

# The Young People's Magazine

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

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*“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 2021***

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**Cover Picture:** The River Ness, in Inverness. See page 143.

## The Young People's Magazine

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# The Young People's Magazine

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Number 8

## The Beauty of Eden

The house is called *Edenvue*. I had walked past it many times before, but I had never before noticed its name. But why had someone given it that name? I do not know. But the house is situated in a beautiful place, near the banks of the River Ness. And the thought struck me that the Garden of Eden must indeed have been a beautiful place; the word *eden* (in Hebrew, in which almost all of the Old Testament was written) means *delight*, or *pleasure*. So the pleasure one may have in its beautiful surroundings may have led to the house having that name. And if we take a view of the Garden of Eden, we may learn something useful.

When God placed Adam and Eve in Eden, everything was perfect; the Bible tells us: “God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). If God saw that everything He had made was very good, we can be sure that everything in Eden was truly beautiful. In particular, Adam and Eve were beautiful, especially because they were sinless. They loved each other perfectly; they were not in the least selfish; they would have been kind to all the animals that went about the garden.

Most importantly, both Adam and Eve loved God with their whole heart. And if any other human beings, adults or children, had been born into the world before Adam and Eve sinned, there would have been perfect love between them all and they would all have loved God perfectly. This also would have been truly beautiful. To say that those who lived in Eden loved each other perfectly and loved God perfectly is just to say that they were perfectly holy; in other words, there was no sin. All was beautiful; there was nothing of the ugliness of sin. But that did not last.

Satan was the chief of the fallen angels. They too were created perfect, absolutely without sin. Yet they fell into sin; they rebelled against God, who had made them. There is much about these things that we do not know, because God has not chosen to reveal it to us, but we are to believe what He tells us in the Bible.

As Satan was a rebel against God, he wanted to make Adam and Eve rebels too. He tempted them into rebellion against God, first persuading

Eve to eat the fruit of the only tree which God had forbidden them to eat. And, through Eve, the devil tempted Adam also to eat of that tree.

Now take a different view of Eden, after Adam and Eve fell into sin: no doubt their outward beauty still remained, but they had lost the beauty of perfect holiness, of perfect love to God and to each other. Instead of loving God perfectly, they were now afraid of His presence and they tried to hide from Him under the trees. How quickly their understanding of God had changed with their fall into sin! And when God spoke to Adam about his sin in eating the forbidden fruit, he blamed Eve for giving it to him. Presumably he still loved her, but it was no longer perfect love. The beauty of their relationship had now drastically changed.

God soon put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. They could still see beauty around them, but they had to face difficulties such as thorns and thistles growing among their food crops. They would find it difficult to find any beauty in the weeds that made it so much more difficult to provide food for themselves, and later for their families.

Sin causes everyone many difficulties. Some experience more and some less; some of the difficulties are more severe and others less so. And every difficulty we experience should make us think of the fact that we are sinners. For instance, when other people act in an unfriendly way, we should be conscious that this is a consequence of sin coming into the world. Yet we ourselves should be careful to treat others properly, for we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. We should ask God to keep us from sin in our contacts with other people.

God tells us to love Him with all our heart. But do we love Him at all? Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). So, if we do not want to keep God's commandments, we do not love Him. And if we do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, as we are commanded, we do not really love Jesus at all, which is truly a serious matter.

How can we go to heaven if we do not love God? And if we do not believe in Christ, we are refusing the remedy God has provided for us in our need as fallen sinners. The salvation that He has provided in Christ provides a perfect remedy. We need forgiveness and a new heart; we need faith in Jesus Christ, a willingness to turn from sin and follow Christ. And those who are given a new heart – who are born again – are saved: they are forgiven all their sins; God makes them able to love Him and to obey His commands, though that love and obedience will never be perfect in this world.

In Eden, there was at first not only wonderful natural beauty everywhere, but there was also true spiritual beauty in the lives and hearts of each of the human beings who lived there. Now, while we can see natural beauty in



many places, yet it is often marred by an ugliness which comes as the result of human activity. Though no unconverted heart is beautiful, we must admire the unselfish actions of some people when they put themselves to great inconvenience, or even risk their lives, for the sake of others.

But can we see spiritual beauty anywhere in this fallen world? Yes, we can. And God sees a beauty in the new creation – when He puts a new, living, holy principle into a human heart. That beauty is marred by the ugliness of sin, which continues even in the godly in this life. They will only become perfectly holy when the Holy Spirit has completed His work of making their souls holy, a work that will continue for the rest of their lives.

We must all die. It was sin, in Eden, that brought death into the world. Adam did not die at once; indeed he lived till he was 930, as we read in Genesis 5. A very ungodly man once wandered into a church. During the service, this chapter was read. After Adam, his son Seth is mentioned: he lived for 912 years, “and he died”. Then there was Seth’s son, Enos, who lived for 905 years, “and he died”. The line down from Adam is followed, generation after generation, and each time – except for Enoch, who was taken straight to heaven – the words are used, “and he died”.

The ungodly man was impressed by the fact that all these men died, even although they lived for so long. He began to think seriously about death and eternity, and at last was brought to trust in Christ Jesus for the salvation of his soul.

Eden was a paradise; everything there was perfect. But no matter how hard we search, we can find no paradise in this world. Yet there is another paradise, another Eden, beyond this world, but we can only get there if we are made truly beautiful in our souls. As we have noticed, it is the work of God’s Spirit to make sinners spiritually beautiful. How earnestly we should seek that work of the Spirit, for whose sake sinners are saved!

It is for Christ’s sake that the Holy Spirit makes the souls of sinners beautiful, and so we should ask earnestly, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalm 51:10), for Christ’s sake. When sinners first believe in Him, it is only the beginning of God’s work in their hearts. The work of cleansing must go on in their souls, as it would have done in the soul of the man who was so impressed by the repeated use of the words, “and he died”.

How important for us to take a view of the paradise that lies beyond this life, where everything will be beautiful – beautifully holy, beautifully free from sin! And we should not close our eyes to the awful realities of a lost eternity, where everything will be ugly and full of sin. Seek the Lord now; trust in Christ Jesus as the Saviour of sinners; and you too will be brought to the perfect Eden beyond this world.

## Preserving the Book

*Rev K M Watkins*

Imagine a king of long ago. This king truly loved his country and wanted a book to record everything important about it. He thought it wise for different authors to write about the aspects of the country they knew best. Some would write about the great events in the country's history: the reigns of kings both good and bad, wars won and lost, what the country's friends did for it and what its enemies did against it. Some would write more homely stories, about their individual and family experiences. The daily lives of farmers, fishermen, tradesmen, builders, soldiers, teachers, fathers and mothers – none of the nation's activities would be left out. Other writers would record the country's laws and customs, and gather the sayings of the wise.

Above all, the king wanted the book to explain the country's religion: the character and acts of their God; the way He was to be served and worshiped; the people's prayers and praises to Him; the messages He gave them, both promises and threatenings; and the blessings and troubles that came as their relationship with God flourished or declined. The lives and work of religious leaders, both faithful and unfaithful, were to be included.

So the king searched throughout the land to find the right authors and he set them to work. He edited their efforts, to ensure that every single word was accurate and that nothing was left out. With the book completed, the king had it published throughout the kingdom. Children would learn it from their youngest days. Future governments would frame their laws and courts would make their decisions using it as their guide. Thus the kingdom would continue the same for generations to come.

Of course, that could only happen if the book was preserved as carefully as it had been prepared. The king required that copies of the book would be made only by the most careful people. He set up a strict system to detect any errors that might creep in, and to stop anyone from making deliberate changes or leaving out even the smallest part of it. As the king was wise and cared so much about this book and the future prosperity of his country, he took care of all these things. Indeed, he took as much care to *preserve* the book as he took to *prepare* it.

Now think about the most important book ever written – the Bible. It was God, the divine King of heaven, who had this book written. No book was ever written with more care. It tells us about the eternal God Himself, existing in three Persons, and how He made all things out of nothing in six days of creation. It describes the history and future of the greatest kingdom of all,

His Church. It lays out His laws and how men sin against those laws. It warns that every sin deserves eternal punishment in hell.

But it also reveals the gospel of salvation through God's own Son, the sinless Lord Jesus Christ, who became man and died on the cross in the place of sinners, and rose again from the dead, having suffered the punishment for His people's sins. It calls sinners to repent and put their trust in Christ for forgiveness, acceptance and eternal life in heaven. It describes a real relationship with Christ, and shows how to serve Him in love. It shows His Church how to worship Him in spirit and truth. Indeed, as "the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him", the Bible alone teaches "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man" (*Shorter Catechism*, Answers 2 and 3).

Nothing could be more important than these things! Therefore the Bible had to be perfect in every way. "Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5). From start to finish, not a single error could be in it – it would have to be *inerrant*. Nothing false could be in it – it would have to be *infallible*. Nothing could be added that was not intended by God. And nothing could be left out that was needed.

Therefore God produced the Bible in a unique way – by the supernatural process of *inspiration*: "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). Over a period of more than 1500 years, God used up to 40 very different people to write the various parts of the book. God not only chose the writers; He also prepared them in character, education and experience to write exactly as He wanted, at the exact times and in the exact circumstances, to produce the absolutely perfect book. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, each human penman of Scripture wrote exactly what God intended him to write. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

The first inspired documents, written mainly in Hebrew and Greek, are called the "autographs". God took such care to make them perfect when they were written. But we do not have them anymore. No one does! The autographs no longer exist. We only have manuscripts that are copies of the originals. Does that mean God's Word has been lost? Of course not! God still cares about His perfect inspired Word. Remember how careful the imaginary king was to preserve the book about his country as well as to produce it. He did that by taking as much care as he could over the copying process. And in His own perfect way, God has taken every care over the copying of the Bible.

As parts of the Bible began to be copied from the autographs, and copies began to be made from the copies, and more copies from those copies, down

through the centuries, God was watching over the process all the time to *preserve* His Word as perfectly as it was produced. It was not that God prevented every copyist from making any mistakes at all, but it did mean that any errors that occurred or any false teachings that were deliberately introduced would be obvious when compared with the faithful copies that did not have those mistakes or changes.

“God’s works of providence are His most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions” (*Shorter Catechism*, answer 11). God is in control of everything, but some things He takes very special care of, and that includes every word of the Bible. God’s special care of the text of Scripture is called *providential preservation*.

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* describes inspiration and preservation in these words: “The Old Testament in Hebrew . . . and the New Testament in Greek” were “immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages” (1:8). Not only did God *produce* the pure Bible by inspiration at the very time that each part was written, but also He will *keep* it pure for the rest of time by providential preservation.

God promised to do this. The Lord Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). Heaven and earth will be altered from their present state, but God’s Word will never be altered. The Saviour also said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law” (Matthew 5:18). The “jot” was the smallest letter and the “tittle” was the smallest mark on a letter in the Hebrew alphabet. God will never allow the smallest change to spoil His perfect Word. He will not allow the smallest part of His book to be lost.

God promised to preserve His Word in His Church, among His people: “As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever” (Isaiah 59:21). At the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Bibles of the various European countries agreed together, because the Reformers believed in providential preservation. They all translated from the same Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that were available to them at the time – ones that God had preserved for His people. The Churches of the Reformation had the whole Word of God in their own languages: English, German, Dutch and so on.

The translators of modern English Bibles have not trusted God to keep His Word pure for His people. That is why they omit so much and question so much. A very strange idea they have of God! They say that He took great care to inspire the Scriptures to begin with, but then they do not trust Him

to take care of it afterwards! But the Authorised Version is a translation made by people who trusted God not only to produce the Bible but also to preserve it through the ages. We do not have to be worried by these new translations that would rob us of so much of God's Word. God has preserved the Book!

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## Assurance of Being Saved

### 6. Can It Be Made Perfect?

*Rev George Macdonald*

This is the final section of a paper on assurance of personal salvation. It was given at a Youth Conference in Australia in 2013. Last month's article addressed the question, Can assurance be lost?

While on earth, with sinful hearts and a tempting devil, the Christian may not assure himself or herself that their assurance will never be tried, and that their sky will never again see a cloud of doubt. Some believers, of course, have departed this life in the full assurance of faith. They stood, as it were, in sight of the gates of the heavenly city. Their triumphant departure should encourage all God's people that there is a rest that remains for the people of God. However, some of God's people have had their faith sorely tried on their deathbed, even when they seemed happy and assured in their hope for eternity almost all their Christian life.

Heaven is where God's people will be assured of their personal salvation in a perfect way. Heaven is where there is no sorrow because there is no sin, no unbelieving thoughts to vex the soul, no doubts and fears to trouble the heart.

In Revelation 21:1-4 we read: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The former things are passed away: unbelief, lack of assurance, doubts and fears, the devil himself – all of these things and more, which trouble the believing soul. For the people of God in glory, there remains only the full assurance of salvation. Just as the man who has been away from his loving home is satisfied that his wife and children love him, when he reaches it

again. Though he knew this before, he now experiences it in its fullness. So God's people will taste and see that God is good for ever and ever. Heaven is – as the theologian Jonathan Edwards put it – “a world of love”.

Let us then seek to be followers of them “who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:12). The thought of that place where doubts and fears will never again cloud the sky of the soul ought to encourage us all to “seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness”.

**Conclusion.** First a quotation from a letter written by Thomas Charles, a minister in Bala, in Wales: “Let us therefore, above all other things, study the Person of Christ, and endeavour to get a deeper insight into the mystery of godliness; and we shall find that our peace and comfort will increase with our knowledge, and that true godliness will be effectually promoted. All peace that proceeds not from this source is carnal security, and all appearance of godliness is only the form, without any life and power.” Second, Isaiah 32:17: “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever”.

True assurance of salvation is grounded in a faith's view of Christ. If it is present in the soul, it is the gracious effect and fruit of being right with God, through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Assurance of personal salvation is a blessing worth seeking. Let us all seek, first and foremost, to be saved in Christ, and then to have an assurance of that salvation all our days.

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## William Hewitson and Madeira

### 2. Robert Kalley and His Work

Last month's section of this Youth Conference paper dealt with Hewitson's early life and his conversion. The article ended with him setting sail for Madeira as a missionary. He was aware that the gospel was already being spread on the island, where there had been conversions but also persecution.

The man who was already spreading the gospel in Madeira was Robert Kalley, a medical doctor. He was born in Glasgow in 1809 and at the age of 16 began his Arts course at Glasgow University, expecting to go on to become a minister in the Church of Scotland. But after beginning his course, he gave up religion and studied medicine instead. As a doctor in Kilmarnock, he was impressed by a poor patient who spoke to him about the saving grace of Christ. Another patient urged him to “read the Book”, meaning the Bible. Kalley did so and after some time was converted. He applied to the London Missionary Society to become a medical missionary in China, but he was turned down.

Kalley's wife was never perfectly well and, in 1838, TB was diagnosed. So he decided that they should spend the following winter in a warmer climate than Scotland could offer, and in October they sailed for Madeira. They landed in Funchal, the main town, and before long Kalley was acting as doctor for the sizeable community of British people on the island. Among them were a few Scots who valued Sabbath worship as it was conducted in Scotland. So Kalley began to keep services in a private house. The following June, he went to Lisbon to sit an exam which would allow him to give medical treatment to the people of Madeira. Having passed the exam, he went on to London, where he was ordained as a minister.

Back in Madeira, he began to treat the local people and their ailments; he even opened a small hospital. Except for the wealthy, he treated everyone free of charge as he had plenty money; his father had been a successful business man. And as he attended to the needs of people's bodies, he also spoke to them about their souls. He found it easy to move the conversation on from bodily disease to the disease of the soul, to Christ as the great Physician and to the remedy that He has provided for sinners.

At one point, when Kalley became unwell, he took a break in the mountains. People began to gather to hear him preach, 1500 of them on one occasion. Very few of the islanders had been to school; so Kalley opened a network of schools – for children by day and for adults in the evening. Some came after working hard in the fields all day. Kalley's big motivation was that they would be able to read the Bible. No charge was made; Kalley himself paid all the expenses; he hoped that the Holy Spirit would open their hearts to receive its truths as they read it.

When Kalley first landed on the island, very few of the people had ever seen a Bible, but interest grew and, by 1842, large crowds were gathering in Funchal to hear Kalley read the Bible and explain it, some walking for 12 hours to get there. Often in the summer and autumn of that year, 2000 people were gathering in the open air to hear him, and on one occasion an estimated 5000 were present. By 1845, 3000 Bibles had been distributed.

We should not be surprised, when the gospel was attracting so much interest, that the devil would attempt to protect his kingdom and do what he could to prevent sinners being influenced by the gospel. The Roman Catholic Church in Portugal published a decree, which demanded that "anyone failing to respect the religion of the kingdom", Romanism, should be imprisoned and pay a fine. One example of not respecting Romanism was to engage in a public act of Protestant worship at which Portuguese citizens were present. If this decree was acted on in Madeira, it would certainly affect Kalley's work.

One of the priests in the cathedral tried to work the people up against

Kalley but without much success at first. A local judge ruled that Kalley was not breaking any law by his activities, but a court in Portugal overruled his decision. In 1843 Kalley was told that he could not act as a doctor and also dispense medicines to his patients; he had to do one thing or the other. The schools in and around Funchal were forced to close, but those in more outlying areas were able to continue. A teacher and his family were arrested; the teacher was sentenced to four months in prison because he was teaching without a diploma.

Then two men, formerly Roman Catholics, became members in the Church of Scotland in Madeira. The Roman Church at once excommunicated them. In itself, that was of no importance, but the Church leaders in Madeira directed their flock: "Let no one give them fire, water, bread, or any other things that may be necessary to them for their support". The two men were persecuted so much that they had to hide in a cave in the mountains for over a year. Even more serious was a Roman Catholic document in which the Bible – inspired as it is throughout by God the Holy Spirit – was blasphemously declared to be "a book from hell".

Then a wealthy man in Funchal, Arsenio da Silva, was converted. His daughter had become seriously ill and all the local doctors felt sure she would die. Da Silva then went to consult Dr Kalley, who was a little more hopeful. The doctor went on his knees and prayed that God would guide him in treating the girl and would bless the girl and her family. When the girl was well on her way to recovery, the father came to Kalley to thank him, and the doctor gave him a Bible.

Da Silva was keen to find out what lay behind Kalley's godly life. He found the Bible disturbing, because he could not find any support in it for the Roman Catholic traditions that he had been brought up to believe. When he found Peter's Epistles, he was sure that these books would answer all these questions – after all, he believed, wrongly, that Peter was the first pope. But, when he read them, he realised that Peter's writings were perfectly consistent with the rest of the New Testament and the Holy Spirit made him able and willing to believe in Christ.

This man continued faithful to his new-found faith and did what he could to tell others about the gospel. At first the priests tried to persuade him to return to the Roman fold. When that failed they turned to persecution. That also failed, even though his wife and daughter refused to follow him in turning to the truth.

Soon about 26 converts found themselves in prison; Roman Catholics called them "heretics" because they no longer followed Roman teachings. When a woman was tried for blasphemy; the most important question asked



her was, Did she believe that the bread in the mass became “the real body and the real blood and the human soul and divinity of Christ”? Even though she knew that she might be put to death if she answered, No, she remained faithful to the Bible and said, “I do not believe it”. She was found guilty, and the judge sentenced her to death. Only because there was some mistake in what happened at the trial was the verdict set aside, and she was released.

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*For Younger Readers*

## The Hen and Its Eggs

Long ago, a man called Tidman wanted to give some money to the London Missionary Society. They were sending men to preach in far-away places where no one knew about Jesus and how to be saved from their sins.

Tidman had very little money; so he decided to set apart one of his hens to lay eggs for the Society. He would sell the eggs and give the money to help the Society. While the hen lived, the money from her eggs came to perhaps £450 in today’s money. The hen had eight chickens and, when they became hens, he sold their eggs to give more money to the Society. Tidman wanted people to hear about Jesus and what He has done. So should we.

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## Three Girls

It was a time when many people were being converted. One was a young girl whose parents had both died. A minister heard that she had become convinced of her sins. He went to see her. His first question was, “When did this work of grace begin in your soul?”

“Several weeks ago,” she told him.

“What brought you to think so?”

“Just felt I was a great sinner and needed Jesus.”

“Have you got Him?”

“Yes.”

“How do you know?”

“God says, ‘The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin’.”

“Are you resting on that word of His?”

“O yes.”

The girl was able to give more reasons why she believed her sins had been forgiven. Among other things, she said she now loved the Bible, which she did not do before, and she loved to pray.

The minister next asked her what she prayed for.

"For the blood of Christ to cleanse my sins away, and the Spirit of Christ to renew and sanctify my nature, and that He would be a father and mother unto me," answered the girl, who had lost both her father and her mother.

The last question the minister asked her was: "Was there any particular text, more than another, that your soul is now resting on, since you found peace?"

"Yes."

"What?"

The girl repeated the two verses: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38,39).

The person who first told the story then asked the question: "Who can doubt that this little one was taught of the Spirit?" He obviously believed that she had been so taught.

The second girl was Anna. Her father said about her: "Little Anna is now the happiest child I have. Formerly she seldom sat down to a meal without crying because it was not good enough, and now she eats with thankfulness whatever she gets." It would seem that Anna belonged to a poor family who could not afford the best of food. She was upset because her meals were not as tasty as she would like and perhaps there was not as much to eat as she would want. It would seem that this girl too was converted and that the change in her attitude to her food was one sign that God had changed her heart. And if that was indeed so, one would expect that there would have been other changes in her attitudes and in her life generally.

Someone else wrote about a third girl. He had seen her crying and praying some weeks before. He now asked her if she was noticing any change in herself lately.

"Yes," she said, "I do."

"What is it?" he asked further.

She answered, "Before, Christ was no concern to me, and now He is never out of my thoughts". Here was a wonderful change in her attitude. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42) is still the most important that we have to face.

God is still able to change the hearts, the attitudes and the lives of young people and children, not only of those who are older. As our attitude to Christ reflects the state of our soul, how much we need to pray to God, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Ask Him to give you now a clean heart and a right spirit.

*For Junior Readers*

## Asahel and His Soul

A boy was born a long time ago to a farmer and his wife in New England, the north-east corner of the United States. They named him Asahel, Asahel Nettleton. He was baptized and brought up to go to church. His parents taught him from the Word of God and he also learned *The Shorter Catechism*. He was very grateful for this in later years, as I hope you will be, because it gave him a good grounding in the teachings of the Bible.

One evening, while he was still quite young, he was out in the fields alone watching the setting sun. As it gradually went down and darkness began to fall, he felt very serious. It was because of the thought that his life would one day come to an end too, and that he would die.

For some years he went on thinking that all was well with his soul. This was because he did not commit the outward sins which he saw others doing.

Then, when he was about 18, he attended a gathering with his worldly friends. He meant to spend the next day with them too. "But we must all die, and go to judgement," he thought, "and how shall we then think about these scenes?" All the amusements he used to enjoy now became empty to him. He realised that he had a never-dying soul, a soul that would live for ever, and he knew that he was not ready to meet his God.

About this time he heard a sermon on the need to be born again. This made him realise that he himself needed a new heart. He began to read the Bible more diligently, to pray more earnestly, to give up his worldly friends, to quit all worldly amusements, and to seek the salvation of his soul.

Sin became a burden to him. He realised more and more that nothing he could do would please God. He saw that all his righteousnesses were "as filthy rags". He was afraid of death and was convinced that "every moment of time was more valuable than all the wealth of the world". He knew that every moment should be used to seek the Lord.

After some time he was brought to believe on Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. The Saviour was made very precious to him. He saw clearly that this change was not the result of any effort of his own; it was only because of God's mercy.

He was very concerned about the dangerous condition of those who had never believed in Christ. He so much wanted to be used in the salvation of other people that he became a minister of the gospel. The Lord greatly blessed his preaching to the salvation of thousands of people during the spiritual revivals of the following years.

What about you? Will you not seek the Lord now, when you are still young, as Asahel did, before you get more caught up in the world? The Lord has promised, "Those that seek Me early shall find Me".

Do you remember who Asahel was in the Bible? He was one of the mighty men in David's army. Perhaps you could find out a little more about him:

What relation was he to David? (1 Chronicles 2:13-16);

What was he well known for? (2 Samuel 2:18);

Who killed him? (2 Samuel 2:23);

Where was he buried? (2 Samuel 2:32).

*J van Kralingen*

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## Young People and Godliness

*W S Plumer*

Taken, with editing, from *Short Sermons for the People*. The text is Proverbs 8:17: "I love them that love Me: and those that seek Me early shall find Me."

**T**he words of the text are the words of Jesus Christ. He is the best friend. He will be our final judge. He makes no mistakes. He gives no bad advice. His words are loving and true. By His kindness, sinners are won to Him. In the text, He commends early piety – another word for *godliness*. This is most reasonable.

1. People have souls and minds capable of being very good or very bad, of enjoying much and suffering much. In youth the hopes are high, fears are strong, the memory is easily impressed, bad habits are few, and prejudices are feeble. Is it not important that a right direction is given early in life to one's whole nature, so that it is not set on fire of hell? Let hopes be fixed on God. Let fears be helpful. Let the memory be stored with useful knowledge from the Bible. Let habits be holy and regular; not wild, dangerous and damning. All this can be secured only by living, hearty piety.

2. Early piety will have a good effect by directing us to right employment, and to choose suitable companions. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose" (Psalm 25:12). In our chapter, Jesus says, "Counsel is Mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength". One wrong step in early life may plant a thorn in your pillow which will pierce you even at the time of death. But "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not" (James 1:5).

3. Only early godliness is sure to protect us from dashing on those rocks

where so many have made shipwreck, both for this world and the next. Here is a youth, hasty, rash, full of hope, with a deceitful heart within him and a treacherous world around him. Who but God can save him from ways which will ruin him? Many plunge not only themselves but their parents into deep sadness by crimes in their youth. Many a father has, like David, wept over the early death of a wicked son, saying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33). Only early godliness can surely save us from such an end.

4. If we do not become godly when we are young, it is very uncertain if we ever shall become so. Not many who live to old age become godly then. It seems to be God's plan that people should glorify Him here as well as enjoy Him hereafter. When people grow old, their hearts become harder, their wills more stubborn, and their sound conversion less likely. But this is not all. A very large number of the human race die before the period of youth has passed.

Not long ago, a young man died, saying, "O that I had never been born; O that I had died and no eye had seen me; O that I had been carried from the womb to the grave. God . . . has bent His bow; He has made ready His arrows." Very different is it with the soul that has fled to Jesus. Christ is with His dying people, and "death is a servant sent to take God's children home from school to their Father's house above".

5. If you will live through youth and pass on to meet the cares, hopes, toils and sorrows of middle age without a new heart, the same evil may come on you as on younger people. But your guilt and misery will be much greater. How can anyone bear the heavy burdens of middle life without the grace of God?

Or if you weather all the storms of youth and middle age, early piety is still important. If every one was sure that he would live to be 70 and have a sound mind at that age, it is still wise to embrace Christ early. Trials and weakness come on the aged and they need all the help they can get. The light is sweet, and the young see beauty almost everywhere. When David suggested to Barzillai to go up with him to Jerusalem, he said, "I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden to my Lord the king? . . . Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother" (2 Samuel 19:35-37).

The senses of the very old are blunted. Their eyesight is lost, or is dim. Their hearing is dull, or confused. Their strength is gone. Their step is un-

steady. Their heads and hands begin to tremble. Their digestion is imperfect. Like Barzillai, they stay at home and hug the chimney corner. Fears are in their way. The almond tree flourishes – grey hairs are on their heads (see Ecclesiastes 12:5). Old and tried friends are gone, and they cease to form plans. Even desire fails. Nothing but hearty piety can sustain one at such an age. But the grace of God is sufficient to do it. In old age, David said, “O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not” (Psalm 17:18). Thanks be to God, He will not forsake His aged servants. He is with them to the last.

But if one comes to old age with all its infirmities without the grace of God, how sad his condition, how cheerless his prospects! Can anything be more dismal than the death of an old man who has lived 60 or 80 years in a gospel land and has not made peace with God? He goes to his long home. The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it.

Let us turn away from this sad view, and suppose that it is an old believer who has died. He is gathered in as a shock of corn fully ripe. He rests from his labours, his works follow him. Before he leaves the world, he says, “Thou art my hope, O Lord God: Thou art my trust from my youth. . . . Thou art my strong refuge. . . . I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only. . . . Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth” (Psalm 71:5,7,16,20). “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. . . . My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psalm 73:24,25).

In middle life too the believer may die, but he finds God's grace sufficient for him. Often even the tender, loving mother has kissed her baby, committed it to God, said farewell to earth and died in triumph.

And even the young believer, as yet but a babe in Christ, is not forsaken in his last hours. Of this something has before been said, but let us not forget the words of the text, “I love them that love Me: and those that seek Me early shall find Me”. What more can anyone need?

**Conclusion.** Are you young? Be not wise in your own conceit. Do not count on a long life. Do not let the thoughts of an early death dishearten you. Play the man. Be firm. Be true to yourself, to your friends, and to God. Aim at the best things. Live unto Him who has bought you with His blood. Set a noble example of devotion to Christ. Live by faith on the Son of God. Pray often and earnestly. Do not be over-anxious about anything earthly. Lay up your treasure in heaven. Walk as Jesus walked, and leave all results with God.

# Looking Around Us

## A Sad End and Spiritual Privileges

The name McAfee will probably be familiar to some readers as a brand of anti-virus software. The brand took the name of the founder of the company, John McAfee, but it was eventually sold for more than \$7.6bn (£4.7bn).

One might expect that, with so much money to spend (though probably not the whole £4.7bn), John McAfee would have lived out the rest of his life in real happiness. After all, he could surely have easily bought everything he wanted; nothing would have been too expensive for him.

But no, McAfee did not like paying taxes. Perhaps no one does, but he refused to send in his tax returns to the United States authorities for four years, although he was earning millions of dollars. Oddly, he claimed that taxes were illegal. He was arrested in Spain, and the US wanted him brought before their courts to face charges. After the National Court in Spain agreed that McAfee should be sent to the US to face trial, he was found dead in his prison cell, and the local justice department said that “everything indicates” McAfee had taken his own life. What a sad end to a successful life – successful, that is, in worldly terms!

No one has any right to take away his own life. The command, “Thou shalt not kill”, includes the command, “Thou shalt not kill thyself”. How dangerous for someone unconverted to launch themselves into eternity.

McAfee could have had everything he wanted, but not a care-free life. Did he ever think of heaven and how he could prepare for it, how he could safely meet God at death and stand before the judgement seat of Christ? Did he ever pay attention to the Saviour’s question, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36).

You will probably never be earning millions of dollars per year or sell a company worth billions. But you may still be so focused on the things of this world that you forget about your soul and its needs – or, at least, you ignore them. Jesus still points us to the first things, the things that we need to put first in our life. He said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). We are to treat our soul as what is most important. We are to seek the Lord so that we may have a place in God’s kingdom, so that we may have the righteousness of Christ put to our account before God, so that we may believe in Him and be saved.

The salvation of our soul is far more valuable than anything else. Christ’s righteousness – along with other spiritual privileges – is all that we can take with us from this world into eternity. Let us, for Christ’s sake, seek these blessings earnestly, and do so now. Otherwise we must go to a lost eternity.

# A Christian's Longings

The Saviour hides His face.  
My spirit thirsts to prove  
Renewed supplies of pard'ning grace,  
And never-fading love.

The favoured souls who know  
What glories shine in Him,  
Pant for His presence, as the roe  
Pants for the living stream.

What trifles tease me now!  
They swarm like summer flies,  
They cleave to everything I do,  
And swim before my eyes.

How dull the Sabbath Day,  
Without the Sabbath's Lord!  
How toilsome then to sing and pray,  
And wait upon the Word!

Of all the truths I hear,  
How few delight my taste!  
I glean a berry here and there,  
But mourn the vintage past.

Yet let me (as I ought)  
Still hope to be supplied;  
No pleasure else is worth a thought,  
Nor shall I be denied.

Though I am but a worm,  
Unworthy of His care,  
The Lord will my desire perform,  
And grant me all my prayer.

*William Cowper*

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