

The Young People's Magazine

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

“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



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Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271; e-mail: kdmacleod@gmail.com. All unsigned articles are by the Editor.

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Volume 79

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Trading with Talents

It is the last of Jesus' parables that you find in Matthew's Gospel. The Saviour described a man who was going to spend time in a country far away from home. He gathered his servants together and gave them different numbers of talents to trade with while he was away. To one he gave five talents; to another he gave two and to a third just one.

Each talent was worth a huge amount of money, and the servants were to use that money in trading of some sort. When the man came back home, he met the servants to find out how well they had got on. He found that the first servant had done very well: he started with five talents and ended up having earned five more talents. The second servant too had done well; he began with two talents and his trading earned him two talents more.

But what about the last servant? He seemed to feel that it was pointless for him to begin trading. So he did nothing, except that he wrapped the talent up carefully in a napkin and buried it in the ground. So when his master came home, he dug up the talent and brought it to him.

Now every parable has a meaning. Obviously, by the man who went to a distant country, we are to understand Jesus Himself. Soon after He told the parable, He went away to heaven. But at the end of the world, He will return and bring everyone before Him in judgement. Then there will be a clear answer to the question: Are we the better of the good things we have been given? Some of these good things are very precious – the Bible, for instance. What have we done with it? Have we tried to profit by it? Have we asked God to bless it to us? Do we read it carefully, regularly and prayerfully?

We might call the Bible a talent. We have, so to speak, to trade with it. Another is the talent of time. If we are wise, we will seek not to waste time but make good use of it, especially for our souls. We must remember that we do not have an endless amount of time in this world; in fact, the time that is left to us may be very short indeed. It would be good for us to imitate the thinking of Edward Staunton, an English minister of long ago, who often asked his friends: "Come, what shall we do for God this day? How shall we trade with our talents for the advancement of His glory?" What was most

important for him, in using his Bible and his time and all his other talents, was to do so to God's glory.

But the talent I wish to focus on is preaching. If the preacher sticks to the message of the Bible, his preaching is indeed a valuable talent. You should want to trade with it effectively, to get as much profit from it as you can. Clearly, after you have heard a sermon, you must not do with it what corresponds to wrapping it in a napkin and burying it. Perhaps one could speak of wrapping a sermon in a napkin of respect, possibly saying respectfully that it was very good but then forgetting all about it. Then the sermon does no good; you do not profit by it at all.

So how should you trade with the talent of preaching? Of course, you should listen carefully to it while you are in church and ask God to bless it to your soul. But what should you do afterwards? Again, you should pray. You should ask God to help you to remember it, to learn something from it, and especially that you would look to Christ, who should be at the centre of all scriptural preaching.

But trading with the talent of preaching will also involve thinking over what you have heard. If, for instance, the sermon dealt with the Bible's teaching about God, what should your reaction be? You should think about the greatness of God, that He created all mankind, *yourself* included. So you are responsible to Him for everything you do. You should remember that He knows everything about you; nothing is hidden from Him, not even your secret thoughts. You should consider that God is absolutely righteous and so He cannot look lightly on your sins; there must be punishment.

Suppose the sermon was about sin; how should you trade with it? First of all, you should say to yourself: *I am a sinner*. You cannot trade profitably if you are always thinking about the sins of other people and ignoring your own. It is not profitable to turn your eyes away from your sins. Your next thought might be: Sin is a serious matter. Think about Adam and Eve and their first sin: because of it they were put out of the Garden of Eden; life afterwards would always be a struggle. And when life was over then they would have to die. Think too what *your* sin deserves: eternal punishment. And how can anyone endure that?

But the sermon may have been about Christ and salvation through Him. Then, as you think over it later, you should say to yourself: This salvation is what I need as a sinner; Christ's death meets my need exactly; He died so that sinners like me need not suffer for their sins. And you should remember that Christ is on the throne of glory, from where He gives spiritual blessings to sinners like you. So you must be earnest about these things; you must seek the Lord "while He may be found". You must trust in Christ, not in yourself.

One day C H Spurgeon went out in a boat for a sail. He was looking for some peace and quiet.

He asked the boatman: “Do you expect to go to heaven?”

The boatman looked astonished and answered, “Yes, yes, Sir, I do”.

“Will you tell me why you expect to go there?” the minister then asked.

The boatman claimed to be “a pretty decent sort of a man”. What was more, he said, he was not given to swearing; he did not drink – but he had to confess that he had taken too much sometimes. Yet he reckoned that he was not “a drunken man”. He paid everybody what they were due, he went on. And he finished up by declaring, “I am a good neighbour”.

“Is that all?” Spurgeon asked.

The boatman went on to add to his list of good points. “I go to church”, he said. But then he had to admit that he did not go in summer; he was then breaking the Sabbath by taking visitors out in his boat. Then he expanded on his kindness to his neighbours: “If any of them wants me to run for the doctor, why, I would get up in the middle of the night to serve them”.

“Is that all?” Spurgeon asked again.

“Well, and enough too, I should think.”

“No, no, you are altogether on the wrong tack. This is not the way of salvation at all.” Then Spurgeon began to explain to him something about how sinners can be saved and about trusting in God.

Spurgeon believed that the man had at least one talent: he had heard the preaching of the gospel. But clearly he had not traded with his talent. Now he was given another talent: what Spurgeon had said to him about the way of salvation and about trusting in God. We know no more about him; we can only hope that he then began to trade with his talents and that he found salvation for his soul.

In Jesus’ parable, those who traded with their talents were rewarded. These men are like people who make good use of their Bible and of the preaching they hear, so that they trust in Jesus Christ. As they pass into eternity, they will hear these words: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21). They will get to heaven.

But what about the man who did not trade with his talent? He was described as a “wicked and slothful servant”. And the command went out to cast “the unprofitable servant into outer darkness”. This refers to those who do not trouble to seek salvation; so their sins are not forgiven; they deserve to be punished. And, solemnly, that is what actually does happen.

Are *you* trading with your talents? Are you trying to make good use of your Bible? Are you trying to make good use of the sermons you hear? Or are you slothful, wasting your time, not considering what you hear?

Death Made Way For Liberty

Rev N M Ross

Long ago, when Switzerland was smaller than it is today, it was invaded by Duke Leopold III of Austria with his army of 9000 soldiers. The Swiss army was made up of only 1400 peasants, who came down from their homes in the Alpine valleys to meet their foe. The two armies faced each other in a valley near the Lake of Sempach on 9 July 1386.

The Austrians knew from past experience that they would not be a match for the Swiss if they fought hand to hand. So Leopold formed his soldiers into a dense mass, says one account, with the soldiers at the front holding out sharp spears which made a deadly, impassable wall.

It looked as if the Swiss would be conquered this time by the advancing Austrians, and lose their land and freedom. How could they break through the wall of spears and fight the Austrians at close quarters?

One Swiss soldier said he would lead the way. He said he was prepared to die if necessary while trying to make a gap through the Austrian front rank. His name was Arnold von Winkelried. He charged against the leading Austrian soldiers, who attacked him with their spears. Immediately a gap appeared in the wall of spears, through which the Swiss soldiers poured and conquered their enemy. But Winkelried died in the attempt.

The Swiss had a great victory that day at Sempach and remained free. Although Winkelried died, his death was a means of securing the lives and liberty of his people. A poet put it this way centuries later:

“Thus Switzerland again was free,
Thus death made way for Liberty!”

Does this not remind you of another man who died to obtain freedom for others? Yes, it is the man Christ Jesus, who died on the cross of Calvary to set His people free from the punishment of eternal death, which was due to them for their sins. By dying He also set them free from the slavery of sin.

Everyone needs this blessed liberty because all are enslaved by sin and deserve eternal punishment for their sins. Therefore everyone must turn to Christ to set them free. He says of Himself: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Where can we find Him so that we may have Him as our Liberator? In the Bible, of course. To know the truth about Him by the teaching of the Holy Spirit is to know Him as the One who sets sinners free. Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Even today Swiss people look back proudly to what Winkelried did and

value the freedom he was the means of securing. How much more should we value the freedom Christ has obtained by the sacrifice of Himself. He now proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isaiah 61:1). May we heed His proclamation.

Some historians have said that Arnold von Winkelried was just a legendary figure but there are recent scholars who think otherwise. It is certain, of course, that Jesus Christ is a true historical person who is alive today in heaven. He is calling to enslaved sinners through the preaching of the gospel, "Come to Me; I will make you free; then you will be free indeed". If you are still a captive to sin and Satan, may He make you willing and able to go to Himself.

The Bible's Teaching on Repentance

3. What Is True Repentance?

Charles Hodge

Last month's article in this series referred to the self-satisfaction with which sinners soothe themselves. It emphasised that the sense of sin involved in repentance destroys this satisfaction with oneself. It spoke too of confession of sin, especially to God. The series is taken, with editing, from *The Way of Life*.

There is indeed a confession which is the result of remorse (a sense of having done wrong, but with no hatred of the sin, just of its consequences). But in the hearts of the remorseful, there is none of the godly sorrow which leads to life. Thus Judas went to the chief priests and elders and said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood"; then he went and hanged himself. This is very different from a sincere acknowledgment of sin flowing from a broken spirit. The more full and free that acknowledgment is, the stronger the assurance of forgiveness.

The Scriptures plainly teach that there is, in all true repentance, a sense of sin, self-loathing, self-condemnation, sorrow and confession. Yet such is the poverty of human language that these very terms must be used to express the attitudes of those who do not truly repent. It is said of Judas that he repented, and his repentance must have included a conviction of guilt, sorrow, self-loathing and confession. Yet all this was not true repentance; it was just the working of that remorse which often drives people to despair and will feed the fire in hell that never shall be quenched.

True repentance and remorse are very different in their nature. There is a gleam of hope and a glow of love in the exercises of those who repent; so they produce very different effects from those which flow from despairing

remorse or a disturbed conscience. Views of the justice and holiness of God produce in someone truly repenting, not only a conviction of sin and sorrow for having committed it, but also an earnest desire to be delivered from sin as the greatest of all evils. So there is an anxious longing to be conformed to the image of God, as the greatest of all blessings.

Repentance in the ungodly is the working of conscience combined with fear; repentance in the godly is the working of conscience combined with love. The one tends toward despair and opposition to God, the other to hope and a desire after His favour. Both may lead to obedience; but the obedience in the one case is that of a slave; in the other it is that of a son.

What distinguishes true repentance most clearly from mere conviction and remorse? True repentance flows from a grasp of the mercy of God. There is no hope in the repentance of the ungodly. They may see, in the light of God's law, that their sins are very great. A sense of God's justice may fill them with terror when they see His infinite holiness and their own vileness. But there is no sense of God's forgiving mercy. So, instead of turning toward God, they turn away from Him.

Following the example of Adam, they would gladly hide from God. So terrifying is God's presence at times that they madly seek a refuge from it in the darkness of the grave, or call on the rocks and the mountains to cover them. This is the sorrow which works death. But in every case of real turning to God, there is, more or less, a distinct grasp of His mercy. This may be so feeble as only to enable the soul to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15) or, to use David's language, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again. . . . But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him" (2 Samuel 15:25,26). Yet this is enough to turn fear into hope, and rebellion into submission.

The hope which saves someone from sinking into despair may only be a conviction that God is merciful; he may have no distinct sense of how God exercises His mercy, or any confident persuasion that God will accept him. Still this person believes that He is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). He has courage to pray like David: "Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Psalm 86:5). We find in the Bible that recognising God's goodness is the great principle in a soul that turns to God. And the Prophet presents this as the great motive when he calls people to repentance: "Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and . . . repenteth Him of the evil" (Joel 2:13).

Samuel Rutherford and Prayer

2. Anwoth and Aberdeen

Matthew Vogan

Last month's article was about Samuel Rutherford's early life. He was converted by the time he reached 20.

A *ministry of prayer – Anwoth.* Samuel Rutherford began his ministry in Anwoth, near Kirkcudbright in south-west Scotland, during 1627. He was ordained in the Presbyterian way.

Prayer was key to Rutherford's ministry in Anwoth. As a minister he was in constant, earnest intercession for his flock. "There I wrestled with the Angel and prevailed", he says. "Wood, trees, meadows and hills are my witnesses, that I drew on a fair meeting betwixt Christ and Anwoth". Those who knew him said that he seemed "to be always praying, always preaching, always visiting the sick, always catechising, always writing and studying". There he also made a covenant with young George Gillespie that each would pray for the other throughout the rest of their days.

Andrew Thomson, who wrote about Rutherford's life, has said that he "was accustomed to rise every morning at three o'clock and the whole of the earlier hours of the day were spent by him in prayer, meditation and study". "To secure for himself a more complete retirement and a greater security against interruption, there was a hallowed spot about midway between his manse and his church, to which it was his frequent practice to retire for prolonged thought and prayer, and which is well known to this hour as 'Rutherford's walk'." Andrew Bonar says that Rutherford was a man so enraptured with Christ that he "was known to fall asleep at night talking of Christ, and even to speak of Him during his sleep". Rutherford himself wrote that "even to dream of Him is sweet".

At a later stage in his life, Rutherford gave practical counsel in the matter of daily prayer: "Acquaint yourself with daily praying; commit all your ways and actions to God by prayer, supplication and thanksgiving". Specifically, he advised that we should ensure that set times during the day "for the Word and prayer should be given to God". This should include the middle of the day, although that would be much shorter. He also counsels that in "the midst of worldly employments, there should be some thoughts of sin, death, judgement, and eternity, with at least a word or two of ejaculatory prayer [a short exclamation] to God". Watch against a wandering heart in prayer, and if you come away from prayer downcast and lacking in spiritual joy, remember that "a sense of guiltiness, and hunger are often best for us".

Rutherford's ministry in Anwoth was not to continue without interference.

He had conscientiously avoided acknowledging the bishop at his ordination, and now he spoke out publicly against the Arminian doctrine that the bishops were seeking to popularise. His first publication opposed the Arminian error that had become such a close ally of Episcopacy and semi-Roman Catholic ceremonialism. In 1636 the High Commission found him guilty of publishing the treatise, failing to recognize the authority of the High Commission and failing to give the bishops their titles, such as "Lord". Sentenced to be deposed from the ministry, he was exiled to Aberdeen.

The Prisoner's Sighs – Aberdeen. Although confined to Aberdeen, he was not put into prison but had free movement within the city. But it was not a city where Rutherford's thorough-going Presbyterian convictions found sympathy and this, together with his "silent Sabbaths" when he was forbidden from preaching, was a sore trial. Yet he rejoiced at being counted worthy to suffer for the One he called "my royal and princely King Jesus". From the "sea-beat prison" of Aberdeen, Rutherford wrote more than 250 letters, every one of which show that the days of Rutherford's exile were days of communion with Christ through prayer. He called it "my King's palace in Aberdeen" and "my garden of delights". "I cannot but write to my friends that Christ hath trysted [met] me in Aberdeen, and my adversaries have sent me here to be feasted with love banquets with my royal, high, high and princely Lord Jesus." "Only the remembrance of my fair days with Christ in Anwoth, and of my dear flock (whose case is my heart's sorrow) is vinegar to my sugared wine. Yet both sweet and sour feed my soul."

The letters also demonstrate a humble submission to God's providence through a prayerful spirit. One of Rutherford's most famous sayings is: "Grace groweth best in winter". He often writes to those in sorrow or affliction drawing from the depth of his own experiences and trials. There are indeed, throughout all of his letters, almost 440 references to prayer. They are letters full of spiritual prayer for fellow believers, the lost, the Church and the ingathering of the Jews. Constantly he was stirring up those to whom he wrote to engage in earnest, effectual prayer.

One of Rutherford's letters offers practical help from his own experience: if alone on a long journey, he tended to give that time to prayer; he set aside regular days for prayer and fasting; because he had experienced God's answers to prayer so many times, he would pray for everything, no matter how insignificant it seemed. He also said, "I have been benefited by praying for others; for by making an errand to God for them I have gotten something for myself". Likewise he valued other people's prayers for himself: "As for myself, I do esteem nothing out of heaven; and next to a communion with Jesus Christ, [nothing] more than to be in the hearts and prayers of the saints".

Rutherford, like Elijah, was “a man subject to like passions” as we are; we should remember that he was not superhuman and that he had his own failings. He had to renew his strength in each trial, even though he had past experiences of answered prayer. “In a new trouble,” he says, “I had always (once at least) my faith to seek, as if I were to begin at ABC again.” Like Elijah also, Rutherford has much to teach us, about earnest, patient, persevering and effectual prayer. Elijah “prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (James 5:18).

Something remarkable was taking place during the persecuting times of the 1630s. God’s people were praying together in private meetings. While, no doubt, these meetings were not new, they received special force from men such as John Livingstone who came across from Northern Ireland. These men had now been excluded from the Church in Ireland on account of their Presbyterian convictions. Even secular historians regard the many private gatherings of the godly for prayer as a vital contribution to the events which led to the signing of the National Covenant in 1638. This Second Reformation was the fruit of years of long prayer and fasting.

There was often a “sensible effusion [a pouring out that could be felt] of the Spirit” at such meetings. James Wood, the foremost writer in support of Episcopacy in these years attended one such meeting for prayer and conference at the invitation of Alexander Henderson. He was so much affected by it that, after reading more about these issues, he became a convinced Presbyterian. Rutherford was an enthusiastic defender of private meetings, even when they came to be questioned in later years.

Rutherford believed in the value of united prayer, when “all who love the truth should join their prayers together, and cry to God with humiliation and fasting”. The chief matters for supplication on these occasions might be the afflictions of churches abroad, sins and divine judgement in the land, the lamentable and pitiful state of the Church, the low spiritual condition of ministers and professing Christians, and that the leaders of the nation and the people would turn from evil ways. Such seasons for prayer may be for several days at a time or in a regular pattern on a particular weekday. Even if the set time for united prayer was not one particular day but over a more extended period of time, much could be expected. “Though the particular day be not observed, yet, where many are on work, some salvation from the Lord’s arm is to be expected.”

It is interesting to contrast these prayer meetings with the movement to impose the reading of written prayers from a Prayer Book upon the Church of Scotland. The character of real, living prayer, according to Scripture, is that it is from the heart and earnest. Rutherford was opposed to set prayers

and prayer books on the ground that prayer has more dimensions than mere words on a printed page. Sighs, groans and tears cannot be put down in a book; the “service-book [prayer book] then must be toothless and spiritless talk”. Prayer is essentially earnest.

During this time of unrest, Rutherford returned from exile in Aberdeen. The National Covenant was renewed amidst protests, and indeed riots, in response to the Prayer Book. Archibald Johnston called this “the glorious marriage day of the Kingdom [of Scotland] with God”. Rutherford himself said, “Our land is called ‘Hephzibah’ and ‘Beulah’. For the Lord delighteth in us, and this land is married to Himself.”

Alexander Henderson declared that “the Lord has multiplied His people, and made them to be so many, whereas, at the first, we thought them to be but very few. . . . It has not been man’s wit [that] has done the work, and [made it] multiply so, but only God has done it; and we cannot tell how; but only we see that there are numbers continually multiplied.” Many were converted at this time, Robert Fleming observed: “Since the land was engaged by covenant to the Lord . . . what a solemn outletting of the Spirit hath been seen, a large harvest with much of the fruit of the gospel discernible, which . . . hath been proved in the inbringing of thousands to Christ”.

For Junior Readers

The Harvest

Do you know anything about harvesting grain and what has to be done with it? Perhaps some of you come from farms or crofts and know more about these things than those who live in towns and cities. Today much of that work on British farms is done much more quickly, by machines. But in the olden days it was all done by hand; it was very hard work and took up a lot of time.

The grain – wheat or oats, for example – would first have to be cut or harvested and piled in stacks to dry. It would then be brought into a barn to be threshed. This involved beating it with an instrument called a flail, which loosened the grain or seeds from the husks and straw.

Then it had to be winnowed. The threshed corn would be put into a winnowing basket and thrown up into the air. The wind, or a draught created by a fan, would blow the lighter husks, or chaff, away and leave the heavier grains to fall back into the basket. The grains were now kept safely. They were later ground into flour to be used as food, while the husks and straw were blown away or burnt up.

There was a man on the Isle of Harris who was working on his croft. He had been busy threshing and winnowing his corn. As he was thinking about this, a verse of Scripture came to his mind – it is found in Matthew and also in Luke: “Whose fan in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner [or, barn]; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”. These are words which John the Baptist spoke about Christ. The solemn words were blessed to the man’s soul; they were the means of causing him to seek the Lord.

What about you? Are you wheat or chaff? There are only two sorts of people in this world in God’s eyes: the wheat and the chaff, the saved and the unsaved, the converted and the unconverted, those on the narrow way and those on the broad way, those who have faith in God and those who do not. What will happen to these two classes of people at the end of the world? God will gather His wheat, those who have been saved, into heaven to be with Him for ever. And what about the chaff, the unconverted? They will be sent to a lost eternity where, as Jesus describes it, “the fire is not quenched”. How very solemn! Where will you be on that day?

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

A Wasted Journey?

Angus Mackay was a poor man. He had very little money. But he had something better: he had love to God. He was one of God’s children; so you would expect that God would look after him. And that is what happened.

He lived in a place called Strath Halladale in the far north of Scotland. One day he left home with a one-pound note in his pocket. The £1 was worth far more than it is now and Angus wrapped it up carefully in a piece of newspaper. He went on his way to a shoemaker; Angus had to pay for, probably, new shoes or boots.

When he reached the shoemaker’s place, he could not find the pound note. So he had to return home, still owing the money to the shoemaker. It seemed a wasted journey.

When Angus arrived home, his wife was very worried; they possibly had no more money. How would they be able to buy what they needed? she wondered.

But Angus was not worried. He told his wife that God would

provide for them. Angus knew that God is the One who gives good things. Perhaps, Angus said to his wife, God would send them back the money he lost. But that seemed most unlikely.

A few months later, a man was walking through the area, selling things to the people in the houses he passed. He noticed a piece of paper in a clump of rushes. He wondered what it was and went to pick it up. He unfolded it and found a one-pound note inside.

The man was honest. So, at the next house he came to, he asked if they had lost any money. No, they had not. But they told him about Angus Mackay losing a pound note.

When the man reached the Mackay home, Mrs Mackay came to speak to him. He asked her the same question. She told him that Angus lost his one-pound note. But the man wanted to know more. "Can you remember the number of the note?" he asked.

(Have you ever noticed the long number on a piece of paper money? Such a number would be very difficult to remember. But probably in Angus's time, the number would be much shorter and easier to remember.)

But no, Mrs Mackay could not remember. Yet she still had the newspaper from which a piece was torn to wrap up the money. And the piece that the man found was exactly what was missing from the Mackay's newspaper. So the man knew he had found the owner of the lost money and handed over the one-pound note.

Was Angus's trip to the shoemaker wasted? It would have made Angus even more sure about God's goodness. He would have seen more clearly than ever how good God is to those who trust Him. And perhaps Angus's wife saw that she was wrong to worry. God takes care of everyone who trusts in Him.

The Red Scarf

A Tragic Story from the Kenya Mission Field

Rev K M Watkins

Her name was Alice. When she appeared in the community with her four children, she was not very old – not even 30. What had happened to her

husband, no one seemed to know and she never told us. She seemed so fit and healthy, and was considered very pretty. Although invited, she refused to come to church to hear the gospel. The world was her great interest.

Then we heard that she was sick. We went to visit her. "Sick" was an understatement. A crumpled heap of skin and bones, lying under a sparse bush to get some shade from the scorching sun, she had given up all hope. Unusually for Kenya, no one else was at home. Like a leper in biblical times, she had been shunned. Death could not be far off. Aids was about to claim another victim.

The Mission clinic immediately started medical help. We began, very basically at first, to explain the gospel and to pray with her. Many a visit was made over the months. With drugs to combat the HIV, her health rallied somewhat, but Alice was never strong again. And she was not going to live for very long. However, she made it to church a few times. She was beginning to understand the gospel. Things seemed hopeful. How encouraging it was to open the Word of God and pray with her! Her children started to attend Sabbath School and some of the church services.

Then Alice went away for a while, back to the part of the country where she had grown up. It was not long before she fell very sick again. On her return home, we visited her. She received us politely enough, but things had changed. Her health had worsened considerably. More seriously, her interest in the gospel was entirely gone. No longer was she eager to hear from the Word. No longer was she seeking Jesus. No longer was she wanting to hear of the Saviour and His work. Not at all. The visit was so disappointing.

The distinctive red scarf on her head should have alerted us immediately. Many women wear headscarves in Kenya, but this was different. The red scarf marked her out as a member of a Christ-denying cult. During her time away, that cult had befriended her and drawn her into its soul-destroying clutches. She had now put her trust in the leader of the cult, a self-styled and self-appointed "prophet". She was not interested in us praying with her any more. She had her prophet to pray for her, she said. And she did not mean the Lord Jesus Christ! She was trusting in the cult leader.

The cult had destroyed the biblical literature we gave her. The prophet promised she would be healed – of Aids! She believed him. The cult told her to stop taking her medicine. She obeyed. Without her tablets, it was not long before death took her into eternity. As far as we know, she left this world trusting in the prayers and promises of a sinner like herself – a man who was going to die just like herself, sooner or later. By this time the four children were attending church regularly. How very sad it was to stand with those young orphans at their mother's open grave!

Cults come in many shapes and sizes. There are the obvious ones like those who falsely claim to be Jehovah's witnesses, the Mormons (who falsely claim the Saviour's name when they call themselves the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), and the Seventh Day Adventists (who not only deny the change of the Sabbath to the first day of the week, but also deny eternal punishment in hell, and confuse Christ's finished work by teaching that sin will be laid on Satan at the end). Other cults may not be as well known, and some of them are more subtle.

Some cults use biblical language. But they do not use it in the way that true Christianity does. Some speak a lot about Jesus. But when closely examined, they do not speak of Him rightly. Some speak of spiritual life as if they have discovered a secret way of getting closer to God. But it is not the life of the godly as revealed in Scripture. Some hold out the promise of such a near relationship to the Lord that it is almost as if you and the Lord become merged into one. But that is not the union and communion that Christians have with Christ. Some cults will smother you with apparent kindness. But it is not the brotherly love of the Christian gospel.

The false gospels of the cults will always direct you away from the real Lord Jesus Christ. The true gospel, on the other hand, will always point you to Christ as revealed in Scripture. The Lord Jesus of the Bible is the only Redeemer. He is both God and man, in two distinct natures and one person for ever. His work is divided into three, as He is Prophet, Priest and King.

As Prophet, Christ teaches people the gospel way of saving sinners. He does this through Scripture, blessed by the Holy Spirit, not through the revelations and insights of any modern-day "prophet". Any talk of another prophet should alarm you immediately. Poor Alice was taken in by the teachings of the cult leader, and her mind became closed to the real teachings of Christ in the Bible.

As Priest, Christ alone offered the sacrifice which takes away sin. By His death on the cross, He suffered the punishment for sin. By His intercession in heaven, He secures the salvation of all who trust in Him. We must depend on Him, not on the prayers of anyone else. Any tampering with Christ's priesthood is eternally fatal to souls that are entangled by it. Poor Alice, after being directed to look to Christ alone for salvation, began to look to the cult leader. Instead of trusting in the one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, she put her trust in the cult leader to obtain God's blessing. How foolish! Only Christ died for sinners. Only Christ can save to the uttermost, because only He lives for ever to make intercession for everyone who comes to God through faith in Him.

As King, Christ alone must be obeyed as the supreme Leader and

Commander of His people. He has revealed His whole will in the Bible, not in the new commands of any church leader. Poor Alice allowed herself to be directed by the unbiblical counsels of the cult. Whatever the leader said, she did, even though it cost her life.

Receive this warning from the mission field in Africa. Do not be anything like poor Alice. Close in with Christ, before some false doctrine or worldly temptation takes you away from the gospel. Put your trust in the Lord Jesus, receiving Him alone as your Prophet, Priest and King. Trust in no one but Him. Trust in no one's prayers but His.

Family Life and the Role of Mothers

The Synod wanted this section from last year's Religion and Morals Report to be printed in *The Young People's Magazine*.

That the divine institution of the family is under very severe attack in the present day has often been identified in this report and by many other organisations besides the Christian Church. The laws passed in our Parliaments over the past 60 years, since World War II, have increasingly eroded family life. Very many children are now reared in homes where marriages have broken down, two or more partners become identified with the family and where increasingly the biblical role of a mother is all but obliterated. The education system and employment changes, together with a revolution in the ethics of matters surrounding fertility and birth control, have all contributed. A particularly pervasive and successful feminist agenda in the 1970s and 1980s has reaped this fruit in the present generation.

Some social commentators are beginning to see signs that this movement is facing something of a reversal in more recent times. It is now more common for young mothers to recognise openly the fallacy of the dogma that a woman is repressed when she acts in the role of a mother and home-maker rather than as a career-driven professional or money-maker. This is certainly a welcome trend if it is finding wider acceptance. It is particularly interesting that this trend is found among highly educated and otherwise employable young women. However, it is clear that much more biblical teaching is needed to break down the decades of destructive legislation and social engineering in our society.

The time and labour invested in the apparently trivial concerns of the home and around infants and young children is indeed a worthy trading with God-given talents and will be sure to find a gracious recompense when performed as unto the Lord. The security and comfort of a home in which

the mother is always found and to which she gives all her talents and gifts and time will be a legacy that children will treasure long after their mother is removed from time into eternity. The absence of a mother from that most fulfilling and yet most difficult and taxing of roles will be felt by every child who suffers that loss. We therefore most earnestly encourage young women to value and cherish these years of motherhood if and when God blesses them with children.

It is neither patronising nor repressing to be instructed from divine truth in matters of such high importance for the future of the Church of Christ and of the nation in which we live. Being a mother is not incompatible with a good, complete university education. The prayerful care of a mother cannot be replaced with any other benefit in the lives of children, and if the time to give it passes, it will not be reclaimed later. Mothers are therefore to pay no heed whatever to the clamouring calls of a godless age to throw off what it calls repression and bondage but what the Word of God describes in the most honourable of terms.

“Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates” (Proverbs 31:10-31).

Looking Around Us

Guilty Or Not Guilty?

Three men tried to rob a jewellery shop in Ayr in November last year. One of the men hit a display cabinet with an axe, but within seconds they all fled out of the shop empty-handed after one of the shopworkers pressed a panic alarm, which caused smoke to fill the shop. The men then ran out to their getaway car. They abandoned their vehicle in a nearby car park and set it on fire. The police were called and stopped the taxi in which they tried to escape.

It was rather difficult for the men to plead not guilty when the case came to court, as the police discovered, when they stopped the taxi, that one of the would-be robbers had burnt trousers. There was other evidence too and, in court, the men admitted the charge against them.

We should ask God to keep us from the kind of sins which brought these men to court. But we should bear in mind that “we must *all* appear before the judgement seat of *Christ*”. And why? The Bible tells us: “That every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

On the last day, we will all be judged by Christ Himself. And it will not be difficult for the Judge to decide whether we are guilty or not. He will have all the evidence before Him about our lives in this world, whether they were “good or bad”. If we have done wrong in any way at all, He knows all about it. If we have done any good deeds, He knows all about that too. He sees everything we do and say and think, and He understands it perfectly.

Perhaps some of you assume that, although you have done what is wrong, your good deeds will balance out your bad deeds, and hopefully with something to spare. But what does the Word of God say? “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10). Only if we have kept God’s law perfectly, can we be accepted on the basis of what we have done. But we have not kept the law, which brings us under God’s curse; we deserve to be in hell for ever.

Is there any possibility of hope? This is how the wonderful grace of God is displayed: “He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God gave His Son so that He might take the place of condemned sinners and take their punishment – the death they deserve to die. He did something else too: He kept God’s law as the sinner’s Substitute, so that those who believe on Him can be treated as if they themselves had kept the law perfectly. In this way, although they often sinned, they will be found not guilty on the Day of Judgement. Believe on Christ and you too will be found not guilty.

UK Youth Conference 2014

Arrangements

Venue: Gartmore House, Gartmore, Stirlingshire, FK8 3RS.

Dates: Tuesday, April 8, to Thursday, April 10.

Chairman: Rev Donald Macdonald.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: to Rev Donald Macdonald, F P Manse, Bayhead, North Uist, HS6 5DS, *as soon as possible* (please let Mr Macdonald know by March 28). See the February issue for an application form. The fee will be £40 for those in full-time employment and £20 for others. Cheques are to be payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Programme

Tuesday, April 8

2.30 pm

Heaven and Hell

A Scriptural View

by Rev J B Jardine

7.00 pm

Regeneration and Conversion

Make the Tree Good, and Its Fruit Will Be Good

by Rev K M Watkins

Wednesday, April 9

9.30 am

Life of Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Jehovah Tsidkenu, All Things to Me

by Mr Frank Daubney

2.30 pm

The Fifth Commandment

Our Duty to Man

by Rev Donald Macdonald

7.00 pm

Zimbabwe Mission

A Talk and Slides

by Mr Hugh Mackenzie

Thursday, April 10

9.30 am

Jeremiah

The Weeping Prophet

by Rev J L Goldby

Further information will be sent to each applicant before the conference. If you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact Mr Macdonald (tel: 01876 510233; e-mail: dmacdclashmore@aol.co.uk). Please do *not* delay sending your application.

Price £1.00