

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Cover Picture: A house front in Chester, where Matthew Henry spent most of his ministry. See page 7. The Bible verse comes from Proverbs 14:27.

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No 1

Worshipping One Who Is Perfect

Plato was born over 400 years before Jesus. He lived in Greece at a time when there were many philosophers, great thinkers, in that country. His writings have survived until today and are still being printed. Many university students all over the world study them.

One of the subjects Plato wrote about was virtue – what does it mean to be good? He thought that if somebody perfectly good would appear as a stranger from another world, everyone would fall down and worship.

Well, someone perfect did appear in this world, and that was Jesus Christ. The Son of God took human nature, so that He could deal with sin. We are told, in God's Word, that He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22); He was absolutely perfect in everything He did. His life was so free from sin that he could challenge those around Him – by asking, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46) – without the least fear that anyone could honestly say anything against Him. The Lord Jesus was even free from sin in His thinking – though no one could see what was going on in His mind except God. And God the Father twice said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17, 17:5).

But when Jesus went about in this world, perfectly holy as He was, did everyone appreciate the wonderful freedom from sin that He showed in His life? Did they fall down and worship Him?

Some did. There was Mary in Bethany, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened earnestly to what He was saying. And we can be sure that, as she listened, she worshipped Him. Her heart would have been drawn out towards Him in holy wonder and praise, for she looked to Him as her Saviour.

And there was Mary Magdalene. When she recognised Jesus after His resurrection, she addressed Him as Master, or Teacher – One to whom she was willing to listen, as she had listened to Him many times before, in the spirit of worship. She too looked to Jesus as her Saviour.

Yes, some did fall down and worship Jesus, but not many. Perfectly holy though He was, most people rejected Him; they would not believe His testimony; they refused to trust in Him as the Saviour of the world. Even

when boatloads of people were crossing and recrossing the Lake of Galilee to find Him, it was not to hear Him and believe in Him; it was in the hope of seeing more miracles (see John 6:26). They had enjoyed a very good meal when Jesus fed the 5000. Perhaps Jesus was not condemning every single individual among them when He pointed out their wrong motives in seeking Him out, but clearly most of them saw nothing more in Jesus than an interesting worker of wonderful miracles.

In Capernaum, a village by the Lake of Galilee, Jesus spoke at some length in the synagogue. Many people listened to him for quite some time; they seemed to be willing to learn from the great Teacher; they are even called "disciples" in John's Gospel. But, in the end, they left Him for ever; they did not like what they heard, even from the perfectly-holy Saviour.

Then Jesus turned to the 12 Disciples and asked them if they too were about to go away. Simon Peter answered for them all: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68,69). There was true worship in Peter's soul as he spoke (though he did not realise that Judas Iscariot was not sincere). But Peter and the other true disciples were among the few who truly worshipped Jesus.

Even in Nazareth, where Jesus was brought up, they wanted to kill Him. They had watched Him grow up and had never seen Him do or say anything wrong. Yet they could not abide His teaching when He spoke to them in their synagogue. They led them to a steep place just outside Nazareth, intending to throw Him down to His death. And in Jerusalem, after Pilate had pronounced him perfectly innocent, the crowds cried out: "Crucify Him, crucify Him". No worship there, just complete rejection!

If we did not already know the whole story which is told us in the Gospels, we would probably expect something very different to have happened. We might have expected everyone to have come to Jesus, bowing down to Him like Bartimaeus did and saying, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark 10:46). But that was not what happened. Many wanted to be healed of illness and of disabilities, but almost no one wanted to be made holy. Sinners have no desire to be holy unless God the Holy Spirit is beginning to work in their souls. Part of His work is to create new desires, so that people begin to ask God, among other things, to make them holy.

People today are reacting in the same way. If they read about Jesus Christ in the Bible, they do not want to know Him; they do not want to give up their sins; they do not want to be made holy. And that is because their hearts are corrupt. That is the position we all are in unless the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts to make us holy, and to make us want to be holy.

That is the position you are in unless you have been converted. You might feel that if you could meet Jesus Christ today, you would believe in Him, you would fall down at once and worship Him. But, as we have seen, that was not what normally happened when people met Jesus as He went about Palestine. And it is not likely that you would have been very different.

You have, I assume, your own copy of the Bible. There you can find out about Jesus. Indeed He is saying to you, as He said to some people when He was in the world, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). You are to pay attention to that testimony about Jesus: that He is God, that He became man, that He suffered and died instead of sinners like you, that He rose again from the dead, and that He has been exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31). And on the basis of that testimony, you are to believe in Him – just as Paul and Silas told the jailer in Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31). The jailer believed on Jesus and was saved. If you believe, you too will be saved and you will have God's blessing throughout the rest of your life; even your death will be a blessing to you, for it will bring you into heaven.

I hope you are also able to listen to God's Word purely preached. Then you will hear about Jesus Christ as the Saviour from sin. You will hear the call to believe in Him and be saved. As you listen to the preaching, may God bless you with faith and a new heart! Then you will want to be holy and to fall down and worship the perfectly-holy Jesus.

In 1681, when it was a crime to go and hear faithful ministers preaching the gospel, Marion Harvie was arrested and condemned to death. She was only 20 when she was brought to the Grassmarket in Edinburgh to be hanged. She spoke of the change that had taken place in her life: "At 14 or 15 . . . I was a blasphemer and a Sabbath-breaker, and a chapter of the Bible was a burden to me". Since that time, her heart had been changed; so she had new attitudes to God's commands and to His Word. Afterwards, she said, "I did not dare to blaspheme, nor break the Sabbath, and the Bible became my delight". She now wanted to be holy; she wanted to keep away from sin; and she loved to read God's Word.

This is the change of heart we all need. We must be holy if we are to enter heaven. We will never become holy if we are left to ourselves. So we need the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts and make us holy. This is part of the salvation that God has provided in Christ Jesus and has revealed in the Bible. If we believe in Him, we will become holy. Only then will we be willing to fall down and worship Jesus; we will do so in our hearts in this world and we will go on worshipping Him in heaven for ever and ever.

The Bible's Teaching on Justification

4. The Curse of the Law Must Be Removed

Charles Hodge

This series comes from *The Way of Life* and has been edited. For God to justify someone is to pronounce him or her righteous. Last month's article brought out some further evidence from the Bible that "our own good works cannot save us". It emphasised the Old Testament teaching.

The demands of God's law are satisfied by what Christ has done. We have already seen that the Scriptures teach (1) that everyone is naturally under the law; it prescribes the terms on which God will accept them. (2) No sinner's obedience is good enough to satisfy the demands of that law.

We now come to the third great point of the teaching in the Bible on justification: unless we are freed from the law – which prescribes the conditions on which God can accept us – we can never be justified (but the law is a rule which we must always obey). "Ye are not under the law," says Paul, "but under grace" (Romans 6:14). To illustrate this, he refers to the case of a married woman: she is bound to her husband as long as he lives; but when he is dead, she is free to marry another man. So sinners are delivered from the law as a rule of justification; they are free to embrace a different way of being accepted by God.

Paul says that he died to the law – that is, he became free from it. And the same is said of all believers. He insists that this freedom is necessary, not only for justification but also for sanctification. For while people were under the law, "the motions of sin, which were by the law," brought forth fruit unto death, "but now we are delivered from the law", that we may serve God in newness of spirit (Romans 7:5,6).

"Before faith came," Paul also tells us, "we were kept under the law", which he compares to a schoolmaster. But now "we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:23-25). He looks on the desire to be subject to the law as the most effective way of deceiving oneself. Tell me, he says, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? Then he shows that those who are under the demands of a law are slaves, not sons and heirs. "Stand fast, therefore," he exhorts, "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify to every one that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ has become of no effect to you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace."

Paul considered this to be madness. He exclaims, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose

eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:1,2). It was deadly to put obedience to the law in the place of the work of Christ, as the ground of justification. It was so damaging that Paul pronounces accursed any man or angel who should preach such a doctrine in the place of the gospel of the grace of God. It was to the law, as revealed in the books of Moses, that the Galatians were looking for justification.

Paul gives the same teaching in the Epistle to the Romans about the moral law, the Ten Commandments, which condemn the most secret sins of the heart. The moral law itself cannot give life; we must be freed from its demands if God is to accept us. Some people might then think that Paul was allowing people to sin freely. This is why he so often and so earnestly argues against this claim. But not until the curse of the law is removed and the soul is reconciled to God, do holy affections rise in the heart and fruits of holiness appear in the life. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" he asks, and answers, "God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31).

Lessons from a Robbery

For the last two years of his life, till he died in 1714, Matthew Henry was a minister in Hackney, in north London. One day he was riding home from central London when some robbers caught him. They stole some money and then they let him go on his way.

It must have been rather a shock to Henry to have been treated in this way. But he was a godly man, and he thought over what happened to him so that he could learn something from it. He wanted God to bless to him even such an incident as this. No doubt, whatever happened to him, he asked God to bless it to him. As he was thinking about the robbery, he wrote down four lessons he felt he ought to learn.

1. "What reason I have to be thankful to God that, having travelled so much, yet I was never robbed before now."

2. "What abundance of evil this love of money is the root of!" He was amazed that men would risk their lives for so little money – people could be hanged for robbery in those days. But he also commented on them risking their *souls* by acting in this way; this sin would make it more unlikely that they would be saved and go to heaven.

3. "See the power of Satan working in the children of disobedience" (Paul's expression in Ephesians 2:2 to describe people who have disobedience to

God as the most important part of their character). The robbers were already wicked, but Satan was driving them on to commit further sin.

4. "The vanity of worldly wealth – how soon we may be stripped of it; how loose we ought to sit to it" – in other words, we should not want to hold on, at all costs, to our money and possessions.

God's Work in Ness

1. Gospel Beginnings

Rev Angus Smith

This is the first in a series of articles about the progress of the gospel in Ness, a district at the north of the Isle of Lewis, which lies off north-west Scotland.

Christianity Comes to Lewis. The gospel seems to have come to Lewis from Ireland. Columba came to Iona in 563 AD, with perhaps up to 200 helpers. It is known that, by the early eighth century, Ronan and Moluadh had come to Lewis, and spent much of their time in Ness. When we look back, we realise that there must have been a tremendous change in the island when the Celtic missionaries first came from Ireland. The Celtic Church kept the Lord's Day, forbidding baking, washing, shaving, fetching fuel, and other forms of labour on that day.

The Norsemen, or Vikings, began invading Lewis during the eighth century. They were cruel – maiming, blinding, killing and burning. They took over Lewis and brought in once more the worship of pagan gods, those of Scandinavia. But by 1000 AD Christianity had become the national religion of Norway itself, and in 1266 the Western Isles became part of Scotland, instead of Norway.

There was an ancient temple in the village of Eoropie, Ness, called St Olaph's or St Moluadh's. Moluadh laboured in the Hebrides, but Applecross became his headquarters. He died in 722 and was buried at Rosemarkie. A later temple was built on the same site in Eoropie, but in modern times it was used for holding sheep until restored in 1912. In 1630 offerings of wooden arms and legs were seen on the altar, as if given by people claiming healing power from the sacred place. This shows how that the rags of Roman beliefs still remained in the area in spite of the Reformation.

Up to the end of the seventeenth century, the Ness folk would each year have a man wade out to sea to pour a bowl of ale into the waves for the god Shonnie. This was supposed to guarantee a plentiful supply of seaweed for fertiliser. A candle was then burnt in the temple, and the night was spent in singing, dancing and drinking. There was also a custom of sacrificing a

sheep before the fishing season. The ancient faith in the area was that of the Druids, and an ancient standing stone, not far from Ness, was thought to be a man who had been turned into stone by the curse of the Druidic priests. This was also believed to be true about standing stones all over Lewis.

North of Habost village is the Blood Stone where the Morrisons of Ness dispatched their prisoners of war. Who can tell the dangers the men faced who first brought the gospel to Lewis? We believe that, just like the first preachers we read about in God's Word, they must have gone through great tribulation. We believe that those who first came with the sweet notes of the gospel also came with prayers which would have been answered long after they had gone.

Reformation Times. The Roman Catholic Church had four parishes in Lewis before the Reformation. There were two monasteries in the Long Island (Lewis and Harris) at Uig and Rodel, and a nunnery at Uig. During Roman Catholic times a hermit stayed at Ness and he was well looked after. In 1559, one year before the Reformation, Lauchlan Maclean was the last Roman Catholic priest to be installed in Ness, being presented by Queen Mary. In 1560 papal authority ended and mass was forbidden.

After the Reformation, Lewis was reduced to two parishes. The first ministers were Sir Patrick MacMaster Martin and Ranald Auguson, who could not write. The marriage of couples was neglected and few were baptized. Marriages began again in 1610; in 1657 marriages were no longer performed on the Lord's day. In some places people baptized their own children, putting salt in the water after the papal fashion of making holy water. After Kenneth Morrison, the minister of Stornoway, had a serious quarrel with Mackenzie of Kildun, a Roman Catholic, he was always armed, with two guards at his church door every Sabbath.

Later Times. The Moderate ministers, who did not follow a spiritual religion, ruled in spiritual matters. The story of a man known as Iain Beag (little Iain) visiting the place of worship in Ness has come down to us by word of mouth. The minister was William Macrae, who came in 1813. All that Iain Beag could remember of that day was the Moderate minister threatening those who allowed their sheep to go into his corn; he promised that if it happened again he would drive the sheep into the sea with his dog.

At the end of the seventeenth century Lewis still had just two ministers, one at Stornoway and one at Barvas. In 1656 the ministers of Lewis and Skye had to be ordered to preach twice on the Sabbath. The nature of things at synod level can be gauged from the fact that in 1724 the Synod ordered Rev Donald Morrison to part from his wife, as she was always drunk. He, being more scriptural, refused and the case went to the General Assembly.

It was 1659 before the first 50 Psalms in Gaelic were published in metre. No Gaelic Bible was yet published because the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge believed that, until Gaelic was rooted out, no progress could be made in the Highland area. The Gaelic New Testament appeared in 1767 and the complete Bible in Gaelic in 1801. There were no catechists in Lewis until 1737. Each village began to have an annual catechising, the *Shorter Catechism* being used, but there seemed to be no spiritual fruit as yet.

Education. If the Moderate ministers had only realised that the Lord would use education as a means of spreading the true religion in Lewis and Harris, then surely they would not have been so keen to educate the people. In 1811 an approach was made by the Gaelic Schools Society of Edinburgh, and it was agreed to teach the people reading and writing in their own language. The teachers were not to be preachers or public exhorters of any church. Sixty attended the first Gaelic school, which was in Bayble, with Angus Macleod, a Skyeman, as teacher, and 300 listened to the reading of Scripture on the Lord's Day. The book used for teaching reading and writing was the Bible. Ness had over 100 pupils, and the children began reading Scripture to grown-ups in their homes. Reverence for the Lord's Day deepened. Sabbath schools also began in 1810.

The Apostle John's Life and Ministry

3. His Ministry in Writing

Rev G G Hutton

Last month's part of this Youth Conference paper focused on John's character.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians, he identified John, along with James and Cephas, as pillars of the Church, who gave to him and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship" (Galatians 2:9). The early Church thus recognised John as an apostle because of his personal knowledge of Jesus and his experiences with Him. John quite obviously occupied a position of some authority in the early Church.

A present-day author writes: "John was present for several of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, and was present at His ascension (Acts 1:13). He was with the Church on the Day of Pentecost and received the promise of the Spirit at that time. He was with Peter when the latter healed the lame man at the temple gate called Beautiful (Acts 3:1,3), and was arrested with Peter, and with Peter defended their proclamation of Jesus' resurrection before the people (Acts 4:1-23). When Philip took the gospel to the Samaritans, the

Jerusalem apostles dispatched Peter and John to Samaria to investigate his activities, and as they returned to Jerusalem they preached the gospel themselves in many Samaritan villages (Acts 8:14-17,25). . . . In light of these activities, it is understandable why Paul would later refer to John, along with James and Peter, as a 'pillar' in the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9)."

No doubt all this gave added weight to John's written ministry. As a pillar of the Church, he must have been generally recognised as a teacher; so it was of some importance that he gave his approval to Paul and Barnabas when they began their gospel service. John had the spiritual understanding to recognise the evidence of a call to the ministry in others, because he himself had been called away by Jesus from his fishing nets to engage in the great work of fishing for men (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20).

It is obvious from his own writing that John did not indicate lightly his approval of others. He wrote, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Because John had been sent out by the Saviour, he understood the importance of not running before he was sent. Matthew tells us that, when Jesus "had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. . . . These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them" (Matthew 10:1-5). It should be obvious that Jesus chose the apostles so that He would train and prepare them Himself, in readiness for a special commission. They were each appointed to specialised work.

We know, for example, what Peter's ministry was to require of him. John records the conversation between Jesus and Peter, when Peter was restored and recommissioned after he had denied the Saviour. Jesus told him to feed His sheep and His lambs (John 21:15-22). This was in addition to what Jesus had already told him before his denial and fall: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). Like Peter, each of the apostles, including John, had his own particular ministry to fulfill.

We are able to observe in the Epistles of Peter how he did fulfil his ministry, strengthening his brethren and encouraging them to feed the flock of God: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder. . . . Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Similarly, by reading the writings of John, we quickly become aware of the

purpose behind his ministry. It has been suggested that the order in which the four Gospels appear in the New Testament follows “the line of the old Hebrew encampment. Matthew surveys the Theocracy [the kingdom ruled by God] in its entirety. In other words, the whole camp is seen surrounding the King. In Mark we find ourselves in the outer court [of the temple], in the place of service and sacrifice. In Luke we have passed into the Holy Place, where stood the seven-branched candlestick of witness, and the table of shewbread, or communion. In John we enter within the veil, into the Holiest of all.”

Whether we follow this line of thought or not, any comparison of the four Gospels will very quickly make us realise that John's Gospel differs distinctly from the other three. There is no doubt that it takes us into the very heart of God and of the Saviour. John 3:16, for example, takes us to the loving heart of God. Christ's great high priestly prayer, in John 17, reveals to us the depths of His love for His Father and for His covenant people. If there is any special place in the Gospels where we enter the Holy of Holies, it has to be in John 17. There we listen in reverent awe to the glorious royal Intercessor speaking on behalf of His poor people, revealing what is in His heart for them.

John has, for good reason, often been referred to as “the apostle of love”. The love of God for sinners, and the love of His redeemed people for God the Father and God the Son – as well as the love of the Father and the Son for one another – are recurring themes in the writings of John. For this reason, some are misled into thinking that love is the central matter in his writings. While no reader could possibly doubt the importance of divine love in the thinking of John or question his emphasis on the duty of believers to love each other, we must allow John to speak for himself. He leaves us in no doubt as to why he wrote his Gospel: “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:30,31).

Someone has said, “Everyone will agree that when a writer interprets his own book, we must give attention to his interpretation if we are to hope to understand his book”. As we listen to John speaking for himself, it is quite obvious that he was concerned with *faith*. He wanted his readers to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, but he also wanted them to exercise faith in Him as their Saviour. For this very reason, John is concerned with proof – to give his readers convincing evidence which they ought to make the ground for believing in Jesus. John could have recorded many other interesting and important events in Jesus' ministry, but he was deliberately selective. The last writer goes on to say, “John is careful to point out that he has not told all the story of Jesus. This does not profess to be a life of Jesus.

Neither does it profess to give all the signs available. ‘Many other signs . . . not written’; but ‘these are written’. John has made a selection. Selection then reveals the method of John.” He concentrated on the evidence that Christ is God, so that we might believe in Him.

Similarly John’s preface to the last book in Scripture reads: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw”. Once again we see John concerned with presenting eyewitness evidence – the things that he saw. Throughout Revelation, we read repeatedly what John saw and heard.

In his First Epistle, he tells us why he wrote it: “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:4). John wants his readers to believe, but he also wants believers to be joyful in their faith. As before, it is evidence which John produces. He writes: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you; that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3).

For Younger Readers

God Lives

There was a woman who always told her friends on difficult days: “Do not fear; God lives. And He will take care of us.”

Her husband died and things became very difficult for her. She was sick and she had very little money. She tried to be patient and cheerful. And, most of the time, she was patient and cheerful.

One day, she felt everything very difficult. She was very sad and she burst into tears. Her little boy had just learned to talk. He saw her crying. He put his hand on hers and looked up at her. He seemed very sad as he said, “Mother, is God dead now?”

She took her boy in her arms and said to him: “No, my son, God is not dead. I thank you for asking that question. He always lives. He is an ever-present help in every time of need. He will help us.”

She wiped away her tears and became cheerful again. She sought help from God, and God did help her. And again she went on with her work cheerfully.

Yes, God always lives. And He helps those who trust in Him.

Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible containing the word:

Hope

It is good that a man should both *hope* and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord (Lamentations 3:26).

Precept: Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? *Hope* thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance (Psalm 42:5).

Promise: The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that *hope* in His mercy (Psalm 147:11).

Prayer: But I will *hope* continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more (Psalm 71:14).

Encouragement: Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that *hope* in the Lord (Psalm 31:24). S

The Long Swim

A boy was just 12 when he decided to become a seaman – right away. He would not listen to his father or his mother and he ran away from home. It seems unbelievable, but he was accepted as a crew member on a ship in some American port. When the ship was ready, he sailed out to sea.

It was probably after several voyages and many storms that the young sailor found himself one night being tossed about on a very stormy sea. The crew could no longer handle the ship; the wind was so strong. In the morning he found that he was the only person left on board; everyone else had been swept away by the huge waves which broke over the ship. He could see that the ship would soon go to pieces on the rocks.

His only option was to jump overboard. But first he put as much of his money in his jacket pockets as he could. And he took his Bible – not because he valued what was written in it, but because it belonged to his mother. When he had left home he decided to take something that would remind him of her. It was a small Bible and it fitted easily inside his jacket.

Then he jumped into the sea, hoping to be able to swim to the shore. He had a long way to go and he swam hard for a long time. But he was tiring; so he decided to throw away his Bible. He thought it would make it easier for him to swim onwards and he imagined that he could easily do without it.

“I threw away from me the Bible,” he said afterwards, “being sorry only because it had belonged to my mother. I did not know it as containing the pearl of great price. But though I had thus far lightened myself, the money still weighed rather heavily. Yet, being unwilling to part with it, I tried all my strength and continued swimming.

“After some time, and when I must have made considerable way, I turned to see whether my Bible was in sight, though I could not suppose it possible. I thought indeed that it had sunk into the water, but to my surprise I found it carried along by a wave and now close to my shoulder. My heart thrilled with joy. I seized my precious book and could not help crying out, ‘O my Bible, so you would not leave me, though I thrust you away. Well then, come what will, you and I will never part.’ I gladly put it into my pocket and then emptied my pockets of my money, which was bulky as well as heavy.” The Bible is far more valuable than any amount of money.

At last the lad reached a rock which stood out of the water a little. He scrambled onto it, thankful to be able to rest his weary limbs. He ate the little sodden bits of biscuit he had in his pocket. He then pressed the water out of his Bible as best he could. He opened it and read the words: “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:12).

He fell asleep and, when he wakened, the words from the Psalm were still on his mind. As he thought over them, he felt afraid that, though the Saviour is merciful, He would no longer be merciful to *him*.

But not only was the sailor’s soul in danger, his life was also in danger. He had been saved from the water, but he would perish if he was not rescued from the rock. Two days had passed and he was now desperately thirsty. He prayed to God, and God heard him. The lad saw a ship in the distance. How glad he was to see the vessel! But, he asked himself, would anyone on board see him? He scarcely even felt strong enough to wave his handkerchief.

Someone on the ship did see him. A small boat was sent to the rock and brought the young sailor safely back to the ship. He did not forget to thank God and he renewed his vows to be the Lord’s. No doubt the verse from Psalm 2 was still impressed on his mind. I do hope that he had by now really trusted in Jesus Christ – that he had found the Pearl of great price.

The young sailor was soon landed safely in Liverpool and set off walking to London. One Sabbath morning, a Christian woman found him sitting at

the roadside in her Warwickshire village. In his hand was his Bible and he seemed to be waiting till it was time for the church service.

That is all we know about him. But no doubt his mother back home had continued to pray for him, and God hears prayer. Yet it is very sinful for young people to treat their parents as this boy did – thinking they understand everything better than their parents. Even if God is good to them and, in the end, saves their souls, they may first have to go through very difficult circumstances. How much better to remember the first commandment with promise: “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12).

For Junior Readers

Life's Clock

I wonder if you stayed up till midnight to hear the clocks chime for the start of the New Year. Have you ever thought that your life is like a clock? Just as the seconds and minutes tick by in each hour and the hours in each day, so the days, months and years of your life are passing, never to return. Someone once wrote a poem about this:

The clock of life is wound but once,
 And no man has the power
 To tell just where the hands will stop,
 At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed;
 To lose one's health is more;
 To lose one's soul is such a loss
 As no man can restore.

The present only is our own:
 Seek and serve God with a will –
 Place no faith in “tomorrow” – for
 The clock may then be still!

In the words of the Bible, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near”. The days of your youth are days when He is near – and they pass very quickly. That is why the wise man said, “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”. Seek Him now, before the clock stops and it will be too late – too late for ever!

J van Kralingen

Repentance

Rev Donald MacLean

This article is taken from *The Young People's Magazine* for 1954. It has been edited.

The *Shorter Catechism* tells us: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience" (Answer 87). Repentance is a saving grace. Like all the other graces it comes about through the Holy Spirit working in the heart. You should try to lay hold of the great fact that everything that will last until eternity in the soul of a sinner arises from the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot do without His work, for it is written: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

As we are born into the world, we have a sinful nature and we love sin. As long as we remain in our fallen state, we are under the reign of sin which the Saviour describes: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). Sin is rebellion and disobedience against God. Instead of His word reigning in us and governing our thoughts and actions, we despise His warnings, we ignore His counsels, reject His invitations, and trample His commands underfoot. We live as if there was no God and break out into open sin in its various, numberless forms.

Sad and dangerous though such a condition is, the sinner lives quite contentedly in it. Apart from some pricking of his conscience at times, he will continue in that state until death will bring him into the presence of the God against whom he has so seriously sinned – unless God in mercy will awaken him from his sleep. Because repentance involves a "true sense of sin", he turns from it unto God, "with grief and hatred of sin" – instead of loving it. So repentance means a change of mind.

This change, as was already pointed out, is the work of the Holy Spirit. The instrument He uses is the Word of God. He applies the truth to the understanding and conscience of the soul in such a way that the sinner realises that God is, and that He is infinitely holy and just. He also comes to see that, before God, he is unholy and guilty; his sins have left him at a great distance from God. The fall of man becomes real to him now; he sees clearly the awfulness of that calamity – not as a mere matter of belief but one that affects himself in a most solemn way. So he begins to mourn before God, acknowledging his sins and seeking grace to forsake them. He begins to cry for mercy, although he does not know yet where mercy can be found.

This brings us to the other side of repentance, "an apprehension of the

mercy of God in Christ". Under a sense of sin, the sinner is crying for mercy, but at the back of his mind is the idea that God will be merciful to him because of something he has done. Thus he looks for mercy on the ground of his prayers, or the reformation in his life, or because he is seeking salvation, or something else that he has the power to do. He does not yet understand the real nature of mercy, nor does he see the channel through which mercy must come: "in Christ". But the Holy Spirit makes him realise that all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags and shows him the impossibility of obtaining salvation from God on account of anything he can do or will promise to do. He is thus realises that he is a lost soul, as far as human power and ability are concerned.

The Holy Spirit also takes of the things of Christ and begins to reveal them to him. He now looks upon Christ in a very different way. He now begins to get light on such truths as this: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them", and, God "hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:19,21).

In Christ, he sees the claims of law and justice fully satisfied in His obedience and sufferings unto death. He also sees the mercy of God flowing forth to hell-deserving sinners in a way that is consistent with that holiness which caused him to feel so unclean. He sees that this atonement was the fruit of God's love. The love of Christ constrains him and he finds in Him peace with God. He now sees sin, not only as something that was destroying himself, but as something that caused the Saviour to be pierced on the cross. He loathes that sin, grieves for it and desires to be freed from it for ever. He "turns from it unto God".

Repentance is also shown by the purpose of his heart: it is after new obedience. And the results of this can be seen in his life. Where sin once reigned, there is now a principle of holiness and a love to God's commands. At the same time, sin remains in him; so his attempts to walk in the paths of obedience are described as "endeavours". He finds sin still a power within him and a blight which will keep him mourning all his days in this world. But as he continues to get that "true sense of sin", the Holy Spirit encourages him by giving him a fresh "apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ".

He thus spends his days in this world mourning and rejoicing until he reaches that place where sin shall no more trouble him. "For the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." He shall enter heaven, the haven of everlasting rest, the joy of his Lord. You should pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit would work this godly repentance in your soul.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2012-13

UK Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section: *Barnoldswick:* David J Martin, Rebecca Ross. *Edinburgh:* Daniel Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Donald and Rachel MacKenzie, Catherine and Mairi Wyatt. *King's Lynn:* Matthew Wiltshire. *London:* Andrew Munns. *Longcot:* Ruth and Samuel Cooper. *Snizort:* Rebecca MacLeod. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot. *Vatten:* Jayne Fleming.

Intermediate Section: *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Kenneth Macpherson, Emma Norris. *King's Lynn:* Susanne Wiltshire. *London:* Sam Munns. *Ness:* Kathryn Ferguson. *North Tolsta:* Mairi Campbell. *Snizort:* Sarah Macleod. *Stornoway:* Aimee Macleod, Joanna MacLean. *Tonbridge:* James Playfoot.

Junior Section: *Aberdeen:* Rachel Somerset. *Dingwall:* Hannah MacKenzie, Laura MacLeod, Matthew Ross. *Gairloch:* Roddie Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Katie MacPherson, Jessica and Jonathan Norris, Rachel Smith. *Guildford:* Susanna Risbridger. *Inverness:* Daniel Maton. *Kyle:* Sarah J Whear. *London:* Claudia and James Campbell, Henry Munns. *North Tolsta:* Anna Campbell, Christie Nicolson. *Stornoway:* Lucienne Doig, Jonathan Maclean, Cara MacLeod. *Tonbridge:* Katie Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Abigail Broome

Upper Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Samuel McIntosh. *Chippenham:* Timothy Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Esther Ross. *Edinburgh:* Bradley Morrison. *Gairloch:* Josh and Kyrene Tallach. *Glasgow:* Iain Macpherson, Louise Norris. *Inverness:* Jessica Maton. *Kings Lynn:* Thomas Wiltshire. *Kyle:* Mark Whear. *Ness:* Eilidh Ferguson. *North Harris:* Hope Macleod. *North Tolsta:* Ross Campbell, Ruth Morrison. *Snizort:* Jonathan Macleod. *South Harris:* Jessica Ann Macleod. *Stornoway:* Jamie Doig, Matthew Macleod, Kate and Mollie MacSween. *Tonbridge:* Joseph Playfoot. *Vatten:* Hannah Fleming, Henry Johnson (please give your address next time).

Lower Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Jane Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Calvin Middleton, Claudia and Daniel van Essen. *Beaulieu:* Deborah MacLean. *Brighton:* Katharine Hills. *Dingwall:* Catherine Campbell, Lydia and Thomas Ross. *Edinburgh:* Ross McKay, Fraser Morrison. *Glasgow:* Grant MacLennan, Hugh and Susie Macpherson, David Norris, Cameron and Hugh Ross, Rebecca Smith. *Halkirk:* Annelise Hymers-Mackintosh. *Inverness:* Emily Hutton, Lois Maton. *London:* Rachel and John Campbell, David, John and Sarah Munns. *North Harris:* John Chisholm, Hannah Jardine, Cara and Connor Macdonald, Neil and Ruairidh Morrison. *North Tolsta:* Esther Campbell, Angus Morrison. *North Uist:* Mairi Macdonald. *Snizort:* Andrew Macleod. *South Harris:* Matthew Macleod. *Stornoway:* Fraser Macleod, Jeni Macleod, Joshua Morrison. *Tain:* Abigail and Benjamin Reynolds. *Vatten:* Catriona Mackinnon.

Looking Around Us

True Religion or False?

The village of Luss is in one of the most beautiful parts of Scotland; it sits on the shores of Loch Lomond. Now it has been added to a list of “global faith pilgrimage sites”, which includes the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and Amritsar’s Golden Temple in India. Luss has made it onto this list because of its associations with Saint Kessog, who crossed from Ireland to Scotland as a missionary in the middle of the sixth century.

The local council thinks that this is a huge boost for the tourist industry in their area. But these days, it does not matter to most people in Western

countries what kind of religion you follow; so to have your village associated with sites where false religion is practised will not worry them. The local Church of Scotland minister is very excited about this development.

Kessog himself would not have taken this attitude; he had left his own land to spread the true religion to people who believed what was false. Irish missionaries of Kessog's period would have carried with them the elements of the true gospel, as they travelled about on foot or by boat to preach in various places, enduring great hardship. And it is not likely that Kessog would be happy to be called a saint, except in the sense that all believers are saints – people who are being made holy by the Spirit of God. Nor would he have been happy to have people going on pilgrimage to a site connected with himself; it would smack too much of idolatry.

Will the Pope's Tweets Be Infallible?

The question was asked in an article on the BBC website informing us that the Pope is beginning to send out Twitter messages – that is, one of his servants will send a weekly message for him, of no more than 140 characters.

The obvious answer to the question is, No; the Bible is the only message in the world without error. And the Roman system has gone very far from the Bible; it is no safe guide for anyone who wants to know the way to heaven.

It was the First Vatican Council of 1870 that first officially announced the doctrine that the Pope is infallible, that he is preserved from all possibility of error when he officially defines a doctrine about faith or morals “which is to be held by the whole Church”. But the idea has no foundation in Scripture; it is a teaching which his Church has made up for itself.

It seems that 80 years passed before a pope, in 1950, claimed to make an infallible pronouncement: that the Virgin Mary had been taken up body and soul into heaven. Again this claim has no support from the Bible.

The idea of a mere man becoming infallible is a nonsense. Mary's body probably lies wherever she was buried after she died; it certainly was not taken to heaven. We can safely reject all such Roman Catholic claims; we must always take the Bible as the only foundation for everything we believe.

2013 Youth Conference

This year's Youth Conference will be held, God willing, in Gartmore House, Gartmore, Stirlingshire, FK8 3RS, from Tuesday, April 2, to Thursday, April 4. Further details are to appear in next month's *Young People's Magazine*.

Price £1.00