

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



November 2017

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Scripture and Catechism Exercises

Overseas Prizes and Awards 2016-2017

Senior Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Claudia and James Campbell. *Gisborne:* Esther Schuit. *Harrisburg:* Jael and Jenny Kerr.

Awards with merit: *Auckland:* Monique Jago. *Gisborne:* Elizabeth Schuit. *Grafton:* Rachel van Dorp.

Awards: *Zenka:* Velani Moyo, Pretty Sibanda.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Danielle Jago. *Grafton:* Hugh Marshall. *Harrisburg:* Phinehas Kerr. *Singapore:* Owen Heyer Chai Yi.

Awards with merit: *Gisborne:* Sarah van Dorp. *Grafton:* Andrew White, Vashti Zuill. *Zenka:* Pedina Mathenjwa

Awards: *Gisborne:* Joshua Schuit. *Zenka:* Sikhanyisime Q Dube, Lovenia Z Ngulube.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Abby de Bruin, Rachel Campbell, Danielle Jago.

Awards with merit: *Connecticut:* Nathanael Mack. *Gisborne:* Caleb Schuit. *Grafton:* Ronnie Zuill.

Singapore: Naomi Ruth Chai Shi.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* John Campbell, Amelia Smith. *Castle Hill:* Jonathan Hickey. *Grafton:* Marcus Optland.

Awards with merit: *Auckland:* Megan de Bruin. *Chesley:* Kara Zekveld. *Grafton:* William Marshall.

Awards: *Chesley:* Isobel Bouman. *Gisborne:* Thomas Schuit. *Grafton:* Mahala Zuill. *Harrisburg:* Ehud Kerr.

Lower Primary Section

Awards: *Auckland:* Joseph and Peter Campbell, Bryce and Maria Jago, Madyson Seegar, Aaron and Owen Smith. *Castle Hill:* Matthew Hickey. *Chesley:* Hannah Bouman. *Gisborne:* Brooklyn and Shona Hembd. *Grafton:* Shyla Hawkins, Levi Kidd, Eden Optland, Elijah and Eve Zuill. *Harrisburg:* Isabel and Othniel Kerr. *Münster:* Clara Rösner. *Sydney:* Ethan MacDonald. *Texas:* Cameron Smith. *Zenka:* Hezel Ncube.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

The Welfare of Youth Committee at its recent meeting discussed the decline in the number of those who do these exercises in the Church in the UK. We understand that some young people do one or two of the exercises, but do not complete the whole set. But if they are to obtain a prize or an award, they must complete all three exercises. We would encourage parents to see that their children do the exercises and complete them, and encourage their families to study the Scriptures and the Shorter Catechism.

(Rev) Donald Macdonald, Committee Convener

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“Try It”

One day, a missionary in Ireland met a Roman Catholic who claimed that he would be saved by keeping the commandments. The missionary's answer was simple; he said, “Try it”. He was inviting the man to make the experiment: to find out if he could save himself by keeping God's law.

The missionary treated the man just like Jesus treated the rich young ruler. The young man seemed to feel that he was not quite perfect; he asked Jesus: “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18).

Jesus told him: “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother”.

Surely the young man realised that he had not kept the commandments perfectly. Had he always, for instance, honoured his parents as he should have done? Had he always shown them proper respect by doing what they told him, and doing so right away?

No, we cannot believe that he did. Yet he told Jesus: “All these [commandments] have I kept from my youth up”. It was a foolish claim. Obviously the young man had not obeyed his parents perfectly, and he should have realised that what he said was not really true.

If we do not keep *all* God commandments perfectly, we are committing sin – for the obedience that He demands is perfect obedience. He tells us: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37). It is impossible for us to love God perfectly; even the holiest person that ever lived (apart from Jesus Christ) has come short of what God requires. Sin has affected every part of our nature. So let us remember that we are guilty of sinful thoughts, sinful attitudes and sinful motives.

Yes, we are all sinners, and that is a very serious matter. We must not compare ourselves with other people and say something like: Because I do not commit the sins that they do, I am not really a sinner. Nor should we say, Because I go to church, read the Bible and pray every day, I am not really a sinner. We are sinning all the time because we “come short of the glory of

God” (Romans 3:23). If we do not succeed in glorifying God all the time by keeping His commandments perfectly, we are sinners.

The Irish Roman Catholic went away, but a fortnight later he came back to see the missionary. Now he had a different account to give of himself. He had changed his mind; he no longer believed that he could be saved by keeping God’s commandments. “It’s of no use,” he told the missionary, “I’m a lost sinner.” He knew he was totally unable to keep these commandments; he could never hope to please God, no matter how hard he tried.

God had been teaching him. It is a great kindness when God shows sinners that they cannot be saved by keeping the commandments. It is completely impossible for anyone to reach the standard God has set, and that standard is the right one. If God was to make the standard any lower, He would no longer be a just God. It is impossible for Him to be anything else. He is always perfectly holy.

Now the missionary had more to say. If the man could not earn acceptance with God – and, most certainly, he could never deserve that – then his one hope must come from God. He could never escape the punishment of his sins, in hell for ever, unless God would show him mercy.

The missionary explained Psalm 103 to the man. It says that “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy” (v 8). See the emphasis on mercy (and *gracious* means something very similar to *merciful*). But what exactly is God’s mercy? It is His kindness to those who are in need, and how great is the need of a sinner, who is condemned to eternal destruction!

When God shows mercy to a sinner, He is showing kindness to someone who does not deserve anything better than eternal punishment. The sinner deserves to be punished for his sins for ever but, when God shows mercy to that sinner, He saves that individual from all the consequences of his sin. God’s mercy is truly wonderful.

But how can God continue to be just when He shows mercy to those who deserve to be punished? He is still just because He has found a substitute for the sinner, one who could bear all the punishment instead of the sinner. Who could that be? It could be no mere man, for no human being could endure the punishment so as to exhaust God’s anger against sin. Nor could an angel.

The substitute who could endure the full punishment of anyone’s sin was Jesus Christ, who was no mere man, though He truly was a man. He is the Son of God, who took a human nature into union with His divine Person. He did all that was necessary to make it possible for God, in mercy, to forgive sin. So it is possible for the guilty sinner to be pronounced “not guilty”, and for this to be done in a righteous way, in a way consistent with God’s justice.

This is possible because Christ endured the punishment due to that sinner; Christ suffered and died in the sinner’s place.

When the missionary taught the Roman Catholic from Psalm 103, he would no doubt have called on the man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul and Silas said to the jailer in Philippi. The man in Ireland too must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of his sin and for a complete salvation from sin and all its consequences. And we are told that the man found peace in believing. Then the man would have seen how great God’s mercy is. He no doubt left the Roman Church and its dangerous teaching about the way of salvation.

In the early part of his life, Paul trusted in his own righteousness. He said, “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more” (Philippians 3:4). He had been trusting in the flesh – that is, in what he could do himself, in the way of keeping God’s commandments. Indeed he was more successful – at least he seemed to be more successful – than anyone else.

But God showed him that what seemed to be his perfect keeping of the law was far from being perfect; it was full of sin. He then stopped trusting in himself and began to trust instead in the Lord Jesus Christ as the One through whom he could be perfectly righteous. Why did he trust in Christ? Because God is merciful and gracious. He made Paul willing and able to trust in Christ, and Paul then acknowledged, “I obtained mercy” (1 Timothy 1:16). Paul knew now that he could not earn salvation; all his efforts were sinful. He needed mercy, and God showed him mercy; He saved Paul from depending on his own righteousness. God took away all his sins and gave him a new heart. Paul learned that God’s mercy is truly wonderful.

Have *you* learned that God’s mercy is wonderful? Do you think seriously about God’s mercy, through the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died in the place of sinners? Have you realised that you cannot save yourself by your own efforts to keep God’s commandments, even though you would try even harder to keep them than Paul did? Do you feel your need of God’s mercy so that He would make you able and willing to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? These are all questions that you ought to take seriously and do so urgently. It may soon be too late to find salvation.

God is calling you to trust in Christ, and to do so now – without delay. There is no other way of salvation. If you think that you can earn salvation at some time of your choosing – by trying harder to be good, by keeping God’s commandments – one answer is: “Try it”. If you really do try to keep these commands in your own strength, I hope God will show you that it is impossible. Far better, look *now* as a lost sinner to Christ, the only Saviour.

Proud of Being Religious?

Matthew Vogan

John Love was brought up with family worship; he attended Church faithfully with his parents and kept the Sabbath carefully. He lived a life that seemed outwardly upright. He was very clever and could read very easily even before the age of 5. He read the Bible and prayed on his own. Indeed, by the age of 12 he had read the Bible from cover to cover no fewer than six times. These things are all good in themselves, but none of them can earn us salvation. It seemed that few could match John in religious things. And John was deeply proud of that.

When he went to church he was proud of his father's rank and the prominent seat that the family occupied. He did not have a true reverence for God in His worship; he did not consider spiritual realities but only what was outward. When he kept the Sabbath, he was proud of that too; as he says, he was "accounting other children heathens in comparison of me". He thought he was "holier than thou" (Isaiah 65:5). He wanted to be a minister and that puffed him up too.

He read the Scriptures a great deal but not with reverence – he did not tremble at God's Word (Isaiah 66:5). It was just like a common thing to him; he would even read it backwards. He wanted to feed his pride at having read so much. One way of doing that was that, during the prayer at family worship, John would sneakily read further in order to tick off having read more chapters.

For all his religion, he later observed that he did not really know the true God. He did not have spiritual thoughts of God. This is how we are by nature: for all our outward activities, "there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11). John was entirely swallowed up in himself and was really living without God in the world. Even when his infant brothers and sisters died, it did not seem to make an impression on him. In fact any impressions made about spiritual things seemed to vanish away quickly.

Is it not strange how someone could seem to be able to say the right things and do the right things, yet their motives and attitude were entirely wrong? Yet this is what the Bible tells us. In worship, it is possible to draw near to God with our lips when, in fact, our hearts are far from Him (Isaiah 29:13). Our hearts can be full of sin and self. We need new hearts; we need to be changed in order to serve God truly.

The more knowledge that John gained, the prouder he became. In his studies, this spirit led him into danger; it made him disbelieve important truths

taught in the Bible. He denied that Christ is God and that His death atones for sin. He was so proud as to think his own ideas were superior to God's Holy Word. Left to himself, John Love would only have become a greater hypocrite with a harder heart.

But a change did come. God drew near to him, even though he was not truly seeking God. The Holy Spirit showed him that salvation was all of God's grace and that we cannot earn it or contribute to it in any way. He was brought to a simple, humble trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John Love later became a faithful minister who declared this precious message to those who were perishing sinners as he once was. He did what he could to help others to take this message to other parts of the world where the gospel was not yet known.

You need the same change – a new heart. You need the same simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not put your trust in your Bible reading, attending Church, Sabbath keeping and other such things. These are very important but they will never save us. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

"O how ought I to reverence and adore that gracious, though unacknowledged, Benefactor", said John Love, "who so long reprieved me – who kept me so long, when on the edge of that precipice, from dropping into everlasting burnings. How many times has His sun risen to give me light, and the earth brought forth my food! How have the Divine wisdom and power been exerted . . . in my heart being kept beating, and my lungs playing every moment; had [they] ceased, the poor soul must have come forth naked to the judgement seat, to receive sentence for its execrable [detestable] deeds! . . . He is come near to me: let me not trifle with Him. That is an awful charge – 'The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified'."

Paul – a Character Study

2. Paul the Missionary

Rev J R Tallach

Last month's article was the first section of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference; most of it was taken up with considering the effects of Paul's meeting with Christ on the way to Damascus. This article begins the second section: "Some Characteristics of Paul".

A Paul's zeal. We see this mainly in Paul's missionary journeys. We know Paul immediately began preaching the Christ whose cause he had first

sought to destroy (Acts 9:20). It also seems likely that, for the three years after his conversion, he was based in Damascus and evangelised in Arabia. It would not be like the Apostle to remain silent and do nothing; and unless his ministry had seen some success, it would appear strange that King Aretus of Damascus set a watch for him at the gate of the city, so that Paul had to escape over the wall in a basket.

First Missionary Journey. Having earnestly sought direction from God, Paul received light from the Spirit. With the blessing of the Church there, Paul and Barnabas left Antioch with John Mark, and travelled to Cyprus, Barnabas' homeland. There Sergius Paulus, a Roman official, was converted.

Paul's clarity of mind on the nature of the advance of the gospel among the Gentiles was demonstrated here. Though, when Paul came to some new place, he would normally go first to the synagogue and preach to the Jews, here he preached the gospel directly to this Gentile, and the Word was blessed. Neither the synagogue nor the law of Moses – circumcision, in particular – had any necessary place in preaching the gospel to Gentiles. This was an issue which would arise time and again, but Paul set a steady course from the beginning and held to that course.

John Mark left the party at Perga, on the mainland, and returned home. Paul and Barnabas travelled 100 miles north to Pisidian Antioch, in Turkey. There Paul preached in the synagogue. Synagogue worship was simple and consisted of three parts: first prayer, then readings from the Old Testament, and finally a word of exhortation (see Heb 13:22). No fixed person was appointed to give the exhortation. Any male Israelite might read or preach, though gradually the preaching became the duty of the rabbi. Visitors were welcome and might be asked to preach. Paul and his party fell in with this and took advantage of it, as an opportunity to preach the gospel. The results were remarkable in that many of the Jews and the proselytes (Gentiles who followed the religion of the Jews) believed. Yet opposition soon arose, and Paul and Barnabas departed from Pisidian Antioch.

This pattern repeated itself in Iconium, and they fled to Lystra. There Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city as a dead man. While his friends stood about him, he arose and, the next day, they pressed on to Derbe, where the Word was preached and much blessing followed (Acts 14:21). Paul and Barnabas returned, visiting the churches they had established and encouraging them, warning them "that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom" of God. In thus going from city to city with the gospel, Paul was entering the lions' den time and again. After being persecuted out of these cities, he returned to the scene of possible danger in order to build up the Lord's cause and establish believers.

Returning to Antioch, he and Barnabas “rehearsed all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles”.

Second Missionary Journey. This mainly involved establishing a church of God in Corinth, where he spent 18 months in ministry (Acts 18:1-18). Throughout this journey he was accompanied by Silas (Acts 15:22) and, for part of it, by Timothy and Luke. Recognising the need to strengthen newly-planted churches in Syria and Cilicia, the missionaries passed through the very cities in which Paul had been so persecuted; they were building up the brethren in the most holy faith. At Troas he saw a vision in which a man said, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9). Ever obedient to God’s direction, Paul and his party, which now included Luke, passed over to Macedonia.

The two conversions in Philippi, of Lydia and the Philippian jailor, illustrate the different ways in which the Spirit worked, and still works, in the heart. Lydia’s heart was opened by the Lord, and she received, in simplicity, the way of salvation. As evidence of this she received the missionary party into her home immediately after her conversion – and again after they came from prison. John’s words apply: “We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14).

The Philippian jailor, on the other hand, was brought close to murdering himself before asking that vital question, “What must I do to be saved?” He then received an answer in peace: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”. Whether by the quiet rising of the Sun of righteousness as in Lydia’s case, or by the earthquake and a guilty conscience as in the jailor’s case, the Kingdom of Christ was established. And the Spirit continues to work in these different ways still.

Paul’s zeal for souls was illustrated in Athens too, where he was waiting for Silas and Timothy. “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). Paul had comparatively few souls “for his hire” at Athens, reminding us that Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). His zeal at a personal level is to be admired and followed.

Paul moved to Corinth and stayed there 18 months. The work in that city formed the focus of his second missionary journey. Even by heathen standards Corinth was proverbially a wicked place. Apart from the unashamed immorality, the Jewish community “opposed themselves and blasphemed”, when Paul was “pressed in the Spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:5,6). Paul shook his clothes and said to them: “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles”.

There were spiritual and physical difficulties in Corinth, and they must have seemed discouraging – just as discouraging as the Children of Israel found the report about the giants in the promised land, and the high walls around its cities, before they crossed the River Jordan. Despite early conversions (Acts 18:8), even Paul feared. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city (Acts 18:9,10). As the Lord had promised, so it transpired, and the church of God was set up in Corinth as a light in a dark place. Then Paul returned to the “mother church” of Antioch (Acts 18:22).

Third Missionary Journey. The principal place on this journey was Ephesus, where Paul spent three years (Acts 20:31), “so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles” (Acts 19:10). On the same journey he revisited and confirmed churches he had founded on his first and second journeys.

His first difficulty at Ephesus was with 12 men who had known only the baptism of John the Baptist. They received the Spirit (Acts 19:6) and doubtless formed the basis for the Christian church in Ephesus. They opened the way for other disciples of John to go on to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah, the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”.

The second difficulty Paul met in Ephesus was the ill will of the Jews against the gospel. Paul speaks of this time to the elders in Ephesus: “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews” (Acts 20:18,19). We read that Paul went into the synagogue in Ephesus “and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples” (Acts 19:8,9). The opposition of his own people, the Jews, was a special trial and sorrow for the Apostle, yet his love for them did not weaken. Writing in Romans 10:1 he says, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer for Israel is, that they might be saved.”

A third element in Paul’s trials in Ephesus was the opposition raised by Satan’s malice through pagan magic. But “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul”. It was like Moses in Egypt bringing about, under God, the deliverance of the Children of Israel from Pharaoh. Handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from Paul’s body to the sick and the devil-possessed and they were cured. Jewish exorcists, attempting the same cures, were told

by the evil spirit, “Jesus I know and Paul I know but who are ye?” and the exorcists fled out of that house “naked and wounded” (Acts 19:13-16). When the report of these events spread, they cast a fear on the people “and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified”. Many believed and confessed their sins, and many who practised magic burned their books. “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

In the face of all these trials, Paul could tell the Ephesian elders, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). A writer on the Apostle Paul notes that in the 10 years between AD 47 and AD 57 Paul established the church in four provinces of the Roman Empire: namely Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia.

The Five Solas of the Reformation

5. God’s Glory Alone

Rev K M Watkins

This article expands the final part of a paper given at this year’s Youth Conference, which covered five essential doctrines in the Reformation 500 years ago: Scripture alone, faith alone, Christ alone, grace alone, God’s glory alone. *Sola* is the Latin word for alone. Whilst Roman Catholicism does not deny a place to any of these five truths, it has always rejected the Protestant assertion of their being *alone*. We have seen how Martin Luther understood the first four “solas”; now we see how he taught and preached the fifth: God’s glory alone. In Latin this is *solī Deo gloria*.

Luther had been forced to acknowledge something of God’s glory long before he came to know the gospel. Unlike other Roman Catholic priests, when Luther came to “celebrate the mass” for the first time, he was terrified by a view of the majestic glory of God. He was to recite the words, “We offer unto Thee, the living, the true, the eternal God”. But as he did so, as he wrote afterwards: “I was utterly stupefied and terror-stricken. . . . Who am I, that I should lift up my eyes or raise my hands to the divine Majesty? . . . At His nod the earth trembles. And shall I, a miserable little pygmy, say, ‘I want this, I ask for that’? For I am dust and ashes and full of sin, and I am speaking to the living, eternal and the true God.”

It was later, as a born-again Christian, that Luther saw another aspect of God’s glory – the glory of His grace. He wrote: “God laid upon Christ the iniquities of us all. This is that . . . infinite mercy of God which the slender capacity of man’s heart cannot understand and much less utter – that unfathomable depth and burning zeal of God’s love toward us. . . . The Supreme Majesty was so concerned for me, a lost sinner, a son of wrath and

of everlasting death, that He spared not His own Son but delivered Him to the most shameful death, that, hanging between two thieves, He might be made a curse and sin for me, a cursed sinner, that I might be made just, blessed, a son and heir of God. Who can sufficiently declare this exceeding great goodness of God?"

From his conversion onwards, Luther was determined to give all glory to God. And no wonder! The first four solas led him unavoidably to the fifth. Scripture alone – not Scripture plus the Church – had the answers to his deepest needs. Faith alone – not faith plus works – was the only way to obtain salvation. Christ alone – not Christ plus others – was the only Mediator. Grace alone – not grace plus his own efforts – was the only thing that could convert him. All of these were gifts from God: Scripture, faith, Christ and grace. Therefore let the Lord have all the glory.

He wrote: "I attribute all things to God alone, and nothing to man. When I first took upon me the defence of the gospel, I remember that . . . a worthy man said to me: 'This pleases me well, that this doctrine which you preach yields glory . . . to God alone, and nothing to man: for to God there cannot be attributed too much glory, goodness, mercy' etc. This saying did then greatly comfort and confirm me."

Luther's experience is the way that Scripture points out to us all. Writing to the Romans, Paul opened up the truth of the gospel, chapter by chapter. Man is such a sinner that salvation *must* be through faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone. That can lead to only one possible conclusion: the glory of God. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36). From beginning to end, "salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Therefore let all the glory be to the Lord. "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God" (Revelation 19:1).

This was a whole new world for Martin Luther. As a boy and later as a monk, he had seen Romanism sharing the honours of its version of salvation widely. In Rome, the glory goes to many: not only to God, but also to Mary, to saints, to angels, to the Church, to the pope, to the priesthood, and even to the sinner himself for what he contributes to his salvation. This was not *solī Deo gloria* – glory to God alone. God was being robbed of the glory that was due exclusively to Him.

Denying any of the other four solas necessarily results in giving God's glory to others. Romanism robs God by denying *Scripture alone*. It is part of God's glory that His voice alone has final authority. As soon as man's ideas enter in alongside those of the Bible, something of man's glory enters in too. Luther saw this. He published his commentary on Galatians with this

in view: “If this doctrine flourish, then all good things flourish: religion, the true service of God, the glory of God, the right knowledge of all things which are necessary for a Christian man to know”.

Romanism robs God of His glory by denying *faith alone*. Luther wrote: “Whoever seeks righteousness by works without faith, denies God, and makes himself God. For he thinks thus, ‘If I do this work, I shall be righteous . . . and shall obtain life everlasting’. And what is this . . . but to take that work to himself which belongs to God alone, and to show indeed that he himself is God?” Faith gives glory to God: “Whoever then believes the word of God, as Abraham did, is righteous before God, because he has faith, which gives glory unto God; that is, he gives to God that which is due to Him”.

Romanism also robs God of His glory by denying *Christ alone*. Luther wrote that in Rome “hypocrites and idolaters go about to do those works which properly . . . belong to Christ only and alone. Indeed, they do not say in plain words, ‘I am God, I am Christ’; yet in very deed they proudly take to themselves the divinity and office of Christ, and therefore it is as much, in effect, as if they said, ‘I am Christ, I am a Saviour, not only of myself, but also of others’. The monks have . . . made the whole world to believe . . . that they are able, not only to make themselves righteous through their hypocritical holiness, but also others to whom they communicate” it, yet “it is the proper and only office of Christ to justify the sinner. The Pope in like manner, by publishing and spreading his ‘divinity’ throughout the whole world, has denied and utterly buried the office and divinity of Christ.”

Romanism robs God of His glory by denying *grace alone*. It supposes that man has some ability and merit by which he can contribute to salvation. On the contrary, wrote Luther, noting Paul’s approach, “Paul cuts off all deserts [merits], and gives glory to God alone, but to himself all shame and confusion”. Paul stated the truth in Galatians 6:14: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

Luther summarised in this way: “The doctrine of the gospel takes from men all glory, wisdom, righteousness, etc, and gives them to the Creator alone, who made all things of nothing. . . . My doctrine is such that it sets forth and preaches the grace and glory of God alone.” How different that is to the doctrine that denies the five solas! With Scripture, with Luther, with the fifth sola, let us be saying: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake” (Psalm 115:1). *God’s glory alone!*

The Free Presbyterian Church still stands today for the five solas. These five things – Scripture alone, faith alone, Christ alone, grace alone, God’s

glory alone – form the very heart of the faith once delivered to the saints. We are to contend for them earnestly. To use Luther's language, "Let us go on boldly in the name of the Lord of hosts, and for all this let us not cease to set forth the glory of Jesus Christ".

We should ask ourselves, each one of us, what the five solas mean to us personally. A true Christian, with a real experience of salvation, will hold these things as most precious: Scripture alone, faith alone, Christ alone, grace alone, God's glory alone.

God Is My Salvation

3. The Little Book

Eily grew up in Dublin, the Irish capital. Her mother wanted Eily to learn the Irish language and she and her teacher became firm friends. During the Irish Civil War, they were both imprisoned. At this time he lost his religion. But some time after his release, he appeared at Eily's home with the "great news" that he had found the truth in the New Testament.

Eily's friend took a little book from his pocket. She and her family, she remembered, "were soon listening to such words as we had never heard before". She listed some of the Bible verses her friend read to them: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16); "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7); "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Eily felt that the Word entered her soul "like lightning splitting the rocks". It seemed that, "as a two-edged sword", it "cut away the scales" from her eyes and, for one wonderful moment, she "saw the truth as it is in Christ" in verses such as these: "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25); "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Was this the time of Eily's conversion, when she first believed in Christ for salvation? Probably not; clearly, for the moment at least, she believed that these verses were true. But did she trust in Christ as the Saviour of sinners? We should remember that it can be very difficult for many people to pinpoint the time of their conversion. The important matter for everyone is to examine themselves in the light of Bible teaching so that they can give a realistic answer to the question: Am I converted *now*?

Eily soon found herself asking about the book her friend had read from: “Was this not a Protestant Bible? What good could come out of a book like that?” She remembered that, for Roman Catholics at that time, it was a forbidden book. “If all this were true,” she thought to herself, “surely the [Roman] Catholic Church would glory in telling its members this amazing news.” Yes, the Bible is true – and Eily was to become absolutely convinced of this. But Rome does not delight in the pure gospel; so it did not direct its people to the good news to be found in the Bible.

Then her mother’s voice interrupted Eily’s thoughts and the verses her friend was reading. “Please close that book,” she said; “it is a Protestant Bible.” She called the teacher a “heretic”, someone who believes false teaching. And she announced that, because he had given up “his holy faith”, as she described it, they must break off all friendship with him. Then she asked him to leave.

Eily’s thoughts were in turmoil. She had heard new teaching from the Bible, and she longed to believe it. She sensed that in it there was life and joy and peace, yet she felt she dared not believe what she had heard. She told herself that her mother was right and that the Roman Catholic Church was infallible – that there was not a single mistake in its teachings. But while what her friend was telling her seemed impossible, she somehow wished that these new teachings were true.

She spent that night tossing restlessly in her bed. Her mother warned Eily not to think any more about what she had heard, for, she insisted, it was “sinful and blasphemous”. Eily’s sister poured confused scorn on what the teacher had said. “Even supposing the Protestants were right, which was impossible,” she claimed, “everyone should remain in the religion in which they were born and reared.” But Eily was to learn that what most matters in religion is that what we believe is *true*, and the only safe source of truth is the Bible, which is indeed infallible – perfectly correct, without any error.

Eily’s thoughts just would not settle. The words she had heard from Scripture went through her mind over and over again: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast”; “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin”. She realised that this meant a clean heart and freedom from the power of sin. Another of these verses was: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”.

When leaving, her teacher friend advised the family to “get a New Testament and read for yourselves; these are not my words, but God’s”. Eily recalled, “To read the New Testament in search of truth was forbidden. Yet

before sleep came that night, I made up my mind that I would get a copy of the New Testament somehow and read it for myself."

But before long the teacher sent her a New Testament. It was a beautiful summer morning as Eily made her way through the crowds on the busy Dublin pavements to find a quiet corner where she could read her precious new book, out of sight of her family. She was heading for the Art Gallery on Harcourt Street, a building she had often visited. On the top floor she found a seat in front of a window, and there she opened her New Testament to read about God's redeeming love for sinners.

From her top-floor seat, Eily could hear the occasional sound of a passing vehicle and the subdued clang of trams sliding past. But the noises seemed to come from another world; biblical places such as Bethlehem, Nazareth and Calvary felt nearer.

She felt that "the cross, with its glorious meaning," shone from the pages of the New Testament. She felt the authority of such verses that speak of the Christian life: "Take up the cross and follow Me"; "My yoke is easy and My burden is light". "O if only I knew how!" she wished. "If only I could believe." Later she compared herself to Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and said, "My burden weighed me down and, although I was in sight of the cross, I could not believe".

"The effect of 17 years spent in an intensely Roman Catholic environment," Eily wrote afterwards, "with constant Roman Catholic teaching, is not lightly nor easily cast aside. And that environment was so different from the new world which opened out before my eyes as I read and pondered."

She thought of her family, who were all so devoted to their religion. She had never known her father or mother to fail in the smallest duty the Church imposed. To fulfil those duties often meant a sacrifice for them, yet they did not shirk them, so that they might acquire merit in God's sight – as they thought. But every duty is imperfect; it is stained by sin; no one can acquire merit through their own deeds.

Then Eily thought of some priests and nuns she knew. "Could they all be in the wrong – living in darkness?" she asked herself. She explained, "A desperate struggle was going on in my heart. O for someone to speak to – for one who might explain these things to me! I had never seen a New Testament until now. I had never entered a Protestant church nor heard the gospel preached." Another difficulty was that she had never heard of anyone in the Roman Church reading the Bible.

She went on: "This was the first time the message of the New Testament reached me – and I was sore perplexed. At first the words of Holy Scripture were so strange and unfamiliar that I could not grasp their meaning, but as

the days passed, the seed sown began to blossom forth. For weeks that little book was my constant companion. I read it at every opportunity, sometimes in the early hours of the morning, sometimes late at night.

“What troubled me greatly in those days was the fact that I was hiding my position, as it were. My mother did not know the change that was taking place: the awful doubts about the Church, the perplexing thoughts about the New Testament teaching. [When I was] walking along by the quayside one autumn evening, the thought came to me that the next step I must take was to confess all this at home. It was the hardest thing I ever faced in my life, but I knew I could find no peace until I did so.

“The still air was cold and crystal clear that evening, imparting a clearness to my thoughts. I was travelling in a maze of conflicting doubts, fears and hopes. But one could only take a step at a time. I prayed therefore for courage.”

For Junior Readers

Moving House

I wonder if any of you have ever moved house? Perhaps some of you have always lived in the same place, but I am sure others of you have had to move for one reason or another.

Perhaps you had to help in preparing for the move; it is not something that can be done overnight. You may have had to pack up your toys and books, to get rid off some things which were old or broken, and to wrap other things up to protect them from damage when they were being moved.

And what then? Your parents would have arranged a new home for you to move into. You could not just walk into an empty house and take it over; that would be breaking the law. Your parents would have had to choose a suitable house, sign papers and get the keys before you could live in the new house. These arrangements have to be made in plenty of time, so that the new home is waiting for you when you leave your old one.

What about your soul? You are not going to live on this earth for ever, are you? No, you are only passing through this world on your way to the great, never-ending eternity.

What does the Bible say we are? The Apostle Paul speaks of the lives of the Old Testament saints – many of them lived till they were very old, but still they were only “strangers and pilgrims on the earth”, on their way . . . to where? Paul explains it in another verse: “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved” (in other words, when our bodies

die). What then? He goes on: "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens".

Did Jesus not speak of this house to His disciples? What did He say?

He told them: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." So the Saviour went up to heaven to prepare an eternal home for His people.

What about you? You have been given time in this world; what are you doing with it? Do you have another home to go to when you leave this world? Are you preparing for the great eternity which is ahead of each of us? Will you not pray that you would not be like those worldly people "who only in this present life their part and portion have" (Metrical Psalm 17:14). Pray rather that you would "lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven".

You probably think that there is no hurry to think about these things, that you have plenty of time. But the Lord knows that young people have that temptation. So what does He tell you in His holy Word?

He says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth". And if you do so, He will fulfill His promise, "Those that seek Me early shall find Me".

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

The Boy Who Did not Want to Tell Lies

A young boy was sent to bring something to his uncle. But the boy did not come straight back, as he should have done. He spent some time playing, perhaps, or watching something interesting.

Then the boy remembered that he should bring the thing to his uncle right away. So he ran back as fast as he could.

One of the other men asked the boy why he was putting himself out of breath. The man said, "Tell your uncle that the people kept you waiting". But this was not true.

The boy was honest. He said, "Why? That would be to tell a lie." It did not matter, the man said.

The boy was shocked. "I a liar!" he cried; "I tell a lie!" He would not even tell a lie to escape punishment. He explained: "My mother told me that lying was the first step to ruin, and my Bible says that a liar shall not enter heaven".

God tells us not to tell lies. Ask Him to make you honest.

Looking Around Us

Sleepwalking Into Oblivion

A former Moderator of the Church of Scotland General Assembly has warned in the Church's magazine, *Life and Work*, that the Church "could easily be sleepwalking into oblivion" – it will be forgotten. Rev Albert Bogle believes that "a great cultural tsunami has turned the social and spiritual landscape of church life . . . on its edge". In less colourful language, he means that society has experienced huge change; it no longer feels its need of the Church or the spiritual instruction that it may provide. Sadly, society as a whole no longer believes the Bible or accepts in any practical way the existence of the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible.

But a more basic problem is that most parts of the Church in Scotland no longer takes the Bible as seriously as it should. Very many of its ministers do not believe that the Bible is absolutely reliable in all that it teaches. They do not believe that, in *all* the teachings of the Bible, God is speaking to us and that He does so with total authority. He is the Creator of all things, human beings included, and that gives Him this total authority over us.

The Church of Scotland as a whole does not support the authority of all the Ten Commandments. The Fourth Commandment, for instance, is largely forgotten; the Sabbath is treated as the day when people may come to church, but most members would be shocked to think that God requires the *whole* Sabbath to be used for spiritual activities as far as possible. The Seventh Commandment is being sidelined also – the General Assembly is even paving the way towards giving ministers permission to conduct "marriages" between two men and between two women.

In how many churches would one find an emphasis on Jesus' warning: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)? And in how many churches would one find it stressed that salvation is only by faith in Jesus Christ? But there *is* no "salvation in any other [but Jesus]; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). No other saviour is revealed.

Mr Bogle does point to a 2001 report that "invites us all to simply take up the call Jesus made to the first disciples, 'Follow Me'". It sounds good; the words are scriptural. But what does Mr Bogle mean by them? Does he mean that all must follow Christ in sincere obedience to all the commandments and teachings of the Bible? It is hard to believe that he does.

The fact is that, the Church of Scotland *will* sleepwalk into oblivion unless it will return to the old paths of following Christ *as He is revealed in Scripture*. May the Lord give us grace as individuals to be faithful to Him!

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

Overseas Prizes and Awards 2016-2017

Senior Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Claudia and James Campbell. *Gisborne:* Esther Schuit. *Harrisburg:* Jael and Jenny Kerr.

Awards with merit: *Auckland:* Monique Jago. *Gisborne:* Elizabeth Schuit. *Grafton:* Rachel van Dorp.

Awards: *Zenka:* Velani Moyo, Pretty Sibanda.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Danielle Jago. *Grafton:* Hugh Marshall. *Harrisburg:* Phinehas Kerr. *Singapore:* Owen Heyer Chai Yi.

Awards with merit: *Gisborne:* Sarah van Dorp. *Grafton:* Andrew White, Vashti Zuill. *Zenka:* Pedina Mathenjwa

Awards: *Gisborne:* Joshua Schuit. *Zenka:* Sikhanyisime Q Dube, Lovenia Z Ngulube.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Abby de Bruin, Rachel Campbell, Danielle Jago.

Awards with merit: *Connecticut:* Nathanael Mack. *Gisborne:* Caleb Schuit. *Grafton:* Ronnie Zuill.

Singapore: Naomi Ruth Chai Shi.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* John Campbell, Amelia Smith. *Castle Hill:* Jonathan Hickey. *Grafton:* Marcus Optland.

Awards with merit: *Auckland:* Megan de Bruin. *Chesley:* Kara Zekveld. *Grafton:* William Marshall.

Awards: *Chesley:* Isobel Bouman. *Gisborne:* Thomas Schuit. *Grafton:* Mahala Zuill. *Harrisburg:* Ehud Kerr.

Lower Primary Section

Awards: *Auckland:* Joseph and Peter Campbell, Bryce and Maria Jago, Madyson Seegar, Aaron and Owen Smith. *Castle Hill:* Matthew Hickey. *Chesley:* Hannah Bouman. *Gisborne:* Brooklyn and Shona Hembd. *Grafton:* Shyla Hawkins, Levi Kidd, Eden Optland, Elijah and Eve Zuill. *Harrisburg:* Isabel and Othniel Kerr. *Münster:* Clara Rösner. *Sydney:* Ethan MacDonald. *Texas:* Cameron Smith. *Zenka:* Hezel Ncube.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

The Welfare of Youth Committee at its recent meeting discussed the decline in the number of those who do these exercises in the Church in the UK. We understand that some young people do one or two of the exercises, but do not complete the whole set. But if they are to obtain a prize or an award, they must complete all three exercises. We would encourage parents to see that their children do the exercises and complete them, and encourage their families to study the Scriptures and the Shorter Catechism.

(Rev) Donald Macdonald, Committee Convener

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Cover Picture: A fishing harbour in south-west Ireland. See page 214.

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