

# The Young People's Magazine

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## Everything You'll Need in Life?

“Everything you'll need in life fits in this envelope”, said the slogan on the front. Inside was an application form for an American Express credit card. Ask for the card, I was more or less being told, and you can go out and buy whatever you need, or think you need.

The reality may not have been quite so straightforward, because many people who apply for a card will be refused. And those whose applications are successful will discover that there are limits on what they can spend – whatever their needs.

In any case, money cannot buy everything. Not even that small piece of plastic from American Express can do that. It cannot buy affection, for instance. People have showered gifts on those whom they wanted to have as their special friends, but it didn't work.

More importantly, there is something we desperately need which money cannot possibly buy for us. That is the salvation of our souls and a place in the kingdom of heaven. Christ directs us: “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). If we seek, and find, a place in God's kingdom, we will be supplied with all the other things we need. In His good providence, God will give us the things that money can buy, such as food and drink, clothes and a roof over our heads – as much of them as He sees to be good for us. That is His promise. But we must give *first* place to seeking salvation.

Yes, we must have our priorities right. The most important thing is what money cannot buy: a place in the kingdom of God. Then we will have our sins forgiven, our hearts purified and, when life is over, a place in heaven. If we will not take Christ as our king – who rules over this kingdom – we will have to wander through life, and on into the great eternity, without His help. Even in this world we need someone greater than ourselves to take care of us, and how can we expect to reach heaven by our own efforts? Unless God will show us the way, we will never reach there. We must come to know Jesus, who has said, “*I am the way . . . no man cometh unto the Father but by Me*” (John 14:6). That knowledge too is something which money cannot

buy, but God has revealed it – in the Bible. There we may discover all we need to know about the salvation which it is so necessary for us to find.

Yet that salvation was obtained at great cost. If we receive it, there is no cost at all to us, but that is only because of the unspeakably great price that Christ had to pay – He had to give His life. And, because of this, we should look on it as tremendously precious. To despise it should be out of the question. And yet how many people do despise it! Which is only possible because of how corrupt our hearts are unless the Holy Spirit will change them. How much then we need that change of heart! And how willing God is to grant us such spiritual blessings! He calls to us all: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1). Here He is offering to us all the blessings of salvation, and we must not think of paying anything for them – not even the best of what we might imagine to be our good works.

All too often, the things which money can buy stand in the way of sinners seeking salvation. Christ warns us of the danger of having our treasure on earth, “where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal”. Instead, He counsels us to have our treasure in heaven. How important it is that we would seek that most precious of all possessions: true religion! It will never be taken away from us.

For many people, Christmas is the only time when they allow religion to enter their lives. Perhaps, scarcely interrupting their focus on what money will buy, they may even permit themselves to attend a church service. One sometimes hears the call to “put Christ back into Christmas”. But there is no place for Christ in Christmas; it is actually a heathen festival. And, because God has not commanded us to observe it, we should ignore it completely. But we must not neglect the special day – once every week, not once in a year – which God has appointed for worshipping Him: the Sabbath. That is the day when, normally, we have a special opportunity to attend to the needs of our souls and obtain what is most needful in life: spiritual blessings. Let us value the Sabbath as a great gift from God.

Money can certainly be very useful. But we can lose it. And we can waste it – like the prodigal son in Christ's parable. There was nothing left for him but to return to his father. Should we not learn that we ought without delay to return to God by faith? Apart from Him, we can never have what we most need in life. If we are trusting in Christ, He will – as our King – watch over us and protect us in this world and, when this life is over, He will take us to be with Himself in heaven for ever. We will have everything we really need, both in this life and the next.

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## The Apostle of the North

### 4. Breadalbane and St Kilda

*Rev D W B Somerset*

In last month's article, we saw John Macdonald settled in the Highland parish of Ferintosh and beginning the preaching tours which earned him the name, *the Apostle of the North*. His work was very much blessed by God.

One of John Macdonald's first preaching tours, and perhaps his most famous, was to the district of Breadalbane in Perthshire in 1816. The minister there was Robert Findlater, a godly man but not a gifted preacher. Hearing of the work going on at Ferintosh, he invited the Apostle of the North to the communion at Ardeonaig, a village on the south side of Loch Tay, in September of that year. A vast crowd attended, and Macdonald's sermon on the occasion was considered the greatest he ever preached. Here is what Robert Findlater wrote afterwards to his brother:

"The whole services were in the open air. . . . It may really be said that John Macdonald came to us in the fulness of the gospel of peace. There was a vast congregation, reckoned between four and five thousand, for I spread the information far and wide. He preached two hours and twenty minutes from Isaiah 54:5: 'Thy Maker is thine husband'. I may say that during the sermon, the whole sermon, there was hardly a dry eye. Eagerness to attend the word preached was depicted on every countenance, while tears were flowing very copiously, and literally watering the ground. The most hardened in the congregation seemed to bend as one man, and I believe if ever the Holy Ghost was present in the solemn assembly it was there. Mr Macdonald himself seemed to be in raptures. There were several people who prayed aloud, but the general impression seemed to be a universal melting under the word. The people of God themselves were as deeply affected as others and many have confessed that they never witnessed such a scene. It will be a day remembered through the ages of eternity, as many, I trust, have enjoyed eternal good. There was no doubt joy in heaven on the occasion. I could compare it to nothing but the days of the apostles after Pentecost."

One godly man said afterwards that he personally knew 50 people who were awakened by the sermon and the only one whose conversion he was tempted to doubt was his own. It is interesting that John Macdonald's subject on this occasion was the same as at the Burn of Ferintosh a couple of years earlier. There his text had been: "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever". At the famous communion during the Cambuslang revival in July 1742, at which about 20 000 people were present, William M'Culloch preached on the Sabbath morning on Song of Solomon 5:16: "His mouth is most sweet; yea,

He is altogether lovely". And in the evening George Whitefield had the very same verse as John Macdonald here: "Thy Maker is thine husband". It is said that Whitefield's sermon on that occasion was blessed to more people than any other sermon he ever preached. The theme of spiritual marriage with the Lord Jesus Christ has been greatly used by God in revivals in Scotland.

Another place the Apostle of the North visited on his preaching trips was St Kilda, a collection of rocky islands about 40 miles beyond the Western Isles. About 100 people were living there at the time. St Kilda was part of the parish of Harris but it is not surprising that the minister of Harris had never been there. Godly missionaries had gone to St Kilda, the most notable being Alexander Buchan, who was there from 1710 to 1730. But the most recent missionary, who left in 1821 after 30 years, could scarcely read. Naturally the people were very ignorant of spiritual things. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge suggested that the Apostle of the North might try to help, and he went to St Kilda four times: in 1822, 1824, 1827, and 1830. The journey to St Kilda was dangerous and it took some courage to attempt it. The night before his first trip, he was staying with the minister in Bracadale, John Shaw, who had agreed to go with him. Shaw was a godly man but somewhat timid. Macdonald slept soundly, but Shaw was sleepless with anxiety. In the morning they went down to the boat together to embark. Macdonald sprang in, but Shaw's nerve failed him, and he returned to his manse alone.

When the Apostle of the North arrived in St Kilda, he put to the people the question of the Philippian jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30), and asked them what answer they would give. He noted their responses. An old man replied, "We shall be saved if we repent and forsake our sins and turn to God". "Yes," said a middle-aged woman, "and with a true heart too." "Ay," said a third, "and with prayer." "And," added a fourth, "it must be the prayer of the heart." "And we must be diligent too in keeping the commandments", said a fifth. The minister commented: "After each had thus contributed his mite, and having no doubt that among them a decent creed had been made out, they all looked and listened for my approval". But he could not give his approval to what they had said. While there was nothing false in it, there was no mention of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle of the North preached to them every day, sometimes twice, morning and evening, and they were very ready to listen. On his second visit he preached through Romans, commenting on a chapter a day. The schoolmaster in St Kilda told him that he had seen something he had never seen before: people praying in the fields of St Kilda. Every time Macdonald left the island, there was a scene like when the apostle Paul left

Ephesus. The people wept, thinking that they would never see him again.

The effect of his teaching in St Kilda was remarkable. Here he is questioning the children on his second visit, two years after he had found the adults so ignorant. He had just been preaching on Luke 7 and he decided to ask the children about the chapter. They had no idea that this was going to happen, and they were not prepared in any way.

“On what message did John the Baptist send his disciples to Christ?” he began. A boy of about 14 replied, “To ask if He was the person who was to come”. “What do you mean by the person who was to come?” “The promised Saviour”, he answered. “And what reply did Christ give them?” “He was working miracles at the time, and He told them to go and tell John the things that they had seen.” “How did the miracles which he worked prove that this was He who was to come?” “Because”, replied another boy, “none but God could do these things, and none except God was with Him.” “But did not others work miracles as well as Christ?” “Yes,” replied the first boy, “but not in their own strength; Christ worked them by His own power.”

“Who is Christ?” “The Son of God,” replied a third boy. “Why did He come into the world?” “To save sinners.” “What does He save sinners from?” “He saves them from sin and wrath”, said a fourth. “How has He brought about salvation for them?” “By His death.” “How many natures has Christ?” “Two,” answered a fifth boy, “the nature of God, and the nature of man.” “In which of these natures did He die?” “In the nature of man,” said he; “God could not die.” “Of what use, then, was the divine nature in Him?” After a pause, for the question seemed to stagger them, one of the girls replied, “He would not be able to save us unless He was God”. Another girl added, “And besides, it supported His human nature under suffering”. “O yes,” said a boy of about 13, “and gave value to these sufferings.”

“Did the Pharisee, or the woman of whom we read in this chapter, love the Redeemer most?” “The woman”, replied a boy. “How so, seeing the Pharisee made a feast for Him?” “He did so,” replied one of the older girls, “to be seen of men and so that the Redeemer might have a good opinion of him, but not from love. But the woman wept and washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.” “Was this not love? What made her weep?” “Her sins”, replied a little girl of about 10. “How do you prove that her sins, sitting as she was at her Saviour’s feet, were the cause of her weeping?” “Yes,” replied the first boy; “you told us yourself lately, when preaching from Zechariah 12:10, that a sight of Christ, whom we have pierced, would make us weep.” At once a slightly older boy added, “The love of Christ too made her weep.” “Ah yes,” said one of the parents, “the love of Christ! That indeed melts the heart.”

What a change the preaching of the gospel had made in a short time! Macdonald collected money on the mainland, and a church and manse were built on St Kilda. A new missionary was settled there in 1830. The island is deserted now except for an army base, but the church and manse remain as a testimony to the great work God did there through the Apostle of the North.

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## **The Book of Ruth**

### **68. Christ Will Finish His Work**

*Rev Keith M Watkins*

Ruth 3:18b. "The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

**B**oaz had promised Ruth to do everything he could to bring about their marriage. There was nothing more that Ruth could do. Now it all depended on Boaz. But she was not to be worried about that, because Boaz would not let her down. Naomi could assure her: "The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day". Boaz was not the kind of man to start a thing and leave it unfinished. He would devote whatever time was necessary to finalising the marriage.

Ruth's marriage to Boaz was in safe hands. Boaz himself would bring it to pass. But what about you? You too need to be married! We are not referring just now to the marriages of this world, but to spiritual marriage. You need to be united to the Boaz of the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ. Unless you become His bride, you will suffer the torment of His wrath, in everlasting separation from Him.

But obtaining and maintaining spiritual union to Christ are not easy. Ruth's marriage to Boaz was no easy matter either, but she looked confidently to Boaz to make it happen. You must look to the One who can begin and finish the work of salvation: the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). If Jesus ever begins to save your soul, He "will not be in rest, until He have finished the thing". How wonderful! Christ will achieve a perfect spiritual union between believers and Himself to all eternity. And He will not rest until then. So, if you are concerned about this spiritual marriage, "commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

Sometimes a man's work remains unfinished because he meets problems he cannot solve. There were difficulties in the way of Ruth's marriage to Boaz. The nearer kinsman had the first right to marry Ruth. And Ruth was a foreigner from Moab who was not allowed into the congregation of the Lord's people (see Deuteronomy 23:3). She had requested the marriage, but she could

not overcome these obstacles. She left that to Boaz. Her confidence in him was not misplaced, for the fourth chapter shows that Boaz had the wisdom to solve every difficulty that stood in the way of completing the marriage.

Perhaps you see difficulties in the way of your salvation. Knowing your sins and circumstances, you despair of finding a way to union with Christ. If all the wisdom of angels and men came to your assistance, still you could never plan a way of solving those difficulties. The deceitfulness and wickedness of your heart make salvation appear impossible. But no case is too hard for the all-wise Saviour. All the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge are in Him. He knows how to remove all the problems that lie in the way of a sinner's salvation. Therefore you should trust Him.

For Ruth's marriage to be completed, the laws of Israel had to be followed. Ruth was a stranger and could not be expected to know the procedures. But Boaz knew exactly what needed to be done, and was careful to remove any legal objections which could prevent the completion of the marriage. At our weddings in England, it is asked if there is any lawful reason why the marriage cannot go ahead. If a just objection is raised, the wedding cannot proceed further, whatever plans and preparations have been made.

The union of sinners with the most holy God must also be legally acceptable. You may feel it is impossible for an undone sinner like yourself to be married to the altogether lovely and holy Saviour in accordance with the rules of heaven. All the laws of God seem to exclude you from the congregation of the Lord. When the Holy Spirit begins to convince you of your sin and misery, you can see no way to avoid eternal condemnation.

But Jesus is a just and righteous Saviour. He is familiar with all the rules of heaven. He knows what pleases His Father and is acceptable to Him. He proceeds in a way that satisfies the strict terms of divine justice, so that no objection can be made against the salvation of the chief of sinners. Does the unkept law demand obedience? Christ provides it by His perfect life. Does sin stand in the way? He removes it by shedding His blood. Thus the Lord Jesus magnifies the law and makes it honourable when He marries sinners. He fulfils all righteousness. His marriage to sinners can go ahead! Even the law must give its approval. Nothing can be said against the union of God's people to their Saviour. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God" (Romans 8:33,34).

Boaz was no ordinary citizen of Bethlehem; he was one of its mighty men of wealth (see 2:1), a man of influence and authority. When he called for the elders to come to the gate (see 4:2), immediately they gave all due attention

to his business. This was another reason why Ruth could trust him to complete their marriage.

The Man Christ Jesus also possesses influence. But His influence is in heaven! His Father hears Him always. He has only to make His will known and it is done. And what is He praying for? It is for His marriage to His bride to be completed: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24).

Perhaps you are afraid that if you were united to Christ in the gospel, it would not be long before your sins would provoke God to divorce you and cast you off. But it cannot be! For Christ will not rest until He has the marriage with His people perfected in glory. Think of Peter denying his Master. He was put to the test that night and his courage failed. But his faith did not fail. Even when he was denying Christ with his mouth, the root of faith was still alive deep in his heart. For Christ had prayed for him that his faith would not fail. It is through faith that the union between Christ and His people is wrought. Even Peter's denials could not break that, because it was upheld by the Saviour's intercession. Just as Boaz had the ears of the people of Bethlehem to ensure that his marriage with Ruth would not be prevented, so the Lord Jesus has the ears of His Father in heaven, to ensure that His marriage to His people will never be broken. Because He ever lives to make effectual intercession, His bride is saved "to the uttermost" (Hebrews 7:25).

The Boaz of the gospel is wise. He is just. He has influence. So come to Him for spiritual marriage. Put the salvation of your never-dying soul into His safe hands, for He "will not be in rest until He have finished the thing".

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*For Junior Readers*

## December Again

So it is December again, the end of another year. Another year of our lives has gone. We are a year nearer to the great eternity. Solemn thoughts!

Yet the world around you would fill your head with silly entertainments at this time of year. Satan does not want you to think about death or to prepare for eternity.

But what does the Word of God say? "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deuteronomy 32:29). God is telling you to consider – to think seriously about – your "latter end". What do these last two words mean? Your *latter end* means the end of your life. So you should think seriously about your death and what will happen to you afterwards.

The Bible tells us that “it is appointed unto men once to die”. It is certain that you will die, and surely you would want to die right. When a godly Scottish minister, John Duncan, preached on that text, he said, “If you die wrong you cannot amend it. What an awful thing if we die wrong! And yet, alas, it is no uncommon thing. Those who would die well should think much on death.”

Job realised this when he said to God, “I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living”. The grave is the house appointed for all living. The world would like you to go with them to places of entertainment but, if you would “die well”, you should keep away from all these worldly distractions. At the most, they will only keep you happy for a short time.

Another Scottish minister who spoke about these things was Ebenezer Erskine. He said, “There are two words that should take up most of our thoughts and cares, namely *Time* and *Eternity* – time because it will soon be at an end, and eternity because it will never come to an end. The candle of time is burning fast. And if we play the fool and are idle about eternal work until the candle is burnt out, we will have ourselves to thank.” Erskine wanted people to realise how quickly time is passing. So you should think seriously about how soon the candle of your life may burn out. And you should use your time now to prepare for your “latter end”.

Perhaps you are not tempted by any of the worldly glitter which is so obvious at this time of year. But many other things are distracting you from considering your latter end! These things may be quite right in themselves – for example, your work at school and at home.

This was the case, in his younger days, with Thomas Chalmers, another Scottish minister. He was very good at Science and Mathematics and, even after he became a minister, he gave much of his time to these subjects. But he came to realise this was wrong and confessed his mistake: “Strangely blinded that I was! What is the object of Mathematical Science? Magnitude and the proportions of magnitude. But then I had forgotten two magnitudes. I thought not of the littleness of time; I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity.” He was not converted; he had not thought seriously about his soul and where he would spend eternity.

I know that, when you are young and healthy, you think death is a long way off. You think that, later on in life, you will have plenty of time to prepare for it. But will you not pray, as this year comes to an end, that God would keep you from the temptations of the world around you. And say, like Moses in Psalm 90, “Lord, teach me to number my days that I might apply my heart unto wisdom”.

*J van Kralingen*

*For Younger Readers*

## **Friends Again**

One man quarrelled with another man. That was not good. But after the quarrel things became worse. Now he hated the other man. He made up his mind to spit in his face the next time he saw him. How horrible that was!

But before they met again, the first man was converted. God gave him a new heart. God showed him His love for sinners.

Did this man still hate the other man? No, the first thing he did was to pray for him. He saw the love of God and he was now a friend of the other man.

The two men met a few days later. What happened to their quarrel? It had disappeared. The first man couldn't hate the other men any longer. He couldn't spit in his face. Instead he gave him both hands as a sign that he was now his friend.

You should never get angry with other people. But ask God to give you a new heart and to help you to love those who are not nice to you.

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## **Not in the Seat of the Scornful**

### **2. "Great Is Your Reward in Heaven"**

Joseph was only 12 when he lost his mother. There was not enough to eat at home, so his father told him he should go elsewhere in the hope of finding food. He reached a farm where he was given work, but the two men who already worked for the farmer mocked him for his religion. Margaret, another servant, began to talk with Joseph as she milked the cows on the Sabbath morning.

Margaret asked him if he thought she would get to heaven. He told her: "If you believe on the Lord Jesus and ask Him to make you holy, you will certainly go to heaven". She thought for some time and then asked if Jesus would hear her when she spoke to Him. Joseph could not understand why she needed to ask such a question. "Margaret," he asked her, "do you not know that the Lord Jesus is everywhere?"

She got up. What Joseph told her awakened within her a sense of longing – a longing after something she could not really understand. She took her milk pail and went away. But she could not settle anywhere. She went from room to room, but she was too upset to stay anywhere for long – until in some dark, far-away room she went down on her knees and tried to pray to the Saviour. "Jesus, help me," she cried. "Jesus, be gracious to me; bring me to heaven. Jesus, make me holy." Just then she heard the farmer calling her. She went to find out what he wanted, but she decided to come back to this

little room again as soon as she could, and as often as she could. And Joseph went back to his bedroom. There he was able to spend a large part of the day reading his Bible, and he felt very happy.

That evening, Joseph and the two men were waiting for their meal. The men were playing with a big watchdog. One of them, called Anton, asked Joseph, "Have you been praying again today to your God?" He said nothing. Then Anton asked Joseph to pray in front of them. Joseph still kept quiet, but he prayed silently for help. The other man said that Joseph must become their minister. "Tell me," he asked, laughing, "shall we go to hell?" Joseph still said nothing. Anton, who was holding the dog, repeated the question and added, "If you do not tell us, I will set the dog on you". Joseph was very frightened, especially because Anton was making the dog growl, but he said faithfully, "How can you go to heaven when you swear so terribly? Anyone who swears must go to hell." The men felt most uncomfortable as Joseph's words echoed in their consciences. But they tried to hide it with loud laughter.

"Now then," said Anton, still holding the big, growling dog, "if we go to hell, then I suppose you will have to come with us, for you must learn to swear too." Then he tried to make Joseph repeat after him the words of some oath. Joseph was deathly pale; he was trembling all over; but he felt confident that God was with him. He said quietly that he could not repeat the words. The men insisted and threatened again to let the dog loose on him – at the same time annoying the dog and making it growl more loudly than ever. This went on until the dog suddenly slipped out of Anton's hands and launched itself against Joseph. Anton tried to call the dog back but it was too late; the dog had already bitten Joseph badly on his hand. He fainted.

Joseph soon came round. Margaret bandaged his wound and prepared another bed for him where she could look after him. Although his hand was painful, he was able to do some work the next day. But after some days, gangrene set in on his hand. He had probably also caught tetanus from the dog's bite. He became more and more ill.

One evening Margaret sat down at the end of his bed. At last she asked, "How are you?"

"I think I shall soon be better", replied Joseph.

"How do you mean?" she asked, in a quiet, frightened voice.

"I believe I shall soon die, and then I shall see my dear Saviour."

"Are you not afraid to die?"

"I may be afraid till it is over. But it will soon be over. And then I can go to my Saviour, where there is nothing but joy and happiness."

Joseph then asked Margaret to read from his Bible. She took it out of his bag and he showed her where to read, in Revelation 21: "And I saw a new

heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Joseph told Margaret how much he was rejoicing "in the hope of seeing this city of God. My dear mother is there; the holy angels and all the saints are there. My Saviour will soon bring me there." They were both quiet for some time and Margaret thought Joseph was falling asleep. But suddenly he said, "I want you to tell Anton and the other servant that I have forgiven them with all my heart and have also prayed earnestly to God for them that He would pardon their sins of last Sabbath and deliver them from hell". Margaret did not know all the details of what had happened and she asked what Anton had done. Joseph did not want to say anything more about it but she did not give up until he had told her everything. She was horrified and wanted to go straight away to the farmer to tell him, but Joseph, weak though he was, made her promise not to.

About three in the morning Margaret was wakened by a loud groan. She jumped up, lit a candle and went to Joseph's bed. She found that his whole body was affected by terrible spasms. After an hour, she decided that she must waken the farmer. He sent her to call the two servants. They came and stood, pale as could be, watching Joseph. They began to tremble; they knew that they were responsible for his suffering.

After some time the attacks became weaker and shorter and Joseph lay in a state of exhaustion. The farmer took the candle so that he could see Joseph's face. "He has gone", he said. But Joseph's soul was still in his body. He opened his eyes and looked around. He focussed on Margaret and said to her, "Thanks, thanks". And he whispered, "Peace. Jesus. Heaven." Then he noticed Anton. With one last effort, he pulled himself up on the bed and stretched out his trembling hand to him. The words came slowly: "I have forgiven you with all my heart. . . . Pray, pray to Jesus and do not swear any more." He was completely exhausted and sank down again. A few minutes later Joseph's soul passed into the heaven which he had so much longed for.

Joseph died young, but his influence continued. Margaret was a different woman for the rest of her life. The farmer too was a changed man. One would like to hope that, in both cases, this was a saving change – that they were led to believe savingly on Christ, the only Saviour of sinners. But we are not told enough to say anything more definite. A few days afterwards Anton left the farm and no one there ever heard of him again. The other man stayed on and, at least, he was never heard to swear again.

Joseph's father had assured him that God would help him. Was it a rash

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promise? No, God was helping Joseph even when he was suffering; He kept Joseph from sitting in the seat of the scornful. And He soon brought him where – in the words that he got Margaret to read to him – “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain”. In Joseph, Christ’s words were most vividly fulfilled: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

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## Do Not Be Rash

*J B Waterbury*

This is chapter 26 from the book, *Advice to a Young Christian*; it has been edited. Last month’s article was on studying the Bible.

I hope, my young friend, that you will come to know the historical parts of the Bible thoroughly. They are closely connected with those other parts of the Bible which contain prophecies, doctrines and commands. At times I have been ashamed because I did not know some fact of Bible history which someone has referred to, especially a fact quoted in the New Testament. This was not because I had neglected the Bible but because I had confined my reading to a very limited part of it.

It is impossible to understand the prophecies without a knowledge of Old Testament history. It is also impossible to understand the beauty and the force of the Gospels and the Epistles if you do not have this knowledge. The more thoroughly you study the Old Testament, the more easily you will understand the meaning of the New. If you get a good grasp of the Book of Leviticus, the Epistle to the Hebrews will become much more attractive. If you have distinguished between the covenant which God made with Abraham and the one He made at Sinai with the people of Israel, you will be ready to feel the force of the Paul’s reasoning in the Epistle to the Galatians. There is scarcely any part of the New Testament which does not have some connection with the Old. The historical books show the providence of God and many bright examples of godliness – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for instance. So you will be well rewarded if you read the histories of the Bible diligently.

When you study those parts of the Bible which teach doctrine, you will need a lot of patience, with constant prayer for light from heaven. Many young Christians have vague ideas of these doctrines although they have the true spirit of the gospel. But if they do not investigate and understand the doctrines of Scripture, they are in danger of being led astray by heresy. So you should

be well grounded in the basic doctrines of the Bible. In making up your mind on any doctrine, do not be hasty. Consider it carefully; then you will not be described as being "carried about with every wind of doctrine". If someone calls in question a truth which you have accepted, do not let his apparent sincerity or the forcefulness of his arguments influence you to change your opinion until you have investigated them thoroughly. You may be right; your opponent may be wrong. Do not be rash in giving up your opinion and adopting his. This caution is specially necessary for young Christians.

I would advise you to examine, in the light of the Word of God, the truths you have been brought up in. Assuming you find they are supported by the Bible, hold them fast as the most precious legacy your parents have left you. Someone may suggest that such opinions are only the result of the way you were brought up. Be cautious about admitting this. Search the Scriptures and, if you find them there, hold them fast as a "form of sound words". If they are opposed to the Bible, give them up. But do not do so rashly. First investigate them closely and sincerely. There is a tenderness of conscience in young Christians which Satan sometimes uses to push them to wrong conclusions, not only about what they do but also about what they believe.

I remember a young man who made a public profession of religion and joined, as a matter of course, the church in which he had been baptized, the one to which his parents belonged. For a short time all went well. He enjoyed the services in the church and also the fellowship of the people of God. But things soon changed. He was upset by someone who had a very domineering way of arguing and led him to doubt a particular doctrine which, up till then, he firmly believed. He was very confused as to his duty. At one time, the other man would suggest that it was wrong for him to remain one day longer in his present church. At another time, he would imply that he had made a false profession, and so had committed a serious sin.

In this hour of distress he prayed most earnestly to God to direct him. The thought went through his mind that he did not need to be rash in changing his views. As he was young and had much to learn, God would not be displeased if he took time to look into the matter. This thought gave him comfort and he set about examining the Bible with diligence and prayer. The result was that he was convinced that what he already believed was the truth. His mind became perfectly settled, and it still is. So I hope that, when you are considering what you believe, you will study the Word of God carefully and prayerfully. Be careful not to rush into hasty conclusions from isolated verses, but take a broad view of what the whole passage teaches. Look at the Bible in its overall teachings. Be thorough in learning its doctrines, and you will become a growing and stable Christian.

# The Young People's Magazine

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Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod

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

**Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland**

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## Looking Around Us

### Praying for the Dead?

Last month, the Pope told a gathering of thousands of his followers in St Peter's Square, Rome, that it was their duty to pray for the dead. But if we follow the Bible, we will not pray for the dead – and the Bible is the only rule to direct us as to what we should believe. Nowhere from Genesis to Revelation is there the slightest suggestion that we should pray for the dead.

When Jesus spoke about the deaths of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16) He made it clear that they both went straight to where they were going to spend eternity – either in hell or in heaven. There was nowhere Lazarus had to pass through before he could reach heaven – no purgatory in which he must suffer till he was completely purified from his sins.

The Pope explained his thinking: “The [Roman Catholic] Church has always exhorted to pray for the dead. She invites believers to look upon the mystery of death not as the last word on human fate.” But death *is* the last word on the eternal future of sinners as they leave this world. That future is according to Solomon's picture: “If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be”. So it is with us. As we are when we reach death, so will we be to all eternity. Whether we lean towards heaven or towards hell before death, that is where we will go when we die. There is no possibility of being changed afterwards.

Since he believes in purgatory, the Pope claims that “it is important and proper to pray for the dead because, even if they died in grace and in friendship with God, perhaps they still have need of further purification to enter into the joy of heaven”. But if people die in friendship with God it is because they have come to Him through Christ and have given up their trust in everything else – including their own good works, the prayers of saints and everyone else, and all the performances of a priest.

And if they die in friendship with God, they die completely free from the guilt of sin. As Paul makes plain, there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1); those who believe in Christ will never be condemned. They are also completely free from the power of sin. There is no sin left from which they must be purified by the pains of an imaginary purgatory. So there is no need to pray for believers who have died; they are all safe in heaven already. And it is too late to pray for unbelievers who have died; they are, solemnly, in hell, from which there is no return. But let us pray earnestly for ourselves and for others, while we are spared in this world, so that we may flee to Christ by faith. Let us do so urgently, for death may come unexpectedly, and there is no hope of pardon on the other side of death.

# Oil in the Lamp

(Based on Matthew 25:1-13)

Ten virgins, clothed in white,  
The Bridegroom went to meet;  
Their lamps were burning bright  
To guide His welcome feet.

Five of the band were wise,  
Their lamps with oil filled high;  
The rest this care despise  
And take their vessels dry.

Long time the Lord abode,  
Down came the shades of night,  
The weary virgins nod,  
And then they sleep outright.

At midnight came the cry  
Upon their startled ear:  
Behold the Bridegroom's nigh,  
To light His steps appear!

They trim their lamps; in vain  
The foolish virgins toil:  
Our lamps are out, O deign  
To give us of your oil!

Not so, the wise ones cry,  
No oil have we to spare;  
But swiftly run and buy,  
That you the joy may share.

They went to buy, when, lo,  
The Bridegroom comes in state;  
Within those ready go,  
And shut the golden gate.

The foolish virgins now  
Before the gateway crowd;  
With terror on their brow  
They knock and cry aloud:

"Lord, open to our call.  
Hast Thou our names forgot?"  
Sadly the words do fall:  
"Depart, I know you not".

Learn here, my child, how vain  
This world, with all its lies.  
Those who the kingdom gain  
Alone are truly wise.

How vain the Christian name  
If still you live in sin;  
A lamp and wick and flame,  
No drop of oil within!

Is your lamp filled, my child,  
With oil from Christ above?  
Has He your heart, so wild,  
Made soft and full of love?

Then you are ready now  
With Christ to enter in;  
To see His holy brow,  
And bid farewell to sin.

Sinners, behold the gate  
Of Jesus open still;  
Come, ere it be too late,  
And enter if you will.

The Saviour's gentle hand  
Knocks at your door today.  
But vain His loud demand;  
You spurn His love away.

So at the Saviour's door  
You'll knock, with trembling heart;  
The day of mercy o'er,  
Jesus will say, "Depart".

*R M M'Cheyne*