

FREE PRESBYTERIAN VISION



THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ULSTER



INVESTIGATING THE ISSUES: Same-Sex 'Marriage'

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Editorial

Over the last century or so, May Day – the first of the month – has come to be associated with the celebration of socialist or communist ideology. For supporters of these views it is better styled 'Labour Day'. With this, the Christian has little sympathy. In one sense, however, it may have a message for us.

Many of us will remember being told that we were 'saved to serve'. This little maxim may seem outmoded and rather trite, but it is true. Our salvation is "*not of works*", but we are "*created in Christ Jesus unto good works*" (Ephesians 2:9-10). In the words of Thomas Fuller, "your salvation is God's business; his service your business".

Is it possible that we have lost this sense of calling, that we are happy to be God's sons and daughters without understanding that we are also His servants? I am often amazed at the amount of work, valuable work, believers get through. And yet, there is ever the thought that the load is not being shared as it ought

to be – that few hands complete many tasks. Christian, are you doing what you can for the Kingdom of God? Are you committed to the life and work of your local congregation? Is it ever your desire to strengthen its presence and further its witness in your community? Have you sought to investigate how precisely you might contribute to these objectives?

One thing is sure: God intends that every member of the body of Christ be a functioning member and He has gifted us all to that end, "*dividing to ever man severally as he will*" (1 Corinthians 12:11). And so, there really are no excuses – at least, none that will count with the Lord. We may go forth in 'fear and trembling'; we may think our efforts are of little use in the grand scale of things; we may entertain but slight hopes of success; but remember the challenge of one Puritan preacher: "Though you cannot do what you ought, yet you ought to do what you can" (Christopher Nesse)

✉ Timothy Nelson
editor@fpvision.org



PERPETUAL PRAYER

“PRAY WITHOUT CEASING” 1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

Prayer is the life of real religion. It proves the existence and tests the condition of our spiritual life. As a true barometer of the soul, it accurately reflects the state of the heart.

This spiritual barometer is often at its lowest when the sky of life is seemingly cloudless and the sun is shining at its brightest. In such times prayer is often restrained. The cry from the heart languishes in the bright days of prosperity. But how quickly things change when clouds gather and storms come! Then prayer is in the ascendancy and the sun of the soul climbs to its meridian. Seasons of adversity, trial and sorrow are the ones when most prayer is offered. When billows of opposition roll upon us, there is a hastening to pray and a longing for solace in God our refuge. In these times, our spiritual barometer is at its highest. Must we not lament our inconsistency? Are we not dependent on the Lord at all times? Is such dependence really acknowledged when prayer is restrained or even neglected?

We need to maintain an aptitude of heart

for prayer in all seasons. Surely this is the meaning of the divine command: ‘Pray without ceasing’. Literally, this is impossible. We cannot pray twenty-four hours of every day, but we can seek to have a constant spirit of prayer. There is to be no relaxing of our times of prayer. It’s a priority, in all seasons, to pray. Our Saviour prayed when He was on earth. He prayed alone, and in company with His disciples. He prayed in the wilderness, in the garden, and on the cross. And He continued the presentation of His desires when He went back to Heaven.

Christ’s praying is founded on His sufferings and death, and so is ours. He asks in His own Name and we ask in the same Name, according to His own Word. Identified so with Him, we must obey His command and believe His promise; *‘ask and it shall be given’*. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving we are to make known our requests unto God (Philippians 4:6). There is always One

to help our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for, as we ought. The Holy Spirit gives us boldness and access with confidence (Romans 8:26-27).

He renders prayer our privilege and we feel it is good to draw near unto God. Why then should we not be consistent in the performance of it?

If we are constantly delighting in the Lord we will always call upon

His Name. Prayer is always as precious incense before God, when offered in Christ’s Name. When the censer of a believing heart breathes the incense of the prayer of faith to God, He will hear. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the soul. We need that personal communion with the Lord whether times are good or ill, delightful or despairing. Let our praying be constant, fervent and believing.

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∴ **Rev Leslie Curran**, Associate Editor, is the Director of Let the Bible Speak radio ministry in N Ireland and a regular preacher on its worldwide network of broadcasts.

A portrait of Alfie Stewart, a middle-aged man with short, light brown hair, smiling at the camera. He is wearing a dark blue collared shirt and a dark tie with light-colored diagonal stripes. The background is a light-colored, vertically-pleated curtain. The image is split diagonally from the bottom left to the top right, with the top right portion being white and the bottom left portion being dark blue.

THE INTERVIEW: ALFIE STEWART

SUPPORTERS
OF IRISH LEAGUE
FOOTBALL (SOCCER)
OVER THE LAST THREE
DECADES WILL NOT NEED TO BE
INTRODUCED TO THE SUBJECT OF THIS
INTERVIEW. TO THE FANS OF GLENTORAN
AND PORTADOWN, ALFIE STEWART REMAINS
A LEGEND - A TOUGH, NO-NONSENSE
DEFENDER WHO PLIED HIS TRADE AT THE
HIGHEST LEVEL FOR THE BETTER PART OF
TWENTY YEARS. SOME, HOWEVER, MAY BE
UNAWARE OF JUST HOW ALFIE STEWART HAS
PROVED GOD'S GRACE IN GOOD TIMES AND
BAD. THE EDITOR MET HIM AGAIN RECENTLY.

TN: Tell us a little of your background.

AS: I was born and raised in Maghera, County Londonderry, one of six children – I have three sisters and two brothers. My childhood was happy, and I attended the local Primary and High Schools. Recreation centred on the Boy's Brigade and Boy Scouts. Which one I attended depended on who had the best football game on offer on any given night!

TN: So football was important early on?

AS: For sure. It was my passion. I joined Moyola Park – the local team – when I was 16 and soon established myself there. I wasn't thinking beyond that, but in October 1982, at the age of 18, I moved to Glentoran, one of the 'big two' in N Ireland. That was a real step up, better facilities, better players, and thousands watching the games. It was quite a shock to the system!

TN: Timothy Nelson AS: Alfie Stewart

TN: How did you progress at Glentoran?

AS: Well, I made my 'debut' in March 1983, and soon I was part of the first team squad. It was difficult not playing every game, 'in and out' at first, but it kept my feet on the ground. Eventually, I became a regular, and we were successful, winning the League once and the Irish Cup four years in succession. That meant European games and I played in France, Iceland, Belgium, East Germany and Finland – all a long way from Maghera! The social side was a factor too; I wasn't always in the pub, but on 'special' occasions I was there with the rest.

TN: How were you brought to Christ?

AS: It happened in March 1987. My background was Presbyterian, but attendance in our family was limited. I did attend a Pentecostal Sunday School, where I heard the Gospel. In my teenage years my grandmother was converted, and she witnessed to us, together with another good friend, but football had taken over. However, when I went to Glentoran, I met 'star' player Johnny Jamieson, a genuine Christian who had the respect of teammates, and that was a challenge to me. But I don't think there was a particular human instrument. In a variety of ways I was made aware of the brevity of life and the need to be ready for eternity. I read Gospel tracts, and the little New Testament I had been given at school. Finally, in a quiet corner at work – a local concrete product company – I just asked the Lord to save me. He did! The very next evening I told Johnny Jamieson and within minutes he had announced my conversion to the other players. My Christian 'colours' were 'nailed to the mast!' And I found those team mates were ready to listen, respecting my convictions, even if they didn't share them.

TN: You were soon on the move

AS: Yes, to Portadown, in 1988. Things were changing in the League then, and in ten years at Shamrock Park we won the League three times, the Irish Cup, and numerous minor competitions. I was successful myself, but that brought problems. I won an award that turned out to be sponsored by Guinness, the famous brewer, and I ended up in a photograph that was as much promotion for the company as recognition of me. It was a mistake, I had failed the Lord, and I looked for an opportunity to put it right. Two years later, I won the same award. I declined, suggesting it should go to the next in line. I was assured there would be no photograph, and all would be fine. Imagine my horror when I opened

the newspaper to discover that the old picture had been used! I was appalled, contacting the sports' editor to make my feelings known. There was quite a furore, and it gave me the opportunity to testify of my Christian convictions. I got a bit of flak from the terraces – but what was that in comparison with what Christ had suffered for me? Nothing!

TN: How did you come to the Free Presbyterian Church?

AS: We drifted around for a time, without really settling. Then I was invited to the church in Magherafelt, where we were living. I wasn't that enthusiastic at first, but we found a spiritual home there, good Christian friends, an opportunity to serve the Lord, and real encouragement from the minister. My wife, Lorraine, became a Christian eleven years after I did.

TN: There were dark days ahead

AS: Very dark. In the autumn of 2008 we were troubled by news of family illness and then bereavement – and worse was to come. On 11th October Lorraine died suddenly and tragically. She was just 42. My son and daughter had been in the car with her, but their lives were preserved. And so, in a moment, I became a widower with two teenage children.

TN: It must have been a great shock

AS: Absolutely. With all that had been happening in the family, I had just said to Lorraine, 'it's going to be a long, hard road to Christmas'. It was going to be harder than I ever imagined. We really don't know "what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). I must acknowledge the Lord's goodness through it all. God really kept us as a family. It was not easy, and there are times when it is still so difficult to reflect on all that has happened, but God has sustained us and brought us this far. I'm so thankful for my children. Aaron and Alana have been such an encouragement. It has been so good to see them go on, with a desire to serve the Lord and honour Him.

TN: And you continue to serve the Lord in your own way

AS: Yes, in whatever way I can. I enjoy singing with the men's choir in Magherafelt, and I have had many opportunities to testify of the Lord's grace over the years. It's always good to meet other believers throughout our churches and beyond – and especially to see souls won for Christ. That's the winning that really matters, not the trophies and the medals, and if I can have a little part in that I will be more than happy.



INVESTIGATING THE ISSUES:

Same-Sex 'Marriage'

'The ayes to the right, 400, the noes to the left, 175; the ayes have it' - Speaker John Bercow's brief announcement confirmed that MPs had passed the first reading of the government's 'Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Bill'. The Prime Minister, a vociferous campaigner for the change, saw a majority of Conservatives - eighteen members of government included - withhold their support. Mr Cameron described the outcome as 'a good step for the country', but he has faced sharp criticism from within and without his party.

Sadly, the lack of principled leadership is not unique to the world of politics. Many mainstream churches have long rejected Biblical teaching on homosexuality. Back in 1979 the UK Methodist Church's Division of Social Responsibility declared, "For homosexual men and women, permanent relationships characterized by love can be an appropriate and Christian way of expressing their sexuality". An Anglican working party did not dissent, though its approach was more cautious. Such views have prepared the way for our present predicament. And current proposals find support among present-day church leaders, professed evangelicals included.

Baptist minister Steve Chalke - who, infamously, denied the doctrine of penal substitution - announced

that "a proper understanding of certain passages in Romans" points to Biblical acceptance of same sex 'marriage'. This is hardly surprising from one who 'blessed' a same sex 'partnership' shortly before the Prime Minister launched his crusade, but it is nevertheless disappointing and disturbing.

Important questions arise. Are the opponents of change so blinded by traditional, conservative views that they cannot see the legitimacy of same sex 'marriage'? Why is it that some 'believers' advocate a re-definition of this age-old institution? Christians claim adherence to Bible teaching - so what does Scripture actually say about the matter?

THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Both Old and New Testament passages address the subject of homosexuality. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, some of whose inhabitants attempted unsuccessfully to inflict their homosexual practices on visiting angels, has given rise to the term 'Sodomy' (Genesis 19:1-13, cf the case in Judges 19). Attempts to suggest that the desire to "know" the angels (v5) did not mean a physical relationship merely an introduction, and that other

Scriptures do not confirm the precise nature of Sodom's offence, will not stand. Would it be appropriate to describe a mere breach of hospitality as "grievous", "wicked" and "vile" (Genesis

18:20, 19:7, Judges 19:23-24)? Doesn't the Judges episode, and how it unfolds, argue strongly for a physical connotation (19:24-25)? Is it not true that the Hebrew term at issue can, and does, refer to a physical relationship (cf Genesis 19:8)? Are Christians at liberty to set aside the verdict of New Testament writer Jude (Jude 7)?

Doubtless there were many kinds of sin in Sodom (see, for instance, Isaiah 1:10f, Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:49f); it is clear that homosexual behaviour was among them.

The laws set down in Leviticus include prohibitions of homosexuality, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13. Although some have sought to associate these directions purely with idolatrous religious practices, and judge them to be, therefore, irrelevant for today, theologian Sherwin Bailey, hardly a conservative, admits "that both the laws in Leviticus relate to ordinary homosexual acts between men, and

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OVERTHROWN!**

not to ritual or other acts performed in the name of religion”.

In the New Testament, Paul issues clear condemnation of homosexual behaviour. Romans 1 outlines a series of decadent practices, including unnatural physical relationships (v26-27). 1 Corinthians 6 lists those sinful actions incompatible with the kingdom of God – among them is homosexual practice (v9). The Apostle’s analysis of those wicked deeds outside both law and Gospel in 1 Timothy 1 refers to those guilty of similar perversion (v10). Arguments continue to be offered on the premise that these prohibitions all relate to specialised circumstances, and not to homosexuality per se. However it is difficult to disagree with the conclusion of Peter Coleman: “Taken together, St Paul’s writings repudiate homosexual behaviour as a vice of the Gentiles in Romans, as a bar to the kingdom in Corinthians, and as an offence to be repudiated by the moral law in 1 Timothy”.

It is simply untenable to say that Christian opposition to homosexual practice rests on a few isolated, obscure texts, whose traditional interpretation may now be overthrown! Neither do we pursue a purely negative agenda. We hold to our position in the light of the very positive presentation of the institution of marriage from the beginning of time.

THE BIBLE AND MARRIAGE

Genesis 2 establishes some fundamental facts.

First, man was created a social being, with a need for companionship (v18). God has given us a capacity to love and be loved.

Second, the need of man was met by a special Divine creation. God created woman out of man and brought her to Adam (v21-23).

Third, a consequence of this provision was the institution of marriage (v24). Man would leave his parents and commit to woman, entering

into physical union with her, by which union their love would be consummated and children born (v24, cf 4:1).

And Christ Himself endorsed this teaching. Quoting Genesis 2:24, He affirmed that a marriage involving a lifelong union between one man and one woman was ordained by God at creation (Mark 10:6-8). Thus Scripture is clear that the marriage instituted by God is to be understood in terms of heterosexual monogamy. No other kind of marriage is envisaged!

And this is true as much for the twenty-first century as it was for the first, or indeed for the very beginning of human existence. Marriage was established by creation not culture, and so it is an institution both permanent and universal.

ANOTHER SIDE?

What of those who argue that homosexuality is ‘natural’ for them? It is God who determines the ultimate standard of what is natural or unnatural. Thus when Paul condemned the conduct of certain individuals in Romans 1, he was indicting them not for acting against their nature but against Nature itself, that is, against the order that God has created. And, as we have seen, that order is clear from the beginning.

Nor does the alleged ‘quality’ of a relationship overturn Biblical teaching. Just because a homosexual relationship is deemed ‘loving’, and therefore ‘good’, does not mean it is acceptable. Love is not the ultimate absolute – it must be guided and governed by law. Christ reminds us that true

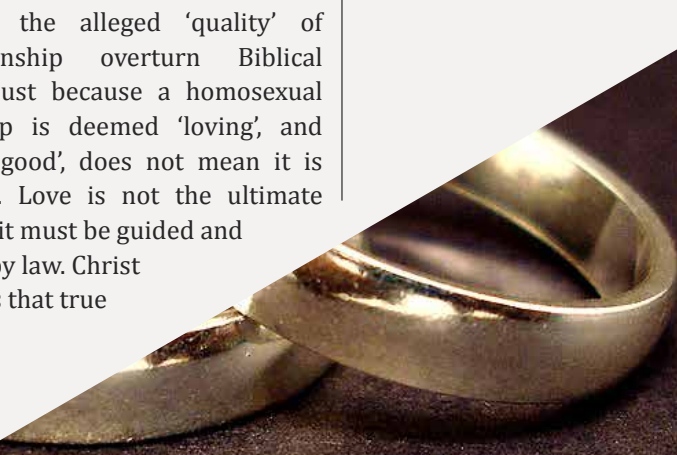
love cannot be divorced from keeping the commandments (John 14:15, cf Romans 13:8-10). To say that ‘love’ is all that matters is to validate other illicit relationships – polygamy or adultery, for instance.

But are ‘traditionalists’ not guilty of being less accepting than the Gospel? Must we not accept homosexuals as they are, and seek to facilitate their relationships? While God accepts sinners ‘as they are’, this means that He forgives those who come to repent and renounce their sin (Proverbs 28:13). He does not condone their continuance in sin. Those now part of His kingdom have been made “new creatures” (2 Corinthians 5:17 cf 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and are expected to live accordingly.

Christians, then, must bow to the lordship of Christ and seek to conform to His Word. They have no mandate to jettison this commitment, sacrificing it on the altar of expediency.

They speak against the sin, but with compassion for the sinner, praying that God’s grace may yet redeem those in bondage and recover them from a life of disobedience.

¶ **Rev Timothy Nelson**, Editor, is the minister of Sixmilecross Free Presbyterian Church, N Ireland, and lecturer in Biblical Exegesis in the denomination’s Theological Hall.



FIRST ELDERS FOR GILFORD

The evening of 27th February marked a significant milestone in the history of the Gilford congregation with the ordination and installation of its first elders. The minister, Rev Gregory McCammon, conducted a well-attended service, and Revs K Elliott, S Murray, I Brown and D Creane also participated. Moderator Rev J Greer was present to lead in the ordination prayer and to bring the charge to the newly ordained elders, Messrs John Kems, Barry Black and Paul Wallace.



MISSIONARY CELEBRATES 100TH BIRTHDAY



Janet Munn, a faithful supporter of the Carrickfergus church from its commencement, has celebrated her 100th birthday. Together with some of her sisters and a brother, Janet served on various mission fields. She has been a great encourager and an unfailing supporter to many involved in missionary endeavour. Mission Board Convenor Rev Ian Harris, a former minister in Carrickfergus, recounts his abiding memory of one of her many sayings:

‘God can make the hardest place His harvest place’. Among the visitors on her birthday were Moderator Rev John Greer, Deputy Moderator Rev Alan Smylie, Carrickfergus minister Rev Philip Gardiner, Elder Mr David Neill, and Rev Ron and Mrs Raema Johnstone. Mr Johnstone has fond memories of Janet as a colleague in the Bethel Bible Bookshop.

May God send us more with the spirit and zeal of Janet Munn!

CONSIDER CHRIST CONTINUES



Since the last issue, Consider Christ Outreach has returned to Athlone and ventured to Sligo. Over 100 have travelled each time, braving the weather, to reach the lost for Christ. A monthly meeting in Athlone now has 10-18 locals in attendance. 'Will you not come back for another

meeting?' has been the cry and there is a great appetite for the preaching of the Word. Pray with us as we plan our next outreach on 11th May to Ashbourne and Ratoath, just north of Dublin. To be part of this outreach or to receive regular updates by email, contact us at outreach@considerchrist.com

CONGRESS 2014

The triennial Congress involving the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster and its sister denomination in N America is scheduled for 23-27 June 2014 in Martyrs' Memorial church, Belfast. Further details will be released in due course. Please pray for the organising committee and its Convenor Rev Thomas Murray.

BLESSING IN BALLYMAGROARTY

After a mission was held in Ballintra, Co Donegal ten years ago and two souls professed faith in Christ, a monthly Gospel meeting was established in Ballymagroarty near Ballyshannon. Local people have attended the meetings, but for ten years we were not aware of any coming to Christ - until now. In the first week of a Gospel Mission conducted by Rev Philip Millen, an entire family, two parents and three grown-up boys, trusted the Saviour. The Word was preached with power, the presence of the Lord was evident, and more came to Christ, until at the close 12 souls had been counselled. Another young man who had attended travelled to Randalstown a week later and trusted Christ. ***"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"*** (Matt 21:42).

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS' APPEAL

Over 30 years ago, an appeal was made in our denomination for covenant support for the newly opened Christian schools. Many responded and a large support base was established. With the passage of time that support has declined - many 'covenanters' are no longer with us. The Presbytery Education Board is now re-issuing the appeal, centrally, and locally through the schools: Bangor, Ballymoney, Clogher Valley, Kilskeery, Mourne, Newtownabbey and Portadown. Details are available from Rev Brian McClung on 028 90835942 or convenor@independentchristianschool.org or from the Education Board website: www.independentchristianschool.org

MOURNE INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Maths Teacher (part-time)
Required for Sept 2013

Applications in writing to:
Rev A Patterson, 5 Carrigenagh Rd,
Kilkeel. BT34 4NE

CHILDREN'S CORNER



No Monkey Business

Monkeys in North Africa usually stay out of the way, high up among the branches of the trees. But the local people have a very special way of catching them. They make a hole in a coconut shell – just large enough to allow a monkey to get its hand inside. Then they place a few nuts inside the empty shell and secure it firmly to the trunk of a tree, just as the sun begins to set.



Later, under the cover of darkness, the monkeys venture down from the trees, attracted by the scent of the nuts. Finding the coconut shell, an inquisitive monkey will put its hand inside the hole and grasp a handful of nuts. However, with its fist now closed the monkey is unable to withdraw its hand. Not having the sense to let go of its precious find, it will pull and pull without

succeeding in breaking free. When the sun dawns the following day the poor monkey is duly captured – trapped by its own foolishness.

In the world around us there are many people just like this monkey. They hold onto things they think are of great value.

But if they don't let go, and give them up, these things will be their eternal downfall. The Lord Jesus once asked two questions, "...**what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?**" (Mark 8v36) and, "... **what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**" (Mark 8v37).

These are questions that only you can answer. Boys and girls, are you holding onto something in this world that is keeping you from trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and making Him your Saviour? If you are, may God help you to let go before it is too late!

Compiled by Robert McConnell

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
Mark 8v37

Rearrange the letters

Rearrange the letters to spell out the names of four of the disciples in the boxes provided. Then, using the letters from the grey squares, spell out the name of a great man of prayer in the Old Testament.

HOT SAM

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

HIP LIP

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

MET WHAT

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

DEW RAN

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



Answer: _____

PRIZES

If you are 12 or under send your answer, name, address, church attended to:

Rev. Stephen Pollock

Email: answer@fpvision.org

51 Old Junction Road, Kilskeery,
Co Tyrone, BT78 3RN.

JANUARY WINNERS EACH RECEIVE £5!

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| » Joshua Hylands | » Jodie McKeown |
| » Jasmine Dunne | » Harry Condell |
| » Amy Rutherford | » Claudia Jeffers |
| » Bethany Dickey | » David Johnston |

March Winners in next issue!

WHAT IS LIFE

Dark is the absence of light, and death the absence of life, but what is life? The sinner is described as being 'dead in sin'. He is without spiritual life, but what is life? Christ defined 'life' for us as He prayed to His Father. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The word 'eternal' speaks of a quantity of time that cannot be calculated, but also a quality that cannot be comprehended. 'Eternal life' is not only future for the child of God, but is also present. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life..." (John 3:36) Thus we see that life means knowing God, and Jesus Christ, who brings us to God. 'Life' must ultimately be defined in respect of our relationship with God. Our condition in sin is that of death. Our conversion by God is unto life; we are made alive in Christ. The consequence of this life is a relational knowledge of God.

This knowledge does not come from a religious upbringing (1 Samuel 3:7) or by being involved in religious service (1 Samuel 2:12). It is a blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, the blood which secures the new covenant (Hebrews 8v11). It is a knowledge marked by communion and fellowship (John 10:14-15), and a knowledge that results from the working of God in our lives (Galatians 4v8-9).

Relationships are enjoyed by mutual delight and

by interaction. In simple terms, we know God as we delight in all that He is as the God of creation, providence and redemption. We know God as He speaks to us in His Word, read and preached. We know God as we meet with Him and fellowship with Him in the place of prayer.

There are many blessings to contemplate for the believer but here we rejoice in the truth that the believer is alive! We who once were God's enemies, dead in sin, are now His living friends!

**'Eternal life' is knowing God.
Are you dead or alive?**

FROM THE OLD TO THE YOUNG

"Let it be our great care to enjoy God in His ordinances [public worship]. Enjoying spiritual communion with God is a riddle and mystery to most people. Everyone that hangs about the court does not speak with the king. We may approach God in ordinances, and hang about the court of heaven, yet not enjoy communion with God. We may have the letter without the Spirit, the visible sign without the invisible grace. It is the enjoyment of God in a duty that we should chiefly look at. Psalm 42:2: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God..." – Alas! What are all our worldly enjoyments without the enjoyment of God!"

- Thomas Watson; A Body of Divinity 1692



WHAT'S IN CHURCH

WHEN SOMEONE LEAVES A CHURCH, THE EXPLANATION INEVITABLY GOES LIKE THIS: 'THERE WAS NOTHING IN THAT CHURCH FOR ME. I WAS GETTING NOTHING OUT OF IT.'

Do you have a question about Christian doctrine and conduct? Send your questions to: questions@fpvision.org

This month, Rev. Samuel Murray was asked 'What's in church for me?'

But the old adage is true: **"You only get out of something what you put into it."** Thus if an individual makes no real contribution to the life and witness of the local church, he ought not to be surprised to feel, 'I'm getting nothing out of it.'

Sadly, the next step for many is to start attending an unsound, modernistic church, where the 'Nothing in it for me - I'm getting nothing out of it' vacuum is filled with an entertainment-driven and activity-filled programme. Even though their souls are not being fed with 'the finest of the wheat', a solid Biblical ministry, they claim contentment because there is plenty in this church for them! Young Christian, if you are tempted to go down this route, please consider the following:

The Criteria for Choosing a Church

In making your choice, make sure the standards are high with regard to -

- The Propriety of the Worship. The Lord is not to be approached casually but with reverence, Psalm 47:7; Ecclesiastes 5:1,2; Hebrews 12:28. Decorum and dress in public worship should reflect the fact that we have assembled in the presence of the King.
- The Preaching of the Word. God speaks through His word (Jonah 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Romans 10:14,15) and preaching is the central act of worship. The whole counsel of God must be declared (Acts 20:27), Christ must be preached (1Corinthians 1:23), and sound doctrine explained (1Timothy 4:6).



FOR



- **The Pertinence of the Witness.** The church must speak up on the issues of the day and say what God says in His Word. It must be for all that God is for, and be against all that God is against, Galatians 4:16; 1Thessalonians 2:4.

In a Bible based, Christ-centred church like this, there will be plenty for you. What then can you put into a church like this? This leads us to consider:

The Chance to Contribute in the Church

The opportunities to contribute will be numerous:

- **Prayerful Work.** The Saviour taught us that men ought always to pray and not to faint, privately (Matthew 6:6) and publicly (Acts 1:14; 4:31; 12:5). To miss the church prayer meeting is to miss out on the blessing of praying with those of like precious faith. If you want to get something out of the local church, start attending the prayer meeting!

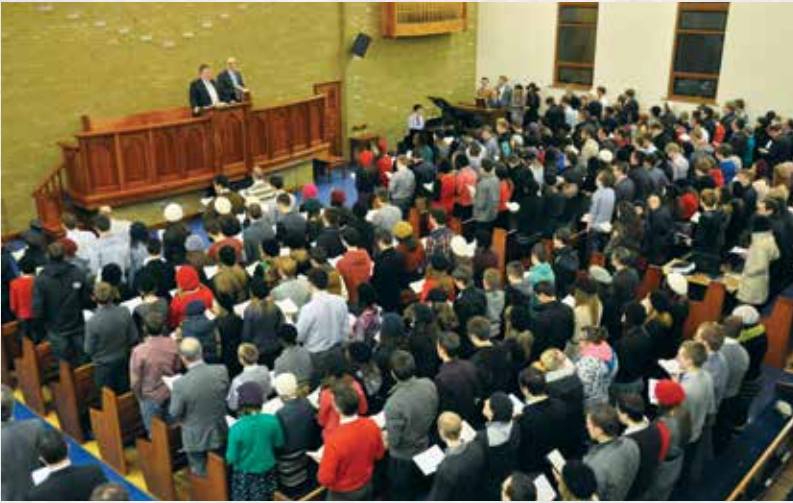
- **Personal Work.** There are many soul refreshing and spiritually rewarding things that you can do in the local church. Be involved in its outreach whenever possible (Mark 16:15). Help in children's work or in the youth fellowship. Bring comfort and consolation to those who are weary. Call with those who are housebound or in hospital.

- **Practical Work.** There are practical ways of serving the Lord. You might help keep the church grounds tidy; or serve refreshments for visitors; or assist with car park duties; or clear up after functions; or drive the church minibus; or supervise children on the bus – the list is endless. Usually the problem is not 'nothing to do', but 'no one willing to do it'!

So, instead of saying: 'I get nothing out of my church', ask: 'What am I putting into my church?'

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YOUTH COUNCIL SPRING RALLY



Magherafelt was the venue for this year's Youth Council Spring Rally. Led by the newly elected Youth Council president, Dr Wilson, the meeting was a blessing as Christ was exalted throughout.

A choir composed of young people from the North West region sang 'I'm Still Amazed' and 'How Great Thou Art'. Moderator Rev Greer preached from Ecclesiastes 12:13, 'Fear God, and keep his commandments...' It was made clear that before faith in Jesus Christ and expression of love for Him, man must fear God. I was challenged by the idea that we are not able to live a life which is holy and set apart for

God, unless we have first acknowledged God as our judge. Christians must first fear God before being useful vessels in his service. Moving to verse 14, 'For God shall bring every work into judgement...', Mr Greer warned those outside of Christ of the inevitable, irresistible and inflexible day of judgement, and how they would have no hope if they remained in sin.

It's my prayer that those who were so clearly warned would not only come to fear God as judge, but to love and serve Christ as their Saviour.

∴ Paul Smith (Ardaragh)

YOUTH COUNCIL TRAINING WEEKEND

This year's Training Weekend focused on various aspects of personal evangelism, with a particular emphasis on children's work.

Those who gathered, including many present for the first time, were encouraged and challenged as Dr Wilson spoke on Friday night, highlighting the privilege of being labourers with God in His work and the responsibility that this brings. That set the tone for a weekend that proved to be a time of sustained spiritual blessing.

We were reminded by Chris Killen of the importance of child evangelism and the principles regarding counselling a child for salvation. Joyce Walsh took us through

IT WAS A GREAT BENEFIT TO SPEND TIME IN FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS WHO DESIRE TO MAKE CHRIST KNOWN.

the various elements of a children's meeting, stressing the absolute centrality of the Bible lesson. Dr Wilson dealt with important Child Protection principles, and Rev David Park addressed the need and methods of outreach. Of particular benefit to many was a practical session where everyone had the opportunity, despite the inevitable nerves, to put theory into practice in the form of a simulated children's meeting.

It was a great benefit to spend time in fellowship with believers who desire to make Christ known. It certainly challenged me to live a more Christ-glorifying life.

∴ Paul Wilson (Tandragee)

EVENTS

**MARTYRS' MEMORIAL
YOUTH CAMP**
CEF CENTRE, ROSSNOWLAGH
22nd – 26th July
Details of activities, cost, deposit etc
Call Maurice Bannatyne
028 95089065

**YOUTH COUNCIL
DELEGATES
MEETING**
KILSKEERY FPC
Monday 13th May
8:00pm

A WORD TO WOMEN

"SIT STILL, MY DAUGHTER, UNTIL THOU KNOW HOW THE MATTER WILL FALL." (RUTH 3:18)

Are things going well for you just now? Do you sail happily on the sea of life with just the odd ripple threatening to spoil a smooth journey? Or are you facing the storms of life, fearful that the ship is beginning to take in too much water and that it may eventually sink?

Seasons of personal anxiety and stress cause every one of us to react to, and deal with, situations differently. Some try to listen to all the (well-meaning) wise advice given, and, after sifting through it, take what they feel is most appropriate for their situation. Others panic, acting on impulse and completely disregarding any advice received.

If you find yourself in such turmoil, as a child of God, your first 'port of call' must be your Heavenly Father. As a favourite old hymn says:

*In times like these we need the Saviour
In times like these we need an anchor
Be very sure, be very sure
Your anchor holds and grips the solid rock.*

WE DO WHAT
IS REQUIRED OF US,
THEN WE LEAVE IT ALL
IN THE LORD'S HANDS. WE
CAN REST ASSURED THAT
HE WILL DEAL WITH IT
IN HIS WAY AND IN
HIS TIME.

However, God also puts people who are wise and trustworthy in our path so that we can go to them for counsel. One example is found in Ruth 3. Naomi and Ruth had left Moab and arrived in Bethlehem, but now they are poor and in need of help. God overrules the circumstances for Ruth, and she ends up working for Boaz, who notices her and does what he can to make life easier and better for her. Naomi, of course, is thrilled when she learns that Boaz is the very man who can marry Ruth and take

care of her and Naomi. So, according to the custom of the day, Naomi advises Ruth on the best course of action.

What Ruth doesn't do is run immediately to a neighbour's house and say, 'Naomi thinks I should do this...what do you think?', and then talk about it for hours! No, even though Ruth may not understand fully, she calmly follows Naomi's advice. Having done what was required of her, Ruth returned to Naomi who went on to say, wisely, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall" (Ruth 3:18). 'What? Sit back and do nothing? Don't take matters into my own hands? Don't say this and don't try that?' Exactly, sit still. Ruth's situation was now in the hands of Boaz, the only one who could do anything about the matter. Surely this is a gentle picture of the Lord's dealings with us. We do what is required of us, then we leave it all in the Lord's hands. We can rest assured that He will deal with it in His way and in His time.

Isaiah the prophet knew this was the answer when the people drove themselves to distraction trying to get matters sorted by their own endeavours. He said, "Their strength is to sit still" (Isaiah 30:7).

"Restlessness and impatience change nothing except our peace and joy. Peace does not dwell in outward things, but in the heart prepared to wait trustfully and quietly on Him who has all things safely in His hands." Elisabeth Elliot

✚ **Karen Murray** lives in Tandragee, N Ireland. She is a busy minister's wife and is actively involved in the life and witness of her local congregation.



A NEW COMMISSION

In September 2012 the Presbytery set up a new committee to oversee our work on the British Mainland. This body replaces the Scottish Commission, the Forward Movement and the Co-ordinating Committee, all of which wound up last summer. Appreciation is due to all who served faithfully and effectively on these committees over many years (Ruth 2:12).

The new committee is the 'Presbytery Mainland Commission'. At the time of its formation some serving on the previous groupings felt that it was time to retire and allow others to carry on the work. The remaining members, with all ordained ministers on the mainland, comprise the new Commission (see below).

Rev. David Smith, last Convenor of the Forward Movement, was appointed Convenor of the Commission. Subsequently the Commission itself elected Rev. David McMillan as its Secretary and Messrs George McConnell and Maurice Bannatyne as its Treasurers. The new Commission will, in addition to many other responsibilities, administer the UK Fund.

Pray that this new Commission will know God's guidance and blessing.

∴ **Rev David McMillan**

THE MAINLAND COMMISSION

Revs: Darryl Abernethy, Patrick Baker, Trevor Baxter, William Beattie, David Creane, Ken Elliott, Gordon Ferguson, Fred Greenfield, Noel Hughes, Wesley Irwin, Gregory McCammon, David McMillan (Secretary), Richard Monteith, Robert Ormerod, Kyle Paisley, David Smith, (Convenor), Calvin Stripp, Nigel Smyth.

Messrs: Maurice Bannatyne (Treasurer), George McConnell (Treasurer) & Barry Stewart.

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Mr M Bannatyne, 63 Richardson Street, Belfast, BT6 8DX
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MAINLAND WEEK OF PRAYER

Just over 20 years ago the mainland Week of Prayer was born out of the Liverpool convention, when the ministers remained after the weekend to pray. Liverpool hosted the week until 2004 when London was the venue. Since then it has moved around, enabling those in every location to meet the ministers, and allowing the ministers to see first-hand the other works. This helps to strengthen the bond between us.

Beginning on Monday evening, when the local congregation has the opportunity to fellowship with those attending, the week progresses with three sessions each day. Preaching is followed by a short update on

each work, any pressing prayer requests, and sustained seasons of prayer.

Obviously prayer is the most important aspect. Yet there is also the opportunity to be fed with God's Word, a time of spiritual refreshing for our souls. And there is always hearty fellowship enjoyed around mealtimes! This year, May 6th-10th, Merthyr Tydfil hosts the week. Please pray that God would speak clearly to us; that the Holy Spirit would lead us in prayer; and that the Lord would move among us and fit us to serve Him better on the British Mainland.

∴ **Rev Nigel Smyth**



REV FERGUSON RETIRES

Friday 14th December 2012 was a milestone in the history of South Grove Free Presbyterian Church, London as members and friends bade farewell to the Rev Gordon and Mrs Anne Ferguson. Some 120 gathered for this special occasion.

Minister Rev Patrick Baker conducted the service, which Rev David Smith opened with prayer. Members of the Church Committee and congregation made presentations. The children took part in song, and at the close some of the people sang a farewell hymn. Messrs Jim Hamilton (Tavistock) and Kevin Turrell (Lewes) gave brief tributes and made presentations on behalf of their respective churches. The Moderator and Mrs Greer were present, and Mr Greer spoke powerfully from 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8, outlining God's blessing on the Christian ministry.

Rev Ferguson responded to the congregation, expressing gratitude for the people and strong feeling for the work of God in Walthamstow. He had often drawn strength from Acts 18:10: 'for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.' Afterwards, supper was kindly provided for all by members of the congregation.

Rev Patrick Baker



LONDON UPDATE

With thanksgiving to God, the Free Presbyterian Church in Walthamstow can look back and look ahead. This year, God willing, it will seek to elect a committee and thereby progress the oversight of the congregation.

One of the greatest opportunities is provided by the radio work under 'Let the Bible Speak'. Broadcasts are received throughout the UK. Feedback is a steady trickle but we pray that the Lord will break into the hearts of many in coming days.

Since the 'London 2012' outreach, new children have attended our midweek 'Children's Club' and parents, the Lord's Day morning services. This reminds us of the enormous potential on our doorstep. A new monthly Bible Study has been well attended and well received. It is hoped that going deeper into God's Word will yield fruit for His glory.

Over 50 are in regular attendance Lord's Day morning, and weekly outreaches to young people and children continue. Our prayer is that God will move again in this city and in our borough. There are many avenues for outreach to the multitudes here, but we are mindful that the Lord must build His house.

Rev Patrick Baker



A LOOK AT THE BOOK: EXODUS

EXODUS REMAINS A BOOK WORTHY OF CLOSE STUDY BOTH BECAUSE OF ITS PLENARY INSPIRATION, AND BECAUSE OF ITS POWERFUL AND ABIDING TESTIMONY TO CHRIST.



The second 'book of Moses' is Exodus. There is no reason to doubt that Moses was the writer. The inherent unity, proliferation of eyewitness accounts, and Divine affirmation (John 7:19, 5:46-47) all argue for Mosaic authorship.

CHARACTER

This book is a *chronicle of departure*. Its title, 'Exodus', derives from two Greek words meaning a "way out," a departure. As with Genesis, the word 'exodus' is used in the New Testament. It is found in Hebrews 11:22 and 2 Peter 1:15. In Luke 9:31 it is translated "decease" and was the subject of a sacred discussion between Moses and Elijah – representing the Old Testament saints – and the Lord Jesus. How thrilled Moses would have been to contemplate that greater exodus which the Lord was about to accomplish by

His atoning work at Jerusalem! With "richer blood from nobler veins" than those of all the Passover lambs quickly slain on that dark, fateful night in Egypt, Christ, our Passover, set His captive people free. In this exodus He led captivity captive and ascended up on high, thus bringing many sons to glory. The exodus of Moses, wonderful as it was, is just a picture of the still more wonderful exodus effected by the Lord Jesus. The exodus of Moses was associated with Mount Sinai, Christ's with Mount Calvary. Thus only Moses saw the glory in the secret place and that for a little time. Here, when He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory, and that for all eternity. Moses saw only the back parts, but we shall see Him 'face to face'. The book of Hebrews enlarges on these contrasts and shows how much better the second is in comparison with the first.

This book is a *continuation of Genesis*. The first words of Exodus 1:1 are “Now these are the names”. The word NOW is the Hebrew conjunction. You may therefore with entitlement read the verse, “AND these are the names...”

This use of the conjunction at the beginning of the book is more than a grammatical connection – it argues a continuity of purpose and message. In the Pentateuch each book assumes the existence of the preceding. Exodus then implies the existence of Genesis, where the ground covered is from Eden to Egypt, the starting point of Exodus.

Genesis concludes with a coffin, the emblem of sin and the world, Romans 5: 12, James 1:14, 15. Yet, in God’s mercy, that same coffin is a token of deliverance – of the exodus, in fact, Genesis 50:24, 25. Abraham foresaw Israel’s affliction and exodus from Egypt, Genesis 15:13, 14. Exodus is the historical and spiritual complement of Genesis.

This book is the *constitution of a new nation, Israel*. In this history is witnessed the birth of a people, Exodus 4:22, 23. They had come down into Egypt as a family. Exodus 1:5 indicates that family numbered but 70. By chapter 12 their descendants prepared to leave Egypt as a nation. Now they number as many as 2½ million.

The early chapters of Exodus record the birth pangs, and the night of the Passover dates the beginning of their existence. “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months,” Exodus 12:2.

The nation of Israel leaves Egypt as an assembly, a congregation, and worships as the church in the wilderness, Exodus 12:6, Deuteronomy 5:22; Acts 7:38. Both Abraham and Jacob understood this before they died, Genesis 12:2; 46:3.

CONTENT

Exodus falls into three parts.

1. The **first** demonstrates **GOD’S POWER** and covers chapters 1-18. God’s Power is manifested in the sending of the ten plagues. These are sent as wonders to secure the release of Israel, as judgments upon the many false gods of Egypt, and as a means of exalting the Lord above the people of the land, for “in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, He was above them” Exodus 3:20; 12:12; 18:11.

Each part also begins with a **DIVINE APPEARANCE** in which the glory of the Lord is displayed, 3:2; 19:17-20; 24: 10, 11, 17.

2. The **second** part is as familiar as the first, and has as its subject, **GOD’S PRECEPTS**, chapters 19-23. These precepts are summarized in the Ten Commandments, otherwise known as the ‘Moral Law’. This was not a new revelation that the tribes of Israel received for the first time. The Ten Commandments are but a restatement of what was already known and recognized as the code of life by the patriarchs. Humanly speaking, the moral law is as old as man’s first footprint and was communicated to him in the beginning by God Himself.

In addition, God wrote this law upon the hearts of all men, Romans 2:15. This law then did not filter through to Israel by means of contact with the kingdoms round about. Rather is its governing presence seen in the chapters of Genesis, interwoven with the narratives which disclose the lines of those heroes in the family of faith. The moral law did not originate with the genius of human wisdom; from its very nature, it is that against which the mind of the natural man rebels, Romans 8:7. No, these precepts are rightly called the law of God: they originated with Him alone.

3. The **last** part we must entitle **GOD’S PATTERN**, for chapters 24-40 relate to the tabernacle, built every piece, as Hebrews 8:5 reiterates, according to the mind of God: “Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.”

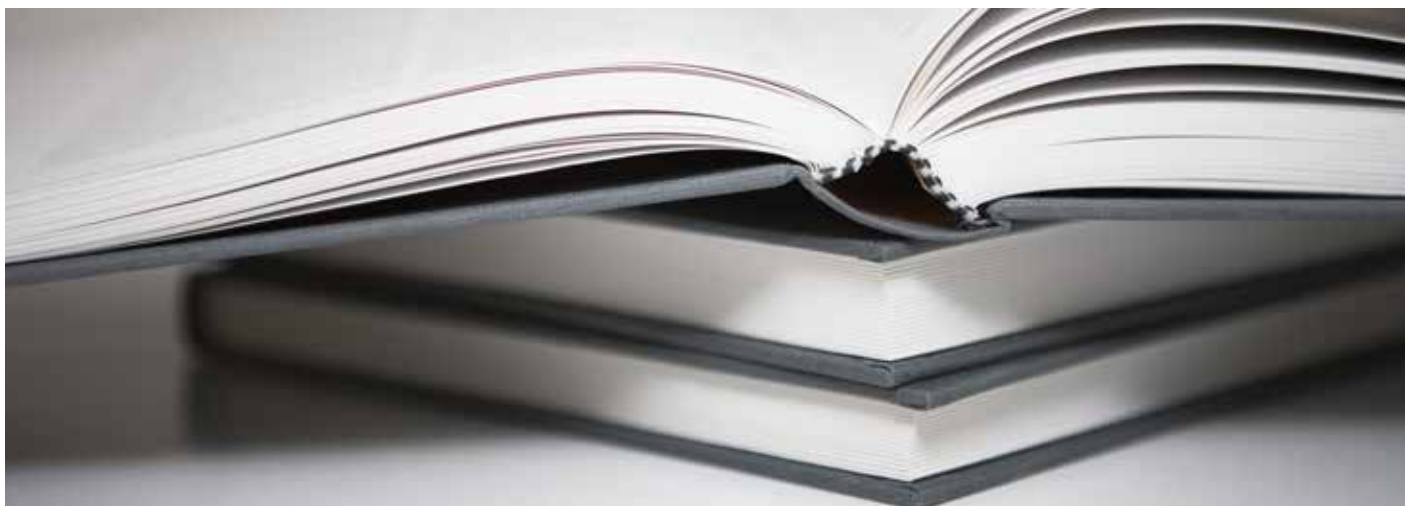
The tabernacle was the dwelling place of God among His people, the centre of worship. Placed in the midst of the camp, it was the meeting place between God and His redeemed, Exodus 29:42-46.

The tabernacle, strictly speaking, was composed of ten curtains, 26:1. There was a three-fold composition to the fabric of the sanctuary as Numbers 3:25 shows: the tabernacle, the tent and the coverings. Exodus 26:1 describes the tabernacle, verse 7 the tent (called here “curtains of goat’s hair”, the material of which tents were made), and verse 14 the two coverings for the tent.

The tabernacle in the midst of the camp typifies the Lord Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, John 1:14. Here “dwelt” among us may be rendered “tabernacled among us.”

Exodus remains a book worthy of close study both because of its plenary inspiration (Exodus 24:4; 34:27; Mark 12:26; Romans 9:17), and because of its powerful and abiding testimony to Christ, Luke 24:27, 44, 45.

∴ **Dr John Douglas** is the senior minister of Lisburn Free Presbyterian Church. He served the denomination as long time Clerk of Presbytery and was, for over thirty years, Principal of the Whitefield College of the Bible.



THE BELIEVER'S BOOKS

'CATHOLICISM: EAST OF EDEN' RICHARD BENNETT (PAPERBACK, RRP £8.50)

Are you seeking an antidote to the euphoria of the Papal election and to the plaudits heaped on the new man in the Vatican? Then look no further than this masterful assessment of contemporary Roman Catholicism!

Many readers will already know the name Richard Bennett, and it is probably true to say that there are few men alive better qualified to write such a book. Born in Dublin, Ireland, into a staunchly Roman Catholic family, Bennett studied under the Dominicans and ultimately became a priest, serving for twenty-one years in Trinidad, West Indies. After much time contrasting the dogma of 'mother church' with the doctrine of Scripture, he was brought to a knowledge of the truth, and, in 1986,

he left the priesthood and the Roman Catholic Church. He subsequently founded the 'Berean Beacon' ministry and has since sought to enlighten men to the message of the Gospel and the errors of Rome.

The first chapter tells the writer's own story, and the seventeen that follow provide a wide-ranging indictment of the Roman Catholic system. Bennett addresses such matters as tradition, the priesthood, the Papacy, the 'sacraments', confession, the mass, images, the virgin Mary, marriage, ecumenism – in fact it is hard to identify any significant matters he fails to address! He is comprehensive and clear throughout; he never fails to hit the mark, and his arguments are always well reasoned and well documented.

This book, a 'Banner of Truth' re-release of a title originally published under another imprint in 2005, is from first to last a contemporary treatment of the subject – in distinction to other good, but somewhat dated, analyses of Romanism. The final chapters present perceptive and powerful consideration of the modern movement towards unity – especially timely in these days.

I cannot recommend 'Catholicism: East of Eden' too highly. Whether as a good read and enduring reference work, or as an evangelistic tool – eminently useful in the task of reaching out to Roman Catholics – it is difficult to think of anything better in the field.

∴ Timothy Nelson

FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE REVIVALIST,
MAY 1978

NEW CHURCH BUILDINGS

The beautiful new Free Presbyterian Church at Magherafelt was opened with over 3000 in attendance. The church, which comfortably seats, in the pews, seven hundred was packed with over one thousand in attendance. A two thousand-seat tent was also packed and many hundreds did not gain admittance at all. The building fund offering taken up at the weekend opening services reached over £23000. To God be the glory!

The following week another forward step was

taken by the Free Presbyterian Church when foundation stones were laid for an 850-seat church in Ballymena.

About 800 people attended the stone laying ceremony and stones were declared well and truly laid by Dr Paisley, MP, in memory of his father; Mrs Margaret Beggs, on behalf of her mother; Rev James Beggs on behalf of the Session and congregation; and Miss Jeannie Clark, the first convert, 38 years ago, of Rev J Kyle Paisley's faithful stand.

MISSIONARY VISION

'CHILD EVANGELISM': JOYCE WALSH



I grew up on a farm at Donaghmore near Newry, County Down. As a child I attended meetings, hearing of my need of salvation. In November 1967, Faith Mission workers conducted a mission in a local Orange Hall. Here I received Christ, together with other young people. We attended a meeting led by the late John Dickson who had a real desire to see us grow and mature in the Lord. Missionaries would speak and we were encouraged to pray for them. Ministry at these meetings taught us that God had a plan for our lives, and it became my desire to serve Him, home or abroad. This burden increased, and after much prayer I came to a glad acceptance of the will of God.

I knew the Lord was calling me, but I wasn't sure where, or to what kind of ministry, so I spent three years at Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh. There the Lord guided me to Canada where I become a children's worker in the rural areas of British Columbia.

After 12 blessed years of service there, I returned home to work under the Free Presbyterian Mission Board, ministering to the children. The Lord prompted this move through various circumstances and, of course, there was confirmation from His Word. I knew that 'this was the way', and I was to 'walk in it'.

Over the last 25 years I have conducted missions across the province in our Churches, Orange Halls, Mission Halls and homes. Recently it has been very encouraging to see doors open into primary schools. I speak at school assemblies and weekly children's meetings. In the summer I am involved with Camp Ministry, Holiday Bible Clubs and out-door meetings. A new venture is the Youth Council Outreach, which has been owned and blessed of God. It is a privilege to see many young people serve the Lord among the children.

These days there are great challenges – the disappointment of seeing young

converts backslide with peer pressure and lack of encouragement at home, and the issue of child protection laws and all that they entail, to name but two. However, it has been wonderful to see children converted, growing in grace, and seeking to serve the Lord in their local church and beyond.

As I look back, reflecting on all that the Lord has done, one verse comes to mind: "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes." (Matthew 21:42) Of course, humanly speaking, nothing would have been possible without the help and support of so many in our denomination, those who have given sacrificially and who remember us daily at the throne of grace. I believe only eternity will reveal all that has been accomplished in the lives of our children. Meantime we can raise our 'Ebenezer' and say 'Hitherto has the Lord helped us'.

∴ Joyce Walsh



'REACHING ROMAN CATHOLICS': COLIN MAXWELL

From my earliest days in the Christian faith, I was deeply interested in the controversy between the Roman and Reformed Churches. This created an abiding desire to reach Roman Catholics with the gospel.

Sensing a call into 'full time' work, in September 1983 I entered the Whitefield College of the Bible, where I later met my wife Olive. This gave me opportunity to meet those engaged in reaching Roman Catholics. Earlier days of open air evangelism in downtown Belfast had brought me face to face with some Roman Catholics from Dublin, so that put the Republic of Ireland on my list of "places to pray about". Then I heard the late Dr. Franco Magiotto, who worked among RC priests in his native Italy. Franco himself had been converted in the priesthood. Maybe the Lord wanted me to go to Italy? Rev. John Hanna spoke enthusiastically about the work in Spain, and so for long months, I specifically prayed about these three Roman Catholic countries.

After finishing at College, I was asked to minister in Port Lincoln congregation, South Australia. This brought useful experience. Unfortunately I had to leave Olive behind, but at least with an engagement ring on her finger! The door opened for us to go to the Irish Republic when our Mission Board asked Olive to go and work with Miss Pat Mills in Cork city. Conscious that providence alone was no sure guide to the will of God, I remember seeking the Lord for a specific word of direction. It duly came as I read in Jeremiah 37.

We were married in July 1987 and set up home in Cork one month later. A small group of Christians met in the living room of our rented home for a few months. Then the Missionary Council made the funds available for the purchase of a larger property also on the north side of the city. From the beginning, our work was evangelistic, along with

the responsibility of studying for the meetings, where it hardly matters whether you preach to few or to many.

Ireland in 1987 was very different to Ireland today. The scandals in the Church of Rome had not yet been exposed. We enjoyed many conversations with Roman Catholics. Those early years of studying the Roman controversy certainly proved

beneficial. Often on the defensive, we had to articulate why we didn't go here (e.g. mass or confessional) or do this or that (e.g. pray to Mary).

However, it gave opportunity to positively proclaim Christ, His once for all sacrifice for sin,

and salvation by the free grace of God. One man was soon converted, and eventually his whole family, who stood

IRELAND HAS CHANGED COMPLETELY SINCE 1987. ROME'S POWER APPEARS BROKEN, ONLY TO BE REPLACED BY AN EMPTY SECULARISM. THE 'CELTIC TIGER' BROUGHT A SPIRIT OF GREED, THEN DISILLUSIONMENT, AND HAS LEFT THE COUNTRY VIRTUALLY BANKRUPT.



with us, at great personal cost, during our whole time in Cork. The work would grow a little, and then recede, as people came and went. Looking back, we never really got beyond the nucleus stage as far as numbers were concerned, although we often 'punched above our weight' with letters to the local and national newspapers and even radio interviews on various matters.

A small advert was carried every night in the local paper, with a short Bible verse and an invitation to ring our "Gospel Hotline" for a two-minute gospel message. For a while, even the Irish Catholic newspaper accepted our advertisements for booklets on various RC subjects, e.g. Padre Pio and St Therése, but this route was always going to have short mileage. We got through the net with one booklet in particular, and had the strange experience of selling dozens of copies to the Legion of Mary in Dublin to use in their work in Mountjoy prison! The subject was Romanist in nature, yet the contents were solidly evangelical and Protestant.

Olive and I spent over 21 years in Cork before discerning the Lord moving us on. I felt led to an itinerant ministry. Since June 2009, we have been living in Fivemiletown, Co. Tyrone. Work now consists of evangelism in the border areas during the winter months, and further south when the weather gets warmer. Mission Board purchased a small camper van, which enables me to be away for a few days at a time, either in Dublin or in the Irish midlands. One place I like to talk to people is at the Marian Shrine at Knock, Co. Mayo, especially during the "Novena" in mid August. We had often driven through Knock en route to Cork and I remember trying to picture what it would be like to evangelise there among the 'devotees'. It is always an encouragement to work with others. Several groups came to Cork to help us. Currently, the witness at the Irish Ploughing Championships is well established, while the more recent "Consider Christ" outreach is gathering momentum.

From the first, we have enjoyed a good relationship with our Mission Board,

always on hand to direct and pray for our work. Deputation meetings have kept the work before a praying and generous people. The Missionary Council has graciously stepped in on two landmark occasions to meet major financial needs. God has never left us 'high and dry' and it is has always been a privilege to serve Him. As Matthew Henry once observed, "All this and Heaven too..."

Ireland has changed completely since 1987. Rome's power appears broken, only to be replaced by an empty secularism. The 'Celtic Tiger' brought a spirit of greed, then disillusionment, and has left the country virtually bankrupt. But God has a people in the 'Emerald Isle' still to save according to His gracious purposes. Irish voices must blend with those out of every other tongue and people (Revelation 7:9) It is our calling, through propagation of the gospel, to bring to them the only basis for forgiveness of sin and real salvation.

✠✠ Colin Maxwell

COMING & GOING

The Boyds (Spain): Rev and Mrs Boyd plan to be home for 5 weeks of deputation from September 2nd. Rev David Creane is arranging these meetings (028 3832 8780).

Kathy Walker (Kenya): Kathy is at home in USA for deputation meetings. She plans to visit Northern Ireland in November, her programme organized by Rev Paul Fitton (028 8772 3368).

Joy Gillespie (Spain): Joy is back in Spain after a very busy schedule of over sixty meetings. She is very grateful for all the support that enables her to continue on the field.

MISSION BOARD DETAILS

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DATES FOR THE DIARY

MAY

10th

LISBURN, YOUTH PRAISE SERVICE

Guest Speaker: Mr Garth Wilson Time: Friday at 8.00pm
Guest Singers: Greer Brothers, Rebekah Bell, Denver Wilson

11th

CONSIDER CHRIST OUTREACH

Location: Ashbourne & Ratoath, Co. Meath
Full details: Dr L Wilson
Mob: 078 8626 5600 Email: outreach@ConsiderChrist.com

11th

BALLYMENA, YOUTH RALLY

Speaker: Dr J Douglas (Lisburn) Subject: Bible Study
Time: Saturday at 7.30 pm

17th+19th

SIXMILECROSS, ANNIVERSARY SERVICES

Speakers: Rev M Lecky (Cookstown), Rev T Baxter (Ballynahinch)
Time: Friday at 8.00pm, Sunday at 3.30pm, Special Singers

24th

MOURNE, YOUTH RALLY

Speaker: Rev R Higginson (Coleraine) Special Singing
Time: Friday at 8.00pm Supper Served

24th

TANDRAGEE, YOUTH PRAISE SERVICE

Speaker: Rev S Murray (Tandragee) Time: Friday at 8.00pm
Singing: Karla Gregg, Calvary Trio, Pathway
Offering: For 'Consider Christ Outreach'

JUNE

8th-14th

BALLYMENA, ANNUAL BIBLE CONFERENCE

Speaker: Dr J Douglas (Lisburn),
Time: Saturday at 7.30pm, Sunday at 11.30am & 6.30pm,
Monday-Friday at 8.00pm

9th-23rd

COLERAINE, GOSPEL MISSION

Location: Faith Mission Hall, Brook Street
Speaker: Rev R Higginson (Coleraine)
Time: Sundays at 3.30pm, Monday - Friday at 8.00pm

AUGUST

3rd-11th

ENNISKILLEN, LOUGH ERNE CONVENTION

Speakers: Dr A Cairns, Dr J Douglas and Rev J Greer
Time: Sunday at 12.00 & 8.00pm
Weeknights at 8.00pm