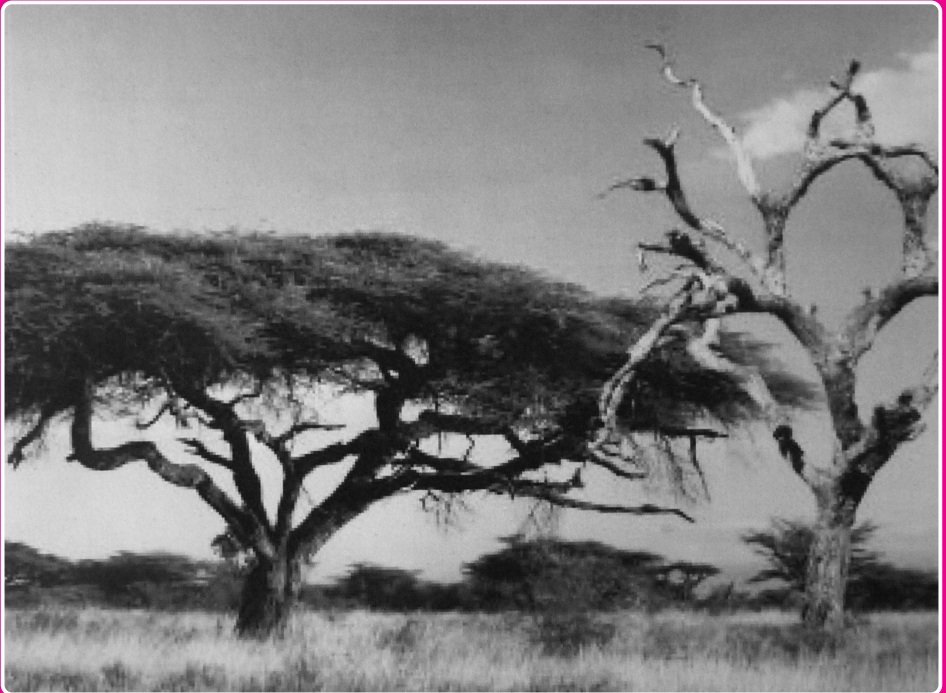


The Young People's Magazine

**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



March 2015

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Cover Picture: See the article, “The Two Trees” on page 49 (but these are not the actual trees described).

The Young People’s Magazine

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The Bible Is Valuable

William Maldon was brought up in Chelmsford, in England. It was the time of Henry VIII, after William Tyndale had translated the New Testament and part of the Old. (Tyndale was the first to translate the Scriptures directly into English from the original Hebrew and Greek. After Tyndale died as a martyr, others translated the rest of the Bible.)

Even poor men in Chelmsford brought a copy of the New Testament and they would gather on Sabbaths in the lower end of the church and sit there reading it. William would come to that part of the church, to listen to the men reading what he called “that glad and sweet tidings of the gospel”. But his father did not want him to be listening to the Bible. He would come and take William away and they would repeat prayers or psalms in Latin, which almost certainly they would not be able to understand. So even God’s Word could do them no good, because it was in another language; they needed to have it English.

William really wanted to hear the good news of the gospel in the only language he could understand. He was upset because he could not stay to listen to the men in the church who were reading God’s Word. He decided to learn to read and then he hoped to buy a copy of the New Testament and read it himself. Some time later William and his father’s apprentice, Thomas Jeffary, had saved up enough money between them and they bought a Testament. They hid it in the straw on which they slept and read it when they felt it was safe to do so.

They probably had to sacrifice a great deal to buy the Testament so that they could read what to them was such good news. They would not have had much money in any case; so if they were to have a Bible, they would have to do without other necessary things. They may have had to do without a much-needed set of new clothes, for instance. I do not suppose that you would need to sacrifice anything to read the Bible. In fact, you possibly have several Bibles in your home. But do you make good use of the Bible? Do you make any effort to read it, and to read it regularly? Do you realise how valuable the Bible is?

But what makes the Bible so valuable? Let us note a number of answers to this important question.

1. *It was God who gave the Bible.* It comes to us with all His authority. When God speaks, everyone should listen. And God is speaking in the Bible. He is speaking to you and me personally, if only we will read it. When God speaks, we can be sure that He has something valuable to say to us. How much wonderful teaching we miss if we do not read the Bible – and if we do not read it carefully!

2. *When God speaks, He says what is true;* everything He says is perfectly true. In writing the Bible, “holy men of God spake as they were moved by [God] the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). These holy men, like Peter and John, Moses and David, Isaiah and Micah, were kept from making any errors as they wrote the individual books that make up the Bible. There can be no mistakes in any part of it. So what we have is an absolutely-reliable book about religion – made up of 66 individual books that are perfectly true from beginning to end. So the Bible must be truly valuable.

3. *The Bible tells us what is wrong with us.* If you are feeling unwell, you would want a doctor to tell you what is wrong with you, so that you can then, hopefully, be given the necessary treatment. And if your illness seems serious, you may be willing to pay a lot of money to get an expert doctor to give you suitable advice. In the Bible we can find out what is wrong with our souls: we are sinners, it tells us. It is not only that we do wrong things, but that we think wrong, sinful thoughts and – what is most serious of all – we have sinful natures which we are completely unable to cure. So, the Bible tells us, we need God to give us new hearts so that we will not want to sin. It also tells us that we need to be forgiven, so that we will not have to suffer for our sins in hell for ever.

4. *The Bible shows us the way to heaven.* If you were in a part of the country that you did not know and had got completely lost, you would find a map really valuable; you might be prepared to spend a lot of money to get one. So we should consider the Bible hugely valuable, because it tells us how to get safely to heaven. It tells us that Jesus said, “I am the way” (John 14:6). He is the way to God; if we believe in Jesus, we will be saved, because He took the place of sinners, so that He might suffer their punishment instead. That is the good news, the “glad and sweet tidings of the gospel”, which William found so valuable. One assumes that he did find salvation for his own soul through the words of the New Testament.

When we consider how great the work of Christ was and how wonderful the blessings of salvation, it should be no surprise that William had that attitude! And if we believe in Jesus, all will be well; but if we do not believe,

we will miss all the priceless blessings that are promised to those who believe. How terrible to miss the way to heaven! How terrible for people to find themselves on the wrong road, arriving in a lost eternity at the end of the journey through life! How much we need, like William, to recognise the value of even part of Scripture!

5. *The Bible is valuable because it shows us how to live in this world.* In it God has revealed His commandments, which tell us His will for how we should live: we are not to have any other god; we are not to make idols; we must use God's name reverently; we must keep the Sabbath holy; we must honour our parents; we must not murder; we must not commit adultery; we must not steal; we must not say what is false; we must not covet.

These represent the Ten Commandments, which reflect God's nature. Because God is holy, the Ten Commandments are holy, and anyone who could keep them perfectly would be truly holy. Certainly no one can keep them perfectly in this life, but those who believe in Christ begin at once to do the will of God. And in heaven they will do God's will perfectly.

6. *The Bible is valuable because it tells us about God.* It reveals to us that He is "a Spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth". (The answer, of course, comes from *The Shorter Catechism*, but it sums up the teaching of Scripture.) Such teaching should help us to worship Him. For instance, when Jesus told the woman of Samaria that "God is a spirit", He went on to show her that therefore "they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) – that is, our worship must be spiritual, from the heart; and it must be according to truth, the truth that God has revealed in the Bible.

7. *It is the Bible that tells us how we can profit from reading it.* We are to study it – to search it (see John 5:39) – and we are to trust it as God-given truth. But let us note particularly at present its valuable teaching about our need to have God the Holy Spirit apply powerfully the truths of Scripture to our souls.

Why did people in Thessalonica get a blessing in their souls when Paul and Silas preached the gospel there? Because it did not come to them "in word only"; instead it came to them "in power, and in the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:5) – in other words, in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is good to have the Bible, for it is indeed a valuable book. But each of us needs the Holy Spirit to apply its words to our soul so that we would take to heart, in particular, what the Bible has to say about Jesus Christ as the Saviour and look to Him by faith.

Then, like William, we will indeed value the gospel, as we find it in the Bible. We will find it to be good news for sinners like us.

A Believing Girl, an Unbelieving Count

He was a rich nobleman, a Count. He lived in Silesia, which was then in Germany, but most of it is now in Poland. He bitterly hated Christianity and gave himself up to worldly pleasures.

Strangely, he had the right to appoint the parish minister. The young man he chose for the parish had studied with him in university and was no more religious than himself. Indeed they seem to have competed as to who could be the more unbelieving. As close friends, the minister often had his meals in the Count's home. The Count's servants were certainly not serious, but they were shocked at the way the two men mocked holy things.

The Count was very pleased with the pastor he had appointed. He often said that his greatest delight would be to see all religious ideas removed from the minds of the people on his estates. He called these ideas superstitions, just as some people with strong atheistic views do today. Superstitions are beliefs and practises for which there is no good foundation. For instance, it is superstitious to cross one's fingers in the hope that a bout of pain does not indicate some serious disease, because there can be no connection between crossing one's fingers and avoiding a disease. On the other hand, prayer, for example, is not a superstition; there is a connection between our prayers and the answer that is given. This is because God hears prayer and is able to answer our prayers as He is in control of everything that happens.

The Bible teaches us to pray, and all religious practices and beliefs we find in the Bible have a good foundation. The Bible is true; God has given it to us so that we would know what is true in religion. Every other outlook on life is false. But the Count had such hatred in his heart to God and the truths He has revealed (and hatred too to every form of false religion) that he wanted to abolish these ideas from the people's minds. He imagined that, if he succeeded, he would be doing them a great service.

Ungodliness had great influence in the parish. Only the schoolteacher resisted the force of unbelief. But he had very little education and very little authority over people. The minister did all in his power to prevent him influencing the children for good. And the Count did not want them to be filled "with dark and gloomy ideas".

But God sometimes shows that He is able to save the chief of sinners (see 1 Timothy 1:15). He had mercy on the Count. One day the nobleman was walking through his grounds when he heard a little girl singing in her garden. He went over to look and saw her sitting on the grass with tears in her eyes. He felt sorry for the girl, especially because her shabby clothes showed that she belonged to a poor family.

“Why do you cry?” asked the Count. “Are you sick, my child?”

“No,” she answered, “but I cry because I am happy, so happy.”

The Count was surprised; he asked, “How can you cry if you are happy?”

“Because I love the Lord Jesus Christ so much.”

“Why do you love Him so much?” the unbelieving Count asked. “He has been dead a long time; He can do you no good.”

“No, He is not dead; He lives in heaven.”

The Count replied with another unbelieving question: “And even if this was true, what good is it to you? If He could help you, He would give money to your mother, that she might buy you better clothes.”

“I do not wish for money, but the Lord Jesus Christ will take me one day to Himself in heaven.”

Unbelief still controlled the Count’s thinking; he claimed to the girl: “It is your grandmother or some such person who makes you believe this”.

“No, no, it is true, and it makes me glad.” And tears again welled up in the girl’s eyes.

He gave the girl some money and walked away. But he could not forget her simple, honest answers. Nor could he forget that, in spite of her poverty, she was happy. After he returned home and on the days that followed, two things filled his thoughts. First, he asked himself how such thoughts had found their way into the girl’s soul. He knew it was not the minister who was responsible; he did not believe these things. And he did not believe that it was the teacher, probably because his teaching gifts were so limited.

His second problem was how an eight-year-old child could be filled with such sincere love for God, especially because he could clearly see that she was happy. For her these were obviously not dark and gloomy ideas! He tried to find an answer to his difficulty but he just could not understand her.

Then he remembered a journey he had taken eight or nine years before then. He spent a night in a settlement of people who took the Bible very seriously. Perhaps just to pass the time he went to one of their evening services. The minister’s subject seemed very strange to him: that the Lord honours those who profit by a child’s conversation. In his heart, the Count sneered at the thought.

Now he remembered the idea again. And he kept on thinking about profiting from a child’s conversation. When he went back home after speaking to the girl, he was more serious. He avoided talking about religion. The minister wondered at the change in his conversation. But the Count did not mention speaking to the little girl; he did not want to be mocked.

A week later he had to travel to near the Austrian border. There also he found a settlement where the people believed the Bible. Again he attended

a service, where the preacher spoke on the words of Jesus: “Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?” (Matthew 21:16). Afterwards the preacher prayed earnestly for the children and young people of the church.

The Count wrote afterwards: “This service made so strong an impression on me that I am sure will last throughout eternity. I was bathed in tears. I felt something which I had never experienced in my life before. The question which the persecutor Saul addressed to Jesus on the way to Damascus, ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ – this question arose in my troubled soul. I continued to cry bitterly till a sweet peace had penetrated my heart. I felt then a calm which words cannot express. I was convinced, to my great astonishment, that the name of Jesus – that name which I could not before then hear without contempt – had become infinitely dear and precious to me.” The Count was convinced that he had obtained mercy from the Lord.

If the name of Jesus was now infinitely precious to the Count, then he was trusting in the Saviour. If, like Saul of Tarsus, he was sincerely asking, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” he also was sincerely submitting to the Saviour. And we are told that, some time later, he was going on faithfully as a follower of Christ, admiring and blessing the ways of God’s providence. He had learned that true religion is no superstition.

God has His own ways of working. His usual way of saving souls is to bless the preaching of the gospel. Paul tells us that “it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). And God did bless preaching to the Count. But the beginning of this work of grace was the result of the simple, honest words of a child who, it was clear, loved Christ sincerely.

For Junior Readers

“One Drop, One Drop”

Have you ever looked at a map to see where Ukraine is? It is a very large country in Eastern Europe. It lies to the north of the Black Sea and its capital is Kiev. The third largest city in Ukraine is Odessa, which is an important seaport. Perhaps you did not realise that the Free Presbyterian Church has a congregation there?

To the east of Odessa, there is a large peninsula, called the Crimea, which stretches out into the Black Sea. You may have heard about it in the news recently, when Russian-backed forces seized control of the Crimea.

It was not the first time there was trouble in that area. In the 1850s the

Crimean War took place, when Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) fought against Russia in the Crimea. The soldiers had to fight in very difficult conditions, and many lives were lost.

At the end of one of the battles, a poor English soldier threw himself down on the ground. He was seriously wounded and expecting to die. "One drop, one drop," he was heard to cry out.

"Not a drop of drink left in my canteen [water bottle]", his comrade replied. "What can I do for you?"

"Bill," replied the wounded soldier, "open my knapsack and get it – my Bible – and let me have a drop from that." Bill did so; he found the Bible and began to read.

"That's it," said the soldier; "it's the blood of Christ which heals our wounds. The blood of Christ makes peace between God and us poor sinners. I shall never get back to England again; but, blessed be God, I shall get to a better country, through Christ, the living way. Ah Bill, if ever the Bible was written for any man, it was written for the soldier!"

How precious the Word of God was to that poor soldier – his hope in life and also in death. How precious was Christ and the blood of Christ, which alone can cleanse from all sin! Will you not seek Christ now, while you are young? Then, whatever lies ahead of you in life, you will have the comfort which that dying soldier had.

J van Kralingen

The Two Trees

Rev K M Watkins

There they stood, side by side, at the edge of the dusty African road. The two trees were about the same height, grew in the same soil, and enjoyed the same warm sunshine and the same refreshing rains. But there the similarities stopped. Two trees could not have looked more different. The one was in full leaf, green and flourishing. The other was bare, barren and withered.

The one was benefiting from all that came its way. Its roots were digging down deep into the ground, seeking moisture and nutrients. Its leaves were absorbing the light of the sun's rays, converting it into the energy that fuelled the tree's inner life-system. The roots of the other tree had long since ceased to reach out for the water essential for life. Without leaves to absorb energy, no sap flowed within, leaving the tree dead and lifeless.

What a picture of two young people under the gospel! They grow up in the same soil. That is, they enjoy the same privileges. Perhaps they have the

same background. Perhaps they were both baptised in their infancy. Perhaps they both have God-fearing parents. The same prayers are made for them. They hear the same truths, and thus enjoy the same light of pure gospel doctrine. They pass through the same periods of gospel blessing, when showers from heaven descend from above to give times of gospel life and power. At such seasons the gospel comes with more warmth.

But one young person benefits from all of this, and another does not. The one drinks in the gospel, while the other refuses to do so. The one obtains true spiritual life within, while the other remains spiritually dead at heart. The one becomes fruitful, while the other never produces spiritual fruit. The one experiences the power of godliness, while the other never goes beyond its mere form.

It was a strange thing in Africa to see the dead tree. Usually it would be chopped down and used for firewood. That is the dangerous position of any soul hearing the gospel but not producing the fruits of faith and repentance. It is in danger of being cut down in death and used for fuel in the fire of a lost eternity. That was the condition of the barren fig tree in the Saviour's parable: "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke 13:7).

A plea was made for that tree: "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it" (verse 8). If you have been barren under the gospel until now, should you not plead with the Lord to work in you? Should you not ask Him to "dig about" you, by disturbing your false peace, stirring you up, and awakening you? Should you not seek Him to "dung" you by adding the influences of His power to bless the gospel to you? In response to the request of the man looking after the vineyard, the tree was given one more year: "And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down" (verse 9). It is a solemn matter to let the years of your life go by without obtaining spiritual life.

The same lesson is taught by the farmer's field. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Hebrews 6:7-8). There are times when the Lord sends showers of blessing upon the gospel, and some souls become serious about salvation, and in due time are converted by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even at such times, others are unaffected by it all. They continue to bring forth the "thorns and briers" of sin and unbelief. They are so close to being cursed with everlasting burning!

The light and warmth of the sun were used by the one tree to maintain the

power of an inner life, but the same light and warmth went unused by the other tree. So it is with gospel hearers. As long as the gospel is preached, they are like the trees in the same sunshine. But the effects are very different. One receives by faith the message of the gospel, as it pours saving light into the understanding, bringing the soul to see the suitability of Christ as Saviour. Another seems to be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7) in a saving way. What about you?

Again, the two trees were equally well placed to benefit from the sun’s warmth, but only one did. This is repeated time and time again among those who hear the gospel. Invitations to come to Christ are warmly given, by preachers and by Christ Himself. These invitations are effective with one hearer, producing a warm-hearted embrace of Christ. But another hearer is altogether unmoved, even by the most tender pleas. What about you?

For a while the two trees must have held out equal promise. For they grew and reached the same height. It was only later that the truth became clear. Perhaps it was a longer, hotter, dry season that revealed the difference. The roots of the one went down deep, where moisture could still be found, even in the time of drought. The roots of the other were shallow, like the seed which fell on the stony ground, where it had no depth of earth. “When the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away” (Mark 4:6).

The same difference appears among gospel hearers. With one hearer, the gospel sinks deeply into the soul, in accordance with the Saviour’s exhortation: “Let these sayings sink down into your ears” (Luke 9:44). Roots of felt need, sincere desire and spiritual delight stretch out to Christ, to drink in the gospel’s living water. No wonder this soul grows up and flourishes, tapping in to such a rich and never-failing supply of grace! But the other, feeling no deep need, desire or delight, remains hard-hearted. Whatever feelings there may be at times, they never last, because they are just on the surface. Nothing is happening deep down in the soul.

The two trees had the same opportunities. One prospered; the other perished. Under the gospel, you have the same opportunities as everyone else. What are you doing with your opportunities? How wonderful to be a tree planted by God’s grace! Then you will never perish.

“Those that within the house of God are planted by His grace,
They shall grow up, and flourish all in our God’s holy place.

And in old age, when others fade, they fruit still forth shall bring;
They shall be fat, and full of sap, and aye be flourishing.”

(Psalm 92:13-14, metrical version.)

The Bible's Teaching on Professing Religion

6. Can the Sacraments Save?

Charles Hodge

Last month's section from Hodge's book, *The Way of Life*, answered the question: Are the Sacraments Effective? The Bible's answer is that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are effective, but only to believers – those who already have the grace which the sacraments represent.

Some people claim that there is always a connection between a sacrament and the spiritual blessings it represents. But God bears His testimony against this teaching. He may grant these blessings to those who have not received any sacrament.

Abraham was justified before he was circumcised; Cornelius was accepted by God and had received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized; Jesus assured the thief on the cross that he would be admitted into paradise though he was never baptized. Thus the sacraments are not appointed to give pardon and sanctification, but to be signs and seals of these blessings to believers, and to them they are effective means of grace.

It is therefore obvious that those parts of Scripture which seem to refer our salvation to Baptism and the Lord's Supper must be understood in a way that is consistent with other plain teaching of the Bible. It is said, Whosoever "confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2), and, "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). This is said because confession implies faith; and no one supposes that an insincere, careless, heartless confession will secure the salvation of anyone.

Thus also we are said to be saved by calling on the Lord, because calling on the Lord implies trust in Him. We are also said to be saved by baptism, because baptism is a picture of the cleansing that is part of salvation. But, apart from faith, baptism can do us no more good than a heartless confession. There is no more difficulty in understanding why the Scriptures connect salvation with the sacraments, than in understanding why they should connect salvation with confession. There is no difficulty in either case, if we allow the Scriptures to explain themselves.

Again, the Bible often gives to a sign the name and the properties of what it is a sign of. Thus circumcision is called the covenant of God, because it was the sign of that covenant. Christ used the words *the new covenant* to describe the cup in the Lord's Supper; He called the wine His blood and the bread His body. So those who drink the wine are said to receive Christ's blood and, of course, the benefits which it purchased.

So whatever the Scriptures say on this subject is perfectly in line with the

Protestant doctrine that the sacraments can do nothing on their own, but become effective means of grace to those who believe. The Holy Spirit communicates to believers the blessings which the sacraments represent.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

4. Yearning for the Salvation of Souls

Frank Daubney

Last month's article spoke about the first part of M'Cheyne's time as assistant minister in Larbert and Dunipace .

***I*llness.** Through all his labours the thought haunted him: "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation". "There is a tide in the affairs of grace," he wrote, "which, taken at the flood, leads on to safety; omitted, all the voyage of our souls is cast in the shallows and in miseries."

He refused to spare himself although his health was fragile, with his tuberculosis (TB) flaring up at the least provocation. His yearning for the salvation of souls would not allow him to let any opportunity slip.

After a short stay in the manse, he took lodgings with a Mrs Graham, who was friendly and kind; though he commented that his room was "about 16 foot by 10 foot but contains a bed, two chests of drawers, three tables and six immense chairs, so, with my two trunks, movement is rather impeded!" This cramped and crowded room was a silent witness to the tears and prayers of this ambassador for Christ agonising over the souls of those under his care. Mrs Graham heard his psalm singing, but she could not have seen his wrestling with God for the salvation of souls.

By the end of December, M'Cheyne's health broke down. He had pain in his chest and a constant cough. He had to leave his work and went to his parents' home to recover. The doctor diagnosed tuberculosis; his right lung was barely functioning. M'Cheyne wrote to John Bonar that, if he was not recovered before the third Sabbath, he would have to give way to fresh and abler workmen, as his conscience would not permit him to leave the minister unaided to bear the burden of 6000 souls. He hoped to return recovered with, as he said, "a heart tutored by sickness, to speak more and more as dying to dying". While sick he continued writing to the people and praying for them. "I feel distinctly that the whole of my labour during this season of sickness and pain should be in the way of prayer and intercession."

It grieved him, when he examined his own heart, to see his remaining depravity. He wrote, "Paul asked, 'What wilt Thou have me to do?' and it was answered, 'I will show him what great things he must suffer for my

name's sake'. This is how it may be with me. I have been too anxious to do great things. The lust of praise has ever been my besetting sin; and what more befitting school could be found for me than that of suffering alone, away from the eye and ear of man?" John the Baptist had said, "He must increase, I must decrease".

Return to Larbert. M'Cheyne was able to return to Larbert in January 1836 and, shortly afterwards, moved to a new house in Carronvale where his sister Eliza often came to help him. He returned to preaching, but often blamed himself that he was more engaged in preparing his head than his heart. Yet he was able to say, "How happy and strange is the feeling when God gives the soul composure to stand and plead for Him. O that it was altogether for Him I plead, and not for myself."

Andrew Bonar notes: "He gave out, not merely living water, but living water drawn at the spring which he himself had drunk from; and is not this a true gospel ministry?" On one occasion, Bonar told M'Cheyne that he had preached on, "The wicked shall be turned into hell", and his friend asked, "And were you able to preach it with tenderness?"

On another occasion when he was ill, he wrote in his diary: "Since Thursday, have been laid up with illness. Set by once more for a season to feel my unprofitableness and cure my pride. When shall this self-choosing temper be healed? 'Lord, I will preach, run, visit, wrestle,' said I. 'No, thou shalt lie in thy bed and suffer,' said the Lord." M'Cheyne was learning to surrender himself totally to God. "I fear Thou wilt not bless my preaching until I am brought thus to hang on Thee."

The months in Larbert and Dunipace were a time of preparation for M'Cheyne. Andrew Bonar wrote, "He had been taught a minister's heart; he had been tried in the furnace; he had tasted deep personal sorrow, little of which has been recorded; he had felt the fiery darts of temptation; he had been exercised in self-examination and in much prayer; he had proved how flinty is the rock and had learned that, in lifting the rod by which it was to be smitten, success lay in Him alone who enabled him to lift it up."

In August the congregation of St Peter's in Dundee invited him to preach as one of those who might become minister of their new congregation. He spoke first on the parable of the sower and the seed. And in the evening of that Sabbath, he said that he preached "with all my heart, on Ruth". He was later to learn that that sermon had been blessed to two of those present. With one accord the congregation chose him to be their pastor.

As he was now to leave Larbert and Dunipace, he looked for someone who would help the over-burdened pastor, and found this in his friend, Alexander Somerville. He had been in Larbert and Dunipace for 10 months,

and now, 23 years of age, he turned towards Dundee, where the Lord was so marvellously to visit him in his ministry.

Dundee. Just over 50 000 people lived in Dundee when M'Cheyne went there. It was a harbour town and had become an industrial centre where linen and jute products, such as rope and sacking, were manufactured. The workmen and their families lived in dirty and insanitary conditions. Cholera, typhus and other illnesses were prevalent. There were more than 100 public houses, which many of the factory workers made full use of. With the rapidly-growing population there was a need for more churches. Due to the pleadings of Thomas Chalmers, the General Assembly in 1834 agreed to erect additional churches with equal rights to those of the existing parishes. St Peter's in Dundee was the first of these to be built. The new church came into use on 15 May 1835.

Bonar observes, "He accepted the call under an awful sense of the work that lay before him. He would rather, he said, have made choice for himself of a rural parish such as Dunipace; but the Lord seemed to desire it otherwise." And he said more than once: "We might have thought that God would have sent a strong man to such a parish as mine, and not a feeble reed".

His induction and ordination took place on 24 November 1836. On the following Sabbath, he preached from Isaiah 61:1-3: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me". He did not take this text (the words Christ used in the synagogue at the beginning of His own ministry) out of any spirit of self-confidence; he knew that he had been called by God and he preached the gospel with a powerful, deep conviction, but also in humble and utter dependence on God. This attitude was central to his ministry and the key to his richly-blessed labours. This sermon also was the means used to bless a number of souls.

So Robert Murray M'Cheyne began a remarkable ministry which lasted for six short, but wonderfully-blessed, years in Dundee. They were years during which there were showers of blessings; there was a gracious, flood-like, outpouring of the Spirit.

God Had Provided

A young man had gone to work in a town on the south coast of England. He enjoyed living there and worked in a bakery. One day his employers told him that in future he would have to work for part of the Sabbath, from 9 am to 2 pm. They noticed that the young baker was taken aback. They told him that he could think about it for a month and then they would talk again.

Yet his employers made it clear that, if he did not do what they wanted, he would be out of a job.

The young man wanted to continue working in the bakery. He hoped that, when he had saved up enough money, he could start a business of his own. It now looked as if this would never be possible. But He did not need a month to conclude that he must follow his conscience, although it seemed most unlikely that he would find another such job in the town. He must do what was right; he must not do unnecessary work on a Sabbath, for it is the Lord's day.

And the young baker did not change his mind when his young friends tried hard to persuade him that to put Sabbath-keeping ahead of his work, and the money it brought him, would be a disastrous move. When he went to speak again to one of his employers, he told him his decision. "Very well then," the man answered, "the matter is settled." He said nothing more; he just turned away – though he realised that it would not be easy to find someone who could take the young baker's place.

The young man walked slowly home; he hoped, as he passed the bakery door, that he would hear his employer calling him back. But no, there was no such voice.

A week passed, and no sign of any work. Another week passed; it was still the same. But as he remembered God's promises, he felt encouraged. At last his savings had almost run out. He wrote a letter to his family, telling them that he planned to go to Southampton to look for a job and probably go on from there to Salisbury. If he did not find anything, he would return in about a week.

He set out to post the letter. He had almost reached the post office when a much older man beckoned to him to cross the street. This man too was a baker and he asked the younger man if he had found a job yet. The man then said that he had been thinking for some time about retiring; he had no family; he had saved enough money to provide for all his needs for as long as he would live. And would the young man like to take over the business?

Well, that is exactly what he did want. But there was one big difficulty: he did not have money to buy the stock – the flour and everything else that was needed to make the bread and other goods that were sold in the bakery.

"I have thought that matter over too," the man replied, "and the difficulty can be easily got over." They could have the stock valued by some of their friends and the young man could pay for it by instalments. The older man would recommend the new owner of the business to those who used to buy from the shop. And he encouraged the younger man to trust in God's providence. Indeed that is what he had been doing: trusting in God in spite

of losing his job. And that is what we should do too; we ought to trust in God to provide for us in all areas of life. But we must remember to seek first “the kingdom of God, and His righteousness”; to find salvation for our souls is far more important than anything else.

The young man took up the offer at once. A fortnight later he took over the bakery business and, many years later, it was still successful. The letter to his family, of course, was never posted. Instead, on the same day, he wrote another letter to tell them how thankful he was that God had provided for him. Do we always acknowledge God's goodness to us?

Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible using the word:

Exalt

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may *exalt* you in due time (1 Peter 5:6).

Precept. *Exalt* the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy (Psalm 99:9).

Promise. Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall *exalt* thee to inherit the land (Psalm 37:34).

Prayer. O Lord, Thou art my God; I will *exalt* Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things (Isaiah 25:1).

Encouragement. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be *exalted* (Matthew 23:12).

For Younger Readers

God's Quick Answer

A man called Donald Mackay was leading his pony across rough ground. The pony was carrying a load on its back.

As it walked along, the pony went into a marsh and began to sink. Soon it was deep in the soft ground; it could not get out. And Donald needed help to lift it out.

Donald could see no one around who could help him. But he knew that God is always near. He always went to God in prayer to tell Him about all his difficulties and to ask Him for help.

Now Donald needed someone to help him get the pony out of the marsh. So he went to pray a short distance away. He went down on his knees and asked God to send someone to help him.

As he was praying, he heard a man shouting. And the man could hear Donald praying. Why was he praying, the man shouted, when his pony was sinking in the marsh?

Donald answered the man: "You have come already, have you?" Donald was not surprised that God answered his prayer. Obviously he was used to God answering his prayers. But perhaps he was surprised that God answered him so quickly.

So Donald told the man: "Well, we will go and take him out." And I am sure Donald felt very thankful to God.

Let us always ask God to help us in every difficulty. Especially let us ask Him to take away our sin and give us a new heart.

Looking Around Us

Creation and Schools

A Scottish council has drawn up guidelines to "protect" school pupils from creationism. South Lanarkshire Council had been under some pressure because a chaplain in one of its primary schools distributed booklets to children which opposed the idea of evolution and promoted the Scripture teaching that God created the earth in six days.

It would seem that the thought that God created the earth is one of the most dangerous ideas around. It is not. When we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth", we are reading God's own testimony about what He Himself did.

God created the human race. And this fact has consequences. Every human being has a duty to acknowledge God as Creator, to worship Him and to obey Him. And that is what many people do not want to do. They want to feel free from His laws; they do not want to feel that they must appear before Him at last and face the eternal consequences of sinning against this holy Being who made all things.

At one time schools saw teaching about the Bible as one of their main responsibilities. It is tragic that the school system should have drifted so far that it is now felt that children must not come in contact with one of the Bible's most fundamental teachings: that God created everything.

“A Place to Weather Any of Life’s Storms”

This was the heading of an online article promoting new houses at Inverkip, in Renfrewshire. The article described their “picturesque waterside location that provides beautiful views across Kip Marina”. Even if a particular house does not look out on the Firth of Clyde, the owner would not have to walk far to see lovely views across the Firth.

But, no matter how beautiful one’s home might be and no matter how nice the view through the windows, life will never be completely smooth. We should always be prepared for trouble. The Bible tells us that “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). Sparks from burning wood always fly upward; so everyone, more or less, will have trouble in this life.

But there is somewhere we may go with our troubles: we may go and pray to God. He says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me” (Psalm 50:15). Yet if we get rid of some outward trouble, we must not be satisfied if we remain enemies to God. Sin is the source of all life’s storms. So we must remember that Christ directs us to seek “first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). If we do so, we will at last enjoy a perfect home in heaven.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2015-16

Overseas Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section. *Auckland:* Rita de Bruin. *Chesley:* Calvin Smith, Samuel Zekveld. *Connecticut:* Rebecca and Sarah Mack. *Grafton:* Duncan Marshall. *Mbuma:* Privilege Bhebe, Rebecca Mkwanzani, Sithabile Mphoko. *Zenka:* Siphathisiwe Mpofo, Pretty Nkomazana, Moyo Velani.

Intermediate Section. *Auckland:* Claudia and James Campbell, Nathanael de Bruin, Monique Jago. *Chesley:* Joshua Schuit, Abigail and Josiah Smith. *Grafton:* Calum Marshall, Rachel van Dorp. *Mbuma:* Shanaz Masango, Sanelisiwe Masuku. *Singapore:* Nehemiah Chai Yong. *Zenka:* Ruth Masango.

Junior Section. *Auckland:* Danielle Jago. *Chesley:* Joel Bouman, Peter Smith. *Gisborne:* Sarah van Dorp. *Grafton:* Hugh Marshall, Vashti Zuill. *Mbuma:* Thandeka Dube, Sizalobuhle Gumpo, Zenele and Zibusiso Masuku, Sidumisile Moyo, Sehliselo and Simelinkosi Mpofo, Sijabuliswe and Isabel Ndlovu. *Singapore:* Naomi Ruth Chai Shi, Owen Heyer Chai Yi. *Zenka:* Sikhangisiwe and Thando Lois Dube, Blessings Gwizi, Somandla Khumalo, Blessing Madiriza, Pedina Mathenjwa, Prudence Mlotshwa, Anile Ndlovu, Lovenia Ngulube, Nokukhanya Sibanda.

Upper Primary Section. *Auckland:* Rachel Campbell, Abby de Bruin, Diana Jago. *Connecticut:* Nathanael Mack. *Grafton:* Andrew White, Ronnie Zuill. *Mbuma:* Talence Bhebhe, Melissa Dube, Beauty and Lizwilenkosi Gumpo, Hliniphani Khumalo, Innocent Masango, Naomi Masuku, Thobile and Nompikelo Moyo, Michell Ndebele, Sithembinkosi and Thandiwe Ndlovu, Saneliso Ngwenya, Anele Nkhwane, Buhlekenkosi, Nokuthaba, and Nomawethu Sibanda. *New Canaan:* Rumbidzai Maunga. *Zenka:* Nathaniel P Ncube, Iminathi Sibanda.

Lower Primary Section. *Auckland:* John and Peter Campbell, Megan de Bruin, Bruce and Maria Jago, Aaron and Amelia Smith, Aaron Verheij. *Chesley:* Isabel Bouman, Kara Zekveld. *Grafton:* William Marshall, Elijah, Eve and Mahal Zuill. *Mbuma:* Bulelwa and Thembelihle Ngwenya, Buhlekenkosi, Phelileso and Sithembelenkosini Gumpo, Brain Lusinga, Prosperus Masango,

Nkosingapha Maseko, Nobukhosi and Thobakele Ncube, Mphokuhle and Thembakile Ndlovu, Abigail Nkomo, Nyasha Shoko, Mbongeni, Sinomusa and Silethubuhle Sibanda, Sharon Sibindi, Trymon Mphoko, Silokuthaba Zikhali. **Zenka:** Ncube Hezel, Sibanda Thembokile.

UK Youth Conference 2014

Arrangements

Venue: Abernethy, Barcaple, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire. DG7 2AP.

Dates: Tuesday, April 7, to Thursday, April 9.

Chairman: Rev Donald Macdonald.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: to Rev Donald Macdonald, F P Manse, Bayhead, North Uist, HS6 5DS; (please let Mr Macdonald know by March 14, if possible). 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 7

2.30 pm

Martin Luther: The Reformer

A powerpoint presentation by

by Dr R J Dickie

7.00 pm

Prayer

The Breath of the Soul

by Rev John MacLeod

Wednesday, April 8

9.30 am

James Renwick

Grace to Live in Killing Times

by Rev Roderick MacLeod

2.30 pm

Historical Tour

Of Covenanting Sites near Castle Douglas

conducted by Rev Roderick MacLeod

7.00 pm

Saving Faith

What Is It?

Rev D W B Somerset

Thursday, April 9

9.30 am

Joshua

Moses' Successor

by Rev N M Ross

Price £1.00