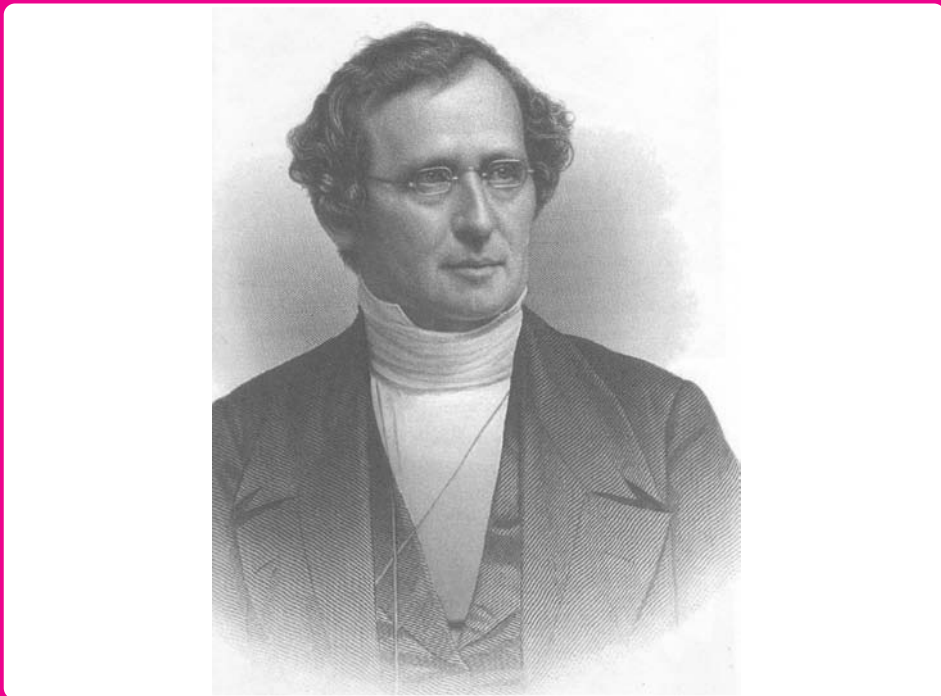


The Young People's Magazine

**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



March 2011

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An Image of Christ?

One of the most prominent features of Roman Catholic idolatry is the crucifix. You can see it on all sorts of Roman Catholic buildings, including their churches. There is the figure of a man, supposed to represent Jesus, stretched out on a cross. But Jesus was not just a man; He was both God and man – one Person but two natures.

So a crucifix does not really represent Jesus; it can only represent, up to a point, His human nature. Of course, it is impossible to represent Him in His divine nature. And it is impossible to represent His actual human nature; we do not know anything about His appearance. The Bible tells us nothing about His height, His hair colour or any of His other physical features. The man on a crucifix is only the result of some artist's imagination.

But there is a further point: the Second Commandment tells us: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them" (Exodus 20:4,5). This commandment forbids us to manufacture any object with a view to worshipping it; so we are not to make a crucifix. Those who really believe that a crucifix represents the crucified Saviour must worship it. But they are wrong; the figure on the crucifix is not Jesus. And it is a sin to worship what is not God. Jesus Himself said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

If we needed to know what Jesus looked like, God would have told us in the Bible. We do not need to know; so we have not been told. But we have been told many other things which we *do* need to know. We know that Jesus is God and that He is man. We know that He was perfectly suited to be the Saviour of sinners. We know that He kept God's law perfectly in the place of sinners, who are completely unable to do so themselves. And we know that He died for sinners, who cannot satisfy God's justice for any of their sins. These are just a few of the facts we have been told about Jesus.

We are told all this so that we would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. And we are to worship Him – not by means of an idol – but as He

really is, as He is revealed to us in the Bible. See Him revealed, for instance, in these words: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). There we may see Him as the glorious divine Saviour, through whom sinners may have eternal life. And if we indeed see Christ by faith, as He is revealed in these words, we surely cannot but worship Him.

Charles Hodge was a student in Princeton Theological Seminary. Then, and for about a hundred years afterwards, it was one of the best places in the United States where students could train for the ministry. After spending 50 years as a Professor in the seminary, Hodge looked back in 1874 over his life there, both as student and as teacher. He thought particularly of the two godly men who had been the first professors in the Seminary, Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller, who had been responsible for his own training. Hodge spoke of Roman Catholics bowing in worship before a crucifix, a lifeless image of Christ on the cross, and contrasted them with students in the seminary. “When students entered the Seminary when its first professors were alive,” said Hodge, there was “held up before them the image of Christ” – not on a crucifix but “as portrayed by the Spirit on the pages of God Word”. They were shown Christ as One who is to be worshipped in the way God has appointed.

When you go to church, you should look for the image of Christ – not on a crucifix or in a stained-glass window, but in the Scriptures and in the sermon. There you should expect to have Christ held up before you as a glorious Saviour, so that you may trust in Him. You should expect to hear again and again the central truths of the gospel: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners through His sufferings unto death, and that every one who believes in Him will be saved.

As Hodge said, it is by looking by faith at that image of Christ, in the Bible and in preaching, that people are changed into the likeness of Christ from glory to glory – from one degree of glory to another. It is not only when sinners look to Christ by faith for the first time that their hearts are changed. But as they look to Him again and again, they are further changed and become more and more holy. It was by “this constant holding up of Christ, in the glory of His person and the all-sufficiency of His work” that these godly professors had a holy influence on their students, including Hodge. They grew in grace as they grew in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 3:18).

But there is another way in which we may see something of Christ: in the godly lives of others. Hodge spoke very highly of the godliness of Alexander and Miller, whom he had known for over 30 years. Hodge did not say they

were free from lying, for instance, and other forms of dishonesty; that was too obvious to be worth mentioning. Instead he focused on more subtle sins; he stated that he believed they were remarkably free from vanity, pride, envy and jealousy. So they were remarkable examples of godliness to their students, and to everyone else who knew them.

Some people might feel it is unreasonable to expect anyone to live a godly life in an age like ours. But every godly person we come in contact with shows us that godliness actually *is* possible – through the grace of God – even in a generation like ours. There may be few godly people in this wicked age, but most of us will know some. And the more godly they are, the more they show us of Christ.

Think of Paul, a remarkably godly man. He was not free from sin – any more than Alexander or Miller, or any other believer outside heaven. It was Paul, possibly more than anyone else in the Bible, who showed a consciousness of evil remaining in his heart. He exclaimed, as he considered the terrible nature of sin, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). But it was the same Paul who, in all humility, could speak of himself as an example for other believers. “Be ye followers of me,” he says, “even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). He had a new heart and, while was not following Christ perfectly, he was following Him sincerely. People today are to follow Paul’s example. As they read about him in the Bible and watch him living a holy life, trying to keep away from sin, they should seek grace to do the same.

We cannot see Paul now, except in the Bible. Yet all that we read about him there is intended to be guidance for us; it shows us what a godly life really is. But you probably know some men and women who are godly – perhaps your father and mother, an elder in your church, or a woman who sits in the next pew. God has given them to you as examples, to help show you how you should live out your life. Yet perhaps when you think about someone who claims to be godly, it is something negative that comes into your mind. Now not everyone who claims to be godly is actually converted. And there may be serious flaws in the character and life even of those who are truly converted. But you are not to use anyone’s failings as an excuse for your sins or for turning away from religion altogether; if you do not repent, you will have to give account for your godlessness on the day of judgement.

And if you do not know of anyone who is truly godly, remember the example of Paul, as you find it in the Bible, and seek grace to follow it. Remember too the more wonderful example of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Seek grace to follow that example; and seek grace to worship Him. Most fundamentally, seek grace to trust in Him for the salvation of your soul.

A Promise of Good Things to Come

5. The Sacrifice of the Red Heifer

Rev J R Tallach

This is the last part of a paper given at the 2010 Youth Conference dealing with the system of sacrifices in the Bible. Last month's article focused on the sin offering.

The whole burnt offering, and especially the sin offering, address that central and profound question: How shall a man be just with God? Another great question concerns the sanctification, or the cleansing, of the sinner, and this is addressed in different ways within the system of sacrifices. One very clear answer to the question of cleansing is found in the sacrifice of the red heifer, described in Numbers 19.

Three ways in which defilement is contracted are mentioned in Numbers 5:1-4: "Every leper, and everyone that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead". The case dealt with in Numbers 19 is defilement by touching a dead body. Anyone so defiled was kept out of the camp for seven days and had to pass through a cleansing ritual before returning.

Why was touching a dead body classified with leprosy and the running sore to typify the defilement of sin? Death was a judgement because of sin against God's moral law. It implied the punishment which sends the sinner to destruction: "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4); "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

The ceremony for cleansing is referred to in Hebrews 9:13,14: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and *the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean*, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who . . . offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Red is the emblem of guilt. "Though your sins be as *scarlet*, they shall be as white as snow, though they be *red* like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). The red colour of the animal may represent the guilt laid on Jesus as the sinner's substitute.

The heifer had to be perfect, without blemishes. As we read in 1 Peter 1:18,19, "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot".

The animal to be used had never come under the yoke, which points to the free, voluntary nature of the service of Jesus. He said, "Lo, I come . . . I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea Thy law is within My heart" (Psalm 40:7,8). Speaking of His life, Jesus says, "No man taketh it from Me, but I

lay it down of Myself” (John 10:18). He gave “Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2). As God is free to give life and to take it away, so Jesus was free in coming into the world and in departing from it.

The heifer was led outside the camp by Eleazar the priest. This represents Jesus bearing His cross. “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews 13:12). He endured this humiliation for the sake of His blood-bought people.

After the heifer was slain, Eleazar the priest sprinkled the blood seven times towards the sanctuary. On the Day of Atonement, blood was brought into the sanctuary; here the blood is far off from the sanctuary, but sprinkled towards it. Jonah in the belly of the whale, looked towards God’s holy temple, though far off from it. So Christ – far off, humiliated, brought to the dust of death – offered His life to God and sprinkled His blood towards the throne of God.

The carcass was then burned entirely. It would appear that, unusually, the fat was burned with the rest of the animal, not on the altar. Further, the rest of the blood was also to be burned, not poured out around the altar, as was usual. Also the ashes were to be preserved in a clean place and used for cleansing. Normally the blood would have been used for cleansing. And it was not necessary for a priest to mix the ashes with water and apply this for cleansing but anyone who was ceremonially clean could do this.

Ashes are specially incorruptible and lasting; when mixed with water they represent the incorruptible sacrifice which cleanses from all sin. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1). The ashes and the water represent a fountain ever open, and ever powerful to cleanse.

A stock of ashes would always be ready for use and when this stock ran low, another animal would be killed. Just as the high priest would be replaced at his death by another priest, so the supply of ashes would continually be kept up by the sacrifice of further animals. This points to the one fountain, opened once for all, and ever ready for use when the conscience defiled by sin requires to be washed anew.

A brush for applying blood or water was made by tying hyssop to a piece of cedar wood with scarlet wool. Hyssop was used in this way to apply blood to the doors of the Israelites on the night of the Passover in Egypt. Again hyssop was used to sprinkle blood when the Children of Israel were brought into covenant with God at the start of their wilderness journey.

But in the sacrifice of the red heifer, the hyssop and cedar wood and scarlet wool were burned along with the animal. This was unusual, as was the burning of the blood; also the purification was found in the ashes, not the blood. These

features are thought to indicate that a sacrifice remained to be offered which no earthly priest could offer. The application of the blood of that sacrifice was beyond the power of any man. This pointed to a divine sacrifice where the priest offering the sacrifice was the sacrifice itself, and He was the Person applying the sacrifice.

All is fulfilled in Christ. So “Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me” (John 13:8). As the Epistle to the Hebrews makes clear, all these sacrifices are an invitation to us to let down the anchor of hope for our own souls within the veil, where Christ sits at the right hand of God (Hebrews 6:19).

Daniel Rowlands

3. In Spite of Opposition

Daniel Rowlands began his ministry in 1733 in Wales – as his brother’s assistant in Llangeitho. After he was converted, crowds of people began flocking to hear him. Later he started preaching in other places and, later still, in the open air.

Rowlands travelled all over Wales on his preaching journeys. One Sabbath in 1740 he was in Llanuwchllyn. The local minister allowed him to preach in his church and came along with the minister of the church in nearby Llangower. As the two men entered, Rowlands was reading with great authority from Deuteronomy 28, a chapter which speaks of the blessings which follow obedience to God and His laws, and of the curses that fall on those who are disobedient. As Rowlands went on, laying special emphasis on the curses, the minister from Llangower interrupted him to ask, “Is Mr Stephen, Glanllyn, accursed?” This was probably a man of some importance locally, whom Rowlands would not have known.

“Yes,” Rowlands answered frankly, “if ungodly.” If the minister from Llangower was trying to cause trouble, he certainly succeeded; at once there was uproar in the congregation. The people, it seems, did not like Rowlands’ blunt answer, but it was true – and he had not presumed to pronounce Stephen to be actually ungodly. But if this man *was* ungodly, he was under God’s curse, like everyone else who has not believed in Christ. On the other hand, if he was a believer, a godly man, then he was not accursed; God’s blessing would follow him throughout his life, and on into eternity. Because of the uproar, Rowlands had to leave without preaching a sermon. But before long he came back and preached, in the open air, standing on a stone.

In 1747 Rowlands took a preaching trip farther from home. He went to Caernarvonshire, in the north-west of Wales. He stopped in a place called

Llan Mellteyrn and asked for permission to preach in the church. Permission was refused, so he stood on a huge stone near the gate of the churchyard. A large congregation gathered around the minister, and he preached to them from the words: "For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 30:21). God demands perfect obedience to His law, but, Rowlands told the people no one has ever given up his heart to God with the perfection that the law demands – except Christ.

Rowlands then imagined a conversation, before the beginning of the world, between God's justice and Christ as the mediator of the covenant of grace. He was illustrating the complete willingness of Christ to come into this world, to suffer and die for sinners, in spite of all the hardship and suffering that this would involve. The preacher saw Justice saying to Christ: "Remember that, though Thou come to Thine own people, no noble mansion will await Thee, but the stable, the manger and the swaddling clothes".

Rowlands had Christ reply: "I am ready for the sake of My Beloved".

"If Thou venture into that condemned world, Thou shalt be without a place to lay Thine head; indeed Thou shalt be liable to the anger and malice of Thine own creatures."

"O My most holy law, I am ready even for that."

"Thou shalt also sweat blood; Thou shalt be spat upon and scourged; Thou shalt be crowned with thorns; and Thine own beloved disciples shall leave Thee and abandon Three in Thy greatest agony; one of them shall betray Thee; another shall deny Thee, swearing that he never knew Thee."

"However hard this may be, I shall not turn back for anyone; repentance is hid from Mine eyes."

"O Thou whom the angels worship and the Father delights in, if Thou venture upon this awful task, all the power of hell will be against Thee, and the wrath of Thy Father will be poured down upon Thy soul and body on the cross; and the last drop of Thy blood will be shed and Thou shalt die."

"Still willing."

At this point, the whole congregation was so moved that it was impossible for the preacher to continue. Perhaps some people's feelings were moved just because they saw others being influenced by what they were hearing. But some must have been moved by the greatness of the price that Christ had to pay for the salvation of sinners like themselves; now they understood better the grace of the One who was eternally so rich, but who, for the sake of poor sinners, became dreadfully poor, in order that these sinners might be made rich (see 2 Corinthians 8:9). How rich they are who believe in Christ! Although the outward moving of our feelings is worthless, yet if from the depths of our souls we truly worship Christ, it is something that pleases God.

Rowlands' travels sometimes took him where there was huge opposition. At one village, another man began the service with a Bible reading and prayer; while he was doing so, someone threw a stone and hit him on the face, making him bleed. At another place, although Rowlands was given permission to preach in the church, someone arranged for a choir to sing Psalm 119 and they went on for hours. Obviously this person did not want the people to hear the preacher's scriptural message. Again and again Rowlands stood up, without success, to begin his sermon, and in the end he had to give up.

One day he was preaching near Pwllheli, when a band of men came along with a drum, hoping to drown out his voice. As these men were beating the drum and Rowlands was continuing to preach, another man came along with a big stick. He thought he could create an even bigger noise and make it impossible for anyone to hear the preacher. But God can use the plans of the wicked to serve His own purposes. Instead of drowning out Rowlands' voice, the man broke the drum, which brought that particular disturbance to an end and presumably allowed the people to listen in peace.

Rowlands crossed over to the island of Anglesey. In one village, where he had permission to preach in the church, so many people gathered that not everyone could get in. They all went outside and Rowlands stood on a flat gravestone to preach. He soon noticed a group of people who were set on creating a riot. But someone ran off to ask an important man in the district for help. This man had a friend who was captain of the militia, a body which acted something like a police force. The Captain came along to the service, sword in hand. This was enough to quieten the rioters, and the service went on peacefully.

One day an old woman came to Rowlands' home in Llangeitho. She was in tears. He asked her why she was crying. She told him: "I want you to come and preach to the ungodly men of Llanfihangel!" He promised to come by 5 o'clock the next Sabbath. The old woman happily spread the news in all directions. On the Sabbath, Rowlands was in Llanfihangel at the appointed time. He stood by the churchyard and the people gathered round him. But soon afterwards a band of men appeared, determined to disrupt the service; at their head was the man who looked after the church.

Rowlands decided that the wisest course was to jump on his horse and ride quickly away. The people went off in the same direction, and their persecutors followed them for two miles, pelting them with mud and stones. After the people crossed the river, the men left them. Then the people went into a field; Rowlands joined them and finished his sermon. The power of God's Spirit must have been present, because we are told that the sermon had a "wonderful effect".

There are other accounts of Rowlands being stoned in villages when he came to preach. Even after being badly cut by stones, he did not stop going around preaching. On his way to a village where the people intended to stone him, some of his friends tried to persuade him to stay away. But Rowlands rode on. As he approached the village he saw a crowd ready to harm him. He shouted to them: "What are you doing here, the devil's own?"

The people decided that the rider was not Rowlands and let him pass by without harming him. There are times when it pleases God to deliver His servants from trouble. But there are other times when He sees it is better, or more for His glory, to allow the persecutors to harm His people. But when we see Rowlands continuing to preach, even at the risk of being hurt, we must recognise the grace that God was giving him to go on in the great work of proclaiming the gospel in such needy communities.

Moses: God's Faithful Servant

4. Out of Egypt

Rev D A Ross

The article in last month's Magazine focused on God preparing Moses to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. When Moses returned to Egypt, Pharaoh refused to obey God's command to let Israel go. This led to ten plagues, the last of which was the death of the firstborn in every family.

After the final plague of death, the Egyptians urged the Israelites to depart as quickly as possible and sent them away laden with gold, silver and clothes. God then led the Children of Israel, not by the easy way toward the land of Canaan, but by a more difficult way, so that the Red Sea was between them and the Promised Land. Not only did God, through Moses, direct them in their journey, He also used a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to show them the way.

Lesson 14. The Children of Israel were to place full confidence in this type of leading. We too ought to have every confidence in the directions God has given us in the Scriptures on spiritual and moral issues.

After this remarkable deliverance from the cruel bondage under Pharaoh, the Children of Israel were to meet with many difficulties on their way to the land of promise. God purposely tested them to prove them, so that they might know what was in their hearts and whether they would keep His commandments or not (Deuteronomy 8:2). Sadly, they often rebelled against Him; they failed to trust the faithfulness and goodness of God; it was their unbelief in God's promises that brought on them overwhelming miseries. This was

a great trial to Moses, but he continued to trust in God as he courageously led the Children of Israel towards the land of Canaan.

Lesson 15. The Church is warned against the sin of unbelief: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

Let us now follow the Children of Israel as they go on their way to the Promised Land. After they left Egypt, they experienced their first great difficulty as they camped by the shore of the Red Sea. To their astonishment, Moses and the Children of Israel saw Pharaoh and his army pursuing them to bring them back into slavery. Closed in by the sea, and with mountains on both sides, there was no way of escape, and they cried to God to deliver them. At the same time they spoke very unkindly to Moses and blamed him for bringing them into that seemingly-impossible position.

But he, as a man of faith, directed Israel to trust in God for deliverance, although they could see nothing but certain destruction. "Fear ye not," Moses told them, "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:13,14).

As God commanded him, Moses stretched out the rod in his hand in the direction of the Red Sea, and God divided the sea to leave a dry path for the Children of Israel. They now believed that this was God's sure deliverance and went through the dry seabed to the other side. Pharaoh, proud and rash, followed them onto the bed of the Red Sea. But God made the pillar of cloud bright on one side to give the Children of Israel light, and dark on the other to keep the armies of Pharaoh at a distance. Thus the Israelites got safely over to the other side. Then Moses stretched out his hand again over the Red Sea and God unleashed the power of the sea to drown the armies of Pharaoh. This, at the beginning in their journey, was one of many wonderful miracles God worked to bring them safely on their way to the land of Canaan, under the leadership of Moses.

Lesson 16. Notice once again the outstanding faith Moses showed. When the Israelites thought that all means of deliverance had gone, Moses had full confidence in his God. "Stand still", he said, "and see the salvation of the Lord." Moses, in spite of the sheer scale of the problem, continued confident that his God would somehow deliver them. Let us keep in mind, whatever difficulty we are in, that there is a great God in heaven who assures all who trust in Him: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15); "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4).

Lesson 17. Moses also showed exceptional qualities of leadership. When the hearts of others failed, and indeed when the finger of accusation was angrily pointed at him, he calmly continued to lead the Children of Israel, directing them to look beyond their plight to their great Leader, Jehovah-Jireh, (a name of God which means: "the Lord will provide" (see Genesis 22:14)). There is a lesson here: when the Lord by His Word and providence requires you to go forward in a particular path of duty – however hazardous it may be and however many people may be against you – do as God directs you, and you will not fail.

The Children of Israel were safely across the Red Sea; they had seen their persecuting, murderous enemies destroyed. And there was now great rejoicing. The prospect looked excellent, and Miriam, Moses' sister, led them in a triumphant song. But, in spite of their remarkable deliverances from Pharaoh, the Children of Israel continued in a course of discontent and murmuring. In His providence, the Lord brought them into difficult situations: there was the bitter, undrinkable water of Marah, then a lack of bread in the wilderness of Sin and no water at Rephidim.

These same trials befell Moses, indeed more so because of his great responsibility as leader of the Children of Israel. The deep discontent among the Children of Israel showed itself in bitter words and worse – all of which was directed against Moses and the Lord. But Moses had taken God as his Leader; God had promised that He would provide, and Moses was therefore bold and assured. The size of the multitude, and the extent of the provision which was necessary, never seemed to raise questions in the mind of Moses. God promised; Moses believed. Others in Israel were of the same mind as Moses, but the majority had no such confidence in God.

Lesson 18. How often the majority in the Church of God have no confidence in Christ Jesus to save either soul or body, and they demonstrate this by living in a worldly-wise way. We must follow Moses' example and live a life of faith on Almighty God. He promises to provide for us always if we will rely on Him. In all these trials which Moses endured, and in others which were yet to come, one outstanding feature was the grace of prayer. His earnest pleas went up to the God who can make full provision. No sooner did Israel complain but prayer went swiftly up to the Most High in expectation of deliverance. People given to prayer are prudent; let us follow Moses in this God-honouring exercise of relying prayerfully on the Lord.

Another trial came at Rephidim, when the Amalakites made war with Israel. Moses fearlessly proceeded to battle and this time the Children of Israel fully supported him.

Shortly after this, Jethro his father-in-law came to greet him. He saw the

huge amount of work Moses had to do as Israel's judge and advised him to operate in a more efficient way. Although Moses occupied the responsible position of leader, teacher and judge, he was not above taking advice from others. Jethro wisely advised him to employ the help of others, "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Exodus 18:21), who would assist him in judging the people.

Lesson 19. If we are in places of great responsibility, we ought never to be above taking advice, even from those who may have a much lower position. God not only speaks to us by the Scriptures but in His providence. He spoke through a young slave maid to Naaman the leper; and once Naaman got over his sinful pride, he was greatly helped by her advice (2 Kings 5:3).

For Younger Readers

Just What He Needed

Angus Munro was a good man. That means he loved God and wanted to keep His commandments.

He believed in Jesus Christ and wanted to hear good preaching. He wanted to hear, over and over again, what Jesus did for sinners – that He came into this world to die for them.

Angus Munro also wanted to be at the Lord's Supper, where God's people take bread and wine to remember Jesus' death. The bread is to remind them of Jesus' broken body, and the wine is to remind them that His blood was poured out. The bread and wine together remind them of His death.

One day Angus Munro set off for a place where God's people were to have the Lord's Supper and extra church services. To get there he had to walk some distance and he had cross a stretch of water in a boat. And he needed some money to pay for the boat.

But that day he had no money. His work was to make shoes, and perhaps people gave him flour or potatoes, instead of money, to pay for their new shoes.

Angus Munro left home although he had no money. I am sure he was trusting God to give him some. Did God answer his prayers?

While he and the other passengers were waiting for the boat, he was poking his stick into the sand at his feet. As he did so, he noticed a coin. It was just what he needed. God was good to him.

What Makes the Internet Addictive?

Matthew Vogan

The internet offers an enormous amount of information as well as making it easier to communicate and to do many everyday tasks. The fact that it can be used in just about every aspect of our life, if we wish, means that you could live your whole life around it.

But is that a good thing? What would it do to us to have our lives, as well as our minds, permanently plugged in to the internet? Mobile devices such as the iPhone, that are always connected to the internet, have made this a reality for some people. The internet is constantly available for the relief of boredom or silence and is a permanent distraction from other responsibilities we may have.

The danger is that we become so dependent upon the internet as a part of our life that we no longer think about what it might be taking away from us. Nicholas Carr, the author of a book called *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, observes that “the deeper a technology is woven into the patterns of everyday life, the less choice we have about whether and how we use that technology”.

Perhaps none of us thinks that we are like the teenagers who lock themselves away in their room, playing non-stop games across the internet. Yet we need to recognise that there is something addictive about the internet, whatever amount of time we think we spend on it. It is addictive because it is instant; if you know that something is a click away, you may keep going and going, following an endless trail of information that you cannot absorb but still fascinates you. This can give us the feeling of information overload where there is so much content that we cannot take anything in properly. This has an impact on our ability and desire for reading books and thinking deeply about things.

It is a question of time too. Simply because someone else happens to be online just when you are, you might chat with them for a long time although you never planned to do so. Our life becomes governed by the permanent distraction of the incoming stream of instant messages, Facebook messages, e-mail messages as well as text messages. How much does the internet distract us from thinking about the things that really matter: eternity and our own souls?

A “wise man’s heart discerneth both time and judgement” (Ecclesiastes 8:15). Time is precious. Scripture tells us to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). How much time is redeemed on the

internet and how much time is wasted? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:6-7). There is a clear connection between distraction and destruction, when distraction causes us to despise the Word of God, even to some extent (Proverbs 13:13), when it involves the company of those who have no concern for their soul (Proverbs 13:20), and when it leaves us without discernment of the things that truly matter (Proverbs 13:23).

Young people often have more free time and are therefore more at risk from being addicted in some way to the internet; they are often referred to as the “net generation”. It is because you have such time and opportunity that Scripture counsels: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). We could wish that the words, “It is time to seek the Lord” (Hosea 10:2), were attached to every computer screen. We are to seek Him now, while He is to be found. “How shall we escape if we neglect [through distraction] so great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3)

Last year, in the “Unplugged” experiment, students at 12 universities around the world volunteered to record their experiences of 24 hours without mobile phones, computers, iPods, televisions, radio and newspapers. As with an earlier study, many began to develop psychological and physical symptoms which are typically seen in smokers attempting to give up. This condition is called Information Deprivation Disorder. Research suggests that the more time people spend online the more depressed they tend to be. Such distraction does not bring happiness.

The internet can be very useful and give us information and contacts that are very profitable. Some are able to make use of the internet in moderation, but all of us need to be aware of its pull. “Let us lay aside every weight” (Hebrews 12:1). The fruit of the Spirit includes “temperance”, or self-control (Galatians 5:23). Excess, even in things lawful, is provoking to God, as Jonathan Edwards, the famous American preacher, observed. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Corinthians 6:12). “All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (1 Corinthians 10:23).

We should also recognise that the more time we spend on the internet, the greater the risk of being tempted into the morally-dark side of the internet. Besides this, as with all media, the values and images promoted on many websites are morally degrading.

A mind that is plugged into the internet most of the time is in danger of greater conformity to the world and its ways of thinking and living. It gives

room in your mind to vain thoughts (Jeremiah 4:14). You are less able to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1). Even if we are constantly listening to, or reading, spiritually-profitable things through the internet, we still need to unplug regularly and “attend upon the Lord without distraction” (1 Corinthians 7:35). Every one of us needs to make the psalmist’s prayer our own: “With my whole heart have I sought Thee; O let me not wander from Thy commandments” (Psalm 119:10).

Thomas Brooks, a noted Puritan writer, wrote, “Ah, the time, the thoughts, the energy which the things of the world consume and spend! O how do they hinder the actings of faith upon God! How do they interrupt our sweet communion with God! How do they abate our love to the people of God, and cool our love to the things of God, and work us to act like those who are most unlike God!”

For Junior Readers

Is the Shorter Catechism Worthwhile?

This is the question asked by a minister called Mr Warfield. He lived in America long ago, and became a famous Professor of Theology. One book, besides the Bible, that he especially loved was *The Shorter Catechism*. That may seem surprising to some people, but he loved it because he got much good from it. So he wanted boys and girls to learn it too; he wanted them to have the benefit of knowing the basics of true religion.

“*The Shorter Catechism* is, perhaps, not very easy to learn,” he said. “Its framers were less careful to make it easy than to make it good.” And very good it is, for it sums up the teaching of the Bible. It shows us clearly what God wants us to believe and to do. Just as we have to learn the basics of any subject we study at school or in college, so we must learn the basics of the most important subject of all: true Christianity.

To show the value of the Catechism, Mr Warfield told some stories. Here are two of them.

Long ago a famous preacher was staying with a friend in London, when a young man called on him to ask some questions about the Christian religion; he knew very little about it. As he talked with the preacher and the preacher’s host, he told them he had a problem about prayer.

“What is prayer?” he asked. “I can’t tell what you mean by it!”

Just then, a little girl appeared. She was about nine or ten, and she was the daughter of the host.

“Come here, Jenny,” her father said, “and tell this gentleman, ‘What is prayer?’”

Jenny knew she was being asked the Catechism question. At once she gave the right answer: “Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies”.

The young man could not have got a better answer to his question. And there are many other answers to important questions about Christianity in that wonderful booklet, *The Shorter Catechism*.

The other story is about an officer in the United States Army who was a friend of Mr Warfield. He told Mr Warfield that he was once sent with his soldiers to help restore order in a certain city where there was rioting and danger. One day in the street he saw a man walk through the crowds of shouting people. He was calm and purposeful in the midst of the uproar. So impressed was the officer by the man's bearing, as he walked past, that he turned to look at him. At the same time, the other man did the same thing and looked back at the officer. He then walked back to the officer and, without saying anything else, asked him, “What is man's chief end?”

The officer replied, “Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever”.

“Ah!” said the man, “I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy by your looks!”

“Why, that was just what I was thinking of you,” answered the officer.

Mr Warfield adds, “It is worthwhile to be a Shorter Catechism boy. They grow to be men. And better than that, they are exceedingly apt to grow to be men of God.”

I am sure Mr Warfield was not forgetting Shorter Catechism girls. The teaching in that little book has been blessed to many of them. Then many of them, when grown up, became helpful to other children – perhaps their own children or the children of others.

Is *The Shorter Catechism* worthwhile? Of course it is! To learn it is to learn the main things that the Bible teaches. It really is more important than all the exciting things that young people learn today.

But remember this also: you must ask God to teach you to understand the Bible, especially what it says about Jesus Christ the Saviour. In other words, as the Catechism says, you must have your mind “enlightened in the knowledge of Christ”. This is necessary so that you would believe in Him, or as the Catechism says, that you would be persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to you in the gospel. Only then can you be saved from your sins and have everlasting life.

Rev N M Ross

UK Youth Conference 2011

Arrangements

Venue: SYHA Central Edinburgh. (The Conference was to be held in Carbisdale Castle, Sutherland, but is now to be held in Edinburgh. This is due to extensive frost damage to the Castle last December, which closes it until May at least. The Welfare of Youth Committee apologises for any inconvenience this may cause.)

Dates: Tuesday, April 12, to Thursday, April 14.

Chairman: Rev Donald Macdonald.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: to Rev Donald Macdonald, F P Manse, Bayhead, North Uist, HS6 5DS, *as soon as possible* (the closing date is March 28). See the February issue for an application form. The fee will be £40 for applicants in full-time employment and £20 for others. Cheques are payable to the Free Presbyterian Church.

Programme

Tuesday, April 12

2.30 pm

From Robert Moffat to Today

Missionary Work in and Around Bulawayo

by Rev D A Ross

7.00 pm

A “More Exact Translation of the Holy Scriptures”

The Work of the King James Translators

by Mr Matthew Vogan

Wednesday, April 13

9.30 am

The Early Church in Scotland

Was it Really Christian?

by Rev J B Jardine

1.30 pm

Church History in Edinburgh

A Tour conducted by Rev D W B Somerset

7.30 pm

“The Power of God unto Salvation”

Paul’s Missionary Journeys

by Rev K D Macleod

Thursday, April 14

9.30 am

Abraham the Friend of God

Lessons from His Life

by Rev N M Ross

Further information will be sent to each applicant about a week before the conference. If you have any queries, do not hesitate to phone Mr Macdonald (tel: 01876 510233). But please do *not* delay sending in your application.

Looking Around Us

Electronic Confession?

Senior Roman Catholics in both Britain and the US have approved an iPhone app to help guide worshippers through what used to be known as *confession*, but is now called *the sacrament of reconciliation*. But it is not a sacrament.

The app is probably a reaction to the small number of Roman Catholics now going to confess their sins to a priest, who then acts as a mediator between them and God. But there are two obvious problems.

First, the Bible teaches us to confess our sins to God directly. We are to follow David's example: he said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord" (Psalm 32:5). That was when God forgave the guilt of his sin. And God still works in the same way.

Second, there is only "one mediator between God and men", and that is Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). No mere human being has the right to pronounce anyone free from guilt – no minister, no priest, or anyone else. Yet a minister, in preaching, must tell the people the *grounds* on which they may be forgiven – the work of Jesus Christ, in His sufferings and death. But a God-called minister would never think of doing anything that would suggest he has the power to forgive sins himself.

The app seems to be a checklist of sins people may have committed. But it is not intended to replace traditional confession entirely. Indeed users are told that they must still visit their priest for him to pronounce forgiveness.

No doubt Roman Catholic priests and bishops feel they are in a difficult position. If very few come to confession, they are losing their power over the people. If people content themselves with an iPhone app, they have also lost power, but they may hope that it will make people more likely to come to a priest to have him pronounce them forgiven. But the power of false religion over sinners is highly dangerous; they are left deceived.

It was interesting to hear Peter Stanford, at one time editor of *The Catholic Herald*, express in a radio interview his unhappiness with this iPhone app. He was concerned that it is "inviting us to have a personal relationship with God", and insisted that it *is* a priest who "intercedes between you and God". He complained that, in one way, the app was "very Protestant"!

Be thankful that, as a Protestant, you are taught that you must have a personal relationship with God, that you must go directly to Him, through Christ, for forgiveness. Be thankful that you have heard that Christ is the one Mediator between you and God. And seek that forgiveness earnestly.

Price 80p