

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: The monastery where Katherine von Bora used to live.
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Volume 88

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Number 9

Proper Values

An opinion piece in today's issue of *The Herald* newspaper refers to a political party, which, the writer claims, "does not align with our values". *Values* are the principles people use – and think that other people should use – in deciding how to behave. He was claiming that the party was not in line with his principles. I do not intend to discuss the particular points he made, but the headline made me ask, Whose values should we follow?

Most readers, if not all, live in a democracy – where a vote is taken every few years as to what political party, or what president, will rule over the country until the next election. What values should that government or president follow? The values of the majority of the people? In fact, the values of a particular government – as well as the values of a particular individual – need a higher and a better foundation.

Who made the human race? People did not just appear on earth by chance. God *created* Adam and Eve. That was the beginning of the human race. He made them in His image, which means that Adam and Eve, in the beginning, were perfectly holy and they had absolutely right values, which they applied to everything that they did and said and thought. That was so because God is perfectly holy. We read in the Bible: "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30), and His way is perfect because He Himself is perfect.

As we read through the early chapters of Genesis, we come across Satan, who took possession of a serpent to speak to Adam and Eve. He too was created perfect, a perfect angel. But he fell into sin, along with many other angels. We know scarcely anything of what happened, but it is perfectly clear from the teaching in various parts of the Bible that he paid no attention any more to the perfect values with which he was created. He was now opposed to God in every possible way. So he attacked God by trying to detach Adam and Eve from God. And he succeeded.

The result was that Adam and Eve too gave up their perfect values. They were now sinners; their great aim in life was to do what suited themselves; no longer was it their great aim to worship, serve and love God with all their hearts. They wanted to get away from God as far as possible, or to hide under

the trees, where they imagined He would not see them. How wrong they were! God sees everything. They had not only lost proper values; they had not only fallen into sin; they had also become fools.

In spite of human sin and foolishness, God has shown mercy to the human race. One great mercy is that He has revealed how He wants us to live. We should think particularly of God giving the Ten Commandments, in writing, to Israel at Mount Sinai. But let us be clear that these commands were not only for Israel in Old Testament times, but for the whole world in every age. These are the values that we should have, what God has revealed.

He knows what is good for us; we should believe that and obey Him in all He commands. None of the big political parties today accept the values that God has revealed. It means that, when parliaments pass laws, they almost certainly take no account of the principles that God has revealed, not only to individuals, but also to nations. How damaging for each such country!

Let us look briefly at each of the Ten Commandments:

First, we are to have the true God, the God of the Bible, as our God, and no other. We are to worship Him, and no other. You might think that you never worship any other god. But are you giving your heart to someone else, or to something you possess or wish to possess – or even to film stars and pop stars? God must have our whole heart; He must have the first place.

Second, we are not to make any images, to worship them. We are to worship God in the way that He has appointed.

Third, we must not take God's name in vain. We must use God's names in a holy and reverent way, and certainly not as mere exclamations. This command applies to everything we say about God and also to the Bible and every part of it.

Fourth, we must keep the Sabbath day holy. It is a day for us to spend, as far as possible, in worshipping God, in learning about Him and in seeking the salvation of our souls. Anything else we do should come under the headings of necessity and mercy.

Fifth, we must honour our parents. Children must obey their parents. The principle extends to obeying other lawful authorities; we ought to obey the laws of the country where we live. But obedience to them, and even to parents, depends on their commands being consistent with God's Word.

Sixth, we are not to kill other people; we should respect their lives – and our own. But the values of today's society have gone so far away from God's law that often the life of an unborn child gets no respect at all; it can be aborted with scarcely a thought. It should be noted that, in time of war, a soldier may have to kill enemy soldiers.

Seventh, no one is to commit adultery. Only a man and a woman, married

to each other, are to engage in the closest of human relations. Again, today's values – because they are so far away from what God has commanded for our good – approve of any two people throwing aside all restraint in their relationship, provided they consent.

Eighth, we must not steal from anyone. We must be honest in our dealings with other people. We have no right to take away other people's property.

Ninth, we must be honest in what we say, especially if we are bearing witness in a court, for instance.

Tenth, people are forbidden to covet, to desire what does not belong to them – though they can buy from someone else at a fair price. Covetousness very easily leads to stealing. We are to be content with whatever we have.

These should be *our* values. But can we keep to these scriptural principles? Certainly not perfectly. We need new hearts, so that we would want to obey God. And we need forgiveness when we go wrong. So we need to believe the Lord Jesus Christ, who calls us to do so.

William Wilson was a minister in Perth. One evening, three soldiers were using a lot of bad language as they walked behind him. One of them went so far as to express the wish that God Almighty would damn his soul in hell to all eternity. Wilson turned round and, with a look of pity, asked him: "Poor man, and what if God should say, Amen, and answer that prayer?"

Wilson walked on. But the man stood where he was, totally terrified. Back in his quarters, he was so disturbed that he did not know where to turn for relief. Soon afterwards he became seriously ill and felt sure that Almighty God would condemn him to hell for ever.

Many Christians came to see him, no doubt hoping to point him to Christ as the Saviour of sinners, but he told them all that he was beyond the reach of mercy and that God had sent an angel to tell him this.

Someone asked him to describe the person who had told him and, from the description, realised that the soldier was speaking about Wilson. This visitor asked him if he would like to see the minister.

He said that he would very much like to see Wilson, "but he will not come near a wretch like me".

Of course, Wilson came, and he showed the soldier the way of salvation through Christ crucified, and encouraged him to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him. God blessed the minister's words; the soldier believed in the Saviour and found peace and right values.

We all need to be saved from our sins through faith in Christ. We need to pray for salvation, to have right values, and for grace to keep to these values. Not least, ask God, for Christ's sake, to keep you from departing from right values even when you have to be in the company of ungodly people.

The Unused Sword.

Caesar Malan

Malan was a minister in Geneva. The article comes from *The Christian Treasury* for 1852 and has been edited.

I was sitting in a quiet spot when I heard a voice singing Psalm 116, and I felt disposed at once to join in. I did so when the third verse had ended, and I was overheard. Though no answer was given, a few seconds afterwards I saw an officer coming up to me. Holding out his hand, he said, "We are both of one mind". The speaker seemed about 40 years of age, with a weather-beaten face, and his eyes were fixed on me.

"Let us sit down together", I replied, "and converse on the subject we both love – on what the Lord Jesus has done for our souls."

"It is long since I have heard such a request", said the officer. "It does me good. I come from a distance. Business has brought me far from home; but here is an unexpected refreshment for me."

"Are you a native of France?" I asked. "You sing in French and you speak that language fluently."

"My mother was a native of Nîmes, in the south of France, and she early taught me the psalms she had been used to singing."

"Then she was a Protestant, probably one of those ancient families who preferred the Word of God to their homes, and even to their lives."

"She had often listened to the Word preached in the wilderness, and she knew the Saviour well. She knew Him, and she has now been with Him for the last five years. What a blessing it is when God gives a pious mother! Whenever my heart draws near to God, I think of her, for she first taught me to know Him. But how remarkable it is that two strangers like ourselves should talk thus freely, and that you should feel this interest in my concerns.

I said, "This proves the truth and the nature of the work of God's Spirit in the heart because, throughout the world, all whom He renews are led by the same teaching, and united by the same life to the same Saviour. And they are prepared for that eternal world, in which they will form just one family."

"The world knows nothing of these ties of brotherhood, by which Jesus Himself makes His presence to be felt in our hearts."

"You seem to have been a follower of the Saviour for a long time."

"Please do not think that, or give me any honour to which I have no claim. You would take care not to praise me if you knew what I have been and done, and how I have denied the Saviour! Never was His mercy more freely bestowed. My story is my shame; yet it tends to the glory of God.

"My father was a man of some importance. After I had received a basic

education at school, I was sent at the age of 19 to university to study law. For a year or two I regularly kept times of prayer and worship. But, at first unconsciously, and afterwards when fully aware of it, I stopped reading the Bible and later my prayers; and, at last, the examples, the invitations and various temptations of those with whom I then associated drew me away from God, from His Word and worship. I became, at last, what those around me were, a worldly-minded man – a fool, as the Scriptures declare.

“I was not happy then; I knew no real peace or satisfaction; I was a terror to myself. I pretended to be merry, and I was sucked into a world of pleasures, to which I was drawn by my youth and outward advantages on the one hand, and on the other by the praise of all those among whom I lived, whatever their age, whether male or female. Yet I felt a secret uneasiness, a sensation of self-reproach, which I vainly tried to resist. Still God watched over me, but I rebelled against Him; I stopped my ears, I hardened my heart, and I went on without hesitation or repentance.

“My mother, as you will suppose, soon observed my backsliding, and by her letters, her precious letters, she did not stop urging me to return to the worship of God. I sigh and mourn to think of the concern which my folly caused her. I know that she, and God also, has forgiven me; but how many wounds I have inflicted on the heart of her who only sought my happiness, and who watched over me with prayers and tears day and night!

“It is enough to say that, when I reached the age of 26, I was like the horse which resists the bridle, rushes furiously into the battle and falls, being wounded suddenly from every quarter. I might have perished too, but God preserved me and brought about His gracious purposes. Long did he wait and, at the very time when the devil would have brought me to ruin, God humbled me and pierced my heart. Like him that was possessed with the legion of devils, I was again clothed, and restored to my right mind.

“I had taken my degree and started to work as a lawyer when, in a fit of temper, I quarrelled with someone I thoroughly hated, for I regarded him as a rival. This ended in a challenge to a duel, which was to take place in secret. I spent a whole day and night preparing for it, and still I could not look forward to it without horror. Not that I dreaded either being wounded or killed, for my heart was hardened. But the Bible frightened me.

“I had laid it aside in a room, and I went to this room to look for the sword with which I intended to meet my opponent. I opened the room; it was nearly midnight; I climbed onto a chair and reached up to the highest shelf, feeling for my sword, but I placed my hand on my Bible. A sudden chill ran through me, and without leaving any time for consideration, I took the Book and opened it. Still standing on the chair, I read Psalm 10, which was the

first passage on which my eyes rested. Then the voice of the Lord once more echoed through the dark corners of my soul. I read with breathless eagerness, and still I went on reading, though my uneasiness increased, till I came to this verse, 'Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.'

"I felt confounded and threw myself face down on the floor of my room. I sobbed aloud and groaned, praying for pardon from God for the sake of Jesus. I did not dare rise. I was afraid even to look up. I felt that the eye of God was upon me, and my sorrow cannot be described. After about an hour, I felt calmer and sat down, still holding my Bible. God had rescued me. The prayers of my poor mother were heard, and my sinful soul was brought into the narrow way of life.

"What followed? I resolved to give up my duel. But this was not all, I was filled with sympathy for the one I had regarded as my adversary. I longed to make this known to him, and also to those who were to have witnessed our crime. The day began to dawn, and the time for our meeting arrived. My companions came to seek me, but I had gone on first and hurried to the wood, the place chosen for the duel. I reached it first and felt that the Lord was graciously present with me. My adversary, accompanied by his seconds and mine, arrived there and cried out to me, 'Here I am; make ready'. I answered seriously, but with much feeling, 'I am ready in the presence of God to ask pardon of you if I have offended you, and to forgive you any wrong you may have done to me'.

"'Coward, scoundrel,' he exclaimed, 'this is your meanness!'

"'You need not insult me', I added; 'I speak in the presence of God, who sees us both. He has humbled me and touched my heart, and I repent and acknowledge my folly before Him, and I entreat you also to fear Him and no longer to reject His mercy.'

"Here the companion of my adversary came up to me, took my hand and asked me if I was a Christian. 'I am,' I answered, and so my sword shall remain in its sheath. If your friend has any complaint against me, let him mention it, and it shall be put right. Also I will not stand in the way of his claim, which caused this quarrel.'

"Thus God prevailed. The contest was dropped, and I returned to the town, urging my companions no longer to live in rebellion against God. I do not know if they yielded to my pleas, for I left the town shortly afterwards and had no further contact with them. But I cannot describe the joy of my godly mother when she heard that I was what she wished me to be, and felt that the Lord had shown His infinite love and mercy to me.

"Not long after this, the Government called me up for military service on

behalf of my country. The Lord has blessed me. His precious Word has daily become more valuable to me and, as you are aware, I love Psalm 116. I find much in it to describe the manner in which God has dealt with me. Where should I have been, if God had not given me such a mother? But let me look higher. Her love is but a faint shadow of the everlasting love of God; let all the praise be ascribed to Him.”

“‘My brother,’ I answered, ‘if we could thus look back daily on the way in which God has guided and preserved us, we should feel the same cause for thankfulness with which you acknowledge your entrance on this path.’

“‘And where’, said the officer, ‘is the haughty, cold spirit of those who think it is in the power of man to keep alive his own soul, by his own feelings toward God? Certainly I was found by Christ when I sought Him not. There was nothing in me by which I laid hold on eternal life; but the Giver of life eternal laid hold on me. The Father, who keeps us by His power, who abides faithful, and who has daily bound me to Him by the cords of His love, has again and again by His Spirit caused me to hear the voice of His dear Son. To Him I owe all my comforts in this life and in the life to come.’”

The officer stopped, and when we had read a part of the Word of God and prayed together, I felt that there may be, on earth, a foretaste of heavenly joy.

Lessons from the Life of Aaron

1. Introduction

Rev John Campbell

Here is the first part of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference, in April. This paper about Aaron had the sub-title, "His relevance for today". Sadly, Mr Campbell died the next month.

“**N**o man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Hebrews 5:4). So Aaron's life can be summed up in the words, “called of God”. He was the older brother of Moses, his senior by three years (Exodus 7:7). Miriam their sister appears to be older still, assuming she was the unnamed sister of Moses mentioned in Exodus 2:4. His father was Amram and his mother Jochebed; they both belonged to the tribe of Levi.

Although little is known about them, what extraordinary roles the parents had in God's providence, nurturing and rearing not just one, but two, future “princes in Israel”, during a very dark, persecuting time for God's Israel. Perhaps this was particularly true of the mother. Little did the parents know what lay ahead, when their sons were just infants.

May any young person – who perhaps harbours the hope of being, one

day, a father or mother – look in faith to God and not be discouraged by the darkness and seeming hopelessness of our time morally and spiritually! He dispels darkness and brings about the dawning of the day, not only naturally but also spiritually. May the cases of Moses and Aaron – and the Exodus from Egyptian slavery – encourage us all today in the certainty that there is a God who rules in heaven. The same unchangeable, all-powerful One is today what He was then, and what He is in every age.

Aaron appears to have been born either before the cruel, Satanic decree of Pharaoh was sent out to destroy the Hebrew baby boys, or at least before the Hebrew families were brought into much distress or suffering by it. Let us stop and consider God's overruling providence: God in His own time, and in His wonderful providence, will preserve those whom He has a purpose to use for Himself and His cause in every age. He will do so even in the darkest of times and thus defeat the powers of evil. God's decrees are infinitely higher than any decree or edict of sinful men.

Scripture tells us very little of Aaron's early life, apart from the fact that he married Elisheba, one of the daughters of Amminadab of the tribe of Judah. They had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Exodus 6:23). Let each one of us continually remember that our lives are of little or no value, except to the extent that we live for God's glory and honour, and to the enjoyment of Him. Each one of us has been created for this reason only. As *The Shorter Catechism* teaches, "man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever" (Answer 1).

The Lord had a great and glorious work for Aaron to do in His service when he was older. God can wonderfully use or call people in His service, as He did Aaron, bringing them to prominence in His cause at any stage in life, earlier or later. In our generation as much as in any other, you and I (every one of us) are called in our own position in life, to devote our best years to serve the Lord. Are you desiring to do so yourself? Do you pray like Paul, "Lord what wilt Thou have *me* to do"? (Acts 9:6)

When Moses was called by God to be the human instrument in delivering the Israelite people from bondage, he was at first unwilling to undertake such a task. But God, in His gracious condescension, sent Aaron his brother to meet him in the wilderness. Aaron obeyed and, because of his superior gifts of speech, God appointed him to be Moses' spokesman to the Israelites and to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:10-16,27). So we see that God gives the necessary gifts to each of His people for His service. But, even more importantly, He gives not only gifts but also grace. Aaron acted as Moses' deputy and human support through the time of the Exodus from Egypt, and in their journey through the wilderness.

According to the mind and will of God, by instructions received through Moses, Aaron and his sons were chosen and called to the high and solemn office of the priesthood. They were properly fitted and consecrated (or, set apart) to fulfill the duties of that holy office. Aaron was thus the first high priest chosen by God among men, an office which he filled for nearly 40 years. This divine appointment of Aaron and his sons as priests was later confirmed by God, when the rod budded that had been taken for the tribe of Levi; it bore Aaron's name (Numbers 17).

God did not permit Aaron to enter the promised land of Canaan – because of his sin (this was also true of Moses). Aaron died at Mount Hor, aged 123 years. His sacred robes and his office of high priest were transferred to his son Eleazar. The nation mourned for him for 30 days (Numbers 20:23-29).

Katherine von Bora

2. Who Would Be Her Husband?

F R Daubney

Last month's article told about Katherine becoming a nun and about her escape, with others, from her nunnery, as arranged by Martin Luther, the great Reformer. She went to live with the Reichenbach family. Most of the escaped nuns found husbands, but who would marry Katherine?

Luther thought a good match for Katherine would be a former priest, Doctor Casper Glatz. To this end Luther sent his friend, Nicholas von Amsdorf to visit Katherine to press Glatz's case. Reichenbach records that Katherine heard what Amsdorf had to say and then burst into tears, saying, "Reverend sir, love cannot be forced or commanded; it must be given by God. My heart is cold towards him whom you bid me to marry, and I could never be to him what a Christian wife should be, according to God's Word and command. Do not urge me, for I would rather continue in my present condition all my life than marry Dr Glatz."

When Amsdorf told her that Dr Luther would not be pleased with her refusal, more tears flowed, and she begged him not to tell Luther but said that she would tell him herself. Yet she did say that she would sooner marry Amsdorf himself or Luther, rather than Glatz. Perhaps she named them because they were older and considered out of the question. Luther was 42 and had made it clear to everyone that, though he approved of marriage, he would not take a wife.

Luther visited the Reichenbachs that same day, and Katherine poured out her concerns to him. He dealt very gently with her and promised not to

press her any further but to leave the matter in God's hands. After Katherine left the room, Luther seemed very troubled and said to Reichenbach, "Now I understand, my friend, why you fear to lose Katherine. She is indeed a treasure, and a maiden after God's own heart. I am vexed with myself, that until now I have regarded her so little, when I am really her guardian and her spiritual father". Reichenbach noticed that, "from that day, Katherine was less timid in the presence of Doctor Martin and was ready to speak to him at all times; and if he commends her housewifely virtues and maidenly reserve, she beams with pleasure".

Amsdorf had reported to Luther what Katherine had said about preferring to marry one of them, rather than Glatz, but Luther did not take the suggestion seriously. When he went home to visit his parents, he told them the story, probably as a huge joke, but his father took it seriously as a realistic proposal. Hans Luther was keen that his son would continue the family name.

Luther had long held the view, and made it known in his sermons, that the Roman Catholic doctrine of celibacy – that priests, monks and nuns must not marry – was wicked. It led to outrageous immoral behaviour and was contrary to the ordinance of marriage appointed by God at creation. Luther pressed other clerics to marry, but stoutly and resolutely refused to consider it for himself. This was partly because he expected to be put to death as a heretic at any time. But many of his friends urged him to put his doctrine into practice and find himself a wife. Even if he was to be burned at the stake within a year, they said, by marrying Katherine, for example, he could give a status to her and a testimony to his faith.

At this time, two friends came to visit him: Reichenbach and Lukas Kranach, a printer and artist. He told them that he was receiving lots of letters urging him to put his own doctrine into practice and get married. He said, "I retract nothing from what I have said in praise of wedlock, nor will I be untrue to myself. I honour the God-appointed institution of marriage, but at the same time I have no intention to take a wife. My enemies slander me enough as it is. What would they say if I should marry?"

He continued, "Look at the times; the peasantry are in rebellion; blood is flowing on every side. Who could think of marrying? I have not the slightest inclination to marry. Certainly, I too am in the Lord's hand; [I am] His creature, whose heart and spirit He can turn at any moment. All I contend for is liberty. Yet I will not harden myself in my own opinion, nor will I dictate to the Lord." One of his friends responded in a quiet voice: "The Lord will provide".

In mid-1525 Luther was going through a period of great despair, closeting himself in the deserted monastery. The peasants' uprising had been quelled,

and the Church of Rome blamed Luther for preaching Christian liberty, which had broken the chains of the peasants – thereby causing the war and all the bloodshed. The peasants in their turn said of Luther, “You have deceived us and betrayed us and forsaken us”.

Luther had at first supported the peasants in the so-called “Peasants War” but, when their violence and bloodshed reached appalling levels, he turned against them and urged the landowners and princes to quell the uprising with whatever extreme measures were necessary. Another reason for Luther’s depression was that the Elector, Frederick III, who had been his wise counsellor, defender and supporter, died on May 5. The people in Wittenberg were asking anxious questions. Where was Luther? His pulpit was silent. He was not teaching at the University. Instead he was sitting alone in his cell, lost to outward affairs and wholly absorbed in his meditations, thoughts and prayer.

During this time of quiet thinking and lowness of spirit, Luther came to believe that it was God’s will that he should marry. Having come to that decision he did not waste any time. He went to the house of his friend, the artist Lucas Kranach, and arranged for two other friends to join them. Luther said, “My dear friends, a change has just come over me which will cause you to marvel greatly. Not to keep you in suspense, I will tell you at once: Brother Martin has received the Lord’s command to take to himself a wife. It is the Lord’s doing, and a little short of a miracle in my eyes. Therefore, my heart consents willingly.”

(Curiously on June 10, his friend Spalatin, the Court Chaplain, had asked him what he thought of long engagements. He replied, “Do not put off till tomorrow! By delay Hannibal lost to Rome. By delay Esau forfeited his birthright. Christ said to those who would delay, ‘Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me’. Thus Scripture, experience and all creation testify that the gifts of God must be taken on the wing.”)

The men, along with Kranach’s wife, Barbara, set out for the Reichenbach house. On arrival they were let into the house by Elsa Reichenbach. Luther said, “Will you permit me in the presence of yourself and of these three honourable men, to speak with Katherine von Bora, upon a matter of great importance?”

Then he said to Katherine, “Dear mistress Kate, you know how great my interest in your welfare is, and how I have tried to find for you a worthy husband, that as a wife you might fulfill your true calling. But to this day my efforts have been unavailing, at which I have been much troubled. I again come to you on a matter of this nature to entreat you.”

At this point, Katherine became upset, thinking she was about to be pressed

to marry another unacceptable suitor, but Luther hastily added, "Do not fear, dear Katherine, today I do not appear for another. God has put it into my heart to delay no longer in enforcing my teaching by my example, and my heart has told me, without questioning, who was its choice. Therefore I ask you, in the presence of God and these human witnesses, whether you will pledge your word to Doctor Martin Luther and be his wedded wife?"

Katherine looked very pale and held on to the arm of a chair for support. And then she whispered, "Lord, my God, I would have assumed it happiness to be his servant! And now I am held worthy to be his wife! Lord, Thy mercy is very great!"

For Younger Readers

God Knows Before We Ask

Oliver Heywood was a good minister in England long ago. He preached just as the Bible tells ministers to preach. But powerful people did not like ministers to follow the Bible too closely. So he was not allowed to preach any longer. And men could come to his house and take him away to prison.

He had no more money; so he could not buy food for his family. There was no food left in the house. They had a faithful servant called Martha. She stayed on with the Heywoods, even when they had no money left to pay her wages. She used the small amount of money she had herself to help them, but none of that money was left now. Still Heywood trusted God to look after them and to provide what they needed.

One day, Heywood called Martha and asked her to take a basket and go to a shop in Northgate. She was to tell the man in the shop that Heywood wanted him to lend him a little money. If he was willing, Martha was to buy some bread and some cheese and a few other little things that she knew they needed. He told her to come back as quickly as she could because the Heywood children were hungry and were getting upset.

Heywood told Martha that he hoped God would go with her. He promised that he and his wife would pray to God, "who knows what we have need of, before we ask Him".

Martha went away, but she did not have the courage to go into the shop. She passed the door again and again without going in. Then the man came to the door and called to Martha. He asked her if she was Mr Hayward's servant. She told him she was.

Then he said that some friends had given him money for Heywood. It was far more than the minister wanted to borrow.

Martha burst into tears and told the man why she had come. The man kindly told her that she was to come back if the Heywoods again needed money.

Martha hurried to get the food they needed, now that she had plenty of money to pay for it. Then she ran back home to tell the Heywoods what had happened.

Once inside, Martha told her story, while the children took a keen interest in the basket. Mrs Heywood wiped tears away from her eyes, and her husband said, "The Lord has not forgotten to be gracious; His word is true from the beginning; they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing".

New Zealand Youth Conference 2022

In December 2022, a Youth Conference organised by the Asia Pacific Presbytery was held in New Zealand, at Masters Hall in Pahiatua, about a 45-minute drive north from Carterton, with 15 young people attending. The venue was very spacious and was formerly a hospital.

On the first day, Mr Hank Optland presented a second paper entitled "Genesis – The Beginning of Lessons for Christians". He drew attention to the fact that modern science ignores the teaching of the Bible and emphasised that nature and geological formations, for example, should be interpreted in the light of creation, the flood and a 6000-year-old earth. Rev Jett Smith gave a paper on the book of Revelation, providing some principles for the interpretation of prophecy. He also gave a brief outline of the last book of the Bible, which encourages God's people in dark times as they face hostility from the world.

The next day Mr Cornell Van Kralingen spoke on "the Benefit of Following Good Examples". He used such eminent examples as Ruth in the Old Testament, Timothy in the New Testament and, in modern times, Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie, who was an officer of the British

Army, serving as the military governor of Malta during World War 2, and was known for his godly character and family devotions.

The next two papers were presented by a live-link. Rev Caleb Hembd presented a paper in the evening on the public worship of God, emphasising that public worship is a solemn approach to God. Rev George Macdonald spoke the following morning on John Bunyan's life and helpful writings. In his paper, Bunyan was described as a "preacher, prisoner and pilgrim", with emphasis on learning from his example of faithfulness to Christ, in spite of persecution. Even while given remotely, the presentation and discussion took place with the usual interest.

Support and catering was provided by the excellent service of the house mothers Mrs Kathy Optland and Mrs Melissa Verheij. On the whole, although the number was small, and some became unwell with Covid-19 towards the end of the conference, the young people were eager to learn. We trust that it was a profitable Youth Conference. In a world full of darkness, it is important that our young people be shown the biblical perspective, which is the only infallible guide.

(Rev) J D Smith

For Junior Readers

“Close to Christ”

James Gilmour was born near Glasgow in 1843. He was third in a family of six boys. They were brought up to attend a church in Glasgow. This meant walking five miles there and five miles back twice each Lord's Day!

Family worship was held morning and evening in his home, and on Sabbath evenings their father would read aloud to them from Mathew Henry's *Bible Commentary*. Their mother would gather the boys around her and read tracts and missionary stories to them. She sometimes said how wonderful it would be if some of them would grow up to be useful to the Lord as missionaries.

James worked hard at school and did very well; so he was able to go on to study at Glasgow University, which was not so common in those days as it is now. He was very gifted at languages and won prizes in Latin and Greek. He was very shy and did not freely speak about himself and his spiritual experience, but he impressed those around him with his holy life.

He wished to spend his life for Christ among heathen people and applied to the London Missionary Society for training. The night before he left for China he had to say a sad farewell to one of his closest friends. James' parting words to him were, "Paterson, let us keep close to Christ". That was his desire as he left behind those he loved in Scotland.

He was going to spend his life in far-off areas of China that were as yet unknown to other parts of the world. He was also to spend time in remote Mongolia, to the north of China. He was far from family and friends, but “close to Christ”!

Is that not good advice to you, whatever stage you are at – and whatever lies ahead of you! Keep close to Christ, to His Word, to His commandments, to His people, and to the house of God! Those who keep close to Christ are described as “a people near unto Him” (Psalm 148:14).

An old writer has said, “If we are near unto Him, He will sympathise with us in all our sorrows, assist us in all our trials, protect us in all our dangers, have fellowship with us in our lonely hours, and provide for us in all seasons of necessity”. Is it not a good place to be, “near unto Him”? *J van Kralingen*

What Are Man's Ends?

John Hall

John Hall was a minister in America 150 years ago. This is a chapter from a book he wrote to explain the answer to the first question in *The Shorter Catechism*. As I hope most readers know, it is: “Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever”. This article has been edited. The previous chapter, “Chief End: What Does It Mean?” was printed in June.

There is obviously a purpose for everything that uses the labour and skill of men, and even of animals. The same reason should lead us to conclude that God had a purpose in all that He does. How can an intelligent being, like you, look on the many and various things that God has created, and not be convinced that He created them for some purpose?

Indeed, for most of God's works that we know anything about, this is so clear that we are not left to think about it: we feel and see and know what God's purpose was. The sun, clouds, rivers and earth were made for some useful purpose – not merely for ornament, or to display God's power. We know that we, and all other living creatures, are dependent on these works so that we can enjoy our life and even so that our life can continue. In these things, the end which the Creator had in view is plain; or at least enough of that end is clear, to keep us from wondering why they were created.

We see the sun giving its light and heat; the rain watering the fields; the streams giving water to drink; the air giving breath; the animals providing meat, clothing and, in many countries, the help of their strength to man – and every other work of God accomplishing some purpose. Can we see all that and yet suppose that God did not create man himself for some end? Or can

we believe that this end was only to eat, drink, sleep, work, suffer, die and turn to dust? Either of these ideas would be far more unreasonable than it would be to imagine that someone would take great pains to make a machine, make sure that it would last for a long time, and arrange for it to be kept in good working order, and yet have no purpose in view for the machine.

If it should be said that the duties of friendship, love and kindness are sufficient ends for our race, would this be satisfactory? How can we account for mankind to exist from age to age, without any other purpose in bringing them into the world than to provide sympathy and assistance for others?

But though we should look for a purpose in the creation of man, it could not teach us the whole purpose of the Creator. God alone can reveal this: and he has revealed it in the Bible, which was written under His inspiration. As our minds are thus taught, we are enabled to discover what man's end is – the end for which he was created and placed in this world.

From the Scriptures, then, we know that one of the ends for which God made man was to have dominion over the other living creatures on the earth, to fill it with inhabitants like himself, and to look after the particular spot in which he was placed (Genesis 1:26,28; 2:15).

The first man and woman sinned together, and by their sin caused themselves and all their descendants to fall from their first state of innocence. Since then man has been required to cultivate the ground with great labour, and his toils and sufferings have become great in comparison with the ease and happiness he enjoyed in a state of holy innocence. But he still continues to perform the same ends that he did at first. He cultivates the ground; he keeps the animals in subjection; human beings are to be found throughout the world, and he is still what may be called the keeper of this earth.

In the case of men and animals, and the earth itself, we see further illustrations of what has been said about lesser, or *subordinate* ends, and the chief end. Each muscle, bone, vein, and part of a living body has its purpose, whether it is a human body, or that of an animal, bird, or fish. But these are subordinate to a higher purpose, to make the animal able to serve man, and man to perform the duties that are required of him.

All the ends of man which have already been mentioned are of the lesser kind. They relate only to what is accomplished by his body – his strength and his superior power as the keeper of the earth. And yet we have seen that, for man, the earth itself is but an end. It was made for him. The ends he fulfills on the earth seem so trifling, when compared with the capacity of his mind and the powers of his soul. If so, they make us feel that they must be subordinate to some higher and greater purpose of his Creator, and it becomes a natural and most important question, What is the *chief end* of man?

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

UK Prizes and Awards 2022-23

Senior Section

Prizes. *London:* Sarah Munns. *Dingwall:* Catherine Campbell. *Inverness:* Jenna Campbell. *North Tolsta:* Uilleam Morrison.

Awards. *Halkirk:* Donald Maclean. *Southampton:* Chloe Wilkins. *Llanelli:* Carys Cran.

Intermediate Section

Prizes. *Aberdeen:* Julia Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Anna Cameron-Mackintosh, Fraser Campbell. *Inverness:* Susanna Jane Campbell, Calum Arie Morrison; *Glasgow:* Elena MacLennan.

Awards. *Barnoldswick:* Bethan Middleton. *Glasgow:* Violet Marr. *Inverness:* Anna McSeveney. *Southampton:* Jonathon and Lydia Wilkins. *Ullapool:* Tacita Faith Angell.

Junior Section

Prizes. *Barnoldswick:* Alexia van Essen. *Dingwall:* Neil Campbell, Donald Allan MacColl. *Llanelli:* Sarah Cran. *Inverness:* Murray Dickie, James Maton. *North Tolsta:* Rebecca Morrison. *North Uist:* Katie MacDonald.

Awards. *Barnoldswick:* Susie Middleton, Sam van Essen. *Beauly:* Rebekka Fraser, Hudson MacLean. *Glasgow:* Evan Marr. *Halkirk:* Catriona MacLean. *London:* Andrew Macleod.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes. *Aberdeen:* Cassia Soni. *Edinburgh:* Darcy Esson, Alice Hicklin. *Halkirk:* Angus Hymers-Mackintosh. *London:* Ernest Campbell, Daniel MacLeod. *North Tolsta:* James Morrison.

Awards. *Aberdeen:* Kenneth Macleod. *Dingwall:* Iain MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Alec and Julia Cameron-Mackintosh, Joella Esson. *Inverness:* Campbell Dickie. *North Harris:* Finlay Jardine.

Lower Primary Section

Awards. *Aberdeen:* Philip Macleod. *Barnoldswick:* Matilda and Micah Fisher. *Dingwall:* Heather Campbell, Charlotte and Mairi MacColl. *Edinburgh:* James and Samuel Dickie, Teddy Esson, Leah and Matthew Hicklin, Genevieve MacLean. *Glasgow:* Joel Marr. *Inverness:* Molly and Emily Campbell, Harvey Dickie. *London:* Lydia and William Campbell, Benjamin Macleod. *North Harris:* Margaret Jardine. *Southampton:* Benji Wilkins.

Looking Around Us

Forgiveness of Sin – a Wrong Way and a Right Way

A rare mould lay buried in a field in the south of England for over 500 years. It was found by someone using a metal detector and has now gone on display at Mottisfont, which was once a Roman Catholic priory. Monks or nuns would have lived in the priory and people came there on pilgrimage.

The priory had once been wealthy, but when the plague of the black death swept through Europe in the 1340s, killing huge numbers, there were fewer people to support the priory with their money; perhaps this was especially because few people now came on pilgrimage. So those running the priory decided to sell indulgences; indulgences were documents which claimed to

reduce the time spent in purgatory – in this case by one year and 40 days. A little hot wax was poured on the document and the mould was pressed onto the wax. This produced a seal which made the document official.

But, of course, purgatory does not exist. If it did exist, God would have told us about it in the Bible. He did not do so, and we can be sure there is no purgatory. When souls leave this world, they go either to heaven or to hell; there is nowhere else. To buy an indulgence is a complete waste of money; it cannot do any good to anyone.

Sin is against God. It is He who must forgive sin. No one else can do it, not even a church. When a church comes up with a scheme like this, especially to make money, you can be sure that there is something very far wrong with the church.

But will God forgive sin? Yes, He will – “without money, and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). The Bible does not tell us how to get out of purgatory, because it does not exist. But it does tell us how to get to heaven and how to avoid going to hell. It tells us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, because God the Father sent Him to be the Saviour of the world (see 1 John 4:14). Jesus is the Son of God, but He took human nature and was born into this world. He took on Himself the guilt of a vast number of people; He suffered and died to bear their punishment, to take away their sin, so that they would not have to suffer.

Another money-making scheme involving indulgences was set up in Germany in 1517. That was when Martin Luther became concerned about people being distracted from the right way of finding forgiveness of their sins and relying on indulgences that did not have God’s authority.

So Luther drew up 95 theses, or points for discussion, and they were nailed to the church door in Wittenberg, where he lived. Nobody bothered to have a formal discussion of Luther’s theses, but the theses were spread everywhere and lots of people heard about them. These theses mark the beginning of the Reformation moment, when the pure gospel – the good news about *God’s* way of salvation – was restored, not only to Germany, but also to large parts of Europe, including Scotland and England.

We should be thankful to know about the Reformation teachings on salvation; in particular, that our sins can be forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ alone, and not by any works of righteousness which we may do, or by any indulgences that we may buy. But let us remember that, unless we believe in Christ, we will perish in our sins.