

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, 11 Auldcastle Road, Inverness, IV2 3PZ. Tel: 01463 712872; e-mail: kdmacleod@gmail.com. All unsigned articles are by the Editor.

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Volume 84

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A Covenant with Death?

It seemed so strange. People were acting as if God had never spoken, and yet He had. He had spoken repeatedly: He was speaking through His prophets. He was speaking through the Scriptures. In particular, He was speaking through the Ten Commandments, one of which begins: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” (Exodus 20:4).

Yet in Isaiah’s time, the people of Israel and Judah were determined to go on with their idolatry. How absurd it was! Isaiah describes how a man might cut down a tree in a forest; he might cut bits off and throw them in the fire to bake bread, to roast meat, or just to keep himself warm. But he might take another part and carve it into an idol, a false god; he would fall down in front of it and worship it; he would say “Deliver me, for thou art my god” (Isaiah 44:17). Yes, it was absurd. What the man was worshipping was another part of the tree that he had used for firewood. It just did not make sense to act like this. Besides, God had warned Israel to stop their idolatry, but they would not listen; they went on in their disobedience.

It is very likely that no reader of this *Magazine* would make or worship an idol of that kind. But there are other kinds of idols. Not only do people with little or no religion have idols, of various kinds, but even those who go to church and hear scriptural teaching about sin and salvation, and about death, judgement and eternity. You can make an idol of anything: your possessions – your car or your house, some item of clothing, your mobile phone or some other technological gadget. It is not necessarily sinful to have these things; indeed you absolutely need some of them and you may make a proper use of them all. The important point is that you may give too much attention – too much of your heart – to them. And you can make an idol of people: your best friend, for instance.

The fact is that we must give God the first place in everything. Jesus tells us to love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind. If we give a greater place to some thing than we give to God, we are making it an idol; it is the same if we give a greater place to some person than to God. And that is idolatry; it is a serious sin.

God was teaching Israel again and again about the significance of death. Yet everyone knew what happens to the body when the soul has left it; it was obvious that "then shall the dust [from which the body was made] return to the earth as it was". But what about the soul? The same verse in the Book of Ecclesiastes gives the answer: "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (12:7). And if we are still careless about God and His authority, if we are still unholy and going on in a course of sin, still careless about our idolatry, how can we expect to enter into the presence of the holy God? Only if we are trusting in Christ, as the substitute for sinners, can we safely enter into God's presence. Every soul that enters the presence of God at death, but has not been made holy, must be sent away into a lost eternity.

One would think then that sinners who hear about these things would take them seriously; one would think that they would seek the Lord urgently and earnestly. But no, that is not what generally happens. The Israelites were going on in their own ways; they were continuing in their idolatry. But what about the death that they must experience?

It was as if they were saying, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement" (Isaiah 28:15). This is what God said to them through Isaiah. It seemed the only reasonable explanation for their behaviour: that they had made this covenant with death and so could be sure that they would never die. This, it seemed, was why they felt safe going on in their idolatry and the worship of false gods. It seemed as if the only reasonable explanation was that they had made an agreement with hell that they would never be received into that terrible place of punishment, and so they went on rejecting God and worshipping false gods.

No, of course, they had not made a covenant with death or an agreement with hell; that would have been totally impossible. God was speaking in that way to draw their attention to how unreasonable it was for them to behave as they did: rejecting their best interests and going on in a way that must lead to eternal punishment unless they would repent.

So today, when people go on in their worldly, sinful ways, giving the first place, not to God, but to various things and people, one might feel like saying, These people must be sure that they will never die and that it is impossible for them to suffer eternal punishment. How unreasonable it is for those who have read at least some of the Bible and have heard sound, scriptural preaching to ignore what they have heard and to go on, year after year, on the broad way that leads to eternal destruction!

The spirit of independence is widespread today. People say, as in Isaiah's time, "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Psalm 12:4). In other words, We can say what we like; no one has any right to stop us; no one has

that authority over us. But how wrong they are! God has full authority to tell us what to say and what not to say. And, however arrogantly they may react to God in this life, everyone will realise, when they pass into eternity, that God does have authority – and even more so when they have to bow in submission before the judgement seat of Christ.

A teacher in a Sabbath school remarked that someone makes a good bargain who buys the truth; she was thinking of someone who receives the truth of God's Word as a rule for how to think and live. The teacher then asked if anyone in his class could remember an instance in the Bible of a bad bargain. "I do," answered a boy; "Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage." Esau despised his birthright, although spiritual blessings were bound up in it. He was acting as if he had made a covenant with death and would never have to pass into eternity and come face-to-face with God.

A second boy said, "Judas made a bad bargain when he sold his Lord for 30 pieces of silver". Judas had heard so many wonderful things from Christ, yet did not value them. It was as if he had an agreement with hell and would not need forgiveness from Christ, as if he could pass safely into eternity.

And a third boy said, "Our Lord tells us that he makes a bad bargain who loses his own soul to gain the world". For people to set out to gain as much as possible of the things of the world, while they neglect their souls, is to act as if one could make a covenant with death and an agreement with hell. Of course, no one can. Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can.

But what does God say? It is this: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isaiah 28:16). Here is truth; here is wisdom. We must lay aside our covenant with death and our agreement with hell. We must take our situation seriously and realise our need of a sure foundation. We are being pointed to Christ as the One on whom we must lay the whole weight of our guilty souls if we are to enter eternity safely. We must trust in Him and in Him alone. Then we will be perfectly safe at death, at the judgement seat and throughout eternity.

Christ is "a tried stone", one that has been tested by many, and He has never failed any of them. Abraham was trusting in God's salvation as he left Ur, his birthplace, at God's command. The Most High never failed him, for he saw Christ's day afar off (see John 8:56). Moses too was trusting in God's provision for his soul and for all his circumstances as he went again and again to Pharaoh without success. However often Pharaoh broke the promises he made, God was always faithful to Moses. Abraham and Moses proved the faithfulness of God to them throughout their lives. This has been true for all God's children, in Bible times and since. It will prove true for us too if we trust in Him who is the sure foundation.

Here Today and Gone Tomorrow

Rev K M Watkins

I stood on a beautiful beach as we let our dog run free, leaving a set of prints in the sand. I imagined a man, his son and their dog at the beach. The boy has never been to the seaside before. I thought of them walking along, side by side, leaving three sets of prints in the sand. The impressions of the man's larger feet, the boy's smaller ones and the dog's paws, would stretch from one end of the beach to the other.

I thought of the boy looking back at the tracks in the sand and asking excitedly, "Can we come again tomorrow? I want to see our footprints again. We have left such a clear path that I'm sure we'll be able to retrace our steps. We will even put our feet in the very prints that we left today." I thought of his father agreeing, but saying nothing about the footprints, knowing that his son would learn some important lessons from what would happen.

I thought of them returning the next day. With the dog skipping at his side, the boy would run ahead eagerly, to see the prints from the day before. But just like our own dog's prints, there would be no sign of them.

It would be as if they had never been there at all. All traces of the previous day's walk would be gone. Not a single print would be left. I thought the boy would be very disappointed – his plan had been spoiled. If another family walked on the beach that next day, they would leave new footprints as they went, never guessing that the man, his son and their dog had walked there the day before. The boy might then say to his father, "Look, they're walking right on top of where we walked yesterday. It's like we were never there."

What would have happened? During the night the tide would have come in, and the waves would have washed away their prints, making the beach perfectly smooth again, ready for others to come and make their own fresh marks on it.

I now thought of the man reminding his son of a well-known saying: "Here today and gone tomorrow". Apparently it was the great Reformer, John Calvin, who first penned those words, back in 1549. Calvin was talking about the shortness of our lives, and how death completely removes us from this world. Just as the footprints were "here today and gone tomorrow", so are we. We are here in this world "today", but it is for such a short time. "Tomorrow" will soon come, and we will die and be gone for ever. How quickly life passes! How final death is!

I thought of the father saying to his son: "Yesterday you thought our foot-

prints were going to last for a long time. They looked so permanent. Our lives can feel like that. We think we will be here for ever, so we make plans for tomorrow, thinking that it will be just like today. But before we know it, the tide of life turns, and waves of sickness and death come and sweep us away. With our bodies buried out of sight in the grave, and our souls gone to eternity, it will be as if we were never here on earth at all. Life will go on as before. Others will take our place, walking where we walked, sitting where we sat, living where we lived, working where we worked."

I thought of the father referring to what Zophar said in Job 20:8, that man "shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found". When man dies, he is like a quickly forgotten dream. Dreams can feel so real at the time, but then we realise that there was nothing to them. As the next verse says: then "the eye which saw him shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him". I thought of the boy saying, "That is just like our footprints! One day death will come and sweep us away, and there will be no trace of us, like the beach swept clean by last night's tide."

I thought of the boy remembering what they had sung in family worship (Psalm 103:15,16):

"Frail man, his days are like the grass, as flow'r in field he grows:
For over it the wind doth pass, and it away is gone;
And of the place where once it was it shall no more be known."

I thought of the father agreeing, and adding this explanation: "We die because of sin. We will be gone tomorrow because we have been sinning today. The Bible says that 'the wages of sin is death' and 'it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement'."

Then I thought that the boy might raise a question: "But I am only young. I have not been sinning as long as grown-ups have. Could I still die, even tomorrow?"

I imagined his father giving the biblical answer: "Yes, son, you too could be gone tomorrow, for you were born in sin and you have been sinning ever since. Remember the answer in *The Shorter Catechism*: 'Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come'. That includes your sin as a young person, just as it includes mine as an older person. There is no difference; we are both sinners and we both deserve to die. Remember, your small footprints disappeared just like my larger ones."

Now I thought the boy would consider their dog. "Father, it was not just our footprints that disappeared. Our dog's prints also went. But he's not a sinner like we are."

The man would reply: "Since man sinned, death has come on the whole

creation, which suffers along with man. Animals also die, including dogs, even though they have never sinned. Scripture speaks of this, in Ecclesiastes 3:19,20: 'For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.' All three of us are going to die: you, me and our dog."

"So we're all the same then," the boy would say. "Just as all our prints were blotted out by the waves, so death will end the lives of all three of us."

I thought again of the father, explaining from the Bible: "If we read the next verse in Ecclesiastes, we see there is actually a huge difference. 'Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?' The spirit, or life, of animals goes back into the earth when they die. At death animals cease to exist. With man, whilst his body goes back to the earth at death, his spirit (or soul) goes in the opposite direction. Ecclesiastes 12:7 says: 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it'. So 'here today and gone tomorrow' is completely true of animals, but it is not the whole truth about men and women and boys and girls. Death is not the end of us. We have never-dying souls that will exist for ever, in heaven or hell."

I imagined the boy becoming very serious now: "So, when our dog dies, that is the end of him for ever, but when I die, my soul will have to face God! How will I be ready to meet Him? I do not know Him. All I know is that He is angry with me for my sins, that I will die, and that I deserve to be cast into hell for ever."

I thought of how the man might reply: "My son, remember that God has provided salvation, through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. We must repent and believe in Christ to obtain forgiveness."

The boy might want to understand this more clearly: "I can see that you and I have to die, because we are sinners. And I think I can see why animals, including our poor dog, die too. But why should Jesus die? He was the Son of God. He lived a perfect life. He never sinned. He did not deserve to die."

I thought of the man explaining the gospel: "It is true that Christ had no sin of His own and therefore did not deserve to die. But He was bearing the sin of all His people. He died for their sins, laying down His life as a sacrifice, in the place of those who would believe in Him. God must punish sin if He is to forgive sinners like us. At the cross Christ took that punishment. And by raising Jesus from the dead, God showed that the sacrifice was accepted. Christ's work was not swept away for ever like our footprints. Though He died, He rose again. So, though they die in this world, none of those who

believe in Him will suffer eternal death in the world to come. For them, ‘here today and gone tomorrow’ becomes very precious, because although death removes them from this world, it takes them to heaven for evermore.”

The Old Ploughman

1. Brought into a New World

A minister in an English village saw several people become members of his church in 1840. Among them were three old men who had been converted earlier that year. They lived truly Christian lives till they died.

The eldest was George Medway, a ploughman from Shropshire. He had been born in 1766, in a little cottage near a small village where about 150 people lived. The minister of the local Church of England had just one service each Sabbath, and he had only 54 sermons, which were just sufficient for the services of each year. He read them over and over again, year after year, until scarcely anyone was left to listen to them except the local landowner.

The old ploughman had lived in this district for over 70 years. When he was young, he stood out as a strong man, a fast runner, for his ability in all the sports the village people played, but also for his bad language and drunkenness. He married about the age of 25 and had three children. One of them died as an infant, another was lame, and the third left home when quite young but followed his father’s worst habits.

Though George Medway lived a very ungodly life, and knew nothing about the Bible, he was a trustworthy servant, and worked on the same farm from the time he was old enough to ring a bell to frighten the birds from the ripening corn. On Sabbaths he spent his mornings at home, and in the evenings he went to the local inn, often boasting that he had not missed one night for over 50 years. At last, when he turned 71, he became too weak for his work and went to live with his son, who kept a pub. At first, because he did not have to pay for the ale he drank, he often got drunk, till his son limited the amount he could have.

One day when wandering about the village, he turned into a path leading to a cottage. At the cottage door, a godly old man, John Dean, was standing, who invited the stranger in. George accepted the invitation and began talking about his early days. John left his visitor to talk, assuming that he would run out of things to say. Then he would have an opportunity to say something of more importance. This is what happened and he found George was not only ignorant of all the facts and teachings of the Bible, but did not seem able to understand them when presented in the simplest possible way. The

only remark he made after a detailed account of the crucifixion of the Son of God was: "Methinks it was too bad to serve Him so; they wouldn't do so in Shropshire".

As George was leaving the cottage, Dean invited him to come back some evening and "have a good long chat". Dean knew there is a power connected with the truth as it is in Jesus which could touch George's hard heart; he also knew that this power sometimes comes through a feeble instrument, no doubt thinking of himself. After he had left, Dean told his wife – a godly woman – "We must pray to the Lord for the poor old man. And who can tell but faith and prayer may prevail, and we may live to see him" brought by God "into the newness of life?"

"It will be," she replied, "a grand thing; and what a striking proof, if it should take place, of the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who can subdue all things to Himself."

The next evening George came along in his best clothes, sat down and talked away about the events of his past life. After a while he had nothing more to say and listened in silence to all he was told about Jesus Christ and His great salvation. John and his wife tried hard to make him feel that he was a sinner who needed a Saviour, but these efforts made no impression on him whatever. But still, though depressed, they did not despair; they knew that God's Spirit could make George able to understand the truth.

When their visitor was leaving, John invited him to come the next Sabbath morning and go with him. George promised to do so; he thought they would be taking a walk into the country. He arrived in good time, and they soon set off. As they were walking up the path from the cottage, George asked where they were going. John told him they were going to church, "and I suppose you will have no objection to go with me".

George admitted he had not been to church for 50 years, on the day when he was married. And he added that he would not know what to do there.

"You will have nothing to do," John told him, "but sit still and hold your tongue, and just listen to what the minister says."

"Part of that, methinks, is easy enough," George replied, "as I shall soon be off to sleep, if I be to sit still and do nothing."

This was a morning when the minister was to administer the Lord's Supper. He always preached, on such occasions, on the purpose of the death of Christ and would speak also on why believers should remember that death in the Lord's Supper. Now and then during the sermon, the preacher glanced at the pew where George was sitting. More than once he noticed George sitting absolutely still, his hands holding the bookshelf in front of him, with his mouth wide open, looking intently at the minister.

When this part of the service was over, those in the congregation left who were not going to take the Lord's Supper, as happens in some churches. But George absolutely refused to go away when the congregation withdrew. His first remark astonished his friend, especially as he spoke very firmly and rather loudly: "I am in a new world, and I shan't go till you go, and I shall do as you do". John did not know what to do; he was unwilling to let him stay, and just as unwilling to force him to go. In the end he decided to leave George to make up his own mind.

George sat down again without saying a word. He was very much moved and a tear fell from his eye. He took the bread and ate it and took the wine also. What happened may not have been according to good order; it was not, but it seemed clear that George had passed from a state of spiritual death to one of spiritual life.

When the plate was handed to the pew, to gather in a collection to help support the poor members of the church, he put in his penny – all that he had – along with the others, without being prompted by anyone. Afterwards he walked some distance in silence. At last he repeated several times: "I'm in a new world. Yes, I be in a new world." But he said nothing else, not even when someone asked him a question.

George reached home and told his son and some of the neighbours who were sitting in the pub: "I have been and heard a man who has taken me into a new world; you must all go with me and Mr Dean tonight. It is a main wonderful world." They were rather alarmed, no doubt wondering what had happened to the old man.

The Sons of God: Adoption in Romans 8

5. They Have the Spirit of Adoption

Rev David Campbell

The last section dealt with two of the six marks of the sons of God given in this Youth Conference paper: the second mark was, "They 'through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body'", and the third was, "They are led by the Spirit of God". This section deals with the fourth mark.

A fourth mark of the sons of God in Romans 8 is that they *have the Spirit of adoption*. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father" (verse 15).

In one sense this is just saying what we said already, that it is the Spirit who applies the redemption purchased by Christ, and all who are the sons of

God have the Spirit of Christ in them. But the words used here are clearly intended to highlight the particular way in which the Spirit of Christ works in the hearts of the sons of God. He does so not as a spirit of bondage, but as the Spirit of adoption.

(1) *Not the spirit of bondage.* The sons of God were once in bondage to sin, to Satan and to the world, but they were also in bondage under the law and under the broken covenant of works which God made with Adam. They were obliged to perfect obedience, which they could not give and did not desire to give. This was a yoke of bondage to them. Their relation to the law now as the sons of God is different. They are no more servants but sons.

They are always obliged to keep the law, but they are under the law to Christ now – they are free men and women – free from the curse, free from the law of sin and death in their souls, free from the complete dominion of sin, and free from complete inability to keep the law. They are now free to obey with spiritual and sincere obedience, and they have a desire to obey out of love. They are liberated to obedience. How different that is from the views of liberty people have today! The spirit of a son is the spirit of love and reverence for the Father and His law. They are those who Paul describes in verse 28 – “them that love God”.

(2) *The spirit of love.* The Spirit of adoption is therefore the child-like disposition and attitude of heart towards God as a Father in union with Christ. That is what the Spirit gives to them who are the sons of God. Love is the great principle of the new nature – love to God and love to our neighbour. The “new commandment” given by Christ to love one another (John 13:34) was not new in the sense that it had never been given before – it was always His commandment. But there are new motives, new objects for it to express itself on, new occasions and new degrees of grace given in the New Testament, when the Spirit is more abundantly poured out on the Church. They are to love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again (1 Peter 1: 22,23). They are to love Him that begot them and so also those who are begotten of Him (1 John 5:1). They are to love as brethren (1 Peter 3:8). They are to love God and their brother also (1 John 4:21).

Application. Are we concerned to know if we are the sons of God or not? Is it something that really exercises our minds and fills our thoughts each day: whether we have a right to the privileges and liberties of the children of God? Well, here is one of the great marks and evidences of the children of God for us to try our hearts by and to examine our life and conduct by: do we have the Spirit of the family of God, which is love to God and love to our neighbour, and especially love to the children of God?

(3) *Calling God Father.* The Spirit of adoption is also said to be that

“whereby we cry, Abba, Father”. The word “Abba” is just the Aramaic form of the same word translated *Father* from the Greek language, in which the New Testament was written. They who have the Spirit of adoption call God their Father. Clearly then, not everyone can, or should, or has a right to, call God their Father. Those who have the Spirit of adoption do so; they are entitled and privileged to do so, in all circumstances. As surely as no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost, so no person can call God Father but by the Holy Ghost. It is a false claim to address God as Father when we do not have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. If we are not born again of the Spirit, or led by the Spirit, or if we do not have the spirit of the family of God in our hearts, we cannot truthfully call God our Father.

The Saviour taught His disciples to address God in prayer in these words, “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name . . .” (Matthew 6:9). He Himself used the name of Father in addressing God in prayer, perhaps more often than any other name of God. Doubtless Christ, in instructing the disciples to pray, intended that, every time they prayed, they should do so in His name as their elder Brother, their Mediator, their Redeemer and Saviour, who had purchased all the benefits of redemption for them, including the benefit of their adoption as the sons of God.

The Shorter Catechism teaches us that in these opening words of the Lord’s prayer (the Preface) we are “to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others” (Answer 100). The spirit of adoption is therefore a spirit of dependence, confidence, trust and expectation – it is the spirit of little children. Yet it is the spirit of reverence and godly fear also – God is in heaven and His name is to be hallowed by us in all parts of His worship. An unholy and irreverent familiarity with God in prayer is not what the Spirit of adoption gives to the sons of God. That irreverence comes from another spirit. God is the heavenly Father of His children and in that view of Him they are helped to speak to Him. At times they are enabled to do this in the most intimate, loving and humble manner, when they are alone with their Father in secret and no one else hears them.

(4) *Public prayer*. When praying with and for others, the sons of God are also helped to address Him as their heavenly Father, but they do so with a deep consciousness of the solemnity of their relation to God in heaven. The duties of public prayer demand that they often have to address God on behalf of those who are giving no evidence at all that they are the children of God, or make no profession of this. The reverence they have for God’s honour, the concern they have to prevent others being deceived, means that they cannot always in such circumstances be as intimate with their Father as they

would be in secret. This brings them to use other terms of address which the Spirit of adoption has also given to them to use in prayer.

James Wallace

William C Burns was the son of a minister in Kilsyth, a town outside Glasgow. In 1839 God brought revival to many places in Scotland, and Burns was one of the ministers whose preaching was much blessed in Kilsyth. When Robert Murray M'Cheyne and others went on a trip which took them as far as Palestine to explore the prospects for mission work among the Jews, Burns took his place in his church in Dundee. Many people were converted there at that time. Burns also preached in other places in Scotland, England and even in Canada. In 1847 he went to China to work as a missionary. He died in 1868.

One evening in Dundee, when Burns was returning from an evening service a man called Wallace met him. This man's son James, a boy of 12, was seriously ill and Burns had already visited him. When he went in to visit James, he found, to his "astonishment and delight", such evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the boy as he had only once seen before in someone who was sick. James was lying quietly on his couch, pale and sickly, but beaming with "inexpressible joy". He told Burns at once that his illness was for his benefit.

Burns asked him what he needed from Christ. James said, "Redemption".

"Tell me some of the particular things you need."

"A new heart and right spirit, deliverance from temptations, the world and the devil."

"Can Christ give you these great things?"

"Yes."

"Why can He do so?"

"He is the Saviour of sinners."

Burns then spoke to James about Christ's state, as the eternal Son of God, before He came into the world, and then asked, "What did He become?"

"A Man."

"What did He do?"

"He suffered persecution; He sweated great drops of blood; He was nailed to the cross that He might redeem sinners."

"This was wondrous love."

"Yes."

"Do you love Christ?"

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Because He loved me.”

“When did you get these views of Christ?”

“Since I lay down here.”

“Who has taught you?”

“The Holy Spirit.”

“Did you seek Him first, or did He seek you?”

“He sought me; ‘I am found of them that sought me not’.”

“Can you ever praise Christ enough?”

“No.”

Would you like to sing His praise in heaven?”

“Yes, for ever.”

“There is a song they sing in heaven: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory’; and they also say, ‘Worthy is the lamb’.”

“Yes, that is the four beasts [living creatures].”

“What do you chiefly desire? Is it to get better?”

“No, to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

“What would you wish for all those about you?”

“That they would know Christ and love Christ, for He teaches us to desire that all should know Him.”

“Do you pray much?”

“Yes, He commands us to pray always.”

“Can we pray ourselves?”

“No, the Holy Spirit helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

“Would you like us to pray?”

“Yes, very much.”

When Burns had finished, he promised to come again soon, and James answered, “Yes, He [Christ] has promised that, where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He will be in the midst of them to bless them”.

James said of himself that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God gets perfect praise. He also told Burns that he had very much enjoyed hearing M‘Cheyne preach. His father had one day told him something that M‘Cheyne had said, “When water is spilt upon the ground, it cannot be gathered up again, and yet the sun [so to speak] gathers it up; and so Christ draws sinners to Himself when they are lost.”

Burns came away, he recalled, “with mingled feelings of astonishment at

the work of the Spirit, and desires for gratitude to Him for His wondrous love in calling me to behold His marvellous works”.

For Junior Readers

The Young Guide

Have you heard of the Apostle of the North? His name was John Macdonald; he was a well-known Scottish minister in the first part of the nineteenth century. He travelled around the Highlands preaching the gospel wherever he went, and God greatly blessed his ministry.

One of his first tours was around the far north-west of Scotland. Much of his travelling was done on foot; it was often across country where there were no proper roads. As he was not familiar with many of these places, he sometimes needed a guide to direct him. On one of these trips he had to walk over hills and across moors to get from Lochinver to Ullapool. A girl who lived in the area and knew the tracks directed him part of the way. When they reached the point where she was to turn back home, he wanted to give her some good advice before they parted.

In a slow and solemn voice he repeated to her the words from Ecclesiastes 12: “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”. She then returned to her home and he went on with his preaching tour. Perhaps he wondered if she had taken his advice to heart, but he was not to find out for many years.

Twenty years later the Apostle of the North was preaching at a communion season in the Dingwall area. After one of the services, a lady spoke to him, but he did not recognise her. She told him that she was the young girl who had acted as his guide across the hills between Lochinver and Ullapool all these years before.

She also told him that the words he had repeated so solemnly to her that day had made a lasting impression on her. God had blessed them to her soul. Indeed other people told him that she was known as a truly Christian woman. No doubt she was very grateful to the minister who had spoken so faithfully to her.

What about you? Do you listen to what the Lord's servants tell you in church or when they speak to you on your own? Do you put their advice into practice? Do you pray that the Lord would bless to your soul what you hear from them?

Jesus told His listeners to “take heed . . . how ye hear”. And the Apostle

Paul told the Hebrews: “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” – or forget about them and so lose the benefit of them. Will you not pray that you would pray like the Psalmist who said, “I’ll hear what God the Lord will speak”? And ask God that, when you have heard His Word, you would obey it – that you would put it into practice?

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

The Friends Who Argued

Two ministers began to argue. They went on arguing. Things got so bad that they were no longer friends. They could not walk together as friends any longer.

They were good men, it seems. But it was not good to stop being friends to each other. At least one of them was doing wrong.

They parted and each of them went his own way. They would have gone home, and their homes were many miles apart.

One of them started thinking about what happened. He felt he had said things that he should not have said. He was not comfortable. He knew he had done wrong in speaking as he did. He knew God was not pleased with him. He knew he must become friends again with the other minister. He must try to make friends with him quickly.

So he sent a message to the other minister asking him to forgive him. The message had just one word: Forgive.

Then a message came back from the other minister. Again the message had just one word. This time it was: Forgiven. This other minister was willing to forgive.

It was good that the ministers became friends again. But it would have been better if they never stopped being friends.

A Prayer for a Bible

Rev Donald Beaton

Taken, with editing, from *The Young People's Magazine* for February 1937.

We who have been brought up in the Protestant faith have no idea what it may cost a devout Roman Catholic to renounce the faith in which he

or she was brought up. This is brought out very clearly in the account Monica Farrell has given in *A Convent Schoolgirl*. It is a pathetic story.

She lost both her father and mother before she turned her back on the deceiving doctrines of the Church of Rome. In this Irish home, there was a Bible. It was read in the home, and some of its words lingered in Monica's memory from her childhood. At school she came into contact with a Scottish Presbyterian girl and they used to have arguments about their religions – Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Monica thought she got the better of her school friend but all the same she was unsettled in her mind.

At last she decided that, whatever could be said in favour of Protestantism, there certainly was an amount of nonsense in Romanism. She then gave up fasting, going to confession, praying to saints and her belief in purgatory. Then there followed mistrust of every church and system of belief. Still, even in her most careless moments, the thought would steal into her mind: "What if I should die? Where would I go?" In this state of mind she knelt down by her bed and prayed: "O God, give me light and give me a Bible".

When the home was broken up after the death of her parents, her brother took the Bible and sold it. She did not know where she would get another one; hence the petition for a Bible in her prayer. She decided that the best thing to do was to go to a Protestant church, and the minister would tell her how to get a Bible. So she went to a Presbyterian church, and the minister gave her a Bible. She still went to the Roman Catholic services in the morning, and at night attended the services in the Presbyterian Church. At last it was discovered that she was going to these services, and her life at home was made uncomfortable, and finally unbearable.

When she went to her brother's house, he asked her if she was attending a Protestant church. When she admitted that she was, he rolled up his sleeves and struck her across the face as hard as he could. She was stunned by the suddenness of the attack. Yet her brother's method of making her a faithful Romanist had the very opposite effect.

She left home and, under the guidance of kind ladies connected with the Irish Church Missions, she learned the doctrines of the Protestant faith and was received into the Church of Ireland. She professes to have passed out of the darkness of Romanism into the glorious liberty of the gospel. "As I look back", she says, "on all the way that God has led me, I feel like saying, with Samuel Rutherford:

"I'll bless the Hand that guided,
I'll bless the Heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land".

The Christian Giving up the World

A poem by Margaret Mauro, based on: "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). It is reprinted from *The Young People's Magazine* for February 1937.

I cannot give it up, the little world I know.
The innocent delights of youth, the things I cherish so.
I think I love my Lord and want to do His will,
But may I not enjoy the world, and be a Christian still?

I love the hour of prayer; I love the songs of praise;
I love the blessed Word that tells of God's redeeming grace.
But I am human still, and while I dwell on earth,
God surely will not grudge the hours I spend in harmless mirth!

These things belong to youth, and are its natural right:
My dress, my pastimes and my friends, the merry and the bright.
My Father's heart is kind. He will not count it ill
That my small corner of the world should please and hold me still!

And yet "outside the camp" was where the Saviour died.
It was the world that cast Him forth and saw Him crucified.
Can I take part with those who nailed Him to the tree?
And where His name is never praised, is that the place for me?

No, world, I turn away, though you seem fair and good;
That friendly outstretched hand of yours is stained with Jesus' blood.
If in your least device I stoop to take a part,
All unaware, your influence steals God's presence from my heart.

I miss my Saviour's smile when'er I walk your ways:
Your laughter drowns the Spirit's voice and chokes the springs of praise.
If e'er I turn aside to join you for an hour,
The face of Christ grows blurred and dim, and prayer has lost its power.

Farewell. Henceforth my place is with the Lamb who died,
My Sovereign. While I have Thy love, what can I lack beside?
Thyself, dear Lord, art now my free and loving choice,
In whom, though now I see Thee not, believing, I rejoice.

Shame on me that I sought another joy than this,
Or dreamt a heart at rest with Thee could crave for earthly bliss.
These vain and worthless things, I put them all aside;
Thy goodness fills my longing soul, and I am satisfied.

Lord Jesus, let me dwell “outside the camp” with Thee!
Since Thou art there, then there alone is peace and home for me.
Thine own reproach to bear I’ll count my highest gain,
Till thou return, my banished King, to take Thy power and reign.

Looking Around Us

Success and Happiness

In 1997 a 17-year-old lad set up his own website with a school friend, who had very good computer skills. The 17-year-old realised that very few web-hosting companies were aimed at small businesses or individuals. So they set out to plug the gap in the market and set up their own web-hosting company.

They were successful, very successful. After nine years of running the company, the 17-year-old was able to sell it for £61.5 million; he owned 75% of the business, which meant that in 2006 he had £46 million in cash. Looking back on how he expanded the company, he says that he was “laser focused” and that “nothing else mattered” to him.

He remembers being in the office when the money came into his bank account and he thought it would make him really happy. Yet he admits that it left him feeling unfulfilled. This need not surprise us too much, for we need something to occupy our attention. For instance, Adam was to cultivate the ground though he was a sinner and though he had to face difficulties such as thorns and thistles – the weeds that would get in the way of the crops he would try to grow. Yet if nothing else matters to us but our success at work, we are forgetting the words of the Saviour: “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). To seek a place as a subject in God’s kingdom should be the most important thing for us.

After two years Andrew set up another computing company, which he later sold for a sum that is also believed to be in the tens of millions. Since then he has set up a third firm, using similar skills, which is again successful.

But there is another, more important point: can we be really happy, no matter how much money we may have, if we do not have a right relationship with the God who created us? We are sinners, and we are separated from God as a result of our sins. But He is willing to be reconciled because of the wonderful work of Christ, who died for sinners to bear away their sins. We are to trust in Him as the Saviour of sinners like us.

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