

# The Young People's Magazine

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## Martin Luther and His Conscience

One June day in 1505, Martin Luther was on his way home from Erfurt University, where he was studying law. As he walked on, he was caught in a tremendous thunderstorm. He was terrified. His conscience was awakened; he felt that God was judging him for his sins. And on the spot he vowed to become a monk.

The vow was not forgotten. And in more than one monastery, Luther strove to please God and quiet his conscience by taking all possible care to perform every duty properly. "I tortured myself", he confessed later, "with praying, fasting, keeping vigils, and freezing – the cold alone was enough to kill me – and I inflicted upon myself such pain as I would never inflict again even if I could." No wonder he went on to claim: "If any monk ever got to heaven by monkery, then I should have made it". But none of these duties could silence his conscience. For one thing, Luther knew that his attempts at obedience did not flow from love to God. "I did not love," he confessed, "rather I hated, this just God who punished sinners."

It was God's Word alone that could calm his conscience. Luther had to learn that the righteousness which would satisfy his conscience – and, more importantly, which would satisfy the justice of God – was one which must come from outside himself. And this is what he saw at last in the words of Romans 1:17: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, *The just shall live by faith*". These words were applied to his soul by the Holy Spirit, and he believed in Jesus.

From then on, the idea of justification by faith alone was at the bottom of all Luther's thinking. God worked in a wonderful way to bring that highly important doctrine to the forefront of the whole Reformation movement. After several centuries of near-total darkness in Europe, when Rome's emphasis on salvation by human works reigned almost everywhere, the light of the pure gospel was now beginning to shine.

Yet there was still much darkness. And one indication of it was Tetzl's mission to sell indulgences. It was all a money-raising exercise for young Prince Albert, just 23, who wished to become Archbishop of Mainz and, at

the same time, continue as Bishop of Halberstadt and of Magdeburg. The Pope accepted this, but a large sum of money had to be paid to Rome. Tetzel assured everyone who bought indulgences from him that all their sins would be forgiven. Indeed you could buy indulgences for your dead relatives which would bring them out of purgatory – or so it was claimed, although the Bible does not allow us to believe in purgatory as a place beyond death where people can be purified for heaven by their sufferings.

Crowds of people were flocking to Tetzel to buy his indulgences. Among them were people from Wittenberg, where Luther was now teaching. He was disturbed, for he knew that Tetzel's deceit was silencing their consciences while they were still guilty before God. Luther's conscience would not allow him to be quiet. He wrote out for discussion a list of 95 statements – known as the Ninety-five Theses – and nailed them to the door of the Wittenberg church. He insisted, for example, that “any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters”. On the other hand, Tetzel was teaching merely “human doctrines”.

Luther assumed that, if the Pope knew what Tetzel was doing, he would put a stop to the whole indulgence business at once. But in this, of course, Luther was wrong. When the Pope heard about the theses, he described them as the ramblings of a drunken man who would think differently when he sobered up. But the Pope was to discover that Luther's thinking was a far more serious matter than he thought – it was the beginning of the Reformation. Its effects were to leave the Pope's throne looking distinctly shaky.

Soon Luther was summoned to Rome to account for his activities. But through the influence of Frederick the Wise, the ruler of the German state in which he lived, Luther was able to avoid a trip from which he might never have returned. Over the next few years, Luther was involved in debates with a number of Roman clerics and in the end he was summoned to the town of Worms to a Diet, or congress, under Emperor Charles V, the head of the Holy Roman Empire. Luther set out in a covered cart, something of a luxury, to begin the long journey to Worms, with a herald of the Empire riding on in front. Everywhere he went, crowds of people came to see him. In various places Luther was asked to preach, and in Erfurt so many people crowded into the church porch that it collapsed in the middle of his sermon.

On his journey, Luther received a very discouraging letter from Frederick, but he showed real determination to go on. “Even if there were as many devils in Worms,” he told himself, “as there are tiles on the roofs, I would enter anyway.” And on 16 April 1521 Luther did enter Worms, with the large number of nobles who had come out to meet him, and 100 horsemen. There were 2000 people waiting for him and, as he came down from the

cart, he was heard to say to himself, “God will be with me”. He was right.

On the afternoon of the next day, Luther was brought into the packed hall where the Diet was meeting. On the table was a great pile of books. He was first asked: Was that pile of books his? Yes, he acknowledged that he had written them. The second question was: Would he renounce them? This was not what Luther had expected; he had understood that he would be able to argue for the truth. He was most surprised to be asked at once to turn his back on what was now so precious to him. He asked for time to prepare his reply and was given 24 hours, but it was made clear that he must be brief.

The next afternoon came and Luther began his reply. He carefully distinguished between his books. First, there were some which no one would want him to renounce; no one would think of saying there was anything wrong in them. Then there were books attacking the papacy, which he refused to renounce. And finally there were books arguing against individuals in which he may have spoken too strongly, but these too he refused to give up. But, he told the Diet, if anyone could convince him from the Bible that he was wrong, he would be the first to throw his books into the fire. And he went on: “I am bound to the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not take anything back, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise; here I stand. May God help me! Amen.”

What an example! Luther did not know what might happen to him. He could have been killed for holding to the truth. In fact he was allowed to walk away because, before he came to the Diet, he had been promised he would be kept safe. But he was now placed under the ban of the Empire. This meant that anyone could hunt him down and kill him. But Frederick sent men to “kidnap” Luther and bring him to a castle, where he lived in safety until he saw it was impossible to stay away from Wittenberg any longer.

Whatever might happen to him, Luther knew that he must keep to the teachings of the Word of God. His conscience told him so and he was willing to be captive to his conscience. Conscience should act for God, warning us against what is wrong, reflecting the claims of God’s law. But we are fallen sinners and, because of sin, our consciences do not work as effectively as they should. They are only a safe guide when, like Luther’s, they are captive to the Word of God.

What we need is that God would give us new hearts, and mould our consciences by His Word – making them His captives. And we should ask Him to write His Word in our hearts. Then our consciences will act for God. This was how God had moulded Luther’s conscience, which was why he remained faithful to God under pressure. That is what we should want too.

## Ambition

### 2. Danger for the Soul

*W G T Shedd*

This is the second section of a sermon by a well-known American preacher; it has been edited. His text is: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:6). In the first part, last month, he gave the first reason for not seeking the great things of this world: because you cannot reach them.

A second reason for not seeking great things is that, if we could attain them, *they would ruin the soul*. It is fearful how quickly a man's character deteriorates as he gains what he desires, when that is something purely selfish. Take, as an illustration, the career of that military genius to whom we have already referred.

Napoleon Bonaparte, the Emperor of France, sought "great things". He aimed at a universal empire in Europe. And, just as he came near to what he hoped to achieve, he departed from that state of mind which a creature of God ought to have. We do not refer so much to outward sins – though the life of the great soldier will not bear inspection in this. We refer to that gradual deadening of the feelings and that Satan-like self-importance which changed him into the most grasping and dictatorial soul that ever lived on earth. Every creature is dependent on God and so should be meek and humble, and He who came upon earth to demonstrate the perfection of human nature said to all the world: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart". But who can think of meekness and humble dependence on God in connection with the character of Napoleon? On the contrary, we always associate him with pride and ambition. And such a spirit as this is the worst kind of human character. It is the most intense form of idolatry – that of self-worship. It is the most arrogant and defiant form of pride. It would climb to the heavens. It would pull God from His throne.

The same effect of mere worldly success is seen also in everyday life. Cast your eye over the people you meet, and select those who are greediest of earthly good and are most successful in obtaining it. Are they not the most selfish people you know? Does not their character get steadily worse as the years roll by? They do not become less greedy because of their success; on the contrary, their appetite grows by what it feeds on. When the "great thing" which they have been seeking actually becomes theirs, it seems small. They are not satisfied with it and they enlarge their limits. This makes their cravings even more intense; it spurs them to yet greater efforts. They jump over everything that stands in their way and opposes them in reaching what they want. They thus become arrogant, which makes them hateful and hated.

It is here that we see the benefit of failures and disappointments. If people were always successful in their search after “great things” – if everyone who sought wealth obtained wealth, and everyone who grasped after power obtained power, and everyone who lusted after fame succeeded – the world would be a place of chaos. And human character and happiness would be ruined. Swollen by constant victory and a sense of superiority, successful people would turn against one another. There would be no self-restraint, no regard for the welfare of others, no right estimate of this world, and no attention to the future life.

The world would be filled with quarrelling parties that would at last destroy each other, apart from the failures and disappointments that so crowd the career of man on earth. One man is reduced from riches to poverty and becomes submissive and moderate and reasonable. Another man fails to reach the summit of his ambition and quietly settles down into a useful and happy sphere of labour. Thus the providence of “God only wise” educates ambitious and grasping man into restraint and a proper estimate of both the great things and the small things of our short existence in this world.

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## “I Am no Preacher”

John was a converted young man working in a factory. His foreman took every opportunity to hold him up to ridicule in front of his workmates because John would not go along to their drinking parties and would not break the Sabbath with them. So it must have been very difficult for him to have to live in the same house as the foreman.

One day the foreman heard John praying and he stopped to listen. He was most surprised to hear John pouring out his heart to God for him, although he was treating John so badly. John was referring to the foreman’s unbelief and hardness of heart and was pleading earnestly that God would give him repentance unto salvation, that He would create in him a clean heart and put a right spirit in him.

The foreman was amazed. As yet he knew nothing about the power of true prayer. He wondered at John’s earnestness and his ability to speak. He had never, the foreman reflected, prayed like this for himself, and he began to think seriously about it.

The next day the foreman took John aside and asked him to preach to him. John assumed that the serious expression on the foreman’s face would soon turn into a mocking laugh. John just told him, “I am no preacher”. And then he probably braced himself for some nasty comment from the

foreman, even although there was no audience of workmen to respond to it.

But the foreman genuinely wanted John's help. "I don't know how you can preach today," he told John, "but I heard you yesterday make such a description of my state as convinces me you can do it very well; and I shall be much obliged to you to repeat it."

"O, it is true I was at prayer," John replied, "and I did indeed pray heartily for you."

"Very well," the foreman told him, "do it again, for I never heard anything in my life which affected me so deeply."

Prayer was, of course, very different from preaching, and John did not need to be asked a second time to pray. They knelt down together and John once more poured out his heart to God for the foreman. And he was heard; the foreman obtained mercy. From that day the two men were great friends. They went together to the same church and they often prayed together, as the foreman now walked in the ways of godliness, which he used to mock.

Someone has pointed out that the persecution he suffered drove John to pray more than he would probably otherwise have done. As he did so, God heard him and blessed him. And the words of Christ were fulfilled: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you".

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## Aim High

*J B Waterbury*

This is chapter 28 from the book, *Advice to a Young Christian*; it has been edited. The previous chapter, in the January issue, was on submitting to the Bible.

**B**y this time you will see that religion should be the main business of life, a work of great significance, which will stretch all your powers to the utmost. To make a profession of faith in your church is one thing; but it is another thing to prove, by growing in knowledge and holiness, that you are a true believer.

When I look around and see so many young people gathered into the churches, through the many powerful revivals of religion, I rejoice in the prospect of the future glories of our church. But I am anxious that this next generation of Christians should have a higher standard of holiness of life than the previous one. I am anxious too that holiness, generosity and self-denial should once more appear as they were in the time of the Apostles, so that holiness would be written even on people's hearts. Yet I confess that I have my doubts. I have seen some who, not long ago, seemed likely to

develop this high and noble character. But they sank down to the dead level of ordinary church members, taking on the character of those around them. They appeared content with just as much religion as will make them agreeable to all, without bringing on themselves any reproach. How unworthy of a great and noble character!

The gospel of Christ will not allow any compromise. It demands all. If it required less, it would be unworthy of Jesus, who is its great author and finisher. I rejoice that it requires all. This is its glory. When we are brought to yield to its claims and give up all, then – and not till then – will the gospel throw around us its arms of mercy. And what is our all? What do we give when we give our all? A polluted soul, that might justly be cast into hell; a body, the miserable companion of that soul, groaning under the dire effects of disobedience and guilt. Our all consists, at last, in nothing more than a polluted and guilty nature. What a wonder it is that God will accept such an offering! What a miracle of mercy that raises us up from our pollution, bathes us in the washing of regeneration and clothes us in the white linen of the saints!

Do we talk about self-denial? Do we say, How hard to give up all? I am ashamed to use such language, ashamed to hear it used. What did Christ do for us? Let that question blot out *self-denial* from the Christian's vocabulary. When you think the gospel makes severe demands, by requiring all, go up to Mount Calvary and weep over such suggestions. See the blood of your Immanuel so freely gushing from a heart that never exercised towards you any emotion but love – love unspeakable, love unsought, love for the guilty. At such a thought, go and hide your head in shame and sorrow for sin. It is a glorious privilege to give up all to Christ. The soul that feels the constraining influence of His love does not ask how little may be given, consistently with obtaining the heavenly reward. It does not ask for the lowest standard of discipleship; it burns with a strong desire to devote all to Christ, and to aim at perfect conformity to His death.

It is sad to see so many satisfied with a name in the church, and a seat at the Lord's table. This appears to be the sum of their religion. Others go one step farther, as they make an experiment in religion. Their object is to see if religion suits them, but they do not aim at that high standard which it would be their privilege to attain. They live in doubt, and they often die in darkness. They neither enjoy the comforts of religion, nor the peace which the world can give. All this is because of the miserable, halfway, compromising spirit, which seeks to serve two masters and to enjoy their approval.

Let me plead with you to make a noble surrender in this cause. The world has been your master, and you must acknowledge that you have given it faith-

ful service. But shall you yield less faithful devotion to Christ? Which is more worthy of your regard? Which has greater claims on you? Which offers the fullest reward? Resolve, by the grace of God, that you will forsake all and follow Christ. Do not, like Peter, follow Him afar off. But, like Mary, sit at His feet. Like the beloved disciple, rest upon His bosom.

You will see from my letters that there is work enough to do in the Christian life and that you must struggle for the prize. You are not to sit down and idly imagine there is no more for you to do, now that you have joined the church. You are not to think that you are to be carried along to heaven by, as it were, a sort of invisible influence, without any great efforts of your own. Even if others are going to be spiritually lazy, you must resolve to leave them and seek to grow in grace. The Bible plainly marks this out as your duty and your privilege. *Onward* is the daily watchword of the faithful soldier of the cross. He does not sleep at his post. He hears the first note of alarm and prepares for the conflict. He loves his King; so obedience is a pleasure rather than a duty.

May you aim high in seeking the prize of your high calling! May you go from strength to strength, from victory to victory, until you inherit the highest rewards of the blessed ones in heaven!

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## Bianchi

### 1. Beginning to Follow Jesus

A group of German soldiers were drinking in an inn when an Italian peddler walked in. He let his pack slide down onto an empty table. Then he sat down and ordered a glass of the local spirits. He was feeling rather dull; so when the soldiers invited him over to sit with them, he poured out his woes to them. "What comfort is there to be got at all in these miserable days of war and slaughter?" he asked. "Every channel of business is blocked up." He had sold very little that day and had made very little money – "less than ten kreutzers", he told the soldiers. They suggested that he should join the army. Then he would have plenty money, they assured him, and he would have no worries. They plied him with glass after glass of drink and, before the evening was out, he had enlisted.

When he wakened up the next morning, Bianchi was sober. He knew that he did not need to worry about earning a living, but he was no longer free. He tore his hair in despair, but there was nothing he could do about it now. Although he had been drunk when he signed up, it was too late to change his mind.



In due course Bianchi marched off to battle with the rest of the army. One evening he said to a soldier who was billeted with him: "It will be a hot day tomorrow. The Austrians will be hard on us. Perhaps we shall lie together in the same churchyard tomorrow night."

"Very well," his comrade answered, quite undisturbed, "as the Lord pleases. Whether living or dying, I am His."

Bianchi was surprised. "Aren't you then afraid of dying?" he asked.

"No, I am not. Death is gain to me."

"How is that?"

"Because I know in whom I believe. My Saviour is my God."

"How do you know that?"

"From His Word. It is written: 'He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.'" The soldier was quoting the words of Jesus to Martha in Bethany. But they are also for everyone who believes in Him, and Bianchi's comrade clearly valued this promise.

"Written! Where is it written?" Bianchi asked. Roman Catholics like him were forbidden to read the Bible; so he knew very little of what it teaches.

The other soldier pulled out a New Testament from under his pillow and read the passage, in John 11, to Bianchi.

"Lend me that book, will you?" asked Bianchi.

"Yes, with all my heart. And if I die tomorrow, you may keep it."

The next day the soldier was killed in battle, and Bianchi was able to keep his Testament. He read it and reread it, and we are told that "he found Him of whom the prophets and apostles did write". It was the end of his life of sin and carelessness. It was the beginning of a life of following Jesus. But it was also the beginning of many new difficulties.

His Roman Catholic comrades noticed that he no longer attended mass and that he no longer crossed himself when he prayed. They called him a child of the devil and various other names. At first his Protestant comrades protected him; they said he had joined what they called "the worthy company of sensible people". But that did not last; they did not believe it was sensible to live a godly life. They realised that Bianchi was different and they did not like it; for one thing, he did not use bad language. And he told them to their face that they were wrong: "The Roman Catholics worship a creature [the Virgin Mary], and that is very bad; but you curse the Creator, which is worse. And the Roman Catholics pray that a powerless woman may save them, which is vanity; but you every moment pray that the Almighty Creator may damn you, which is reckless and foolish and blasphemous." Everyone mocked him and tried to irritate him as much as they could. They put mud and salt in his coffee; they put pins and needles in his bed; they filled his

shoes with water. But Bianchi put up with it patiently, committing everything to God, and at last the other soldiers stopped annoying him and left him to his loneliness.

Just occasionally he could join a few of the other soldiers to pray and read the Bible. But they were scattered through various battalions of the regiment and it was not possible for them to meet often. There were also a few believing soldiers in another regiment which was stationed in a village three miles away. One day they sent Bianchi an invitation to come to a prayer meeting a few evenings later. He hesitated to go to ask his captain for permission, but he looked to the Lord to help him and at last he went.

"What do you want, Bianchi?" the Captain asked.

"Leave for tomorrow evening, Captain."

"What is it for?"

"I want to see some friends at the Brandenburg regiment who have sent me an invitation."

"O, I know," replied the captain, and he went on to suggest that it was to sing and pray and "all that sort of nonsense". He added: "I must put a stop to that playing at being church and chaplain. I will speak about it to the officers of the Brandenburg regiment".

"I don't suppose you would rather have me go to the public house and go about with immoral women", replied Bianchi – and perhaps not very wisely, for he was speaking to his Captain.

Whether he knew it or not, Bianchi had put his finger on the Captain's sins. The officer stood up and shouted at Bianchi: "You scoundrel, come here to give me a lecture! Turn round and be gone as quickly as you can."

"So you give me leave?" Bianchi asked.

"I give you leave to go to the devil" the Captain replied flippantly.

"I beg your pardon, Captain. I cannot obey you there."

"Perhaps because you don't know his address", the Captain answered with a mocking laugh.

"I do not want it, but . . ." Bianchi hesitated; he knew that what he was going to say would only irritate the Captain further.

"What were you going to say?" He asked. But Bianchi refused to tell him.

The Captain called for a corporal and four men and ordered them to put Bianchi in prison. That evening Major von Benedeck was examining the weekly report. As he read the last page, he frowned. "What!" he exclaimed in surprise, "Bianchi serving three days' imprisonment because of insubordination! Has he turned to the wrong way again? That would indeed be a pity. I cannot believe it." He called for a sergeant and ordered him to bring Bianchi in.

*For Junior Readers*

## “His Early, Only Choice”

Are you now almost a teenager? Or perhaps you are newly a teenager. This seems an exciting stage in growing up. Life seems to lie before you like an open book. What an important time it is! A time when choices have to be made about your future. How important to make the right decisions, which will be for your spiritual good above everything else.

“O happy is the man who hears instruction’s warning voice,  
And who celestial Wisdom makes his early, only choice.”

I am sure you know that you are old enough to be praying seriously for your soul. You need to be converted now, when you are young. Do not listen to Satan when he tempts you to think that you have plenty of time, that you can leave thinking about your soul till later. And do not listen to him when he tells you that religion is for later on – when you are older. You may not believe now how quickly the years pass, how busy your life can become with studies, work and relationships, if God spares you. But the years pass very quickly indeed. So there is no time like the present to get your priorities right, to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”.

Many of the Lord’s people were converted when they were young, some even in their teenage years. Perhaps you have read the lives of ministers or missionaries who came to know the Lord savingly in their youth.

One such minister was Thomas Boston, who was born in 1676 in Duns in the south of Scotland. He writes about his first spiritual impressions, when he was about 11. He tells us that he was “living without God in the world, unconcerned about the state of my soul, till the year 1687. Toward the end of the summer that year . . . my father took me with him to a Presbyterian meeting where I heard the worthy Mr Henry Erskine . . . by whose means it pleased the Lord to awaken me and bring me under exercise about my soul’s state.”

Erskine’s texts were: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!” and, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Boston said he “was going on his way to hell as blind as a mole till Christ opened his eyes and let him see his danger” under these sermons. God is still the same God, and He can bless your soul also under the preaching of His Word.

Will you not make celestial (that is, heavenly) wisdom your “early, only choice”? You will never ever regret such a choice. Robert Murray M’Cheyne wrote some very solemn lines about a young friend of his family who chose the world when she was faced with the decisions of life:

“She has chosen the world and its paltry crowd;  
She has chosen the world, and an endless shroud!  
She has chosen the world, with its misnamed pleasures;  
She has chosen the world before heaven's own treasure.”

With M'Cheyne we would plead with you:

“Away then, O fly from the joys of earth!  
Her smile is a lie; there's a sting in her mirth.  
Come, leave the dreams of this transient night,  
And bask in the beams of an endless light.”

*J van Kralingen*

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*For Younger Readers*

## **A Wife for Isaac**

**A**braham wanted a wife for his son Isaac. Where they lived, none of the women believed in God. No woman would be a suitable wife for Isaac, unless she believed in God.

So Abraham called his chief servant. He was going to send this servant to where his relations lived, far away. Perhaps one of them would be willing to come to be Isaac's wife.

Abraham made his servant promise something. He was not to take as a wife for Isaac any of the women who lived near them. This was a special promise before God. God sees all our promises. He knows if we break them, and He is angry when we do so. But it would be even more wrong if Abraham's servant broke this promise.

One day the servant took ten of Abraham's camels and set off on his journey with his men. At last they reached the place where Abraham's relations lived. They stopped near a well. It was evening, the time of day when the women came to draw water from the well. But which of all the women was the right one? Which woman would become Isaac's wife?

How could he know? He did the best thing possible. He prayed. And he decided to ask one of the women to give him a drink from the well. He asked God that she would tell him that she would also give water to his camels. Then he asked God that this would be the woman who would become Isaac's wife.

Before he finished praying, a woman came to the well. She was

called Rebekah. He asked Rebekah for a little water to drink. She quickly drew some water for him from the well. Then she said that she would draw enough water for all the camels to drink.

This was wonderful. The servant could see that it was God who made Rebekah do this. But the servant did not say anything to her yet about why he came. He just gave her the presents he brought for her.

He asked her who she was. And yes, she was one of Abraham's relations. Then he asked her if there was enough room in her father's house for him to spend the night there. Yes, there was, and she invited him to come.

What did Abraham's servant do now? He worshipped God. He was so very thankful to God for leading him to someone from the right family.

Rebekah had a brother called Laban. He called Abraham's servant into their home. He gave the camels straw to lie down on and food to eat. And of course he gave the men food too.

But before Abraham's servant would eat, he wanted to tell why he came. So he told Laban about Abraham and Isaac. He told him about everything that happened and how God answered his prayer.

Laban too could see that it was God who brought Abraham's servant to Rebekah. He was willing that she would go away to be Isaac's wife. Abraham's servant was very happy, and again he worshipped God.

So they called Rebekah and asked her if she would go with the man. She said, "I will go".

They all travelled back together on the camels. When they reached home, they saw Isaac out in a field. He was thinking about God. Very likely he was also praying.

How happy he must have been to see Rebekah! And I am sure he would have prayed again that evening. He would have asked God to take care of himself and Rebekah in their new life together. And he would have thanked God for being so good to him.

We should always ask God to help us in everything we do. And we must remember to thank Him too.

## “In the Beginning”

### 2. More about the Scripture Doctrine of Creation

*Rev David Campbell*

The first part of this Youth Conference paper examined two points: (1) God is the Creator of all things, and (2) He created all things out of nothing by His power. We now go on to the three further points in this section.

**(3) God created all things to display His glory.** The Shorter Catechism teaches us that “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth”. God did not create the world because He needed to add to His glory or happiness; that would mean God was subject to change. God made the world, not because of anything outside Himself, but out of His mere good pleasure. Yet in His works God reveals what is true about Himself and so displays His glory to His creatures. The Bible tells us that “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). Creation manifests the glory of God’s eternal power, wisdom and goodness.

Scripture everywhere speaks of God’s infinite *power* in creation. For instance: “The invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they [the heathen] are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). Only God is able to create out of nothing. “I am the Lord that maketh all things,” He tells us, “that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth forth the earth by Myself” (Isaiah 44:24). God would have man acknowledge Him as the Almighty and to stand in awe at His power. When David looked into the heavens which God had made, he exclaimed, “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” And when God showed Job His power as Creator, Job says, “Behold I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth” (40:4).

The *wisdom* of God is seen in the complexity and variety and beauty of creation. The Bible gives ample testimony to this: “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches” (Psalm 104:24). Again: “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens” (Proverbs 3:19). The earth abounds with evidence of a designing hand. From the vastness of the heavens and the motion of the planets to the complexity of the human body and the structure of the smallest worm, everything speaks loudly of infinite understanding. The glory of this belongs to Him “who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out the heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance” (Isaiah 40:12).

The *goodness* of God is also obvious in creation. Psalm 104 is a very full declaration of God’s goodness as creator: “He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works.”

The Saviour referred His disciples to God’s goodness to the creatures. God clothes the grass of the field, cares for the sparrows and feeds the young ravens. But His goodness to man especially is noticed in the Bible. God kept back no good thing from Adam when He placed him in Eden. The pleasantness of his surroundings were intended to draw praise from his heart.

Psalm 148 is an invitation to us and to all God’s creatures to praise Him as creator: “Praise ye Him, all His angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon: praise Him, all ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for He commanded, and they were created.” Too often we fail to acknowledge our Creator when we see His works. Let us always recognise the evidences of the glory, power, wisdom and goodness of God and let us bring our offerings of praise and thankfulness to Him.

**(4) God made all things in the space of six days.** Genesis 1 tells us that God made the universe and everything in it in six days. It might be useful to remind ourselves of the order in which everything was made.

Day 1 – The unformed world and the light.

Day 2 – The water above the firmament divided.

Day 3 – Dry land, vegetation and the seas.

Day 4 – Sun, moon and stars.

Day 5 – Fish and birds.

Day 6 – All other living creatures on land, and the first man and woman.

Not only does Genesis 1 state plainly, but the Fourth Commandment also, that “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth”. Each day had an evening and a morning and consisted of 24 hours. The weekly order was established at the dawn of history, and that included the seventh day of rest. We can conclude that time had a definite beginning, and so it is possible, in theory at least, to know the age of the world. These things have troubled scientists, but they do not need to.

Some have asked why God made the world in six days and not in a single moment? Although it is not always wise or profitable for us to ask the reasons for what God does, it is obvious that God could have formed all things in a moment of time on the first day. We might conclude that the slower method of creation was intended to display God’s works more clearly, and to

encourage us to think about them carefully in their variety, greatness, harmony and beauty. It also shows that God is a God of order, an order which is commended to us to imitate. James Fisher, a Scottish minister who wrote a book on the Shorter Catechism, asks: Could God not have created all things in a moment of time? The answer he gives is: Yes: but He saw it more for His own glory, and for the good of mankind, to set them an example of working six days and resting on the seventh.

Some people have posed a further question: How could the first three days be of 24 hours when there was no sun or moon? One answer is that there was evening and morning on the first, second and third day in the same way as on the others. No distinction is made between them. So we can be sure that there was light and darkness from the first day. God called them day and night and they were regulated by His power then as they have been ever since.

One other question may be considered here: When were the angels created? Job 38:7 suggests that it was on the first day. We read there that, when God created the earth, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy". Most commentators agree that the angels were created on the first day of Creation.

**(5) Coming from the hand of God, the Creation was very good.** In Genesis 1, after each of God's works, the statement is made: "And God saw that it was good". To suggest that God could make anything imperfect is to deny that He is infinitely perfect. The chapter concludes: "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good". This is specially true of man: "God made man upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Every creature was made perfect according to its nature. God's creation was changeable; only God is unchangeable, for that is a divine perfection. But the creation was in its own way perfect; it was very good. Our first parents were full-grown adults when they were created, and we can safely assume that the animals also were created mature. Plants and trees were placed on the earth fully developed, as when God planted the Garden of Eden. This was all meant to encourage reverent and grateful obedience to the Creator.

Adam and Eve in their innocence would have seen that the creation was very good. How they would have admired the wonderful works of God! When they looked at their own bodies, they could have said, "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). When the animals were brought to Adam, he would admire the work of their Creator. As they kept the garden, Adam and Eve would have been struck by the goodness and wisdom of God in providing for them. And as they lay down to sleep in the evening and looked up at the heavens, they could only have concluded, "How manifold are Thy works: the earth is full of Thy riches"!



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## Looking Around Us

### Modest Clothes

Last year a group of girls from a high school in Tucson, Arizona, signed a petition asking shops to stock more modest clothes; they were asking for a larger selection of clothing that “shows respect for the body”. Their parents signed the petition too.

The Bible tells us that “that women [are to] adorn themselves in modest apparel” (1 Timothy 2:9) – in clothes that are respectable and seemly. Ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin, clothes have been necessary, not only to keep us warm, but to preserve our modesty. It is one way of avoiding tempting others to break the Seventh Commandment, and such temptation is all too widespread today.

The girls showed commendable initiative, and a good example. And they have had some success. A department store has asked some of them to comment on new designs and the manager has promised that more modest styles are on the way.

### The One Effective Remedy

Scotland’s justice minister is concerned about the number of people who go on to commit another offence after spending time in prison. For instance, 60% of the prisoners released in 1999 were convicted of another offence within two years. So she plans to copy a “community justice” system from the United States.

The idea is to send off those who have committed minor offences very quickly, perhaps within 24 hours of being sentenced, to carry out tasks in the community – like cleaning up graffiti on walls. Experience in the USA shows that, when this happens, offenders are much less likely to commit another crime.

One reason for searching around for alternatives to locking people up is the very large number who are already serving time in jail or in young offenders institutions. And anything that will reduce re-offending is obviously very welcome.

But no one seems to realise that the real reason behind crime is a sinful heart. And the one effective remedy for a sinful heart is shown to us in the Bible – the Holy Spirit giving the sinner a new heart. Every government should be doing all within its power to encourage the preaching of the gospel. It is when the Holy Spirit applies the truth of the gospel to a sinner that He gives a new heart – and then the whole lifestyle is changed. If the gospel was preached faithfully everywhere, the rate of crime would fall very quickly.

### **Looking for A Better Life**

One of the big political issues of our time is the number of people who come from other parts of the world looking for a better life in Britain, and similar countries. Some of them are afraid for their lives; others expect to earn far more here than they would at home. Some arrive by normal means of transport; others put themselves to no end of trouble to make the journey in other ways. One reads of people crammed into unsafe old boats to cross the Mediterranean Sea or travelling in the back of container lorries hidden behind fruit or other goods to cross the English Channel. They do so because they believe it will be worth it in the end; they believe that, no matter how difficult the journey may be, their lives afterwards will be much happier.

But how many take that attitude to heaven? In heaven there will be no sin nor any of the effects of sin; there will be no sadness, or worries, or difficulties of any kind. Yet how few think of making any effort to get there! Most people are focused on getting some enjoyment out of this short life and they give no consideration to the fact that there is an eternity beyond. How earnest we should be in seeking the salvation of our souls, by faith in Jesus Christ! That is why He says, "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate".

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### **Wisdom's Treasures**

O happy is the man who hears  
instruction's warning voice  
And who celestial Wisdom makes  
his early, only choice.

For she has treasures greater far  
then east or west unfold;  
And her rewards more precious are  
then all their stores of gold.

In her right hand she holds to view  
a length of happy days;  
Riches, with splendid honours joined  
are what her left displays.

She guides the young with innocence,  
in pleasure's paths to tread,  
A crown of glory she bestows  
upon the hoary head.

*Anon*