

The Young People's Magazine

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Croagh Patrick

Croagh Patrick is a mountain on the beautiful west coast of Ireland and is the scene of a Roman Catholic pilgrimage on the last Sabbath of July every year. Pilgrims climb to a shrine – built 2510 feet up (736 metres), at the top of this mountain – which is dedicated to a godly man known to history as Saint Patrick. According to tradition, he spent 40 days fasting and praying on Croagh Patrick.

This pilgrimage has been taking place for hundreds of years. And when Romanism still had a firmer grip on the minds of the people, up to 50 000 pilgrims would have taken part; before 1970, most of them would have set off long before daylight, to reach the summit in time for mass at sunrise. Now most of the 30 000 or so pilgrims, including the local bishop, do not begin the climb until darkness is over. Even now, more than one in ten of the pilgrims go on bare feet; no doubt they believe this will gain them a much greater reward, in a system which is based on the idea of *earning* salvation. Last year, the weather was poor; the pilgrimage took place in conditions of mist and rain. The result was that, among the 120 treated on the mountain for the injuries they sustained, some were suffering badly from the cold. A further 30 suffered more serious injuries and were brought down on stretchers.

It surely suggests that these people did not have God's blessing on their outing. Indeed, the Bible gives no one any encouragement to go on such a pilgrimage. Here were thousands of people going to a place associated with the worship of a "saint", and however much Rome may try to distinguish between different kinds of worship, all worship of anyone except God is forbidden by the Second Commandment. When the people of Lystra were about to worship Paul and Barnabas, who had healed a man that had never been able to walk, they protested forcefully. They "ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you." Even an angel objected strongly when John "fell down to worship before" his feet. He told the apostle: "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God".

And it is a type of worship when people *pray* to those who have been made saints. The official Roman Catholic catechism teaches that “we can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world”. The simple answer is that the Bible nowhere tells us to do this, and that should be the end of the matter. Yes, those of us who are still on earth are to intercede for others, and indeed for the whole world, but we are to pray directly to God, in the name of Christ.

In any case, do the saints have any basis for making intercession, for passing on to God the requests of those who pray to them? The Roman Catholic catechism claims that they present, presumably to God, “the merits which they acquired on earth” – the idea is that the saints are so holy that their good works exceed what God requires of them. The fact is that even Paul, who was a truly holy man, was far from having done everything God required of him. “Not as though I had already attained,” he told the Philippians, “either were already perfect: but I follow after” (Philippians 3:12). That was the most he could say. He was pressing on to lay hold of the blessings that Christ Jesus had earned for him. But he had to confess: “In me . . . dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). Paul was perhaps the holiest man who ever lived and he could not claim that there was any merit in his good works which would be of benefit to himself or anyone else. He is most certainly not listening in heaven for anyone who might be praying to him – nor, we might add, is the Virgin Mary. They both know that Christ is the One through whom prayers are to be sent up to heaven. They know that He is a perfect Mediator; He does not need their help.

But who was Patrick? He was born, possibly about 390, somewhere on the west coast of Britain – perhaps on the River Clyde. When he was 16, he and some others from his village were captured by Irish pirates. They sold him to a chieftain in what is now County Antrim. Patrick belonged to a Christian family, but was unconverted when taken captive. But in these new, difficult circumstances he began to seek God. He confessed later: “I did not know the true God” but “lay in death and unbelief . . . and took no thought for my salvation”. But he went on: “the Lord gave me the feeling of my unbelief and hardness of heart, so that I should call my sins to remembrance”. When the Lord began to work in his heart, all he had with him of the Scriptures was what he brought in his memory. And that was enough. He went on to say, “He that is mighty came and in His mercy raised me up. . . . I ought to shout out in gratitude to the Lord for His great favours, in this world and for ever, that the mind of man cannot measure.”

After spending six years as a shepherd, Patrick escaped and, after a difficult journey on land and sea, returned to his family home in Scotland. Some time

later he felt called by God to go back to Ireland as a preacher of the gospel. He obeyed and never returned to Scotland; he was to spend the rest of his life trying to present “the unsearchable riches of Christ” to the people among whom he had served as a slave. And this is the spirit in which he went: “I am a servant in Christ to a foreign nation for the unspeakable glory of life everlasting which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”. He now brought with him a Bible, though perhaps it was not complete. One scholar has said of him: “He goes straight to the heart of the biblical message, to the promises of God in the Old Testament and the redemption brought by Christ in the New”.

For about 30 years, Patrick went through the length and breadth of Ireland preaching. He said, “I am greatly God’s debtor, because He granted me so much grace, that through me many people would be reborn in God.” He faced great difficulties; his life was often in danger but God preserved him; his converts also suffered persecution. He was opposed by the Druids, who followed a heathen religion which regarded the oak as a sacred tree; they may even have offered human sacrifices. But Patrick wrote of baptizing many thousands after they had professed faith. At the end of his days, there may have been 365 churches in the island, though we should bear in mind that he was probably not the first to bring the gospel to Ireland.

Patrick’s teaching was basically that of the Bible. He summed up his beliefs in his Confession, where he wrote: “There is no other God, nor ever was, nor will be, but God the Father unbegotten, without beginning . . . and His Son Jesus Christ, whom we declare to have always been with the Father, spiritually begotten before the beginning of the world . . . And by Him are made all things, visible and invisible. He was made man and, having defeated death, was received into heaven by the Father; and He has given Him all power . . . in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess to Him that Jesus Christ is Lord and God . . . judge of the living and of the dead, who will render to every man according to his deeds. And He has poured forth upon us abundantly the Holy Spirit . . . who makes those who believe, and obey, sons of God and joint heirs with Christ. And we confess and adore Him, one God in the Trinity of His holy name.”

A sincere man, Patrick would have been shocked to hear of thousands of people coming on pilgrimage to a shrine associated with himself. And he would have objected to such blasphemous practices as the mass, when priests claim to change bread and wine into Christ Himself. He would also have been shocked to think of anyone calling him a saint, as distinct from how the Bible speaks of saints – as ordinary believers seeking in weakness to follow God’s law and altogether dependent on the grace of God. That is what *he* wanted to be, and that is how we too should want to live in our time.

The Book of Ruth

79. Not Ashamed

Rev Keith M Watkins

Ruth 4:9,10. "And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place; ye are witnesses this day."

One thing was certain. Boaz was not ashamed of what he had done. He wanted everyone at the gate of Bethlehem to know about it. A crowd had joined the ten elders, for Boaz spoke "before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people" (verse 4). Naomi and Ruth were also present at this stage. Even the kinsman who would not do his duty was there. To this large assembly Boaz said twice over, "Ye are witnesses this day". He was definitely not ashamed of the day's proceedings.

What had Boaz done? Two things. He had helped the widow Naomi by redeeming the land which belonged to her deceased husband and sons: "I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi". Of that he was not ashamed: let all be witnesses to it. Secondly, he had helped Ruth, the younger widow, by marrying her: "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife". Clearly he was not ashamed of his bride.

All through the Book of Ruth, Boaz is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. His redemption of Naomi and Ruth is a picture of the Saviour redeeming sinners. His marriage to Ruth is a picture of Christ's union to His people. And just as Boaz was not ashamed of what he had done, neither is Christ ashamed. He also would have many witnesses to His redeeming work: "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:9). His Church is often harassed by enemies, but He promises: "Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Revelation 3:9). Jesus is not ashamed of His people.

Ruth was a stranger and foreigner, a Moabitess. That gave great cause for shame in Bethlehem of Judea, at the heart of Israel's land and religion. But Boaz was not ashamed. He specifically referred to that very matter: "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess . . . have I purchased to be my wife". There was no necessity to mention Ruth's background. Perhaps Ruth felt ashamed of it, but Boaz certainly did not. Whatever she had been before, now she was his wife.

Before their conversion, Christ's people were foreigners in a spiritual

sense. They were like the Prodigal Son in a far country – far away from God and Christ. They were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise” (Ephesians 2:12). Their past was truly shameful. Recall the Corinthians, who were told: “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). A truly shameful list! But Paul added: “And such were some of you” (verse 11). Yes, but now “ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus”. Christ’s bride in Corinth had a shameful past, but He was not ashamed of her. Unashamedly He tells all who read the Bible: You are witnesses that this fornicator in Corinth, this idolater, this thief, this drunkard, I have purchased to be My wife.

While the outwardly-respectable Pharisees were content with the rags of their own righteousness, the notorious tax collectors and infamous harlots were entering into the blessings of salvation through union to Christ. And the Lord Jesus was not ashamed of them. He openly acknowledged them as the citizens of His kingdom (see Matthew 21:31).

The woman who came into Simon the Pharisee’s house was a sinner – a great sinner. Everyone in the city knew it. Jesus knew it better than anyone. But He loved her. He forgave her. And He was not ashamed of her. Therefore He allowed her to wash His feet with her tears, wipe them with her hair and kiss them (see Luke 7:38). Simon thought Christ should be ashamed of her and stop her. A true prophet would not allow it, so he thought. But Jesus the Saviour loves to acknowledge His people for His own. Let the proud Pharisee and everyone else be witnesses that this woman was now wedded to the Redeemer: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much” (verse 47).

It was the same with the woman with the issue of blood. For 12 long years she suffered that embarrassing complaint. She was so ashamed that she came secretly to touch the hem of Christ’s garment, with the intention of shrinking back unseen into the crowd. But the Saviour brought her into the open to declare “before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed” (Luke 8:47). He was not ashamed of her. Let the whole multitude thronging Him be witnesses to that.

Leprosy was a shameful disease. It was a picture of the disease of sin. Its sufferers were untouchable outcasts, despised and rejected by all. But not by Christ! Moved with compassion, He would reach forth His hand and cleanse them (see Mark 1:41). He was so ready to accept the unacceptable and to love the unlovable. He was not ashamed of them.

The world glories in the strong, the noble, the wise, the influential, the beautiful. It is ashamed of anyone not meeting these "standards". But Christ glories in taking His bride so often from among the poor, the weak, the despised: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen" (1 Corinthians 1:26-28). Boaz did not take His bride from among the rich and famous in Bethlehem, but a poor despised widow from Moab. There is room in Christ's heart even for the chief of sinners. He will never be ashamed of those who come to Him.

Christ died for the unjust, for the ungodly, for enemies. Scripture testifies to this over and over again. And the Redeemer is not ashamed of what He has done. Let all be witnesses to this: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren". During this life, at the day of judgement and to the endless ages of eternity, He will openly acknowledge them for His own – the jewels in His crown. Boaz took a Moabitess for his wife, and was not ashamed. Christ has taken sinners for His bride, and He will never be ashamed. On the contrary, it will proclaim His everlasting glory, "for this thing was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

George Hepburn

1. The Son of Many Prayers

George Hepburn was born near the village of Sorn in Ayrshire. He grew up in Covenanting times, when from about 1662 onwards in Scotland, people were persecuted for trying to worship God in the way He has appointed in Scripture. George's father was a faithful Covenanter who was killed in the Battle of Pentland, near Edinburgh. George himself was just a boy at the time, yet for some reason he blamed the Covenanters more for his father's death than those who were persecuting them. And when he grew up, he joined these persecutors as an informer; he did all in his power to search out the hiding-places of helpless Covenanters all over the surrounding districts.

The only way the Covenanters could worship God properly was to gather secretly at what were called conventicles, often held in some very out-of-the-way place. One cold winter's evening, Hepburn was on his way back from Hamilton. He crossed the Clyde near Bothwell and was walking along the north bank of the river when he came across people meeting in a wood for

a conventicle. They had just begun their service, and the falling snow was beginning to drift among the trees. Hepburn, of course, did not want to be seen; so he crouched down behind a stone wall. From there he could see the preacher, who was the one he wanted to recognise more than anyone else in the congregation. He was thinking of the reward that would be his if the preacher was arrested. He might also have reported on as many of the other worshippers as he recognised, but perhaps the fee for reporting a preacher was a lot higher than for an ordinary Covenanter.

Hepburn intended to follow the preacher away from the service. He would probably have noted which way he went – perhaps even tailed him to his home – and then returned to Sorn to tell the new minister there. He was one of the ministers known as curates; often ignorant men, they had replaced godly ministers in places like Sorn who could no longer continue in their churches after 1662. In that year the Government tried to force them to go to the newly-appointed bishops to receive authority to continue their work in the Church. Nearly 400 ministers refused to do so; they knew that they already had authority from God Himself for their work. It was a tragedy for the people in places like Sorn when their faithful minister was replaced by a man who, as was said in this case, could not even read, or at least could not read well, and had no care for the souls of the congregation.

The would-be informer listened behind the wall as the minister gave out the text on which he was to preach to the congregation. The words, from Christ's Sermon on the Mount, were extremely encouraging for people in their position: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11,12).

But all thoughts of reporting these people, and of the reward that would follow, were swept from his mind as the words of the preacher's text penetrated his heart like an arrow. The Holy Spirit applied the truth of God's Word to his conscience and now, still crouching behind the wall, he trembled. Once and again, when he looked over the wall, he seemed to see peace written on the faces of all the people, although it was no longer easy to make them out, as the wind was now blowing the whirling snow through the trees. He knew that he was a lost sinner, and he was particularly disturbed because of his terrible behaviour in oppressing the people of God. He was painfully conscious of the contrast – they, the persecuted, were at peace; while he, the persecutor, felt wretched.

The storm seemed to be at its height when the service came to an end and the people started to move away. To give the weather time to improve,

Hepburn crept in under some bushes and thought solemnly about the state of his soul. There he cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner".

From his hiding-place, he began to hear voices not far away. He moved closer so that he could make out what they were saying. He heard one man saying to another, as they also sheltered under bushes: "I am much mistaken if I did not see Hepburn the informer skulking behind the dyke. And if it is as I suspect, the soldiers will be scouring the neighbourhood tomorrow." He fully expected Hepburn to make straight for the manse at Sorn and report what he had seen to the curate, who would quickly arrange for soldiers to go in search of those who had gathered at the conventicle. The other replied: "It is marvellous to me that the son of so worthy a man should turn out so badly – and he the son too of many prayers. His father was a godly man and sealed an honourable testimony with his blood." Hepburn was now more than ever troubled because of his sins, particularly for agreeing to be an informer for the curate in Sorn. But the God who hears prayer had already begun to work in his heart; Hepburn would never again skulk behind a dyke to spy on a company of God-fearing people.

At first he thought he would go to the men and tell them what was going on in his mind. Then he decided against doing so; he was afraid they would not believe him; he thought they might treat him as he might have treated them if he was in their position – they might assault him and maybe even kill him. But as he listened to them praying in the undergrowth as the storm raged around them, he quickly changed his mind. Among the petitions he heard them send up to heaven were requests that the God of all grace would save his soul. He realised that these men had a kindly, forgiving spirit.

At last the storm became less severe and the men decided to start off on their way home. Hepburn realised that they would be going in the same direction as himself; so he set off behind them. Perhaps, he thought to himself, he might be able to cross the Clyde in the same boat; yet he hoped that in the darkness no one would recognise him. Once across the river, someone asked him if he had been at the conventicle. Hepburn agreed that he had been there, but it was obvious that he did not want to say much. The men assumed that, in these dangerous times, he was just being cautious and told him that he did not need to be afraid of them. Their kindly manner led him to talk freely. He told them that he was Hepburn the spy but that his outlook had been changed by what he had heard at the conventicle and that he would act quite differently in the future. The men, of course, were completely astounded. But they felt rather uneasy in his presence; they were not at all sure that they could trust him in spite of all he said about being sorry for the past.

Yet they knew they were in no immediate danger from him, whatever he

might do when he reached Sorn. So they started to speak to him as someone who was genuinely under serious concern of soul. They spoke to him about the gospel as earnestly as they could, in the sincere hope that he would believe and be saved. At first what they said only made him more concerned about his sins, but eventually God opened his heart to understand the truth and brought him to believe in Jesus Christ. Clearly the Lord had heard the many prayers of his father, and the son who had begun so badly was now turning back to the good old ways of his father.

God the Father

2. The Children of Israel

Rev J R Tallach

This is another part of a paper given at the 2005 Youth Conference. The first part dealt with two ideas: God the Father in the Godhead, and as the Father of creation.

The third image of fatherhood is that of *God's relationship to the Children of Israel*. As explained already, the Israelites were a shadow, or type, of God's children. When Moses went to demand the release of the Children of Israel, God instructed him to tell Pharaoh: "Israel is My son, even My first-born" (Exodus 4:22). And God said again: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt" (Hosea 11:1). Moses warned the Israelites against falling prey to the ways and the sins of the heathen when they would enter the Promised Land; he told them: "Ye are the children of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 14:1). He reminded them that, as children of God, the practices of the heathen were unworthy of them.

Here we have the shadow of the spiritual sons and daughters of God. They are His adopted children; as Paul says of them, they "are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption" (Romans 9:4). They are to honour God as their Father; so He says, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if I be a father, where is My honour?" (Malachi 1:6) They have a mark on them which sets them apart as God's children, and they lose that mark when they adopt the ways of the heathen: "They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of My children" (Deuteronomy 32:5). There was even evidence that the family of God, of which Israel was a shadow, was eventually to cover the whole world. "I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 43:6).

In all His dealings with Israel, God acted towards them as a Father. He formed them in bringing them out of Egypt. He protected them from the

Egyptians and the Amalekites when they were like weak and vulnerable children; He taught them at Sinai as ignorant children; He led them, as wayward children, through the wilderness, where there was no path; He bore with them as rebellious children; He gave them bread and water in the wilderness as needy children. And in the end He gave them, as homeless children – strangers and pilgrims – a home in the land that flowed with milk and honey. God was a Father to them.

You are to study the wanderings of the Children of Israel and seek to profit by what you read. By faith you are to put yourself into God's fatherly care. He calls to you: "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" (Jeremiah 3:4).

For Younger Readers

“Something Said to Me”

Rowland Hill was a famous minister in England long ago. William, his gardener, seemed to be a quiet, honest man. But William was not at all honest. He was a wicked man.

After a long time, people found out what William had been doing. He had broken into several houses to steal. But, at first, no one knew who the thief was. No one thought about Mr Hill's gardener.

In the end, William was caught. He was arrested, put on trial and found guilty.

Mr Hill went to visit his gardener in prison. He asked, "How was it, William, that you never robbed me?" He knew that William could easily have taken money and other things from his house. There were many times when he could have done so.

William asked him: "Do you remember the juniper bush in the border?" William often went to hide under that bush at night when he wanted to go in and rob the minister's house.

But why did he never go in and steal from Mr Hill? William explained, "I was afraid. Something said to me, 'He is a man of God. It is a house of prayer.' If I break in, I shall surely be found out." So he never had the courage to go on with the robbery.

There was a man in Mr Hill's church whose name was Mr Rugg. He was good man, who loved God. He also had a lot of money. William knew this.

William told Mr Hill: “I knew well that old Mr Rugg was in the habit of carrying a lot of money in his pocket. Times and times I have hid behind the hedge of the lane leading to his house. He has passed within a yard of me when he was going home from the prayer meeting again and again. I could not stir; I did not dare touch such a holy man. I was afraid. I always began to tremble as soon as he came near me, and I gave up the thought altogether, because I knew he was a holy man.”

God has wonderful ways of taking care of those who trust in Him – people like Mr Hill and old Mr Rugg. I am sure that both these men used to pray to God to protect them from danger. God heard their prayers and watched over them. He kept them safe from wicked people like William the gardener.

William heard something inside him telling him not to do what was wrong. Do you ever feel something telling you not to do what is wrong?

That is your conscience. When God created you, he gave you a conscience. God has been good to you in many ways. He has given you many good things. One of these good things was a conscience, to warn you about what is wrong.

But do you always listen to your conscience? Obviously William did not always listen to his conscience. His conscience stopped him from robbing Mr Hill and Mr Rugg. But it did not stop him robbing other people, although he must have known that was wrong too.

Ask God to help you to listen to your conscience.

For Junior Readers

A Substitute

Do you know the meaning of the word *substitute*? It is a person or thing that takes the place of another. You have probably come across it when playing games; when one player is injured he is replaced by a substitute. There is another word with a similar meaning, which you may perhaps have heard in a sermon; it is *vicarious*. Something is *vicarious* if it is done or endured by someone who has become a substitute. For example, a vicarious punishment means taking the punishment due to someone else.

Can you think who it is in the Bible that these words can be applied to?

Who suffered God's wrath as a substitute for sinners? Who suffered the punishment that sinners deserved? Who suffered a terrible death by crucifixion as a vicarious sacrifice for sinners? You can find the answer at the end of 1 Peter 2: "Christ also suffered for us . . . who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree". Also in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him".

The teaching of these verses is summed up in the few simple words of a converted African. When a minister visited her and asked her how she came to know Jesus, she said: "Good Mr Hinnican came and tell us that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, came down from the good place to save us sinners. He die or me die. He die, me no die. I weep very much; I ask Jesus; He good; He save me."

John Duncan was a godly Scottish minister. He said: "I think here is a noble specimen of the teaching of the Spirit of God – His sublime mystery in all its simplicity: 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from the good place to save us sinners. He die or me die. He die, me no die.'"

Will you not pray, as this African woman did, that Jesus would save you? Then you would truly appreciate the doctrine of substitution summed up in these words: "He die, me no die".

J van Kralingen

In Danger from the Devil

J C Ryle

Another edited article from this noted English minister of the nineteenth century.

The devil uses special diligence to destroy the souls of young people like you, and you do not seem to know it. Satan knows well that you will make up the next generation, and so he promptly uses every possible scheme to make you his own. I wish you not to be ignorant of his devices.

You are those against whom he uses all his most effective temptations. He spreads his net with the greatest care to entangle your hearts. He baits his traps with what is most attractive to get you into his power. He displays his wares before your eyes with his utmost skill in order to make you buy his sugared poisons and eat his cursed delicacies. You are the special object of his attack. May the Lord rebuke him and deliver you out of his hands!

Beware of being taken by his snares. He will try to throw dust in your eyes and prevent you seeing anything in its true colours. He would make you think evil to be good, and good evil. He will paint and dress up sin in order to make you fall in love with it. He will deform, misrepresent and

caricature true religion in order to make you take a dislike to it. He will exalt the pleasures of wickedness, but he will hide the sting from you. He will lift up the cross and its pain before your eyes, but he will keep the eternal crown out of sight. He will promise you everything, as he did to Christ, if only you will serve him. He will even help you to wear a form of religion if only you will neglect its power. He will tell you at the beginning of your lives that it is *too soon* to serve God; at the end he will tell you it is *too late*. O do not be deceived!

You little know how much danger you are in from this enemy; and it is this very ignorance which makes me afraid. You are like blind men walking amidst holes; you do not see the perils which are around you on every side.

Your enemy is *mighty*. He is called “the prince of this world” (John 14:30). He opposed our Lord Jesus Christ all through His ministry. He tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and so brought sin and death into the world. He tempted even David, the man after God’s own heart, and caused his latter days to be full of sorrow. He tempted even Peter, a chosen Apostle, and made him deny his Lord. Surely his enmity is not to be ignored.

Your enemy is *restless*. He never sleeps. He is always going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is ever going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it. You may be careless about your souls; he is not. He wants to make them miserable, like himself, and he will have them if he can. Surely his enmity is not to be ignored.

And your enemy is *cunning*. For 6000 years he has been reading one book, and that book is the heart of man. He ought to know it well, and he does. He knows all its weakness, all its deceitfulness, all its folly. And he has a store of temptations, such as are most likely to do it harm. Never will you go to a place where he will not find you. Go into towns; he will be there. Go into a wilderness; he will be there also. Sit among drunkards and revellers, and he will be there to help you. Listen to preaching, and he will be there to distract you. Surely such enmity is not to be ignored.

Young people, this enemy is working hard to destroy you, however little you may think so. You are the prize for which he is specially contending. He foresees you must either be the blessings or the curses of your lifetime, and he is trying hard to get into your hearts thus early, in order that you may help to advance his kingdom afterwards. Well does he understand that to spoil the bud is the surest way to mar the flower.

O that your eyes were opened like those of Elisha’s servant in Dothan! O that you could see what Satan is scheming against your peace! I must warn you; I must exhort you. Whether you will hear or not, I cannot – I dare not – leave you alone.

Youth Conference Report 2005

Rev D A Ross

When there are so many attractions to draw our young people away from spiritual and eternal matters, it is cause for humble gratitude to the Most High that a goodly number of them continue to attend our Youth Conferences. It is hoped that they will all show unreserved faithfulness to the King of kings. Over the years some have done so and are now in useful posts in church work; others show in their everyday callings their desire to follow Christ. We have no doubt that the preaching of the Word is what is most used by the Holy Spirit to convert sinners and edify them in eternal matters, but He also uses other means to profit them spiritually and we have reason to believe that Youth Conferences have proved to be a blessing in such ways.

St Andrews turned out to be a suitable venue though not as convenient as some other centres. For example, the lecture hall was some distance from the halls of residence and the dining room. During our time there, the weather was cold and drizzly, but we were well looked after, not least by the house-mothers, Miss Margaret MacAskill and Mrs Norma MacLeod. On this occasion, 65 young people attended and some of these were from America, Holland and New Zealand. Our young friends were very attentive; even the questions they asked indicated their interest. In the evening, after everything was over, they spent much of their time singing Psalms.

The first paper, given by Rev James Tallach, was *God the Father – what this doctrine teaches us*. He made four main points. The first had to do with the Trinity: God the Father is first in order, but equal with the Son and the Holy Spirit in power and glory; Dr Tallach also referred to the mystery of the Father eternally begetting the Son, His only begotten Son, distinct from all other sons. Secondly, God the Father, as the Father of creation, gives “to all life, and breath, and all things”. Thirdly, God the Father was the Father of the Children of Israel; they were to honour Him as their Father by remaining apart from the heathenish practices around them. This relationship pointed to the worldwide nature of the family of God and led to the last point: God the Father, out of free grace, adopting sinners into His family. All the benefits they enjoy as the children of God arise from the redemptive work of Christ. In conclusion we were reminded “what a good Father our heavenly Father is to His children, and so we commend Him to you”.

The paper on the Tuesday evening was: “*Go Ye into All the World*” – *some aspects of the Free Presbyterian Church's mission work*, by Rev John MacLeod. Christ's commission to the Apostles was: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. Their labour was owned by

God and the gospel spread. It came eventually to the shores of Britain, and from Britain many missionaries went to different parts of the world. The spreading of the gospel continues and, in the providence of God, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland is established in Africa.

Our Church in Africa began through the labour of the godly Rev John B Radasi. He established a place of worship and schools at Ingwenya, which lies 30 miles from the city of Bulawayo. Until the present time, the work of the gospel has progressed through the work of many labourers, and places of worship have been established in Zenka, Mbuma, Zvishavane and other parts. Schools, as well as a hospital at Mbuma, continue to bring sinners into contact with the gospel. The most recent development was at Sengera, in Kenya, where our missionaries by the blessing of God have proclaimed the gospel and set up a very busy medical centre. For a short period there was a gospel work in Malawi but it had to be closed. Recently the Church has been attempting to begin work among the Jews. In the Lord's providence, churches in Holland have over the years shown interest in our mission by giving liberally to the work. Without their help, we could not continue the work to the extent we do.

A Time of Surprising Conversions – Jonathan Edwards and his work, 1703-1758, was the subject of the third paper, given by Rev K D Macleod. Edwards spent most of his ministry in Northampton, Massachusetts, in the USA. At the early age of 19 he became a minister of the gospel. After this, he had an extremely busy life, due in part to the spiritual revivals which took place under his preaching. It was common practice in Northampton to admit people to the Lord's Table on the basis of their knowledge of the Scriptures if they lived a careful life, but they were not required to give an account of a saving experience. Jonathan Edwards set out to change this practice, much to the displeasure of his congregation and some other churches. When it was decided that he could no longer be minister in his congregation, he took this painful experience graciously.

Afterwards he was to become a missionary to a settlement of Indians in Stockbridge. While he had his share of troubles there also, he did enjoy some success in the work of gospel. He was known as a very pious and learned man and wrote several theological works which are still appreciated today. When he was young he was a tutor in Yale College, and just before his death he became President of the College of New Jersey.

Rev J B Jardine conducted a historical tour of sites of religious interest in St Andrews. The town is full of religious history, some of which is very sad because of the cruel persecution the godly had to endure, but the stand of faithful men and women on the side of Christ is very encouraging. The

Church of Rome was very much to the fore before the Reformation and St Andrews was at one time known as the "little Vatican". However, the Reformation, in which John Knox took a great part, swept away much of this idolatry. What is now St Leonard's School, where we had our conference, was one of the first places where Protestant views were popular. The well-known Patrick Hamilton was burned at the stake in the town, the first of a number who loved the Word of God and were faithful to the last. It was in St Andrews University that the godly Samuel Rutherford was Professor of Divinity from 1639, as was Thomas Halyburton from 1710.

A paper on *Marriage – what the Bibles teaches* was given by Rev G G Hutton on the Wednesday evening. Marriage is "the oldest institution in human society . . . upon which all other legitimate social institutions are established". To undermine marriage is to damage the whole of society. Some other points were: the foundation on which a marriage should be built is the Word of God, together with trust and love. There is a scriptural order in marriage: the husband is the head of the wife, and the wife is to submit to her husband in the Lord. In the marriage union, where husband and wife are one, there is sharing. "They laugh together; they mourn together; they plan together; they suffer together." Where there is fault there must be a readiness to forgive each other. There are many blessings, such as companionship, mutual spiritual help in a Christian marriage, and finally the wonderful blessing of having children. The importance of bringing up children in the fear of the Lord was emphasised, as was the danger of mothers neglecting their role when they are too much taken up with other occupations.

Finally Rev John MacLeod spoke on "*The Man after God's Own Heart*" – *David, the son of Jesse*. In various ways David showed himself to be a man of God. He was a humble shepherd when he was anointed to be the future king of Israel. He became a soldier, having shown in an outstanding way, when he slew Goliath, that he trusted the Almighty God to deliver him. The bond of friendship between David and Jonathan "has come to be almost proverbial". As a dutiful son to his father, he graciously performed whatever duties befell him, even when provoked by his elder brother Eliab. As a righteous King, despite serious failings, David was wise, and the whole nation enjoyed "the fruits of his good government". Finally, David was a man of God, which is evident from the psalms he penned, his life of prayer and his humble submission to the will of God. We were reminded that, "notwithstanding the faults and infirmities which marred his character, it is clear from the divine record and specially from the book of Psalms, that the prevailing tenor of David's life was that of a pious, humble, devoted man; and in that sense he was, also, a man after God's own heart".

Looking Around Us

Legalised Unbelief

Almost two years ago, Thorkild Grosboell, a minister in Denmark declared, “There is no heavenly God; there is no eternal life; there is no resurrection”. One wonders what he does believe and why he considers it worthwhile to be a minister in a Christian Church.

Not surprisingly, he was suspended by his bishop, but it seems that only the Government can remove him from the ministry, and they have refused to do so. Amazingly, another bishop said that, although he disagrees with Grosboell’s views, there should be room for him in his church. And in May, this minister was back in his pulpit although his views have not changed.

But there most certainly is a God in heaven, and He appointed the Church to make known His will to the people of the world. And ministers are to make known that will faithfully – according to what is revealed in the Bible. How Satan must gloat when ministers reveal the depths of their unbelief!

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2005-06

Overseas Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Christa and Jessica van Kralingen, Kirsten McCrae, Liana Sullivan, Susan Thomas. *Brisbane:* Sarah Brigden. *Chesley:* Everdena and Margaret Kuiper. *Dunedin:* Hayley Worth. *Gisborne:* Mark and Stephen Geuze. *Grafton:* Susanna Kidd, Cassandra van Dorp, Emma and Natalie White. *Sengera:* Kevin Nyabuto. *Sydney:* Jennifer and Laura Marshall. *Wellington:* Naomi and Thomas Hicklin.

Intermediate Section: *Auckland:* Charlotte McCrae, David Thomas. *Brisbane:* Miriam Brigden. *Chesley:* Martha Bouman. *Gisborne:* Anita Geuze, Herman and Trudy Haringa. *Grafton:* Shelley van Dorp. *Holland:* Anne and Peter Bakker. *Sengera:* Lispher and Keziah Amanda, Jennifer Mosiria, Bernard Mosoti, Linet Ondieki, Jared Onywoki. *Singapore:* Linus Lau Jun Ling. *Sydney:* Alison Marshall. *Wellington:* Conan Cassidy, Joanna Hicklin, Alison Optland.

Junior Section: *Auckland:* Sam McCrae, Samantha Muirhead. *Chesley:* Jenny Bouman, Audrey Zekveld. *Dunedin:* Richie Worth. *France:* Julia Davenel. *Gisborne:* William Geuze, Louise van Dorp. *Grafton:* Chloe van Dorp, Matthew White. *Sengera:* Joan Abel, Peter Amanda. *Sydney:* Andrew Marshall, Madison van Praag. *Wellington:* Elizabeth and Rebekah Hicklin.

Upper Primary Section: *Auckland:* Laura McCrae, Amy Thomas. *Brisbane:* Mary Jean Brigden. *Chesley:* Jacob Zekveld. *Dunedin:* Gresham Worth. *Gisborne:* Anne Marie Gauze, Heidi Haringa, Alexander and Kirsten van Dorp. *Grafton:* Bethany McAlpine, Cameron White. *Sengera:* Dolfine Moses, Lilian Kamanda. *Singapore:* Julius Lau Jun Xi. *Sydney:* James Marshall. *Wellington:* Lydia Hicklin.

Lower Primary Section: *Auckland:* Claudia Campbell, Rita de Bruin, Lachlan McCrae. *Brisbane:* Rachel Brigden. *Connecticut:* Rachel, Rebecca and Sarah Mack. *Gisborne:* Hannah Geuze, William Haringa, Anna, Annika and Emma van Dorp. *Grafton:* Joshua Kidd, Alexandra van Dorp. *Holland:* Gerben Bakker, Nathalie and Samantha MacDonald. *Sengera:* Finlay Mogari, Eric Momanyi, Judith and Rebbecca Moses, Christine and Mary Mosoti, Job Ondieki, Nyabonyi Ontiri. *Sydney:* Duncan and Keith Marshall, Emily, Heather, Nathan and Zoe van Praag. *Texas:* Joseph Ervin. *Wellington:* Luke Cassidy, Abigail, Julia and Timothy Hicklin.

A group of Youth Conference members

Youth Conference CD

A CD containing the five papers given at the 2005 Youth Conference is now available from Mr Mark Middleton, 4 Rhodes Close, Haslington, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5ZF (e-mail: mkomiddleton@hotmail.com; tel: 01270 255024). The cost in the UK will be £5 (£6.50 in Europe and £7 in the rest of the world), all prices including postage and packing. Details of the papers are given in the report which begins on page 136.