



ISAAC FINLAY, of Newtownards.

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ISAAC FINLAY, who passed away to be with Christ on 7th January, 1916, in his 91st year, was the last member of the original meeting of Brethren which was begun in a house in the Square fifty-five years ago. He was a regular attender at the meetings for almost fifty years.

His conversion took place about fifty-seven years ago, shortly before the great spiritual movement known as the Revival of '59. We have often heard him describe the wonderful meetings held in the First Presbyterian Church, and the great open-air gatherings in the Glen, addressed by Dr. Grattan Guinness and others.

Throughout his Christian life Mr. Finlay was always interested in Gospel work, and rejoiced to hear of its success anywhere. He himself was the means of turning some from darkness to light through personal dealing. In this direction he had a special gift, and knew how to introduce spiritual things in conversation, always being faithful, but never offensive. He was a witness for the joyful side of Christianity, and seemed to live on the "sunny side of life."

Our veteran brother was not carried about by every wind of doctrine, but stood firm for "the Old Gospel" as found in the Scriptures, and preached by Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, and many others. The "New Theology" had no attractions for him. He often said it should be labelled, like certain other wares, "Made in Germany." To him the whole Bible was the Word of God. He read it carefully, and its decisions were binding on his conscience. Once he knew the will of God he sought to do it, regardless of the opinions of others. He had only one Master, and he made it his aim to be well-pleasing to Him.

Soon after his conversion he became exercised on the question of baptism, and concerning this also he "searched the Scriptures." From his reading of the Acts of the Apostles he concluded that baptism was by immersion, not sprinkling, and that believers, and only believers, were baptised on their profession of faith. His mind was soon made up that he, too, would follow the Lord in this ordinance, so he communicated with Mr. Spurgeon, who made arrangements for him, and he was baptised in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, by Spurgeon himself. He was a great admirer of the "Prince of Preachers," and

was a regular reader of his sermons right up to the last. He was a frequent visitor at "Spurgeon's," and on several occasions he had the privilege of conversing with him. During one of these conversations Mr. Spurgeon asked him what section of the Church he belonged to. He replied that he met with a few Christians who came together on the first Day of the week to obey their Lord's command, "This do in remembrance of Me," and to worship Him without priest or president. "I know," said Spurgeon, "you are one of the Brethren." Mr. Finlay was one of the first in Newtownards to meet in this way. He recognised that Christ Himself was the centre of gathering for His people—"Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49. 10); "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

He believed in the priesthood common to all believers, but not in a clerical order. He disliked professionalism in the things of God. He believed that the Great Head of the Church still gives pastors and teachers to feed the flock of God, and evangelists to "spread the joyful news wherever man is found." These are the principles for which he witnessed during his long and honourable Christian course.

The last Scripture which he heard read in public, Acts 24. 14-16, may well be taken as his confession of faith: "This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

May we have grace to follow him as he followed Christ, till we join him "where glory, glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's Land."

W.G.