

# The Young People's Magazine

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## Half-Heartedness

Jehu was a leading officer in Israel's army. One day God's prophet Elisha sent a messenger with a box of oil to anoint Jehu as king. Jehu at once accepted the responsibility and set about gaining control of the country. He also took steps to banish the worship of Baal from Israel – which was commendable, though one cannot approve of the deceit and cruelty that he used. Indeed Baal-worship was a horrible, wicked religion; some people burnt their children as sacrifices to this imaginary god.

Jehu clearly believed that Jehovah is the true God. And when he met a man called Jehonadab, Jehu asked him to join him in his chariot. Jehu began to boast about what he was doing for God. He told Jehonadab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord".

Do you at once ask, How genuine was Jehu's zeal? It wasn't. Godly people do not show off their religion; they do not draw attention to how well they are serving God. We should not be surprised to find that almost the last thing the Bible tells us about Jehu is that he "took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart". Obviously Jehu's religion was not sincere. He was half-hearted, and God does not accept a half-hearted religion. God tells us that we are to keep His commandments with our *whole* heart (see, for instance, Deuteronomy 26:16).

Jehu wanted to pick and choose between the commandments of God. He was willing to keep the First Commandment, but not the Second. When God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me", Jehu was willing to obey and he wanted everyone to know about it. But when God said, "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, nor serve them . . .", Jehu was not willing to obey. Although he did not worship Baal, "he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin".

Jeroboam's great sin was to make two golden calves and worship them. These were idols and, by worshipping them, Jehu broke the Second Commandment. We cannot choose what commandments we will keep. Some

people might not want to tell lies; they believe it is right to keep the Ninth Commandment. But they do not want to keep Forth Commandment; they do not see why anyone should want them to keep the Sabbath. We dare not be half-hearted in our religion; we must keep *all* the commandments.

But we should not assume too easily that we are actually keeping God's Commandments in a way that pleases Him. Do you remember the rich young ruler who came to Christ asking, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus told him, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments". The young man then asked, "Which?" Jesus listed some of them: "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". The young man obviously did not understand the degree of perfection God demands when He tells us to keep the commandments. So he told Jesus, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" But when Jesus began to teach him what he did lack, he went away with a sad heart. He would not give up his riches even when Jesus told him to. His too was a half-hearted religion. He would not give his whole heart to God.

God's people know what they lack; they know what is wrong with them. They know they have sinful hearts. They know they have sinful thoughts. Even when no one else can see them doing anything wrong on the Sabbath, they know that they break the Sabbath in their thoughts. Yet they really want to be holy. An 11-year-old girl was asked if she wanted to be made holy. She said, "Indeed I often wish I was away [to heaven] that I might sin no more". Clearly hers was no half-hearted religion. This was a girl who was whole-hearted in seeking to keep God's commandments. She wanted, unlike Jehu, to walk in the law of the Lord God with all her heart.

Your religion must be consistent. It is not enough to try to do what is right when you are at home with your parents; you must also seek to do what is right when you are at school, or at work, or with your friends. It is not enough to be religious on Sabbaths – to go to church and involve yourself in the various duties which are appropriate for that day – if you are going to ignore your religion on other days. You should be honest in all your dealings with other people; you must not imitate the bad language you hear; you should not show any appreciation when people tell obscene jokes. And these are just a few examples. Of course, it is difficult to resist temptation, but you must do so if yours is not to be a half-hearted religion.

Yet you cannot resist temptation in your own strength. And you do not need to. Remember that God hears prayer and that He can rescue you from even the most difficult situation; He can give you strength to do what is right.

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Even when you are tempted most unexpectedly, remember that God can hear your prayer. Say to Him, “Lord, help me. Keep me from sinning.”

We should seek to be consistent. It is not good to say one thing and do another. It was said of David Clarkson, a godly minister who lived over 400 years ago, that “his life was a silent repetition of his holy discourses”. The godliness of his heart showed itself, not only in his sermons, but also in his life. You may never become a preacher, but I suspect you believe – whether you would admit it to everyone or not – that you are responsible to God to keep all His commandments. How can you possibly do so? It should be obvious that you need a new heart. Cry earnestly, as David did, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me”. Without that new heart, your religion will never be better than half-hearted.

Part of a church was being replaced. A lot of old wood was taken out of the building and cut up into logs for the members of the congregation to take away and burn in their fires at home. As a man was sawing through one of these pieces of timber, which had been part of the church for 128 years, two very solemn thoughts went through his mind. First, he thought of the thousands of sermons which had been preached during those 128 years. The sound of the preacher’s voice must have echoed again and again off that piece of wood, but not one of all the words those preachers had spoken had ever made any impact on the wood. Second, he thought about how useful the wood had been in the structure of the chapel, yet it was now to be burned in a fire. The man was comparing the wood to some of the people who went to his church. They attended every service; they were ready to help about the church in many ways. But the Word of God never made any real impression on them; they did not believe the truth in a saving way. And if these people went on like that, they must have gone at last to a lost eternity. At best, their religion was half-hearted.

Yet, no doubt, there were others in that church who believed when they heard about Christ Jesus coming into the world to save sinners. They learned that this last word *sinners* did indeed describe them and that their half-hearted religion was unacceptable to God. They realised that God could only accept them if the righteousness of Christ became theirs. But they did believe in Christ; His righteousness did become theirs; and they were accepted by God. What is more, they were given new hearts; their desire now was to live consistently holy lives; their religion was no longer half-hearted. It is true that, until they went to heaven, there were many inconsistencies in their lives. But, unlike Jehu, they did take heed to walk in the law of the Lord God with all their heart. Let us all ask God to give us true religion – one that is indeed wholehearted.

## Not in the Seat of the Scornful

### 1. "God Will Help You"

Joseph was brought up in a God-fearing home in Switzerland. As his father worked at his loom – he was a weaver – his mother used to pray with her son and teach him from the Bible. And what she taught him was blessed to him. God gave Joseph a new heart; he turned from sin and trusted in Christ. He was now very happy when his mother would take him aside and pray with him.

The winter of 1816 was very hard. Joseph's father had no work; so it was now very difficult to provide food for his family. His mother did all she could to get them something to eat, but she fell ill. There was probably no medical help within reach and, before long, she died. Joseph was just 12. On the evening before she died, she called Joseph to her bedside. She presented him with a Bible she had bought for him some time before then, and told him: "Here I give you my inheritance. I am now going to the Saviour and can no longer teach and guide you, but this Bible can teach you for your eternal salvation. Read it diligently and cling to your Saviour. God bless you and guide you by His hand. Farewell, my child. I hope I shall meet you again with the Saviour."

When his mother died, Joseph was very sad; he cried all day. No doubt he was all the more sad because his stomach was empty. One day his father told him he should leave home and go out into the world in the hope that he would find plenty to eat somewhere else. "God will help you", he said to Joseph. "I shall see how I shall manage for myself with your younger sister and brother – God helping me."

Joseph was very upset, but he did what his father told him. He put his Bible into a little bag and said goodbye to everyone. He set off along the road and walked for perhaps two hours. He felt weary and sat down to rest.

Later that day, some distance farther on, as Joseph sat at the roadside crying, someone found him and brought him to his cottage. He gave the weary boy a piece of bread and something to drink. Again and again, people took pity on Joseph and gave him something to eat. "God will help you", his father had promised, and he was right. Joseph must have felt very lonely, but he was not alone, for God was with him. Joseph prayed to God and no doubt thanked Him for every act of kindness.

After some days, Joseph reached the River Rhine. As he stood watching the water flowing over cataracts, some blacksmiths came along. They took him to their workshop and give him a few old potatoes they had roasted on

the fire. A few more days found Joseph near the city of Basle. People he met on the road had told him that many rich and kind people lived there who would probably take him in and give him food. It was near sunset when at last he saw the towers of the city. He felt thankful and imagined he was near the end of his troubles. He could not hope to reach the city before nightfall, so he decided to ask for permission to spend the night at a nearby farmhouse.

As he walked into the farmyard, the barking of a dog brought a servant out to see who was there. Joseph told Margaret shyly what he wanted. She went to ask the farmer. He told her to bring Joseph a warm potato and take him into the stable. Margaret took another potato from her own plate and gave them to him. She then spread a bundle of straw in the stable for him to lie on. As soon as he was alone, Joseph went on his knees and prayed: "I thank Thee that Thou hast given me something to eat. Thou didst know that I was very hungry, and now Thou hast thought of me and hast not allowed me to starve." He also gave thanks for a place to sleep where he would not be in danger of freezing to death. And he asked God to give his father and brother and sister something to eat too. Then he ate his two potatoes, lay down on the straw and was soon asleep.

In the morning Margaret went to the farmer to suggest that he might keep Joseph on as an extra hand on the farm. She reminded him that the two men who worked for him could not manage all the work that had to be done. At first he frowned and muttered that he could not take in "every rover that came", when everything was so expensive. But Margaret persuaded him; he had a high opinion of her because he knew that she was a faithful, honest worker. She quickly gave Joseph something to do and he set to work with a thankful heart.

At breakfast that day, Joseph had his first contact with the two men who worked on the farm. He was upset by their swearing and they mocked him for being upset. When Joseph folded his hands to say grace, they broke out in roars of laughter and spoke wickedly about God and those who follow Him. Joseph was frightened. He remembered the verse in Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful". He wanted to go away from men who were scornful of God and His people. He also thought of the verse: "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness". But Margaret tried to comfort him, and he decided to stay.

At night Joseph had to sleep in the same room as the two men. He was most unhappy. He wanted to pray but he was afraid that the men would treat him badly. So he decided to wait till the men were asleep. He lay down, but

then the men began a most ungodly conversation. They said various things to him too, but he was too frightened to say anything. At last the men fell asleep. Then Joseph got up, knelt down beside his bed and began to pour out his heart to God. He seemed to forget where he was and his voice became louder and louder. One of the men wakened; he swore and shouted, "Who is there?" He threatened to throw Joseph out on the road if he would not be quiet. The other man wakened too and spoke just as roughly to Joseph. Joseph crawled back into bed and hid under the bedclothes. He was terrified and could not sleep.

When he got up in the morning, the men were already at work. Joseph picked up his little bag and headed outside, determined to go away. But in the farmyard he met Margaret, who spoke nicely to him and persuaded him to help her with her work.

"Tell me what heavy thing you have in your bag", she asked him after she began milking the cows. "That is my Bible", he told her. But Margaret knew very little about the Bible. She gave him no peace until he took it out and showed it to her. He sat down beside her on a bundle of fresh straw. It was still dark, so he had to read by the light of her lantern. He chose the third chapter of John's Gospel, which begins with the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus at night. Margaret listened eagerly, but she said nothing except to tell Joseph what work he should do next. In the evening, when the farmer and his men were out drinking, Margaret asked Joseph to read the chapter to her again.

When Sabbath came, the men took a long lie and wasted the rest of the day in idleness. But Joseph had been taught otherwise. So he got up early and went down to the stable. There he found Margaret, who had even less to say than usual. At last Joseph asked if he would read to her. She said, "Yes". He read John chapters 18 and 19, about Christ's sufferings. When Joseph reached the verse: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost", she had a question: "But why did God allow this holy man to die such a horrible death?" Joseph was surprised; he did not seem to know what to say.

At last he asked her, "Do you not know, Margaret, that if the Lord Jesus had wished it, His heavenly Father would have sent 1000 legions of angels to help Him?" He then explained why Christ died. He told her that Christ gave Himself to save people from their sins "by His precious blood". And he quoted the verses from Isaiah 53: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

## The Book of Ruth

### 67. “Their Strength is to Sit Still”

*Rev Keith M Watkins*

Ruth 3:18a “Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall.”

We live in a day of ceaseless activity. Especially in the West, and particularly in towns and cities, people seem to be continually rushing: rushing to school, rushing to work, rushing home again. Even recreation and leisure are pursued in a rush. Do people never sit still any more? Do they never stop, even for a small moment, to consider where all their haste is leading them? Surely we need to relearn the old-fashioned ability of sitting still. By this we do not mean to encourage laziness. Rather, we mean what Naomi meant when she told Ruth, “Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall”.

As a young widow without children, Ruth faced a difficulty. She needed to marry again. On Naomi’s advice, she asked Boaz to marry her. He promised to do all he could. Now there was nothing left for Ruth to do. Everything depended on Boaz. It was for him to do everything. Ruth would have to sit still until she knew the outcome. If she fretted and worried it would not help at all. Her wisdom was to sit still, leaving everything in the hands of Boaz, with quiet confidence in his promise.

Spiritually, this is exactly what we need to do with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ. *Sitting still* may not seem very exciting, but it is essential to spiritual life. Indeed, it is said of God’s people that “their strength is to sit still” (Isaiah 30:7).

The unconverted are not so very different from Ruth, for in a spiritual sense they are not married. They ought to have the Lord as their spiritual husband. But it is not so. In fact, He has divorced them, for they are guilty of sin, which is spiritual adultery. Sin is unfaithfulness to God. They are like Gomer in the Book of Hosea, who was called “the wife of whoredoms” (Hosea 1:2) because she departed from her true husband. They have gone astray from their Creator, and He has said, “She is not My wife, neither am I her husband” (Hosea 2:2). They come into the world “without God” and not spiritually related to Him.

Not only that, they are barren like Ruth. That is, they have not produced any spiritual fruit for God. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5: 22,23). Their lives ought to produce these spiritual “children”. But, because

they are not converted, they bring forth nothing but sin. Like bad trees, their bad hearts cannot produce good fruit.

We must take our trouble to someone who is able and willing to help us. Ruth went to Boaz. He was ready to marry her, and through that marriage she would be fruitful and bear a son. Who can we turn to? To the Lord Jesus Christ, of course! He is willing to marry us. He is able to make us spiritually fruitful. As Naomi advised Ruth to go to Boaz, we advise you to go to Christ. Seek Him without delay. Ask Him to bring your soul into spiritual union with Himself in a marriage that is for ever.

If we have spread our troubles before the Lord and asked for His help, we now need to *sit still*. In other words, we need to wait on Christ by faith. Faith in Jesus Christ is essential. Without it we cannot please God. Without it we cannot be saved. The Bible uses various pictures to help us understand faith. Christ invites us to *come* to Him. Those who are born again *receive* Christ. Believers *rest* on Christ alone for salvation. All these indicate different aspects of faith. But what does the picture of *sitting still* point to?

*Faith rests on Christ's promise.* Ruth sat still because Boaz had made a promise, and she trusted him to do as he had said: "I will do to thee all that thou requirest" (verse 11). Perhaps you too could sit still if you knew that Christ had promised to marry you. Well, listen! He has promised to marry everyone that comes to Him: "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness" (Hosea 2:19,20). Isn't that enough to persuade you to take Christ at His word? If you come to Him, He cannot turn you away, for He has said: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). His own promise, given to us in Scripture which cannot be broken, prevents Him from rejecting any sinner who comes. So sit still, resting on His promise.

*Faith looks to Christ alone.* Ruth's sitting still showed that she was not looking to anyone else but Boaz for marriage. Faith is like this. It refuses all others and looks to Christ alone. When the Israelites were running to Egypt for help, the prophet counselled them to cease, telling them that instead "their strength is to sit still" (Isaiah 30:7). They should put their trust in God alone and wait for His deliverance. Have you come to that? Have you come to see that Jesus Christ is your *only* hope? If He saves you, you will be saved. If He does not save you, it does not matter who you run to – they will never help you. Go to Christ and sit still, refusing to move away from hope in Him alone. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

*Faith listens for Christ's voice.* When sitting down, you can still listen.



Ruth must have been eagerly waiting for the knock on the door which would announce the news that Boaz had arranged the marriage and all was well. Sit still and listen for Christ! Read His Word, meditate on it, hear sermons. When Mary sat weeping in the house because of the death of her brother Lazarus, it must have been wonderful for her to hear the words: “The Master is come, and calleth for thee” (John 11:28). Is that what you long to hear? Then sit down under His Word, saying, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people” (Psalm 85:8). One day you will say, “It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh” (Song of Solomon 5:2).

*Faith waits for Christ’s time.* Sitting still showed Ruth’s willingness to wait patiently for Boaz. This is also part of faith. David could testify: “I waited patiently for the Lord” (Psalm 40:1). He advised others: “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (Psalm 37:7). The Lord has His own time for revealing Himself to His people. Do not despair! If you have put your trust in Him, He has already set the time for you to have the sense of His favour and grace. Sit still and wait in faith for His time. “Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Habakkuk 2:3).

*Faith draws on Christ’s strength.* By sitting still, Ruth acknowledged that there was nothing that she herself could do. Her own efforts and resources were spent. She had placed everything in the hands of Boaz, the “mighty man” (2:1) whose name means “in him is strength”. Believers are the same with Christ. Of themselves they can do nothing more. They have to leave it in the hands of Another, even the Mighty Saviour. Their strength is not in themselves but in Christ. *He* will bring it to pass. Do you trust Christ like that? “Their strength is to sit still”.

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## The Stars and the Sand

*Rev Neil M Ross*

Astronomers tell us that under good viewing conditions we can see about 2500 stars with the naked eye from any given spot. You may remember that God said to Abraham, “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Genesis 22:16,17). One may wonder why God first mentioned the stars, rather than the innumerable grains of sand on the sea shore, when he gave Abraham this promise that his descendants would be as many as the stars and the sand.

It seems, however, that there are in fact many more stars than there are grains of sand on the sea shore. *The Daily Telegraph* reports that scientists

have now found that “there are 10 times more stars in the night sky than grains of sand in the world’s deserts and beaches. Astronomers have worked out that there are 70 thousand million million million stars visible from the earth through telescopes.”

The report continues: “Dr Simon Driver, who led the study at the Australian National University, said: ‘Even for a professional astronomer used to dealing in monster numbers, this is mind-boggling’. Rather than count the stars one by one, Dr Driver and other participating astronomers from Edinburgh, Baltimore, St Andrews and New South Wales, counted all the galaxies in one small region of the universe close to the Earth. By measuring the brightness of each galaxy, the team were able to estimate how many stars it contained, and then they worked out from that how many stars are in the entire sky.” The researchers admit that, although the new figure is 10 times more accurate than previous estimates, it is still just an estimate, based on surveying only a small patch of sky. Dr Driver added, “The real number could be much, much larger still”.

These findings underline the *greatness* of God. The Bible tells us that “He made the stars” (Genesis 1:16). It follows that every single one of these millions and millions of stars is well-known to Him. Indeed, he knows the exact number of them and has names for them all. Therefore we should praise Him as the Psalmist did in Psalm 147: “He telleth [or counts] the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” The stars also show the *glory* of God. Psalm 19 tells us that the heavens, including the stars, declare the glory of God. “One star differeth from another star in glory”, wrote Paul (1 Corinthians 15:41); so each star has its own glory. Therefore how unspeakably glorious must be the One who brought these countless millions of glorious stars into existence!

As we view the stars, how humble we should be before their high and holy Creator! What insignificant creatures we are in comparison to Him! Let us then take the same low place as David did when he said in Psalm 8,

“When I look up unto the heavens, which Thine own fingers framed,  
Unto the moon, and to the stars, which were by Thee ordained;  
Then say I, What is man, that he remembered is by Thee?  
Or what the son of man, that Thou so kind to him should’st be?”

The greatest kindness which God has shown to mankind is to provide a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who Himself is “the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). The glory of this altogether lovely Star is greater than all the glory of all the numberless stars in the heavens taken together.

Remember too that, just as the morning star in the sky ushers in the dawn,

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so the appearing of Christ in the world has “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). As Matthew Henry says, “He has brought it to light not only to set it before us, but also to offer it to us, by the gospel”.

The only way in which we can receive this life and immortality is by receiving Christ Himself – that is, by believing in Him. The Bible tells us plainly in John 3:16 that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. If you do not yet believe in Christ, pray earnestly to God. Ask Him to be merciful to you and make you willing and able to believe.

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## The Apostle of the North

### 3. His Early Life

*Rev D W B Somerset*

The previous part of this paper – given at the 2003 Youth Conference – told us about John Macdonald’s parents, especially about his father, who was highly regarded as a godly man in Caithness. This article covers the period 1779-1816.

John Macdonald was born on 12 November 1779. Sometime in the next month his parents set out to find the minister to have their baby baptised. In those days baptisms were very often performed privately although this was quite contrary to Church law. Since the Reformation, the Church of Scotland has required both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper to be administered publicly and to be accompanied by preaching. It turned out that the minister was out shooting that day and, when the Macdonalds eventually found him, he did not want to lose time by going back to the church or the manse. His solution was to break the ice on a nearby frozen pool with the butt of his gun and, muttering some words of prayer, to scoop up some water for the baptism. The whole episode illustrates the worldliness and irreverence of a Moderate minister.

John Macdonald was a clever child at school, and in 1797 he was sent off to university, to Kings College, Aberdeen. At that time many, if not most, of the Highland students went to Aberdeen. One of the students in the same year as John Macdonald was John Munro, later the famous minister of Halkirk in Caithness. It was during this period of his life that John Macdonald was converted. The writings of Jonathan Edwards, the famous American minister, seem to have played some part in this, as did the preaching of John Robertson, later minister of Kingussie, but at that time missionary at Achreny, also in Caithness.

One of the practical consequences of his conversion was that he gave up playing the bagpipes. He was very musical and, the first time he went to

Aberdeen, he took his pipes with him. The next year he meant to take them, but forgot until he reached Thurso, and had to go back for them. By the next session, his interest was in spiritual things and he deliberately left the pipes at home. His father, who detested the pipes, sent a message pointing out that he had left them behind and asking what was to be done with them. "Just what you think right", was the reply. He knew very well what this would lead to, and sure enough his father had no sooner received this permission than he took an axe and smashed the pipes to pieces.

John Macdonald finished his degree in 1801, and then studied divinity at Aberdeen. He was licensed as a probationer in 1805 and then worked as a missionary at Achreny, near his birthplace, for about six months. At this stage there was nothing remarkable about his preaching. He was rather dry and academic. It was while he was at Achreny that he married for the first time. From Achreny he went to Berriedale, also in Caithness, for a short while and then in 1807 he became minister of the Gaelic chapel in Edinburgh. He had not been there two years when there was a split in the congregation. What happened was that most of the young people growing up in the congregation could not speak Gaelic and they wanted English services. This was always a problem in Gaelic chapels. The result was that in 1809 a considerable number of people left the Gaelic chapel to form the Gaelic and English chapel. In 1815 the dispute was settled, and the two chapels were united under the ministry of John Munro, whom we mentioned above. While he was minister of the Gaelic chapel, John Macdonald's preaching was transformed. He had some experience – nothing is known about it – and thereafter he became intensely earnest in his preaching.

In 1813 he returned to the Highlands, to the parish of Ferintosh, sometimes called Urquhart. The previous minister was the famous Charles Calder, who had been there for 38 years. Charles Calder was an eminently godly man and it was no easy thing to be his successor. As John Kennedy remarks, however, John Macdonald was of a quite different character to Charles Calder, so that the people did not feel inclined to draw comparisons between them. Those who had loved Charles Calder also loved the Apostle of the North.

At that time, communion was held just once a year in Ferintosh, as was the case in most Highland parishes. John Macdonald went to Ferintosh in September 1813 and it was August 1814 before the first communion came round. Just before then, however, his first wife died, and there was a question about whether they should go ahead with the communion. He resolutely decided that they should, and in the event it was one of the most famous communion seasons in Scottish Church history. It was reckoned that 10 000 people attended. John Macdonald himself preached the Gaelic sermon on

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Sabbath morning at the Burn of Ferintosh on Hosea 2:19: "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever". It was the beginning of a work of revival. Multitudes were deeply moved by the sermon, and some were converted. The steady, though not spectacular, work of revival continued for the next few years. Every year many people came forward to make a profession of faith and others became concerned about their souls.

John Macdonald remained minister of Ferintosh for the rest of his life. Soon after his first communion there, he started to make preaching tours in different parts of the Highlands. These tours are what made him most famous, and it is because of them that he is called the Apostle of the North. It was the foundation Charles Calder had laid in the parish that made it possible for him to go away on these preaching tours, sometimes lasting for months. There were many godly elders and catechists who could be depended upon to continue the work in Ferintosh while he was away.

Charles Calder's widow, a godly woman, continued to live there, and she was pleased to see that there were so many conversions under the new minister. She had to admit, however, that it was a trial to her that her husband had laboured all those years with comparatively little fruit and that now, after his death, another man was reaping the harvest. John Macdonald, however, told her, "The farmer sends his best man to sow the seed", but "any boy that happens to be at hand" is fit to harrow it. The sowing is the more difficult work. God has His times of sowing, when the labourers are likely to be weary and discouraged and need to persevere, but it is promised in Psalm 126 that the season of sowing will be followed by a season of reaping.

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*For Younger Readers*

## **The King's Daughter**

She was a godly woman, but she was very poor. She loved God; she believed on Jesus; and she did what was right.

One day this godly woman went to visit two rich ladies. They were wearing lovely clothes, but the poor woman wasn't. She did not have the money to buy nice clothes.

But the rich ladies did not care. They knew that something else is far more important. They too were godly. So they loved God and believed on Jesus.

They spent their time talking about good things. What do I mean? What good things do you think they would have talked about?

The really good things to talk about are in the Bible. The women

would have spoken about Jesus, and what He did for sinners. They would have spoken about God's care for those who trust Him. And they might have spoken about heaven, where all God's children go at last.

As they talked, the rich ladies' brother came in. He was surprised to see his sisters speaking to a woman who was so poorly dressed.

But one of them told him, "Brother, don't be surprised. This is a King's daughter, though she has not got on her fine clothes."

What did he mean? Who was the King she was speaking about?

Of course, the King was Jesus. And the lady was thinking of the fine clothes which all the children of God will wear in heaven.

Ask God to make you one of the King's daughters.

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## Study the Bible

*J B Waterbury*

This is chapter 25 from the book, *Advice to a Young Christian*; it has been edited. The previous chapter, in the August issue, had the title: "Read the Whole Bible".

**Y**ou remember that, when I was speaking about prayer, I warned you against being hurried and superficial. I would repeat the same warning about reading the Word of God. There is a careless, superficial way of reading the Bible which is not acceptable to God, nor is it profitable to your soul.

We should always approach that sacred Book with reverence. Though it was written by men, remember that those men "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost". The way the truth was brought to us does not take away from its divinity. When we open the Bible, we listen to the voice of God. It is the same voice, though without those terrifying circumstances, that came from the cloud which covered Mount Sinai. It is the same voice that was heard in the lamentations from Calvary, when our Immanuel trod for us the wine-press of the wrath of God. Should we not then pay reverent attention when Jehovah speaks? Should we not listen with the deepest humility and awe?

When you take the Scriptures in your hand, it is profitable to pause for a moment and say to yourself, What a privilege I enjoy in reading this holy page! Millions of others do not have it. They have only the dim light of nature. They live in ignorance and sin. But I am favoured with the clear light of revelation. I hold in my hand the mind and will of God concerning me. Are my obligations then not equally great? What account can I give at the judgement day if I neglect this precious volume or undervalue it? "O, Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

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Open my ear, so that I may listen and be willing to receive and obey. Spirit of light, Inspirer of this heavenly book, be present to put away my darkness, and shine into my soul the beams of heavenly glory. Let me not fall under the condemnation of that wicked servant who knew his master's will but refused to perform it. Rather, give me light so that I may have a perfect understanding of the Word. And, through Thy sanctifying grace, may I be moulded by it into the likeness of God.

I take it for granted that you will study the Bible every day. It is on that assumption I make these remarks. Beware of the habit of glancing over different parts of the Bible, instead of reading it in course and with close attention. This second way, if it is accompanied with the blessing of God, will form a high Christian character. The other way is characteristic of the worldly-minded and superficial professor. Depend on it, the closer attention you give to the Word, the more precious and interesting you will find it, and the more rapidly you will grow in knowledge and holiness. David declared that his love for the Word of God was so great that he meditated on it day and night: "I meditate on all Thy works. I muse on the work of Thy hands." It is this spirit of meditation which I would recommend when you are reading the Scriptures.

Thomas Scott, who wrote what was once a well-known commentary on the Scriptures, was in the habit of reading the Bible on his knees. Whenever he was considering a difficult part of the truth, he would pray for the light of the Spirit. It was by praying over the Word of God that there was formed in him a character that will stand as a bright example to all Christians who come after him. It was in this way also that he arrived at such a knowledge of the Scriptures that made it possible for him to write his commentary.

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*For Junior Readers*

## Whales

**H**ave you ever read about killer whales? Although smaller than some other whales, they are the largest creatures which prey on mammals. Even the dorsal fin, on their backs, stands up to two metres high – taller than most grown men. These whales prey on fish, squid, seals and penguins and will even eat smaller whales. They hunt in groups, then share out the prey when they catch it.

They have a standard method for catching their prey. They will chase, for example, a baby blue whale, which has to stay close to its mother. They may swim after it for hours, and gradually the young whale begins to tire. It slows down, and so does its mother, which still stays as close to it as possible. The

next move the killers make is to try to come between the baby whale and the protective mother. They jostle the baby, which by that time is too tired to struggle any more. Then they separate it from its mother and surround it.

When they have caught their prey, what happens? They eat the parts of the baby whale that they want and then leave it for dead. They have no more interest in it. They swim on and leave it to sink to the ocean floor.

Is that not how the world treats you who have been brought up in the church? In your daily life you will have contact with worldly young people. They expect you to be like them. They want you to dress like them. They want you to meet up with them, to do the things that they do out of school.

But your parents and your Christian relatives and friends will try to protect you. They want to keep you close to themselves and close to the standards of the Bible – for your own safety.

However, as time goes on, you may find it harder to be different. You get tired of saying, No. But if you give in to the world, what will happen? They may accept you for the moment, but are they interested in your long-term good? No. They will draw you away from those who love your soul and care about your eternal welfare. But in the end they must leave you, like the baby whale, to sink down to the bottomless pit.

Will you not pray for strength to stand up to the world, for courage to be different from worldly people around you? The Bible clearly tells us, “Be not conformed to this world”. It also asks, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Would you not rather be an enemy of this sinful world and a friend of God?

This life is very short; it will be over so quickly. Then we will all have to stand before the great white throne. What will the opinion of worldly friends matter then? What did the Saviour say? “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

A godly man, J G Pike, once wrote to young people, “If you remember your Creator in these your young days, He will remember you through all the scenes of your following life.

And when the closing scenes prevail,  
When wealth, state, pleasure, all shall fail –  
All that a foolish world admires,  
Or passion craves, or pride inspires –  
At that important hour of need,  
Jesus shall prove a friend indeed.”

*J van Kralingen*



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## Looking Around Us

### A Good Case?

An Egyptian lawyer thinks he has found a good case to pursue in court. One difficulty he will have is that he must go back well over 3000 years for the evidence he needs.

He has focussed on what happened when the Children of Israel left Egypt. They took with them large amounts of the Egyptians' property. Should that not have been returned? Or do the people of Egypt even now have a claim on it? That is what the lawyer has set himself to investigate.

But what really happened? To find out we must go back to the Bible, to the account in Exodus of what took place when the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt. Because this account is part of the Bible, which is God's Word, we can be sure that it is perfectly accurate.

When Moses and Aaron first went to Pharaoh, it was to ask permission to go a few days' journey from their homes so that they could worship God in the way He had appointed. That permission was repeatedly refused. This was why the plagues were sent on Egypt. Every time God sent a plague, Pharaoh made promises. And every time God took a plague away, Pharaoh went back on his promises.

Just before the last plague was sent, when the firstborn in Egypt died, God told Moses: "Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold". And, we are told, "the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required". No doubt it was all meant to be given back when the Israelites returned from worshipping God.

But, even after the death of all the firstborn, Pharaoh went back on his word and pursued the Israelites with his army. It was then that the Lord opened up the Red Sea for Israel to escape from the danger they were in. There was now no possibility of going back to Egypt, and no possibility of returning what they had borrowed.

What is more, Israel had for many long years been slaves in Egypt; they were not paid for their hard labour. But God was not going to leave them without wages. And no doubt much of what they were given was used to make a beautiful tabernacle, where God was worshipped for hundreds of years.

Slavery is clearly wrong. Not to pay proper wages to people is wrong. And in this case God ordered events so that the Israelites were paid what was justly due to them. Accordingly the Egyptian lawyer has no case against Israel, and very likely nothing more will be heard about the matter.

## **“Thy Will Be Done”**

Where'er I am, where'er I roam,  
In pleasure or in pain;  
Should burning desert be my home  
Or distant scorching plain;  
Should it be mine to dwell alone  
In solitude afar,  
Where howling winds together moan,  
And wage eternal war;  
Yet teach me, Lord, with steadfast eye  
To mark Thy gracious presence nigh  
And say, “Thy will be done”.

Should sickness, with its withering dart  
And pestilential breath,  
Curdle the life blood of my heart  
And herald coming death;  
When friendship fails, and love in vain,  
With eager, anxious care,  
Attempts to smooth my bed of pain,  
And fain my pang would share;  
O teach me still, with steadfast eye,  
To mark Thy gracious presence nigh  
And say, “Thy will be done”.

*W H Madden*

## **The Cry of the Needy**

Hungry and faint and poor,  
Behold us, Lord, again  
Assembled at Thy mercies' door,  
Thy bounty to obtain.

Thy Word invites us nigh,  
Or we must starve indeed;  
For we no money have to buy,  
No righteousness to plead.

The food our spirits want  
Thy hand alone can give.  
O hear the prayer of faith and grant  
That we may eat and live.

*John Newton*