble in this life by committing suicide but there is no escape from the bottomless pit. The worst pain in this world is temporary but hell is where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48). The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever (Rev.14:10-11). We have an awful picture of hell in the words: 'his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds' (Rev.16:10-11). There they 'shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever' (Rev.20:10). Make sure you do not end up there. Repent and believe the gospel.

What is our response to heaven?

We have comfort with regard to those who have died believing in Jesus. We know that they are now in a better place where there is no more death. They are dead to us yet they are more alive than they ever were, and far more alive than we. Also we have encouragement with regard to ourselves. We may have heard from a doctor that we are terminally ill. To many people this is awful news. However we can rejoice because we know that the best is yet to be. We are going to heaven and death is simply falling asleep in the arms of Jesus. Whatever trials we have here it is light affliction in comparison to the weight of glory which awaits us (2Cor.4:17). There is a rest that remains for the people of God (Heb.4). Rejoice, we have a great future. We leave this world where death reigns and go where there is no more death.



Wasted Life

I looked upon a farm one day,
That once I used to own;
The barn had fallen to the ground,
The fields were overgrown.

The house in which my children grew,
Where we had lived for years,
I turned to see it broken down,
And brushed aside the tears.

I looked upon my soul one day
To find it too had grown
With thorns and nettles everywhere,
The seeds neglect had sown.

The years had passed while I had cared
For things of lesser worth;
The things of Heaven I let go
While minding things of earth.

To Christ I turned with bitter tears,
And cried, 'Oh Lord, forgive!
I haven't much time left for Thee,
Not many years to live'.

The wasted years forever gone,
The days I can't recall;
If I could live those days again,
I'd make Him Lord of all.

Theodore W Brennan



Access by One Spirit (Part I)

A Sermon by Rev John Macsween (1910-1982)

Late Minister of the Free Church congregations of Toronto and Point

'For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father'
Ephesians 2:18

This is the conclusion at which the Apostle arrives following the thesis he develops from the 11th verse downwards, when he reminds the Ephesian Church, 'Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ'. That is their position: they were far off, now they are made nigh. He goes on to explain how this has happened: 'For', he says, 'he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace'.

Now, sometimes a little confusion arises in considering what the Apostle says about 'both'. When he says, 'ye who were far off' he is thinking also of those who now were near. Then he goes on to talk of the breaking down of 'the middle wall of partition between us'. Now what is he talking about?

Well, in the immediate context he is talking of the Jew and the Gentile; these are the two to whom he refers. He says we both have access unto the Father through Christ Jesus by the Spirit and then when he talks of 'the middle wall of partition' he refers to the wall that separated Jew and Gentile; the wall that divided the world into two different groups, namely, the Jew on the one hand, and the Gentile on the other. But we must not lose sight of the fact that over and above the reconciliation of Jew with Gentile there is the reconciliation of both unto God through the blood of the Cross. The reconciliation between men, between races, between classes, is made in a greater reconciliation than these, even in the reconciliation made between God and man through the Man Christ Jesus.

Temple Barrier

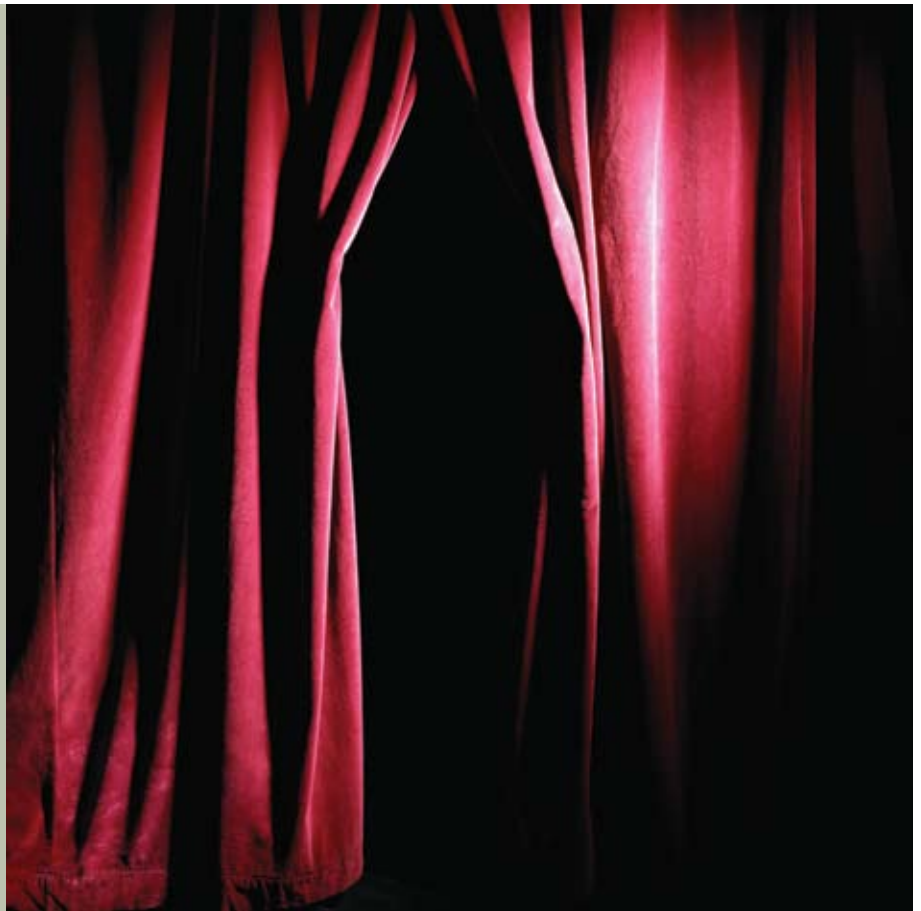
In order to understand what the Apostle says, it might help us to recall the worship of the Temple. In the Temple precincts there was a wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. There was what was called, the wall of the Gentiles beyond which no Gentile could go. That was what caused the uproar when Paul was accused of bringing Trophimus into the Temple (Acts 21). His enemies said that Paul brought Trophimus, who was a Gentile, beyond the wall of partition, the wall beyond which

a Gentile could not go. But as we go further into the Temple precincts and into the Temple itself there is another wall of partition beyond which no Jew could pass and that is the veil of the Temple which separated the Holy from the Most Holy place. This was a wall of partition. None, not even the priests, could go beyond this wall; none, but the High Priest and him but once every year. Amongst other things that happened at the crucifixion of the Lord, there was this, the rending of the veil which separated the Holy from the Most Holy place: it was rent from top to bottom. This wall of partition was done away with; the veil that separated the Most Holy place from the congregation of Israel, and when this one was done away with every other veil was done away with also. The wall of partition that kept the Gentile from going beyond a certain place became meaningless once the veil of the Temple was rent in twain. We might look at it like this: that which divided the Jew from the Gentile was abolished because that which separated man from God was abolished.

The veil of the Temple was the obvious sign that the way to the Most Holy place was not yet open while the old Tabernacle stood. You remember how in the Epistle to the Hebrews this argument is developed at length. There was no immediate access for man into the presence of God while the earthly Tabernacle or Temple was still standing. We might say that a characteristic of the Old Testament dispensation was not only what it *revealed*, but as in contrast with the New Testament we would say it is what it *concealed* that was characteristic of it; it certainly revealed much but as contrasted with the New Testament it concealed much also. The way into the Holiest was not yet open while the earthly Tabernacle still stood but when these shadows were set aside when the substance had come, there was a way of access for all; the veil was rent from the top to the bottom and because of this every other partition, every wall, was automatically abolished.

And now says the Apostle, seeing He is our priest, our High Priest who has entered into the Holy place, not into the Holy place that is made with hands but into Heaven itself there to present Himself for His people; since this is so, we have a way of access unto the Father. Now for a little, we might think of the place to where we have a way of access - To the Father. Then, through whom? Through Him, the Son we both (Jew and Gentile) have a way of access unto the Father. But by whom? We both have a way of access through Him by one Spirit unto the Father. It is to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. We have therefore in these few words the fullness of the

'The veil of the Temple was the obvious sign that the way to the Most Holy place was not yet open while the old Tabernacle stood. You remember how in the Epistle to the Hebrews this argument is developed at length. There was no immediate access for man into the presence of God while the earthly Tabernacle or Temple was still standing.'



Godhead: in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Ghost - and all that fullness engaged in the work of man's salvation.

Access to God

Now in the ultimate analysis this is salvation - access to God. We know that this is how man, ruined by sin, is presented to us in the Scriptures. Man sinned and was expelled from the presence of God, and not only was he expelled, but every precaution was taken that he would not return; that he would not, in other words, have a way of access unto life. 'Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life ... he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life' (Gen.3:22,24). Access, in other words, is made absolutely impossible. That is, from man's side, and this is his misery; this is the essence of it - that he is expelled; he is a wanderer; he is cast out from God - man's misery commenced in this: 'for by the fall man lost communion with God'. No access, no communion, no friendship any more; he is shut out, and it is man that is shut out; that is not Jew or Gentile, considered merely as Jew or Gentile, but man, both Jew and Gentile. Of course, at that time there were no divisions, but man, as man, was expelled from the presence of God and from the glory of His power.

But he is not expelled in such a way that there cannot be a return; there certainly cannot be a return on the part of man because he has neither the desire nor the energy to retrace his steps. All the propensities of his nature hasten him on the way of getting further and further from God. His back is towards God and his face is towards perdition, and thus he moves and thus he is gathering momentum. He doesn't move

at a steady pace, but gathers momentum all the time in his downward course, in his flight from God. For he is without God in the world, without Christ and without hope - this is his condition. But now he says, 'we have access' and this access is based on peace. He has made peace by the blood of His Cross. We have almost the identical thought, almost in identical words, in the first verses of Romans chapter 5, 'being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God'. Being justified by faith we have peace through Christ, by whom also we have access to peace; access to God through Christ of course. We have it because of the peace made.

Now, there was never peace like this peace and there never will be peace like this peace. It is the peace of God and the peace of God means first, not the peace that one enjoys in himself, it is the peace that God has wrought. It is objective, not subjective. It is something that has objective reality, not something that is merely enjoyed in man's soul; of course it can be enjoyed in man's soul, but that is not its basis. It is something that God has accomplished, something that God has brought about, and that is peace. Now, if He is our peace and if we have no peace without Him, there is the implication that what exists without Him is not a state of peace but a state of war or a state of enmity, and that is exactly the testimony of Scripture. Man is at enmity with God, the God who expelled him, the God who cast him out on account of his sin. Man is at war with God and from man's side the angel with the flaming sword is still at the gate.

To be continued



Above: The 2012 Graduates from Covenant College

Some Students of Covenant College

Rev David Lachman

We were able to briefly interview eight of our eleven 2012 graduates so that you could get to know a little bit about them, their families and their ministries. Please keep these men in your prayers as they have completed their studies at Covenant College and continue with their ministries throughout Eastern Province, Zambia.

Charles Zulu, Age: 52

Charles is married to Veronica and they have 7 children, ranging in age from 31 to 17 years old. He lives in Sinda which is 50 kilometres from the College, and travels by bicycle. His supporting church is the Grace Ministries Mission International (a Pentecostal group). He is currently serving as an elder in the church and hopes to be ordained as a pastor now that his studies are complete.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'I can interpret what the Lord Jesus has done for us'.

Highlight or special memory? 'The fellowship when we have lunch with the staff on Wednesdays, and you inviting us into your home'.

Andrew Tembo, Age: 47

Andrew is married to Esther and they have 3 children, ranging in age from 12 to 5 years old. He lives in Uquimi district and it takes him about 6 hours traveling on a bicycle to reach the College. His sending church is the United Pentecostal. He currently serves as a pastor and is awaiting ordination.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'I have grown spiritually through the teaching here and can see some differences in my life and pastoral work'.

Highlight or special memory? 'I will be depending on the teaching of Farming God's Way'.

Evason Daka, Age: 43

Evason is married to Alice and they have 6 children, ranging in age from 12 to 1 year old. Evason lives in the village of Kychapa which is very close to the College, only about 1 kilometre, so he comes on foot. His sending church is the Baptist Convention. Evason is the pastor of 3 congregations.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'When I came, I came empty ... now

there is change. I am able better to teach and preach in the Word'.

Highlight or special memory? 'Fellowship at dinner'.

Robert Njovu, Age: 54

Robert is married to Joyce and they have 5 children ranging in age from 31 to 16 years old. Robert lives in Sinda and usually hitchhikes to the College. He serves as a deacon in the Anglican church.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'Initially I was very blank. I knew very little. I have grown spiritually. I didn't have the chance before'.

Best memory? 'Our relationship as students with your family. It was exceptional'.

Greenford Kawaza, Age: 48

Greenford is married to Christine and they have 6 children ranging in age from 21 to 14 years old. Greenford lives in Sinda about 45 kilometres from the College and usually hitchhikes to the College. He is in the Reformed Baptist church.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'Since I studied theology and started learning from the Bible, I have been encouraged from the promises I find when in difficult times. Everything is the will of God and it brings peace to my heart'.

Highlight or special memory? 'The dinner invitation from your family was a most wonderful moment. It made me feel that we are united, all one in Christ'.

Wallace Mwanza, Age: 42

Wallace is married to Helen and they have 5 children ranging in age from 16 to 12 years old. Wallace used to live in Ukwimi, but he was kicked out of his church because of his stand for the truth and his family has had to move to the town of Petauke. Wallace is in a difficult situation now, needing to find a new church and a new place to minister, and he is praying for the Lord's leading.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'I did not know much about theology before, but now I can understand the Scripture and how to minister to my church and this I really appreciate'.

Reuben Tembo, Age: 58

Reuben is married to Aliness and they have 8 children ranging in age from 25 to 5 years old. Reuben lives in town in Petauke and is a member of the Reformed Baptist church.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'I have made a lot of mistakes when teaching others, especially in the application of the sermon. Now God has helped me to understand better the themes of His Word'.

Highlight or special memory? 'The management and how we were kept and taken care of'.

Paul Mwale, Age: 74

Paul is married to Amelia and they have 6 children ranging in age from 48 to 36 years old. Paul lives in the Sinda area and

serves as a pastor in the Reformed Church of Zambia to a congregation of over 600 people.

Most beneficial thing about his time at the College? 'I began preaching at 12 years old, but did not know how to handle the Bible. Previously I was leaning on my own understanding'.

Highlight or special memory? 'That we were mixing freely here at the College – the fellowship between staff and students'.

Sadly, we were not able to interview two graduates: Maxwell Sakala and Paul Mba. Please particularly pray for our 11th graduate, James Sakala. James finished his course of studies earlier in 2012 and was waiting to graduate with the others in October. In the interim he fell into public drunkenness and was disciplined by his church. As a result of his behaviour he was not invited to participate in the commencement exercises, although the College management will allow him to receive his certificate privately. We ask you to pray that the Lord will renew James 'in the inner man', draw him back to Christ, give him victory over this besetting sin and equip him to become a strong witness for our Lord and Saviour.

It is our prayer that the Lord would be glorified and exalted through the lives and ministries of these men. We hope that we will continue to be in contact with them in the future through our Graduates' Conferences so that we can continue to support them in their labours.

'But thou, O man of God... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses' (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

Congregational Remittances - December 2012

	CENTRAL ORDINARY REMITTANCES							
	BUILDING FUND YTD 2013	2013 Jan	2013 Total to Jan	2012 Total				
Presbytery of Inverness								
Aberdeen	0	1,100	1,100	900				
Duthil-Dores	0	1,396	1,396	1,496				
Inverness	0	2,000	2,000	2,000				
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	1,300	1,300	0				
Total Inverness	0	5,796	5,796	4,396				
Northern Presbytery								
Assynt & Scourie	185	0	0	0				
Brora	0	500	500	500				
Kiltearn	0	0	0	0				
Tarbat	0	1,000	1,000	0				
Total Northern	185	1,500	1,500	500				
Southern Presbytery								
Arran	115	830	830	948				
Ayr	0	0	0	0				
Dumfries	0	0	0	0				
Edinburgh	0	0	0	0				
Glasgow - Partick	0	2,000	2,000	2,000				
Glasgow - Shettleston	0	2,200	2,200	2,100				
Glasgow - Knightswood	0	2,450	2,450	1,500				
Rothsay	0	0	0	0				
Total Southern	115	7,480	7,480	6,548				
Outer Hebrides Presbytery								
Cross	0	1,797	1,797	2,239				
Harris - Leverburgh	0	1,175	1,175	1,150				
Harris - Scalpay	0	1,800	1,800	1,800				
Knock & Point	0	920	920	1,150				
North Uist	310	1,000	1,000	1,000				
Stornoway	900	5,474	5,474	5,934				
Total Outer Hebrides	1,210	12,166	12,166	13,273				
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron								
Bracadale	0	1,500	1,500	1,000				
Duirinish (Waternish)	0	1,000	1,000	500				
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	0	0	0	1,300				
Lochalsh	50	150	150	150				
Poolewe & Aultbea	0	820	820	550				
Ullapool	0	0	0	0				
Portree	0	1,400	1,400	1,400				
Snizort	0	1,200	1,200	1,200				
Strath	60	795	795	400				
Total Skye/Lochcarron	110	6,865	6,865	6,500				
Total Congregations	1,620	33,807	33,807	31,217				
Other Donations	0	698	698	3,008				
Legacy		0	0	0				
TOTAL	1,620	34,505	34,505	34,225				
Including Gift Aid			0	0				



News



Above:The New Place of Worship for Partick FCC, Broomhill Community Church. **Inset:**The old Partick building on Crow Road.

Partick: End of Legal Case

Rev John J Murray

At the beginning of the year the congregation of Partick Free Church (Continuing), Crow Road, Glasgow accepted the finding of the Court of Session over the disputed property. The manse had already passed out of our hands. The Court finding with regard to the church building came into effect on 24th January and in the light of this we moved from the church on 31st January. This was a sad day for us all but especially for some who had been

associated with the building for over half a century.

After a search for an alternative place of worship we were thankful to have been given the shared use of the Community Church, 1 Norby Road, Broomhill, G11 7BL (off Broomhill Drive near the shopping centre). Due to the existing congregation having a service at 11.00 am we are not able to have our 'morning' service until 1.00 pm. The times of the other services remain as before. Services commenced at the new location there on Lord's Day 3rd February.

We are grateful for the support of members of the Legal Advice & Property

Committee and the prayers of many in the Church throughout these last few difficult months. We will value continued prayer.

Sad, yet trust in God

Rev William Macleod

I was ordained and inducted as minister of Partick Free Church on 12th October 1976. For the next 17 years I laboured to preach the gospel and feed the flock from that pulpit. To me it will always remain special. I think of times of discouragement but especially of times of blessing when souls were born again. I followed in the footsteps of the much-loved Rev Hugh Ferrier

Desk



and was myself followed by Rev Iain Smith and Rev Murdo Angus MacLeod. I think of those who worshipped there and where they sat – many of them now in glory, some of them the choicest of God's children. Others too have passed on but where are they? They heard the gospel and 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?' (Heb.2:3). What of the many children who passed through the Sabbath School? Some are following the Lord but too many are thoughtless and Godless. I hear rumours about the new congregation removing the pews and doing extensive 'renovations'. To me they were beautiful yellow-pine pews, comfortable and I remember when we purchased cushions for them. Is the focus to be different? Will the worship change, as in so many Free Churches, from what God has ordained to what pleases man?

However for Partick Free Church (Continuing) it is the beginning of a new chapter. At the end of the day buildings don't matter. The early church had no buildings and neither have the house churches of China, yet they are flourishing. What is vital is the blessing of God. Thankfully the disputes are over. Seldom is the blessing of the Lord to be found where there is strife: 'The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient...' (2Tim.2:24). The new location is convenient and comfortable and who knows what God might yet do! 'Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land' (Josh.1:6). Let us remember our brothers and sisters in Partick and pray that the Lord would bless them abundantly.

Victory! Public order law

Christian Institute

On 14th January the Government agreed to reform Section 5 of the Public Order Act to protect free speech. In the House of Commons, Home Secretary Theresa May agreed not to contest a House of Lords amendment to remove the word 'insulting' from the Section 5 offence. It's a wonderful victory, at the end of a very long campaign which had broad support across society and the political parties. Reforming the law in this way should mean we see fewer cases like that of Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang, the Christian hoteliers prosecuted for criticising Islam. And we should see fewer street preachers, like Dale McAlpine, wrongfully arrested simply for expressing biblical beliefs in public. And we should see fewer instances of over-zealous police officers saying it is a crime to publicly display Bible verses, like happened to Jamie Murray the café owner.

Thanks to all our supporters who prayed about this important matter, and who contacted Peers and MPs. It really made a difference. Thank God for this important reform of the law.

Freedom to preach the gospel is a precious blessing and not available in all countries.

Lillian Ladele Lost her European Case

Christian Institute

Sadly, European judges ruled against Lillian Ladele on 15th January – she was the registrar at Islington Council who was pushed out of her job because of her beliefs about marriage. Five judges ruled against her claim of discrimination, but two judges believed she should have won her case. Lillian may decide to appeal the ruling to what's called 'the grand



Lillian Ladele

chamber' of the European Court, so it may not be over yet. That's for another day. But what this ruling shows, is that Christians risk being left out in the cold if they believe in traditional marriage. And if the Government presses ahead with its plans to redefine marriage, hundreds of thousands of people who believe in traditional marriage could be at risk in their jobs. The British Airways employee Nadia Eweida, who was stopped from wearing a cross at work, won her case. We were not directly involved in her claim but we are delighted for her. So, it seems, Christians are allowed to wear the cross at work but not allowed to act upon their deeply held beliefs about marriage. Two other British Christians lost their claims for religious discrimination, but they have declared they will appeal against those decisions.

Let us fight for Christian marriage while we have it.

Belgian Men Euthanised

Christian Institute

Identical Belgian twins who were not terminally ill have been killed by lethal injection in a case believed to be the first of its kind. Marc and Eddy Verbessem, who were born deaf, sought euthanasia after discovering they were both going blind. They believed their lives would not be worth living if they could not see

each other, according to their brother. It has emerged that the pair, aged 45, had to overcome strong resistance from their family to be killed. Their local hospital refused to euthanise them, and raised doubts about whether their situation met the requirements of Belgian legislation. A professor of medical ethics at Leuven in Belgium criticised the killing saying: 'In a society as wealthy as ours, we must find another, caring way to deal with human frailty'. Under Belgian law a doctor must judge that a patient is unbearably suffering, and the patient must make clear their wish to be killed. However in this case neither were suffering extreme physical pain nor were terminally ill, according to media reports. Their local hospital said the law is 'clearly open to various interpretations', but warned that if any blind or deaf person is allowed to be killed then the country would be moving far away from what the legislation intended. Professor Wim Distelmans, the doctor who allowed the killing, said: 'It is certain that the twins meet all the conditions for euthanasia'. Belgium was the second country in the world after the Netherlands to legalise euthanasia. Last month it was revealed that Belgium is considering allowing children and Alzheimer's sufferers to ask to be euthanised. Dr Peter Saunders, director of UK-based campaign group Care not Killing, has warned: 'Once you relax the law on euthanasia or assisted suicide steady extension will follow as night follows day'.

When people no longer fear God and forget that God our Creator and Owner alone has the right to take away life, life becomes increasingly cheap and murders of this type will increasingly take place.

Pastor Beaten and Tortured in Iran

Barnabas

A pastor beaten and tortured in jail for his Christian activities in Iran has said such sufferings 'only make you a man of steel' for expanding Christ's kingdom. Saeed Abedeni (32), who is now a US citizen, was arrested last September while visiting his native Iran. He is being tried on charges of compromising national security. Court documents reveal that the charges are a pretext for Saeed's work in starting a house church movement in 2000 following his conversion from Islam to Christianity. He became a US citizen in 2010 after marrying an American woman, Naghmeh. The couple live with their two children in Idaho. Saeed, who was ordained as a minister in 2008, has returned to Iran with his family on several occasions over the past few years to visit relatives and continue his ministry. Saeed has been detained since his arrest last September; he has endured beatings, torture and threats at the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran. In a moving letter to his wife, Saeed wrote about his ordeal: 'One day I am told I will be freed and allowed to see my kids on Christmas (which was a lie) and the next day I am told I will hang for my faith in Jesus. One day there are intense pains after beatings in interrogations, the next day they are nice to you and offer you candy'.

Saeed reflected on how God is transforming him through these mixed experiences: 'I always wanted God to make me a godly man. I did not realise that in order to become a godly man we need to become like steel under pressure. It is a hard process of warm and cold to make steel. These hot and colds only make you a man of steel for moving forward in expanding His Kingdom'. Saeed had been trained by Hezbollah to become a suicide bomber and was deeply depressed before his remarkable



Pastor Saeed Abedeni

conversion to Christianity. He was transformed into a fearless evangelist and has been instrumental in leading many Muslims to Christ and establishing a number of house churches in Iran. Prior to his arrest last September, Saeed had been detained twice by the Iranian authorities during visits to the country. On the first occasion, in 2009, he was interrogated about his conversion to Christianity and warned against continuing with his house church activities; the second arrest happened while he was working on an orphanage project last July.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has called for Saeed's immediate and unconditional release. Chairman Katrina Lantos Swett said: 'The national security charges levelled against Mr Abedeni are bogus and are a typical tactic by the Iranian government to masquerade the real reason for the charges: to suppress religious belief and activity of which the Iranian government does not approve'.

Thank God for the grace He gives to modern martyrs just as He did in the past.

Persecution in Egypt

Barnabas

A Christian mother and her seven children have been jailed for 15 years in Egypt for changing their religious affiliation on their identity cards after they left Islam. Nadia Ali Mohamed and her family returned to Christianity in 2004 having previously converted to Islam; they subsequently replaced their Muslim names on their identity cards with their Christian names. Two years later, one of the boys, Bishoy Malak Abdel-Massih, was arrested in an information centre in Beni Suef, where the family live. Police were suspicious of the young man's documents and interrogated him for hours until he confessed his conversion to Christianity. Charges were subsequently brought for violating Egyptian laws governing name changes against Nadia, her seven children and the seven clerks from the registration office who had amended the family's documents. The criminal court in Beni Suef sentenced each member of the family to 15 years in prison and the clerks to five years behind bars. It is not possible for converts from Islam to Christianity to change their religious affiliation on their identity cards in Egypt. There is, however, precedent for Christians who converted to Islam and later returned to Christianity being permitted to change their documents back to their original status. But this is an extremely difficult process. Converts from Christianity to Islam, however, can change their identity cards without hindrance.

In a separate incident that also demonstrates the vulnerability of Christians in Egypt, a church-owned community building was destroyed by Muslims, who feared it was going to be turned into a place of worship. The centre in the village of Fanous, Fayoum province, consisted of a reception hall on the first floor and a kindergarten on the second. On 16 January, hundreds of Muslims came out of the mosques carrying hammers and chanting Islamic slogans, having been rallied to go and help fellow Muslims in Fanous, where Christians were said to be 'building a church'. They demolished the centre, shouting 'Allahu Akbar' ('god is great'). The security forces failed to intervene, and nobody has been arrested in connection with the incident. Local Muslims had previously raised objections to the building, despite its having all the necessary government permits. A meeting had taken place between the village mayor and elders from both the Muslim and Christian communities; it was agreed that only the first floor would remain and the second be demolished, but this agreement was not honoured by the Muslim vigilantes.

The 'Arab Spring' has led to less freedom for Christians in Arab countries and increased their persecution.

Media Publications Manager

Cardrona Charitable Trust is looking for a Media Publications Manager capable of delivering the message of the Trust through various media across Scotland. The ideal candidate for this full-time role must have a good knowledge of the Scottish church scene, a good understanding of and sympathy with the values of the Reformation and of the Westminster Confession of Faith in particular. The candidate will also be expected to help as well as implement a vision for disseminating these values. The role will also include organising various meetings, events and conferences as well as travel throughout Scotland. Remuneration will be commensurate with previous experience. Applications should be made in writing or by email to the following address: Cardrona Charitable Trust, c/o Robertson Craig, 3 Clairmont Gardens, Glasgow, G3 7LW. Vacancy20130108@robertsoncraig.co.uk.

Accounts of the 1859-60 Revival Eyemouth, Berwickshire

Rev John Turnbull – Individual Accounts of Conversion



'C' was rude and intemperate. He has given himself to Christ; and now he is one of the gentlest and most loving of men. He is a kind husband and father. He prays in his family, and in our church-meetings. With tears in his eyes, he thanks God for what He has done for him; and prays that God would not leave any of his relations exposed to the condemnation from which he has been delivered. He takes a part in the numerous private prayer-meetings which are being held in the town, and goes to the neighbouring villages for the same purpose.

'D' attended the house of God regularly; he read the Scriptures and worshipped God in his family, yet he had but the form of godliness. Some months ago he began to suspect this; his sins began to lie heavy upon his conscience. After the revival had begun, he became more and more troubled, till at last he spent whole nights weeping and praying for deliverance. One morning he was summoned to go to sea. At this time he felt very unwell, caused, no doubt, by his intense anxiety. After going into the boat, he felt so oppressed by a sense of his sin and danger, that he was obliged to go below to cry for mercy. While he was praying, he obtained deliverance and He said to me when he came ashore, he could not help running up to everybody he met, and shaking hands with them and telling of his new-found joy. 'Mother', he said, addressing his aged parent, 'I thought I was a good man; I find now I have been but a servant of the devil'. Very happy must this old woman be, for other two of her sons and her daughters, and a son-in-law have been brought to Christ at this time.

'E' was a man of intemperate habits and intractable temper. He attended the house of God, but somewhat irregularly.

One could see, however, that his heart was not there - that he was not one of those who could say, 'A day in thy courts is better than a thousand'. A softening and solemnising influence came over him at the time when the revival commenced. He became anxious about his soul. His wife obtained peace at the Methodist church while engaged in singing a hymn; but his burden remained. One day he called for me. On entering the study where he was, I found him sitting with downcast face and eyes streaming with tears. Putting his finger upon a verse of the hymn, 'Just as I am', he said, 'This quite answers me'. He then spoke of the life he had led; of his many and aggravated sins; of the sense of wrath that was upon his soul. He had sinned, he feared, beyond forgiveness. He feared there was no mercy for such a sinner as he was. I reminded him of the words, 'Though your sins be as scarlet', etc and of Christ's own words, 'Come unto me,' etc and 'The Son of man came to save that which was lost'. I told him that he was not further from God than the lost were; that the Lord could hear his cry from the depths of the pit, and come down and deliver him. Often we met and prayed that his burden might be removed.

After some days it pleased the Lord to remove it. Light dawned upon him; he saw the beauty of Christ; he saw how free he was to come to Christ, and to all the blessings of the gospel; and accepted what was so freely offered. He cast himself entirely on Christ; and now he can say, 'I know in whom I have believed', and 'My Beloved is mine, and I am His'. He is now a sober, rigidly-abstaining man. He has begun to worship God in his family, and takes a part in our prayer-meetings. His daughters have also been converted at this time; and his wife, a newly-converted, rejoicing Christian, says, 'Sir, our house is now a heaven upon earth'.

To be continued



Books

Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry

Addresses and Articles by Faculty and Friends of Princeton

Selected by James M Garretson,
Banner of Truth Trust,
hbk, two vols 1395pp, £34.00

The name of Princeton has an honoured place in the annals of Presbyterian history. Established in 1812 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and located in the township of the same name in west-central New Jersey, Princeton Theological Seminary began with three students and Archibald Alexander as its first professor. For a century and more it was famous for its doughty defence of orthodox Christian belief until the rise of modernism within the Presbyterian Church led to the departure of conservative members of the faculty and the formation of Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929 under the leadership of J Gresham Machen.

Today Princeton has over five hundred students and a faculty of more than fifty but while it retains a nominal link to Presbyterianism through its affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (USA) it is an altogether different institution from the one which was founded two hundred years ago. This may be demonstrated (sadly) by a Scottish link: the current President of Princeton is Iain R Torrance, a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and a strong supporter of the ordination of homosexuals and inter-faith dialogue.

These well-produced volumes take us back to Princeton's halcyon days. Given that the Banner has already published many works by Princeton worthies, plus a two-volume history of the Seminary by David Calhoun and 'Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton' and 'Princeton and Preaching' by James Garretson, the question might reasonably be asked, What is left to put into print?

The answer is this useful collection of seventy-five addresses, sermons, articles and essays by Princeton men, many of which were previously unavailable. It will be of particular interest to ministers, students for the ministry and those who train them; others might think the price of the work rather high for what they will get out of it. Following a helpful introduction by Garretson and after an address by William Sprague delivered on the occasion of Princeton's first half-century Volume 1 is taken up chiefly with items from Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. Volume 2 continues in a broadly chronological fashion, containing some contributions from lesser-known men such as J W Alexander and William Paxton but dominated by items from Charles Hodge and B B Warfield, until finally we come to the men who were serving when Princeton's sun was sinking. There are pieces from the stalwart Gresham Machen, from a contemporary who followed him (Maitland Alexander) and from two who did not, although their hearts were doubtless with him (Geerhardus Vos and Caspar Wistar Hodge). Brief biographical details are provided for each contributor.

How may we summarise this material? There are subjects one would expect to find in a title of this sort, such as *The Pastoral Office* (Archibald Alexander), *The Teaching Office of the Church* (Charles Hodge) and *The Religious Life of Theological Students* (Warfield). There are less-obvious subjects, such as *The Use and Abuse of Books* (Archibald Alexander) and *The Duty, Benefits, and Proper Method of Religious Fasting* (Miller). There are also some pieces which will be of general interest to Christians, including *Evidences of a New Heart* (Archibald Alexander), *Revivals of Religion* (Miller), *What is Calvinism?* (Warfield) and *Christianity and Culture* (Machen).

For this reviewer a most challenging (and encouraging) article was Miller's sermon to Princeton Alumni entitled *Christ the Model of Gospel Ministers*, based on our Lord's words in Matthew 4:19: 'Follow me, and I



will make you fishers of men'. Miller humbles us all when he says: 'I firmly believe that if we were more like Christ, more devoted, spiritual, diligent, and prayerful, we should all of us be more successful in "winning souls" to him; and, consequently, that if we are seldom or never thus honoured, it is chiefly because we so little resemble him'. He concludes with these stirring words: 'In following [Christ], and only in following him, you will be best qualified to promote the enlargement, the holiness, and the genuine edification of the church of God. May this be your habitual aspiration, this your blessed attainment! And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, may you all be so happy as to receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away! Amen and Amen'.

The times in which these addresses and articles were given or written were clearly very different from our own and many will say that the material which has been collected here has little relevance for our modern age. That is a great mistake. What today's church needs above all is a ministry which is at the same time sound in the faith and separated from the world - men who are walking habitually in the 'old paths' of truth and godliness. The 'Princetonians' can help us to recover this spirit. As Garretson says, they were 'men who knew Christ's love and who loved him in return'.

Rev David Blunt

The Culdee Church: Scotland's First Presbyterians

TV Moore

Printed as Issue 66 of The Presbyterian Standard,
James Begg Society, pbk, 46 pp, £2.50

Copies may be obtained from: Mr Donald Morgan, 7
Cearn Sheileidh, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis HS1 2YW, tel:
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This publication represents an interesting development for the Presbyterian Standard magazine, which has followed a conventional format in previous years, printing a variety of short and serialised articles per issue. Perhaps recognising that the conservative periodical market is now a fairly busy one with the reformatted Bulwark, and old standards such as the Banner of Truth and Bible League Quarterly, the intention now is to use the quarterly publication rather for reprinting some of the substantial pamphlet literature of the past. This is a very stimulating idea, and the Editor could do worse than consider some of the writings of Dr Begg himself for republication, as most of his important works were pamphlets rather than full-length books.

This particular work is a historical study of the Celtic or Culdee Church, first published in 1868, by an Irish-American writer probably better-known today as a thoughtful and reliable commentator on some of the Minor Prophets. Moore sets out to prove two fairly controversial propositions: first, that the Christian Church in Scotland was first planted not from Rome but by Greek-speaking missionaries, perhaps even as early as Apostolic times; second, that the Culdee Church was broadly Presbyterian in its government and character. Moore certainly assembles some interesting information in support of these arguments. I certainly was not aware that Tertullian, an early Father who died c225 AD, had commented that 'those parts of Britain that were inaccessible to the

Romans had become subject to Christ', or that the Roman Catholic historian Baronius claimed that Christianity had reached Britain as early as AD 35. Other aspects of Moore's argument are rather speculative, such as the suggestion of an ethnic link between the Galatians of Asia Minor and the Celts of the British Isles leading to early missionary effort across the continent of Europe. What is certainly clear is that the Celtic Church developed with a certain independence of spirit and distinctiveness of character from the Roman Catholicism of the Continent, whatever the historical factors may be that contributed to this.

Regarding Moore's second assertion, he certainly demonstrates that diocesan episcopacy was not fully developed in the Scottish Church until the twelfth century, and that in previous centuries ordination was carried out by fellow-ministers, 'presbyters', such as the Abbot of Iona, rather than by bishops in the prelatic sense. Again, the difficulty lies in the lack of evidence, as it is difficult to demonstrate that such practice reflected a presbyterian understanding of parity, rather than sheer exigency in an exceedingly remote and isolated outpost of the Christian Church.

Moore's work should probably be counterbalanced by more recent scholarship, such as the work of Professor Donald Meek, who is very sceptical regarding many of the claims made for the distinctive spirituality of the Celtic Church. Meek has demonstrated that, despite its independent spirit, the Celtic Church shared many of the features of medieval Catholicism, such as the centrality of the sacraments, monasticism and the Christian calendar of festivals. He writes particularly in response to the Church of Scotland's Iona Community, which pushes an aggressive liberal agenda on issues as diverse as environmentalism, gay rights, and nuclear disarmament, under the guise of 'rediscovering' Celtic Christianity. The danger is that history is used, especially where the evidence is very scanty, to promote the writer's agenda rather than to reflect reasoned conclusions, and this is as much a danger for the Reformed historian keen to find an ongoing heritage of evangelical religion as for the 'hippy brigade'. What is beyond question is that Scotland has had a Christian presence, and no doubt a succession of true believers, since the early days of the expansion of Christianity, and maybe this should satisfy us.

Rev Alasdair J Macleod

Westminster Confession of Faith

Pocket Puritan, Soft Cover Edition, 136pp, £10.00

Baptist Confession of Faith 1689

Pocket Puritan, Soft Cover Edition, 128pp, £10.00

Here we have very pleasing and handy editions of the Westminster Confession which had been published in 1646 and the 1689 Baptist Confession. They are pleasingly presented in a book format which fits easily into the pocket. The proof texts (references) are included and the Westminster Confession has a fine introduction by Sinclair Ferguson. The amendments by the Presbyterian Church in America are included which is useful in comparing the documents to which subscription is rendered in the American churches with that in Scotland.

The 1689 Baptist Confession is simply the Westminster

Confession adapted to Baptist beliefs (especially that baptism is only to be administered upon the individual's profession of faith and also distinctive views on the church and the civil magistrate). The Congregationalists (who argue that every congregation is to be independent) had revised the Westminster Confession to reflect their own views and published it under the name of the Savoy Confession (1658). The Baptist Confession was first issued in 1677, anonymously because of the widespread persecution, and was known as the Second London Confession. After the Revolution and the settlement of William and Mary on the throne, representatives of 107 Baptist congregations met in London in 1689 and adopted the 1677 Confession. It

was thereafter called the 1689 Confession and became and still is the most popular confession of the Calvinistic Baptists. Walter Chantry writes in the introduction: 'Here the younger members of our church will have a body of divinity in small compass, and by means of the Scriptural proofs, will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them'. Spurgeon writes, 'This little volume is not issued as an authoritative rule, or code of faith, whereby you are to be fettered, but as an assistance to you in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness'.

Rev William Macleod



Fighting the Good Fight (Part II)

Rev Maurice Roberts

The substance of an address given at the School in Theology,
Larbert, 2012

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing
(2 Timothy 4:7-8)

Could I step back for a moment and look at church history very briefly. May I suggest that it is useful to look at church history in four divisions, each of five hundred years. We are talking about rough, round, approximate figures here of course. In the first five hundred years or so there was a wonderful spreading of the gospel. How did it happen? What were they doing? The gospel went from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, to Greece, to Rome, to Britain and to other countries, very quickly. However did it happen? What caused it? It was preaching, preaching, preaching, witnessing, testifying and praying and suffering martyrdom for our blessed Lord.

Once the gospel had really got hold in the Roman Empire, one of the emperors - after the days of Constantine when Christianity became the official religion of the empire - Julian by name, tried to reverse the progress and influence of Christianity. Julian the Apostate, as he is called, did everything educationally to try to suppress the gospel and to keep the people of God back and not allow them to make advancement. Yet, as you well know, he died on the field of battle fighting against the Persians. As he did so, he was fatally wounded. Lying on the ground, soon to die, he exclaimed, 'Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!' Christ had conquered and he as Emperor had failed to stop it happening. That is what all the haters of Christ will have to say in the end. Christ will conquer. So the fight you are fighting, dear brethren, is good, very good, extremely good. And I want to give you a few reasons why it is good.

The Fight is Good

First, the fight is good because you who are the fighters are standing for God's glory in this world. You cannot do anything

more important to glorify God. That is number one priority in the life of everyone who serves the Lord - standing up for the glory of God. And He knows that, and the angels know that. Another reason why you are doing a good work and fighting a good fight is this. Because the truth you preach is not from man, it is God's own truth. It is His own revelation. We are not advancing theories of our own; we are not promulgating philosophies of men. This is the truth of the living God, who has told us to preach our gospel to all mankind in order that He might save sinful men and women by His love and grace. A third reason we are fighting a good fight is because we are doing what Christ Himself did. Our blessed Lord was doing the same thing. What was His great work? It was preaching and teaching. The miracles He did of course we cannot do but He did those as evidences of His Godhood, and displays of His divinity and to give evidence of the truth of what He was preaching. But he preached so as to feed men's precious souls. 'Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep'. You are 'fishers of men', He said.

It was a wonderful story, was it not, when they were in the boat and the miraculous draught of fishes occurred. Peter and the others who were helping in the boat were astonished, because the night before they had toiled all night and caught nothing. Now, at the command of Christ, the nets were full which they dragged to land. What does Peter do? He falls on his knees: 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord' (Luke 5:8). The divinity of this person, Jesus, is altogether obvious to Peter. And what was Jesus to say to him? 'I will make you fishers of men' (Matthew 4:19). So it is a good work and a good fight.

Years ago I was in London walking through the streets as a young Christian man and I saw a person in a wheelchair. He

was only about twenty-five. He was being pushed along by an older fellow and they both stopped at a certain point. The older man took out a cigarette, stuck it between the lips of the frail man in the chair and away he went, slowly walking down the street, pushing the wheelchair. I said to the man who was doing the pushing, 'I'm terribly sorry to see that fellow in the chair – so young, so disabled'. He said, 'You see that man sitting in that chair, he was once a boxing champion and that is what has left him like that – so disabled'. I mention this experience of mine because it shows how sometimes people sadly waste their strength, waste their health, waste their time on the things of small value. But those who fight for Christ do not waste their strength or their energy. They are fighting what Paul calls here a 'good fight'.

I mentioned a moment ago that the first five hundred years of the Christian church were a wonderful example of how the gospel goes forth in power and shakes nations. Would that that had continued, but it did not. Take the next five hundred years, from roughly 400/500 to 1000 AD. What happened in that period? Well in that period there was a terrible decline. I mention it for this reason. Something fearful began to happen.

There was a group in North Africa called the Donatists. Without going into detail just now, the Donatists were more or less orthodox in theology but separatist in their views. They did not want to belong to the Roman Catholic Church. They were not heretics. They were separate from the Catholic Church and they wanted to remain separate from the Roman Catholic Church for reasons that I cannot go into now. What happened to these Donatists? Did the Roman Church say to them, 'O well, you are entitled to believe what you wish. You have a good conscience. Get on with it. God bless you'. No. Even the great Augustine of Hippo, who was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding leaders and teachers in the history of the church, took the view that you cannot tolerate any kind of separation like this. He quoted a verse of Scripture to try to justify the use of force: 'Compel them to come in' (Luke 14:23). That was the verse he adopted to deal with these independent people who did not want to belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Of course you know the next word is 'persecution'. That was the beginning of a terrible wave of change in that church.

Brutality

Take the third of these five hundreds – from 1000 to 1500 AD. Here you have the church in its most brutal form. My dear friends, it is hard to imagine just how brutal it was, but I can tell you what they did. There arose a pope called Urban II. In 1095 he instituted a thing called the First Crusade. They did not go to fight with Bibles and gospel tracts but with swords and spears. They sailed from Europe to the Middle East where those of another religion were in power. The fight was over possession of the Holy Land. The method of fighting, sad to say, was to slay their opponents and fill the land with their blood. They were fighting a battle but it certainly was not a good battle. It was not the battle which Christ ordained. It was a very bad battle for which they had no Biblical warrant.

In the third of these Crusades in 1202, they were attacking not only those who lived in the Middle East but also Constantinople, which is the capital city of the Eastern Empire

and therefore of the Eastern Church, the Greek Orthodox Church. It so weakened that population that the Greek Orthodox Church eventually crumbled and their civilisation was overthrown.

That was bad enough. But come now to the year 1229 and to Pope Gregory IX. He instituted the Inquisition in southern France against the Albigensians. These were southern French Christians. I believe they were humble and sincere Christians for the most part. Bad things have been said about them but most of what we know about the Albigensians arises from Roman Catholic sources. There may have been some unorthodox persons among them but many of these Albigensians were probably humble evangelical, Bible-believing Christians. But they were slaughtered by the thousand and wiped out. If any persons doubt what I here affirm of the Albigensians I would recommend that they read *The History of the Ancient Vallenses and Albigenses* by George Stanley Faber. It puts right the all too common idea that the Albigensians were nothing better than heretics.

A little later another pope came along. What did he do? He instituted what we call the Spanish Inquisition. I don't know if you realise how many people died through the Spanish Inquisition. It was set up to inquire into what you believed, what you did in secret. Were you conformable to the Catholic Church? If not, look out as we will torture you for a few days and see what you will do at the end of your torture. The number of people who died as a consequence of this fearful and inhuman organisation, known as the Spanish Inquisition, is reckoned to have been between fifty to sixty-eight million. I have this figure from Dr. Alan Cairns' excellent book 'Dictionary of Theological Terms'. He is a very careful and accurate writer.

Why do I mention the Inquisition? Because, my dear friends, it shows what men will do if they depart from the great fundamental principles upon which we are to conduct our fighting. Yes, they were fighting, but it was not the 'good fight' that you and I approve of.

The Reformation

So I bring you now to the fourth period of church history. Let us see what John Knox so courageously said to Mary, Queen of Scots. We must remember that it was very much through the courage of men like Knox that you and I have our liberty in this country today. Knox said, 'Madam, I offer myself to prove that the church of the Jews which crucified Christ Jesus was not so far degenerate ... as the Church of Rome declined, and more than five hundred years hath declined from the purity of religion which the apostles taught and planted'. You will find these words of Knox in his own wonderful book, *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*.

What did Queen Mary reply to that? She said, 'My conscience is not so'. To which Knox replied, 'Conscience, Madam, requireth knowledge and I fear that right knowledge you have none'. Blunt talking, wasn't it? He risked his life of course in saying that. Let us not forget that he was fighting the good fight for Scotland and for you and me. He was risking his life for us. Mary Queen of Scots replied like this: 'Ye interpret the Scriptures in one manner and they (the pope and cardinals) in another. Whom shall I believe?' Now here is Knox's point. Here is the great fundamental thing which shows you what

our task is. John Knox replied to Queen Mary, 'Ye shall believe God that plainly speaketh in His Word; and further than the Word teacheth you, shall believe neither the one nor the other. The Word of God is plain in itself. If there appear any obscurity in one place the Holy Ghost, who is never contrarious to Himself, explaineth the same more clearly in other places; so that there can remain no doubt, but unto such as obstinately will remain ignorant'.

I take the time to say these things because, my dear friends, all of this repeats itself again and again. There are two brilliant ways in which the devil turns away people in the church from the fight which we call the good fight of faith. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who explains it like this. He said to His disciples, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees' (Matthew 16:6). What does our Lord mean? I will tell you. The leaven of the Pharisees is to add to the Word of God – adding tradition. That is what the Catholic Church has done. That is what the Jewish Rabbis did of old and were severely rebuked by Christ for doing so. The great fault of the Pharisees was that they added to the Scriptures their man-made traditions.

If you study the Roman Catholic documents today, right up to date, it has not changed. Here is what the Roman Catholic Church says: 'God's authority in matters of religion is found in two places: sacred Scripture and sacred tradition'. I am not saying that out of my own head. It is accurate. You can get it from their Catechism of the Catholic Church. My copy is dated 1995. Allow me to quote this Catechism which is of full authority as a document of the Catholic Church. Here it is: 'As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence'. That is exactly what Christ warns against: adding to the Word of God through the 'leaven of the Pharisees' as He terms it.

At the Reformation this fatal mistake was put right. Martin Luther saw the principle when he said: 'Here I stand, I can do no other'. The principle was the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible as the infallible authority for faith and practice. That wonderful principle of course has brought our nation out of the darkness of the Middle Ages and it has changed our country and is changing other countries like China today as we

have heard in this School in Theology a few days ago.

What now is this leaven of the Sadducees? It is the very opposite - it is taking away from Scripture. That is what the Sadducees did. They would not accept the whole of Scripture. How is this relevant to us? Well, extremely so because what so much damaged the Free Church of Scotland in the 19th Century is just this. It was the leaven of the Sadducees. The Free Church of Scotland in 1843 was undoubtedly a wonderful and a great church. I do not think it is too much to say that - a wonderful church. There was rich blessing all over the country and also on certain mission fields there was the beginning of a great work of God. But in the generation which followed the policy was to send young men to Germany to learn the Higher Criticism as part of their training for the ministry. They were coming back from Germany and teaching the people the ideas of Higher Criticism. As we all know the effects were disastrous.

What did the people in the churches learn to do? They voted with their feet. 'If I can't believe the man speaking out of the Bible, let me stay at home. I am wasting my time listening to some preacher preaching from a Book I cannot trust'. That is what people have done. That is why they are not coming to hear you in our country as once they did. People generally do not any more believe this Book to be the supreme authority of Almighty God.

My dear friends, look at what the Roman Catholic Church did with this principle of adding to Scripture. Albigensians slaughtered by Simon de Montfort – thousands of them. Waldensians in northern Italy – rolled down the mountain to their death - innocent men, women and children. The Hussites of Bohemia – killed. The Lollards, the followers of Wycliffe in England – severely treated. The poor Huguenots of France – again, tortured and killed. No Christians perhaps suffered more than the Huguenots of France.

The great mistake that Augustine made was to argue that the Judicial Law with its penalties from the Old Testament ought to be applied in New Testament times. The penalties of the Judicial Law are not to be applied in this Christian age. They got it terribly wrong and because of that, instead of fighting a good fight, they ruined the cause and it took the Reformation, in the fourth quarter of these four periods of five hundred years, to bring Christianity back to its true character as the religion of truth and love.



'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees'. The leaven of the Pharisees is to add to the Word of God – adding tradition. That is what the Catholic Church has done. That is what the Jewish Rabbis did of old and were severely rebuked by Christ for doing so. What now is this leaven of the Sadducees? It is the very opposite - it is taking away from Scripture.

Sri Lanka Mission Update

Nov - Dec 2012

Dear friends,

I wish you all the blessings of Immanuel, praying that we may all learn to forgive others, as God forgives us in Christ and that we will be more and more conformed to Him in this New Year.

Family

We thank God for His providence to our family in this past year. He has been very kind to us in many ways. This letter is not sufficient to write of all His goodness to us. We remembered our first wedding anniversary on 20th December. We have great joy in this and give all the glory to Christ. When we look back over this year, we can see God's great providences to us in the way He has guided us in His path. As a family, we are very thankful to HIM alone. We can say now, that we are almost settled in our new location. We thank you for your prayers for us as a family. We received a gift of love from our friends. God knows the cheerful givers.

Ministry

Our worship service and midweek prayer meeting are held regularly and are going well by the grace of God. The number of regular attendees at our Sabbath service continues steady. It is held on Sabbath afternoon and I preached through a series on 'The whole armour of God'. It was a blessed study. I continue to teach through the Westminster Confession of Faith at the prayer meetings. It is always good to study the doctrines of God's Word. I have made some contacts with ministers of independent churches. One of them, Pastor Amos, is very keen to study Reformed doctrine and he has started to sing the Psalms in his church. From time to time I preach in his church. I find it encouraging. There are also other pastors who are willing to study the Word of God with us and I am planning to teach pastors two days a month in the village of Cheddikulam which is 40km from our town.

Prayer

Please pray for the preaching of God's Word and the conversion of those who are not yet saved. Pray also for the Bible studies with the local ministers at Cheddikulam.

Special meal

Our congregation met together for a dinner on 25th December. We enjoyed a nice meal prepared by Mr and Mrs Maran, and had a time of fellowship. We had a midnight worship service for New Year. The congregation of our friend Pastor Amos also joined us for our time of worship. Forty people in all attended the service. I preached on 'Forgive one another as God forgives us in Christ'. We had a really nice and blessed meeting. We thank God for this.

New Plans

This coming year, God willing, we hope to start having a Sabbath morning worship service and also a young people's

Bible class at our home.

We also hope to start Bible classes for children in a village 11km from Vavuniya called Selvanagar. Please pray for our children's ministry in this village. Our dear brothers, Amos (who has started to sing Psalms in his church) and Maran (who works with Ceylon Christian Care (CCC)) will teach in this children's ministry. Maran's wife is also a very capable woman and she will also help with the children's ministry. Please pray for these new ministries, that God will give much needed wisdom and grace to continue the work of the Lord.

The lawyers have almost completed the registration of our church. We thank you for your prayers.

The work of translating the Psalms into Tamil, however, has proved difficult and slow. At present we have only thirteen Psalms available to sing in Tamil. Please pray that we will be provided with a capable and appropriate individual to carry out this important work.

Charitable work

As many of you are aware from the article in January's Witness, CCC are willing to support us in charitable work. We are setting up a preschool (nursery) in Selvanagar, and we have distributed exercise books, free of charge, to 100 students in that village. The village is very open to our Christian ministry and appreciates our work amongst the children. There is no church in the village. We look to the Lord and hope that this will be used as a further means to extend His kingdom.

We also distributed eight food packages to the families who have been faithfully attending our worship services. They were very thankful to God for them. We also gave food packages to approximately fifty church-going families who were affected by terrible local flooding. These families were in Cheddikulam and also in Amos' congregation. By the grace of God, we received funds of 210,000Rs (£1,000) from our good friend Ranjan (in Singapore) for this work. We used these funds, with his permission, for this needful work. This ministry is showing our love towards the temporal needs of the poor, and we hope that the Lord will use it to show them that they are also poor spiritually and need Christ.

Finally brethren, we take this opportunity to thank all who have helped us in the Lord's ministry this past year. Especially we give thanks to our Scottish friends who helped us purchase a motorbike for the work of the Lord. Ranjan's family who made the donation for the poor and needy have helped also. Others of you have prayed for us and phoned us and this gives us much encouragement. We are very thankful to you all. One of our RP friends is helping make us a web page for our mission. It is a work in progress, www.rpmission.org. Our Tamil services, with English titles and outline are also available on sermonaudio at www.sermonaudio.com/srilankafcc.

Please pray for all these cheerful givers!

Thank you,

Parthee

“Having an high priest over the house of God;
let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,
having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,
and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Hebrews 10:21-22