

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



June 2022

Vol 87 • No 6

Contents

“Keep It Cheery”	103
The Power of the Bible:	
1. Beginning to Pray to God	106
“It Is All Wrong!”	108
Scriptural Teaching on the Family (6)	111
For Junior Readers:	
The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee	113
For Younger Readers:	
Two Lost Children	114
A Reformation Tour:	
1. Perth to Dundee	115
Poison in Books	118
Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2021-22:	
UK names for Exercise 2	119
Looking Around Us	119

Cover Picture: The blind dog. See page 108.

The Young People’s Magazine

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

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

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

Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates, including postage, are: *Free Presbyterian Magazine* £28.50 (£2.20 per copy); *Young People’s Magazine* £16.50 (£1.10 per copy); both magazines £43.00. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

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

The Young People's Magazine

Volume 87

June 2022

Number 6

“Keep It Cheery”

A minister was about to take his first service after becoming the assistant in a church in the east end of Glasgow. Before the service began, the church officer told the minister: “Keep it cheery; keep it cheery”. And, it seems, the minister took the advice he was given. No doubt the church officer meant well. He probably wanted everyone in the congregation to go away happy; he did not want them to be sad and discouraged; he wanted them to come back regularly in the future.

Yet how wise was the advice? A church minister should be an ambassador for Christ, and he should be very conscious of the responsibility that goes with his duties. An ambassador for the United Kingdom, for instance, has responsibilities: he is to represent the Queen and her government in some other country. When the ambassador speaks for his government, he is to convey accurately the message he has been given. Ministers are ambassadors for King Jesus; so they are to convey their King's message accurately. Christ has said, “I am . . . the truth” (John 14:6). So ministers should speak the whole truth. In their preaching they have no right to select what they consider to be the more cheerful parts of the Bible and ignore the other parts.

When Christ was in this world, He made statements like: “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). There probably were some who would have complained when they heard Jesus Christ warning them about perishing in hell for ever. They might have described such a message as dismal, lacking in cheerfulness. But what they should have realised was that He was speaking *the truth*. They needed to know about the danger they were in. They should have been thankful to be warned, to be reminded of their need to repent – to turn away from their sins and look to Christ Himself as the only Saviour from sin. They needed to face up to the reality of their spiritual situation, and so do congregations today.

Christ also spoke plainly about the Day of Judgement. He encouraged those who had trusted in Him that all would be well with them on that solemn day. He as Judge will then call to them: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew

25:34). Christ's ambassadors have full authority to encourage those whom God has blessed with a new heart, and who exercise saving faith in Christ as the only Saviour for sinners. They will be in no danger whatever on the Day of Judgement.

God tells ministers, among others, not to make "the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad" (Ezekiel 13:22). Instead, they are to be encouraged – not least, by showing them the spiritual evidence that should make them conclude that they are among God's children. This is the kind of preaching that should cheer them up: bringing out, for instance, the teaching of the Beatitudes (in Matthew 5) – in particular, that "blessed are the poor in spirit", people who do not look within themselves for spiritual blessing; they are too poor for that. How good for poor sinners to be encouraged to look away from themselves and see endless riches in Christ Jesus!

But God warns, through Ezekiel, against strengthening "the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life" (13:22). This shows us the danger of preaching that is always cheerful; it is likely to strengthen the wicked in their rebellion against God, because they are never shown that they must return from their wicked ways to God, through Christ.

The Bible tells us that "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). It might seem unkind to tell a man, who is enjoying his walk along a road, that he should turn back at once. The way seems right to him, but his walk will probably end in death. The reason is that there are lions not far beyond the next corner. But the warning will only seem unkind to someone who does not believe there are lions ahead or assumes they are not really dangerous.

In the same way, there are many who do not welcome a straightforward warning about the danger of going on in an ungodly way, because eternal punishment lies ahead. Their way seems right to them, but it will end in eternal death if they do not turn back. People may wish to hear nothing about sin or hell or the Day of Judgement; they would prefer to hear sermons on more cheerful topics. But congregations need to hear the whole truth; they need to hear the notes of warning as well as more cheerful notes if they are to "flee from the wrath to come" (Matthew 3:7) before it is too late.

Someone has pointed out recently that, in 1939, when Russia under Joseph Stalin was planning to invade Finland, his generals were unlikely to have given him realistic advice. Fearful for their lives, they would likely have told him what he wanted to hear: that everything would go smoothly and that the Russian army would be wonderfully successful. But it was not wonderfully successful; the Finns fought back strongly and the Russians made little

progress. Stalin’s generals ought to have given him a less cheerful message. Nor should we be looking for a cheerful message that is not justified by the reality of our spiritual state. We should be thankful to hear warnings about sin and its consequences.

Of course, preaching that is all warning, without any encouragement for needy sinners, is not according to the Bible. Sinners need to be shown the way of salvation; they need to be pointed to Christ as the One who came into the world to save sinners. And that is what God’s true ambassadors seek to do. They delight to make known that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Satan may come to sinners to tell them that there is no salvation for them. But he has been a liar since the beginning, and Christ, who is “the truth”, assures sinners of every kind: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). How cheering that message should be!

However many warnings there are in the Bible – and there is more from Christ Himself in the Bible about hell than from anyone else– there is also much to encourage. But to whom are these cheering encouragements addressed? To whom is it said, “Be of good cheer” (Matthew 14:27)? These words were said to Christ’s believing disciples at first. It is to Christ’s disciples they are still spoken – to those who want to learn from Christ more and more, for He is the great Teacher. These words are spoken to those who want to follow Christ, to obey Him, to do what He wants them to do. There is indeed a place for ministers to preach a cheering message, but it is not to be addressed to those who are determined to go on in their sins. They need to repent and believe the gospel.

At the end of his long life – he was 82 when he died – John Newton still felt he needed more light and more love; he knew that he was still a sinner and was coming short of the glory of God. To encourage him, someone told him: “The Lord is gracious”.

Newton was by now blind and his memory was failing, but he showed his clear grasp of Scripture truth when he answered, “If it were not so, how could I dare to stand before Him?” We sinners could never hope to stand before God safely unless He shows mercy to sinners – which He does because of Christ and His finished work in the place of sinners. The fact of God’s mercy is the most cheering message that a condemned sinner can possibly hear.

May we, when we come to die – and indeed long before then – have a clear sense of our need as sinners and of the mercy of God in Christ for sinners! Then we can look forward with cheerfulness to a place in heaven.

The Power of the Bible

1. Beginning to Pray to God

A couple in Calais had a family of two boys and two girls. The parents were strict Roman Catholics and brought up their children in that religion. The older daughter had finished preparing to take part in the mass; she had learned by heart some catechisms and was able to repeat prayers to the Virgin Mary, to saints and angels – but not, it seems, to God. This is strange, because God can hear prayers, and the Bible gives us every encouragement to pray to Him, but we are not told to pray to saints or angels as they cannot hear us. So we must pray to God and we must *not* pray to the Virgin Mary or to any other being except God.

As a reward for learning catechisms and prayers, the priest gave her a chaplet, similar to a rosary. At each of the beads on the chaplet, she was to say a prayer to the Virgin. Every time these prayers were said – so she was told – the time that a soul would have to spend in purgatory would be reduced by 40 days. (Purgatory is the false, unscriptural idea that most Roman Catholics will have to suffer punishment there for their sins, for some time after they die.) And someone could be entirely delivered from purgatory if she said these prayers earnestly on All Saints' Day, after attending mass. (All Saints' Day is November 1, a day kept in honour of those whom Roman Catholics claim were particularly holy in this world; such "holy" days, of course, have no authority from the Bible). The young woman imagined that she had delivered her grandfather and others from purgatory through her prayers.

When she was 19, she crossed from France to England. The English friend she stayed with put a French Bible on a table for her to read, but for six months it lay unopened. The Frenchwoman had always been told that the Bible was not at all a suitable book for her to read; so she did not dare to read it. She did agree, after some time, to go to church with her English friend, but she did not understand English well and gave her attention to reading her mass book during the service.

One day her English friend picked up the book and opened it. She was shocked to see prayers to the Virgin Mary. She asked, "What sort of prayer can you address to a creature who, like yourself had need of a Saviour?" She was surprised that her French friend could not understand that no one could hear prayer except God.

The Frenchwoman insisted that she had the greatest confidence in the Virgin, "and it is through her I ask for everything I need from God". But her

friend asked where she could find that idea in the Bible. The Englishwoman had the understanding that a true Protestant should have: we are to take all our religious ideas from the Bible; we must take nothing in religion from anywhere else.

So the Frenchwoman began to read the Bible – a Roman Catholic translation into French. She did not then know that a Protestant translation would have been more satisfactory. She was reading the Bible in the hope of finding verses that would prove that she was right in praying to the Virgin Mary. Before she had read halfway through the Scriptures, she had to go back to France, and of course she had not found there what she was looking for so seriously – the Roman Catholic teachings about the Virgin Mary. But she wanted her family not to know that she had been going to a Protestant church and that she had been reading the Bible.

Her sister who had stayed in France told her that she had been reading a book, translated from English, called *Father Clement*. In answer to the older sister's question as to what the book was about, she said, "It proves, from the Bible, that the Roman Catholic faith is not founded on the Scripture, and that the Protestant faith, on the contrary, is the pure religion founded on Jesus Christ". She then asked, "You that have been for nearly a year in a Protestant country, what do you think of this belief?"

Her sister answered, "All I can say is, I have the greatest esteem for the Protestants". She wanted to read the book too, and they ended up spending the night reading it together. They were left with the question, Was the book really founded on Scripture or not? The older sister promised that, when she would get back to England, she would look up in the Bible all the verses quoted in the book they had been reading.

The sisters were no longer praying to the Virgin Mary. They gave the book to their mother to read, but she made no comment when she gave it back. Shortly before her older daughter went back to England, their mother asked her whether she meant to confess to a priest and go to mass. The daughter agreed to go but was obviously uneasy about it, as she kept putting it off.

Then the sisters decided to go together, hoping that God would show them what was right. They prayed – not now to the Virgin Mary – "O God, teach us what we are to do. Shall we confess, or shall we not?" They let everyone else go ahead of them to confess, till no one was left. The younger sister then asked, "Are you going?" The other answered, "No, I cannot". And at once they set off together for home. God was beginning to answer their prayers.

The next day, the older sister returned to England. The first thing she did there was to buy Bibles for her sister and her mother. As she continued to read the Bible herself, she was learning more about the way of salvation. On

her next trip to France, the older sister stayed away from Sabbath mass and so did the other. The next Sabbath was wet, and the mother stayed at home too. The father commented, "Times are sadly changed now"; he showed no sign of questioning his Roman Catholic faith.

That evening the older sister noticed that no one had been looking after the statue of the Virgin while she was away. This led to the two sisters speaking together about how the Lord had been dealing with them. They did not know what to do. Should they ask advice, they wondered, from a priest they could rely on? But they were afraid that he would tell them they should not have read the Bible, which, as we have seen, made them doubt Roman Catholic teaching. Then they considered speaking to a Protestant minister. In the end they decided, "Let us continue to read our Bible with prayer. God has done His work up till now, and He will carry it on."

"It Is All Wrong!"

Rev K M Watkins

These were the words of the vet as she shone her light onto the back of our blind dog's eyes. "It is all wrong!" This was the dog's first visit to a vet in the UK and we were hoping that something could be done to help his sight a little. But our dog will never see. Blood vessels are meant to join the retina at the back of the eye. But there were no vessels at the back of our dog's eyes. The vet admitted, "I've never seen anything like this before".

The Bible says that unconverted sinners have their "understanding darkened . . . through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18). This is *spiritual* blindness, not physical blindness, for it is the *understanding* that is darkened and the *heart* that is blinded. As the physically blind cannot see physical things, so the spiritually blind cannot "see" spiritual things.

The physically blind cannot see if something is ugly, like a piece of clothing that is filthy and torn. Likewise the spiritually blind person cannot see that he is spiritually ugly. Left to themselves, they think that their souls do not look too bad. They may admit that they are not perfect, but they still think that they are good people. But that is only because it is all wrong with their spiritual understanding. If the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of their understanding, they see themselves as they really are and confess with others, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). They see that their "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Now they say, "It is all wrong!"

Now they admit that they never saw such sinful ugliness as they now see in themselves.

The physically blind cannot see danger ahead. The spiritually blind are like that. “A prudent [or wise] man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple [or foolish] pass on, and are punished” (Proverbs 22:3). The horrible pit of hell is ready to swallow up those who go on in sin and unbelief. But sinners cannot see that, even when they are warned over and over again. Their way of life seems right to themselves, and they ignore the dangers of a lost eternity, assuring themselves that somehow it will be all right in the end. But if the Holy Spirit convinces them of their danger, then they become greatly alarmed, realising that it is all wrong for them, for time and eternity. Then they cry out to be saved from the wrath to come.

The physically blind cannot know the beauty of things like colours and attractive views, because they cannot see them. Likewise the spiritually blind cannot know the beauty of the gospel and Christ, because they cannot understand them properly. “The natural [unconverted] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

There is nothing but spiritual beauty in Christ, for “He is altogether lovely” (Song of Solomon 5:16). Everything we need as sinners is found in Him. He is a perfect Saviour. Do we need blood to cleanse us? “The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Do we need righteousness to clothe us? “He hath covered me with the robe of [Christ’s] righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10). Do we need a powerful and faithful friend to walk with us on life’s journey? Christ is the “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). All these wonderful things and more are in Christ. But sinners are blind to His loveliness and cannot appreciate it. “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2). It is all wrong – not with Him, but with us! If the Holy Spirit gives us a new heart, “enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ” (*Shorter Catechism*, Answer 31), then we see how wonderful the gospel is.

Physical blindness is a sad affliction. Spiritual blindness is much worse. Only a few people are born physically blind. But we are all born spiritually blind. Physically blind people are not to be blamed for their blindness, but spiritual blindness is sinful. “For this they willingly [that is, wilfully] are ignorant of” (2 Peter 3:5). If we did not have fallen, unbelieving, sin-loving souls, we would not be blind to spiritual things. If we were not so eager to be dazzled by worldly pleasures, we would not be so blind to the value of spiritual things. Our spiritual blindness is not only our weakness, but also our wickedness. It is all *wrong*!

Reader, have you ever realised how blind you are? Have you ever said about your own understanding, "It is all wrong!" Have you admitted your sinful failure to see the value of the gospel as you should? "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2). The Pharisees did not want to accept the truth about their spiritual blindness. They resisted the Saviour's witness against them, by saying, "Are we blind also?" (John 9:40). Make sure you do not resist like them!

Although our dog is completely blind, on the surface his eyes look normal, deep brown and clear, without any cloudiness. It is only on the inside that the blindness appears. Sinners can be like this too. It might seem that they understand. Other people might think that they really understand the Bible. But, like the vet looking deep into the dog's eyes, "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Behind the outward appearance, deep in the soul it is all wrong! Sinners may have eyes, but they are like the idols of false religion that cannot see (see Psalm 115:8).

Perhaps, when you compare yourself to worldly people, you think that there is nothing wrong with your spiritual sight. Clearly you know more of the Bible than they do. Perhaps you know *The Shorter Catechism* off by heart. Perhaps you can recite all Ten Commandments. Perhaps you can quote gospel texts like John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". But do you really know these things in the right way, so as to value them above all other things? Until then, it is all wrong!

Our dog has learnt to cope with his blindness very well. When we are out on a walk, people we meet can be astonished to learn that he is blind. They see him trotting along with us as if there was nothing wrong. They think that he must have some sight. But the truth is far otherwise. He cannot see anything. It is all wrong! Likewise sinners can learn to go along with the people of God. Even though they have never seen the ugliness of their own sin, they hear the people of God speak of it. Even though they cannot see the beauty of Christ for themselves, they hear what others say of Him. They can learn to speak as if they saw and felt the same things as God's people. But inwardly they are still completely blind. It is all wrong!

Our poor dog will never be able to see. But that is not the case with spiritually blind sinners. The Lord can give them their sight. Blind Bartimaeus cried to Christ for mercy. Jesus asked him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" As soon as he answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight" (Mark 10:51), "immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way" (verse 52). This miracle on the blind man's eyes teaches sinners

that Christ can do the same for their spiritual eyes – He can give them spiritual sight.

Yes, it is all wrong with sinners' spiritual sight. But it does not have to stay like that. Pray with the Psalmist, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things" (Psalm 119:18). Ask the Lord to open the eyes of your understanding. Ask Him to show you yourself, that you would see the ugliness of your sin. Ask Him to awaken you, to fear a lost eternity. Ask Him to show you Himself, that you would see His beautiful suitability as the only Saviour. Ask Him to show you the open door of the gospel invitation, so that you would come to Him by faith.

Scriptural Teaching on the Family (6)

Matthew Vogan

Last month's article from this Youth Conference paper focused on "loving others as ourselves". This is the final article in the series.

A husband, in his love to his wife, should feel it a loving honour not to serve himself. As the Puritan Isaac Ambrose says, "she is called the wife of his bosom, to show that she ought to be as his heart in his bosom. He must love her at all times; he must love her in all things; love must season and sweeten his speech, carriage [behaviour], actions towards her; love must show itself in his commands, reproofs, admonitions, instructions, authority, familiarity with her: the rise of which love must not be from her beauty or nobility, but especially because she is his sister in the Christian religion, and an inheritor with him of the kingdom of heaven; because of her graces and virtues, because she bears him children [who are] the heirs of his name and substance, and because of the union and conjunction of marriage.

"Love growing on beauty, riches, lust, or any other slight grounds, soon vanisheth; but if grounded on these considerations, and especially on this union of marriage, it is lasting and true: the want hereof [lack of this] is the fountain of strife, quarrelling, and debate, which converts the paradise of marriage into an hell."

In an impure, unclean society, there are many ways in which those who are preparing for marriage or are married can be influenced in their thoughts and desires. The impure lust of our culture defiles and makes self-gratification and fulfilment the great goal. They are to seek and demonstrate a pure and chaste love according to the Seventh Commandment, which also reaches to their behaviour and words to others, and to their thoughts. These things, if not resisted, will attack the love that ought to be in a marriage.

When we put others first we will be conscious of the example we set and of the stumbling blocks that we can put in their way, through our words and behaviour. We will want to avoid the anger that provokes others to anger, resentment and bitterness. Parents need to exercise loving discipline – it is destructive to neglect it, as we can see with Eli's sons. But parents will seek to use discipline with a sense of what is right and wrong, not their personal self-interest. It is good for children to submit to such loving correction and discipline.

Expressive individualism (the idea that we find our basic meaning only when we express our own feelings and desires) resists all restraints that get in the way of our personal freedom, and so it goes well with a prevailing spirit of rebellion, which attacks the very notion of loving submission and obedience. Besides speaking of the respect, honour and obedience that children owe to their parents, Isaac Ambrose speaks of the inward duties they also owe, and which help them fulfil the outward duties. The inward duties which children owe to their parents, are love and fear: "love, like sugar, sweetens fear; and fear, like salt, seasons love.

"There must be a loving fear, and a fearing love. Hence the fear of a child is opposed to the fear of a slave: for a child's fear being mixed with love, hath respect to [refers to] the offence which a parent may take; but a slave's fear, which is ordinarily mixed with hatred, hath respect to [refers to] nothing but the punishment which his master may inflict upon him. This love-like fear is so proper to children that the awful [full of awe] respect which the saints bear to God is called a filial fear [children's respect for their parents]. Children have received their substance from the very substance of their parents, and therefore they are to perform this duty of love and fear to them."

As we consider the duties of the family (and we have only been able to do this in a superficial way) there is much reason for spiritual self-examination. Isaac Ambrose says, "Christians, look within you, look about you; that man is not a good man that is not good in all his relations. The same God that requires us to serve him as private persons [individuals], requires us to serve him in our relations. . . . [He] commands you to serve Him as a father, as an husband. And he that keeps the whole law and offends in one point is guilty of all."

Briefly we must now ask this final question, Which future for the family will you follow? and address it to you very personally. Will you follow the destructive way of the world in your own future (or present) family relations or will you follow God's perfect way of love?

We should be concerned about attacks on the family and other things that undermine it. But we need more than this. We need families built with

the right foundation, of Christ and His Word (Matthew 7:24-27). Without the right foundation we can have successful careers, bank balances and to-do lists, but not blessed families. We will build but we will “labour in vain” (Psalm 127:1). If families lack such a foundation, it will affect the Church and nation, who in turn are built on families.

As we have already mentioned, Mark Regenerus in his book, *The Future of Christian Marriage*, writes, “As a researcher, studying the demise of marriage has been like watching an invasive fungus slowly destroy a stately old oak tree.” “The oak will not perish”, says Regenerus. “In fact, marriage will increasingly become ‘a Christian thing’, which means the Church will bear increasing responsibility for an institution with an uncertain future.”

The same can be said of the family as a whole. The family will have critical importance in a society that becomes more secular and more damaged by the destructive tendencies of the LGBT agenda. Those who survived the experience of Russian communism without being brainwashed testify that the family was a key unit for fostering the truth rather than the lies being promoted by the government and culture around them. Some Christian families in Russia found that their father was sent to prison, and their mother had to raise the children and teach them. The worse a society and culture get and the more intolerant their attitude to biblical values, the more we need families that will teach, live and love the truth.

But this will only be carried out faithfully as we implement the challenging teaching of Scripture in this area. Daniel Cawdrey (a member of the Westminster Assembly) believed that “the spring of all reformation, in towns, Churches, nations (next to personal reformation where every man mends himself) is that which is found in families”. The family is the fundamental institution of society and the Church. If we want to see churches and communities transformed, we need to start with ourselves and our families now and for the future.

For Junior Readers

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

I am sure you have heard about the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, which is to be celebrated this month. A jubilee marks an anniversary of a special occasion; for example, the coronation of a king or queen. Silver, Golden and Diamond jubilees mark something that happened 25, 50 and 60 years ago, and a Platinum Jubilee marks 70 years. Queen Elizabeth II is the first British monarch ever to reign for 70 years; so it is a very significant event.

On her twenty-first birthday in 1947, Princess Elizabeth, as she then was, made a speech over the radio to the peoples of Britain and its Commonwealth. In it she made this promise: "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service. . . . God help me to make good my vow and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it." By continuing to carry out her duties into old age she has clearly been intent on fulfilling this promise.

After her father, King George VI, died she was crowned in Westminster Abbey. The Coronation Service was lengthy and during it the Queen was presented with a Bible: "To keep your Majesty ever mindful of the Law and the Gospel of God as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords".

You may not have realised that the Synod of our Church, when it meets each year, sends a special letter to the Queen, called, "The Loyal and Dutiful Address of the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland". In it the ministers and elders assure the Queen of their prayerful support. They also point out to her issues of concern and what Scripture says about such matters. In these ways she has had God's Word and biblical standards set before her throughout her long reign.

The Bible tells us that God says, "By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice". We are also told that "prayers and giving of thanks [should] be made for kings and for all that are in authority". So we should pray that the Lord would bless our Queen. We should also be thankful that He has given her a long and stable reign.

(The idea of a jubilee dates back to Old Testament times. You could look up Leviticus 25 and read about the setting up of the year of jubilee among the Israelites in the time of Moses.)

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

Two Lost Children

Two children were lost. They had travelled with other people on a bus. After getting off the bus they must have wandered away and they could not find their way back. They did not know what road to follow.

What could they do? They were sensible enough to go to a phone box and call 999. (That was a time when there were no mobile

phones.) The person who spoke to them on the phone asked two police officers to go in their car to find them.

The police officers took the children into their car and brought them to the bus. The children were 40 minutes late, but they were safe. That was the most important thing.

We are all lost sinners. We do not know how to get back to God. We need Him to rescue us. So we need to speak to God to ask Him to save us. How can we speak to God? We must pray to Him.

I hope you pray to God every day. Perhaps you say, “God be merciful to me a sinner”. That is a good prayer. But you could also ask God: “Save me; forgive me all my sins; for Jesus’ sake”.

How important it is that God would save us! He can do so. No one else can.

A Reformation Tour

1. Perth to Dundee

Rev David Campbell

This year’s Youth Conference took place at Strathallan School, near Perth. The Conference included a tour of Reformation sites, mainly in St Andrews. This article records remarks that were made during the bus journey as we passed the city of Perth heading towards Dundee. Stopping at Dundee we recalled aspects of its history connected with George Wishart. Later articles, God willing, will detail some things about events at the Reformation in St Andrews itself.

1. Leaving Strathallan. Our tour is going to take us to St Andrews via Dundee. We will be passing by Perth, which at the time of the Reformation was called St John’s Town. There is much to be said of Perth in connection with the events of the Reformation, and you would be well rewarded if you study its history and the events that took place there. Among these events was the sermon John Knox preached which led to the destruction of the monasteries and other places of idolatry on 11 May 1559. John Knox had arrived back in Scotland from Europe on 2 May 1559. He immediately went to Perth to support his fellow preachers who had been summoned before the Queen Regent.

In a letter to a friend in England at the time, Knox wrote, “I see the battle shall be great, for Satan rageth even to the uttermost, and I am come (I praise my God) even in the brunt of the battle. My fellow preachers have a day appointed to answer before the Queen Regent, the tenth of this [month],

where I intend (if God impede not) also to be present, by life or by death, or else by both, to glorify His godly name, who thus mercifully hath heard my long cries.”

The Queen Regent promised the preachers liberty, but in fact condemned them as rebels and outlawed them as fugitives. This was effectively a sentence of death on the Reformed ministers. This was soon known in Perth.

We take up the account of David Hay Fleming's, a noted historian of the Scottish Reformation: “The news did not soothe the multitude. The preachers had previously [spoken] on the odiousness of idolatry in God's sight, on His command to destroy the monuments thereof, and on the idolatry and abomination of the mass. On Thursday forenoon, the 11th of May, Knox in his sermon ‘was vehement against idolatry’. At the end of the service most of the people went to dinner, but some lingered behind in the church. A priest, out of contempt, resolved to celebrate mass and opened ‘a glorious tabernacle’ which stood upon the high altar. A boy cried out, ‘This is intolerable, that when God by His Word hath plainly damned idolatry, we shall stand and see it used in despite’.

“The priest rewarded his zeal with a blow; and the boy in anger, seizing a stone, threw it at the priest. The stone struck the tabernacle and broke an image. The effect on the bystanders was instantaneous. Some threw stones, some laid violent hands on the tabernacle, some attacked the other altars and images. Before the tenth part of the inhabitants of Perth knew what was going on, the tabernacle, and every other object savouring of idolatry in the great church of St John, had been utterly destroyed.”

What followed this significant day in Perth was the destruction of idolatry in the monasteries of Perth and other places. Thereafter the Reformed party, now called The Congregation, entered into a band or covenant on 31 May 1559. A covenant had been entered on in 1557 and there were to be others, but these early bands or covenants were to protect their lives as well as their religious liberties. They led on to the famous National Covenant of 1638.

Perth is also the town in which the infamous Five Articles of Perth were passed in 1618. They allowed and authorised the beginnings of a dilution and corruption of the Reformed worship at a General Assembly which was bullied by King James VI. There were many godly ministers and people in Perth throughout the period of the first and second Reformations.

2. *Nearing Dundee.* I mentioned the First and Second Reformations and I want briefly to explain what I meant. Very roughly, the history of the Scottish Reformation can be divided into three portions of time, each about 50 years in length. The first is from about 1550 to about 1600, the second from about 1600 to about 1650 and the third from about 1650 to nearly 1700. A period

of 150 years saw the Reformed Church develop from scattered and persecuted congregations meeting in secret, with the protection of some lairds and nobles, to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church with an orthodox creed, government and worship protected by Acts of Parliament which remain in force in some way, to the present day, following the Glorious Revolution in 1688. This is a very rough outline, which I think helps to make the dates and events a little more manageable.

But really there were two distinct phases of the Reformation. The first was up to 1560, when *The Scots Confession* was adopted, the authority of the Pope abolished, worship reformed and a Protestant Church organised in the major cities and in many other parts of the country. The first General Assembly met in December 1560. This was the First Reformation and it flourished throughout Scotland, amidst various troubles, until a decline set in around 1600.

That decline was on account of the increasing efforts of James VI to conform the Scottish Church to the English form of worship and government. This was vigorously resisted over a period of nearly 40 years until, in the 1630s, there was a remarkable spiritual revival and a revolution in church and state and the signing of the National Covenant. This led in the 1640s to the Westminster Assembly and their work and famous documents. These were all adopted by the Scottish General Assembly and were in use by 1650, along with the beautiful Scottish Metrical version of the Psalms. This period, from 1638 until about 1650, is the Second Reformation.

This wonderful work of God was quickly followed by another near-40 years of intense struggle and persecution of the Presbyterians by the King, his Episcopal clergy and their supporters, in what is known as the Covenanting struggle. Many thousands were killed, fined, imprisoned and banished for adherence to the National Covenant and the Westminster Standards. Not until the Glorious Revolution in 1688, when William of Orange was invited to share the throne with his wife Mary, a Protestant sister of James VII, did the nation recover its Reformation heritage. That is the heritage we cherish and seek to assert, maintain and defend.

But to return to Dundee. It was in Dundee that the first Reformed congregation gathered for public worship in Scotland. We do not know much about it, but it was before John Knox returned to Scotland. This, among other things, showed that the resolve of the people to support the Reformation was genuine and serious. But we are stopping at Dundee in connection with the ministry of George Wishart. It was here that he preached after his return from Europe with his more firmly established Reformed views and his zeal for the gospel in its purity.

In the next article we will consider the events in Dundee connected with the life and ministry of George Wishart, and will take up some details of what happened in other places on our journey between Dundee and St Andrews.

Poison in Books

A man living in India picked out a book from one of his shelves. He felt a sharp pain in one of his fingers as he did so. He thought he must have pricked his finger on a pin that someone had thoughtlessly stuck into the book's cover. But he was wrong; it was far more serious than that. Soon his finger began to swell, then his arm; at last his whole body was affected. And in just a few days he died. There was no pin in the cover of the book; it was a small poisonous snake that bit him.

Few readers of this *Magazine* need be afraid of finding a snake among their books. But lots of books contain poison – poison that is dangerous for the souls of those who read them. Let me mention a few kinds of such books.

First, there are books that argue against the fact that God exists. Some are very popular, selling in large numbers. But there is indeed a God, the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible, and even in creation. We should not be able to look around us without realising that there is a God. No other being could bring the human race, for instance, into existence; our bodies are just too complicated. Especially they are too complicated to be brought into existence by the random process that evolution is claimed to be.

Second, some books oppose particular teachings of the Bible. They may make light of sin, although we sin against a perfectly holy God who, as our Creator, has total authority over us. Or they may teach that we are able to save ourselves from sin, or that we only need some help from God to do so. But we are saved through faith, and faith is the gift of God (see Ephesians 2:8,9). We must be completely dependent on God for salvation.

Third, many books make sin attractive, and they may make people want to engage in these sins. Most of these are novels, which largely, if not completely, flow from the writer's imagination. Novelists can promote whatever kind of lifestyle they please, however immoral it may be.

Some books, of course, are far more dangerous than others; they contain more serious "poison". And there is much poison in other places: the internet and television, for instance. The safest way to avoid being poisoned is to keep away from poison. Yet we may come in contact with it when we do not mean to. The best way to protect ourselves is to absorb the teachings of the Bible, while asking God to teach us and keep us from wrong thinking.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2021-22

UK Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Barnoldswick:* Claudia van Essen. *Brighton:* Katharine Hills. *Glasgow:* Cameron Ross. *Halkirk:* Annelise Hymers-Mackintosh. *Inverness:* Lois Maton. *London:* David, John and Sarah Munns.

Intermediate Section. *Aberdeen:* Julia Macleod. *Barnoldswick:* Bethan Middleton, Daniel van Essen. *Dingwall:* Catherine Campbell. *Edinburgh:* Fraser Campbell. *Glasgow:* Elena Maclellan, Hugh Ross. *Halkirk:* Donald Maclean. *Inverness:* Jenna Campbell. *Southampton:* Chloe, Jonny and Lydia Wilkins. *North Tolsta:* Uilleam Morrison. *Ullapool:* Tacita Angell.

Junior Section: *Barnoldswick:* Samuel van Essen. *Beaulieu:* Anna McSeveney. *Dingwall:* Donald Allan MacColl. *Dungannon:* Hannah MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Beth Dickie, Anna Cameron-Mackintosh. *Glasgow:* Violet Marr, Shona Ross. *Halkirk:* Grace Maclean, Fraser Stewart. *Inverness:* Susanna Campbell, James Maton.

Upper Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Kenneth Macleod, Cassia Soni. *Barnoldswick:* Susanna Middleton, Alexia van Essen. *Beaulieu:* Rebekka Fraser, Hudson Maclean. *Dingwall:* Neil Campbell, Iain MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Alec Cameron-Macintosh, Darcy and Joella Esson, Alice Hicklin. *Glasgow:* Evan Marr. *Halkirk:* Angus Hymers-Mackintosh, Catriona Maclean. *Inverness:* Campbell Dickie. *London:* Ernest Campbell, Andrew Macleod. *North Tolsta:* Rebecca Morrison. *North Uist:* Katie Macdonald. *Portadown:* Nathan Macleod. *Tandragee:* Joseph Brown.

Lower Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Philip Macleod. *Dingwall:* Heather Campbell, Mairi and Charlotte MacColl. *Dungannon:* Sarah Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Julia Cameron-Macintosh, Anderson and Samuel Dickie, Leah and Matthew Hicklin. *Glasgow:* Joel Marr. *Halkirk:* Sophie Stewart. *Inverness:* Molly Campbell, Harvey Dickie. *London:* Lydia Campbell, Daniel and Benjamin Macleod. *North Harris:* Finlay and Margaret Jardine. *North Tolsta:* James Morrison. *Portree:* Murdo Macraill. *Southampton:* Benjy Wilkins. *Tandragee:* Aaron Brown.

Looking Around Us

Superstitions

Today is Friday, May 13, and many people consider Friday the thirteenth to be unlucky, just like they may believe that to walk under a ladder is unlucky. So should I be afraid that something bad will happen to me today?

No, it is just a superstition – a belief for which there is no justification. To walk under that ladder has no connection with anything that may happen to me shortly afterwards. It may not be sensible to walk under a ladder if someone is standing on it. Suppose a painter is putting a new coat of paint on a window while I walk underneath him, some spots of paint may fall on me, which might spoil my clothes. That is different: in this case there is a connection between what I foolishly did and the drops of paint falling on me. But if I take seriously ill after walking under a ladder, there is no connection between the two events. To believe otherwise is wrong; it is just a super-

stition. In the same way, if something unwelcome happens to me today, it most certainly is not because of the date. To think of Friday the thirteenth as unlucky is nonsense.

To give credit to superstitions such as these is to ignore the fact of God's providence. Many readers will know the answer to Question 11 in *The Shorter Catechism*: "What are the works of providence?" The answer is: "God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions".

Jesus asked, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" They were worth very little. Yet God was in control of what happened to them. Jesus went on: "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" – whatever else might be involved in its fall. We should always remember that God not only created all things; He is always in control of them. In a holy, wise and powerful way, He preserves them in existence as long as it pleases Him to do so. And when it pleases Him to preserve them no longer, they will no longer exist – at least not in the same form.

Because of sin, human beings will die, as well as other living creatures. God is in control of that. In particular, He is in control of *when* people die. When it will please Him to bring the world to an end, He will do so. He is governing, or ruling, everything that He made, and He will always do so.

Especially God is ruling over the spiritual lives of His people. It was He who drew them to Himself by the Holy Spirit and made them able to believe in Jesus. It is He who preserves spiritual life in their souls. It is He who will bring them at last to eternal glory. He does all this in a most holy, wise and powerful way. To think of a particular day as lucky or unlucky is wrong; no day is different from any other in that way.

So whatever we plan to do on any day, we should commit it all to God in prayer. He is able to bless us in it. He is able to help us and make things turn out the way we would like; He is also able to prevent us succeeding if that would be better for us. And if what we wish to do is sinful, it is a great blessing if God will stop us from doing what we are planning. We should be content with God's providence; there is wisdom in all that He does. Whatever happens to God's children, they have a right to say, My Father has done it; He does all things well.

Especially let us ask Him, in His kind providence, to bless our souls, to forgive our sins, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to give us grace to live godly lives. And if we are superstitious, may the Lord deliver us from that ungodly way of looking at life!

Price £1.10