

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



August 2019

Vol 84 • No 8

Contents

Rebellion Against God Is Unreasonable	143
King Arthur or King Jesus?	146
John Calvin – His Life and Work:	
2. Flees from Paris	149
For Younger Readers:	
Prayer for Rain	151
Samuel the Prophet:	
3. Leading Israel Back to God	152
The Miller’s Prayer	154
For Junior Readers:	
The Pilgrims’ First Sabbath	157
Looking Around Us	159
The Lord My Banner	160

Cover Picture: The Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Barnoldswick.
See page 146.

The Young People’s Magazine

Published by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Scottish charity number SC003545.

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.

Material for the magazine should reach the editor by the beginning of the previous month.

Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates, including postage, are: F P Magazine £26.00 (£2.00 per copy); Y P Magazine £15.00 (£1.00 per copy); both magazines £39.00. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

Free Presbyterian Magazine: The Church’s main magazine is *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Send to the General Treasurer at the above address for a free sample copy. See above for subscription rates.

The Young People's Magazine

Volume 84

August 2019

Number 8

Rebellion Against God Is Unreasonable

It is the first message we read in Isaiah's Prophecy, the first message that God gave him to declare to the people of Judah. Isaiah must go and tell the people that they had rebelled against their God, the One who had "nourished and brought" them up as children (Isaiah 1:2). He had given them a "righteous . . . law" which showed them how they should live. So they had a good upbringing. In a very wonderful way, God had brought them out of Egypt, and they were not to forget what they had seen; they must never let these things depart from their hearts (Deuteronomy 4:8,9).

Many readers of this *Magazine* have had a *good upbringing*. Their parents have taught them how they should behave – not because the father and mother have worked out some good way of parenting that they thought would result in their children turning out well when they grew up. No, it is because they believe the Bible and what it teaches about the way that people, young and old, should live. And what the Bible teaches about how we are to live in this world is summed up in the Ten Commandments. Assuming you have had a good upbringing, your parents will have taught you these Commandments, beginning with: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me".

Parents who believe the Bible also teach their children the main facts that God has revealed in this Book. First, they teach their children that they *can rely on the Bible*, because it is true. So a Psalmist said, "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of Thy righteous judgements endureth for ever" (Psalm 119:160). Everything that God says to us in the Bible has always been true, and it will always continue to be true. That means it will always be relevant; it will never become out of date; and this is the attitude we should always have to the Bible. We can always rely on what God says; so the Bible, as God's Word, will always be reliable.

Among much more that the Bible teaches, there is the solemn fact of *sin*. Parents who bring up their children well will teach them about sin. We are all sinners: we do wrong against God by not keeping His commandments perfectly. Sin deserves punishment, but the most wonderful teaching of the Bible is about *salvation*: that God is willing to forgive sin – so sinners will

not be punished if they believe in Jesus Christ, “for 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).

In spite of their good upbringing, the Israelites *rebelled against God*; He went on to say, “They have rebelled against Me”. We may be surprised at those who have been brought up well when they rebel against their parents’ teachings: when teenagers, for instance, follow the ways of sin instead of following in the good ways that they learned about from the Bible.

We may be surprised, but we must remember that everyone comes into the world with a sinful heart – so there is natural rebellion against God in every young sinner, as well as in older ones. God does restrain sinners, in one degree or another, from going as far in sin as they might. That is something we should all be very thankful for. But that natural rebellion shows itself especially when people, young and old, reject the authority of Christ speaking in the gospel – when, for example, they refuse to obey His command, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isaiah 45:22).

But there is rebellion whenever sinners turn from the ways they used to follow. Perhaps they always used to come to church with their parents; that is what they were brought up to do. Then they leave home to begin studying at university or college, or to begin work in some other town or city; they would not want anyone to know that they go to church; so they stop going.

Perhaps their conscience tells them that we are not to be “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”, but they reject the testimony of conscience and of the Word of God. They are rebelling against Him, which is something extremely serious. How can they expect God’s blessing in their studies or their work? And how can they expect God’s care and protection when they spend the hours of God’s day in Sabbath breaking – as they almost certainly will if they stay away from church – when, in rebellion against God, they refuse to use the Sabbath for the good of their souls.

As young people grow up they may rebel against the restrictions that their parents laid upon them – for their good. They were not allowed to go to discos or the cinema, for instance; they were not allowed to watch films even on a computer or mobile phone. But later they may rebel against one restriction after another; they feel that these restrictions are unreasonable and claim that they are old enough now to decide what is right and wrong for them to do.

Yet they are rebelling against God, who requires them still to honour their father and their mother, and requires them to have holy minds and resist unholy thoughts. God warns young people, in particular, “Love not the world,

neither the things that are in the world". And He adds, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). If we love the world and the things of the world, we do not love God the Father; instead we are rebelling against Him.

A final point from Isaiah 1:2: *to rebel against God is unreasonable*. The response from the people of Israel to God's teaching and His commandments was so unreasonable that He called on the earth and on the heavens (all the rest of the universe) to listen – for the Lord, not man, had spoken. God had brought them up in a perfect way; He had provided for them wonderfully. Yet they rebelled against His marvellous goodness. So it is with many people today, and it is just as unreasonable now as it was long ago. Not only is this true for those who know something of what the Bible teaches, but it is completely unreasonable for *anyone* to rebel against God, since it should be obvious to everyone that there could be no world unless it had been put in place by God the Creator.

God went on to say, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider". The animals knew where to come for their food, but human beings in Israel did not know God; they did not think seriously about Him; they were rebelling against His authority. What about us? Do we think about God, especially about our spiritual needs, which He is able to supply? Or do we rebel against Him?

There was once a boy who helped his father sell food in his shop. The father opened his shop for an hour on a Sabbath morning and his son helped him then too – until he (the boy) was converted, when he was 14. Late on the Saturday night, he told his father that, though he wanted to be obedient to him, he could not help him any longer in the shop on Sabbaths, because that was to break God's commandment. It was to rebel against God. But the father was very angry and threatened to put the boy permanently out of his house on the Monday if he did not work that Sabbath.

No doubt the lad prayed about the matter, and on the Monday his father called him to open the shop as usual. Then the father told his customers that he was no longer going to open his shop on Sabbaths. This was to begin to give up his rebellion against God. Later he began to go to church and, it seems, was converted. To turn to God with all one's heart is to give up one's rebellion and submit to the Creator of all things.

That is our duty too: to give up our rebellion and submit to God. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). No matter how rebellious sinners may be, God calls them to trust in Him; He forgives sinners for Jesus' sake.

King Arthur or King Jesus?

Rev K M Watkins

We were later than usual leaving the Barnoldswick church after that Sabbath morning service. It was the communion, and Christ's death had been remembered: first in the preaching and then in that special way appointed by Christ Himself the night before He died, the Lord's Supper.

On our way back to the car, we passed as usual through the public garden to the side of the church, but this Sabbath there was a group of half a dozen children playing there. They were about ten years old. We were dressed in formal, smart and dark clothing, appropriate for attending the public worship of God, who is to be approached with honour and reverence.

We heard the children say as we walked, "Someone must have died". Sad that the only times they saw people dressed smartly and soberly was for funerals! The minister replied, "No, it is not a funeral; no one has died. We've just come from church." As he walked on, the minister thought, "That's not right – Someone has died. The Lord Jesus Christ died almost 2000 years ago, and we have been in church for the express purpose, not of mourning His death, but commemorating it."

So the minister turned back to the children: "Actually, Someone has died, and that's why we've been at church today". The children were interested; so the minister continued, "This death took place many, many years ago. But it was not like any other death." Now they were more interested, especially when the minister added, "This death was very special, because the Person who died rose again from the dead. And He is still alive today." Then he asked them, "Do you know who that is?"

The children were silent for a while. It surprised the minister that they did not know the answer immediately. But he was about to be surprised even more, for one of the boys then said, "King Arthur!" The minister tried again: "No, King Arthur did not rise again from the dead. It was Someone different."

Then a girl said, "You're talking about Jesus!" Another of the boys quickly agreed with her. The other children then moved away, uninterested, but this girl and boy stayed a little while, giving us opportunity to explain how Christ was crucified for sinners and rose again. We invited them to come to church that evening for the service. Sadly they did not come.

What ignorance! The children were not Muslims, but English, from the town – a town with a number of churches and church schools. It was shocking that they did not immediately think of Jesus as the One who died and rose again. Having rejected the gospel for so long, many in Britain can

hardly think of it now. They live their lives in the darkness of ignorance. Many do not even hear about Jesus any more. If they do, they are not interested enough to remember what they hear.

Young people reading this Magazine, you are not like that. Most of you will be hearing about Jesus at church every week. Many of you will be hearing about Jesus at home every day as well. You would have known the answer to the minister's question straight away. That is good. But what are you doing with that knowledge?

Jesus died a horrible death on the cross. You know that. But do you understand why He died? He suffered the wrath of God. But do you understand why God was angry with Him? Had He done anything wrong? No! You know that He never sinned. So why did He die? Jesus died for His people's sins. He took the punishment for them. That is why He is called a "Substitute". Instead of His people suffering in hell for their sins, Jesus took their place and suffered on the cross on their behalf. He really died, and then He was buried.

But is Jesus still dead? Is He still in the grave? You have heard that He rose from the dead on the third day, leaving an empty grave behind. That is right, because death could not keep hold of Him. God raised Him from the dead, to show that He was satisfied with the price Jesus had paid for His people's sins. Jesus is alive, and He is alive for evermore.

Perhaps you say that you know all that, and that you have heard it many times. But we ask, What have you done with that knowledge? The wages of your sin is death. You deserve to suffer eternal death in the torments of hell for ever. Jesus died and rose again, so that those who believe in Him will not perish like that, but enjoy eternal life in heaven. Have you believed in Him? We mean, Have you put your trust in Him? As a guilty sinner, on the way to hell with the heavy burden of your sins, have you fled by faith to Jesus, the great Sinbearer and only Saviour?

Saving faith is more than just knowing that Jesus died and rose again. It involves receiving Him as your Saviour. It involves hearing His gospel call to come to Him, and acting on His invitation, by actually coming. How do you come? You do so by calling upon Him in prayer. You will then be like Peter, when he felt himself sinking under the waves and about to be drowned and cried out to Jesus, "Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30). "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him" (verse 31). Trust Jesus to do that for you, before you sink down into the depths of a lost eternity!

Jesus died. You know that. Jesus rose again. You know that too. Jesus is alive today. You know that as well. But is He a living Saviour to you? Do you know Him? Have you met Him? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

If we go back to the children in Barnoldswick, the first boy's answer reveals what many people in Britain today are very interested in. They have rejected the supernatural wonders of the Bible – the miracles of Jesus and others, and especially the resurrection of Jesus. They are not interested in these supernatural events that truly happened. Instead they have turned aside to the lying wonders of myths and legends, of wizards and witches. In these they may be intensely interested. King Arthur means more to them than King Jesus.

As for Arthur, historians are not agreed whether he even existed. If he did, he lived in the late fifth and early sixth centuries and was a strong and brave warrior who, with his so-called “knights of the round table”, led the fight against the Saxons who were trying to conquer Britain. Numerous stories of magic and the supernatural have grown up around Arthur, so that he has indeed become legendary. But these stories – the spells of Merlin the wizard and the magical properties of the sword “Excalibur” – are most certainly not true. There is even a myth that Arthur will appear again at some point in the future. Perhaps that is what the Barnoldswick boy was thinking of. Perhaps his school had been telling him these things or he had seen a film about Arthur.

This generation has become fascinated with the supernatural, and the entertainment industry has not been slow to feed the demand for it. One has only to think of the incredible popularity of the “Harry Potter” books and films, with their content of wizards, witches, spells and so on. Even when dressed up in childlike garb and portrayed as harmless, you know that all of this is forbidden in the Word of God.

God warned the Israelites to keep away from the superstitions of the Canaanites: “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one . . . that useth divination [pretending to know the future in a supernatural way], or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [someone who supposedly communicates with the dead]. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. . . . For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do” (Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

In turning their backs on the truly supernatural wonders of the gospel of Christ, and seeking out the fables and lies of witchcraft, the people of our day have committed those two evils against God: “They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns,

that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). Do not join them! There is nothing of any value to thirsty souls in these stories – they are wells without water. But seek the Lord Himself – He is “the fountain of living waters” – He has everything that our poor souls need. King Arthur or King Jesus? There is no comparison! Seek King Jesus. He can perform the miracle that you need – the miracle of saving your soul.

John Calvin – His Life and Work

2. Flees from Paris

Mr F R Daubney

The first section of this Youth Conference paper told of Calvin's younger years, including his time as a student. The most important event of these years was his conversion – when God, he said, “tamed to teachableness a mind too stubborn for its years – for I was so strongly devoted to the superstitions of the Papacy”. He became one of the Lutherans, as the Protestants were then known.

It was not an easy step that Calvin took in going over to the Lutherans. He had long been a student of the Scriptures and could see clearly enough the corruptions of the Roman Church. But to see the faults of the Church was one thing; to break from it was another. He had always been attached to the Roman communion and naturally supported its authority and was not inclined to cast off its restraints.

But events convinced him that no reform of the Church could come from within. (Both Luther and Zwingli had set out to try to change the Church from within, only to realise it was not possible.) Calvin found no rest for his conscience in following the customary religious practices; instead he found this rest in the gospel of Christ, especially the revelation of God's mercy to himself personally. His conversion was rapid and thorough; old things had passed away, and all things became new.

Before long, Calvin was fearlessly denouncing the abuses of the Church of Rome in the homes of wealthy people, in gatherings of poor workers, in meetings at the University, in surrounding villages and, at times, in the pulpit. He was surprised to find that what he had to say won followers everywhere for the pure doctrine. He was powerfully persuasive and convincing, and the deep moral earnestness of his appearance won over many who attended his sermons and speeches. Quite unintentionally the young man from Noyon had become a spiritual leader of these secret gatherings.

One of the visitors at these gatherings was a man called Pointent. He was a surgeon, and he told the priests and monks who came to him with shameful

diseases that the cause of their illness was a punishment for the Church's rule on celibacy, which forbids priests to marry; they were unable to keep this rule, which is against Scripture. Pointent was outspoken in recommending marriage to the priests as a remedy for immorality and its consequences. He was arrested and condemned to be burnt at the stake, but first to have his tongue cut out because he had dared to blaspheme the institutions of the Church. Calvin was a witness to Pointent's execution and was so upset and enraged by it that he had to be forcibly pulled away by his friends. In the evening Calvin preached a sermon on the text, "Be thou faithful unto death". His friends pleaded with him not to risk his own life, as they felt that the loss to the Church of Christ could not be made up.

Nicolas Cop, from Basel, a man inclined to the gospel, had been elected Rector of the University of Paris. Calvin asked him to "give the pure Word a chance in your Rectoral address. After centuries of silence, let truth be proclaimed from the pulpit." Cop needed to be persuaded but finally agreed. As he was not at home in the field of theology, he asked Calvin to write the address. Choosing their words very carefully, the address was titled, "Christian Philosophy". Who could object to that? Under that title the nature of the gospel could be demonstrated, and a confession of the Reformed faith made before the whole land.

The speaker's position at the University, his high rank – his father was the King's personal doctor – should, it was thought, protect Cop from persecution. When the day came, the people listened with astonishment. They heard the newly-elected Rector say, "Let us plead with Christ *who has great mercy and who is the only Mediator with God*, that His Spirit may enlighten our hearts so that all our being and striving might praise Him, feel Him and bow before Him in awe, so that the Divine Redeemer may fill our hearts and immerse them in His grace". Cop continued by contrasting the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount with the theology and practice of the Roman Church. Included in his address was a defence of justification by faith alone. Never had the University heard anything like it.

The Romanists appealed to the Paris Parlement, a court where most members were opponents of the Reformation. Cop's arrest and execution were now a foregone conclusion; there was no possibility of him being allowed to defend himself. One of the evangelically-minded members of the Parlement succeeded in warning him just in time. The students who had accompanied Cop from Basel told him to "flee, otherwise you'll be in jail today and at the stake tomorrow". An hour later he was on the road to Basel in disguise.

Furious at Cop's escape, his enemies hurried to capture Calvin, as it was known that he had had a hand in the address. The Queen of Navarre, sister

of the King of France, and a Protestant sympathiser, had offered him her protection, but he too had to flee for his life. It is said that his friends let him down from a window on bed sheets as the bailiffs were knocking at the door. In his exposition of the Acts of the Apostles, Calvin remarks that the flight of Paul from Damascus was similar to his own.

The next few years of Calvin's life involved wandering to and fro under an assumed name, sometimes visiting his hometown of Noyon, sometimes returning to Paris. After various difficulties and perils he found a temporary home at Basel in Switzerland, where he was able to continue his work of writing. In 1536, aged about 26, he published his great work, one of the landmarks in the history of Christian doctrine, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*. The *Institutes* is an encyclopaedia of scriptural theology, and has not been superseded to this day. In this first edition, Calvin laid down the doctrines which he retained to the close of his life, though the *Institutes* were expanded in successive editions down to 1559.

The book was dedicated to Francis I, the king of France. Francis was an ambitious and pleasure-loving king, who had no care for religion, and allowed himself to be guided by leaders in the Church of Rome. These men told the monarch that the Reformers were fanatics whose principles were not consistent with a stable throne, with the good order of society, and with religion continuing. It was all a pack of lies but it encouraged Francis to permit them to persecute Reformers and repress the truth.

Calvin knew full well that these false charges had been brought against his fellow Protestants; so by dedicating his book to Francis, he affirmed the truth of the Reformed doctrines and sought the King's favour towards those who deserved, not to be persecuted, but to be protected. Interestingly, Zwingli, a few years earlier had dedicated his *Commentary on True and False Religion* to the same king of France, no doubt for the same reasons.

For Younger Readers

Prayer for Rain

The Senufos are a people in West Africa. Where they live, the frogs sing when there has been lots and lots of rain.

Usually it rains at the same time every year. Then the people plant their crops. But one year, it started to rain much earlier than usual. The people went out to their fields to plant.

Their crops began to grow. Then the rain stopped suddenly. The

hot sun shone down on the little plants day after day for more than a month. They needed water, but there was no longer any water in the dry ground. The plants would soon die if there was no more rain.

The people who did not believe in God tried to bring rain in their own ways. The women brought pots of water to pour over black leather bags, which perhaps had bones in them. But this did not cause any rain to fall on the dry ground. Then they tried beating drums all night and singing and dancing. But still there was no rain.

Now the Christians knew that they must have a special time of prayer. They knew too that, if rain had come when the other people were trying to bring rain by their foolish ways, these people would have given no glory to God.

The Christians decided to spend three days praying for rain. On the second day they looked at the sky for signs of rain. They saw a small cloud and then it started to rain. But there was far too little rain to do any good. But one of the Christians said, "When God gives us rain, there will be so much water that the frogs will sing again". He believed that God hears when people pray.

The Christians met again to pray. The sky became dark with clouds, and the rain came – lots of it. The plants got all the water they needed, and the frogs began to sing.

That night, the Christians met to thank God for the rain. The other people heard the frogs singing and said to each other, "Their God did send rain, just as they said He would".

Samuel the Prophet

3. Leading Israel Back to God

Rev Neil M Ross

This is the third part of a paper from the 2019 Youth Conference. Part 2 dealt with Samuel's youth in dark days in Israel, during which Eli and his wicked sons died.

About 20 years after the Philistines captured the ark of God, the people of Israel, we read, "lamented after the Lord" (1 Samuel 7:2); they were grieved that God had departed from them and longed for His blessing. The reason for this spiritual concern was likely God's blessing on the teaching and preaching of Samuel. In 1 Samuel 4:1 we read, "The word of Samuel

came to all Israel,” which one commentator takes to mean that “the doctrine, instructions, and exhortations of Samuel to the people of Israel, were by the means of others conveyed throughout the land”. How much we need faithful preachers of the Word like Samuel for our own sin-sick nation; as Proverbs 13:17 says, “A faithful ambassador is health”.

Samuel also said to the people, “If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Samuel 7:3). The nation did actually return to God. We nationally need to return to the Lord and to heed the principle, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34), and to act on it.

Samuel then convened a national gathering of the Israelites at Mizpeh so that he would pray for them and they would testify of their repentance. They not only poured out water before the Lord as a sign of their desire to be cleansed from their sin, but they also fasted that day, which showed they were serious in repenting. They confessed, “We have sinned against the Lord” (1 Samuel 7:6). It was a time of spiritual awakening and one of the greatest religious revivals in the history of Israel.

What an unspeakable blessing it is to have the Holy Spirit work among people, to convince them of sin, of righteousness and of judgement, and to bring multitudes to seek Christ and believe in Him. We sorely need such a revival.

The Philistines noticed this great gathering, perhaps regarding it as an uprising which had to be quelled. Their army marched against the Israelites, who urged Samuel, “Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Samuel 7:8). Samuel offered a lamb as a burnt offering to God, showing that his hope of being accepted by God was through the One typified by the lamb, the Messiah to come. It is vitally important that we also would “behold the Lamb of God” with the eye of faith, as the One who lovingly offered Himself to God as “a lamb without blemish” for the sins of His people.

Samuel at the same time “cried unto the Lord for Israel”; we read, “and the Lord heard him”. As the Philistines advanced, tremendous peals of thunder suddenly crashed from the heavens. The Philistines fled in terror. The Israelites then pursued and destroyed them. Here we see the power of intercessory prayer. Charles Spurgeon said, “It is a very great privilege to be permitted to pray for our fellow men. Such prayers are often of unspeakable value to those for whom they are offered.”

In their thankfulness to God, Samuel and the Israelites set up a memorial

and called it Ebenezer, the stone of help, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12), implying that they hoped for help in the future also. All of us, especially those who have been brought to faith in Christ, have to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us". May we also look to Him for the help we always need as we go on.

One writer has made the interesting point about this great revival, in Samuel's day, that there were four elements in it: first, *lamentation* (the people lamented after the Lord); second, *sanctification* (in the sense that they devoted themselves to the Lord, confessing their sin and forsaking their idolatry); third, *manifestation* (God manifested His power by scattering the enemy); fourth, *commemoration* (they set up the pillar at Ebenezer in thankful remembrance of the Lord helping them). So there was not only a spiritual awakening and revival but also a real reformation of religion. Under God, Samuel was an eminent reformer.

May you and I ever remember our own Scottish Reformer John Knox, who reformed the Scottish Church and transformed the nation, by the grace given to him by the divine Head of the Church and with the aid of his fellow ministers. Although most people today despise our Reformed heritage, may we treasure it and plead with the Lord to work again by His Word and Spirit, through His faithful ministers to effect a mighty spiritual and moral change. He has promised to do it; yet He requires us to pray for it.

The Miller's Prayer

The miller's little house was surrounded by high hills, and beside it stood the mill where he worked. His father had built them both and had lived contentedly here until he was old, when his house and business were passed on to his son. Down the sides of the hills ran the streams whose water turned the wheel of the mill.

The buildings were now old, and competition from other mills had affected business at his mill. Though his customers were now few, the miller continued to work the mill, and by hard toil he was able to provide food for his children, as he trusted in the Lord for help in time of need.

One year, there was a long, severe drought. Day after day, the hot sun rose and continued to scorch the earth, leaving the cornfields with very poor crops. The cattle could hardly find enough food to keep them alive. The millstream, which normally rushed along in a torrent, became a little brook. The price of all kinds of grain had risen higher than anyone had ever known. The miller, unable to run his mill, managed for a long time to obtain a supply

of food; but when week after week passed, and no clouds appeared in the sky, his heart sank. Starvation was staring him in the face.

One morning, after a sleepless night, which he spent thinking about his troubles, he sat down with his family at the breakfast table. There was just one brown loaf in the middle of the table. As the family took their seats, the miller's wife remarked that this loaf was the last in the house. "I have baked the last meal," she said, "and what we shall do for more I cannot tell."

The miller looked troubled; for a moment it seemed as if he would burst into tears. But he restrained his feelings and calmly told his wife and children: "Let us continue to trust in the Lord, who has hitherto never failed to supply our needs. Eat thankfully what we now have." He wanted them to trust that "a kind providence, which supplies the sparrow's needs," would bring them help. "I may be able to obtain money or food in some way, and . . ."

His voice failed him; it seemed so unlikely that money or food could be provided. His heart sank at the terrible prospect of starvation. He could not talk hopefully of something that seemed almost impossible; and he could not keep up a show of cheerfulness that he did not really feel. "Let us thank God for present blessings," he said at last, and in a low and husky voice he said grace.

That morning meal was indeed sad. The little ones were hungry from the shortage of food over several days already, and could not understand the situation the family faced. They ate up their portion; then the parents gave them what they had no appetite for and what they did not have the heart to keep for themselves.

After breakfast, the miller got up and went outside. He did not know where to go and did not want to beg for money. He made his way towards the mill and, as he walked, he anxiously searched the sky for signs of approaching rain, which would provide the only permanent relief. A few light clouds were all that could be seen. "The Lord hides His face in anger," he told himself; "clouds and darkness are round about Him." But he also remembered the words, "Righteousness and judgement are the habitation of His throne", and he silently submitted to what God has revealed in the Bible.

Sadly he looked around him. The mill's huge wheel, dry and rusty, seemed like a giant resting for ever from its labours. The little brook, which hardly reached the under edge of the lowest bucket, seemed to say, "Never again, never again, old man, shall I be your servant". The door of the mill swung idly on its hinges. Tools lay scattered about where they were last used. The miller sat down upon the doorstep and buried his face in his hands.

He stayed there for some time lost in thought. But he was aroused by a familiar voice, which seemed to come from the opposite side of the mill. It

was a low, gentle voice – one that had often soothed him when he was weary. He lifted his head and listened eagerly to catch each word.

“Poor dear papa,” murmured the voice, “how I wish I could do something to help him! If I was only a great strong girl, then I could work and get money and buy bread and do ever so many things. Little brook, aren’t you ever going to get big and strong again so as to turn the wheel?”

It was the miller’s little daughter Mary, who was slowly walking along the edge of the brook towards the place where her father was sitting. Passing the corner of the mill she saw him on the doorstep. She rushed towards him and sat on his lap.

“Well, my daughter,” he said to her

“I have been thinking . . .”, she began to answer, but said no more.

“Why do you hesitate, my child?”

“I was thinking this morning, when you and mother seemed so troubled, what we could do to help you. I thought and thought a long while, but couldn’t find a way to earn any money. At last I came outside to see if the sky looked as if there would be any rain, and all I could see was those little clouds over the big hill there, and they didn’t seem like much. Then, Father, I remembered that story in the Bible you were reading on Sabbath Day, about the drought where Elijah was, and I thought it seemed just like this. And then I wondered, if you were to pray to God as Elijah did, if God wouldn’t make it rain as He did then. Don’t you think He’s just as kind as He was then, Father?”

The words, “The same yesterday, today, and for ever,” rose at once to the miller’s lips. The suggestion of his child fell on his heart with great power. So unexpected was anything of the kind from such a source that, as he looked down into her clear, blue eyes, raised so anxiously towards his, it seemed to him as though an unseen spirit from another world had placed the thought in her mind. “Ask and it shall be given you”, was the thought which a new, powerful hope suggested as its foundation. Opening the well-worn pocket Bible which he always carried with him, he looked for something that might increase the hope. A page turned down to mark some verses of special interest caught his attention. He unfolded it and read, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?”

“It is enough”, he said as he closed God’s Book. “Let us pray, my child”. As he spoke, father and daughter knelt together on the grass. They reverently raised their closed eyes towards the blue sky, and the miller poured forth in simple, earnest words the strong desire of both their hearts. He prayed that the Great Father might look down on the earth and pity His feeble children

in their great distress. He poured into God's ever-ready ear the sad story of poverty and need.

As the miller went on, the confidence he felt in the One to whom he prayed grew stronger and stronger. His Father in heaven, he felt, seemed to stoop to listen to His troubled child's petitions. "I know, my Father," cried the miller, "that Thou wilt not desert me in this hour of trial and of need. Didst Thou not send food from heaven to satisfy the hunger, make water to gush forth from the rock to quench the thirst of Thine ancient people? And art Thou not as full of love for Thy redeemed children as Thou wast for Thy chosen ones? O yes, Thou wilt never leave nor forsake them that put their trust in Thee."

"I rose from my knees", the miller said, "with a calm, happy mind, from which the burden I had, for so many days, been bearing seemed to be removed. My little daughter too looked into my face with a quiet smile, exclaiming in a tone of strong assurance: 'Now God will make it rain, Father'."

The miller had to acknowledge that what his girl had said was true, and he looked up at the sky from time to time to see if there were signs of rain approaching. In fact, before an hour had passed, dark clouds gathered on the horizon, and thunder pealed in the sky.

The miller went on: "With almost childish delight I hailed the first welcome drops and, when at last the rain descended in torrents, I cared not to seek a shelter". Instead, he stood by the bed of the stream and waited for it to rise. The showers became heavier and heavier and, before long, the stream became higher and higher, until at last it reached its usual level. Then the wheel began to turn and the miller now had the means to earn some money again. They could look forward to having plenty food again on their table. With thankful hearts, they sang to God's praise.

God is still the same. He still hears prayer. Let us come to Him with all our difficulties, but let us remember to seek "first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness".

For Junior Readers

The Pilgrims' First Sabbath

Have you heard of the Pilgrim Fathers? They were Christians from England who were being persecuted for the way they worshipped God. They wanted to be able to live and worship according to the Bible and their consciences, but the laws of the land at that time would not allow them to do

this. Yet they put God and His Word first in their lives; so, after much prayer and thought, they decided to sail across the Atlantic Ocean. They wanted to start a new life in the country we now call the United States of America.

The year was 1620. It was a tremendous risk to take. They were leaving homes and relations whom they would probably never see again. They were crossing the ocean to an unknown and dangerous land. The voyage was very hard and far from safe. Their ship, called the *Mayflower*, was a very small, wooden sailing ship without proper rooms, food, or beds. They met severe storms; they were blown off course; it took them nearly nine weeks to make the crossing!

At last, on November 10, they sighted land, which turned out to be Cape Cod, and dropped anchor the following day. The pilgrims kneeled down to thank God, who had taken them safely through so many dangers to dry land again. But this area was not suitable to settle in, and over the next few weeks they had to go exploring, both on foot and in a smaller boat.

It was now December, and the cold was intense. Eventually the ten pilgrims on the smaller boat, after many more hardships, reached land. It was dark, but they hoped that this was their destination, where they would be able to settle. Sadly, in the morning they realised it was just a small island off the coast, now called Clarke's Island.

They were exhausted and longing to get properly onto the mainland. But this was a Saturday, and they knew that they could not reach the land and get themselves established before night fell; it was so near the start of the Lord's Day. Instead they waited, cold and uncomfortable, till Monday, when they landed at Plymouth Rock.

They waited the extra day in their little boat on Clarke's Island because of their love to the Fourth Commandment and their desire to obey it. Although they had crossed the sea to find this shore, they knew it was not a work of necessity or of mercy to use the Lord's Day to complete their journey. So they rested the Sabbath Day, and on Monday, December 21, they made the historic landing at Plymouth Rock and fixed on it as the place where they would settle permanently.

They then returned to Cape Cod and to the *Mayflower* with the joyful news. The *Mayflower* with the rest of the pilgrims was then able to sail to Plymouth Harbour. You can imagine how relieved and thankful they must have been to have arrived, to have found a safe harbour and a suitable place to make their new home!

Should we not also have such a love to the Lord's Day as these pilgrims had? Will you not then pray that you would be helped to keep it holy, as the Lord has commanded!

J van Kralingen

Looking Around Us

A Saint's Bones

In September, relics of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux are to be displayed in Roman Catholic cathedrals in Aberdeen and Inverness and in an abbey near Elgin. She was born in France in 1873 and died, from tuberculosis, when she was just 24. Parts of her body are held in a heavy box nearly five feet long, which is to be carried around the north of Scotland, for the “veneration by the faithful” both day and night. Thérèse became a nun when she was just 15 and was proclaimed a saint by Pope Pius XI in 1923. A spokeswoman for the organisers of the tour said: “Saint Thérèse . . . teaches us that holiness consists simply in doing God’s will and being just what God wants us to be”.

She was reportedly cured of a serious illness after praying to a statue of the Virgin Mary, whom she believed smiled at her when she prayed. But Mary was in heaven and could not hear Thérèse as she attempted to pray to her. We are called to come boldly to the throne of grace, for Christ is on that throne. He is the Mediator between sinners like us and God, and we do not need a mediator between us and Christ – not Mary or any other saint. The Bible speaks of *saints*: all whom the Holy Spirit has begun to make holy – those who trust in Christ and in Him alone. There is no special class of saints among true believers, as Rome would have us believe. And the Bible in no way encourages us to pay any attention to the bones or other relics of saints.

What does God want us to be? He wants us to love Him with all our heart, to keep all His commandments – as these are brought to our attention in the Bible, not according to Roman Catholic ideas which add to Scripture. Especially God wants us to look to Jesus Christ alone for salvation, not trusting in our own works of any kind. And that includes not trusting in becoming a nun, a Roman Catholic idea for which there is no authority in Scripture, which must be the only source for our religious ideas – as to what we should believe and how we should behave.

Australian Youth Conference

The next Youth Conference in the Asia Pacific Presbytery, will be held in Australia, during 7-9 January 2020, the Lord willing. The venue is in Alstonville, which is about an hour and 50 minutes north of Grafton by car. The Youth Conference Committee will decide soon on the speakers and papers. Any questions can be sent to the Convener, Rev J D Smith, at any time. His e-mail is jettddaniel@gmail.com.

The Lord My Banner

This poem by William Cowper is based on God's title, *Jehovah Nissi*, which means, "The Lord My Banner" (Exodus 17:15).

By whom was David taught
To aim the dreadful blow,
When he Goliath fought,
And laid the Gittite low?
No sword nor spear the stripling took,
But chose a pebble from the brook.

'Twas Israel's God and King,
Who sent him to the fight;
Who gave him strength to sling,
And skill to aim aright.
You feeble saints, your strength endures,
Because young David's God is yours.

Who ordered Gideon forth,
To storm th'invaders' camp,
With arms of little worth:
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown.

O I have seen the day
When, with a single word,
God helping me to say,
My trust is in the Lord,
My soul has quelled a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose.

But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side?
Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's Friend,
Will help His servant to the end.

Price £1.00