

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 69

June 2004

No 6

Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

This was the question splashed some weeks ago over the cover page of the American news magazine *Time*. An important question certainly, a question which we dare not ignore if we have any serious thoughts about life – and especially about eternity.

But why was *Time* asking this question? One answer is that it was Easter time, when many churches commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But why, you may ask, does the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland *not* observe Easter? The simple answer is that the Bible does not tell us to observe it. We should only have in our worship what the Bible commands us to observe. On the other hand, we are all commanded to observe the Sabbath every week in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, and believers are commanded to observe the Lord's Supper in commemoration of Christ's death. This is what God has appointed; but anything, like Easter, that lacks the authority of the Bible is forbidden.

Easter has its roots in a heathen festival; it is named after a heathen goddess whose feast was held at the spring equinox, halfway between midwinter and midsummer, when day and night are equal. We have no authority to Christianise heathen festivals such as Easter and Christmas; to make them the occasion of worshipping God cannot be pleasing to Him.

The other reason for *Time* asking this question is the tremendous interest in the film *The Passion of Christ*. In the April issue of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Rev Hugh Cartwright pointed out, among other objections to the film, the blasphemy of a human actor attempting to play the part of the divine Saviour. But if Christ was faithfully preached everywhere in a truly scriptural way, *The Passion* would be attracting far less interest. People would know who Christ is, why He came into the world, why He suffered and died, and how He is ruling from heaven over everything in this world. They would not then go to view a film for instruction – or for entertainment.

So why did Christ have to die? Remember that He was no ordinary man. You and I must all die because we are sinners; we fell in Adam and have inherited original sin. Not so Christ. He was indeed man; He had a truly

human body and a truly human soul. But He was not only a man; from all eternity He was God – the Son of God. In this world He did many wonderful things; by His own power He performed miracles without number. Among these miracles was His bringing alive those who had already died. There was Jairus' daughter, the widow's son in Nain, and Lazarus; all of them had died and Jesus made them alive again. Death is powerful; it will carry us all away from this world, sooner or later. But Jesus was far more powerful than death. There must clearly have been some very special reason that made it necessary for Him to die.

Before Adam sinned, no one could die. Death followed sin into the world. But how could death reach Jesus, who was formed, by the Holy Ghost, within His mother as "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35)? Brought into the world in a unique way without the least taint of original sin, He was no ordinary man. He had no sin; He was holy in everything He did, in everything He said and even in everything He thought. Yet He died. The reason was, as Paul tells us, "Christ Jesus came into the world *to save sinners*" (1 Timothy 1:15). He came to rescue sinners from the consequences of their sins, so that no one who believes in Him will perish in a lost eternity; instead they will have everlasting life.

That is God's goodness. But God is also just; He cannot pass by sin without the sin being punished. And that is why Christ came – to bear the punishment instead. He came to die for the ungodly. Most certainly, none of them could do anything to save themselves. Try as they might, they could never do what would take away the guilt of even one of their sins. No matter how hard they might try to keep God's law for the future, it could not do anything to put the past right. No matter what they might suffer, it could have no power to please God. If God is to accept us in spite of our sins, we need to come to Him with something better than what we can do ourselves. Which is why Christ came, to suffer, "the just for the unjust" – the perfectly holy One instead of condemned sinners.

That is what was very clearly shown in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. When someone came to the altar to offer a lamb, he was saying something like this: "I am a sinner, and I deserve to die. But I am bringing this lamb as a substitute; the lamb is going to die instead of me." Jesus is *the* Lamb who died instead of sinners. Because He died, everyone who believes on Him will be saved from eternal death. They will escape because Jesus, the Lamb of God, died instead.

Time brought forward several people to give answers to their question, and these answers varied enormously. And when there are so many competing voices, how can we know who is right? We must go to the Bible and listen

to what God tells us there. The Bible is the only safe source of religious knowledge. We cannot go wrong if we keep to its teachings, though we should be careful to ask that the Holy Spirit would direct our thinking as we read it. We should remember the example of the people of Berea, after they first heard Paul preaching to them about Jesus and why He died. They searched the Scriptures to see if what he was saying was right. And they had God's blessing in doing so. We are told that many of them believed. And we are told this about the Bereans to encourage us to act like them. We too might be greatly blessed if we would search the Scriptures rather than just read them superficially.

Many of those whom *Time* spoke to gave their own ideas and they were therefore wrong. Some spoke of Christ as an example and, of course, He was an example. But that does not explain why He died. Peter speaks of Christ as an example, but then he goes on to say this about Him: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:21,24). Peter could say that Jesus, as his substitute, carried away his sins, and so he had been forgiven. Have you any reason to believe that Jesus has done this for you?

It is unspeakably sad that, among those whom *Time* spoke to, there were ministers and university theologians who could not, or would not, give the right answer to the question: Why did Jesus have to die? Clearly they are in positions where they can put others wrong in their thinking about Jesus. Yet, thankfully, there were two men who gave the right answer – and they gave a right answer because what they said was based on Scripture.

Sin is a far more serious matter than most people believe. If our sins are not forgiven, we cannot possibly enter heaven. If we are to enter safely into eternity, we need a sure foundation, a foundation that is guaranteed not to collapse under us at last. A chief on one of the islands in the Pacific Ocean was dying. Did he have a sure foundation? Yes, he had. He told his friends: "The blood of Jesus is my foundation". He had learned why Jesus had to die. What is more, he trusted his soul to Jesus. That is what we must do if we are to be safe at death. We must trust in Jesus as the One who had to die for sinners. There is no other Saviour.

The chief added: "Jesus is the best King. He gives a pillow without thorns." It is those who take Jesus to be their King who can have confidence at death. They will not be disturbed by their sins; their sins will not be like thorns in their pillow at last. The chief had a comfortable pillow because his sins were forgiven and he had learned to follow Christ as his King.

May you have a pillow without thorns when you come to die! But remember, you need to have your sins forgiven. You must trust in Jesus as the one who died for sinners and you must take Him as your King.

Ambition

4. Great Sorrow

W G T Shedd

This is another part 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 last month's section, Shedd gave a third reason for not seeking the great things of the earth and time: because "great things", so far as they are gained at all in this world, are usually reached indirectly.

A fourth reason for obeying the direction of the text is that *great sorrow springs from hoping for great things* when those hopes are not fulfilled. There is only one kind of hope that does not weary and wear the soul, and that is the cry of the soul after God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." The desire expressed in these words of the Psalmist can never disgust the human spirit, because God is the real and true portion – the substantial, eternal good – of the creature. But all other hopes are, in the end, discouraging. "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

The sadness of many authors is well known. One writer, uniquely calm and balanced by nature, confessed at the close of a long life of 80 years that he had never experienced a moment of genuine rest. A scientist, who had given his long life to calm observation of the processes of nature, said in his eightieth year: "I live without hope, because so little of what I have undertaken yields a satisfactory result".

This is the penalty which ambitious minds pay for seeking "great things". There is an infinite expectation and a tiny result. The hour of death, and the falling shadows of an everlasting existence bring the expectation and the result into terrible contrast. Most impressively do such facts in the history of prominent men repeat the prophet's warning: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."

Once more, go down into the sphere of active life and see the same sorrow arising for the same reason. Look at that businessman who has spent his life in great and – we will suppose – successful activities, but who now draws near the grave. Ask him how his hopes compare with the results. He has generally succeeded, we will assume, in what he undertook. All who know him can see the results of his energy. His associates have praised him, and still praise him, for he has done well for himself and for all connected with him.

But he writes vanity upon it all. When he thinks of all the pressure of his life, all his anxious toil by day and by night, all his sacrifice of comfort, and

then thinks of the actual results of it all – the few million dollars, the few thousand acres, or the few hundred houses – he sorrows over his folly. He sees that great sorrow springs out of great expectation when it goes no further than things seen and temporal.

These are reasons which should persuade us against ambition. These are reasons for heeding the warning of the prophet not to seek the great things of earth. Let us recall them: (1) The great things will not be reached because, as soon as you have them, they lose their value. (2) If you could obtain the great things, they would ruin your soul by extreme pride and self-exaltation. (3) So far as you obtain them in part, it is indirectly, not by any previous purpose you had of doing so. (4) Great sorrow always springs out of a great expectation that is not fulfilled.

The Role of Women in Society

1. Some Biblical Principles

Rev N M Ross

This is the first part of a paper given at the 2004 Youth Conference. I will be referring to the writings of several authors, most of whom are very sound, but others are somewhat lacking in their understanding of the Reformed Faith. Nevertheless they have written useful material about our subject. So, when I quote these writers, I am not necessarily endorsing their other religious views.

Introduction. This subject is very complex, but I hope that, by the time we have finished, we shall have a clearer grasp of what the Bible teaches about it. However, we need the help of heaven in trying to understand what the Word of God says about any subject, so we must prayerfully seek this help as we proceed.

The Basis of Belief and Practice. God is the God of truth; He cannot lie. What He says to us in His Word is absolutely right and true. Whenever there is a dispute between the ideas of men and the Word of God, we must say, “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

So our views on the subject of “the role of women in society” must be shaped by the Word of God. Only then will they be correct and God-glorifying. That is why this talk about the role of women in society is subtitled, *Some Biblical Principles*.

Unless these principles are applied in society, no one can remedy the confusion which prevails about the role of women. Much of this confusion has been caused by feminist activists, some of whom profess to be Christians, and even theologians.

“God is not the author of confusion”, we read in 1 Corinthians 14. God is a God of order. The basic principle undergirding the role of women in society is that God has appointed a certain order between the man and the woman. This is found, for example, in 1 Corinthians 11:3: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”. This fundamental rule must be our constant benchmark in exploring the role of women in society. But why should this subject be on our programme at all?

The Effects of Feminism. Sixty years or so ago, the role of women in society was a subject seldom aired, let alone discussed, at church conferences. In other words, the Bible's teaching on the role of women was still largely accepted by society.

But there was a tremendous shift in thinking when the feminist movement got under way in the 1960s. Those of you who have read Sharon James' helpful book, *God's Design for Women*, will have found in it a good summary of the development and effects of radical feminism.

“The classical definition of *feminism*”, she writes, “would be a wish for equal opportunities, and an end of legal discrimination against women. We surely all sympathise with feminism in the broadest sense, that of calling for women to have political, economic and social rights. The first stage of feminist agitation took place from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

“Second-wave feminism was very different. A small number of thinkers aimed, in effect, to liberate women from their womanhood. The very things that were of central importance for women (marriage, motherhood, home-making) were derided as fit only for those who were mentally subnormal or emotionally weak.”

The mantra then became, “Women must be liberated!” Radical feminists, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Germaine Greer, skilfully and persuasively promoted the idea that women must be liberated from marriage, from motherhood and housekeeping, from staying at home, from family life, from having children, even from their femininity – and, of course, liberated from men, especially from patriarchal religion.

Patriarchal religion is the religion of the Bible, inasmuch as, by God's appointment, Adam is the father of the human race; the man is the head of the woman and of the family; inheritances pass from father to son; Abraham is the father of the faithful; and the genealogy of the Messiah from Abraham is reckoned through the male line. As Anne Graham says in her useful book, *Womanhood Revisited*: “Patriarchy is not the result of the disobedience of Genesis 3, but was established in the perfection of creation in Genesis 2.

Patriarchy was and is God's intention, not fallen manhood's invention. It has to do with leadership and direction, not domination and suppression. It has nothing to do with superiority and inferiority, but has everything to do with the orderly functioning of a family, tribe, or nation." So patriarchal, biblical religion and the God of the Bible were the special targets of leading feminists, not least of Mary Daly in her blasphemous book, *Beyond God the Father*.

Sharon James says of those feminists: "All united to mock the notion that God created male and female with distinctive characteristics for distinctive callings". Germaine Greer espoused atheism in her student days, concluding: "If there is no God, then there are no rules". Not surprisingly, when God's law is openly and blatantly rejected by radical feminists, dark threads of sexual immorality may be seen woven through their philosophy.

We must also note that Satan, by using such enemies of God and Scripture as his willing tools, was himself the attacker. His objective has been – and continues to be – to eradicate the creation distinctions between male and female, the creation ordinance of marriage, and the creation institution of the family.

We admit that in the 1990s there was a strong reaction against radical feminism, and that feminism was declared dead. But the damage was done – damage that is very evident in modern society. Sharon James writes, "The very word *feminist* is likely to raise a yawn or a giggle among the youth of today. . . . Yet the ideas of the radical feminists – self-contradictory though they were – have taken root in much of our thinking."

More serious is the fact that the radical feminist agenda (that is, of liberating women by bringing about the end of the traditional family) has been relentlessly carried forward since then. The subtle strategy to be implemented, as Sharon James points out, had a number of stages: "First, privileges would be removed from the traditional family. Secondly, alternative family patterns would be given greater support. Thirdly, history would be rewritten, and an all-out ideological attack launched on the 'nuclear' [or traditional] family as being only a recent innovation (which is nonsense). All of these strategies have been employed successfully throughout the western world over the past 30 years or so."

Women, in fact, are the victims, not the victors, in this battle of the sexes waged by radical feminism. "An increasing number of writers," says Sharon James, "are building a convincing case that women have not been liberated by modern feminism; they have been betrayed."

There is much need, therefore, for us to be clear about God's purpose for women.

Bianchi

3. A Long, Tedious Struggle

Bianchi was an Italian who joined a German army and was afterwards converted. One day he went to his captain to ask permission to go to a prayer meeting in another regiment. Permission was refused. In the conversation that followed, Bianchi was about to make an unwise remark and stopped. When he refused to state what he was going to say, he was sent to prison. That evening Major von Benedeck called Bianchi in for an explanation. The discussion turned to spiritual matters. As the conversation went on, Bianchi could see that the Major did not have saving faith. The officer then asked, "What would you have me to do?"

“It appears to me that your fault is self-righteousness, Major,” Bianchi began, as he tried to show the officer what was so seriously lacking in his religion.

“You try to conquer the devil first, and then you will give yourself to Christ. But that will never do, for it is a true saying of the Lord: ‘Without Me ye can do nothing’. Christ’s salvation is only to be obtained as a free gift of God, but you try to deserve it by your own self-improvement. Now this is a long, tedious, hopeless struggle. You will never attain such a height of virtue and purity as to assure you that you have enough of it to satisfy God and to deserve heavenly glory. You will continually feel that you come short of the required amount. So you will never be at peace. You will always be in doubt, in anxiety, in fear. You will every now and then glance at Christ with the hope that He will, at the end of your hard labour, come with His grace and make up the full weight for you.

“No soldier can use his sword well whose limbs are burdened with chains. And no sinner can defeat the devil as long as he is lying under the load of a disturbed conscience. But Christ is revealed to us so that we may be free of every weight and, leaning on His cross, may rise joyful and ready for every battle. But we can only do this if we resist every attempt to help ourselves and give our heart and soul to Christ as our only strength and refuge. It is only then that our conscience can be at peace. However great and monstrous our sins may be, we then know that they are cast into the depths of the sea and that they will not be brought into judgement against us. Justified by grace, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and in His peace we have strength from God to leap over every wall that the enemy puts in our way.”

“Very true, very true,” the Major agreed. “But now tell me, Bianchi, are you sure of your salvation? Have you no fear and anxiety?”

“To the honour of my blessed Saviour,” Bianchi told him, “I joyfully say

that I have peace with God through Him. Tired with the hopeless toil of saving myself, I at length have obeyed that sweet word of Jesus: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. I have gone to Him; I have laid down the burden of my sins at His feet; and I have believed that He has done and suffered all that is required for my salvation. Since then I have taken for granted that I am God's child through Him, and that the joy of His saints in heaven is my future portion."

"But do you not sometimes doubt whether anything of all that is true?"

"O yes," Bianchi admitted, "those doubts attack me every moment, but I deal with them as Abraham dealt with the fowls that came down on his sacrifice. I drive them away by prayer. I know I have to expect these darts of Satan every now and then as long as I am in this tabernacle of flesh and blood. But I know, at the same time, that just then I must show that my faith is as surely from God as my doubts are from the devil. I know that my flesh must doubt; it will never believe in God's Word. In fact, it cannot, for its very nature is to mistrust the Invisible One and to give the lie to everything it does not see with its own eyes or handle with its own hands. Now my justification by grace cannot be seen, nor can my salvation through Christ be touched with hands. No wonder then that my flesh will never allow that I am justified and saved. When these feelings of doubt arise within me, I at once set my face against them so that I will not give the devil pleasure, and I go immediately to my Saviour to talk with Him about His work and promises, which are yea and amen. Of course, I am sometimes not alert enough, but my faithful Shepherd does not allow me to remain long in those cold, dismal quarters. His Spirit whispers into my soul that I must get up and leave that place as quickly as possible."

"Ah, you are a happy man," the Major said. "I wish I was like you, Bianchi. I sometimes have moments when I would believe that there is hope for me, but they are very rare and short."

"You know that I am made of the same sinful clay as you and all the children of Adam", Bianchi answered, "and I do not see that there can be any reason why Christ should be less willing to save you than me. The helmet of salvation, which He gives to His soldiers, fits your head as well as mine. But certainly it cannot cover yours as long as you persevere in wearing your own crown. You must give up your work as hopeless and throw yourself at the feet of Jesus. That is the only way; and if you walk in it, you will find yourself in a new world at once. The difference between what you are now and what you will be then is like night and day. You are now in constant doubt and fear, with only a few exceptional moments of hope; you will then be in constant peace and rest, and doubts will only

be exceptions. You are now walking in a dark valley, through which a twinkling star casts a faint glimmer only now and then; you will then walk in the rays of the glorious Sun of Righteousness, whose brightness is too powerful not to dispel the occasional clouds that may rise from time to time at the horizon."

"You have spoken a good and faithful word to me, my friend," Major von Benedeck told him. "I feel I must take it to heart. Pray for me that the Lord would bless it to my soul." Then he promised to do what he could to get the Captain to treat Bianchi differently. But meantime he must go back to prison.

Before leaving, Bianchi had a request to make: "In my ignorance, and under the influence of alcohol, I signed up for ten years' service. Six of them have passed already. I was pretty well satisfied with a soldier's life as long as I served the world and took delight in the pleasures of sin. But since it pleased the Lord to open my eyes to see His heavenly kingdom, I found myself in the midst of Sodom. My soul is vexed day and night with the terrible wickedness and blasphemy I am forced to witness. You cannot wonder that I continually pray to my God to deliver me out of that company." So he was asking the Major to use his influence with the King so that he could leave the army and go back home to Italy.

But the Major had to tell them that it was impossible. A big battle was looming and the King had ordered the army to recruit as many men as possible.

"I see", Bianchi answered; "never mind, but I will get my dismissal before long." The Major was almost afraid that Bianchi was thinking of taking his own life. But no. Bianchi explained: "I only mean to say that I feel as if the Lord is about to give me my dismissal by taking me out of this world to His heavenly home. And that certainly will be by far the best."

For Junior Readers

You Cannot Fix It Yourself

Have you ever looked under the bonnet of a car? I'm sure you were amazed at how complicated it looked and how many different parts there seemed to be! Perhaps you managed to identify the engine and the battery, but possibly that was all.

If something goes wrong with a machine as complicated as a modern car, you would not try to fix it yourself, would you? You would take it to a car mechanic. He is the expert in how cars work, and he should be able to discover what the problem is, and hopefully to fix it as well.

Think instead about yourself. How complicated your body is! And how amazingly all the different organs work together to keep you alive! Should it not remind you of the words of David to God his Creator: “I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works” (Psalm 139:14)?

When something goes wrong with your body – with your health – you would again go to the experts, wouldn’t you? You would go to your family doctor first, who might then send you to see a specialist doctor – someone with an expert knowledge of a specific area of your body.

So it is in spiritual things also. Since Adam fell into sin, we have all been born into the world as sinners. Your “heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Surely you do not want to go through this life and into eternity with this same wicked heart! So where can you go to get it mended, or healed? Indeed, where can you go for a new heart, because that is what you need, isn’t it?

The first thing you learn is that you cannot fix it yourself. You might try really hard to be good, but again and again you fail. No, you cannot save yourself! What about your family? Can they save you? Perhaps you have godly parents who always pray for your soul. But, however much they love you, they cannot save you. This is what Psalm 49 says:

“Yet none of these his brother can
redeem by any way:
Nor can he unto God for him
sufficient ransom pay”.

There is only one place you can go to be saved. You must go to the soul-doctor, the great physician of souls, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What did He say when He was on this earth? “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance”.

Jesus is the only one who can save your sin-sick soul. And your sinfulness, bad as it is, must not keep you away. It is really a qualification for coming to Christ. It is sinners He came to save. And Christ is the only remedy, the only hope, the only One who can save you. Even the Pharisees had to admit: “This man receiveth sinners”. And Christ Himself promised: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Will you not pray to Him, then, to give you a new heart? Plead the promise which James Laing (see last month’s article) used: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

J van Kralingen

“In the Beginning”

4. What Should We Learn?

Rev David Campbell

This is the last part of a paper given at the 2003 Youth Conference. Last month's section looked at the creation ordinances of marriage, birth of children, subduing the earth, dominion over the creatures, labour, and the Sabbath.

We must deal briefly with some further issues which the doctrine of creation raises.

(1) It is central to the Christian faith. It should not escape our notice that creation is an essential doctrine in the Bible; it is a pillar of the Christian faith. Without it we cannot have a correct understanding of reality; nor can we make sense of the Scripture doctrines of the fall and of sin, and of the work of salvation. So it should be no surprise that Satan seeks to undermine the doctrine of creation. But his success in this should not shake our faith in the unchanging Word of God. This doctrine shows us that evolution, a relatively recent theory, cannot be the true explanation for the origin of the universe. We can be sure that there is perfect harmony between the Bible and true science, but to yield to the atheistic principles of those who reject the Word of God is foolish, and it is highly offensive to the God of heaven.

(2) The sovereignty of God as Creator. Our Creator is our King and Lord, and we belong to Him. “He doeth His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” The fact that God is sovereign over sinful men ought to make us tremble. But, as united to Christ in the covenant of grace, believers are told with affection: “Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name” (Isaiah 54:5). It is a most comforting gospel truth that the whole creation is placed in the hands of Christ, as the Mediator to whom all power is given in heaven and earth.

(3) This doctrine may convict the heathen. Many heathen peoples – such as the Babylonians, Greeks, Romans and Indians, who did not possess the Scriptures – had accounts of the creation of the world in their ancient writings. Although they are greatly distorted, these writings do testify to man having knowledge of the creation of the world. The Apostle Paul used the Scripture doctrine of creation to challenge the heathens in Athens about their sins. He told them: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). And we may still use it in this way. The “eternal power and godhead” of the Creator is shown in His work of creation and this makes

unbelievers inexcusable (see Romans 1:20). But preachers may also point to the goodness of God in that work, and in the works of providence ever since, to convince men that they have sinned and that they are liable to just judgement.

We too may learn the same lessons. We should ask ourselves: Do we live in the world that God has created without acknowledging His law or His grace? Should the goodness of God not lead us to repentance? God has clearly shown us His glory as Creator; the proper use we should make of this is to submit to Christ as He is revealed in the gospel.

(4) Other truths. Several passages of the Bible use the doctrine of creation to illustrate a spiritual truth. Paul described the work of regeneration as a new creation: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul also told the Corinthians that God, “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). When we think of creation, we are to lift our thoughts up to these spiritual realities. We all need that new creation.

Isaiah spoke of God making “the new heavens and the new earth” (66:22). These are said to remain before God, and some suggest that this is a reference to the New Testament age. Peter too spoke of “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). And John saw “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). These references are to the kingdom of heaven, where believers shall dwell in happiness for ever. It is elsewhere called paradise, which reminds us of the original Garden of Eden planted for the benefit and enjoyment of sinless Adam. Let us always think about this kingdom and seek it first. And may the original creation serve to remind us of the house of many mansions which Christ has prepared for His true disciples.

(5) Conclusion. Because of sin, the world which God had made suffered a universal flood in the days of Noah. Man still sins, and God has left it on record that “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”. We are further exhorted: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” (2 Peter 3:10-12).

We are only in the world for a short time. The history of God’s created

world is a history of redemption. The power and wisdom and goodness of God in redemption are clearly revealed. Christ Jesus, the Creator of the world, has taken man's nature and suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring sinners to God. But He is also set to be judge of all the earth and He will send all His enemies to eternal punishment when He destroys the world that He made. Let us make it our business to seek the Lord while He may be found and to call upon Him while He is near.

God tells us: "Remember now thy creator *in the days of thy youth*".

For Younger Readers

Where Was It Going?

It was just a little ant walking about on a window-sill of a house in Zimbabwe. It walked one way and then another. It went this way and then that. It kept going, going, going. But it never went anywhere far. It was always moving around on the same little bit of wood in front of the window.

At last the little ant must have moved away somewhere else. But while I was watching, it went nowhere far. It didn't seem to know where it wanted to go, but it looked very busy. It was moving around as quickly as its little legs could carry it.

Although the ant seemed very busy as it walked around, it wasn't doing anything useful. People too can look very busy although they are not doing anything useful. Perhaps *you* sometimes look very busy although you are not doing anything useful.

But where should everyone be thinking of going to? And where should you be thinking of going to?

The answer to my questions is: Like everyone else, you should be thinking about going to heaven.

But what people are on their way to heaven? Those who love God and are doing what He commands them. They are the people who are going the right way. They are not like the little ant that did not know where it was going. They are busy too, but they are doing something useful. They are keeping God's commandments.

We can answer the last question another way. Those who are on their way to heaven love Jesus and believe on Him. They are just the same people as do what God commands. They are going in the right way. They are not wasting their time.

Everyone else is like the little ant that did not know where it was going. However busy they are, they are not really keeping God's commandments.

Are you like the little ant? Ask God to make you want to go in the right way – towards heaven.

Three Scriptural Rules

This story was told in a sermon by Rev Donald Macfarlane, when he was Free Presbyterian minister in Dingwall. It is about a heathen man who was converted and afterwards became a missionary.

“Having gathered a congregation, he resolved to build a church, and he appealed to the people for contributions to meet the cost, and appointed a day on which they were to give their contributions. He laid down three rules, according to which they should give: (1) Everyone should give something; (2) Everyone should give according to ability; and (3) Everyone should give cheerfully and ungrudgingly. These were Scriptural rules.

“On the appointed day the congregation gathered, and the missionary stood at the plate, and saw what was put into it. He knew the circumstances of the people, and was satisfied with their givings till a wealthy chief came forward, who put a very small piece of gold into the plate.

“The missionary said to him, ‘I will not accept of that small contribution from you, who are a wealthy man. You have given according to the first rule, but not according to the second – that everyone should give according to ability. Take it back.’

“The chief took it back and then, in an angry way, threw a large piece of gold into the plate. ‘I will not take that either,’ said the missionary, ‘for it is not given according to the third rule – that everyone should give cheerfully.’

“The chief lifted his contribution and then placed it on the plate with a smiling face. ‘I am satisfied now,’ said the missionary; ‘you have given something; you have given according to your ability; and you have given cheerfully.’”

Mr Macfarlane had wanted to teach his congregation about how they should give to the Church. So, after he told the story, he said to them: “Now, what I would like is that our people would contribute to the funds of the Church according to the three rules laid down by the missionary”.

These three scriptural rules still apply to people everywhere today. To give, cheerfully and according to our ability, is still our duty. Indeed, these rules summarise the teaching of the Bible on the subject.

Looking Around Us

Recreating a New Heart

Some of you will have read about the young woman, Maxine Carr, who was jailed for conspiring to pervert the course of justice, by telling lies on behalf of the murderer, Ian Huntley. She is now to be freed from prison, having escaped further imprisonment for other crimes.

In pleading for her release, her lawyer said, "She has but one plea: that she may be left in peace to recreate in herself a new heart, and that she may be free to live her life again". So she hopes to have peace, a new heart, and freedom – and all, it would appear, without the help of God.

The Bible shows that neither she nor anyone else can have real peace except by believing in Jesus Christ. Only believers have a right to say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Any peace short of that peace, however pleasant it may be for a while, must end in misery for ever.

As for recreating a new heart, she is faced with an impossibility. Neither she nor anyone else can do what only God can do. Only He can say, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezekiel 36:26). We may and should stop bad behaviour, but it is as impossible for us to change our hearts as it is for the leopard to change its spots. Some outward change for the better is good, but it can never, never take the place of the new heart. Therefore it is to God we must turn, with the prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Freedom that is true, spiritual and lasting will also elude her and others, if they do not have Christ as their liberator. Good as certain kinds of worldly freedom may be – whether freedom from prison, freedom from debt, freedom from famine, or freedom from disease – they are nothing in comparison to that blessed freedom of which Jesus says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). *NMR*

Free Money

Not long ago a bank in south London told about an experiment it conducted last January. For two hours one morning, the bank offered passers-by free £5 notes. But no one took up the offer.

The reaction may sound surprising, but this is how most people treat the gospel. They are shown that there is a full and free salvation through Christ Jesus for sinners. They are pressed to take it. But they are much more inclined to try to pay for salvation by their own good works. How foolish!

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2003-04

Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Bracadale:* James Campbell. *Chesley:* Everdena Kuiper. *Dingwall:* Joanna Mackenzie. *Farr:* Ruth M MacQueen. *Gisborne:* Stephen Geuze. *Glasgow:* Jacqueline Freeke. *Grafton:* Susanna Kidd, Andrea van Dorp, Emma White. *Halkirk:* Cherith Sutton. *Inverness:* Ben Fiddes, Hanna J Schouten. *Kyle:* Joanne Whear. *London:* Naomi K Rowland. *Ness:* Nathanael Smith. *North Uist:* Margaret J Macdonald. *Sengera:* George Birundu, Jane Magoma, James Maina, Pamela Maranga, Zablou Marube, Rachel Mochamo, Andrew and Mishael Mosiria, Justus Mosoti, Moses Nyanchongi, Bhanice Nyangarisa, Lucas and Ruth Omweno, Esther Ongori, Francis Oyaro. *South Harris:* Iain MacLean. *Stornoway:* Angus D Macleod. *Sydney:* Jennifer Marshall. *Texas:* James Smith (1 & 2). *Wellington:* Esther and Naomi Hicklin.

Intermediate Section: *Auckland:* Charlotte and Kirsten McCrae, Liana Sullivan, Susan Thomas, Anya Whetton. *Bonar Bridge:* Rebecca Campbell. *Bracadale:* Neil Campbell. *Brisbane:* Sarah Brigden. *Chesley:* Margaret Kuiper, Randy Winkels. *Dingwall:* Kathryn Mackenzie, Neil MacLean. *Dunedin:* Hayley Worth. *Dunoon:* Esther Malley. *Farr:* Caitlin MacQueen. *Fort William:* William S Mackinnon. *Gisborne:* Mark Geuze, Trudy Haringa. *Glasgow:* Neil Freeke, Kenneth Gillies, Marion Macleod. *Grafton:* David Kidd, Cassandra van Dorp, Natalie White. *Highworth:* Rebecca Woodhams. *Holland:* Anne Bakker. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell, Chloe and Lois Fiddes, Angus Murray, Jonathan Schouten. *Kyle:* Paul Whear. *London:* Rebecca Munns, Josie van Kralingen. *Ness:* Sarah Smith. *North Harris:* Cailean and Eilidh J McCombe. *North Tolsta:* Chrisann Macleod. *North Uist:* Rhoda Cameron, John MacDonald, Kathleen Macdonald, Kerri Macinnes. *Pennsylvania:* Alyssa and Philip Gerace. *Oxon:* Emily Sayers. *Portree:* Finlay MacRaid. *Scaynes Hill:* Sam Main. *Sengera:* Selina Morumbwa, Kevin Nyabuto, Jennifer Mosiria, Lispher and Keziah Kamanda, Linet Ondieki, Bernard Onwonga. *South Harris:* Stewart MacLean. *Stornoway:* Anne R Dickie, Stephen Macdonald. *Swordale:* Sara Macleod. *Sydney:* Alison and Laura Marshall. *Texas:* John Smith (1 & 2). *Tomatin:* Lois V Cameron-Mackintosh. *Wellington:* Joanna and Thomas Hicklin. *Westerham:* Edward Hanks.

Junior Section: *Aberdeen:* Rebecca Buchanan. *Auckland:* Sam McCrae, David Thomas. *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy Campbell. *Brisbane:* Miriam Brigden. *Chesley:* Martha Bouman, Rachel Winkels. *Crowborough:* Heidi Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Beverly MacKenzie, Sarah MacLean. *Dunedin:* Richie Worth. *France:* Julia Davenel. *Gisborne:* Anita Geuze, Louise van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Hugh Gillies, Donald Macleod. *Grafton:* Jennifer Kidd, Shelley van Dorp, Matthew White. *Guildford:* Matthew Risbridger. *Holland:* Peter Bakker. *Inverness:* James E M Fraser, Natalie MacAskill, Catherine Schouten. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *Larne:* Philip Acton. *London:* Elizabeth Munns, David Rowland, Alexander and Constance Turnbull, Jeremy and Justin van Kralingen. *North Harris:* Sara McCombe. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie. *North Uist:* John Cameron, Alastair, Christina and Flora M Macdonald. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail and Martha Main. *Sengera:* Joan Abel, Carolyne Omony. *Shieldaig:* Jennifer Goldby. *Stornoway:* Karina Ferguson, Alasdair G Gillies. *Stratherrick:* David Fraser, John A Fraser. *Swordale:* Murdo S Macleod. *Sydney:* Andrew Marshall, Madison van Praag. *Texas:* Samuel Smith (1 & 2). *Ullapool:* Siobhan and Stuart MacCulloch, Susannah C Mackenzie. *Wellington:* Conan Cassidy (1 & 2), Elizabeth Hicklin, Alison Optland.

Upper Primary Section: *Auckland:* Samantha Muirhead. *Barnoldswick:* Philip Martin, Robert Ross. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Brisbane:* Mary Brigden. *Chesley:* Jenny Bouman, Audrey Zekveld. *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie. *Dunedin:* Gresham Worth. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Isla and Jonathan MacDonald. *Farr:* Alasdair MacQueen. *Fort William:* Rachel Mackinnon. *Gisborne:* William Geuze, Heidi Haringa, Alexander van Dorp, Kirsten van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Fiona Beaton, Donna Chisolm, Catherine Freeke, Kate Gillies, Neil Gillies, Rachel MacLeod, Peter MacPherson. *Grafton:* Chloe van Dorp, Cameron White. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton. *Larne:* Deborah Acton, Alison and Renwick Sharp. *London:* Edward and William Munns,

Rupert Turnbull. **Ness:** Joshua Smith. **North Tolsta:** Sheena Mackenzie, Sean MacLeod. **North Uist:** Margaret Cameron, John MacDonald, Laura MacInnes. **Peasmarsh:** Alasdair Bailey. **Salisbury:** Jill Buchanan. **Scaynes Hill:** Philip Main. **Sengera:** Dolfine Moses, Milcah Paul, Salome Ontiri. **South Harris:** Catherine MacLeod. **Stornoway:** Sarah Gillies, Lauren MacDonald, Robert MacQuarrie. **Sydney:** James Marshall. **Uig:** Murdo Mackay. **Vatten:** Rebecca Fleming. **Wellington:** Lydia and Rebekah Hicklin. **Westmuir:** Ailidh Drake-Watson

Lower Primary Section: **Aberdeen:** Sarah Somerset. **Auckland:** Rita de Bruin, Lachlan and Laura McCrae, Bianca Jago, Amy Thomas. **Barnoldswick:** David Martin, Emma Norris, Rebecca Ross. **Brisbane:** Rachel Brigden. **Chesley:** Jacob Zekveld. **Connecticut:** Rachel and Sarah Mack. **Croydon:** Andrew Hickman. **Dingwall:** Alasdair and Laura MacLean, Andrew and Graham MacLeod, Ruth Macleod. **Edinburgh:** Catriona Logan, Annabelle and Daniel Macdonald. **Farr:** Finlay and Muriel Macrae-Cramp. **Fortrose:** Jerusha and Sarah Nixon. **Gairloch:** Donald and Rachel Mackenzie, Catherine and Mairi Wyatt. **Gisborne:** Anne-Marie Geuze, William Haringa, Anna and Emma van Dorp. **Glasgow:** Ewen and Grant Beaton, Ian Gillies, Iona Gillies, Ruairidh Macleod, Callum Macpherson. **Grafton:** Bethany McAlpine, Alexandra van Dorp. **Holland:** Gerben Bakker, Nathalie MacDonald. **Inverness:** Jonathan Fiddes, Nikki MacLennan, Peter Schouten. **Kyle:** Nathan Whear. **Larne:** Cameron Sharp. **London:** Claudia, Edward and Oliver Martin, Andrew Munns, Benjamin, David, Elizabeth and Rachele Strata, Jemima, Jeremy, Joseph and Lucy Turnbull, Amy van Kralingen. **Ness:** Anna and Gerrit Smith. **North Harris:** Tormod Mackinnon. **North Tolsta:** Sheena Mackenzie, Lucy Macleod. **North Uist:** Fraser MacDonald, Angus Macinnes. **Pennsylvania:** Richard Gerace. **Raasay:** Joseph MacGowan. **Sengera:** Betty Bochere, Evans Mekenye, Finlay Mogari, Eric Momanyi, Judith Moses, Mary Mosoti, Job Ondieki, Dominic Ongoro. **Stornoway:** Leah Beaton, Cirsty Gillies, Ryan MacSween. **Stratherrick:** Ewen Fraser. **Sydney:** Duncan and Keith Marshall, Heather and Zoe van Praag. **Texas:** Joseph Ervin. **Ullapool:** Lewis Mackenzie. **Vatten:** Sabrina Annand, Jayne-Anne Fleming. **Wellington:** Luke Cassidy (1 & 2), Abigail and Julia Hicklin.

The Shepherd Boy's Song

He that is down needs fear no fall;
he that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,
little it be or much.
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
because Thou savest such.

Fulness to such a burden is,
that go on pilgrimage.
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
is best from age to age.

John Bunyan