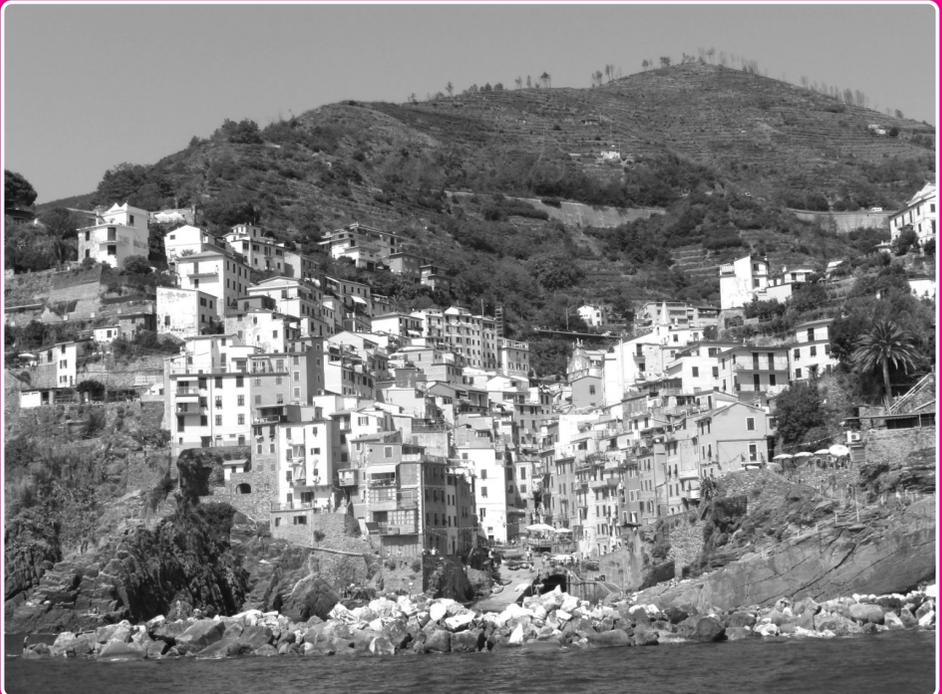


The Young People's Magazine

**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



December 2018

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The Young People’s Magazine

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Volume 83

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Number 12

Gathering in Harvest – or Sleeping?

Here is one of Solomon's proverbs: "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame" (Proverbs 10:5). He is speaking about the need to be active at harvest time; it is not a time when people can afford to sleep too long. (Grain crops in Israel were harvested a few months earlier than would be the case in Britain; these crops were gathered by early summer.)

Now imagine yourself in a situation where you have to grow all your own food. If at harvest time you do not gather it in – if you spend too much time asleep in bed – you will have many hungry days before you can have another opportunity to gather in a harvest. How shameful that would be! You would be leaving good food to rot in the field and then have nothing to eat. But how wise to make every effort to cut down crops such as wheat and barley at the right time, bind them into sheaves and then bring them home.

Even then your work is not finished. You still have to separate the grain from the straw on the threshing floor. You would scatter the bundles of straw on the floor and drive oxen over them. You would then have a mixture of grains and small bits of straw, or chaff, which you would throw up in the air. The wind would blow away the chaff, leaving the grains to fall at your feet. You would then store the grain until it is ground into flour, which you would use to make bread to eat over the next 12 months.

During harvest time, if you are wise, you will spend as much time as possible, six days a week, in the harvest field or on the threshing floor. You will get up early; you will not take unnecessary breaks; you will get back to work as soon as possible after every break; and you will work as long as daylight lasts.

But many of these proverbs not only provide good advice for the ordinary things of this life; they also point to spiritual lessons which we need to consider. So what spiritual lessons can we learn from this proverb?

It is this: our lifetime, the time we are given in this world, is our opportunity to prepare for eternity. If we are wise, we will be active in earnestly seeking spiritual blessings for our souls. On the other hand, if we are spiritually lazy,

if we neglect our souls and waste our time on other things, how shameful our position will be in this life, and especially in a lost eternity! And, remember, our time in this world is an opportunity that God has given us.

Samuel was still young when he learned to ask God: “Speak; for Thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:10), though what Eli actually taught him to say was: “Speak, *Lord*; for Thy servant heareth”. We too should be asking God to speak to us through the Bible, and we should be trying to listen to what He says to us. This is part of what is involved in “gathering” spiritual blessings – whether in church as the minister reads a part of Scripture, or as we listen to him explaining his text and applying its teaching to us, or as we read the Bible for ourselves. We should be conscious that God is able to reach our hearts through the teachings of the Bible, as the Holy Spirit makes people able and willing to receive these truths.

Hundreds of years later, when Jesus was in the world, He visited Mary and Martha in their home in Bethany. Martha was so busy preparing a meal for them that she thought she had no time to listen to what Jesus had to say. But Mary “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word”; she listened carefully to what He was saying; she was making good use of her opportunity to “gather” as much as possible. She would not always have such a wonderful opportunity; Jesus would not always be in the world – though even after He ascended to heaven, she could still “gather” blessings for her soul from the Scriptures and from the preaching of apostles such as Peter and John.

Jesus told Mary’s sister: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41,42). Martha clearly was a believer too (see John 11, a chapter which tells us her believing words to Jesus after the death of her brother Lazarus); she too should have been using this opportunity to “gather” spiritual blessings.

Perhaps Martha felt that she must spend time making a very special meal for Jesus. But it was far more important for her to “gather” His words so that her soul would not starve in the winter – as we might describe it – when Jesus would no longer come to visit them in Bethany, after His work in this world was over. Yes, it was right to give Jesus something to eat, but the meal could no doubt have waited and it could have been simpler.

What Martha needed to do was to put first things first, to put the needs of her soul above the needs of the body. She needed to listen as much as possible to what Jesus was saying, whatever else might have to be delayed or left alone completely. Mary had chosen to listen to Jesus, and Martha too should have made full use of her opportunity to listen to Jesus teaching them. This was the one thing that was necessary at that time.

Everybody needs to take time to eat, to sleep and to work, for instance. We should do all we can to keep body and soul together, but even more important is to listen to Jesus speaking from heaven through the Scriptures, as the great Teacher of sinners. We should make use of every reasonable opportunity to read the Bible or go to a service. But we must balance such duties with our other responsibilities. A doctor, for example, who is called to attend on a patient who is seriously ill while he was enjoying a sermon cannot reasonably refuse the call. Sometimes it may be obvious what is our duty; at other times it may not be at all obvious. So we should ask God to direct us, to influence our mind so that we make the right choice.

It is so easy for people to make excuses for neglecting their souls; there may be so many other things that they would prefer to do than pray or read the Bible, or even go to church. But these things *are* necessary; they are means that God uses for the good of souls. It is not enough to promise that we will attend to our spiritual needs at some time in the indefinite future.

We must listen to what God tells us. He says, “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Now is the time God has appointed for us to gather good things for our souls. For our souls to sleep through all the opportunities that God has given us to find salvation is tremendously dangerous. How shameful it is if we waste all the wonderful opportunities we are given to seek the Lord and so end up in the awful winter of a lost eternity – a winter which will never end.

The Reformation in Europe

4. France, Scandinavia and Italy

Last month's section of this Youth Conference paper noted John Calvin's conversion in France and some of his work as the most famous Reformer in Geneva.

Although Calvin had been forced to flee from *France*, he continued to have great influence on the progress of the Protestant cause there. He was no doubt thankful that many of his countrymen had come to believe Protestant teaching – in other words, the teaching of the Bible. But he was very concerned that many of them continued to follow Roman Catholic practices, including going to mass.

Yet he fully realised the danger people faced when they stopped living as Roman Catholics; he had experienced that danger himself, and this was why there were so many refugees from France living in Geneva. In 1559 King Henry II of France even declared that anyone who received letters from Geneva was guilty of high treason; if caught, they would no doubt have been

put to death. Henry even thought of invading Geneva, but his plans did not work out.

Yet Protestant congregations continued to appear, and Frenchmen who had been acting as pastors in Switzerland returned to their own country to minister at the peril of their lives. By 1561 the Genevan church was overwhelmed with requests from France for preachers. In response to these calls, ministers in Geneva might disappear and turn up later in some faraway corner of France, to take care of the spiritual needs of a group of Protestants. Many of these men had benefited from a thorough training in the college in Geneva, where Calvin lectured on the Scriptures and other worthy Reformers also taught.

The danger was real; from a group of 88 men who went to France from Geneva as pastors, nine or ten suffered as martyrs. Most often French martyrs were burnt to death, and many of them had their tongues cut out first so that they would not make a public confession of following the teachings of the Bible – and so influence others away from Romanism.

In 1561, in spite of persecution, there were 2150 Protestant churches in France. By 1562 more than 2 million people, out of a population of 20 million, belonged to Reformed churches in France, and perhaps a third of the nobles were favourable to Protestant preaching. Besides ministers, there were hundreds of men going about France selling books, but dressed as beggars. And the books they sold were printed in Geneva, where printing became one of the city's biggest industries.

From the 1560s onwards, there was a series of wars between the Roman Catholics and the French Protestants, who became known as Huguenots. The Huguenots in certain parts of the country were given freedom to observe Protestant worship. But the Huguenot cause was seriously damaged by the events of St Bartholomew's Day in 1572, when the Queen Mother arranged for one of the Huguenot leaders to be killed. Before the killing stopped in Paris, perhaps as many as 3000 Huguenots had been slain there. The killing went on in other parts of France for many more months resulting in a total death toll of 30 000.

Probably the Huguenot cause never recovered from this onslaught. In 1598 the Treaty of Nantes gave substantial protection to the Huguenots in various places, protection which lasted until the Treaty was revoked in 1685, when Protestantism was declared illegal. Large numbers of Huguenots then fled the country to escape the threat of death, many of them settling in England. The result was that the Reformation in France was effectively over, but many souls must have received spiritual blessing since the first flickerings of spiritual life before Calvin's conversion.

Let us now, more briefly, look at the success or otherwise of the Reformation movement in some other European countries. It was natural that **Denmark**, being so close to Germany, would be influenced by Lutheran teachings. In 1521 the King, Christian II, sent to Wittenberg for a Protestant preacher, but neither of the two who came were successful. Then Hans Tausen, a Dane, returned home after studying in Wittenberg. By 1527 the link between the Danish Church and Rome was broken and shortly afterwards the demand for further reformation of the Church was successful. The Reformation in that country was very much helped by the publication, in 1529, of a translation of the New Testament into the Danish language.

At that time, the same King ruled over both Denmark and **Norway**. But though Norway became Lutheran, there were few preachers of the gospel. Besides, the Bible was not translated into Norwegian; the people did not even have a catechism in their own language; the result was that true religion made very little progress there. Yet a translation of the New Testament appeared in Icelandic in 1540; surprisingly, the translator came into contact with the Protestant religion in Norway before returning to **Iceland**. **Sweden** and **Finland** also became Lutheran about the same time.

In **Italy**, Protestant books were being sold by German and Swiss merchants by 1528. Luther was rejoicing that the people of Venice “receive the Word of God. Thanks and glory be to the Lord.” As far back as 1519 Protestant books were circulating in the Vatican, and the next year the Pope ordered people not to read them. For several years, the efforts of both the Church and various rulers to ban these books were not effective (Italy was not then one nation). But many of those who were reading them, while they wanted changes in the Church, were not looking for a thorough reformation.

In the early 1540s a Protestant leader contacted Luther from Italy asking for help because, he said, “Antichrist was beginning to rage”, persecuting those who were sympathetic to Protestant ideas. Before long, the Inquisition was in action; it was a tremendously effective but evil system for putting down opposition to Roman Catholic ideas and practices. Many of the Protestant leaders fled to other countries to escape the Inquisition. And soon the only obvious Protestants in Italy were the Waldensians in the mountains in the north of the country, who could be described as Protestants long before the Reformation.

One of those who fled from Italy was Peter Martyr, who became prominent as a preacher and Reformer before he left Italy in 1542. He was to spend two years in England teaching at Oxford University, but he again had to flee when Queen Mary came to the English throne. Before long, Mary, a fanatical Romanist, was sending many godly preachers and others to be burnt.

The Sons of God: Adoption in Romans 8

2. Becoming a Son of God

Rev David Campbell

In considering the making of the sons of God, we asked, Who are made sons of God? This leads to the second question:

(2) *How does someone become a son of God?* How is a child of the devil to become a child of God? We have mentioned that they were predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Romans 8:29) and are given the Spirit of Christ and so become His (verse 9). This can only be explained because Christ is their Redeemer. Those whom God predestinated to glory were given to Christ in the covenant of grace and He came into the world to redeem them. A person therefore becomes a son of God because of the *redemption purchased by Christ*. It is to this Paul refers in verse 32 and again in verse 34 of Romans 8.

God the Father delivered up Christ for them all. Christ died for them, rose again for them, appears on the right hand of God for them and makes intercession for them. It was in order to bring them as "many sons to glory" that He was sent to suffer for them as the Captain of their salvation (Hebrews 2:10). They could not redeem themselves or one another – that ransom would never be enough. It needed the Son of God – His only begotten Son – to become man, to come under the curse they were under and to suffer for them unto death. This ransom price earned their redemption – it satisfied God's justice, and so salvation could be applied to all those predestinated and most certainly would be.

Two of the answers in *The Shorter Catechism* help us at this point. "We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by His Holy Spirit" (Answer 29). "The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling" (Answer 30).

They are made sons of God by the Spirit of Christ being given to them. He works faith in them and unites them to Christ. He does this in effectual calling. This brings us to another very important answer of *The Shorter Catechism* which you should all know from memory: "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel" (Answer 31).

This answer explains how the benefit of Christ's work of redemption is

applied in the experience of sinners. They are, first of all, born again, or regenerated, by the Holy Spirit. This is the beginning of a new spiritual life in their souls, something they cannot bring about themselves, although they are solemnly obliged to seek it in using the means of grace. When God's call is made effectual by the Spirit, it is the beginning of their conformity to the image of God's Son.

Let us not pass over this subject without applying it to ourselves. In order to act any spiritual grace, such as faith, repentance, or love, and obedience in the Christian life, you must be *born again*. Whatever your outward privileges in the "family of God", in the visible Church, you "must be born again", as Christ told Nicodemus. You may have, like the Jews, an external adoption under the outward privileges of the Church of God, without being really adopted as sons of God at all. Paul said the Jews had the "adoption, the glory and the covenants," but they were still of their father the devil. You may have very many great outward advantages, but they are not the same as having spiritual life and the Spirit of Christ.

Being born again, the sons of God have the spiritual image or likeness of Christ restored in their souls. They are renewed in the powers of their soul, the mind, will, affections and conscience. What a wonderful work of grace this is! How earnestly we should ask for it. It is a new creation – "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).

(3) *Those who are effectually called are adopted.* To "embrace Jesus Christ" is the result of the effectual call; embracing Christ is saving faith – a gift of God, not by human power, but by His Spirit. By this faith, sinners receive the benefit of justification, as Paul says in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus". This benefit of justification relates to their former position as condemned rebels against God as a moral Governor and Ruler. Justification changes their relation to the law and justice of God; instead of being condemned, they are reconciled and at peace with God. They are accepted as righteous in His sight.

But the Bible also says that "as many as received [Christ], to them gave He power [that is, the authority or the right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (Jn 1:12). Receiving Him is the same as believing on His name. Also "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus". So, by the Spirit working faith, they also receive the grace of adoption – they legally become the sons of God who formerly were disinherited by God their Creator, the One who brought them into being.

Notice how *The Shorter Catechism* calls both justification and adoption "an act of God's free grace". Sanctification is the *work* of God's Spirit, begun

when they are born again but continued for the rest of their lives. Justification is by faith alone. We should not confuse the faith by which we are justified, embracing “Christ, freely offered in the gospel,” with the *actual thing* that earns our pardon and makes us acceptable to God, which is only “the righteousness of Christ imputed to us”.

Neither should we confuse the faith that is found in the sons of God, which they have through the work of the Spirit of God, with the act of God's free grace in adopting them. They do not earn their adoption by believing. They receive it by free grace. When they are legally adopted they are already renewed and bear the image of the Son in their hearts. But in their justification they are viewed as ungodly and as under condemnation.

This is one difference between justification and adoption – although really happening at the same time. If we think of the order in which these things are done by God, then adoption comes after both regeneration and justification. It is distinct from both. This is expressed very plainly in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: “All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption”. Adoption legally confirms those united to Christ in the privileges they already have. It adds to the benefit of justification.

One writer says it is something like a judge who has freed the person at the bar of his court from all liability and punishment because of the price paid by another; he then passes *another act* by which that same criminal, now pardoned and accepted by the law as righteous, is adopted by him as his own son. It is something more than justification. It is a higher and closer and more endearing relation to God than that of justification.

Another writer says that we can think of adoption as being necessary in addition to justification (1) to give us a complete view of our Christian privileges, (2) to heighten our enjoyment of these privileges, (3) to explain how the sins of believers are dealt with by way of fatherly chastisement, and (4) to show that heaven is not a reward earned, but an inheritance bestowed. So we should not just think of salvation being about the legal pardon and acceptance that sinners have when they are justified; we should also think about the fatherly love and grace with which they are received and embraced, like the prodigal son was received back with joy and gladness.

(4) *In summary*. Let us come back to the question, How is someone made a son of God? The answer is, In two ways. *Firstly*, by being renewed inwardly and spiritually by the Holy Spirit and made a son, being given a new nature, which is godly, or “after the image of His Son”. This is their new birth. Then *secondly*, they are given the grace of adoption, confirmed in their rights and privileges as the sons of God, received into His family; they

are delivered for ever from the family in which they once were – the family of Satan.

How earnestly you ought to seek this blessing! To continue at a distance from God, in that condition of enmity to Him, walking “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) is a position from which you need the Lord to deliver you in a day of His grace. Seek that above all things.

A Hopeless Case?

Many years had gone by since the congregation had experienced the converting work of the Holy Spirit. But now there seemed to be a change: prayer meetings were crowded, and people who seldom came to church were asking what they must do to be saved.

One of the first to be converted was a young man whom people did not think at all likely to be saved. He had been so careless about sin and so much opposed to religion and to those whose lives showed they were sincere followers of Christ. He would never let anyone speak to him about his soul. Strange as it might seem, he did come regularly to church on Sabbath mornings and listened to the sermon. Perhaps, it was said, he did so in order to hear something he could find fault with.

One evening the young man appeared at a prayer meeting. Everyone thought he had come only to hear something he could make fun of. When the meeting was over, he walked up to a deacon and told him courteously: “I wish to go home with you”.

The deacon answered, “You are welcome to come”.

Nothing was said as they walked along to the deacon’s house. When they had gone inside, the young man asked abruptly: “Is there any use in my trying to be saved?”

The deacon was so surprised at the question that he took a long time to answer; he did not expect the young man to speak about personal religion. And the young man assumed that the deacon stayed silent because he could not say anything positive that might encourage him. So he asked, “You think my case is hopeless?”

At once the deacon assured him that his situation was not hopeless. He went on: “Christ came to save just such sinners as you are”.

Then came the question: “What must I do?”

The deacon emphasised that it is Christ who must save. He added that they must pray for God’s direction and help. They both knelt down and

the deacon prayed. As they sat down in their seats again, the deacon began, "Now, my young friend . . .".

The young man interrupted: "You have not much reason to call me young friend". He felt guilty because of the disrespectful way he had treated the deacon, who was said to be "one of the most humble and faithful followers of Christ in the place".

"Never mind," the deacon replied in a forgiving spirit, "the matter we have to talk about is between God and your soul. You are convinced you are a sinner and need salvation?"

"I am."

"You feel that God might justly punish you for your sins?"

"I feel that I deserve hell."

"What are you willing to do for salvation?"

"I don't know. I can do nothing good."

"Why not?"

"Because I have become so hardened and accustomed to sin."

"If you are a great sinner, and so great a sinner that you can do nothing towards your salvation, your case is hopeless – unless someone comes to act on your behalf, who has the necessary ability. Do you believe that Christ has that ability?"

"I believe that He is all-powerful."

"You believe then that He is able to save you? Do you believe that He is willing to save you?"

"I do not know; I have sinned wilfully against great light."

"Whether He is willing to save you or not depends not upon what you have done, but upon what He has said." The deacon then took up his Bible and read several verses, including Paul's words: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). And he made some short comments on the verses as he went along; here he said, "You see He did not come into the world to help sinners to save themselves; He came to save them. And He did not come to save small sinners, but the chief of sinners."

He also read the verse: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10) and he added, "The case seems to be a very plain one. You are a lost sinner; Christ came to save such. He has sought you out by His Spirit, for you would have gone on in your blindness and hardness if He had not awakened you. What you need is a humble and contrite heart, faith, the spirit of obedience and love – you need to be made over again throughout. Is it not so?"

"Yes."

“Well, you can’t do that for yourself, and nobody can do it for you but Christ.” So the deacon encouraged the young man to ask Christ to do this for him.

The young man accepted this: “He is willing to do it if I will trust in Him”. But he then added, still resisting the freeness of the gospel: “I don’t know that I am willing to do that; my heart is so steeped in sin”.

“The more need then of a new heart. You must ask Christ for the spirit of trust. The fact is, you need everything connected with salvation, and you must go to Him for everything. If you wait till you get something yourself, you will never go. Don’t you see that you need Christ to do everything for you?”

“Yes. And if He does not do it, I am lost.”

“Undoubtedly.”

“There is no reason why He should do it.”

“Certainly not. But on the other hand, many reasons why He should not.” And the deacon again encouraged his new friend to ask the Saviour to save him, encouraging him to believe that the Lord is willing to answer prayer.

“Do you really mean to say that salvation can be secured at once?”

“Why not? Christ has got to save you if you ever are saved, and it is as easy for Him to save you tonight as at any other time.”

“But will He?”

The deacon warned the young man not to add to his sins by doubting what Christ has said. And, through the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul, the young man was made able and willing to trust in Christ as the Saviour of sinners. He was the first of many to be converted at that time.

From that day on, the two men were close friends, and the one who previously had shown such a shameful attitude to the older man now lived out his life in a truly godly way. And we can be sure that, whenever he now went to church, the younger man would have listened in the hope of getting good for his soul and certainly not to find fault with what he heard.

For Younger Readers

The Cat and the Rat

The young woman was very frightened of rats. She was really upset when a man came to her door one day and told her about a huge rat in her garden. He had just seen it disappearing among some bushes.

She felt so afraid and so helpless. What could she do? She could certainly pray to God, and that is just what she did. She went down on her knees and told God that she was alone, and He knew this.

Her father and mother had died; God took them away from this world. She told God all this in her prayer. She then said to Him: "I know if Father was alive, he would do something for me". And she told God that He had promised to be a father to her, and asked Him to help her. This good woman was trusting in God.

She finished her prayer and stood up. As she walked into another room she heard a terrible squeal. She rushed to the window and saw a cat disappearing over the wall. It had a rat in its mouth that was almost as big as itself.

God heard her prayer and helped her. God still answers prayer.

“God Taught Me”

A boy of 12 came one dark, stormy evening to a minister in Yorkshire. He wanted the minister to visit his sister, who was just a year older than himself. She was dying.

They lived with their parents in a lonely cottage five miles away. The boy had never been to school, and the parents were completely careless about religion. But the girl greeted the minister warmly; her smile suggested peace and thankfulness. And she told him that she was trusting in the Saviour.

“Who taught you all this?” he asked her.

“God taught me, and the Holy Ghost teaches me still,” she told him, as she placed her hand on a Bible that she was now too weak to lift.

Before she took ill, she was working as a maid in a lady's house. The lady taught her from the Bible. The girl learned to pray that God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, would give her the Holy Spirit to teach her about the Saviour. The result of all this teaching was that, just six weeks before she sent her brother for the minister, it was clear that she had come to know Jesus Christ. But it was more for the sake of her parents and brother that she wanted the minister to visit. She was very worried about their spiritual state.

The next day, when the minister called again, the girl had died. He spoke earnestly to the others about why the girl was so peaceful. He prayed with them and then left.

A year later, someone wrote to the minister to tell him that the boy, and

then his mother, had come to believe in the Lord Jesus after a severe struggle. That was not all. The father became impressed, particularly with the change that took place in his wife's life. The result was that he too sought the Saviour and found Him.

The minister told one of his friends about the boy and this friend provided the boy with a good education. In the end the boy became a respected missionary in some heathen country.

God blessed the teaching the lady gave the girl. The efforts of the minister and his friend also had their reward. Not least, the prayers that one would believe the girl offered up for her brother and parents were heard in heaven.

For Junior Readers

The Passover Door

Do you remember how many plagues the Lord sent on the Egyptians when Pharaoh would not let the Children of Israel go to worship Him? You can read about them in the Book of Exodus, chapters 7 to 12. Perhaps you will look them up and make a list to remind yourself of them.

The last plague was to be the worst of all. The oldest child in every single Egyptian family was to die, from the royal family right down to the poorest servants. Even the firstborn of all their animals would die. Can you imagine how awful that would be? What sorrow, what mourning, what grief in every single Egyptian home!

But the Lord was not going to let His people, the Israelites, suffer from this awful judgement. Yet how could they escape when the destroying angel came to visit every house in the land? The Lord told them what to do. The doors of their houses were to have a mark around them which would distinguish them from the houses of the Egyptians.

What were they told to use to make that mark? They were to use the blood of a lamb. This was the beginning of the *passover*. God said, "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt".

The Lord gave them exact instructions about the sort of lamb they should use. It was to be a male lamb, a year old, without any fault, or blemish – a perfect lamb. It was to be killed and its blood caught in a bowl or basin. They were then to take a small bunch of twigs from a hyssop bush, dip it in the blood, and strike it on the lintel above their front door, and also on the two posts on each side of the door. So their houses and families were under

the shelter of the blood, protected by the blood of the *passover* lamb. The lamb was then to be roasted and eaten that evening, before the Lord would visit the land to destroy the firstborn of the Egyptians.

What lesson can we learn from this about the gospel? What did John the Baptist say when he saw Jesus? “Behold the *Lamb of God*, which taketh away the sin of the world.” So the *passover lamb* was a type of the Saviour who was to come – that is, it pointed forward to Christ. And Paul tells us, “*Christ our passover* is sacrificed for us”; in other words, He “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”.

As you come to the end of this year should you not ask yourself whether you are under the shelter of the blood of Christ? It is the only safe place to be – for the rest of your life here and for the endless eternity which is ahead of you. Should you not pray like David in Psalm 51:

“Me cleanse from sin, and throughly wash from mine iniquity:

For my transgressions I confess; my sin I ever see.

Do Thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so;

Yea, wash Thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.”

J van Kralingen

For Your Bookshelf?

The Glory of Grace, the Story of the Canons of Dort, by William Boekestein, published by the Reformation Heritage Books, hardback, 32 pages, £7.99, may be bought from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom.

Four hundred years ago, a dramatic conflict was unfolding. It was a vital battle for the gospel of grace and it happened in Holland. After the Dutch became free from Spanish and Roman Catholic control, a new threat arose. A man called Jacob Arminius began to teach that salvation is not by God's grace *alone*, but that we must depend on our own works too. The Reformation was only 100 years old, but its biblical message of salvation by grace alone was now being attacked.

A Synod came together in a place called Dordrecht to agree a very full and biblical response. The result was clearly set out as the Five Points of Calvinism in something called the Canons of Dort. These points are simply explained in this book.

This is a very attractive book with full colour illustrations by Evan Hughes. It is designed for children aged 6-12. It is part of a series which includes volumes on the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession too.

Matthew Vogan

The Young People's Magazine

2018
Volume 83

Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod

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)

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

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If . . .

If you can keep “the faith” when those about you
 Are losing it and seeking something new;
 If you can stand the firmer though they flout you
 As being simple and old-fashioned too;
 If you can put your hand in Christ’s, and feeling
 The marks of Calvary’s scars upon your palm,
 Can gladly say, “Amen”, to all His dealing,
 Or change the sigh into a joyous psalm;
 If you can laugh when human hopes are banished,
 When castles fall and cherished prospects die,
 And just keep on though earthly props have vanished,
 Content to see the pattern by and by;
 If you can meet abuse without complaining,
 And greet your unkind critic with a smile;
 If, conscious that your human love is waning,
 You claim a Calvary love that knows no guile;
 If you can bear the unjust imputation
 Without a murmur or revengeful thought,
 And even forfeit rights and reputation,
 Because His glory is the one thing sought;
 If you can give an honest commendation
 To him whose work looms larger than your own,
 Or scorn to speak the word of condemnation
 To him who fails, or reaps what he has sown;
 If you can give consent to Calvary’s dying,
 And live again in resurrection power;
 If you can claim the victory, not by trying,
 But resting in His triumph every hour;
 If you can be content with His provision,
 Though others seem to prosper and succeed;
 Nor let repining mar the heavenly vision,
 And simply trust in God for every need;
 If you can let the mind of Christ possess you,
 To think on things “of good report” and true,
 And ever let the love of Christ obsess you,
 Constraining everything you say and do;
 If you can find in Him your highest treasure,
 Let Him hold sway o’er heart and soul and limb:
 Then *life* is yours, and blessing without measure,
 And, what is more, you’ll live and reign with Him! *Reginald Wallis*

Looking Around Us

Dandelion Seeds and Drones

It may be difficult to imagine what dandelion seeds have in common with drones. The connection comes from a study at Edinburgh University on how these seeds travel, sometimes, more than half a mile. This study has shown that movement of air around and within the seed's "parachute-shaped" bundle of bristles keeps the seed in the air as the breeze moves it along.

In neither of the reports of the study that I read was there any reference to evolution. So often, when some discovery in nature is announced, a claim is made as to how evolution brought this natural feature into existence. But evolution has no power to design anything; rather it is usually described as a series of random events. Although the dandelion seed is so small, yet it should be obvious that it was designed and that its sophisticated design was carried out by a powerful mind. And that was the infinite mind of God.

It is He who created everything: from the dandelion seed to the largest galaxy; He did it all in wisdom. Whatever changes took place as a result of sin coming into the world, everything was at first designed to be the best it could possibly be. We know that, after the Fall, the earth was to bring forth thorns and thistles – examples of weeds which get in the way of the crops that people want to grow. And though the dandelion is a weed, it was created by God, but not at first to be a nuisance to farmers and others.

The leader of the study has commented, "Taking a closer look at the ingenious structures in nature, like the dandelion's parachute, can reveal novel insights". One of these insights is the idea of developing small-scale drones needing very little power – in imitation of the dandelion seed. Again a large company in the UK has designed a drone which is less easily picked up by radar. Now the researchers at Edinburgh University hope that what they have discovered about dandelion seeds can help improve the technology used to make such stealth drones, ones that cannot be detected by radar.

This is by no means the first example of features in nature helping people design things better. It should not surprise us that God's designs excel ours; even the most brilliant of human beings has a limited understanding, but God's understanding is infinite. Many scientists speak about apparent design in nature, as if there was no designer; they do not want to believe in God. But God does exist. He has created all things, human beings included. Let us then acknowledge Him. Let us seek to worship and serve Him.

Price £1.00