

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



July 2010

Vol 75 • No 7

Contents

God's Authority in the Bible	123
Revival at Kilsyth:	
3. A Thousand Worlds for One Smile from God	126
The Gap in the Middle of Your Bible:	
1. From the Beginning	129
The Scottish Reformation of 1560:	
2. Problems with the Priests	130
Only One Way of Salvation:	
3. Because of What God Is	132
For Junior Readers:	
A Help to Remembering	134
For Younger Readers:	
The Pony and the Brothers	135
Why Read. . . <i>Practical Religion?</i>	136
Looking Around Us	139

Cover Picture: *Wellington harbour, New Zealand.* See back page.

The Young People's Magazine

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

Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271; 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: F P Magazine £19.50 (£1.50 per copy); Y P Magazine £11 (70p per copy); both magazines £28.50. 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

Vol 75

July 2010

No 7

God's Authority in the Bible

There is a God. He is perfect. He is altogether glorious. He knows everything. He makes no mistakes. He is all-powerful. He is perfectly just. There is no limit to His wisdom. He exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father sent His Son into the world to save sinners.

But how do we know? The answer is: God has told us; He has revealed all this, and much more, to us in the Bible. It is all utterly dependable; we can rely on every word that God has spoken. He is truth; there is not the remotest possibility that He will say anything that is even slightly out of line with the truth. Everything He says corresponds exactly to reality, and everything He tells us to do is exactly what we ought to do. And, because it is God who is speaking, all the commands we find in the Bible have authority. We have no right to go against God's authority. If our thinking differs from what the Bible is telling us, one thing is sure: it is we who are wrong. God can never be wrong, but we can very easily be wrong.

Many people do not want to believe that God created the whole universe, and did so in six days. But God tells us in the Bible that this is exactly what He did. There were no human beings around when He was at work, until the very end, when Adam and Eve were created. So the only way we can know what happened is to listen to God. He knows exactly what He did and He has told us about it. The account in the Bible has His authority. It is our duty to submit to His report of what happened. Many people will point to various facts that seem to contradict the account of creation in Genesis; they believe that everything points to the theory of evolution as the only explanation of how everything came into existence.

But the theory of evolution has serious weaknesses. The theory claims that, by means of tiny changes, all living creatures have gradually developed from something very simple. But the Bible teaches that God created separate "kinds" of creatures. (See Genesis 1:25, for example: "God made the beast of the earth after his *kind*, and cattle after their *kind*, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his *kind*".) No one disputes that there may be change within a *kind*; think of the various breeds of dogs which have been

produced. But no one can provide evidence that a creature of one *kind* has changed into a creature of another. As time goes on, and scientists and others discover more information, and as they consider their information in a more biblical way, we can be sure that the ideas of evolution will fall away and the authority of the Bible's account of creation will become widely respected. We can rest assured that the all-powerful God was easily able to create this world and everything in it, as well as the rest of the universe.

The Bible is full of miracles: (1) the Red Sea opening up when Moses stretched out his rod, for instance, (2) Elijah going up to heaven in a chariot of fire without dying, (3) the Lord Jesus feeding 5000 people from very little food, or bringing Lazarus alive again after three days, (4) or Peter and John healing the legs of a man who had never been able to walk. No one sees such miracles today (although many wonderful things may happen in answer to prayer). Because they have not seen these things happen, people feel free to deny that miracles are possible. But miracles were never ordinary, everyday events; God only made miracles possible for very special reasons – when He was bringing about a new stage in the development of His Church.

Look again at our examples; they include the time (1) when God used Moses to establish His Church among the Israelites, (2) when God was about to give clearer revelations, through the prophets, of the Saviour who was to come, (3) when the Saviour did come, to work out salvation for sinners, (4) when God was using the Apostles to establish the New Testament Church. Although God does not always work miracles – indeed He does not often work miracles – we must not disbelieve when we read in the Bible that He has acted in these wonderful ways in the past. A miracle took place when God exerted special, direct power in some situation. There is no natural explanation for it; it is above nature; it is supernatural. But many people do not want to be reminded that God has this kind of power.

Voltaire, a French writer who lived more than 200 years ago, strongly opposed anything like biblical Christianity. He went so far as to say, “If in the market of Paris, before the eyes of 1000 men and before my own eyes, a miracle should be performed, I would much rather disbelieve the 2000 eyes and my own two than believe it”. It is amazing that a man could be so determined to refuse even the clearest of evidence. He did not want to believe in miracles; he did not want to submit to the authority of God.

Sadly, even people within the Church argue strongly that miracles could not have taken place. They too are rejecting the authority of God speaking in the Bible. A professor, teaching his class of students for the ministry, was once speaking about the accounts in the Gospels of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee. “It goes without saying” said the professor boldly, in defiance of

God's authority, "that Jesus did not actually walk on the water. The laws of nature would not have permitted it. In reality Jesus walked on the shore. A mist had risen to about the height of their knees, and so it looked to the disciples in the boat as if He was walking on the water."

This is ridiculous, and at least one of the students realised this. He asked, "But, Professor, how do you explain that Peter sank when he tried to walk up to Jesus?" The professor smiled; he assumed he knew better than the student, and better than the Bible. No doubt he would have had some such answer to every possible question. He told the student: "They were near the shore. The water was not very deep. It was filled with long sedgy grass. As Peter stepped out, this grass held him up. He thought he was walking on the water. Then he suddenly lost his nerve and imagined that he was sinking." This is even more ridiculous! Are we to believe that Peter was so stupid that he could not recognise the difference between walking on water and walking on thick grass? And would Matthew have bothered to tell us about this incident if all Peter did was walk on thick grass?

Jesus did walk on water. And so did Peter; at least he took a few steps before he began to sink. They walked on water because of the power of Jesus, who is God. All miracles take place because of God's power, and the accounts of these miracles in the Bible come to us with the authority of God behind them. It was He who directed Matthew and all the other authors of the Bible to write as they did. So they made no mistakes. We can feel perfectly safe when we believe what is written in the Bible: about creation and miracles and everything else.

We are making our way through life. But where are we going? And how can we know where we are going? We must go to the Bible. Just as it has God's authority when it speaks about creation and miracles, so it has authority when it tells us about other things. In particular, it has authority when it tells us what lies beyond this life. There is a heaven and there is a hell. And it is vital for us to know if we are prepared for heaven or if we are only fit for hell. The question is: Have we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? If we have, the Bible teaches, we will want to learn more about the way of salvation; we will want to hate sin; we will want to love God and do what pleases Him; we will want other people to be converted; and we will want God to be glorified, even in this world. If we have *not* believed, we will be in no hurry to be converted; we will not care about being holy; we will not be anxious to please God; and we will not care whether He is glorified or not.

How can we reach heaven safely? By trusting in Jesus, the Son of God, who died in the place of sinners like us. This is what the Bible tells us, and everything in the Bible has God's authority behind it. We dare not reject it.

Revival at Kilsyth

3. A Thousand Worlds for One Smile from God

In 1742 revival came to various parts of Scotland, including Kilsyth, north east of Glasgow. James Robe, the local minister, wrote about some of those who were converted. Last month we followed the conversion experience of a man Robe called CD. This month we will look at the experience of another man who was turned to God; we may refer to him as AB.

AB did not actually live in the parish of Kilsyth. But because the Kilsyth church was nearer to his home than the church in his own parish, he came regularly to hear James Robe. In early August 1742, AB handed Robe a paper giving an account of how God had dealt with his soul.

On the Sabbath of the previous communion season, Thomas Gillespie, a well-known minister of the time, had been preaching on Zechariah 9:11: "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water". AB felt as if he was tied up in a pit without water – he felt himself a sinner who had no hope of deliverance or of anything that could possibly help him. He felt as if someone had said to him: "Believe, or thou shalt be damned". And that disturbed him greatly. He must have known that he did not believe, and the thought of being condemned to hell for ever was truly awful.

As Gillespie addressed the believers at the Lord's table, he told them that God and Christ were theirs, and so were heaven and earth, the Bible and ministers. But AB felt he had no right to anything good and the thought troubled him greatly. At the last service, on the Monday, another minister was preaching. He told those who had been at the Lord's table to bless God, because "He is still waiting to be gracious to you, although you have trampled His Son's blood under your feet". He meant that, in the past, they had rejected the grace of Jesus Christ, who died for them. Yet they had been made willing to look to the Saviour, and God was now graciously ready to show them further blessings. Yet this encouraged AB, probably because he realised that the One who had shown such wonderful mercy to other sinners was able to help him too in the time of need he was now so conscious of.

Before they parted at the end of that service, Robe gave the people some advice. He asked them: "Do you not envy them that are going home with Christ in their bosom, and you have the devil in yours?" And he earnestly pled with them to part with the devil and take Christ instead. AB thought he saw that the devil was in his bosom. He started to walk towards a building where he would be able to speak to Robe, but the thought went through his mind that he was already condemned to a lost eternity and he decided to go

home. He thought it was silly for him to speak to any minister about spiritual things when, as he wrongly assumed, there could be no hope for him.

Now it is true, for Christ Himself said so, that “he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”; the sentence of condemnation hangs over the head of every unbelieving sinner. But that sentence is not final. Whenever sinners believe, they are justified – in other words, the sentence of condemnation is reversed and God accepts them as if they had never sinned.

On the other hand, the devil will do all in his power to discourage sinners who have serious thoughts about their souls. He will try to make people like AB believe that there is no hope for them. Satan hopes they will give up thinking seriously about their souls, go on with their sins, and so perish for ever in hell. No one should pay any attention to the thought that there is no hope for him. There is hope for every sinner who is still in contact with the Word of God – even if it is just some verses somewhere in his memory. But he must believe in Jesus Christ, who died in the place of sinners.

Yet, though AB felt there was no hope for him, he kept on praying. Strangely, although he fully expected God to cast him into hell, AB wanted first to thank Him for all the mercies he had received during his lifetime. He also prayed that everyone else would be saved. And, through these desires, can we not see some glimmers of spiritual life in his soul? Yes, he was confused and the devil was trying hard to discourage him. Yet there were some indications that AB now had a new heart though he could not see that yet. The important thing for those who are concerned about spiritual matters, whether they are really born again or not, is to press on, to keep seeking the Lord, until they know that they have found Him.

AB went on in a despairing condition for some time. One night he was lying in bed, thinking sadly about the condition he was in. He felt some “impressions of pardon”, though he does not explain what gave rise to them. But when he wakened in the morning, “all my comfort was gone, and I would have given a thousand worlds for one smile [from God] again”. And surely it was a genuine faith in Christ that made AB say he felt that “my heart would break when I thought on the great love and goodwill of heaven to mankind sinners – considering my own unworthiness, that before ever I had thought of mercy, He showed me such kindness. For if I had 10 000 hearts I would do nothing else but show forth His praise!”

God taught AB how to decide if he was thinking in a right way. He told his minister that, “when any good thought comes into my mind, I look into the Scriptures and, if I find it there, I try to keep it. And if I do not, I let it go, as not consistent with the Word of God.” He blessed God that he was now

taking “more delight in striving to please Him” than ever he did in trying to please his own worldly desires.

AB now had a strong desire to go to the Lord's table, but he was afraid he had not truly repented of his sins. Yet he was conscious of love to Christ as his Redeemer. So he did remember Christ's death, in the Lord's Supper, and God gave him more assurance of faith there. One result was that sometimes all he could say when praying was: “O love, O love, redeeming love!” – so strong was his sense of the love of Christ in dying for sinners like him.

This was not the end of AB's difficulties. Sometimes he “was sure of the Lord's favour”; at other times he was “in great doubt”. But he was helped by the words: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). Afterwards, AB lost his worshipful thoughts of Christ and felt that his “heart grew as hard as a stone”. Then he went to a communion season at Cambuslang, when George Whitefield, the famous English evangelist, was one of the preachers. AB was encouraged by what Whitefield was saying, and these words came into his mind: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezekiel 36:26). “I sat afterwards at the [Lord's] table,” AB added, “overjoyed with the love of my dear Redeemer.”

Some time later, AB came to his minister to ask for advice. “Sometimes”, AB complained, “my heart is as cold as ever it was in all my life.” He was afraid that he “would almost give over to the world again”, if God in His mercy did not go before him. Then, “though I would pray till I could speak no more, all is in vain” – unless the Lord would revive his soul. Yet at other times he was conscious that he did love Christ as his Redeemer, and he believed that Christ did love him, so that he felt he must pray.

Robe had a talk with AB and was satisfied that he understood the way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus. “And he looked for acceptance with God, not on the account of his repentance or duties, but only of Christ's righteousness.” Robe also noted that AB was resolved to keep from sin “in Christ's strength” for the future. When AB said that he had felt that he was not sorry enough for his sins to be able to believe in Christ, Robe noted that many others who are concerned for their souls make the same mistake. He pointed out that what is necessary is the work of the Holy Spirit – “to make sinners willing to part with all sin and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ”.

Conversion was not a quick, easy experience for AB, nor were his experiences after conversion easy. And those in whose hearts God is dealing today may feel confused, not knowing where to turn. But God is in control and, whatever other purposes He may have in His dealings with sinners, He will bring them to depend, not on themselves, but altogether on Christ alone.

The Gap in the Middle of Your Bible

1. From the Beginning

Andrew R Middleton

When you open your Bible and start to read on the first page, you find that it contains a fairly continuous history. It starts on page 1 with Creation and moves from the beginning of the world down to Abraham. This faithful man was the founding patriarch of a family who multiplied into tribes which became known as the people of Israel. Abraham and his family travelled from modern Iraq, which is called Mesopotamia in the Bible, up along a northern trade route that passed through Syria into Palestine (modern Israel). His grandson Jacob went with his family, in a time of famine, down into Egypt, where they settled in the Nile Delta region. The move of Jacob and Joseph links in with what students of ancient Egypt would call the late Twelfth-Fifteenth and Hyksos Dynasties, and we would date them around 1900-1600 BC.

After several generations (about 400 years) under oppression from Pharaoh (probably Ramesses II) the Children of Israel fled, under Moses, back towards Canaan through the Sinai desert. After a war-filled period of settlement and the rule of Judges (from about 1210 to 1050 BC), they saw the anointing of the first king, called Saul, who was crowned around 1050 BC. Saul's coronation followed the Battle of Aphek, when the Israelites were thoroughly beaten by the Philistines and Shiloh, the centre of worship and home of the tabernacle, was destroyed.

Saul ruled over Israel from his court at Gibeah in Benjamin for around 40 years. He was killed, in a battle with the Philistines, alongside Jonathan his son. Saul was succeeded by a son, Ishbosheth, who reigned over the larger part of a divided kingdom (1006-1004 BC) for the short period of two years. The ruler over the tribe of Judah at Hebron – David, the Lord's anointed – was eventually accepted as the king of all Israel (1003 BC). His first act as king was to unify the territory by conquering Jerusalem and building in it a palace. David fought a series of battles against the neighbouring heathen tribes on each side: the Philistines, Moab, Edom and Ammon (and their ally the powerful warlord of Aram-Zobah). This series of military victories gave David a small empire from whom he obtained tribute (money). At the end of this 40-year reign Israel was a much wealthier and more stable nation, and David was succeeded by his son Solomon (971-931 BC) who built the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem.

This empire was then lost due to the foolhardy rule of Solomon's son

Rehoboam and the intervention of Egypt. The country was split into the two rival mini-Kingdoms, Judah in the south and Israel in the north, each with their own set of kings. These two kingdoms lasted until armies from Assyria (part of modern Iraq) destroyed Israel in 722 BC and then their successors from Babylon captured Judah in 586 BC. When the Babylonians conquered Judah, they took the local population captive to Mesopotamia (Iraq).

After the Persians (Iran) overcame Babylon (Iraq) they allowed some of the captive Judeans (Jews) back into Palestine in the fifth century. The Jews who returned renewed their loyalty to their God, under the guidance of men like Ezra and Nehemiah. The books of the Old Testament draw their history to a close about 400 BC.

At the beginning of the New Testament everything has altered! We have a different language. The New Testament is written in Greek rather than Hebrew. Another group of kings has emerged. The reigning monarch is Herod, who tried to murder the infant Messiah. We have synagogues in addition to the Temple. We do not have the Jews as a unified group, but as Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and others. The Romans have become the new local power; their empire stretched far and wide and was the scene of the missionary activity of the early Church. What happened in those 400 years between the two Testaments to alter everything?

What follows in these articles is the story of that gap in the middle of our Bible which is so often ignored.

The Scottish Reformation of 1560

2. Problems with the Priests

Rev D W B Somersset

The first article in this series – printed last month – described briefly the state of religion in Scotland before the Reformation.

David Hay Fleming was a well-known historian of the Scottish Church 100 years ago. In his book on the Reformation in Scotland, he lists seven corrupt features of the pre-Reformation Church. Here we look at the first three of them.

1. Depravity. Immorality was widespread in the Church of Rome before the Reformation. Hay Fleming gives a list of children of Roman priests in Scotland between the years 1529 and 1559. The list occupies 23 pages and includes over 300 cases. Most of those listed were boys, and there must have been, more or less, an equal number of girls as well. These are the recorded cases and there are likely to have been many others.

The main cause of the problem was that the Church of Rome insisted, and still insists, that priests are not allowed to marry. This rule is unscriptural – the Apostle Peter was married (Mark 1:30) – and it puts these so-called priests in a dangerous state of temptation. Before the Reformation there were many laws against priests acting immorally but there was no one to enforce them because so many, from the highest to the lowest, were guilty of this sin. At the same time at least one priest was put to death, in 1534, for getting married. Another priest, who had become a Protestant and got married, was bricked up between two walls to perish, but his brother helped him to escape.

2. Ignorance. Several of the pre-Reformation bishops were highly educated men, but some, even of the bishops, were grossly ignorant. Many of the clergy knew very little of Scripture and its doctrine, and some could not even read fluently. In 1551, for instance, Archbishop Hamilton issued his Catechism to try to improve the state of learning. The rules that went with it ordered that “the said rectors, vicars, or curates must not go up into the pulpit without due preparation, but they must prepare themselves with all zeal and assiduity for the task of reading [in public], by constant, frequent, and daily rehearsal of the lesson to be read, lest they expose themselves to the ridicule of their hearers, when, through want of preparation, they stammer and stumble in mid-course of reading”.

In the same year there was a survey by Bishop Hooper in the Diocese of Gloucester. This was in England, admittedly, rather than Scotland, but there is no reason to think that things would have been better in Scotland. In the Diocese of Gloucester there were 373 ministers, of whom 62 were absent, mostly because they were “pluralists” – men who had more than one charge. This left 311 to be examined. Hooper tested them on the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.

The examination was: for the Commandments, how many there are, where they are found, and to repeat them from memory; for the Creed, to say what its statements of the Christian faith are, and confirm them from Scripture; for the Lord’s Prayer, to repeat the petitions from memory, to state how it is known to be the Lord’s Prayer, and where it is to be found. Of the 311 priests, 90 did well or fairly well on the examination; 171 could not repeat the Ten Commandments, 33 could not tell in which chapter they were found; 10 could not repeat the Lord’s Prayer, 30 could not tell where it was found; 9 could not repeat the Creed, 308 could not prove its statements from Scripture (though some could prove some of them). One wonders how Church of England and Church of Scotland ministers would perform nowadays if they had to take the same test.

The most famous case of ignorance was given by the Scottish Reformer

George Buchanan, when he quoted the priests who said that “Martin Luther had lately composed a wicked book called the New Testament; but that they, for their part, would adhere to the Old Testament”. A Swiss monk said that “a new language had been invented some time ago called Greek, which has been the mother of all these heresies. A book is printed in this language, called the New Testament, which contains many dangerous things. Another language is now forming, the Hebrew; whoever learns it immediately becomes a Jew.” These are extreme cases, but they make the point.

If the clergy were ignorant, the people were even more so. In a document signed in Aberdeen in 1530 by 35 of the leading men, 8 could not sign their names. Even in the 1554 Scottish Parliament there were men who could not sign their names.

3. Irreverence. Another feature of the pre-Reformation Church was a lack of reverence in religion. Religion was mocked, or made to appear ridiculous, by the very people who were supposed to be upholding it. For example, in the month of December “boy bishops” were appointed as part of the lengthy festivities that took place, and at the end of the period these “boy bishops” would preach a “sermon”. We can see the same thing today with jokes, clowns, and puppet shows during public worship, and even holding services to bless animals. The present writer, in his teens, attended a service in an old church in England in which he was sitting near a donkey which periodically snorted and stamped its feet loudly on the stone floor. Every gimmick is used to bring people into church, but the solemn realities of heaven and hell are obscured and forgotten.

Only One Way of Salvation

3. Because of What God Is

J C Ryle

This is a series taken from Ryle's book, *Knots Untied*, and is based on the verse: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). It has been edited. Ryle is now giving some reasons why the teaching of the text must be true. Last month's article contained the first reason: because of what man is.

My second reason is: the doctrine of our verse must be true because *God is what God is*. Now what is God? That is a deep question indeed. We know something about Him; He has not left Himself without witness in creation; He has mercifully revealed to us many things about Himself in His Word. We know that God is a Spirit; eternal, invisible, almighty; the Maker

and the Preserver of all things; holy, just, all-seeing, all-knowing, all-remembering; infinite in mercy, in wisdom, in purity.

But, after all, how low are our highest ideas when we come to put down on paper what we believe God is! How many words and expressions we use whose full meaning we cannot fathom! How many things we say of Him which our minds are utterly unable to understand! How small a part of Him we see! How little of Him we can possibly know! How weak are any words of ours to convey any idea of Him who made this mighty world out of nothing, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day!

How weak and inadequate are our feeble minds to form any idea of Him who is perfect in all His works – perfect in the greatest as well as in the smallest. He is perfect in appointing the days and hours and minutes and seconds in which Jupiter, with all its moons, shall travel round the sun; He is also perfect in forming the smallest insect that creeps over a few feet of our little globe!

How little can our busy helplessness understand a Being who is ever ordering all things, in heaven and earth, by His providence. He has ordered the rise and fall of nations like Nineveh and Carthage. He has ordered the exact length to which men like Alexander the Great and Napoleon shall extend their conquests. He has ordered the least step in the life of the humblest believer. And He has done it all at the same time, all unceasingly, all perfectly, all for His own glory.

The blind man is no judge of the paintings of the most famous artists; the deaf man cannot appreciate the beauty of the best music, however well you may describe it. They do not have the ability to take in these things; they have no set of thoughts which can understand them. And just in the same way, the best and brightest ideas that man can form of God are weak and faint indeed, compared to the reality which His children shall one day see.

But one thing is, I think, very clear. It is this: the more any man considers calmly what God really is, the more he must feel that the distance between God and himself cannot be measured. The more he thinks about it, the more he must see that there is a great gulf between him and God.

His conscience will, I think, tell him, if he will let it speak, that God is perfect and he is imperfect, that God is very high and he is very low, that God is glorious majesty and he is a poor worm. So if he is ever to stand before God in judgement with comfort, he must have some mighty helper or he will not be saved.

And what is all this but the very teaching of the text? What is all this but coming round to the conclusion I am urging on those who read this article.

With such a one as God to give account to, we must have a mighty Saviour. To give us peace with such a glorious being as God, we must have an almighty Mediator, a Friend and Advocate on our side – an Advocate who can answer every charge that can be laid against us and plead our cause with God on equal terms. We need this and nothing less than this. Vague notions of mercy never give true peace. And such a Saviour, such a Friend, such an Advocate is nowhere to be found except in Jesus Christ.

I know well that people may have false ideas about God as well as everything else and shut their eyes against truth. But I say this boldly and confidently: No one can have really high and honourable views of what God is if he avoids the conclusion that the teaching of our text is true. We are shut up to the truth of Peter's declaration. There can be no possible salvation but by Jesus Christ.

For Junior Readers

A Help to Remembering

I wonder if you know what a *mnemonic* (pronounced *nimonik*) is? It is something to help one's memory. It could be initials to help you think of a list of names or perhaps a verse to help you remember some important events. When God created man, both Adam and Eve were perfect in every way. But when they fell into sin, every part of them was affected, including their memory. And that is true also of every human being that has been born since then. This is why we often have difficulty remembering the things we should remember. The most important things for us to remember are the truths of God's Word. And the best time to start to memorise verses from the Bible is when you are young.

A mnemonic to help you remember a selection of Bible verses could be to arrange verses in alphabetical order which you could then learn. You could make up your own list but this list gives you a selection to start with. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31).

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Draw me, we will run after Thee (Song of Solomon 1:4).

Every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

God be merciful to me a sinner (Luke 18:13).

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat (Isaiah 55:1).

I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15).

Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am (Psalm 39:4).

Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

One God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

Prepare to meet thy God (Amos 4:12).

Quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required (Luke 12:48).

Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3).

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

eXamine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Ye must be born again (John 3:7).

Be Zealous therefore and repent (Revelation 3:19).

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

The Pony and the Brothers

There was a pony near the house where two little boys lived. One of them could see the pony as he stood at the window looking down the road.

His brother said to him: "What would you do with him?"
"Ride him; that's what I'd do."

“All day long?”

“Yes, from morning till night.”

“You’d have to let me ride him sometimes”, said the brother.

“Why would I? You would have no right to him if he was mine.”

“Father would make you let me have him part of the time.”

“No, he wouldn’t!”

The two boys were starting to get angry with each other. That was not good. The pony did not belong to either of them. How silly to start arguing and to get angry when there was nothing really to argue about!

Their mother stopped them. She could see that, if the boys went on arguing, they might get more and more angry. Then they might start to fight. That would be very wrong.

Do you sometimes get angry? Perhaps with your brother? Or with your sister? Or with one of your friends? Or do you even get angry with your father or mother?

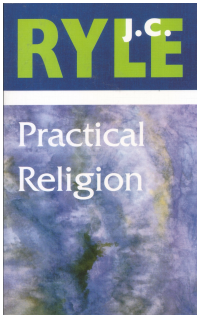
It is wrong to get angry. And God sees it. He does not like it. He sees it is sin. You are not only doing wrong to your brother or sister or friend, or your father or mother; you are doing wrong to God. It is very wrong to get angry with your parents. God has given them to you to look after you and to show you when you are doing wrong.

God says, “Honour thy father and thy mother”. You give honour to people who are more important than you. Your father and mother are more important. So you should do what they tell you to do, and you should love them.

Why Read . . . *Practical Religion*?

John Charles Ryle, a bishop in the Church of England in Victorian times, produced many useful writings. Among his output is a series of three books on key questions that matter to anybody with a church background. The first, *Knots Untied*, deals with issues that cause controversy among Christians; the second, *Old Paths*, deals with the vital doctrines of the Christian religion. Both of these are interesting and valuable, but it is the third book in the series, *Practical Religion*, which I would especially like to recommend as something definitely worth reading.

As the title suggests, this book is full of very practical advice. Each of its chapters focuses on a different topic – for example, prayer, or Bible reading – and each chapter contains some very down-to-earth guidance for readers to put into practice in their everyday life.



Although it may seem unlikely at first glance that a book first published in 1878 could have much to offer teenagers and young people in today's world, I would like to give you some ideas which might persuade you to have a look at this book whenever you next get the opportunity.

To start with, this is one of the most readable of the Christian classics. Partly this is because of the way it is structured – in 22 separate chapters, each dealing with one distinct theme. This means that you do not have to start at the beginning and work your way through it page after page. If you have a look at the contents page, you will be able to choose a theme that catches your attention, and then just read what J C Ryle has to say about charity, or zeal, or “our home”, or “the best friend”. In addition, Ryle made a point of being easy to understand. Avoiding the complicated sentence structures with which the reader sometimes has to grapple in other books from the nineteenth century, Ryle wrote plainly. He uses short sentences and keeps things straightforward. The different sections of each chapter are clearly labelled and he always sticks to his point. So do not be put off by the old-fashioned appearance of the print on the page – the meaning should be clear.

Another reason to recommend this book is that it deals with topics which do not change much with the times. Themes like “happiness” and “freedom” still matter to people today, even though the cultural context and some of the words have changed. Since Ryle is especially concerned with the spiritual dimensions of these themes, this point is doubly important. Having freedom of speech in a democratic society is good as far as it goes, but more importantly, we need to have freedom from sin, for example. The answer to people's questions about how to read the Bible, or how to cope with poor health, or how you can define worldliness, tend to remain fairly constant over the years, and Ryle tackles each of them in a way that remains relevant in today's world.

Another good thing about this book is that it counteracts the approach to religion which places too much emphasis on theology for its own sake. Of course it is not a problem when people are thoroughly familiar with biblical doctrines, but there could be a danger for “biblically literate” people to rest

content in knowing what the Bible says, and falling short of putting it into practice in any meaningful way. So, for example, everyone who reads their Bible knows that Jesus Christ says, "Ask, and ye shall receive," and everyone who hears gospel sermons knows that they can and should pray for salvation, "God be merciful to me a sinner". But do we actually pray?

In the chapter on prayer, J C Ryle gives suggestions for what exactly to do – and sweeps aside all the excuses that people might use to justify why they do not pray. "It is useless to say you do not know how to pray. Prayer is the simplest act in all religion. It is simply speaking to God. It needs neither learning, nor wisdom, nor book-knowledge to begin it. It needs nothing but heart and will. The weakest infant can cry when he is hungry. . . . It is useless to say you cannot pray till you have faith and a new heart, and that you must sit still and wait for them. This is to add sin to sin. It is bad enough to be unconverted and going to hell. It is even worse to say, 'I know it, but I will not cry for mercy'. . . . If you want faith and a new heart, go and cry to the Lord for them."

So the final reason why this is a good book for young people to read is that it does not leave your conscience untouched. Each chapter ends with a very direct reference to the various kinds of situations that readers might find themselves in. This allows everyone to investigate closely to see what category they belong to – and to follow the scriptural advice that Ryle offers to each kind of person. We all know at the back of our minds that a book like this is not intended to let you pass the time without reminding you as kindly and warmly as possible that, although we are sinners, Christ saves sinners just like you and me.

Ryle says: "And now I close this paper with three plain words of application. . . . (1) In the first place, Is your religion a matter of form and not of heart? . . . If it is, consider solemnly the immense danger in which you stand. . . . I earnestly beseech you this day to know your danger, to open your eyes and repent. . . . (2) If your heart condemns you, and you wish to know what to do, consider seriously the only course that you can safely take. Apply to the Lord Jesus Christ without delay, and spread before Him the state of your soul. Confess before Him your formality in time past, and ask Him to forgive it. Seek from Him the promised grace of the Holy Ghost, and entreat Him to quicken and renew your inward man. . . . (3) If . . . you have real well-grounded confidence toward God, consider seriously the many responsibilities of your position. . . . There is none so spiritual but that he may have a heavy fall. Watch, therefore, and be on your guard." CED

Note: *Practical Religion* is published in paperback by the Banner of Truth Trust and is available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom at £7.00.

Looking Around Us

Respect for the Bible

Ladywell Church is in Bannockburn, where, during a famous battle in 1314, the Scots defeated the English. Now, for the second time in less than two years this church near Stirling has been attacked; stones were thrown and several windows were shattered. The cost of repair is estimated at hundreds of pounds. A teenage boy is being investigated over the most recent act of alleged vandalism at this Church of Scotland building. In September 2008, eight arched windows in the church were broken by a group of children aged as young as six.

The Ladywell minister has complained that “some children have little respect for the Church” today. Sadly, this is an accurate complaint. Large numbers of children are being brought up by parents who have no respect for the Church or for the Bible, which should direct the beliefs and the activities of the Church. No wonder their children have no respect for the Church.

I assume you have a degree of respect for what the Bible teaches. That will mean, I hope, that you would not vandalise someone else’s property and that you would want to keep all the Ten Commandments. But do you really do so? Do you really keep them in your heart? Do you keep the Tenth Commandment, which forbids coveting – wanting what you have no right to? And have you obeyed God’s command to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”, so that you might be saved?

And does the Church today really respect the Bible? Sadly, in many cases, the answer is, No. The Church of Scotland, for instance has many ministers who do not believe that the Bible is properly the Word of God. They deny that the Bible is free from mistakes. And the Church as a whole does not submit to the authority of Scripture. One instance of that lack of submission is Ladywell Church: their minister is a woman. Neither the congregation nor the minister is bowing to the authority of God, who has spoken through Paul about what should – and what should not – happen in church. He says, “I suffer not a woman to teach . . . but to be in silence” (1 Timothy 2:12).

This does not excuse children’s bad behaviour, but it does point to one reason why there is so little respect for the Church today. Long ago the Church stopped showing proper respect for the Bible; men were allowed to believe and preach that the Bible is not free from mistakes. That was one main reason why the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland began as a separate body. Children in Scotland, and in other countries, need to hear the truth about the Bible, and about God and how He wants us to live. Unless they hear this, they are in danger of growing up without respect for anyone.

Knocking Sense into a Sinful Head?

Another news story about throwing stones, this time in Wellington, New Zealand. Two would-be burglars tried three times to break into a shop which sells skateboards. But each time one of the burglars threw a stone at one of the shop's glass windows, the stone rebounded on him. The third time he tried, the stone bounced back knocking him on the head. At this point, both men gave up and ran away.

That was a good thing. Yes, the man may have had a sore head; he may even have had a serious cut on his head. But the two men were kept back from committing the sin of theft, although they had already committed this sin in their hearts. Yet it is a great mercy when God restrains sinners from committing further sin.

A detective sergeant told a reporter that CCTV images showed one of the offenders throwing a stone at the window; it then bounced back and hit him on the head; at which point they fled the scene. The police hope, with the help of witnesses, to be able to use these TV images to identify the failed burglars and to bring them to court.

Yet the men may never be caught by the police; they may never appear in a Wellington court. But this does not mean that they will escape justice for ever. God saw them and, if they do not repent, He will judge them at last. No one can escape His justice, "for we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The police hope the experience has knocked some sense into the burglar. Indeed, that would be good. Yet painful experiences do not always make people any more sensible in the future. And they certainly do not give people a new heart. That is what the would-be robbers need more than anything else. It is what we all need more than anything else. And it is only God that can give a new heart.

You may never have tried to break into a shop or commit any such sin. But you have committed many others. So you need a new heart – a heart which will hate all sin and love holiness. How appropriate then to use David's prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10). When He answers this prayer, God puts sense into people's heads and hearts; they begin to live to His glory and to keep away from sin. Ask for that tremendous blessing, *for Jesus' sake*. It is through Him, and only through Him, that we can hope to have any such blessing – for He came into the world to save sinners.

Price 70p