

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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Contents

The Way of Life and the Way of Death	163
Remembering a Godly Mother	166
The Tabernacle and Temple:	
5. Some Other Things in the Tabernacle and Temple	167
Seeking the Lord Early:	
6. The Best Way	169
“It Is Good”	170
Life Is Short	172
Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland:	
3. Rev Donald Macfarlane’s Protest	174
For Junior Readers:	
Back to Church	176
For Younger Readers:	
Waiting for a Bible	177
Not Yet and Not Quite	177
The Boy in the Attic	178
Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2019-20:	
UK Prizes and Awards	179
Looking Around Us	179

Cover Picture: The Bass Rock, in the Firth of Forth, where some of the Covenanters were in prison during the time of persecution after 1660.

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Volume 85

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Number 9

The Way of Life and the Way of Death

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. He was an ungodly man, reigning over a nation that had departed far from the principles that God had laid down for it. Now Zedekiah and his people were in a very difficult position: a powerful army from Babylon was besieging their capital city Jerusalem. So he sent messengers to Jeremiah, God's prophet. The King wanted him to go to God, on behalf of Judah because of the danger from the invading army. He hoped that God would act "according to all His wondrous works".

This sounds very good, but there was no suggestion that Zedekiah was willing to turn from his sin of rejecting God and His commandments; not least there was his sin of worshipping idols. He had been trying to make his own way through life, apart from the true God. While there was no foreign army outside the walls of Jerusalem, he had no thought of acknowledging the God of previous godly kings such as David and Hezekiah. Now he felt his need of help from God, but only because of the crisis he faced, and even now he did not approach God, confessing his sin; he did not turn to God in repentance, looking to the Lord to forgive him and make him holy.

Zedekiah's duty was to repent, and Judah's also. In the absence of that repentance, God would not withdraw His judgements; He would not send the Babylonians away and let Jerusalem and its King remain unconquered. Yet God sent Jeremiah to the people to tell them: "I set before you the way of life, and the way of death" (Jeremiah 21:8). The way of life was to go out from Jerusalem and surrender to the army from Babylon; those who did so would be preserved alive. And the way of death was to stay where they were; those who stayed would die by the sword, famine or disease.

Surely, you might say, everyone would listen to what God was saying to Jeremiah; they would surrender to the besieging army; they would not want to die. But they did not surrender. Obviously they did not really believe Jeremiah, and they did not believe God. Even with a powerful army just outside the city, they did not think that their situation was as dangerous as it really was. They went on in their sins, refusing to obey God; they did not think it was a serious matter to refuse to submit to Him and His commands.

Still God speaks in His providence. In just over 100 years, much of the world has experienced two massive wars, much more awful and more widespread than were ever seen in the past. Now the world is experiencing the coronavirus pandemic, and even more serious was the “Spanish” flu pandemic of 1918-1920, which infected a third of the world’s population. Yet people go on ignoring God; they want to live as they please; they do not want to be bound by His commandments and live godly lives.

God continues to set the way of life and the way of death before many people. He sets those paths before those who read the Bible and those who listen to the preaching of the truths of the Bible. We are sinners, and God warns against going on careless about Him; He warns about how we live our lives, about death and about what lies on the other side of death. In such ways, He is setting before us the way of death. He is warning sinners that the result of such rebellion will be eternal death, that they will go down to hell to suffer the punishment of their sins for ever.

Yet God also sets before them the way of life; He tells them that, if they will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died in the place of sinners, eternal life will be theirs. When Christ suffered and died, He was enduring all the terrible punishment that those who believe on Him would otherwise experience. Even those who are on the way of life will die, in the sense that their body and soul will be separated; but at death their souls will at once enter into heaven. There they will be completely free from sin and from the consequences of sin; their souls will be made perfectly holy. Their spiritual life, which began when they first trusted in Christ, will become perfect when their soul leaves their body and enters heaven. And when the day of the resurrection will come, the effects of death will be reversed and, with their soul and body reunited, they will exist for ever in perfect holiness.

God had already spoken through Jeremiah: “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). King Zedekiah should have been asking for the old paths – not because they were old but because they were good, and they were good because God had revealed them. If Zedekiah had been concerned to walk in these good old ways, he would have gone directly to God in prayer when he first heard about the army from Babylon advancing toward Jerusalem. Instead he was saying, like so many others among his people, “We will not walk” in those ways.

A few generations earlier, when Hezekiah was King of Judah, an army from Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem. But Hezekiah loved the old ways; he understood they were good ways. He did not worship idols; he trusted in the true God. And in the face of that powerful army, he went to God in prayer,

as well as asking Isaiah, God's prophet in Jerusalem at that time, to pray for him. God heard Hezekiah and Isaiah and delivered the city from the attacking forces. Zedekiah would have known about Hezekiah and Isaiah, but he was not attracted by their godly lives; he did not want to follow the true God. And so he did not find peace for his soul; he went on to the very end of his life, it would seem, in the way of death. How very sad!

God is telling *us* too that we must "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein". Most of those who read this article will know people who are walking in the good old paths – people who believe that the whole Bible was given by God, and so is all true. They know that God's commands are still entirely relevant, as relevant today as they were long ago, and that it is good for them to obey these commands.

These are people who do not want to sin, because every sin is a great offence against God. They realise that people around them think them strange because, for example, they try to keep the Sabbath holy and believe that it is wrong for a young man and woman (or a couple of any age) to live together before they are married. They know that they need to be forgiven, and that they cannot earn forgiveness themselves; they must cast themselves by faith on Christ Jesus as the One who died for sinners. These people are walking along the way of life, the path that has heaven at the end of it.

Too many, even of those to whom God has shown the way of life and the way of death, despise that way. They say, It is old-fashioned; my friends do not walk in that way; they are much more up-to-date in their thinking. But what matters is: first, *God* has spoken; second, the Bible is true from beginning to end, including what it says about the ways we take through this world; third, the way of life does end in perfect happiness; fourth, the way of death does end in hell, where there is endless suffering because of sin.

A man called Reid was a missionary in southern Africa. One day he went to see a local man who was dying. The African told him: "This is the message of death. I shall now go and see the other country [heaven], where I have never been but which I long to see. I am weary of everything here. I commit too much sin here. I wish to be free from it. . . . The Lord has spoken much to me, though I cannot explain it."

He was a man whom God had brought into the way of life; he was very close to the end of his journey and soon he would be in heaven. May we follow his example, believing what God has said about sin and salvation. May we also follow the example of godly Hezekiah and turn away from the example of Zedekiah. May we, without delay, forsake the way of death and enter, by faith in Jesus Christ, into the way of life. Then we will reach the same blessed destination as Hezekiah and the African whom Reid visited.

Remembering a Godly Mother

A seaman was very seriously ill in an American seaport. In that port, there was a chaplain who attended to the spiritual needs of the sailors whose ships called there. The chaplain went to visit this man and felt that he was near death.

He spoke kindly to the sailor about his soul and advised him to cast himself on Jesus. The sailor did not welcome the chaplain's concern; he swore at the chaplain and told him to go away.

The chaplain told the sailor that he must be faithful to him; he warned him that, if he died without repenting, he would be lost for ever. The seaman said nothing; he pretended to fall asleep.

The chaplain was not to be put off so easily; he called on the man again more than once, but he did not get on any better than the first time. Then he realised that the sailor was probably a Scot, who might well recognise the words of a metrical psalm. So he repeated to the seaman a verse from Psalm 103:

“Such pity as a father hath unto his children dear;
Like pity shows the Lord to such as worship Him in fear.”

Some tears appeared in the seaman's eyes as he listened to these words. So the chaplain asked him if he had a godly mother. The seaman started to cry and acknowledged that his mother had, years before, taught him the words of the Psalm and that she used to pray for him. Since then he had travelled far on the sea and on land, but now he was reminded of her faith and her love for him and this moved his heart – although apparently he was so close to death.

In God's mercy, what the chaplain said to him was blessed to his soul; the Holy Spirit applied the truths of the Bible to him. He recovered from his illness and afterwards showed, by the way that he lived, that his was a genuine conversion.

Let us notice some lessons:

1. How foolish and how wicked it is to treat lightly a mother's teaching and prayers and go on to live a godless life. Those who do so *may* be brought back, as the seaman was, but it is sheer presumption to depend on this taking place. Let us value highly a mother's and a father's teaching and prayers and ask God to bless them to us.

2. How foolish it also is to neglect the salvation of our soul until we are within sight of death. There may then be no port chaplain, or anyone else who knows the Bible, to warn us about the danger of going down to a lost

eternity and to point us to Jesus Christ. Seek Him now, while He may be found. Feel a sense of urgency about your soul.

3. The Saviour will never turn away anyone who comes to Him. He has promised, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). But if you do not make use of your opportunities to come to Christ – to believe in Him – you may find that, when you need Him most, you will have no desire to come to Him.

4. Many people have become serious about religion when death has loomed up before them. They may even have appeared to trust in Christ. But when they have recovered from their illness, they have become careless again and are no longer concerned about their souls. How good that we are told not only that the seaman appeared to be converted, but that his future life confirmed this! We should not only feel our responsibility to seek the Lord and believe on Him, but also to examine ourselves in the light of the Bible, so that we may be sure that we have experienced genuine conversion – that we are indeed new creatures in Christ Jesus and are prepared for heaven.

The Tabernacle and Temple

6. The People

Rev J B Jardine

Last month's part of this Youth Conference paper spoke of various things, such as the scroll of the law and musical instruments, in the tabernacle and temple. A type was earlier explained as "a thing or a person that is used to represent a spiritual truth; the fulfilment of that spiritual truth – in its antitype – belongs to the future".

Fifth. The *people* of the tabernacle and temple. (1) *The Levites*. They were set apart to the service of God. They performed religious duties that the priests were not directly responsible for. The Levites performed secondary duties like singing in the temple and guarding the gates.

(2) *The Priests*. All of the priests were Levites, but not all the Levites were priests. The priesthood followed the line of Aaron and his sons. After the time of Abiathar, the high priest came from the house of Zadok, for about 800 years until 170 BC.

The purpose of the priesthood was to represent the people and bring them into communion with God. They were to go between God and the nation. Sacrifice was needed if this was to happen. The priests had to be of the highest purity and devotion; they could not have any outward physical blemish. They prepared the sacrifices and attended to the various ceremonies of the temple. The high priest performed the most sacred functions himself, with the other

priests carrying out any of the multitude of daily tasks in the temple. It was an honour to set the wicks in the lamps or shovel the ashes from the altar. The priest was also meant to keep and teach knowledge (Malachi 2:7).

(3) *The high priest.* The high priest was set apart to mediate between a holy God and a sinful people. He was a type of Christ, the great High Priest. The outward restrictions laid on him were symbols of the holy way of life he was to follow as a priest of the Most High God. His consecration with an abundance of holy oil was a symbol of the plentiful supply of every grace that a priest should have.

Like all priests he wore breeches, a bonnet, a girdle and a tunic. He also wore the robe of the ephod, a blue coat without sleeves, with golden bells and pomegranates attached to the bottom. It covered him from head to foot. Patrick Fairbairn, a Scottish writer, says this garment spoke of what he made known of God's revelation, "and the fruitfulness in righteousness" which this should produce. It also seems to point to the beautiful garment of Christ's righteousness and His glorious finished work. "The righteousness of saints" is called "fine linen" in Revelation 19:8.

The ephod itself was a short garment like two aprons, joined at the shoulder. It was woven with figures in gold, blue, purple and crimson. Two onyx stones, set in gold with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel inscribed on them, were placed one on each shoulder. These spoke of the high priest's authority and power; he shouldered the responsibility of all the people.

The breastplate of judgement was a piece of tapestry suspended from the shoulders by two chains of gold and attached to the outside of the ephod. Twelve precious stones were placed on the cloth. They were set in gold and arranged in four rows of three. The stones represented the 12 tribes and were near to the high priest's heart as mediator. Set over the priest's heart, they showed the love and tenderness of Christ for His redeemed ones. They are precious to Him and bound on His heart. The breastplate was also related to the Urim and the Thummim, a symbol of the priest's fitness to lead and guide the people.

His mitre, or bonnet, was different to those worn by the other priests, as it had a golden plate attached. The plate had the words, "Holiness to the Lord", written on it. The inscription signified the unique, complete holiness of Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant.

The high priest of the tabernacle and the temple was a type of Christ, who offered Himself for the sins of His people, an offering which will for ever be effectual. By this He made an end of sin and brought in an everlasting salvation. Christ was clothed with all the graces necessary for the complete salvation of the countless multitudes of His people.

The holiness of the high priest and his acceptance with God appears fully in Christ, the great High Priest. Christ as priest brings the surpassing glory and suitability of His person as Mediator into view. He also magnifies the love of God, which crowns the perfection of His work. It was God who chose His own Son to be a priest; moved by the same love, Jesus was willing to be a priest (Hebrews 4:14-16). Christ is the Altar, Sacrifice and Offerer.

Seeking the Lord Early

6. The Best Way

J C Ryle

Ryle directed this address to children; probably he was including young people. But everyone, young and old, should be able to read it with profit. It is taken, with editing, from Ryle's *Home Truths*, volume 5. The previous article, in April, was about seeking Christ early; this is the last article in the series.

Proverbs 8:17. *I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me.*

Last of all, seeking early is the *easiest way*. When you and I have a great deal of work to do, you know there is nothing like beginning in good time. Now this is just what you should do about your souls; you should begin in good time to seek Him who alone can save you. If people have work to do that must be finished before dark, they take care to get up early in the morning. So should you do for your souls.

You should seek the Lord in the morning of life and get your work done before the night of death comes, when no one can work. Every year you put it off you will find it harder work – more to be done and less time to do it. Every year you will find your hearts more stubborn – more unwilling to do what is right. Now they are like young trees, so soft and tender that, by the Lord's help, you may bend them in any way. In a few years they will be like strong thick trees, so tough and well rooted, that nothing but a mighty wind can shake them. Children, begin to seek the Lord at once. I want you to have as few difficulties as possible in your journey to heaven.

Consider these things; consider these things well. Begin early to seek the Lord. It is the safest way, the happiest way, the easiest way. Try to be like Obadiah, who feared the Lord from his youth. Try to be like our blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who grew up “in favour with God and man”.

Think of the day when Jesus Christ shall come again to this world. He means to come again in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. He will come very suddenly, in an hour when no one thinks of Him, like a

thief in the night. He will gather together all who love Him, and take them home to His Father's house, to be for ever happy. All the idle and wicked and unbelieving people, who have not sought Him, will be wretched and miserable for ever.

How sad it would be to see others taken up to heaven and ourselves left behind! How dreadful to feel: I might have been taken up too, but I would not seek the Lord.

Think too of the great Day of Judgement, when all of us shall stand before God and give account of our works. Some of the people who are saved will say then, I never began to seek Jesus Christ till I was 40 years old, and I wasted away more than half my life. Others will say, I never began to seek Him till I was 20, and I wasted many years of my life.

But some will be able to say, I sought the Lord when I was quite young; I can hardly remember the time when I did not try to love Him. How pleasant it will be for those people to think this! How good to feel that they gave the first days of their lives to Jesus Christ, as well as the last! How glorious they will appear who have loved their Saviour in the beginning of their time, as well as in the end. The Lord grant that many of you may be found among them. Seek the Lord early; seek Him while He may be found.

Now it is time for me to leave off and let you go. Perhaps I shall never see you all together again in this world; indeed I am almost sure I shall not. But we shall all meet at the last day. I do hope you will think of what I have told you about Jesus Christ and about your souls. Remember I want you all to be happy children, and in order to be happy you must love Jesus Christ.

“It Is Good”

John Arch was a Native American. Born about 1797, he was a Cherokee. His mother died when he was very young and, as a boy, he learned almost nothing except how to hunt deer and other wild animals in the forest. When John was old enough to spend all day in the woods, his father left him to find his own food. He used to go hunting with another lad and was always the more successful of the two.

When he returned to his village, people would praise him highly for his skill. But one year, when John was about 21, the other lad was more successful than he was, and John was so ashamed that he decided not to hunt any more. Now the world seemed empty and vain; he felt very sad and nothing gave him any pleasure.

Afterwards he and several others from his tribe went to a place in eastern

Tennessee. There John met a missionary to his tribe who found out that he wanted to learn to read. So he advised John to go to a place called Brainerd and apply to attend the school there. (The place may well have been named after David Brainerd, the well-known missionary to Native Americans.)

The school was reluctant to accept him but at last they agreed to take him in on trial. He told them that he had spent a short time in school when he was young and that he had learned the letters of the alphabet. After being taken away from school, he had studied his spelling book until he wore it out. But since then he had forgotten almost all he had learned and had given up all hope of ever being able to read.

What did John know about religion? He told one of the missionaries that he always believed that there was a "Great Being above", but he assumed that this Great Being took little or no notice of what people were doing. John assumed that when people died, they cease to exist. Yet, he told the missionary, he had heard that people did continue to exist after death and that the good went to a place of happiness and the bad to a place of misery. He added, "And I sometimes thought this might be true". He assumed that, "if this was true, I must go to the place of misery, for I was bad". He had no idea that his nature could be changed from bad to good.

Not long after coming to Brainerd, he became convinced that there was indeed a future place of happiness and a future place of misery, but he still did not understand how anyone who had sinned could be pardoned and saved. He became very upset about this and the more he saw of his sinfulness the more upset he became. He began to wish that he had never known about these things.

You might ask, Why did the missionaries not tell him about Christ and salvation through him? But they *had* told him. They taught him that the greatest of sinners can be saved through the death of Christ. The problem was that John did not believe them. It seemed obvious to him that no sinner could become holy and be admitted to heaven. And perhaps you have heard many times about the Saviour and salvation through Him, and yet you do not believe the significance of what you were told. But you probably also do not believe the awful significance of being a sinner; you probably do not take seriously the terrible nature of sin and the terrible nature of the punishment of sin in a lost eternity.

As the missionaries explained further to John the way of salvation through Christ, and as he saw the changed lives of other people whom he knew, he saw that he had been wrong to reject the idea that God can give a sinner a new nature. But now he felt a dislike for this way of salvation and that dislike seemed to him more serious than all his other sins. One night he lay awake

till morning, all the time expecting to be destroyed at once because of his sins. He was so terrified that he trembled all the time.

But in the morning he saw that the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ was perfectly reasonable and that it was exactly suitable for him. The thought of being saved in that way, and not in any other, gave him unspeakable joy. It was the Holy Spirit working in his heart, in connection with the Word of God, that gave him a new attitude to the way of salvation and made him able to trust in the Saviour.

From that time on, he was consistently godly. He spent the rest of his life teaching other Native Americans. He acted as an interpreter for the missionaries as they spoke to his people; he helped them to translate parts of the Bible into the Cherokees' language and to prepare schoolbooks for them. Wherever he went, he answered objections to the Christian faith and exposed the various slanders that were put about.

But John died when he was only about 28, seven years after he had come to Brainerd. When he was told that he would be in eternity in just a few minutes, the smile on his face showed that he was glad to hear this. He raised his hand and said, "Well, it is good". These were his last words. He knew that it was good to be so near to eternal glory.

How thankful we should be who have heard the truths of the Bible since we were young – about sin, about heaven and hell, about Christ and salvation through Him, about the Holy Spirit and His power to change our nature. How great our guilt will be if we go on refusing to receive these truths as God's revelation to us! Because John believed in the Saviour, he was able to go to heaven. God in His kindness is telling us: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Life Is Short

J W Alexander

Alexander was an American minister. He wrote a series of letters to his younger brother. They have been reprinted as *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* Here is one of these letters; it has been edited.

Life has been compared to the movement of fast ships and the flight of an eagle hastening to its prey. It is described as a hand's breadth, a dream. This is what the Bible says about human life. If you will consider it, you will see much in it to make you change the way you behave at present. When a young person looks forward, he almost always thinks of a long life. He thinks something like this: "I am now 13 (or 15, or 17, or whatever it may

be). In so many more years I shall be an adult. Then I shall decide everything for myself; I will do such and such; I will try such and such schemes; I shall be happy.

Mistaken boy! How different from this does life seem to an old man! *He* looks back and says to himself: It was just the other day that I was a boy. I was then full of hope. Life seemed a long and flowery path. I was wrong. It is a short journey, through a valley of tears.

From this we should all learn to say with Moses in Psalm 90: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”. Is life short? Then, whatever you have to do in life, it ought to be done soon. You ought to begin at once. If you were told to do something difficult and given an hour to do it – and if you were told: At the end of the hour I will come to see whether you have finished your task – you would be anxious not to waste a moment.

You should be just as anxious now to make good use of your time. If the whole of life is very short, then the little parts of it, which we call childhood, youth, middle age, old age, are short indeed. The little portion of youth will soon be over; yet in this very stage of life you are laying a foundation for all the rest of your days. If the young twig grows crooked, the full-grown branch will be fixed in the same direction. Think of this.

Youth is a time for gathering. You must now be busy laying up useful knowledge for the future. Youth is a time for sowing seed. If the farmer lets the time for sowing pass by, he will have no harvest and he must starve. If you do not fix in your mind the seeds of truth and wisdom now, you will be ignorant and foolish when you grow up to be a man – if you ever live to become a man.

Everything you do, however trivial it may seem, has a bearing on your future life. You will reap as you sow, and you are sowing some good or some evil every moment. It seems to you no great matter to waste an afternoon, but in that way you are getting into a habit of idleness – you are losing that part of your life.

The great thing for which you were made is to please God and to enjoy His love. *The Shorter Catechism* says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever”. Life is short; so do not put off serving God until tomorrow. If life is so short, you ought to give God the *whole* of it. Surely you will not rob Him of the springtime of your days – the very best part of them. He has as much right to this day as to tomorrow; He demands your youth as well as your old age.

Follow the example of the Saviour, who said, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”.

This is what few boys think much of, but those who do are wiser and happier when they become older. And no one enjoys life so much as those who began, early in life, to love Jesus Christ, the Lord.

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

3. Rev Donald Macfarlane's Protest

Rev J D Smith

The last section of this Youth Conference paper spoke about the Declaratory Act that was passed in 1892, changing the foundation of the Free Church. It undermined the Church's attachment to Scripture truth.

Sadly the wheels of change that were set in motion over many years continued to move to a climax, now that the Declaratory Act was part of the constitution of the Free Church. What happened next? Did the Constitutional Party leave? No, but a movement began in order to repeal, or reverse, the Act at the next meeting of the General Assembly. Ministers and elders asked the General Assembly to repeal the Act, so that it would no longer be part of the constitution of the Church. But nearer the time of actually doing so, when the General Assembly was about to meet again, the Constitutional Party were losing courage.

The Constitutional Party did not separate. At one of their meetings, they somehow discovered that the Declaratory Act was not binding. So they decided they did not have to separate from the Church, even if the Act was not repealed. They thought the Act was a dead letter, since the Church did not have the right to pass such an Act in the first place. Why did they take so long to come to that conclusion?

Previously they had actually said that, once the Act passed, the Church would cease to be. But the Act *was* part of the constitution of the Church. The errors in the Church had the present support of the Act – now part of the constitution of the Church. It was not a dead letter. The Constitutionalists were wrong. But they had lost courage. They gave up and made excuses.

This reminds us that we should not boast of our plans and fail to follow them through. We should be determined to carry out what we claim is the right course of action. Actions have more weight than words. Words not backed by action are of little worth. The Saviour teaches us that it is not what we say but what we do that is most important. "What think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I

go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first” (Matthew 21:28-31). Clearly the son who actually obeyed was the one that did the will of his father.

There were some in the Church who were prepared to separate, regardless of the Constitutional Party and their weakness. But they were waiting to see if the move to repeal would be successful. And one of them was Rev Donald Macfarlane.

The time came for the General Assembly of 1893 to meet. There were Overtures to have the Act repealed. No fewer than ten overtures were put forward! But sadly the Assembly did not grant their request. Some people dissented; that meant they put on record that they did not agree. But there was someone who was not satisfied with only dissenting. It was time to make a *protest*. This man stepped forward. He was Rev Donald Macfarlane.

He came forward to the table and read the following: “Whereas by the action of the General Assembly of 1892 in passing the Declaratory Act into a law of the Church, and by that Act being retained in her constitution, the Church, in our opinion, ceases to be the true representative of the Free Church of Scotland; and whereas by our ordination vows we are bound by the most solemn obligations to assert, maintain, and defend the doctrines and constitution of the said Church, and to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine, worship, discipline, government, and exclusive jurisdiction of the same, I, the undersigned minister of the Free Church, in my own name, and in the name of all who may adhere to me, declare that, whatever I may subsequently do, neither my conscience nor my ordination vows allow me to act under what has now been made law in this Church.”

He had agreed to assert the doctrines the Free Church held to. But now this Church did not exist. How could he assert the doctrines and constitution of a Church which was no longer in existence? To continue in the Church that now existed meant remaining in a Church which had altered its constitution, and even claimed the right to determine by itself what teaching it held to. His ordination vows would not let him stay in such a church! There was only one solution – to separate from the new Church and continue the testimony of the Free Church, without the Declaratory Act.

He also protested against the power which a majority of office-bearers used in making changes to the creed and constitution of the Church. It was *ultra vires* – which means it was beyond their rightful power – to change the constitution in the face of any protesting minority. They had no right to change the constitution in relation to the *Confession of Faith*. Remember: the Declaratory Act did not explain the *Confession* – it *changed* it.

Rev Donald Macfarlane had to separate from the body calling itself the

Free Church because, staying within it, he could not be faithful to the vows he had taken at his ordination. He could not now take any minister to task for incorrect teaching, so as to bring him under discipline. If he or the Presbytery were to correct anyone for error, all that person needed to do was to point to the Declaratory Act to justify their right to teach such things. Surely *that* is to change the very constitution of the Church.

The General Assembly did not accept Mr Macfarlane's protest. In other words, they would consider that unless he took back his protest, he would no longer be a minister in the Church. After making his protest, Mr Macfarlane was joined by another minister, Rev Donald Macdonald of Shieldaig. These ministers, together with an elder, Alexander Macfarlane, formed a Presbytery which first met on 28 July 1893. It was agreed that the Presbytery should be called "The Free Church Presbytery of Scotland". At this Presbytery meeting, a student for the ministry was licensed to preach the gospel.

For Junior Readers

Back to Church

“**W**hat went ye out into the wilderness to see?” Do you remember who asked that question and who did people go into the wilderness to see? It was Jesus asking the people why they went to hear the preaching of John the Baptist.

What if the same question was addressed to you? After nearly four months of our churches being closed due to the risks of Covid 19, we are now able to return to them. I am sure you were very happy to go back to church again – but why? Have you ever thought of why you attend church?

It is not like attending a social occasion, is it? So it is not to see the other people that are there, even though they are your friends and you are pleased to see them. Nor is it just to be seen by other people, so that others are pleased to see you attending church.

No, attending church is different. It is a spiritual duty. It has to do with God, with your soul and with eternity. How offensive it must be to God if you just drift into His house without thinking about what you are doing, drawing near to Him in an outward way but your heart still far away!

Is that not to trifle with divine things? Should you not be *seeking* and *praying* for the salvation of your soul when you go to God's house? The Bible tells us that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”. So you should be *listening* with attention, like the Psalmist when he said, “I will *hear* what God the Lord will speak”. You also need an *appetite*,

a desire for spiritual blessings. When God said, “Open thy mouth wide”, He promised, “And I will fill it”. He encourages you to “*taste and see that the Lord is good*”.

Perhaps you will look up Question 90 in *The Shorter Catechism* and remind yourself of what it tells you about benefiting from reading and hearing the Word of God, both on your own and in church: “That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with *diligence, preparation and prayer*; receive it with *faith and love*, lay it up in our *hearts and practice* it in our *lives*”. May you always value the privilege and blessing of attending the public worship of God and may you never neglect it! *J van Kralingen*

For Younger Readers

Waiting for a Bible

In Wales long ago, there were very few Bibles and they cost a lot of money. Most people had very little money.

Twelve men wanted a Bible; none of them could afford to buy one. But they each put some money aside and gathered it all together. It was enough to buy a Bible between them.

The men decided that each of them would take the Bible home for a month at a time. That would mean that they would all have a turn of having it in their home for one month in a year. Then they would all be able to read it, though only for a few weeks at a time. It was far better than not to have a Bible at all.

They worked out what order they would have the Bible. But one man was very upset because he was last on the list. He would have to wait 11 months before he could take the Bible to his own home and he was afraid that he might be dead before then. I think he must have loved the Bible. I hope you will grow up to love the Bible.

Not Yet and Not Quite

When recording the effect of what Paul said to Felix and to Agrippa, the Holy Spirit has shown clearly the usual state of mind of those who hear the gospel but are not saved. We read that “Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will

call for thee" (Acts 24:25); and that "Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). In effect, Felix said, Not yet; and Agrippa said, Not quite.

The sinner's judgement is convinced; his heart is touched; the knockings of the Holy Spirit are heard and recognised. Will the sinner absolutely refuse? No, he dare not. He can only say, Not yet. That is enough. The Spirit is grieved and has gone. Man's extremity is God's opportunity, but man's convenient season is what God abhors.

Another sinner says, Good Master, I am ready to be a Christian now. The Saviour explains what it means to be a Christian, and the young man sorrowfully adds, But not quite a Christian. *Not yet* and *not quite*. Dangerous words! They are Satan's milder words for *never* and *not at all*. They look towards heaven and take hold of hell.

Christian, when we examine ourselves, let us also ponder these things when the Master gives such commands as: Take up thy cross and follow Me; seek first the kingdom of God; go, preach My gospel; love thine enemies; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. When the Holy Spirit shows us sins that must be put to death and duties to be done and when conscience awakes and talks to us, let us listen lest perhaps, in the corners of our hearts, there may be heard the echo of these sinful words, *not yet* and *not quite*.

Adapted from *The Christian Treasury*

The Boy in the Attic

There was once a boy who spent every Sabbath studying the Bible. That was what he enjoyed doing. In the Bible he read the words of Jesus: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret" (Matthew 6:6), and he wanted to obey Jesus. He had no closet, or private room, to go to. So he used to climb up a ladder into an attic and, so that no one would interrupt him, he used to pull up the ladder after him. He took his Bible with him and spent the time reading it and also praying to God.

He was still young when he died. He went to be with Jesus, whom he loved in this world. He had communion with God in this world, perhaps especially in the attic; in heaven he has perfect communion with God.

By the way he loved to read the Bible and to pray, the boy showed where he would go when he died. If you do not love these things, ask God, for Jesus' sake, to give you a new heart so that you would want to read the Bible and to set all your needs before God in prayer.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2019-20

UK Prizes and Awards

Senior Section

Prizes: *Brighton:* Katharine Hills. *Beaully:* Deborah MacLean. *Glasgow:* Rebecca Smith. *Inverness:* Victoria Maton. *London:* David and John Munns. *North Tolsta:* Ruth Morrison.
Awards: *Barnoldswick:* Claudia van Essen. *Dingwall:* Esther Ross. *Edinburgh:* Ross Campbell.
North Harris: Hannah Jardine. *Tonbridge:* Joseph Playfoot.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick:* Calvin Middleton. *Dingwall:* Lydia Ross. *Glasgow:* Cameron Ross. *Halkirk:* Annelise Hymers-Mackintosh. *Inverness:* Lois Maton. *London:* Sarah Munns. *North Tolsta:* Angus Morrison.
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Looking Around Us

The End of the Universe

Katie Mack of North Carolina State University has written a book called, *The End of Everything*. She is a cosmologist, which she would explain as someone who studies the origin, the evolution and the end of the universe. So she uses terms like “heat death”, “big rip” and “vacuum decay” – names cosmologists use for their theories about the end of universe.

She admits that scientists have no idea why the early universe expanded in the way they assume it did. And that, it seems, means that scientists also

have no way of saying that space will not start violently and rapidly ripping apart at any time. Then the universe could very quickly fly out of control.

But all this leaves God completely out of the discussion. God does indeed exist, and we need to listen to what He is telling us, if we are to be prepared for our eternal future. The universe did not begin with a “big bang”; it began because “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”, the whole universe (Genesis 1:1). It did not evolve from the “big bang” to its present condition – with all the variety of creatures on earth, human beings included – over a huge period of time, but “in *six days* the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exodus 20:11). Do we have any idea why He did so? We can at least give this answer: He did so for His glory.

Katie Mack thinks that the most likely way the universe will come to an end is through “heat death”. She says, “It’s where the universe just expands and expands and cools, and everything kind of decays and fades away”. She also states that it is probably not going to happen for trillions of years. “But, technically, it could happen at any time.”

She is presenting a picture of an impersonal universe, but we must not ignore the fact that the personal God who created all things is ruling over all things. What confidence it should give us, as we pass through life, to trust Him as One who is in control of the whole universe. It is He who will bring the universe to an end. He has not told us when, but to speak about trillions of years is totally beyond the timescale He has revealed in Scripture. He tells us also that we are to be “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God [the end of the world], wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:12). Even then He will be in control of all that happens.

The day of God is not only when the universe will end, it is the day when “we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). We will all be there; we will all be judged. As we have all sinned, we can only be safe at Christ’s judgement seat if we will go there with a better righteousness than we can work out for ourselves. The only such righteousness is what Christ Himself has provided for sinners.

How necessary it is for us to trust in Him for salvation, and to do so *now*. Tomorrow may be too late. He calls us: “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).

Price £1.00