

# Good News

# News

Jesus  
Rose

From the Dead



## Editor

Rev William Macleod  
B.Sc Th.M

25 Branklyn Crescent  
Academy Park  
Glasgow  
G13 1GJ

Tel 0141 959 0292  
williammacleod@fccontinuing.org

**Design and Layout:** Alasdair Macleod  
**Cover:** Heather (Jupiter Images, 2012)

### Subscription Details

Subscription rates (including postage) for a year's issues of the two magazines mailed to one address are:

U.K. £25.00  
Europe (Airmail) £30.00  
Overseas (Airmail) £35.00

The congregational rate is £22.00.

We would like to encourage churches to make bulk orders. The *Explorer* may be ordered separately for Sabbath Schools.

Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to: "Free Church Witness"

Subscriptions and orders should be sent to:

Mrs Isobel McQueer  
The Manse, Tordarroch, Farr, Inverness IV2 6XF.  
Email: isobel@snizort.com  
Tel: 01808 521474

### Witness on Tape

The GOOD NEWS magazine is available on two tapes which can be ordered at no cost.

Please order your tapes from:

Mr D Grant  
4E Belmar Court  
Linwood  
PA3 3EE

### FCC Audio Ministry

Sermons by ministers of the Free Church (Continuing) are available on CD and a catalogue listing the sermons may be obtained. The cost of each CD (including postage) is £1.00.

Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to:

"Free Church (Continuing) Tape Ministry"

Please order your catalogue and CDs from:

Mr Donald Morgan  
7 Cearn Sheileidh  
Stornoway  
Isle of Lewis  
HS1 2YW  
Tel: 01851 702476  
email: donaldmorgan186@googlemail.com

	Page
<b>You Will NOT Come to Me . . . . .</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A Story with Christ at the Centre . . . . .</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>God vs. Science . . . . .</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Jesus Rose from the Dead . . . . .</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A Devout Muslim . . . . .</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Is Your Time Short? . . . . .</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>A Timeless Question . . . . .</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>I had an Abortion. . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>My Journey to Christ. . . . .</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Get My Mother in! . . . . .</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The Sinking of the Iolaire . . . . .</b>	<b>19</b>

Church Website at [www.fccontinuing.org](http://www.fccontinuing.org)

### Gifts and Donations

All donations and gifts for the Church should be sent to the Financial Administrator:

Mrs Muriel Smith  
1a Stewartfield  
Stornoway  
Isle of Lewis  
HS1 2UW

from whom further information may be obtained. Cheques should be made payable to "Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)". The Church is a recognised Scottish Charity (No. 030976).

### Published by

Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)  
25 Branklyn Crescent  
Academy Park  
Glasgow  
G13 1GJ

### Printed by

MMS-Almac Ltd.  
Unit F Isla Bank Mills,  
Keith  
AB55 5DD  
Tel: 01542 886409

*For more information, contact the Editor at the address above, or the Home Missions Worker:*

**Donald John Morrison**

**85 Old Edinburgh Road**

**Inverness IV2 3HT**

**SCOTLAND**

**Email: [murtieuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:murtieuk@yahoo.co.uk)**

**Tel: 01463 241618**

**Mob: 07776 010000**

**Good News** replaces the current issue of the **Free Church Witness**.



## You Will **NOT** Come to Me

Jesus once said to the crowd gathered round Him, 'You will not come to me that you might have life' (John 5:40). There is a note of real sadness in His voice. He came from heaven to save people, but they rejected Him. He is God but He became man to reconcile God and men. The personal cost to Himself in the humiliation He suffered, the pain He endured and the death He died, was immense. He offers life in all its richness, fullness and eternity but is rejected. 'You will not come to me that you might have life'. What do you do with Jesus?

### The life given

Jesus is talking to people who appear alive. They stand around, they listen, they talk, they throw stones and eventually they crucify Him. Yet, in reality, they are dead. God warned our first parents in the perfection of Eden, that in the day they would eat of the forbidden fruit they would surely die. Having eaten they heard God's voice in the garden, they felt naked, they hid themselves and they tried to make excuses, but they were dead. They had animal life, they could breathe, walk and talk but they were spiritually dead. They were dead to God, and dead in sins – living a sad, depressing life, growing old, dying and going to hell forever.

What is life in this context? It is knowing God, loving God, trusting God, glorifying God and enjoying God. It is a meaningful, purposeful life for God, with God, and in God. No! – more, it is God living in you. Death is merely falling asleep in Jesus and waking up immediately in the bliss of heaven. Do you have this life, this eternal life? Is God dwelling in your heart already?

### The great message

What a contrast we find between Jesus and every other religious leader. All the rest say, 'Go'. 'Go to a temple, to a shrine, to a priest, to a guru, to Lourdes, to Mecca'. But Jesus says, 'Come, come to me'. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). 'All things are ready: come unto the marriage' (Matthew 22:4). 'And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst' (John 6:35). 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). The prodigal son got a great welcome when he came home. 'Come' is an invitation, a call, a command. Are you aware of Christ's call?

### Those called

This call is not merely addressed to the Jews, or the church people, or the good living, or the elect. It is addressed to all. 'Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man' (Proverbs 8:4). 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth' (Isaiah 45:22). Even those in the most distant parts of the world are called. Come all, come you, come unto Me and you will be saved. 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Revelation 22:17). The Holy Spirit of God, through preaching and Scripture, calls you. The bride, which is the church of Christ, tries to persuade you. Everyone who hears this message should add their voice. The one who is thirsty for peace with God and lasting satisfaction should come. Anyone who wants is invited to come to Christ for eternal life.

---

---

## 'You are called to Christ. He alone is the mighty Saviour.'

### Who are you to come to?

It is not a call to a priest, or a minister, or an evangelist or even a church. You are called to Christ. He is the great Prophet who will teach us all we need to know. He is the great Priest who offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins and intercedes with God on our behalf. He is the great King who subdues us to Himself, who will rule and defend us, restraining and conquering all His and our enemies. He alone is the mighty Saviour. He rightly claims: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (John 14:6). Scripture declares: 'Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead ... This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:10-12).

### How are you to come to Christ?

What does it mean to come? Some might say, 'Start attending church, praying and reading the Bible'. But the Pharisees did that and received no benefit from it. Some would say, 'stop all known sins'. But that is easier said than done. With a big struggle and the help of AA, the alcoholic drunkard can sometimes stop his drinking but usually replaces the sin of drunkenness with that of pride and self-righteousness. Paul was a very good-living person before his conversion. He tells how he tried hard to stop coveting, but the more he tried the more he coveted. 'The commandment came, sin revived, and I died'

(Romans 7:9). So how are you to come to Christ? 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31).

### But what does it mean to believe?

'Believe' can be a hard word. Many people claim to have faith. They say their faith is very important to them and they couldn't do without their faith. In a sense everyone has some kind of faith. So we must distinguish between saving faith and all other kinds of faith which cannot save our souls. There are three elements to this required faith. First, we need to know the way of salvation set out in the Word of God. We need to know about our sinfulness before God, the holiness and justice of God that demands that the sinner be punished, the substitute the Lord Jesus Christ who bore our sins and suffered our hell for us, and the need we have to repent and believe in Him. The second element is assent. We must agree that this is the truth. The third element is trust. It is vital that we commit our soul to Christ. When the Titanic was sinking only those who left the big ship and trusted in the lifeboats were saved. You must cast yourself on Christ. Put another way, you must receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel.

### But what if I am not one of His elect?

Election troubles many as it did me in my youth. I saw it as a barrier. How could I trust in Christ when I did not know if He had died for me? But election is not meant to keep us from Christ. Indeed, it is the very opposite. None of us would come to Christ but for election. We are naturally enemies of God and run away from Him. Faith is a saving grace and God's irresistible grace is required to make us willing to be saved. Do you want to be saved? Praise the Lord if you do because He himself must have given you that desire. Claim Christ as your Saviour and trust in Him.

### You will not come to me

'You will not come to me that you might have life' (John 5:40). Christ is willing to save and able to save but you will not come. You hate Christ and His cross. You would rather do anything than believe in Christ. If you were required to pay a large sum of money, eat no food for a month, crawl to London on your hands and knees, you would do it. Suicide bombers have been falsely promised heaven for killing themselves and others and they willingly make that ultimate sacrifice, sadly only to open their eyes in hell. But just to believe is too easy. You are too proud to accept the free gift. You want to earn it. Repent of your unwillingness to come to Christ. Respond to His loving pleading. Come to Christ!

---

## A Story with Christ at the Centre Alastair Manderson

Following a recent church fellowship I told the speaker that I was delighted to hear his testimony. He responded that he was delighted to have one. I also have the same delight – God gave me a personal story with Himself at the

centre. I want to testify to the glory of God and to how we are saved by God and His grace alone.

### First Hearing

I first heard the Gospel being preached at high school by a

In the Army Cadet Force the Padre talked about the Lord Jesus Christ at muster parades and I was confronted with who Jesus actually is. He is the Saviour. At the time I had terrible language; loved the football; mocked the 'religious types' and was pretty sure that the Roman Catholic and Christian religions were essentially the same thing. But this was the turning point in my life.



minister who had the audacity to talk about the crucifixion story at 'Christmas' time. I felt the man had got his dates wrong and did not benefit from his teaching.

My parents did not have me baptised and they were not active in the church. Bibles were in the home and I was welcome to read them. I once attended an Easter service at the local Church of Scotland where the woman minister did her best to preach. She complimented me on my tie, which had the Simpson Family on it, but did not ask regarding my knowledge of salvation. My eldest brother was, and sadly is, a staunch non-believer and yet he and I were probably (and are) the closest in the family. So all this makes clear that it is not our family history that will save us – salvation is not limited to certain households.

Sometime later, in the Army Cadet Force the Padre, Mr Andrews, talked about the Lord Jesus Christ at muster parades and I was confronted with who Jesus actually is. He is the Saviour. At the time I had terrible language; loved the football; mocked the 'religious types' and was pretty sure that the Roman Catholic and Christian religions were essentially the same thing. But this was the turning point in my life.

#### **Read Bible**

It may seem strange that I was led to read a Bible in a home

climate where it was not valued, but it happened. Looking back now, I know that God was guiding me. The internet was a great tool. I did not value the importance of big doctrinal matters – in a sense this is only a very recent change.

I began to study the Bible but it was initially very difficult. I couldn't start at Genesis and work through because I stumbled over the complex details of creation and the explanation of how the world came to be. The Gospels were the initial treasure, particularly Matthew. These parts of the Bible were easier to read, not because they are 'better' but because they seemed more relevant. Nobody in my family or even at my school seemed to be regular Bible readers. It can be difficult to start reading the Bible, as I know from experience. I would recommend not rushing through it. It is very precious and worth taking time over it. I am thankful for the pace at which I read through the Gospels and the New Testament.

I became conscious of the sin in me which I felt the Bible revealing to me. I struggled to reach out to God, unaware of my own inability, and that God must reach down to me. I believed when I read my parents' Bibles that I was holding in my hand the actual Word of God but initially there was no commitment to this claim. Yet this surely testifies to God's infinite grace in allowing such a process of learning, to take things at a pace which allowed me to absorb the most important teachings,

and so gradually to understand what I was reading. Also He protected me from views of the Scriptures which would not be beneficial to me. God is gracious in giving us His Word, but also in guiding us through it.

### **Prayer**

Prayer was another crucial thing. Prayer is so important. Yet, I had never prayed before a meal nor engaged in worship other than when involved in the Boys' Brigade and school assemblies. Other Christians, other believers, seemed to pray so readily and heartily that when I compared myself to them I found myself lacking. Daily prayer is useful though, not because I had great things to say or wonderful ways of tying in my needs with Scripture but because I now recognised God and desired to give Him His place. I needed to appeal frequently to God in prayer.

### **Changed**

Over a period of time I came to put my faith in Christ. The change began to manifest itself in my life. Having Christ gave me contentment in a school atmosphere where drunkenness was considered a desirable state. I was freed from that desire. My attitude to study improved and far from being a below average pupil, I was Depute-Head Boy in my final year of school. The difference was that King Jesus had the place that He deserved in my life. Ultimately, I came into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ of which I am undeserving. My whole life changed. If it hadn't, what good was Christ's presence in my life?

Setbacks did come however. The church under whose care I placed myself was not a Biblical one. It gave me a modest appreciation for the Sabbath by making me set aside an hour every Lord's Day to go to the Kirk. Christ was not preached there.

Sin is responsible for everything that has gone wrong in my life and I am ultimately responsible for that. Every failure has been caused by myself and cannot be blamed on God. It is remarkable to hear the cries of atheists who point to the damage of sin and conclude there can be no God. I did that myself. For years I had access to a Bible and would not read it; access to Christian places of worship but would not attend them but most crucially as soon as I came to an active relationship with God through Jesus, these things changed.

### **A New Life**

I am now involved and profiting from the ministry in the Free Church (Continuing) and finding every day a blessing, loving to assemble with Christians who worship in a way in keeping with the Bible. This is a great blessing, but it would be worthless if it were not Christ that was preached.

Before I was fifteen, I could not give an account of Christ. I could not tell of the truth of the Bible or the usefulness of prayer nor could I testify that a living relationship with Jesus is possible. Yet today it is very clear. If we accept – and we must – that we are sinners in need of a Saviour then we must grasp the fact that there is only one person capable of saving us – Jesus Christ.

I pray that many others will have the blessings that I have had, and will be able to reflect on the grace of God working in them. Cling to Christ; read the Bible which is all about Him and approach God only in the Saviour's name and seek the Lord's salvation.

## **The Prodigal Son**

Afflictions, though they seem severe,  
In mercy oft are sent;  
They stopped the prodigal's career,  
And forced him to repent.

Although he no relents felt  
Till he had spent his store,  
His stubborn heart began to melt  
When famine pinched him sore.

'What have I gained by sin', he said,  
'But hunger, shame, and fear;  
My father's house abounds with bread,  
While I am starving here.

I'll go, and tell him all I've done,  
And fall before his face;  
Unworthy to be called his son,  
I'll seek a servant's place'.

His father saw him coming back,  
He saw, and ran, and smiled;  
And threw his arms around the neck  
Of his rebellious child.

'Father, I've sinned—but O forgive!  
'I've heard enough', he said,  
'Rejoice, my house, my son's alive,  
For whom I mourned as dead.

Now let the fatted calf be slain,  
And spread the news around;  
My son was dead, but lives again,  
Was lost, but now is found'.

'Tis thus the Lord His love reveals,  
To call poor sinners home;  
More than a father's love He feels,  
And welcomes all that come.

**John Newton**



## God vs. Science

*A true story by one of our most brilliant scientists*

Let me explain the problem science has with religion'. The atheist professor of philosophy pauses before his class and then asks one of his new students to stand.

'You're a Christian, aren't you?'

'Yes sir', the student says.

'So you believe in God?'

'Absolutely'.

'Is God good?'

'Sure! God's good'.

'Is God all-powerful? Can God do anything?'

'Yes'.

'Are you good or evil?'

'The Bible says I'm evil'.

The professor grins knowingly. 'Aha! The Bible!' He considers for a moment.

'Here's one for you. Let's say there's a sick person over here and you can cure him. You can do it. Would you help him? Would you try?'

'Yes sir, I would'.

'So you're good...!'

'I wouldn't say that'.

'But why not say that? You'd help a sick and maimed person if you could. Most of us would if we could. But God doesn't'.

The student does not answer, so the professor continues. 'He doesn't, does he? My brother was a Christian who died of cancer, even though he prayed to Jesus to heal him. How is this Jesus good? Hmmm? Can you answer that one?'

The student remains silent.

'No, you can't, can you?' the professor says. He takes a sip of water from a glass on his desk to give the student time to relax.

'Let's start again, young fellow. Is God good?'

'Er ... yes', the student says.

'Is Satan good?'

The student doesn't hesitate on this one. 'No'.

'Then where does Satan come from?'

The student falters. 'From God'.

'That's right. God made Satan, didn't he? Tell me, son, is there evil in this world?'

'Yes, sir'.

'Evil's everywhere, isn't it? And God did make everything, correct?'

'Yes'.

The professor responded: 'So who created evil? If God created everything, then God created evil, since evil exists, and according to the principle that our works define who we are, then God is evil'.

Again, the student has no answer. 'Is there sickness? Immorality? Hatred? Ugliness? All these terrible things, do they exist in this world?'

The student squirms on his feet. 'Yes'.

'So who created them?'

The student does not answer again, so the professor repeats his question.

'Who created them?' There is still no answer. Suddenly the lecturer breaks away to pace in front of the classroom. The class is mesmerised.

'Tell me', he continues to another student, 'Do you believe in Jesus Christ?'

The student's voice betrays him and cracks. 'Yes, professor, I do'.

The old man stops pacing. 'Science says you have five senses you use to identify and observe the world around you. Have you ever seen Jesus?'

'No sir. I've never seen Him'.

'Then tell us if you've ever heard your Jesus?'

'No, sir, I have not'.

'Have you ever felt your Jesus, tasted your Jesus or smelled your Jesus? Have you ever had any sensory perception of Jesus Christ, or God for that matter?'

'No, sir, I'm afraid I haven't'.

'Yet you still believe in him?'

'Yes'.

'According to the rules of empirical, testable, demonstrable protocol, science says your God doesn't exist. What do you say to that?'

'Nothing', the student replies, 'I only have my faith'.

'Yes, faith', the professor repeats, 'and that is the problem science has with God. There is no evidence, only faith'.

The student stands quietly for a moment, before asking a question of his own. 'Professor, is there such a thing as heat?'

'Yes'.

'And is there such a thing as cold?'

'Yes, there's cold too'.

'No sir, there isn't'.

The professor turns to face the student, obviously interested. The room suddenly becomes very quiet. The student begins to explain: 'You can have lots of heat, even more heat, super-heat, mega-heat, unlimited heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat, but we don't have anything called "cold". We can hit up to 459 degrees below zero, which is no heat, but we can't go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold; otherwise we would be able to go colder than the lowest, -459 degrees'.

'Every body or object is susceptible to study when it has or transmits energy, and heat is what makes a body or matter have or transmit energy. Absolute zero (-459.67 F) is the total absence of heat. You see, sir, cold is only a word we use to describe the absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat we can measure in thermal units because heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, sir, just the absence of it'.

Silence across the room. A pen drops somewhere in the classroom, sounding like a hammer.

'What about darkness, professor. Is there such a thing as darkness?'

'Yes', the professor replies without hesitation. 'What is night if it isn't darkness?'

'You're wrong again, sir. Darkness is not something; it is the absence of something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing light, but if you have no light constantly you have nothing and it's called darkness, isn't it? That's the meaning we use to define the word'.

'In reality, darkness isn't. If it were, you would be able to make darkness darker, wouldn't you?'

The professor begins to smile at the student in front of him. This will be a good semester. 'So what point are you making, young man?'

'Yes, professor! My point is, your philosophical premise is flawed to start with, and so your conclusion must also be flawed'.

The professor's face cannot hide his surprise this time.

'Flawed? Can you explain how?'

'You are working on the premise of duality', the student explains. 'You argue that there is life and then there's death: a good God and a bad God. You are viewing the concept of God as something finite, something we can measure. Sir, science can't even explain a thought'. 'It uses electricity and magnetism, but has never seen, much less fully understood either one. To view death as the opposite of life is to be ignorant of the fact that death cannot exist as a substantive thing. Death is not the opposite of life, just the absence of it'.

'Now tell me, professor. Do you teach your students that they evolved from a monkey?'

'If you are referring to the natural evolutionary process, young man, yes, of course I do'.

'Have you ever observed evolution with your own eyes, sir?'

The professor begins to shake his head, still smiling, as he realizes where the argument is going. A very good semester, indeed.

'Since no one has ever observed the process of evolution at work and cannot even prove that this process is an on-going endeavour, are you not teaching your opinion, sir? Are you now not a scientist, but a preacher?'

The class is in uproar. The student remains silent until the commotion has subsided.

'To continue the point you were making earlier to the other student, let me give you an example of what I mean'. The student looks around the room. 'Is there anyone in the class who has ever seen the professor's brain?' The class breaks out into laughter. 'Is there anyone here who has ever heard the professor's brain, felt the professor's brain, touched or smelled the professor's brain? No one appears to have done so. So, according to the established rules of empirical, stable, demonstrable protocol, science says that you have no brain, with all due respect, sir'.

'So if science says you have no brain, how can we trust your lectures, sir?'

Now the room is silent. The professor just stares at the student, his face unreadable.

Finally, after what seems an eternity, the old man answers. 'I guess you'll have to take them on faith'.

'Now, you accept that there is faith, and, in fact, faith exists with life', the student continues. 'Now, sir, is there such a thing as evil?'

Now uncertain, the professor responds, 'Of course, there is. We see it every day. It is in the daily example of man's inhumanity to man. It is in the multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil'.

To this the student replied, 'Evil does not exist sir, or at least it does not exist unto itself. Evil is simply the absence of God. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that man has created to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not have God's love present in his heart. It's like the cold that comes when there is no heat or the darkness that comes when there is no light'.

The professor sat down.



## Jesus Rose from the Dead

**Rev Greg MacDonald**

**T**he book of Acts records the courage of the apostles in preaching about the risen Jesus. Before His death, these very men were so often worryingly misguided that you begin to despair of them. One betrays Him. All forsake Him. Peter denies Him. After Jesus died they were terrified. They hid behind locked doors, did nothing, said nothing. Yet somehow, in Acts 5, there is Peter, speaking up for Jesus. It's not as if suddenly everyone was going easy on them. They had been imprisoned. Beating or even death were possibilities. Yet here before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, they announce with confidence the same message which they had preached publicly in the temple: 'Jesus died, but is now risen'. The Gospel changed them. It did that away back then, and it still does it today, because it is built on truth.

### **Jesus' death**

Today the Gospel itself and saving faith still both rest on the reality of Jesus' death. You have to have a Saviour who died. Our Gospel of hope for your immortal soul rests squarely on this foundational truth: Jesus died. There is no lack of evidence to support this.

#### **The Lord's friends admit it.**

Do you see why that matters? Put it this way: no friend of yours would ever say that you had died, unless you did die. Enemies might wish you dead, but not friends.

The disciples had actually been quite confused by Jesus' talk of His death, and plainly opposed to the idea (Matthew 16:21-22). So the very people who got scared at the mere mention of His death, who rebuked Jesus for repeatedly raising the subject, now say that yes, Jesus died!

#### **Even his enemies admit it.**

In Acts 5 Peter accused them of murdering Jesus. Despite this, not one person tries to raise a defence based on Jesus still being alive! That would have been easy! But it was impossible, because Jesus died, and everyone knew it.

God made sure that even the words of His enemies assure you that Jesus died. It is an incontrovertible truth, at the core

of the Gospel.

### **Jesus' resurrection**

Peter says more: he says 'the God of our fathers raised up Jesus'. We need Jesus to die, but equally to rise. To help us believe this we get three proofs.

#### **i. The testimony of the apostles**

They saw Him. They bore witness. More than five hundred saw Jesus risen.

#### **ii. Look at the reaction of the enemies**

Guilt. They were cut to the heart. Their own consciences raised the uncomfortable truth: Peter is right! Their own conscience accused them. Guilt swamped them. Their first reaction is to kill the disciples. Their screaming hearts were desperate not to hear any more of resurrection, of return to life, of their murdering of Messiah.

Why?

Because their own hearts suspected it was true. It was just because their consciences were convinced that what Peter said was true that they were cut to the heart.

#### **iii. The counsel of Gamaliel**

Gamaliel famously counselled the Sanhedrin to do nothing, because if it was of God, they could not hope to prevail.

How does this prove anything?

Simply because he was right! If Jesus didn't rise, you would not be reading this. If Jesus didn't rise it would have all come to nothing. It would be a footnote in history: 2000 years ago, a man died, while claiming to be the Messiah.

#### **Why has the Gospel survived?**

God has given us the answer in the mouth of unbelieving Gamaliel: Because it is of God, and so it cannot be overthrown.

Jesus died, and Jesus rose. He was dead, but He is alive for evermore. These twin facts are the foundation for the Gospel, the bedrock of faith and a challenge to the unbeliever.

### **Did Jesus really die and rise again?**

Look at it for yourself. But be prepared to face incontrovertible evidence for the most incredible fact of history.

---

---

# Devout Muslim Comes to Christ

*Majed*

I was born into a devout Muslim family in Syria and brought up in Damascus. I faithfully practised Islam by keeping the five pillars (stating the creed, praying five times a day, fasting in Ramadan, giving alms, and even making the pilgrimage to Mecca at age 19). My father worked in the Interior Ministry and my mother was a school-teacher.

## Well Educated

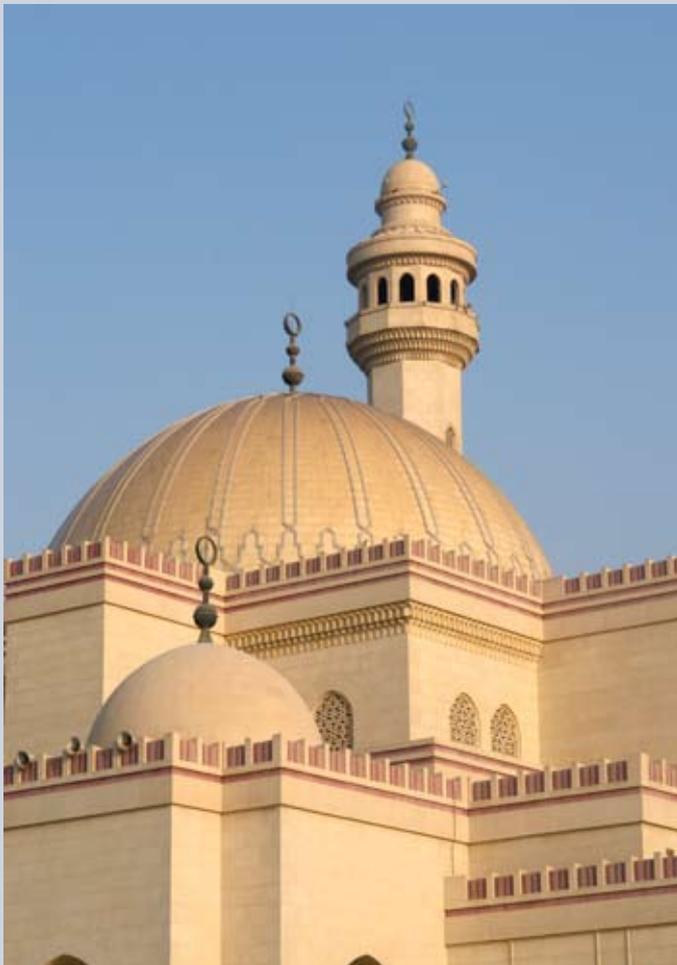
As devout Muslims, my parents made sure that I was well educated in their religion. They sent me to the 'madrasa', a school in the mosque, where I followed intensive study in the summer and after-school classes during my regular academic training from age 7 to 18. In the mosque I memorised the Qur'an, studied the regulations and laws based on the Qur'an and learned classical Arabic by reading the Hadith, commentaries on the Qur'an, Islamic history and philosophy (all according to the Sunni tradition). My secular education was through the government schools and university in Damascus.

## Work in Publishing

After finishing at university I went to the Gulf to work. My father would have been happy for my brother and me to do the required five years of military service, but my mother preferred that she pay the exemption fee, US\$10,000 each. So we both left home; my brother was involved in a civil engineering company and I helped there for six months. Then I moved on to work with an Islamic publishing company. While working in publishing, I had the opportunity to mix with people from other countries. Among my new friends were some Christians.

## Leaflets – Angry

At this same time I received leaflets through my post office box. They spoke of Christ and salvation, but made me angry because of their insensitivity in directly naming Jesus as the Son of God. (Most likely Filipino or Indian Christians who worked in the post office were carrying out this distribution.) Each time I received the leaflets I threw them away.



It was through friendship with my Christian friends that I began to search. I saw the difference between secular Western friends who invited me out for good times and these Christian friends who showed a sincere concern for my welfare. The Christian friends gave me an address to write to for a Bible. I was sent a Gospel of Luke which I began to study regularly with my friends. After such study I would return home, do the required ablutions and pray – I wanted to die as a Muslim. But the next day I would see the Christians again at work.

## Christian Friends

It was through friendship with my Christian friends that I began to search. I saw the difference between secular Western friends who invited me out for good times and these Christian friends who showed a sincere concern for my welfare. The Christian friends gave me an address to write to for a Bible. I was sent a Gospel of Luke which I began to study regularly with my friends. After such study I would return home, do the required ablutions and pray – I wanted to die as a Muslim. But the next day I would see the Christians again at work.

## Debate

As time passed I began to debate more openly with my Christian friends. I started to understand and began drawing near to Christ in spite of my worries. Once I was asked to join with them in prayer and I wondered if they would perform ablutions. Then I found that they prayed while sitting. I was impressed with their attitudes of concern and love; I also appreciated their total respect for Arabs, their history and religion.

## Becoming a Christian

While I was thinking about the Christian faith as a result of this relationship with Christians, I was also travelling to Europe for work purposes. Even as I continued my commitment to study the Bible with my friends, I felt no pressure from them to become a Christian. Yet I was beginning to believe, but continued to live as a Muslim at work. Then I was able to visit the United States where I met a missionary who had worked in the Middle East. In a dramatic way my fear was gone as I interacted with this brother who was such a good example of the Christian faith. When asked if I was ready to take the step and accept Christ, I agreed.

## Persecution

Back in the Gulf, I continued work as usual. My sister-in-law, who came to cook and clean for me now and then, found the Bible. She immediately told my brother and my father in Damascus. Then I received a most painful phone call from my brother. It would be better for me to die than to bring such shame on my family. My employer was also very displeased on receiving the same information and fired me immediately. All of this came about just because I had a Bible and accepted Christ as my Saviour.

Without a job I could not stay in the Gulf and I was unable to apply for a work permit from within the country. Within 72 hours I had to fly out of the country. I was hoping to get a visa, which would permit me to return. However, I was not able to do so.

*Majed is currently involved in ministry to Muslims, mainly producing Christian literature, translation and Bible commentaries. He is also involved in speaking in churches in N Ireland and Europe to explain the faith of Islam and the challenges faced by evangelism to churches. Majed's full story is written in a book called The Fifth Pillar, published by Piquant. Last year, Majed graduated from Belfast Bible College after completing a postgraduate theological course. The aim was to deepen his understanding of the theological aspects of the Bible and the Christian faith so that he could better approach the Muslim community with an apologetic approach involving both dialogue and respect.*

Majed can be contacted by email: [majed@wornet.org](mailto:majed@wornet.org)



## The Anvil of God's Word

Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith's door,  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor,  
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

'How many anvils have you had', said I  
To wear and batter all these hammers so?'  
'Just one', said he, and then with twinkling eye,  
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know'.

'And so', I thought, 'the anvil of God's Word  
For ages sceptic blows have beat upon,  
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The Anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone'.

**John Clifford**

---

---

## Is Your Time Short?

**Rev John Keddie**

Jesus told a story about a rich man (Luke 12:16-21). He had plenty of ground and a great harvest. He was rich. What did he need God for? He was successful— so successful that he thought he would expand his buildings, store up his produce, retire and be happy. This is what he said to himself: 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry' (v19).

You know, many people are like that today. We are in an affluent society. We have plenty and to spare. We think ourselves self-sufficient. We don't need God, or church, or prayer, or Jesus. 'Eat, drink, and be merry'. That sums up most people's lives these days. How is it with you, dear friend? Is that your outlook? Can you not see beyond that? Are you like this rich farmer? You may not think yourself rich. Maybe you aren't. But you have sufficient and to spare. If the worst comes to the worst we can be 'taken care of' by the system. We are thankful, of course, for so much. In truth these are good things.

But it is perilous to leave God out. To live as if there were no ill consequences of our sin – and after all we have all sinned. And that itself – having no thought of God, or of our need of

a Saviour, is a great sin. This rich man was foolish. He thought he did not need salvation. But just when he said to himself: 'take thine ease', God said to him: 'Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' (v20). He had stored up treasure for himself, but he was not rich towards God (v21).

Friends, the day is coming, when God will say of you: 'This night your soul will be required of you'. Who is ready for that night? Only the person who is 'rich towards God'. And who is rich towards God? The person who has Christ as Saviour, who has received Him as their Lord. He is offered to you in the gospel. He is the *only* Saviour, having suffered and died on the cross for sinners. What He has done is the *only* remedy for sinners. You dare not live and die Christless, or you will be lost for all eternity. But now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, now is the time to get right with God, now is the time to repent of sin and come to Christ. Consider Him. Think of your never-dying soul, have a concern today to be 'rich towards God', and not as this rich fool, taken up only with the things of earth.

**'The day is coming when God will say of you: "This night your soul will be required of you". Who is ready for that night?'**



## A Vital Question

**Rev John Keddie**

**P**eople may think: No-one believes the Bible any more. Or they may think, like so many, that religion is at the heart of all our troubles. People are worried about being extreme.

What do people want out of life? Comforts; freedom to do what they want; pleasure and enjoyment. These are all very well: who would not want such things? But listen: these are passing things.

What are the uncertainties we face? Declining health; disappointments and trials; breakdowns in relationships; the loss of loved ones.

What certainties do we face? Our mortality. Death itself. It happens to the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate. It happens to the unimaginably rich celebrities and the poverty-stricken in the third world; in Los Angeles and Calcutta. It happens to the Queen, the Prime Minister; to you and to me.

What then? *What then?* Have you thought of that? Or are you among those who are hoping beyond hope that there is nothing after death? And you're prepared to take that chance? Well, here's a question that the Lord Jesus asks as recorded in the Bible – and I encourage you, dear friends, to read the Bible for yourself. Don't close your mind to it. It is the message of the Bible that in many ways made this a great country. Don't be among those who turn their backs on it. It is God's word. It is His message. It is a timeless message. It is a challenging message. And listen – it addresses itself to the important issues:

'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' (Mark 8:36-37).

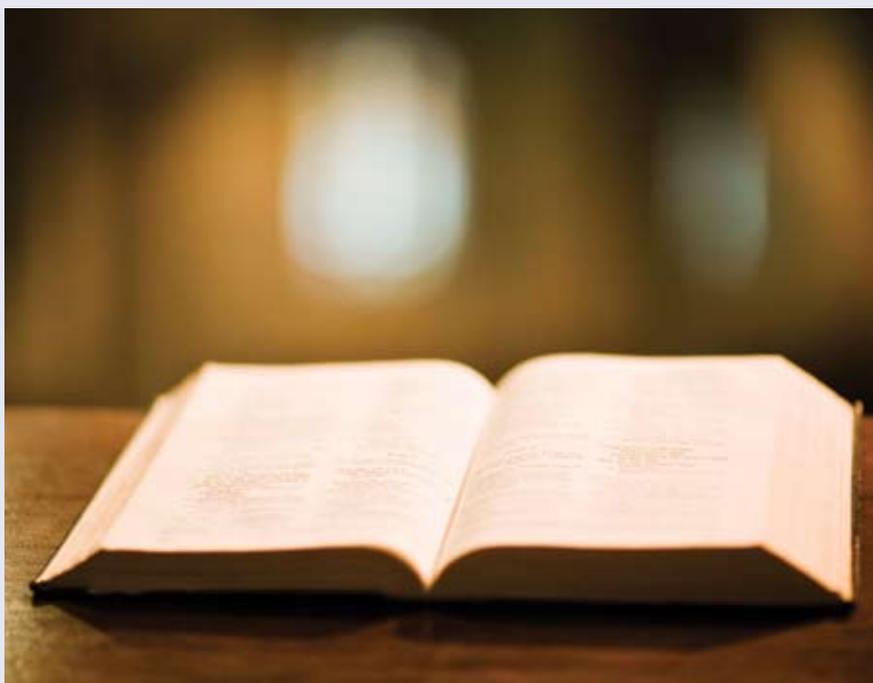
When did you last think about your soul? Do you know that you have a soul? What about the purpose or meaning of your life? And what about death and after? We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account! Gain the whole world? That would suit you, perhaps. Or you may be more modest in your demands on what you get from this life. But are you going to lose your soul? What does that mean? It means, going into eternity and finding yourself lost, beyond the reach of mercy.

Jesus told a gripping story about a rich man and a poor man (Luke 16:19-31). You know what? They both died. Their experiences in this life couldn't be more of a contrast. But death levels everything. Well, not quite. Because the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell. He was lost, you see. How? Because he was rich here? No. *Because he did not have true faith in the Saviour.* He was a sinner (as we all are). But he didn't bother about that. After all, he was doing well, thank you very much.

But in hell he lifted up his eyes, in torments. (This is Jesus' teaching remember). But he spied across a great divide the poor man – Lazarus. He was safe in heaven. How so? Because he had been poor here and deserved to be rich afterwards? Oh, no, but *because he trusted in the Saviour.* Truly.

The fearful thing is that there was a great gulf fixed between the two: one in torment, the other at peace. And it will not change – ever. That is what it is to be lost. Do you want to be lost? Surely you don't. But you will be if you don't repent of your sin and come and believe in Christ as Saviour and Lord. You will be if you fail to consider your soul, and death and eternity.

There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Through faith in Him there is forgiveness of sin. By His death He dealt with the consequences of sin for all who receive Him by faith. May the Lord direct your hearts to seek Him today.



**'Read the Bible for yourself.  
Don't close your mind to it.  
It is God's word.  
It is His message.  
It is a timeless message.  
It is a challenging message.'**



## I had an Abortion

**Mary-Lou Bell (Paisley)**

I had an abortion at 17 because I was frightened and I allowed my fear to control me. I was frightened of the consequences of living at home, and being single, and people getting to know I was sexually active. I regret that this is my story. I regret that I made a mistake to cover up a wrong choice. I regret my abortion.

At the time no one counselled me; no one explained what was going to happen. No one said I had a choice. No one explained to me that living inside me was a growing and perfectly formed 14 week old baby girl. I was to find out all these things later.

Years later I found myself on a hospital ward awaiting fertility tests. The nurse came in and drew the curtain around my bed, as they were talking about termination to another lady across the ward from me. Instantly, this dark cloud descended upon me, as the full weight of what I had done began to surround me.

I desperately wanted a child and I was having difficulty; and all around me women were aborting their babies, and I couldn't have one. They were getting rid of them and I couldn't have one. I aborted my only chance of giving birth to my own child. As a young person I had had so many dreams; after my abortion I knew that I was never going to be good at anything because I had made such a dreadful mistake. I was afraid and I felt that way for years, living under that cloud of fear. I had committed the worst crime ever and I was always afraid of being found out. I buried these emotions, tried to cover them up, get on as best I could. But I knew that deep down I was useless.

But in order to live a healthy life, you cannot live in denial. It does break; you have to come out from under it. The

protective wall begins to crumble. Mine began to crumble when I laid eyes on the baby boy that I had waited so many years to adopt. The pain I felt for the daughter I had lost was overwhelming. But I didn't know then how to express my grief because abortive women are not allowed to express their grief or feel sad for the decision they have made.

I went through months on a roller-coaster of emotions. So excited – elated at being a mum finally for the first time – and realising the grief that I held in my heart for the child that I had aborted. I could no longer deny or keep it buried. I did find a sympathetic counsellor who helped me through these emotions and helped me to come face to face with each area of my life that the abortion had affected.

I did eventually find peace and forgiveness from God and from my parents. God helped me to discover His love, His grace and most of all His mercy. I discovered that He was there the whole time. He was allowing me to make my mistakes. They were my choices. I didn't want to make His choices. He allowed me to make my own choices. He watched as I made one mistake after another. I grieved Him with what I did to my child. Yet He was waiting with open arms to receive me when I eventually by His grace opened my heart to Him completely, and welcomed Him to come in and heal me. And He restored me.

*Taken from the DVD 'Silent No More' produced by British Victims of Abortion, with permission. A 'helpline' is operational every evening of the year from 7-10pm also from 9-5pm during office hours Monday – Friday. Tel: 0845 603 8501.*

---

---

# Why did Jesus Die?

*Rev David Blunt*

**W**hy did Jesus die? It is a question to which very few know the real answer. Do you know? Depending on the answer you give you will either spend eternity in heaven or in hell. It is that important. Ask yourself this question, Why did Jesus die?

## **Natural**

To many it is an easy matter. They think that death is a natural event which comes to everyone in time. 'It's a simple fact', they say, 'we all die. It just happens!' But Jesus died in the prime of His life. And the Bible says that death is 'the wages of sin' (Romans 6:23). It is the payment we have earned for our disobedience. Yet Jesus was not a sinner! He 'knew no sin' (2 Corinthians 5:21). He 'did no sin' (1 Peter 2:22). He was 'separate from sinners' (Hebrews 7:26). Ask yourself again, Why did Jesus die?

## **Criminal**

Jesus was actually put to death. He died on a cross. He was brutally flogged then made to carry His cross to the place of execution. There His hands and feet were fixed by nails to the upright cross. He was left to suffer, bleed and die in agony. Crucifixion was a cruel death used by the Romans for the worst criminals.

Perhaps you think, 'Jesus must have committed a crime! He must have broken the law!' But Jesus did nothing wrong. He had many accusers but 'their witness agreed not together' (Mark 14:56). When the high priest asked Him, 'Art thou the Christ?' He replied truthfully, 'I am', but was charged with blasphemy (Mark 14:61-64). At His trial Pilate's verdict was, 'I find no fault in him' (John 19:4). Even His betrayer Judas confessed, 'I have betrayed the innocent blood' (Matthew 27:4). Ask yourself once more, Why did Jesus die?

## **Example**

You may believe that Jesus was a good man, unworthy of such a death. You say that He died to set us an example. There is certainly something admirable in a man who keeps to his principles, something attractive in a man who suffers in a noble cause. You think it a great shame that a man who 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38) was so cruelly destroyed.

But this is very far from the truth. The death of Christ was not a misfortune or a defeat. Jesus said of His own life, 'No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself' (John 10:18). On the cross He cried, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (Luke 23:46). And on the third day He rose from the dead. Ask yourself yet again, Why did Jesus die?

The fact is that the death of Christ was unique, unlike the death of any other. This is no surprise, for He is God as well as man. The Bible gives us the true answer to this great question, Why did Jesus die? What do we learn?

## **Substitution**

Firstly, Jesus died as a substitute. He died for others. Daniel

foretold that Christ would be 'cut off, but not for himself' (Daniel 9:26). Caiaphas, the high priest of the Jews, prophesied 'that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only' (John 11:51,52). Jesus Himself said, 'I lay down my life for the sheep' (John 10:15). Paul wrote that 'Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it' (Ephesians 5:25). What Jesus did in His life and death He did on behalf of certain people.

## **Redemption**

Secondly, Jesus died as a redeemer. He died for others to pay for their sins. To sin is to disobey God's law. The first man Adam broke God's commandment. He became guilty and lost his original righteousness. He acted in our place so we were all made sinners. We owe a debt to God that we cannot pay. We deserve to be punished in hell for our sins. Divine justice holds sinners captive; divine mercy must intervene and set them free.

To redeem is to recover a possession by paying a ransom. For a people enslaved to sin, Christ undertook to discharge their debts, remove their sin and cancel their condemnation. He came 'to give his life a ransom for many' (Matthew 20:28). He satisfied divine justice by obeying God's law perfectly in His life and suffering its penalty in His death. In Christ we have 'redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins' (Colossians 1:14).

## **Reconciliation**

Thirdly, Jesus died as a reconciler or mediator. He died for others to bring them to God. When Adam sinned he lost his original purity. His heart became wicked and he ceased to enjoy fellowship with his Maker. God's wrath was upon him. In this sinful state we are 'alienated from the life of God' (Ephesians 4:18) and must remain so.

To reconcile is to restore to harmony those at enmity. Christ overcame this separation of sin. 'When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Romans 5:10). Standing in the place of sinners, bearing God's wrath, Jesus turned it away from them forever. 'He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him' (Isaiah 53:5). Mercy, grace and love flow from God through Christ to believing and repentant sinners.

## **Salvation**

Finally, Jesus died as a Saviour. He died for others to bring them to God in everlasting salvation. 'By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us' (Hebrews 9:12). Jesus died but rose again in victory over sin. He ascended to heaven to prepare a place for His own. By His Spirit in the gospel He saves men, making them holy. He will come again to judge the world.

*Friend, as a sinner this cross of Christ is your only hope. You need God's pardon, you need Christ's righteousness. Trust in the Saviour! 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life' (John 3:36).*

---

---

## Calvary



**Y**ears ago a party of people were trekking the vast prairies of what are now the Middle Western States of America. These prairies were covered with tall, dry grass. They had passed a river the day before and were going on with their covered wagons and cattle when suddenly they were horrified to see a thin red line across the western horizon. They cried out with fear, 'The prairie is on fire! What can we do?' The dry grass was to their shoulders, the river was now a day's journey behind them, and they knew of no barrier ahead of them that might hold the flames back.

One of the group was used to pioneer life. He said, 'Clear a space and set fire to the grass behind you'. They did this, and the wind carried the flame away towards the river. 'Now', he said, 'come onto the charred ground and you will be safe'. And so they took their stand there. They could now feel the heat of the fire on their cheeks; and one frightened little girl cried, 'Are you sure we won't be burnt up?' 'Don't be afraid', the old pioneer said, 'the flames can never reach us here: we are

**STANDING WHERE THE FIRE HAS BEEN'.**

When a sinner takes his stand at the place called Calvary, making what once happened there the sole ground of his trust, he is standing where the fire has been, and there the judgment of divine wrath can never reach him. He is perfectly and forever safe because he is relying for his salvation upon the redeeming death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In God's great mercy, the believing sinner's Substitute was put to death upon the Cross that there may be deliverance from God's judgment, law and wrath. By Christ's death, the believer's state has been wonderfully changed. Once threatened with damnation on account of his sins, he is now delivered from all evil and from every fear. 'We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions' (Isaiah 53:4,5); 'Jesus ... delivered us from the wrath to come' (1 Thessalonians 1:10); 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life' (John 3:36).

*Gathered Gems*

---

## My Journey to Christ

***The conversion testimony of Mr Kevin McGrane,  
Elder of Bury St Edmunds Presbyterian Church.***

**I** was raised in a Roman Catholic family, my father having been born in Dublin of Roman Catholic ancestry. Baptism, Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation followed in regular course. After junior education under Ursuline nuns, I moved to a boys' grammar school established by Jesuits. The education was of a high standard (four years of Greek being particularly useful later). However, no student could take an 'O' Level in Religion as every examination board required study of the Bible, which was not permitted. Instead, we were fed a diet of Roman dogma, the sacraments, sacerdotalism, history of the Jesuits, and the Church Fathers. Catechisms instructed that doctrine was not always to be sought in the Bible but in the infallible teaching of the Church. We learned much about Christological heresies, but at no time could we have explained why Christ had died – we supposed that it was that we might have the Mass. Every week the whole school gathered for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, where we worshipped what we were assured was the Lord Jesus Christ, in appearance as a consecrated wafer fixed into a golden sunburst-style monstrance, borne at arms length by a Jesuit priest amidst clouds of incense. This, we sang, was the 'newer rite' that had superseded the former 'types and shadows'.

### **From Romanism to Atheism**

The great tragedy was that there was never anything more than crumbs of truth to be gathered – a starvation diet of Scripture alongside a surfeit of error. Even my father, who hardly accepted the Vatican II reforms promoting a more

enlightened view of the Bible, became critical of this policy when I left the Roman fold. And leave I did. At sixteen, though convincingly devout, I knew this heritage was slipping like sand through my fingers. I had no safe grounds for believing this dogma, and would no longer do so. My parents referred me to the parish priest, who plied me with liquor but could not induce me to recant. For me, the pursuit of truth became an overriding aim, which included opposing error, superstition and hypocrisy. I rapidly drifted into atheism, keenly pointing out to my classmates the unreasonableness of Roman dogma. I refused to attend Mass with my family, or the compulsory Masses at school. I was prepared to accept any sanctions that might be imposed. With regard to truth, I felt this would be found through the scientific enterprise, and thus it was that I became a physics undergraduate at the University of Oxford. It was easier to be a radical atheist at Oxford, away from Roman Catholic pressure, but I was also exposed to those of genuinely Christian convictions: one training for the ministry at Wycliffe Hall; another, John Hughes, a student at my college; and others. I spent many hours discussing theology with them, and also came into contact with the theologian Michael Green, then Rector of St Aldate's. I read books given to me on Christian apologetics, but these, and all the discussions, merely served to sharpen my counter arguments.

### **Unyielding spiritual blindness**

Those who knew me as an atheist have spoken of my unyielding spiritual blindness. My response to evangelism was anything but

---

indifference or apathy, more a reaction of fighting fire with fire. I distributed atheistic tracts and had a determined zeal to promote atheist ideals. I should add that this was not like the contemporary New Atheist brand, which sneers and peddles weak discredited arguments. The likes of Richard Dawkins or Christopher Hitchens would have dismayed me as much then as now.

But my faith in science as a path to truth was severely shaken when I discovered at Oxford a systemic corruption in the enterprise. Science had a fatal flaw: human nature. This was a devastating and life-changing experience – the second time the bottom had fallen out of my world. Later, coming to understand more of the philosophy of science, I have never abandoned the stand I took against the corruption of science that I glimpsed at Oxford, and have seen with greater clarity since. As an idealist, perhaps, I had a very high view of the scientific enterprise, but I now see that atheism will eventually destroy it.

After leaving Oxford, I started a job in radar engineering in Chelmsford, and some months later arrived in Southampton to pursue further studies in electronics. Three hours after moving to the city, I was confronted by a Christian couple doing door-to-door evangelism. They asked me where I had studied previously. 'Oxford University', I replied. 'That's interesting', said the woman, 'Which college?' 'Hertford College', I answered. 'Really? Did you know a student there called John Hughes?' 'Yes', I responded, 'He often came to my room for discussions about Christianity'. 'He's my brother', she replied. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' (Romans 11:33).

I was invited to attend a course of Bible studies, but the leaders were ill prepared for presentations of alternative persuasive answers to their questions. They eventually asked me to stop attending Bible studies – I mention this to their shame as well as mine, and as an example never to emulate – one of them stating that I was not interested in truth. Such a statement was quite unfair: was it not precisely because the Apostle Paul understood the implications of Christian doctrine and had a passion for what he believed to be the truth that he was so zealous to extirpate the church? Likewise, I was far

from apathetic about truth, and had made bold and difficult adjustments in my life in my search for it. Yet it was a zeal not according to knowledge.

I was angered and stung into reading more Christian apologetics. The arguments seemed no more persuasive than before, but now the Scripture verses underpinning them came to me as hammer blows. Why should those sentences leap off the page like a battering ram against the strongholds of my mind? How could these mere words land such devastating blows? Prayer was being made for me, and the Holy Spirit was convicting me of sin, righteousness and judgment, yet also showing me the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ – not through the lens of Roman Catholicism, but through the Word of God. The force of truth was irresistible, and I was granted repentance unto life. 'Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord' (Psalm 25:7).

### **From darkness to light**

I was given a Bible that day, which I read avidly, and that week I ventured into a Christian bookshop in Southampton and was amazed at the treasury of books available. The Lord, there and then, gave me a love of Reformed truth, and I was delighted to come away that day with Hodge on the Westminster Confession of Faith, Cunningham on the Reformers and the theology of the Reformation, and a Greek New Testament. Before long I had come to Presbyterian convictions, though such was a rather exotic species in England in those days.

The reaction of my parents was actually somewhat favourable to begin with: to be a Christian was surely better than to be an atheist. But when it began to dawn that this Christianity was decidedly Protestant, and Calvinist, and that I wanted them to know and believe the gospel, then a certain amount of antagonism became evident. In 1991 my family, with a number of others, were founder members of Bury St Edmunds Presbyterian Church, where I continue to serve as a ruling elder.

*'Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen'* (Revelation 7:12).

**'But my faith in science as a path to truth was severely shaken when I discovered at Oxford a systemic corruption in the enterprise. Science had a fatal flaw: human nature. This was a devastating and life-changing experience – the second time the bottom had fallen out of my world.'**



## Get My Mother In!

A minister was getting ready for bed one night when he heard a knock at the front door. Upon answering it he found a little girl drenched with rain. As he stood looking into her thin, haggard little face, she said, 'Are you the minister?' 'Yes, I am', he replied. 'Well, won't you come down and get my mother in?' she asked. The preacher answered, 'My dear, it is hardly proper for me to come and get your mother in. If she is drunk, you should get a policeman'. 'Oh, sir', she quickly replied, 'you don't understand! My mother isn't drunk; she's at home dying, and she's afraid to die. She wants to go to heaven, but doesn't know how. I told her I would find a minister to get her in. Come quick, sir; she's dying!'

The minister could not resist the appeal of the little girl, so he promised her he would come as soon as he was dressed. The little girl led him into the slum district to an old house, up a rickety stairway, along a dark hall, and finally to a dismal room. There the dying woman lay in the corner. 'I've got the minister for you, Mother. He wasn't ready to come at first, but he's here. You just tell him what you want, and do what he tells you, and he'll get you in!' Too weary to sit up, the poor woman raised her feeble voice and asked, 'Can you do anything for a sinner like me? My life has been lived in sin, and now that I'm dying, I feel that I'm going to hell, but I don't want to go there; I want to go to heaven. What can I do now?'

Looking at her sin-weary face the preacher thought: 'What can I tell her? I have been preaching salvation by reformation, but this poor soul has gone too far to reform. I have been preaching salvation by character, but she hasn't any. I know what to do. I'll tell her what my mother used to tell me as a boy. She's dying and it can't hurt her even if it doesn't do her any good'. Bending down beside her the preacher began: 'My dear woman, God is very gracious and kind, and in His

Book, the Bible, He says, "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)'. 'Oh,' exclaimed the dying woman, 'does it say that in the Bible? My! That ought to get me in. But, sir, my sins, my sins!' He was amazed at the way the verses came back to him. 'My dear woman', he continued, 'the Bible says that the "blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7)'. 'All sin, did you say?' she asked earnestly. 'Does it really say ALL sin? That ought to get me in'. 'Yes,' he replied, kneeling down beside her. 'It says all sin. God's Book also says: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15)'. 'Well', she said, 'if the chief got in, I can come. Pray for me sir!'

The preacher bent down and prayed with the poor woman. Just as she was she came to Jesus, who never turned anyone away, and she got in. 'And in the process', added the preacher, 'while she was getting in, I myself got in. We two sinners, the preacher and the poor woman, entered salvation's door together that night'. The Lord Jesus says: 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved' (John 10:9). Again, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). The Lord Jesus is the door. He does not say a door. The church is not the door; the Ten Commandments are not the door; reformation and good works are not the door; the blessed Mary, mother of Jesus, is not the door. Jesus is the only door, and to enter heaven a sinner must come through Him to have his sins forgiven and washed away. The preacher's good living didn't get him in, nor did the poor woman's bad life keep her out. Both were sinners – for 'all have sinned' (Romans 3:23) – and as such they entered through the same door to life and peace, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool' (Isaiah 1:18).

*Bible Truth Publishers*



Just as she was she came to Jesus, who never turned anyone away, and she got in. 'And in the process', added the preacher, 'while she was getting in, I myself got in. We two sinners, the preacher and the poor woman, entered salvation's door together that night'.

---

---

## The Sinking of the *lolaire*

*Rev Maurice J Roberts*



In the Western Isles, where people over the years have so much depended on boats for their livelihood, many families have become familiar with the experience of bereavement as news has reached them of vessels lost at sea and their men drowned. Among the shipwrecks off the Isle of Lewis probably none has been more tragic or more pathetic than that of the 'lolaire' which went down in the early hours of January 1<sup>st</sup> 1919. Two hundred and five men drowned within sight of the lights of Stornoway. Scarcely a family was left untouched in Lewis by this horrific event. It was described some years ago as 'the third worst maritime disaster in peace time, yet barely known'. As the captain himself perished it has never been fully explained why the ship went aground on waters which were so well known to those on board.

This ship named 'lolaire' was one of two anchored off Kyle at the end of the First World War. The name of the other ship was the 'Sheila'. Both of these vessels were ready to take home the servicemen from the Western Isles who had survived the fearful ravages of the First World War, which had swept into the grave so many thousands from the field of battle. The War was now over and weary Highland men were longing to get home to their families and their crofts. They boarded these two ships and were comforted to think that in a few short hours they would be happy with their loved ones in the homes which they had longed to see again.

What no one could yet have known, as the last of the passengers arrived and men settled down for the sea-crossing to Stornoway, was that the 'lolaire' would be wrecked on the notorious rocks known as the Beasts of Holm just a short distance outside Stornoway itself. But, tragically, this is what happened early on the morning of the New Year. Over two hundred of these tired seamen and soldiers were drowned virtually within sight of home and with their family members and friends watching for them to welcome them back home. A joyous home-coming was transformed into a terrible nightmare. By one means or another some of the men on board managed to get safely to land. But many died by drowning – almost before the very eyes of their close relatives.

### One man's escape

There is one event in this tragedy which is particularly remarkable. It has a lesson in it from which it is important for us all to learn. One young soldier who had come back home had a most amazing escape. He had been appointed to travel on the 'lolaire' with many others but in fact did not do so. Before the two ships set off that night he had noticed on the 'Sheila' someone whom he recognized and wished to speak with. In the darkness of night, before the ships sailed, he had quietly slipped across, by means of a rope, from the 'lolaire' to the 'Sheila'. This change of ship very probably saved his life.

This is a true story and we wish to show that there is an important lesson to be learnt from it. It is this lesson that makes the whole story more than a tragedy and turns the event into a sermon.

When we study the Bible we discover that there are really

two branches of the human family living in this world, the one heading for heaven and the other for eternal shipwreck. Each of these ships is headed up by a 'captain'. In the one case, the captain is our first father Adam; in the other case it is Jesus Christ. The Bible refers to these two men as the 'first Adam' and the 'last Adam'.

Adam, the 'first man' has, by sinning against God, brought condemnation and death upon the entire human race by his disobedience in the beginning of history. We can read of this in Genesis chapter 3. On the other hand, Christ, by His obedience and suffering on the Cross, has brought salvation and eternal life to all who put their trust in Him. The passages in the New Testament to read in connection with this are: Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:22-58.

The bad news is that we are all of us by nature travelling on the ship of which Adam is the captain. It is very clear from the Bible that if we are to be saved and taken at last to heaven we must 'change ship' by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Jump ship

The message of the gospel is to jump ship and to join the company of those who have Jesus Christ as their Master, Lord and Saviour. To change ship in this sense means to become a true follower of Christ by giving our heart and life to Him to save us and to wash us in His blood. It means that we must repent of our sins and place our hope of eternal life in Him alone as the 'captain of salvation' (Hebrews 2:10).

Those who do not do so are still 'in Adam' and are travelling towards eventual shipwreck. But happily those who change ship and have Christ as Saviour are travelling safely toward the harbour of heaven, glory and eternal life.

Dear reader, if you have not yet done so, ought you not to 'change ship'? There is no time to lose since we never know how soon our journey in this life will be over. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31).

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

**I John 5:12**