

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Cover Picture: Part of today’s Houses of Parliament. The building where William Wilberforce attended burned down. See page 225.

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Volume 87

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Number 12

What We Need to Hear

What are ministers to tell the people who come to hear them? One answer to that question comes from the Apostle Paul. He said, “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23). That is good news for sinners, for “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). It is sinners that Christ came to save. No one would need saving if they were already good people. But it is not welcome news for people to hear that they are sinners; they would rather hear that they are good.

That is how one of the largest churches in the United States operates. The ministers in the church do not say anything about sin. Their wish is that coming to church would be a completely positive experience for the people. They do not want the congregation to go away feeling bad about themselves; they are afraid that such people will never come back again. But this is very serious: these ministers are deceiving the people who come to hear them and, very likely, they are deceiving themselves too. This is tremendously serious for both pastors and people, for their whole eternity is at stake.

Presumably these ministers have a copy of the Bible in front of them as they preach. The Bible makes clear that “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23); all mankind sinned in Adam and we have all inherited his fallen nature. This verse goes on to say that all “come short of the glory of God”. Man was created able to keep God’s law perfectly, to keep all God’s commandments without coming short in the least degree. Adam and Eve were able to keep them in the beginning, but they both fell into sin and no mere human being can ever again do so in this life. We are all sinners. We need to realise it.

So we need to be told about it. It may not be easy to realise that we have sinned against the holy God who created all things – who created all mankind, and made each of us in particular. It may be very unwelcome for people to hear that they are sinners, that God hates sin and will punish them for ever if they do not repent.

But the really important question is: What is the truth *about* these things? And where can we find the truth? In the Bible. We read there what the Psalmist said to God: “Thy Word is true from the beginning” (Psalm 119:160).

The Bible is God's Word, and the Psalmist was saying that the Bible is true from the beginning, from when it was first written, and from when its truths were first in the mind of God – that is, from all eternity. The Bible is true also from the beginning to the end – from the first verse in Genesis to the last in Revelation. There is no error in it; it is all accurate.

The Bible speaks about sin, and what it says about sin must be the truth. Ministers have no right to hold back the truth about sin from their congregations, and that includes the huge church in America. It is no kindness to the congregation to keep back from them the truth about sin. How can these people seek salvation if they do not know that they need it? And people do not know that they need salvation – salvation from sin and from its consequences – unless they discover that they are sinners, and that “it is an evil thing and bitter” to have “forsaken the Lord” (Jeremiah 2:19).

If people do not find out in this life that bitterness is associated with sin, they will have to live with that bitterness throughout eternity; it will never come to an end. Yes, there is a bitterness in people finding out, in this world, that they have sinned against the Lord, but there is hope for them if they go to Christ as He is made known to them in the gospel message.

The Bible's teaching about sin is not only that, if we do not believe on Christ, we will experience eternal bitterness. It also tells us that sin is an *evil*, that it is evil to sin against God – it is evil to break God's commandments. And sin comes from an evil heart; the very core of our being is corrupt. So we need to be cleansed; we need to be made holy. We need to go to God and say, “Cleanse Thou me from secret faults” (Psalm 19:12) as well as from outward faults. We need the Holy Spirit to work in our souls to make us pure and holy. We need new hearts, and the Holy Spirit is able to give us new, holy hearts, so that we will not want to sin – so that we will want *not to sin*.

Henry Martyn was a noted missionary to India. When he was still a student at Cambridge University, he went one day to visit a family who were very upset because they knew that the father would soon die. Some of the family had gone to another house because they were so upset; they were afraid that their distress would disturb the dying man. Martyn found another man already in the room; he was trying to comfort the family – by reading a play to them. Perhaps the play was funny; perhaps it was very well written; but it certainly was *not* what they needed to hear, especially at that solemn time when death was approaching someone close to them.

It would have been good for them to have heard what the Bible has to say about life and death, about sin and salvation. But Martyn knew what they needed; he spoke strongly to the man reading the play because of what he was doing; it was so inappropriate. The man did not take Martyn's rebuke

well, and he was afraid that unpleasantness might follow. Yet the next time they met, the man thanked Martyn for his faithful rebuke; it had led to a saving work beginning in his heart. Later these men were to work together in India, spreading the truth about the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of sinners. The man reading the play needed to hear about sin, and God blessed that truth to him, preparing him to receive the further truth that Jesus Christ is the Saviour who can really save from sin.

William Wilberforce was very prominent in the campaign to make, first, the slave trade illegal, and then to make slavery itself illegal in those parts of the world which belonged to Britain. He spoke again and again in the British Parliament, and outside it, and the campaign was eventually successful. When he was younger, he enjoyed all the sinful entertainments that he could find. But, he said, “My conscience told me that, in the true sense of the word, I was not a *Christian*. I laughed. I sang. I was apparently . . . happy. But the thought would steal across me: ‘What madness is all this, to continue easy in a state in which a sudden call out of the world would consign me to everlasting misery . . . when happiness is within my grasp!’”

Wilberforce no doubt knew something about sin – he was probably hearing about it in church – but he was not taking it seriously. But God, in great mercy, brought him to consider how quickly he might be taken away from this world and all its vain pleasures, into a lost eternity. Wilberforce needed to take these things seriously, so that he might look to Jesus Christ, who had done everything that sinners need for salvation. Jesus died in the place of sinners and is exalted “a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).

So do not turn away from the warnings that Scripture gives about sin and its consequences. Do not turn away from the warnings about sin that you hear from preachers. Realise that the preacher is speaking the truth when he keeps to the Bible. He is speaking God’s truth. It is for your good, even if you would much rather follow the ways of the world. But that, as Wilberforce realised, is madness. The Lord God still calls, “Repent, and turn . . . from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (Ezekiel 18:31). Turn from sin and look by faith to Jesus Christ. And do so now, before it is too late.

Yes, ministers must preach Jesus Christ to sinners. They must preach Him as the One who was crucified – in the place of sinners. But people must hear that they are indeed sinners, that they have broken God’s commands and that they deserve to be punished for their sin. God cannot treat sin lightly, for He is absolutely just. Remember that this is the God that you must meet when you leave this world. Seek to prepare at once for that solemn event.

How Will We Ever Pay?

Rev K M Watkins

In recent months the cost of many things has been going up and up. Inflation is back. Prices of electricity, gas, oil, coal, petrol, food, transport – all are increasing. Worried about winter, many are asking, “How will we ever pay?” It is especially difficult for poorer households. Some may be in debt already, and all they can see is their debts getting larger and larger, debts that they will never be able to pay off. It was said that some are staring into “the pit of financial doom”. Their only hope is that the government will help.

There is another bill that is always increasing, and none of us can pay it. It is what we owe to our Creator, the God of the Bible. As His creatures, we owe the debt of perfect obedience to His laws. The bills come in constantly, in the demands of the Ten Commandments. But none of us pay what we owe. Instead, we disobey His will every day, making the debt go up and up.

If you go through the *Shorter Catechism* and *Larger Catechism*, you will see that each of the Ten Commandments requires many duties to be performed and many sins to be avoided. Every time we fail to do one of those duties required, and every time we commit one of those sins forbidden, our debt to God goes up. But we are *constantly* failing in duty and committing sin!

God requires the devotion and love of our whole hearts. But until we are converted, much of the time we hardly give Him a thought. We easily forget His Word. We avoid repenting and turning from our sins. We delay trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and continue in the serious sin of unbelief. We fail to keep the Sabbath Day holy, but fill it with our own things – in our thoughts at least, if not so much in our actions. We enjoy entertaining ourselves with sin, taking pleasure in things that God hates. All the time, our debt to God is racking up and up.

Like the man in one of Christ's parables, God's justice is ready to take us by the throat and demand, “Pay me that thou owest” (Matthew 18:28). At the beginning of *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan pictures the convicted sinner like this: “a man clothed with rags . . . and a great burden upon his back”. There is the debt he owes to God because of his sin – that is the heavy load he carries on his back. But there is his poverty too, showing that he cannot pay his debt – he is clothed with worthless rags. How can such a sinner ever pay for his sins? Have you ever seen yourself in that picture?

Our debt cannot be settled just by going to church, even if we do so throughout our whole lives. It cannot be discharged by saying a few prayers, doing a few good deeds, or giving generously to charity. It cannot be paid

by trying to be “good”, kind and respectable. The debt is much too large to be paid off by little things like that. Our sins have been against God, who is infinite in majesty and glory. Therefore our debt is so large we cannot measure it – it is infinite. We can never pay this debt!

One of the greatest problems people face today is paying the bills for their use of energy in the home. Energy firms advise customers to speak to them before things get out of hand. Christ has similar advice for sinners: “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest . . . thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matthew 5: 25,26). People who could not pay their debts used to be put in jail, where they could languish for years on end. People who die in their sins are put into hell, and no one ever escapes that prison, for their debt is never paid. Hell will not be a temporary “pit of financial doom”, but the bottomless pit of eternal doom. We need to agree with God, our Adversary, quickly, before that happens.

The Apostle Paul had a friend called Philemon, whose servant Onesimus had run away to Rome and met Paul there. Paul sent Onesimus home, beseeching Philemon to welcome him mercifully. But Onesimus had wronged his master, so Paul wrote, “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought [anything], put that on mine account . . . I will repay it” (Philemon, verses 18,19). Yes, Paul tells Philemon, Onesimus owes you for the days of service he did not give. But charge all of that to me. I will pay his debt myself.

That pictures the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. His people had not obeyed God’s laws and therefore had huge unpaid debts. But Christ had all their debts charged to Himself. By always doing what pleased His Father, His obedience paid their debt to the *precepts* of God’s law. By suffering and dying on the cross in His people’s place, Christ paid their debt to the *curse* of God’s law. He was punished instead of them. Because Christ is God as well as man, His obedience and suffering are infinitely valuable and meet all the claims of God’s justice, so that He has paid their debts in full.

This is illustrated by Bunyan’s pilgrim, who carried his heavy burden for a long, long time. He lost it only when he came to the cross. “Just as Christian came up [to] the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble; and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.” Our debt is paid when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and rely on His death on the cross as the only way to pay the price for sin.

God says of every believer in Jesus: “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom” (Job 33:24). Christ came into the world to pay

the price – “to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Are you trusting in Christ to pay your debts to God? Or are you trying to carry on your life just as you are, trying to ignore the ever-increasing debt you owe to God? If you go on doing that, in the end you will go deep into hell, the pit of eternal doom and despair, saddled with debts that you will never be able to pay.

A Reformation Tour

7. St Andrews – Walter Mill

Rev David Campbell

The previous article looked at the martyrdom of George Wishart, and what immediately followed it in St Andrews, when the Castle was first seized by the Protestants and then besieged by the French, leading to the capture of John Knox and his slavery on the French galleys. This article turns to another of the Scottish Reformation martyrs – the last one.

On the Martyrs Memorial, which we looked at when we started the tour, there are four names. We have considered three of them: Patrick Hamilton, Henry Forrester and George Wishart. The fourth is Walter Mill (or Milne) and he was the last known martyr of the Scottish Reformation before the deliverance ushered in under the powerful preaching of John Knox and others, which the Lord so graciously blessed.

After the death of Cardinal Beaton, which we also mentioned in the last article, John Hamilton succeeded him as Archbishop of St Andrews. In November 1549 he summoned a General Convention and Provincial Council of clergy. This convention acknowledged many faults among the clergy and went some way to address them, but it also rekindled the flame of persecution against what they called “heretics”. It was in the summer of 1550 that Adam Wallace – who had taken over as the teacher of the pupils once under the care of John Knox at Ormiston – was seized and tried in Edinburgh before being burnt at the stake on the Castle Hill there.

To place these events in a wider context, the godly young Edward VI died on 6 July 1553 and Mary Tudor (known as Bloody Mary because of the blood of the martyrs she was guilty of) became queen on the nineteenth of that month, following the unsuccessful attempt to set up Lady Jane Grey as queen. Many Protestants fled the persecution that followed, and in September 1555 John Knox, released from the French galleys, laboured for five years in England and then in Germany and Geneva. He was briefly in Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland, where he preached and dispensed the Lord's

Supper. He returned to Geneva at the entreaty of his congregation there, in July 1556. After his departure he was summoned before the Romanist clergy and condemned in his absence. Afterwards an effigy [image] of Knox was burnt at the stake.

On 12 April 1554 the Regency of Scotland (during the infancy of Mary, later “Queen of Scots”) was transferred from the Earl of Arran to Mary of Guise, the widow of James V and the mother of the young Mary. The new regent was displeased with Archbishop Hamilton because he tolerated heretics too much. It was doubtless because of this that the Archbishop began to try to gain her favour by further measures against the Protestants.

He complained to the Earl of Argyll for having a Protestant minister as his chaplain and three weeks later, in April 1558, he had an old priest, Walter Mill, brought to the Cathedral for trial as a heretic. Walter Mill was 82 years old and frail in body, but very firm in his convictions and clear in his mind. John Foxe says that out of his ashes “sprang thousands of his opinion and religion in Scotland, who altogether chose rather to die than to be any longer overtrodden by the tyranny of the foresaid cruel, ignorant and beastly bishops, abbots, monks, friars”.

John Foxe says that Walter Mill had been in Germany in his younger years, and it may be that he picked up Protestant opinions there. On his return he was appointed a priest in Angus but, during the time of Cardinal Beaton, was accused of heresy and was forced to flee to avoid capture. Foxe then says that “he was soon apprehended and committed to prison”. But he must either have been absent from his charge for some considerable time before being arrested or else he must have spent a long time in prison before his trial in 1558, because Cardinal Beaton died in 1548 – ten years earlier.

His trial was, as suggested earlier, prompted by Archbishop Hamilton’s attempt to win the favour of the Regent, Mary of Guise. He was questioned about his opinion and asked whether he would recant. To this he replied that he would “sooner forfeit ten thousand lives, than relinquish a particle of those heavenly principles he had received from the suffrages [the intercession] of his blessed Redeemer”. David Hay Fleming records that he also said, “Ye shall know that I will not recant the truth, for I am corn; I am no chaff. I will not be blown away with the wind nor [be] burst with the flail, but I will abide both.” He was condemned to death and conducted to prison to be executed the following day.

The place of his execution is not marked in St Andrews but is thought to have been on the brow of the hill on the track between the Castle and the Cathedral overlooking the sea. On this spot his remarkable courage and “marvellous constancy” was witnessed by multitudes. It is said that even his

enemies were astonished at his calmness. No citizen in St Andrews would sell a tar barrel to burn him or a rope to tie him to the stake, and so he was bound with the cords of the Archbishop's pavilion. He was led to the place by armed men and, after prayer on his knees, stood on the coals to deliver his last testimony to the throng of people around him. John Foxe records his words:

“Dear friends, the cause why I suffer this day is not for any crime laid to my charge (albeit [although] I be a miserable sinner before God) but only for the defence of the faith of Jesus Christ, set forth in the New and Old Testament unto us, for which as the faithful martyrs have offered themselves gladly before, being assured, after the death of their bodies, of eternal felicity [happiness]. So this day I praise God that He hath called me of His mercy among the rest of His servants, to seal up His truth with my life; which as I have received it from Him, so willingly I offer it to His glory. Therefore, as you will escape the eternal death, be no more seduced with the lies of priests, monks, friars, priors, abbots, bishops, and the rest of the sect of Antichrist, but depend only upon Jesus Christ and His mercy, that ye may be delivered from condemnation.”

All the time of his testimony there was great mourning among the people. After this he was hoisted up on the stake and, being on fire, he said, “Lord, have mercy on me. Pray, people, while there is time.” Thus he died.

John Foxe records that by the just judgement of God, after this, in 1560, at the same spot where Walter Mill was burnt, the images of the great church of the abbey – which were very many and of great cost – were burnt to ashes in the removal of idolatry from St Andrews. But at the time of Mill's death the Cathedral and Abbey were in full operation and stood as a powerful symbol of the evils of Romanism and of the tyranny it exerted over the people. Our next article will look in more detail at the Cathedral and what is to be noticed in it today.

For Junior Readers

The British Josiah

What do you remember about King Josiah in the Bible? He was a boy king, was he not? He was only 8 years old when his father was killed and he became king of Judah. He was only 16 when he began to seek the Lord.

Although his grandfather Manasseh and his father Amon had both been very wicked, Josiah was a good king who loved the Lord. He wanted to help

his people to obey the Lord and to stop worshipping idols. When he was older, he and his people started to repair the temple and to make it beautiful again. When the book of the law was discovered again in the temple, he gathered his people together and read to them God's laws from the book and made a solemn promise to serve the Lord.

He also made all the people promise that they too would serve God. He reigned for 31 years and was only 39 when he was wounded by an arrow in battle and died soon after.

So who was the "British Josiah"? Have you heard of King Edward VI? He was the only son of King Henry VIII and became king at the age of nine! His reign was short, only 6 years, but in that time his strong Christian witness and writings were very valuable in establishing the foundations of the Protestant Reformation. It was he who insisted on a Bible being carried in his coronation procession, saying that the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) was to be preferred before any other type of sword.

Although not much more than a child, it seems that, around this time, Edward recognised his need as a sinner and trusted Christ as his Saviour. He delighted to study the Bible and memorised whole passages at a time. He regarded the Holy Scriptures as his supreme guide in all that he believed and did. He wrote in a letter: "I consider that godliness is to be desired and embraced by me above all things, since Paul said, 'Godliness is profitable unto all things'".

His respect for the Word of God was seen one day when he was trying to take something down from a shelf that he could not reach. One of his companions offered him a large Bible to stand on. When the young King realised this, he rebuked his friend sharply. He said that it was not right that he should put under his feet what he should treasure in his mind and heart.

In 1552 the King caught measles and smallpox. He never fully recovered from these illnesses. It seems that, about this time, he was reading a book called *The Benefit of Christ's Death*. Inside the cover he wrote, "Live to die, and die to live again". Would that not be a good motto for you too? Shortly after this, on 6 July 1553, aged 15, the young King died, saying, "Lord, have mercy upon me; take my spirit".

There was much grief in the country following his death. The life and works of King Edward reminded the people of England of godly King Josiah of Judah, and they often spoke of King Edward as the "British Josiah". To spread more copies of the Scriptures was one of the main achievements of King Edward's reign. As many as 34 editions of the whole Bible or of the New Testament were printed during the six years he was on the throne. Reading the Bible in their own language was no longer a crime and the

Scriptures were now available to everyone. John Knox described him as "that most godly and virtuous king that has ever been known to have reigned in England".

If you think about both these kings, remember how young they were, and how strongly they stood on the Lord's side against much opposition. Should you not resolve also to "follow the Lord fully"? And you should pray:

"Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide in those Thy paths divine,
So that my footsteps may not slide out of those ways of Thine."

J van Kralingen

Lessons from the Life of Jacob

1. His Family

Rev J B Jardine

This is the first section of a paper given to this year's Youth Conference. The lessons appear throughout the paper

Although Jacob lived many hundreds of years ago, the lessons we can learn from his life are as valid today as they were during his lifetime. The name *Jacob* means "to supplant" and it is appropriate to his character and conduct. Jacob "took his brother by the heel (the action of a wrestler) in the womb" (Hosea 12:3).

Similarly every believer, having been born again by the Holy Spirit, takes hold by faith of the bruised heel of Christ crucified (see Genesis 3:15), the "firstborn among many brethren". The believer has no right in himself to the spiritual inheritance, but Christ became a curse for those who would be among the true Israel of God, so that He might become a blessing to them.

Jacob was his mother's favourite, a "plain" man, an upright man, steady and affectionate. He stayed at home, "dwelling in tents", minding the flocks. He was unlike Esau, "a man of the field", who moved around hunting. Esau as a man was restless and self-indulgent.

The family of Jacob. They have been described as the "dynasty of the heirs of promise". Jacob was the son and successor of Isaac. He was probably born at Lahai-roi when Isaac was 59. Isaac had married Rebekah rather than a woman of the land of Canaan. Jacob was a quiet and gentle man who grew up to be a shepherd. Jacob represents the first generation that deliberately separated from the society they lived in. Abraham and his household were immigrants to Canaan, but Jacob and Esau were born in the land. They did not have any Canaanite blood in their veins. Isaac and Rebekah waited 20 years for their children to be born. This would have driven them to seek

the help of God and to recognise their twins as the evident gift of God in His grace.

We are told, without any explanation, that Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected. But in Romans we read, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (9:10-13). It was of God’s mere good pleasure that Jacob was chosen to obtain the inheritance and receive the promise. Esau was rejected because of his own sin as well as the sin of Adam imputed to him, “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears,” (Hebrews 12:16-17). He did not seek spiritual repentance – for all who seek it will find it – but he only repented of, or regretted, the temporal loss which could not be undone.

From Jacob as an individual, there came “the seed” of the promise. He became the father of 12 sons who in turn became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. This people bear the name *Israel*, not the name of his father Isaac or his grandfather Abraham. In the Old Testament, “the children of Israel” or the “house of Jacob” indicate the whole seed of the promise.

“Don’t You Love God?”

The man was married. He and his wife had a young boy and some other children. The man’s parents taught him from the Bible when he was young, but he turned his back on all these teachings. He was not guilty of great outward sins, but he was a rebel against God.

He trusted in himself that he was righteous enough, although he did not have Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Indeed he did not believe that Jesus was God. He lived for the world and for the things of the world. He did not believe the Bible; so he did not believe that there is a devil or that hell exists. He did believe that there is a God and that God had created him, but he did not serve God or obey Him. He did not pray; he did not go to church; he just tried to live a good life according to the standards of other people.

Sometimes he was afraid that some of the things he was taught when young were in fact true. And he must have taught his boy a little about God; he taught him to say his prayers – not because he really believed in prayer; it was just a habit, it would seem, that the father carried over from his childhood.

The parents had a nanny to look after the children and she taught the boy about God. The boy asked his father lots of questions about God and about

heaven, which the father found very difficult to answer. And he found it very difficult to assure his son that there was truth behind the simple prayers that the father, along with his brothers and sisters, had learned from his mother – the prayers which the boy was now using. The fact was that the father did not really himself believe the truths of the Bible, but he later realised that he himself was a “poor, sinful father”.

Yet he never went to church; there was not even a Bible in their house. “What was I to teach my boy?” he asked himself. Was it Christ and Him crucified, or the false idea that everyone will be saved in the end? Or should he send him to a Roman Catholic church, where the boy had been baptized? That was because he had married a Roman Catholic, though it would seem that she did not follow her religion either. But to go to a Roman Catholic place of worship would cause serious harm to the boy’s soul.

Sadness came into the boy’s life. One of his young friends died and then another. His uncle also passed away. The boy wanted to know why God had done this. He felt it hard that God should take away his friends. He wished that God had not done so. And the father had to try to answer the lad’s questions. It was, of course, very difficult for the father – who was so unbelieving – to begin to provide answers.

One evening, the boy was lying on his bed, half undressed, while his parents sat by the fire. The mother had just told her husband about the boy’s bad behaviour that day. Then suddenly he began to cry loudly. His father went to him and asked what was wrong.

The boy said, “I don’t want it there, father. I don’t want it there.”

“What is *it*?” he asked.

The boy explained, “I don’t want the angels to write down in God’s book all the bad things I have done today. I don’t want it there. I wish it could be wiped out.” Then he got even more upset. (The children’s nanny had obviously taught him, and probably the other children, much from the Bible. By “God’s book” he meant one of the books in which are written the things that people have done in this world, the books that will be opened on the Day of judgement. But the Bible does *not* say that it is angels who write in these books. These are God’s books. They point to His perfect memory of everything that everyone does, whether it is good or bad.)

The father said later: “What could I do? I did not believe. But yet I had been taught the way [of salvation].” Yet he felt that he ought to comfort his child. So he told his son: “Well, you need not cry. You can have it all worked out in a minute, if you want.” He was trying, as best he could, to repeat to his young son what he had been taught when he was young

“How, Father, how?” the son asked.

“Get down on your knees and ask God, for Christ’s sake, to wipe it out, and He will do it.”

The boy was so distressed that the father felt that he too must go on his knees, although he had not done so for a very long time. He asked God to wipe away his son’s sins.

They then came off their knees and the boy lay down again on his bed. A few moments later, the boy asked, “Father, are you sure it is all wiped out?”

His father assured him that it was so, not because he really believed what he said, but on the basis of what he had learned years before. He told his son: “The Bible says [that], if you seek God from your heart, for Christ’s sake, to [wash away your sins], and if you are really sorry for what you have done, it shall be all blotted out”.

The boy smiled happily and asked, “What did the angel blot it out with? With a sponge?”

Of course the boy was not understanding properly. So his father corrected him: “No, but with the precious blood of Christ. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” He was referring to 1 John 1:7. God was able to teach this little boy and bring him to understand properly how God pardons sin.

It was all too much for the father; he burst into tears. He felt, he said, “my cold heart was melted within me. I felt like a poor, guilty sinner and, turning away, said, ‘My dear wife, we must first find God, if we want to show Him to our children. We cannot show them the way unless we know it ourselves.’”

Soon afterwards, the boy came to his father and, leaning on his knee, lifted up his face towards his father’s and asked him: “Father, are you and mother sinners?”

“Why, yes, my son, we are.”

The boy then asked, “Why, have you not a Saviour? Don’t you love God?”

The father gave the boy the best answer he could, but it may not have been according to Scripture. But that night he prayed by his son’s bed: “Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief”. His wife refused to pray with him, because she was a Roman Catholic. But the husband thought of the Lord’s Prayer, and she was willing to use its words. He believed that the Lord heard their prayers and brought them to trust in Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and to love God.

We may not know enough to be sure that the parents or the son were truly converted. We would hope they were – that at least what we are told about them led on to them truly trusting in Christ. But let us note these points:

1. What a solemn responsibility it is to bring up children! As the man acknowledged, parents need to know God for themselves before they can properly tell their children about Him. So those who hope to be parents

should seek the Lord earnestly, asking Him to draw them to Himself. And those to whom God gives children should earnestly seek His help and blessing in their new responsibility.

2. It is very dangerous for young people to turn their back on the Bible and stop attending a church where they can find the truths they need to know – truths that will guide them through life and on towards heaven at last. It is very dangerous to neglect the truths that God has revealed.
 3. God is able to change the hearts even of little children.
 4. It is good for children to bring their questions about spiritual things, to their parents, or to anyone who can give them an answer from Scripture.
 5. No one can get to heaven unless their sins are forgiven, and no one can have their sins forgiven unless they believe in Christ Jesus.
 6. It is not enough to believe the facts the Bible teaches. We must look to Him by faith – we must believe in Him as the Saviour of lost sinners. If, by God's grace, we do so believe, our sins will be forgiven and we will be made holy.
 7. We must examine ourselves – and keep on doing so – to find out what our spiritual state is, so that we may be sure that we have been truly converted. It is dangerous for people to assume too readily that they have been converted, if their lives are still as ungodly as ever. We need to fear God – to have a holy respect to God and to His commandments, not only in outward things but in our thinking.
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For Younger Readers

Whiter Than Snow

It is now December (or very close to it). Do you think you will see snow this month (if you live in a country where it is winter)? I am sure you love to play in the snow when it comes.

Have you heard a verse from the Bible that speaks about snow? Perhaps in a Psalm that David wrote: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7). God answered David's prayer and took away his sin. God made him so clean that his soul was even whiter than snow. And snow is really white. Is it not?

When we do wrong, we sin against God. Sin is filthy and black, because it is done against God, who is perfectly pure and holy. No one else can take away our sin, its filthiness and blackness. He does so because of what Jesus, God's Son, has done for sinners like us. Ask God to take away your sin, to make you pure and holy – whiter than the snow.

The Young People's Magazine

2022
Volume 87

Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod

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)

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

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New Zealand Youth Conference

The 2022 Youth Conference in New Zealand will be held, God willing, from 2 pm on Tuesday, December 20, till 3 pm on Thursday, December 22, at Masters Hall in Pahiatua, about a 45-minute drive north from Carterton. The lower age limit is 16. The cost is NZ\$120. Payments can be made on arrival at the conference, but please e-mail Rev Jett Smith as soon as possible to tell him that you intend to attend (jettddaniel@gmail.com). The papers and speakers for this Conference are as follows:

Genesis: The Beginning of Lessons for Christians (2)	<i>Mr H Optland</i>
The Public Worship of God	<i>Rev C Hembd</i>
The Benefit of Following Good Examples	<i>Mr C Van Kralingen</i>
John Bunyan – Preacher, Prisoner and Pilgrim	<i>Rev G Macdonald</i>
The Book of Revelation	<i>Rev J Smith</i>

Thoughts About a Lost Bible

Andrew Bonar and Robert M'Cheyne were two Scottish ministers travelling through Israel in the late 1830s Israel to investigate the prospects for missionary work among the Jews. At the well in Sychar, where Jesus met the Woman of Samaria, Bonar's Bible fell into the well. Here are M'Cheyne's thoughts after the incident.

My own loved Bible, must I part from thee,
 Companion of my trials by land and sea,
 Man of my counsels, soother of distress,
 Guide of my steps through this world's wilderness?
 In darkest nights, a lantern to my feet;
 In gladsome days, as dropping honey sweet.
 When first I parted from my quiet home,
 At Thy command, for Israel's good to roam,
 Thy gentle voice said, "For Jerusalem pray,
 So shall Jehovah prosper all thy way".
 When through the lonely wilderness we strayed,
 Sighing in vain for palm-trees' cooling shade,
 Thy words of comfort hushed each rising fear,
 "The shadow of thy mighty Rock is near".
 And when we pitched our tents on Judah's hills,
 Or thoughtful mused beside Siloa's rills;
 Whene'er we climbed Mount Olivet, to gaze
 Upon the sea, where stood in ancient days
 The heaven-struck Sodom.

Sweet record of the past to faith's glad eyes,
Sweet promiser of glories yet to rise!

Looking Around Us

“Will Humans Ever Go Extinct?”

This question was the heading of an article on the BBC news website. But where is the best place to go for an answer? Scientists may make their observations; they may do their calculations; but the future is just too complex for anyone to make a reliable prediction about the future. There is just no way that people, however educated and however intelligent, can answer this question about extinction.

Most people today ignore the Bible; they assume – especially because the Bible is so old – that it has nothing relevant to say about such issues. They may close their minds to the thought that God exists and that He can tell us, speaking through the Bible, how the world will end. The Bible does not tell us *when* the world will end. But it does make perfectly clear that there will still be men and women alive when Christ will come again the second time to bring the whole universe to an end. Mankind will not become extinct while the world lasts.

We read of a time when “the Lord [Jesus] Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump [trumpet] of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) to bring the world to an end. Then all who have died will be called from their graves and go to appear before the judgement seat of Christ. Then evidence will be led about how they behaved when they were still alive, and it will be clearly seen that God was just in bringing some to heaven and sending others to hell. But the last generation of people will still be “alive” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and they too will be judged in the same way as those who died.

If we do not take into account what the Bible says on such matters, we will go seriously wrong. The Bible is totally reliable in everything it tells us. Many were involved in writing it – Moses, David, John and Paul among them – but God the Holy Spirit inspired it all. This is why we can trust it in all it says – including the fact that the human race will never go extinct. It is for us to apply these things to ourselves, especially to seek a preparation for death and for our appearance at the judgement at the end of the world.

Price £1.10