

# The Young People's Magazine

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**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland  
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

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*“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1*



***January 2014***

***Vol 79 • No 1***

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**Cover Picture:** *The Mer de Glace, a glacier near Chamonix in south-east France.*  
See page 14.

## The Young People's Magazine

**Published by** the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Scottish charity number SC003545.

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**Material for the magazine** should reach the editor by the beginning of the previous month.

**Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address** should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates, including postage, are: F P Magazine £26.00 (£2.00 per copy); Y P Magazine £15.00 (£1.00 per copy); both magazines £39.00. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

**Free Presbyterian Magazine:** The Church's main magazine is *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Send to the General Treasurer at the above address for a free sample copy. See above for subscription rates.

# The Young People's Magazine

Volume 79

January 2014

Number 1

## Anything More to Be Said?

These were the words on a gravestone: "I have nothing further to say 1907-2007". There was no name and no other details, unless there was some other information on the other side of the stone.

Probably this was an attempt to be slightly funny. Yet it may have been someone expressing confidence that the 100 years he or she spent in this world was the entire period of that person's existence. But it was not; our existence will continue for ever and ever, throughout eternity, either in heaven or in hell. And the passing of another year should remind us that our life will not last for ever; it will not be long before we too pass through death, into eternity.

This person's lifetime seems long, and so it was – if we measure it in comparison with the number of years that most people live in our time. But it was not long in comparison with the more than 900 years that Adam lived, or his son Seth, or Methuselah. But all of these men have already existed much longer in eternity than they ever lived on earth. And such people's time in heaven or hell has hardly begun; it is just a matter of some thousands of years. Can you bear to think of someone spending even thousands of years in the awfulness of hell? But thousands of years will pass into millions of years, and millions of years will pass into billions of years, and it will go on and on without any possibility of coming to an end. How solemn!

Suppose you could know that you have 100 years in front of you. How would you spend it? I assume you want to get to heaven at the end of your life and that you most certainly do not want to be sent to hell. Some who read this will probably say, That is right, but I want to live life to the full for at least 99 of these 100 years.

Let us note three points in reaction to this thought. First, to hope to enter heaven after an ungodly life is most dishonouring to God. To glorify God is the main reason for our existence. So, if we do not seek God's glory more than everything else in our lives, we are living a vain life – a life that is empty of all that could make it worthwhile. It is a life about which, in the end, there is nothing further to say that is positive.

Second, the way to live life to the full is to seek God's glory by doing all that we can to obey His commandments, and to do so in dependence on His grace. It also involves enjoying God – not seeking entertainment in the foolish ways that so many people spend their time (or, rather, waste it): by watching, for example, films, whether in the cinema, on television or on DVDs. Especially, God cannot be glorified by watching what is in itself sinful – what your conscience would tell you that you should not do yourself. How much better to seek to enjoy God in His worship and spend as much time as possible in learning about Him and His ways.

Third, the Bible says, “*Now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Now – not when you are many years older – is the time to believe in Christ; it is the time that is acceptable to God. That is what is really important, not the time that you might find acceptable after spending many years sinning against God, despising the gospel, and refusing to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. After all these years of unbelief, your heart will be much harder, much more resistant to Christ and His invitations, such as, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:22). And, obviously, you cannot predict what will be the last day, or even the last year, of your life. The danger is that you will pass into eternity without ever beginning to seek the Lord. No one has ever been sorry that they found the Saviour too soon.

As a youth, Richard Cecil did not believe the Bible; he lived a godless life. His mother was a godly woman but she experienced various kinds of trouble. One might think that this would put Richard off religion completely. But no, one night as he lay in bed, he thought about his mother's troubles and noted how cheerfully she went on in spite of all these difficulties.

Her cheerfulness, he realised, was the result of her going away, again and again, to pray and to read the Bible. He noted also: “She has a secret spring of comfort of which I know nothing, while I, who . . . seek pleasure by every means, seldom or never find it”.

He drew the appropriate conclusion: “If, however, there is any such secret in religion, why may I not attain it as well as my mother? I will immediately seek it from God.” He did seek it, and he found it in Jesus Christ. He began to live a godly life – a life which was glorifying to God. So it was a life about which there was something positive to say.

Cecil afterwards became a noted minister. Yes, he glorified God in his work as a minister, but what really made his a God-glorifying life was his trust in Christ and that he lived as a godly man.

Robert Harris was a minister many years before Robert Cecil. As a youngster he much preferred sport to reading the Bible. But when he was at

university he was convinced of the importance of reading God's Word. Later he was converted but, like many other people, he was not able to tell what particular sermon God had used to bring him into Christ's kingdom.

When he was in his final illness, he told his friends to think good thoughts of God. And he went on: "However it is with us, we cannot think too well of Him". Here was a man whose whole aim was to glorify God.

Clearly he wanted his family to live also to God's glory. So he left a Bible to each of his children and grandchildren; in all these copies of the Scriptures there was written: "None but Christ".

He knew that he was going to a place where he would glorify God perfectly. He said, "If God has no more service for me to do here, I could be gladly in heaven, where I shall serve Him better, delivered from sin and distractions. . . . I praise God that I can live and dare to die." Here was something positive that could be said about him after his death.

Notice how Harris was being delivered from the world and the things of the world. He realised that, while he could serve God in this world, he could serve God better, perfectly, in heaven above. So we need not be surprised to find him asking, "Why should anyone desire to live but to do God service?"

We may not attain the same standard of godliness as Harris did, but we should all want to serve God sincerely. Not everyone is called to serve God in the ministry of the gospel. Yet there are many other ways in which young men and women and boys and girls can serve God. The first thing you need, if you are to serve God, is a new heart. So you should pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

As we already noted, to seek to keep God's commands is to serve Him. Paul was serving God when, in his making of tents and in all his relationships with other people, he made every effort "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16) – in other words, to live a godly life. And God is glorified by such an attitude.

More obviously perhaps, we may serve God in worshipping Him. So if we read the Bible and pray at home, or if we gather in church to pray, to sing, to hear the Bible read, and to listen to the preaching of God's truth, we may be serving God. But we are not really serving God if we just go through the motions of praying and reading, for instance. Our hearts must be involved in the worship of God, for, as Jesus told the woman of Samaria, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Many who truly worship will be forgotten in this world; after they die, people may have nothing to say about them. But at the day of judgement, Christ will at least have this to say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matthew 25:34).

## Salvation in *The Pilgrim's Progress*

### 7. "Things Rare and Profitable"

*Rev Roderick Macleod*

This is the final section of a paper on John Bunyan's book, given at last year's Youth Conference. The theme of the previous four articles has been perseverance: "keeping on till the end"; it is continued in this article. Last month's section looked at perseverance in relation to the Christian warfare and meditation on the Word of God. Here are some more things to be learned from what Christian saw in the Interpreter's house – the Interpreter is a picture of a minister.

***P****erseverance the only course for those who truly believe what is at stake.* The sixth solemn thing that Christian saw in the Interpreter's house was a man in a cage of despair. He was lamenting his desperate wickedness because he was sure that he had, by sin, ruined his soul for ever. Let us be afraid lest our wicked hearts lead us to despair; let us listen to him: "I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it, as in this iron cage. I cannot get out. O now I cannot! I left off to watch and be sober; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts [that is, he did not restrain these evil desires]; I sinned against the light of the Word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me; I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent."

How solemn are, for example, Esau seeking repentance, or Judas betraying his master, or the frightful things that are said about the sin against the Holy Ghost. Such Scriptures make believers fear the world, the flesh and the devil more than any suffering (true or imagined) that they may expect on their journey. It makes them think with absolute dread of anyone going back to the world. Those who do not fear God go back when things get hazardous, because their faith is no more than an opinion about the divine origin of the Word of God, an opinion which they can change at will. But those who fear God tremble at the threatenings, because they are infallibly sure. They have been effectively taught in the Interpreter's house, and they will endure any cross that a sovereign God shall give them, rather than "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:10).

Mistrust was one of those who went back; this made Christian say, "You make me afraid, but whither shall I flee to be safe? If I go back to my own country, that is prepared for fire and brimstone and I shall perish there. I must venture on. Back is nothing but death. To go forward is fear of death, but it is life everlasting beyond. I will yet go forward."

When Christian reflected on what he was shown in the Interpreter's house,

he said what we believe is very important: "Here I have seen things rare and profitable, things pleasant, things dreadful, things to make me stable in what I have begun to take in hand. Then let me think on them and understand why they were shown to me and let me be thankful, O good Interpreter, to thee."

***Perseverance and good company.*** Malachi writes, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name" (3:16). The life of a pilgrim is the life of a stranger in this world. A great source of strength for a lonely pilgrim is the company of good people. See how Faithful and Hopeful encouraged Christian in his pilgrimage. See how heart warming was the time spent with Discretion, Piety, Prudence and Charity. This is one of the advantages of communion seasons: we meet with more of God's people than we usually do. The company of those who can be called Faithful or Hopeful, or Discretion, Piety, Prudence or Charity is of great value.

"Behold, how good a thing it is, and how becoming well,

Together such as brethren are in unity to dwell!

Like precious ointment on the head, that down the beard did flow,

Even Aaron's beard, and to the skirts, did of his garments go.

As Hermon's dew, the dew that doth on Sion's hills descend:

For there the blessing God commands, life that shall never end" (Psalm 133).

***Perseverance and Prayer.*** Prayer is the breathing of the life of grace. It can be said of Bunyan's Pilgrim, from the beginning to the end of his story: "Behold, he prayeth". A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. When he was awakened to his danger, "he began to retire himself to his chamber to pray for, and pity [his family], and also to condole his own misery. He would also walk solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying; and thus, for some days, he spent his time."

Final salvation is possible only by warfare. But our weapons are spiritual. Salvation is not possible without the spirit of grace and supplication. "All-prayer" is a part of the Christian's armour. Charity, Piety and Prudence took Christian into the armoury, where "they showed him all manner of furniture [articles], which their Lord had provided for pilgrims, as sword, shield, helmet, breastplate, all-prayer, and shoes that would not wear out."

The things Christian learned in the Interpreter's house impressed on him the need for prayer: "Well, said Christian, this is fearful! God help me to watch and be sober, and to pray, that I may shun the cause of this man's misery!" "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10).

May we also be Christian pilgrims, fleeing from the wrath to come, setting

off with the Book in our hands, by the way of the cross, to the celestial city. May we too learn, in the house of God, “things rare and profitable, things pleasant, things dreadful, things to make us stable in what we have begun to take in hand”. May the Lord make us thankful for the Word of God read and preached, and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit which accompanies it!

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## **“In Christ Alone”**

*Rev N M Ross*

**A**bout 350 years ago, a boy called John Sudlow lived in Middlesex, England. His parents had taught him well about the things of God and that he needed to be saved from his sins. It was the death of a little brother that first made him really serious about being saved.

When the Great Plague came in 1665, John was afraid he would catch it. What could he do? He knew that the best thing was to pray to God.

“O Lord God and merciful Father,” he prayed, “take pity upon me, a miserable sinner and strengthen me. O Lord, keep me from this poisonous infection. However, not my will but Thy will be done.”

He also told God about his sins. “O Lord, I have sinned against Thee. Lord, pardon my sins. I would have been in hell long ago, if it had not been for Thy mercy. But, O Lord, if Thou hast appointed me to die, prepare me for death, that I may die with comfort.”

He also prayed that his parents and brothers and sisters would not catch the dreadful plague. Then he concluded, “And, O Lord, I ask Thee to help me bear up under my afflictions, for Christ’s sake. Amen.”

We know that he prayed this prayer because he also wrote it down. He did not show it to anyone, but it was found after he died.

Yes, as you may have guessed, John did catch the plague. But the story about him also shows how God answered his prayer to be ready to die.

When he became ill he patiently submitted to the will of God; he said, “It is the Lord that takes away my health; but I will say as Job did, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord’. If I should live longer, I should but sin against God.” He also said, “The Lord shall be my physician, for he will cure both soul and body; heaven is the best hospital. It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good in His eyes.”

Not long before he died, a minister visited him and asked, “John, are you not afraid to die?”

“No,” said John, “if the Lord will comfort me in that hour.”

“But,” said the minister, “how can you expect comfort, seeing we deserve



none?" The boy answered that, if he got from God what he rightly deserved for his sins, he would have been in hell long ago.

The minister then asked him: "But how do you expect comfort and salvation, seeing that you are a sinner?"

"In Christ alone", said John.

An hour and a half later he died peacefully, trusting in Christ alone.

The lesson we have to learn from this story is very clear. We too must depend upon Christ alone for salvation.

When do we need salvation? Perhaps you may be thinking, "I hope to live a long life, so I can wait until later". That is the wrong answer! Even if you were to live to be 100 years old, you need salvation *now*. The Bible says: "Behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). It also says three times, "Today if ye will hear His voice," (that is, the voice of Jesus) "harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:8,9,17; 4:7). Jesus says, "Come unto Me". May He give you ears to hear and a heart to obey.

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## Peter, the Apostle of Hope

### 5. The Hope that Purifies

*Rev J R Tallach*

This is the final section of a paper given at last year's Youth Conference. Other sections in the paper were: the hope held out, the hope established, the hope under attack, and the hope restored. Last month's article considered Peter's hope restored after he had denied the Saviour.

**I**t was in the very nature of hope that Peter would have been expecting good things in the future. The Lord set before him the prospect of death as a martyr; and in his converted spirit of faith, love and hope, he accepted his end without murmur or debate. When the Lord had referred to His own death by crucifixion (John 13.36), Peter immediately said that he would follow Him. But Jesus said, "Thou canst not follow Me now". Peter must grow further in grace before he could follow the path of crucifixion and endure to the end.

For the same reason, Jesus told those who arrested Him in the garden and who would also have taken His disciples prisoner: "Let these go their way" (John 18:8). The disciples were not ready to bear the cross of martyrdom after Jesus. Simon Peter at first offered some resistance by cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant. But "the weapons of our warfare", says Paul, "are not carnal". So the sword was put away at Jesus' command, and the ear was restored by His mercy and power.

But “they all forsook Him and fled” (Mark 14:50). As John Colquhoun writes in his book on *Saving Faith*, “true faith admits of various degrees. The Apostle John informs us that some of the saints to whom he wrote were fathers, others young men, and others little children. Some believers are compared to fathers; they ‘have known Him who is from the beginning’. Having received Christ Jesus the Lord, they walk in Him. Others are compared to young men, who are come to the vigour of their age, fit for fighting the good fight of faith, and who are so strong in the Lord and in the power of His might that they have overcome the wicked one. And others are compared to little children who, though they are unskilful in the word of righteousness and are weak in understanding and in faith, yet ‘have known the Father’. These different degrees of spiritual stature denote different measures of faith among the saints.”

Peter's final reference to his expected martyrdom is to be found in 2 Peter 1:14: “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle”. The tent of his body must soon be taken down and folded away, “even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me”. He would then follow the Lord both to the cross and to heaven.

Much had happened between the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter writing this epistle. The resurrection; Jesus leading the disciples out as far as Bethany and being raised up to heaven in front of them; the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost; the preaching of the Word with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; Peter's rebuke at the hands of Paul, “because he was to be blamed” (Galatians 2:11); and his fulfilling of the Lord's commission, “Feed My sheep”. But, above all, his life of faith and repentance sustained a more enduring and a clearer hope. The growth that he commended to others had been his own over these years: “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

The tabernacle, the tent of meeting, served the Children of Israel through their wilderness journey, but this tent was later replaced by Solomon's temple – a solid, beautiful, relatively-permanent building in Jerusalem. Peter would soon leave the tent of his body and be a living stone in the temple above.

Peter's last recorded exchange with his Lord (in John 21, see article 4 in this series) speaks clearly of the elements which made up Peter's hope. (1.) The boat coming to the shore: “so He bringeth them to their desired haven” (Psalm 107:30). (2.) The Lord standing to greet them: so the first martyr Stephen said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). (3.) The food prepared for them on the shore: so “blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9). (4.) The great matter to be discussed:

the love existing between Christ and His Church: “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Revelation 1:5).

Peter wrote concerning that hope in 1 Peter 1:3,4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”.

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*For Younger Readers*

## **The Unkind Ruler**

A lot of people were going hungry in the town. Yet important people had plenty to eat. One important man, a ruler in the town, was giving a dinner to some other important people. So he felt that he did not need to trouble himself about anything else.

Outside there was a crowd of hungry people. They were waiting to get a share of the food that the Emperor had sent for them. The Emperor ruled over the whole country; so he was the most important man of all.

The ruler of the town thought that the hungry people could wait until he finished his meal, however long it took. He was unkind. He did not care about those who were hungry.

After some hours, a man walked into the room where the dinner was being served. He was dressed as a soldier. He asked the ruler of the town to take pity on the hungry people outside. He told the ruler that he ought to obey the Emperor.

The ruler of the town would not listen. He was annoyed. “Who are you?” he asked the soldier. “Mind your own business.”

Then the soldier opened his coat. He pointed to a badge on his chest and said, “I am the Emperor, and I will teach you your duty”.

How shocked the ruler of the town must have been to hear these words! He must have been even more shocked when the Emperor told him that he was no longer to be ruler of the town. And he had to leave his big house the very next day. How sorry he must have been for saying, “Who are you?”

When God speaks to us, do we listen to Him? When He tells us

what to do, do we obey Him? And do we obey Him right away? God tells us that we are to be kind to people. He also tells us that we are to love Him with all our heart.

Or do we give Him some foolish answer like the ruler of the town did? We ought to pray to God: "Teach me to do Thy will" (Psalm 143:10). When God hears that prayer, He makes people really want to do all that He tells them, and to do it right away.

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## Living for Eternity

### A Letter from *Mary Winslow* to Her Grandchildren

Taken, with editing, from *Heaven Opened*, a book of her letters. One assumes that the grandchildren were already converted.

What poor creatures we are if left to ourselves! What a mercy that there is One who loves us better than we love ourselves! What a mercy that He will watch over us all our journey here and has engaged (by all the varied workings of His providence) to prepare us for the blessed place that He has gone to prepare for us! And what a place will that be!

Love Him more than anyone else. Live for eternity; live for Jesus; have much to do with Him. Go to Him when you will – and you will be always welcome, and never more so than when you come full of needs. You may tire a fellow creature out with coming often, but you will never weary Jesus, your own Jesus, that Brother born for your adversity. Remember that you can, at all times, and under all circumstances – in the streets, in company, abroad, or at home – have the loving, listening ear of Jesus.

Hold fast your union with Him. What an honour this is for a poor worm! Whatever concerns you, it equally concerns Christ. He has taken up into heaven a body like your own, and is not ashamed of it either. Yet how many who call themselves Christians are ashamed of taking up a cross for Him who bore the cross for them and went with it unto death!

My dear children, live for eternity; this world is not worth living for – its honours, its riches, its glories are things that are passing away. But the love of Jesus is as eternal as Himself. Search your Bible, and walk as He walked through life. Do all things as if He was now walking by your side.

O live for eternity! The glory of this world is fading and will soon be gone, and gone for ever! O to be a real Christian, a follower of Jesus, who has said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments"; "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it"; "Ask . . . that your joy may be full".

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Search the Scriptures, and see what He has commanded, and He will make every path of duty plain. Again I say, Live for a glorious eternity. If you could have the glory, the wealth, and the honours of this world laid at your feet, short and empty would be the enjoyment of them. Then live and act with reference to eternity. And O the glory that awaits the true follower of Christ who has cast overboard all that the world calls good and grand and, taking the Bible as his directory, walks as Jesus did. He will receive a “Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”.

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*For Junior Readers*

## The Sands of Time

The end of one year and the beginning of a new year is often when people reflect on the passing of time. People make comments about how the past year has flown by; and we can be sure that, if we are spared, the coming year also will fly past.

Perhaps you have heard of the poem, “The Sands of Time Are Sinking”. It was based on the letters of the godly Samuel Rutherford, who lived in the 1600s. The first verse refers to an old-fashioned hour glass, which contained very fine sand and was used to measure time. When you turned it upside down, the sand would trickle through until it all went into what was now the bottom part of the glass. Then you knew that an hour was up.

The words of the first verse are:

“The sands of time are sinking,  
The dawn of heaven breaks,  
The summer morn I’ve sighed for,  
The fair sweet morn awakes:  
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,  
But dayspring is at hand,  
And glory, glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel’s land.”

In the letter on which this verse is based, Rutherford emphasises our need to use properly the time we have. “Misspend not your short sand-glass,” he says, “which runneth very fast. Seek your Lord in time.”

What does the Bible say? “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found”. In other words, the time will come when it will be too late to seek the Lord – when the sands of your time have run out. So, as Hosea puts it, “it is time to seek the Lord” – now, at this present moment, at the start of this new year!

Perhaps the sand of time ran out, in the past year, for someone you knew and loved. How sad for you and for those close to them! But, if they sought the Lord in time, the darkness of this life is past for them, and they are now dwelling in glory, in what Rutherford calls "Immanuel's land". How wonderful for them! Would you not wish, like them, to "die the death of the righteous"? (Do you remember that Immanuel, or Emmanuel, is one of Jesus' names? See Matthew 1:23.)

There is a beautiful description, at the end of Part 2 of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, of some of the pilgrims crossing the river of death. One was called Mr Standfast, and we are told what he said as he faced death: "I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face which was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith: but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of. . . . His name has been to me sweeter than all perfumes. His voice has been to me most sweet. . . . His Word I used to gather for my food." And then Mr Standfast said to Jesus, "Take me, for I come unto Thee".

If you wish to enter glory like he did, will you not pray now, Teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom? Do not waste your short sand-glass of time, but seek the Lord!

*J van Kralingen*

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## **"Convert Me Now and not Tomorrow"**

In 1826 a man called Vernier left home to bring the gospel to the people of the region of Drôme, in south-east France. He did not carry much luggage, just a spare shirt tied up in a handkerchief. He bought what he needed with the money he earned by weaving straw hats. Sometimes he would speak from the Bible, from 8 o'clock in the morning till midnight, to those who wished to listen to him. And God blessed what he said to the conversion of many of those who heard him.

One day Vernier came to a village called Ocelon, praying that the Lord would bless his work there. The first person he saw was a poor woman sitting at the door of her cottage. He asked her for a glass of water. She suggested that he was a soldier who had deserted from the army. "No," he explained, "I am crossing the country to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come."

"The wrath to come? What is that?" she asked in reply. Obviously she had never heard the expression before. But she was struck with what Vernier had

said to her; she felt that it was a man of God who had come into her house. And she offered him the best food she had in her cupboard.

While he was eating his meal, the woman went away to call the local people to come together to hear what her visitor had to say. About 600 gathered, even before Vernier had finished eating. He spoke seriously to them and, that day, 30 of them were “hopefully converted”. In other words, that is how they seemed to be at the time, though “hopeful” conversions are not always what they appear to be. This work of grace continued as Vernier visited all the homes in the village, and the influence of the work spread into the surrounding countryside.

It was probably some time afterwards that Vernier married. He and his wife had the happiness to see God’s blessing fall on their own family. The Holy Spirit worked first in the heart of the oldest son and continued His wonderful work until each of them might be found praying sincerely to God, even the youngest. The children thanked God for giving them parents who prayed for them.

A teenager was alone looking after her sheep in a field; she was suddenly seized with a sense of her sins. For three weeks this 18-year-old prayed earnestly day and night. One day she saw Vernier passing by and followed him to a meeting. She listened to him very closely. Coming away from the meeting she prayed, “Lord, convert me – convert me now and not tomorrow”. How appropriate her prayer was! And God heard her.

When should we ask God to convert us? We should ask Him to convert us *now*. It is the only safe time – today and not tomorrow.

A much older man, now 65, found salvation. He exclaimed: “There was in my heart a bad root, which had never been taken away. But now I feel that it is taken away for ever.”

There was a school where 60 young girls used to go, at playtime, to pray for each other. One day, two soldiers were walking along the road beside the school; they stopped to listen and then went on their way much moved at what they had heard.

Most of the people in the district were Roman Catholics; they were amazed at what was happening. It was obvious to them that what the priests told them about the Protestant religion was false. Their priests claimed that Protestantism was just a cold denial of what they believed. But the people could now see the evidence of life and salvation in the Protestant converts; so their religion was obviously not cold.

So these Roman Catholics would say, “If we had among us men as godly and devoted as these evangelists, we also should be religious and happy”. The pity was that they did not leave their priests and go to hear men like

Vernier. If they could read, they would also have done well to begin their search for true happiness by buying a Bible to read for themselves. How thankful we should be for our privileges if we have a Bible and a preacher to listen to. But let us earnestly seek salvation through the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus". And if we are in earnest, we will seek that salvation *today* rather than tomorrow.

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## The Bible's Teaching on Repentance

### 1. What Does Repentance Mean?

*Charles Hodge*

This is the first article in another series taken, with editing, from *The Way of Life*.

**T**he Scriptures teach that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved. But they teach no less clearly that, unless we repent, we shall all perish. These two graces, faith and repentance, are both necessary, but they cannot exist separately. Repentance is a turning from sin to God, through Jesus Christ, and faith is to accept Christ in order to return to God. So whoever believes repents, and whoever repents believes.

The simple meaning of the word commonly used in the New Testament, for the idea of repentance, is a change of mind as the result of reflection. So, in that sense, God does not repent. The Bible tells us: He "is not a man . . . that he should repent". In the same sense it is said that Esau found no place for repentance, when he could not make his father Isaac change his decision.

In the ordinary religious sense of the word, repentance is a *turning* from sin to God; this is how it is usually used in the Bible. "I thought on my ways", said the Psalmist, "and *turned* my feet unto Thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:59). "When the wicked man *turneth away* from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive" (Ezekiel 18:27). "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him *return* unto the Lord" (Isaiah 55:7). Yet there is a repentance which has no connection with salvation. So we must search the Scriptures to learn what distinguishes repentance unto life from every other kind of repentance.

Conviction of sin is always part of repentance. It is prominent in the Bible and in the experience of Christians. There is one general truth clearly taught in the Bible: all true repentance springs from right views of God. Every Christian may, with more or less confidence, take up Job's words: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5,6).



To learn of God's justice will awaken conscience; it often produces a "fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation". This is the natural effect of a clear grasp of the rightness of God's character: He is a judge who gives everyone what is due to them. This is often found in the Bible. "Fearfulness and trembling", said David, "are fallen upon me; and horror hath overwhelmed me" (Psalm 55:5). "While I suffer Thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; Thy terrors have cut me off" (Psalm 88:15,16).

These fearful thoughts are so common in the experience of God's people that earlier writers make terror of conscience a prominent part of repentance. But there are two points we should remember. (1) These feelings vary in degree from unbearable despair to a calm conviction that we are justly exposed to God's displeasure. (2) The righteous and the unrighteous experience these terrors of conscience. Not only did they occur in David's repentance, Judas also experienced them; fearfulness often surprises the hypocrite. We are not to desire these terrors for their own sake, since there is nothing good in fear. It is reasonable that those should be afraid who refuse to repent and accept the offers of mercy. But there is nothing reasonable in those fears which arise from unbelief or distrusting God's promises.

People are often made to realise their guilt and danger before they have any clear grasp of the plan of redemption. To grasp the holiness of God produces awe. The angels in heaven are described as veiling their faces and bowing with reverence before the Holy One. There must be something of the same feeling in the minds of men when they discover His infinite purity. Yet this awe may be mixed with love and express itself in worship; or it may go along with hatred and express itself in blasphemy.

Very often the effect is simply awe (or at least this stands out most clearly) and the soul is led to bow low in the dust. Is this awe good or bad? This can only be decided by noticing if there is submission in the soul's thinking about infinite purity and a desire to see more of it. Or is there uneasiness and a desire to be left to remain at ease in darkness?

To discover the holiness of God must produce a sense of our own unworthiness. It is in God's light that we see light. It is by learning His excellence that we learn our own wickedness. As no one can be aware that he appears vile to others without a sense of shame, we find that this most often goes along with repentance. Thus Ezra prays, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6). Daniel expresses the same feeling when he says, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day" (Daniel 9:7).

## Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible using the word:

### Now

Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

**Precept.** And that, knowing the time, that *now* it is high time to awake out of sleep (Romans 13:11).

**Promise.** Come; for all things are *now* ready (Luke 14:17).

**Prayer.** Save *now*, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech Thee, send *now* prosperity (Psalm 118:25).

**Encouragement.** Come *now*, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isaiah 1:18). S

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## What Should We Believe?

Two men were away from home and went to hear a sermon. After they had gone back to their hotel, they complained that the minister did not appeal to their reason; he was not expecting them to work things out by their own powers of thinking. They both agreed that they would not believe anything they could not reason out.

An old man was sitting near them and he overheard the conversation. He told them: "You say you will not believe anything you can't reason out. Now as I was coming to this place in the train yesterday, I noticed some sheep and cattle and pigs and geese, all eating grass in the same field. Now can you tell me by what process that same grass is turned into feathers, hair, bristles and wool?"

"No," they answered, "we can't tell that."

"Do you believe it is a fact?"

"O yes, it is a fact." They could not doubt it. But the old man had led them into a trap. Clearly, he understood things much better than they did.

The old man then reminded them: "But I thought you said you would not believe anything you could not reason out".

Perhaps the minister had been speaking about the ways of God and salvation from sin. These too are things which we cannot reason out; we cannot work them out by our own thinking. But God has revealed them, and we are to believe what He has told us. God's mind is far more powerful than ours. So we must submit to what He tells us in the Bible.

# Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2013-14

## UK Names for Exercise 1

**Senior Section:** *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Rebecca Ross. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle MacDonald. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Emma Norris. *Inverness:* John and Rebekah Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew and Sam Munns. *Snizort:* Rebekah MacLeod. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot.

**Intermediate Section:** *Aberdeen:* Rachel Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Lily-Ann Metcalfe, James Ross. *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie. *Garrabost:* Isla Macdonald. *Glasgow:* Katie Macpherson, Jonathan Norris, Rachel Smith. *Inverness:* Daniel Maton. *Kyle:* Sarah Whear. *North Tolsta:* Catriona Nicolson. *Snizort:* Sarah Macleod. *Stornoway:* Joanna and Jonathan MacLean. *Tonbridge:* James and Katie Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Abigail and Daniel Broome.

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**Upper Primary Section:** *Barnoldswick:* Claudia van Essen, Robert Metcalfe. *Beaulay:* Deborah Maclean. *Brighton:* Katharine Hills. *Chippenham:* Timothy Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Esther Ross. *Edinburgh:* Fraser Morrison. *Gairloch:* Josh and Kyrene Tallach. *Glasgow:* Grant MacLennan, Hugh Macpherson, Rebecca Smith. *Inverness:* Victoria Maton. *Kyle:* Mark Whear. *London:* David and John Munns. *North Harris:* Hannah Jardine, Cara and Connor Macdonald, Neil Morrison. *North Tolsta:* Ruth Morrison. *Stornoway:* Kate and Molly Macsween.

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## Looking Around Us

### The Bay Psalm Book

Would you pay nearly £9m for a Psalm book? I doubt it, but this one was special. It was the first book printed in what later became the United States of America. It was sold recently in New York for £8.8 million, the first Bay Psalm Book to be sold since 1947. This copy is one of 11 known to survive, out of about 1700 copies that were originally printed. The other copies would have been worn out; they would not only have been used regularly in church on Sabbaths, but also at home, particularly for family worship.

The 300-page Bay Psalm Book was printed in 1640, after many Puritans crossed the Atlantic to Massachusetts Bay, because they were not able to

worship God in England in the way they believed the Bible told them to. The settlers, with godly ministers such as John Cotton and Thomas Shepard at their head, decided that they should have a new translation of the Psalms in metre. It is not nearly as good as the version of the Psalms in metre that we use today. And Stephen Day, the printer of the Bay Psalm Book, probably had little or no experience of printing; he was a locksmith by trade. He seems to have had no idea of how to use punctuation, and he put quotation marks where apostrophes should go. The book contains a large number of misprints, and the workmanship in other ways was not good. Yet so great was the demand for copies that it was reprinted more than 50 times over the next 100 years and most first edition books were worn out within some tens of years.

A librarian in Philadelphia – his library has a Bay Psalm Book on its shelves – commented, “It’s a book that was not created to be fancy or splendid or valuable in any way other than the significance of its content”. It is good when a Psalm book is well-produced and looks nice, but the important thing should always be its content. And we can be thankful that we can buy Psalm books today which, while they are not produced to be fancy or splendid or valuable, are accurate, attractive and reasonably priced.

The Psalms were written by David and other godly men as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So they are appropriate material for us to sing, particularly in public worship. And nothing that anyone else will ever write can possibly match them for material with which to praise God, no matter how godly the writer may be, no matter how excellent a poet. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit would bless us as we sing the Psalms – for instance these two verses (Psalm 19:7,8) which speak of the wonderful effects of God’s Word on the soul:

“God’s law is perfect, and converts the soul in sin that lies:  
God’s testimony is most sure, and makes the simple wise.

The statutes of the Lord are right, and do rejoice the heart:  
The Lord’s command is pure, and doth light to the eyes impart.”

### **2014 Youth Conference**

This year’s Youth Conference will be held, God willing, in the same venue as last year: Gartmore House, Gartmore, Stirlingshire, FK8 3RS, from Tuesday, April 8, to Thursday, April 10. Further details are to appear in next month’s *Young People’s Magazine*.

**Price £1.00**